

*(GQ9H) Page 1*

This is a fanwork of Zampanio!

I do not own the concept of Zampanio!

In addition to being a fanwork, it's also a collection of a LOT of the things I've found out about Zampanio over the years.

This is a written adaptation of the original Gopher Hole experience. To follow along as an interactive fiction novel, choose your option and:

- search for the code in your document reader of choice.
- search for the page number provided

Otherwise, you can skip the interactive fiction and read this document as a normal document.

Have fun exploring!

### **README:**

If you're here you know what Zampanio is. You know what all this means. Have fun, and don't get lost!

Note for futureJR: p sure this'll need to get stared up anytime the server reboots.

If there were no errors shown above,

Gophernicus has now been succesfully installed.

Please enable and start gophernicus.socket using the commands:

```
system enable gophernicus.socket
```

```
system start gophernicus.socket
```

to allow your gopher root to be accessed.

**echidnas.txt:**

....

no.

but i guess if you agree with me you can go to [knucklesux.com](http://knucklesux.com)

**gophermap.bak:**

Welcome to Gophernicus!

fig let -f chunky Gophernicus

# Gophernicus

Shamelessly lifted from Apache 1.3...

If you can see this, it means that the installation of Gophernicus on this system was successful. You may now add content to this directory and replace this page.

Real-time configuration output (WOO!)

Generic information:

your ip address: Nowhere

server time: Indeterminate (Last Updated: April 1, 2022)

server uptime: Not Applicable

server version: Gopher Hole Simulacrum

server platform: Text Document

server description: Original Code of the Gophernicus system is being mimicked in this section to simulate what looking at the document in the folder felt like as a non-coder.

Server configuration:

configuration file: for FILE in:

System Configuration. Gophernicus. Library. Launch Daemons. Boot Network Services.

server hostname: VB

root directory:

<http://gopher.floodgap.com/gopher/gw?gopher://farragofiction.com:70/1/>

running as user: Unknown

output character set: Hidden

### **hall\_of\_fame.txt:**

As of 10/12/21, here are those who have made it to the start of the path, the discord server:

XxSTARL1GHTxX

moth gang

the one who screams i guess (Herald)

I'm not going to update this, check the wiki for more.

Here are those who have made a path of zampanio (have you found it yet?):

lionfish1212  
SmeargleUsedHex  
attendantWatcher  
I SING THE TRUTH  
cmon i even made a custom avatar

Each room is a potential fanfic prompt. Here's a list of fics inspired by the rooms:

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/34647190>

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/34718575>

**hello\_weaver:**

I'm glad you could join us :) :) :)

**robots.txt:**

Disallow: NORTH. This is an infinite maze.

Disallow: SOUTH. This is an infinite maze.

Disallow: EAST. This is an infinite maze.

man its weird setting up a robots.txt file again

**seerOfVoid.txt:**

There is nothing hidden here.

Nothing to peer into.

Can a void even be a void in a file system?

**zampanio.txt:**

This is a fanwork of Zampanio! I do not own the concept of Zampanio! If you'd like to contribute anything to this fanwork, or if you have information on Zampanio, or if you have your own fanworks you'd like me to link to, please contact me!

<https://discord.gg/tZmtKwnbac>

*Choose Your Path:*

*North: (NT8S) Page 9*

*East: (ERROR)*

*South: (ERROR)*

*Dead End: (D34D) Page 6 :) :) :)*

*(D34D) Page 6*

South > South > South >  
**the\_end\_is\_never\_the\_end.txt:**

I did it!

I got a gopher server up and running! Feelin really smug it only took me a few hours :) :)

Biggest challenge was I forgot I needed to open up my firewall for the default gopher port.

Now, I know what you're thinking, you're thinking: JR, why would you bother going to such obscure lengths to add a path to a simulation of a creepy pasta game that probably doesn't even exist (if we're being honest with ourselves in the sanctity of the gopher hole)?

Why go the further trouble to leak it in that weird abandoned discord server that also probably doesn't exist?

And you see, the ANSWER is that even more smug than you'd think!!! The gopher server came AFTER the countless references to it by

Soon / demeter'd / go\_far / gone\_further!

It was too perfect not to tie into.

Can you imagine? The next person to go "is there something on gopher about this" just....

Bam.

Now, BECAUSE of how hard it is to get in here, I wasn't about to, you know, put TOO much effort in...

But...

It still really amuses me to just...  
make a little thing, just for you.

Thank you for finding the Core of Truth :) :) :)

I do want to let you know though.

This maze mirrors my Attic.

Choice is an illusion and depending on what path you are on that illusion is either stripped away, allowed to fester and rot, or celebrated.

East > North/East/South > North/East/South > North/East/South > North/East/South  
> North/East/South >

**ramble.txt**

Have you noticed what is going on?

First of all, of course, this is a refrance to what NotAMinotaur tells you inside  
ThisIsAGame:

"To the NORTH is ThisIsNotAGame. In it's endless hallways you see countless variations on players and screens and the wistful Might-Have-Beens of a game you wish you could have played.

To the SOUTH is JustTruth. In it's endless corridors lurk the bitter ThisIsNotASpiral that has been watching and trying in vain to keep from tormenting you. Only truths are here, no more masks, no more pretence.

To the EAST is ThisIsAGame. It is a place of lies and madness. It is here. You have brought us here and it is your fault. This was never a game. This STILL isn't a game, no matter how much you insist otherwise. How long will you trap us in these endless corridors?"

You HAVE read that, right?

It would be hella ironic if you missed all the actual in game things yet found this gopher server.

In any case, you're currently in the Eastern Path.  
Have you noticed the madness and lies?

Do I really have to spell it out for you?

Tell you what: Prove yourself to me.

If you know why this is the path of madness and lies, \*specifically in this gopher hole\*. Document it. Update it on the wiki. Tell others.

Convince them you're telling the truth. That you're not lying or mad.

Explain to them what the gimmick is here.

*Choose Your Path:*

*Return: (GQ9H) Page 1*



*(NT8S) Page 9*

You find yourself at the entrance of a poorly constructed maze.

You have 0 gopher gold!

*Look for water.*

You find a sealed plastic water bottle, with a sticky note on top.

"Remember to hydrate! It can be easy to forget, since sleeping and eating have always been so optional, but water is not!"

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (S2DY) Page 10*

*East: (3QN5) Page 35*

*South: (F2Z1) Page 33*

*(S2DY) Page 10*

The room appears to be a study, with rich, dark wood and plush burgundy rugs. There's bookshelves lining the walls and a desk with paper scattered on it along one wall. There is an air of abandonment about it all.

There are glass panels creating a transparent pathway through the room, with twists and turns as it spirals around it. You can never quite reach the book shelves or the desk, there's always glass between you.

Some of the glass panels are all one piece, but most are a mosaic of different sizes and thicknesses of glass. As you move through the room, a single panel, no bigger than the palm of your hand catches your eye. While it is not glowing, when you look directly into it you can see light.

As you focus, you see someone sifting through papers furiously at the desk, deep in thought.

You cannot see them, or the light, when you look through the other panels.

When you tap on the panel to the lit world, the figure does not respond.

You can only watch.

Nothing appears to be happening.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (P4PR) Page 12*

*East: (NT8S) Page 9*

*South: (ZL4M) Page 11*

*(ZL4M) Page 11*

You move back to the door you came through, only to find it now leads to a smoothly polished wooden wall.

You slam the door in frustration.

You hear a gasp behind you.

One of the small mosaics of glass that simply showed you a slightly warped view of the room now has light along the edges of it. The shadow in the center moves, draws back and you see a gaunt face peering back at you, drawn tight with horror.

It's the figure from the desk. They've noticed you?

They flee to the NORTH, scattering paper in their wake.

You notice the paper fluttering listlessly to the ground even through the regular glass panels. You hear a door slam.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (S2DY) Page 10*

*(P4PR) Page 12*

Papers are scattered everywhere in this room, but it is otherwise empty.

As you gently close the door behind you the papers in the center move slightly.

"I just want to talk..." you say slowly. Hesitantly. Is that really all you want? It doesn't matter.

You don't see anything. You don't hear anything.

You walk to the center of the room. You hear a door gently close behind you. You shuffle the papers in the center but nothing seems to be relevant in them.

"I. I'm going back to the study. To the glass pane. I want to see you again. I think I can hear you there." You say loudly, hoping that the invisible figure can hear you.

You need to know.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (PG3N) Page 53*

*East: (P3PL) Page 184*

*South: (GQ8D) Page 13*

*(GQ8D) Page 13*

As you go back towards the study you find the glass maze inside of it has shifted. You now have access to the bookshelves and the desk.

All thoughts of the figure leave your mind. Like a starving man being presented with a feast you desperately grab at the books only to discover each page is blank.

You rush to the desk and begin frantically sifting through the papers, looking for anything, anything at all to give you even the tiniest shred of knowledge. There are words here, strange ciphers that you almost understand if only you had just a bit more context, a bit more time....

You're broken from your frenzy by the sound of a door slamming behind you.

The figure.

It...it MUST know the cipher.

You rush to the glass panel that let you see it before and press your face close to peer into the darkness.

In shock, you draw back, then rush back out of the room.

Nothing good can be learned here.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (W8RM) Page 25*

*East: (3QN5) Page 35*

*South: (CTL6) Page 37*

*(6Q1N) Page 14*

You have to keep going.

You have to keep going.

You have to keep going.

Somewhere in here is the key. Not to the map (you are the map, you are the only possible true map, any other map by definition is false). No.

The key to preventing the Apocalypse.

You know it.

In your bones.

In your heart.

It has to be.

Nothing else could be **IMPORTANT** enough to willingly go into this maze. To **KEEP** going into it.

The very fate of humanity **MUST** hinge on this. Because why would you be doing this to yourself.

Zampanio is rumored to "End the World". You know that. You read that somewhere. Somewhere **OUTSIDE** of here. It's the one thing you remember clearly from before.

So. You **MUST** have come in here to figure out how to stop it.

You have to keep going.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (P4PR) Page 12*

*(TR89) Page 16*

You enter a vast room with a huge rusting train nestled in its center.

The train has the face of a leering rat.

Static crackles on the intercom as the train speaks to you:

"It's been years since I've seen any new faces around here. My name is Jaimie! What brings you to my humble abode?"

"I'm trying to find all the secrets inside this terrible place. I...I hope they'll be the key to saving the world." You stammer.

"Don't worry about that. I'll sort everything out by taking the train back to the past." The rat says, laughing hideously. "Now then, if you want to help me, you'll have to get inside that van over there."

"The van?"

You look around wildly. There is no van. Have you missed something? Some clue?

"What... What van?"

"The one the maintenance guys use to transport me around. You must have missed it. Let me help you."

"How?"

The rat grins, and licks its lips.

"You should know... You brought me here yourself."



"No I didn't! This is my first time even ENTERING this room!" you protest. Sure, your memory isn't the greatest lately but...surely you would remember having some sort of... Train delivery job???

"Well, you did or you wouldn't be standing here talking to me now. Now, let's get you over there." The rat commands.

You are so confused.

You refuse.

"No.", you say.

The faded signpost reads: 'Look for /ZampanioEyes'.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (3XBH) Page 56*

*(8TQN) Page 18*

There is a giant red button in the center of this room.

It is labeled: RETURN TO 1972 APRIL FIRST 1:13 am

You do not trust it.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (S2DY) Page 10*

*(K1QC) Page 19*

There are clocks ticking on every wall, on every shelf, on every possible surface in an endless cacophony.

Somehow, they are all perfectly synced, not a tick out of place.

You realize with dread that you do not wish to be here when they finally all sound off the hour.

You find 5 Gopher Gold!

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (PL45) Page 106*

*East: (EVU8) Page 54*

*South: (9QQL) Page 72*

*(ZL3P) Page 20*

It is pitch black.

You hear a groan from somewhere deep within.

"Can you NOT knock? I'm TRYING to sleep!"

What?

"Uh."

You have no idea what to do.

"Sorry?"

"Just GO, go FAR, FAR away!"

You guess this room isn't for you.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (5CR1) Page 90*

*(K4K3) Page 21*

You step into the room with a sickening squelch.

As you stare down at your foot to see what fresh horror you have stepped into you get the distinct smell of... vanilla?

The floor is cake.

White icing.

Festive sprinkles.

Looks like a yellow sponge cake base?

It's decorated to look like wooden planks. Topped with a thin layer of chocolate that your foot punched through.

There's furniture.

You quickly discover the furniture is also cake.

Well.

Not all of it.

Some of it is chocolate.

What.

What is even going on here?

*Look for water.*

The water cooler is a cleverly disguised cake.

It looks like they used a combination of a thin sugar plane and some kind of almost...gelatin structure to make the clear plastic of the bottle.

A viscous sugar syrup is the "water".

The opaque plasticky parts are chocolate.

The table itself is layers upon layers of sponge cake propped up by rice krispie treats.

You are so thirsty.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (DRQ8) Page 23*

*East: (NS3R) Page 91*

*South: (BK3R) Page 24*

*(DRQ8) Page 23*

The door is cake.

When you try to open it, it crumbles into your hands, smearing a thick, viscous icing onto you.

There's nothing behind it.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (K4K3) Page 21*

*(BK3R) Page 24*

The door is made of chocolate.

It's hollow, and brittle, so when you try to twist the knob it just kind of breaks off. It looks like inside is...cherry syrup?

It drips thickly down the soft yellow of the "wood".

"Heeeeeeyy!" you hear a voice from behind you. Your hackles immediately raise. Just the sound of this voice makes you kind of want to fight.

"Did you do this"? You ask.

"What?? Little ol me??" An almost caricature of a baker is behind you. White coat. White puffy hat. Rosy cheeks.

There is something...subtly off about him. Nothing you can put your finger on.

You wait patiently for him to stop being coy.

"I make art, don't you see?! Fans back home expect more from me!" he declares.

He spins in a slow, wide circle. "Everything is cake!"

He looks you directly in the eye.

"If it's not, I'll lie until its declared the fake."

You don't really see a point to staying here.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (K4K3) Page 21*



*(W8RM) Page 25*

The room you enter is completely empty. White walls. White floor. It gives you a slight headache.

It sets you on edge.

There is nothing to see here. No conclusions to draw. Nothing to add to your attempts to make sense of this endlessly spiralling maze.

You need to know more.

Surely when you get a big enough picture, you'll see the meaning inherent in anything sufficiently complex.

Surely.

*Choose Your Path:*

*North: (LQN6) Page 161*

*East: (6Q1N) Page 14*

*South: (P4PR) Page 12*

*(C8QD) Page 26*

There's a conspiracy board on the western wall, or at least you think that's what it is. Captioned photographs are pinned to a large corkboard with colorful lines strung between them, all connected with white strings to a single photo in the middle. The photo focuses on a pale light hovering over the head of a small, green animal with its face obscured by a hooded cloak. The other pictures have been messily smeared over with something black, but you can still make out most of the captions:

"Followed in the footsteps of our predecessors: Searched earnestly for a copy of Zampanio and found one."

"Suddenly recognized Zampanio from their distant past even though it's just a story."

"Assembled a catalog of different versions of Zampanio. The final version documented was the catalog itself."

"Wove a fangame that began to follow them around."

"Embraced Zampanio as a story. Everyone thought they were a regular fan until they were embraced in turn."

You take a step and narrowly avoid stepping on a loose pushpin. The floor is covered in them along with packs of photo film, and messy, colorful finger paintings line the bottoms of the walls. A gray figure with dragon wings. A purple figure with strings rising from its arms. A yellow figure with a spiral for a face. A purple paintbrush. A pink fish. A yellow triangle. A bright red figure with a floating gear for a head watching a darker red monster dunk an egg with a mustache in a blue lake. A black smiley face and a purple graffiti almost-word, both surrounded by question marks.

Another intact photo on the corkboard catches your eye, seemingly taken in this very room. A person with frosty green hair and animal ears is staring into the camera with wide, glowing eyes while the animal from the last picture draws on the wall in the background. The caption reads:

"Split across layers and left an unsolved mystery behind."

There's a piece of paper pinned next to it.

<https://zampaniosim.fandom.com/wiki/Puzzle>

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (3QN5) Page 35*

*(3S3S) Page 28*

If only you were NotTheseus, you muse. Then you could use some NotYarn to make your way finally out of this horrible maze.

But what would NotYarn even be? String? Thread? Aren't those all the same thing?

[reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/co3kr/whats the difference between yarn and string/](https://reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/co3kr/whats_the_difference_between_yarn_and_string/)

Ah. Excellent. Glad that's cleared up.

You find -3 Gopher Gold!

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (FR4C) Page 129*

*East: (4EST) Page 110*

*South: (LBR3) Page 88*

(DQ14) Page 29

You accidentally kick a wooden duck figure on your way through. It lands with a deafening thunk. There's a quacking in the distance, getting closer by the second. You shouldn't stay here for long.

You find that the wooden duck statue is also actually 1.5 Gopher Gold!

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (3G6G) Page 101*

*East: (MB1M) Page 70*

*(WTP8) Page 30*

There are wet paint signs everywhere.

You aren't sure if you've seen something like this before.

The paint glistens.

You want to touch it...but suddenly are seized up with the fear of leaving a mark. Of an indelible reminder of your passage here. You could only leave this room worse for your presence, you're certain of it

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (FLF1) Page 49*

*East: (D34D) Page 6*

*South: (TQ77) Page 31*

*(TQ77) Page 31*

As you go to leave, you see a single fingerprint smudged against the paint of the wall.

A mark has been made.

Your limbs move in a jerky fashion and your thumb smooshes against the paint as well.

You feel. Elation? You're free. Let this be a canvas.

You open the door with a smile on your face only to walk face first into a blank wall, freshly painted.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (WTP8) Page 30*

*(ST14) Page 32*

There is a cool dampness to the air. With each breath, your lungs feel a bit more...sticky?  
That can't be good for you.

You find 13 Gopher Gold!

*Look for water.*

There is a tall glass of water here, lightly covered in condensation. It is slightly cool to your touch.

You feel so thirsty.

You lift it to your lips and tip it back, eagerly, your tongue reaching out to capture that much needed first drop.

You furrow your brow in confusion as it fails to come. As you draw back your head to get a better look, you see a thick viscous drop falling towards your tongue.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (F83G) Page 100*

*East: (3QN5) Page 35*

*South: (TR3D) Page 47*



*(F2Z1) Page 33*

Everything is fuzzy in this room. Not in a texture way, but as if your eyes have a slight filter on them. You can't quite make out the text lining the walls, even as you approach. It seems everything has a constant level of fuzz, and there is no distance where things actually resolve. It makes you feel a little bit sea sick.

You find 1 Gopher Gold!

*Look for water.*

In an unobtrusive corner you find a small table with a few disposable plastic glasses, a jug of room temperature water and a trash can.

A sticky note on the jug reads: "Remember: Stay hydrated! Don't let your obsession lead to poor health.

You probably can survive without food, though :) :) :)"

*Look for the vent.*

A glint of gold catches your eye.

Inside this vent is an ornate pocket stopwatch. It displays a single value: 20h:14m:36s.

You get the feeling this will be important later on.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (1NF1) Page 93*

*East: (3XBH) Page 56*

*South: (4RJR) Page 212*

*(T3XT) Page 34*

There is text lining every possible surface in this room. The walls. The desks. The floor.  
Even the pencils have teeny tiny words marching along every inch.

You can't make out the text. You. You know you SHOULD be able to.

You head aches with the effort of trying to remember. It ALL has meaning.

It's so close to you but may as well be infinitely far away.

You can't understand it.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (M34T) Page 147*

*East: (4EST) Page 110*

*(3QN5) Page 35*

There is a stillness to the air, as if you are the first to move in unknowable eons. The very concept of motion seems to be anathema here.

You find 3 Gopher Gold!

*Look for water.*

You find an empty water bottle with a sticky note attached to it.

"Remember to hydrate! So many of your mortal concerns have been suppressed while you are here, but thirst has not been one of them!"

You are so thirsty.

*Look for the vent.*

Inside this vent is dozens upon dozens of increasingly illegitimate looking copies of pirated video games, labeled with sharpie.

Tiles include:

Skyrim

Skyrim Legendary Edition

Skyrim Special Edition

Skyrim GOTY Edition

Skyrim 2: The End of Hammerfell

Skyrim 2.1: Todd Howard Strikes Again

Skirem by Hord Tord

Tord Toward's Trove Textravaganza

Hodd Coward's Skyrim for The Polybius System

Oh my god PLEASE JUST PLAY THE GAME I PROMISE IT HAS IMPORTANT LIFE LESSONS

Skyrim VR

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (EVU8) Page 54*

*East: (ST14) Page 32*

*South: (BLY8) Page 74*

*Down: (RQT7) Page 61*

*(CTL6) Page 37*

This is a space claimed by the Catalyst.

Lobsters with pixelated Todd Howard's faces fill the room, more than you could imagine. If you catch a glimpse of one out of the corner of your eye it twists and corrupts and your mind refuses to process it, except for the upsetting and inescapable fact that it is DEFINITELY Todd Howard you are seeing. Most of them are corralled into a pit of viscous red liquid along one of the walls.

Scrawled on the wall is a message: "Stop wasting Segundia!!! -JR". Scrawled underneath it is a message you understand far too well. You almost wish you could look away from it.

The Red Miles are clearly seen outside of a window, along a wall you know for a fact just contains another room. This is fine.

Lining the walls are shelves upon shelves of beakers full of chemicals with labels like "Danger" and "XXX". Scorch marks touch on everything, including a few broken beakers.

On another wall is a desk, with an open laptop laid across it. It doesn't respond to keyboard presses or movements of the touchpad, and all it displays is a giant red ERROR message.

It's probably fine.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (6RDN) Page 156*

*East: (77QZ) Page 163*

*South: (P4PR) Page 12*

*(LYV4) Page 38*

As you step into the room you notice the floor is lava. A spike of panic lances through you before you realize that it is the only thing you're experiencing.

It doesn't hurt. Your foot resting gently on oozing lava is perfectly fine.

You suppose that makes sense. If it were actually red hot, your skin would have been blistered from your bones long before you set foot onto it.

You can't help but feel weirdly disappointed, however. The room isn't even warm.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (GQ9H) Page 1*

*South: (23CM) Page 81*

*(48JY) Page 39*

The room is on fire.

The walls. The floor. The ceiling. The furniture.

The heat is oppressive, but not painful.

You aren't sure if its because your pain threshold is that high these days, or because it's not quite real fire.

In the center of the flames is a metallic...girl...scout? She has no face. This is fine.

"Hello?" you venture.

"Interesting!!!", she says.

"Who are you?"

"Hmmm..." is the response. You wish you could read her face.

"Have you been here long?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen anything interesting?"

"Interesting!!!"

You are starting to notice a pattern.

"Um. "

"Hmmm..."

"I think I'm...just going to go?"

"Yes."

She turns to face you the whole way through the room.

As you go to open a door, you feel an implacable yet tiny hand stop you.

"Hmmm..." she says.

She seems to want something from you.

"Ummm..."

"Yes."

She draws your attention to the wall, and you squint past the flames. Is that...is that a ...shipping grid?

You see a crude drawing of someone....familiar? Do you know them? They're ...they're next to someone else you feel like you should know, as well.

There's various symbols between them with a question mark. Heart. Spade. Diamond. Clubs. For some reason all those marshmallows from that kids cereal?



"Who.... who are they?" You ask, in wonder. It feels like they are on the tip of your tongue. Some raw part of your memory connects and you ask "Why does...why does the one on the left have my eyes?"

"Hmmm..." the girl scout says. Clearly unimpressed.

She releases you and no longer pays you any attention.

Well. Alright then?

<https://www.nexusmods.com/stardewvalley/mods/7811>

*Look for water.*

You find a small table with a mug with the writing "This is Fine." on it. The table is singed.

"Hmmm..." you hear, from behind you.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (48JY) Page 39*

*South: (RCN4) Page 160*

*(F8SZ) Page 42*

The room appears rustic in nature, with wood grained oak panels lining the walls and floor and ceiling.

It's almost...peaceful at first? If you could just shake off the strong feeling of being WATCHED.

As you look around, you can't help but notice...the oddly symmetrical placements of knots and whorls in the wood. Almost like. Two eyes. And a mouth? Over and over again?

As your eyes focus closer on it you realize that dozens...no...hundreds of faces are hidden in the wood.

All of them are screaming.

*Choose Your Path.*

*South: (RCN4) Page 160*

*(PL8K) Page 43*

The floor is made of wooden planks. You step on one, and it emits a squeak; the room breaks into uproar. Half the planks squeak when you step on them, and you can't tell which ones. The room laughs every time. Is it laughing at you? Or something else?

You find 7 Gopher Gold!

*Choose Your Path:*

*East: (S81C) Page 55*

*South: (CNM7) Page 118*

*(J45Z) Page 44*

It is a room that screams. Rhythmically.

You think you could probably do jazzercise to it.

*Choose Your Path.*

*South: (P3DR) Page 107*

*(T8BL) Page 45*

The room has cheap carpet on the floor, plaster on the walls and a plastic fold out table with a couple of aluminum chairs at its center. The wallpaper is a stained yellow that was probably cheerful once.

It smells faintly of cigarettes and mildew.

*Look for water.*

There is a dead beetle inside this water cooler. A bubble erupts from the bottom, swirling it around in the water.

There is a single pristine glass sitting next to it, made of actual glass.

A laminated brochure assures you that hydration is the single most important thing inside this labyrinth.

You are so thirsty.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (B3DS) Page 66*

*East: (W7DR) Page 112*

*South: (F1TN) Page 64*

*(M4GT) Page 46*

There is food here.

Shelves and shelves of cans and crates. Bags and bags of flour and rice.

You don't need to open them to know they are squirming with maggots. They spill out bulging metal edges, ripped seams and rotten wood.

Nothing good remains here.

*Look for water.*

Cool clear water lies undisturbed in a pitcher, save for a viscous gob of what appears to be snot nestled into the very bottom. Clean glasses sit next to the pitcher, a terrible mockery.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (U7DR) Page 196*

*(TR3D) Page 47*

You aren't tired.

You aren't hungry.

You aren't thirsty.

Yet somehow you are all three things to a degree your mind can no longer comprehend.

Somehow each time you are reminded of how much you should be feeling these things it gets worse.

It's hard to think.

It's hard to care.

There is only going forwards.

To the next waypoint.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (8R1K) Page 96*

*East: (ST14) Page 32*

*South: (WDW1) Page 83*

*(BN7Y) Page 48*

The ground is soft, earthy and warm under your feet.

You can smell dirt, growth, and perhaps a recent rain.

You'd forgotten what the Outside could be like, and something unfamiliar is blossoming in your heart.

A quick motion draws your eye and you see something brown and furry wiggling out of the earth. Tall ears and dark eyes and a twitching nose immediately identify it as a bunny!

You'd forgotten how much you...

Oh.

Huh.

You don't remember bunnies being this....long?

There is a whole...warren? Is that the right word for a group of bunnies? There's a lot of bunnies. Long ears and twitching noses and long and long and long necks leading down into the earth, stretch curiously up towards you.

It's...fine. Right? This is how bunnies are supposed to be. So why...are you so...unsettled?

You hear a honk behind you and see a flash of fangs. You stumble forwards and the whole pack of them descend on you, predatory glints in their eyes.

*Choose Your Path.*

*South: (SLU6) Page 104*



*(FLF1) Page 49*

There is something white and large and fluffy and MOVING in this room with you.

It doesn't make sense.

Its eyes are WRONG. Nothing at all like normal eyes, like the eyes you see wherever you look.

Oh god it's touching you.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (TT3M) Page 186*

*East: (GQ9H) Page 1*

*(NF1T) Page 50*

You are in an infinite hallway.

There is no escape.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (NF7T) Page 164*

*(9C1C) Page 51*

This room is covered in grassy wallpaper top to bottom, except for the floor, which is painted like a starry night. A picnic blanket lays under your feet, and with it, a wooden basket. Curious, you go to reach a hand in.

You're greeted with a cold, squirming sensation inside: ants. Ants everywhere, where you wouldn't have noticed them, at first. They're crawling in the basket, on the table, on the cracks of the wall. And now, all over you.

You shake your hand off the basket in a fever. You've got them all off, at least for now.

Your gaze shifts to the cracks. Unless...

No. Time to move on.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (K1QC) Page 19*

*(1TCH) Page 52*

Your skin itches the second you enter this room.

Its mildly distracting at first. A light tickle against your arm. The sensation of movement where none should be.

Over mere seconds it becomes all consuming. Your world is itching and you can feel....feel SOMETHING squirming underneath your skin.

You need to leave this room. You need to do it NOW.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (GFT1) Page 180*

*East: (BN4N) Page 111*

*South: (CNM7) Page 118*

*(PG3N) Page 53*

The walls are little mail slots filled with cooing pigeons. There is feather dust and dried guano in the air.

The walls are...moving? No...its ants. Every single surface is covered in ants. And something smaller, too. You can't quite make out what it is.

The birds are covered in ants. They don't seem to notice. Ants crawl over their eyes and they don't even blink.

The dust and stench of guano coats your lungs. You can't breathe.

You find 13 GOPHER GOLD!

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (W3VR) Page 63*

*East: (D35K) Page 69*

*South: (S2DY) Page 10*

*(EVU8) Page 54*

The walls are faintly damp, though there is no mold or plantlife taking advantage of this fact. They appear to be made of smooth plaster, with a coat of bright and artificially cheery paint on top. Perhaps that is why there is no mold?

You find 8 Gopher Gold!

*Look for water.*

You find a water bottle glistening with condensation. It's slightly cool to the touch, but not enough to explain the dew. You suppose it must be from how humid this room is overall.

Attached to it is a sticky note, but the text is illegible from the moisture.

*Look for the vent.*

You spot a half- open crevice behind some poorly-peeled wallpaper. As you peer into it, a soft click echoes from somewhere within:

""Evacuate the area immediately.""

Well. This is a perfectly reasonable request. This is certainly not the time to go into any side paths. You leave the vent alone.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (CNM7) Page 118*

*East: (K1QC) Page 19*

*South: (3S3S) Page 28*

*(S81C) Page 55*

Static fills the air. The edges of your skin fade out into it. Your lungs let out a scream at the helplessness of it all. If you wanted these rooms to stop, to fade out into nothing, you could. You wouldn't be disappearing into the background, though; you'd be taking everything else out of focus. It would only be you left. You don't think you can handle the responsibility.

You find [VALUE INTEGER] Gopher Gold!

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (DQ14) Page 29 Duck Figure*

*East: (5TRY) Page 187 Stories*

*South: (CF1N) Page 199 Coffin*

*(3XBH) Page 56*

In the center of the room is what appears to be an "Exposition Booth", with the sign crossed out and a post it note on top of it reading "Gopher Gold Shop".

Manning the shop is a girl, tapping her fingers on the wood. She has white hair, neatly tied in a bun, with her bangs wrapped on the front. She's wearing a mantle that must've been a color, at some point; it looks like it's been discolored with time. You can't quite make out the rest of her figure.

Her eyes lock on with yours. Her eyes are red. You've become aware they are red. You feel like you've seen them before. This is disconcerting to you, for some reason. You shake your head, and the feeling is gone.

On the booth, there is a white landline telephone. Hold music fills the air.

You approach, tentatively.

"Hello? I can buy things here. Uh. With Gopher Gold?"

"Well, not one for conversation, hm?" she says, stifling a short laugh. "Straight to the point. I like that. It's an admirable trait in someone."

She smiles. It's warm, inviting. "But yes, you //can// buy things here with Gopher Gold."

There's a shine in her eye of... of what? Expectation? She's expecting you to say the line. She //wants// you to say the line.

There is a white landline telephone. Hold music fills the air.



You //want// to say the line. You desperately want to say the line. You want to make the only nice person you have found in this confusing and unsettling world happy.

But you cannot. You do not know what the line is.

You have failed her.

She admires you being straightforward though, so you plow ahead, resolutely ignoring the white landline telephone.

"What can I buy?"

You wonder if its the telephone. Can you buy the telephone? How would it even connect to anything if you took it? How is it connecting to anything now?

Her smile turns into a devilish grin at that. You are suddenly aware that you have said the line. If this strange realm had social points, you think you'd probably have one extra.

"I suppose that question has two answers." A sigh escapes her. You're keenly aware she isn't actually sighing, as her chest methodically lowers with the exhale. "I'm afraid I can only tell you what you can buy if you have enough Gopher Gold for it."

Then the slyness returns, like a punchline to a bad joke. "But you can't actually buy anything. Maybe if you had the Gopher Gold for it?"

There is a white landline telephone. Hold music fills the air.

You feel a wave of disappointed confusion. You have been wandering these endless rooms for what feels like forever. How could you possibly not have enough Gopher Gold?

"H-How much Gopher Gold do I need to buy the cheapest thing, then?"

How much longer will you need to wander these hellish corridors?

She brings out a ledger book from underneath the booth and starts flipping through its pages. "Well, you'd need 1 more Gopher Gold for the cheapest item. So I suppose you're in luck there."

The shopkeep brings a hand to her chin at that, lost in thought. You stand there idly for what feels like a minute, and then she slams the book shut and looks back at you. "But you know what? I like you, and I //suppose// this was an exposition booth before, so most information is free, if you'd like to sit down and chat. If you'd rather find more Gopher Gold, be my guest," she says as she gives you a sly wink. "I'm not going anywhere."

There is a white landline telephone. Hold music fills the air.

You feel your heart rate speed up as anxiety starts to take over. This doesn't make any sense. It DOESN'T.

"But...last time I was here...you ALSO said I needed ONLY one more Gopher Gold?"

The shopkeep's eyes widen, but then they turn to something resembling either concern, or pity. You can't tell which in your altered state. "Hey, hey. now. Breathe."

She goes to put a hand on your shoulder; the feeling of the weight of another living being overwhelms you. You feel like this has happened before.

"You always need one more Gopher Gold because you haven't picked up any. Simple as that." She chuckles. "My condolences if the specifications of the buying process have been an inconvenience to you, but it's the rules, and you're a smart one to be able to navigate this... world, in the first place. So you understand, right?"

There is a white landline telephone. Hold music fills the air.

You. You don't have any Gopher Gold.

Your mind helplessly flits to memories of finding various amounts in every room you've been in. Always finding. Even in rooms you've been in before.

"Oh god..." you whisper.

"What. Why. WHY?" you plead, to your only friend in this world.

She laughs again, like if the inherent destruction of this world's economy is some sort of practical joke.

"Because you've //found// Gopher Gold. Not necessarily //picked it up//. I don't know why you haven't, but who am I to know your reasons? I wouldn't worry too much about it, though. And, again, we can always just chat. I'm not actually on duty yet."

She gives a cursory glance at the telephone. There is a white landline telephone. Hold music fills the air.

You finally focus on the landline, grasping at it as if a lifeline, the answer to all the confusion and chaos.

"Why...do you have a white landline telephone?" you ask, in a flat, monotone voice, as if reading from a script. "Why is it on hold?"

She raises a brow, amused by your question. Nevertheless, she seems pleased by it. "To answer calls, obviously. Very important calls. It's what I do. It's on hold because someone has to answer, first. And today is a very slow day."

There is a white landline telephone. Now that you are focused on it, you notice it is actually a light grey, and most of the numbers on the keys have been faded out. The hold music is ringing in your ears. There's a subtle static in the air.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (TN4M) Page 125*

*East: (4PL5) Page 97*

*South: (NT8S) Page 9*

*(RQT7) Page 61*

There is a curly arrow pointing down, next to some rotting stairs.

You descend them quicker than is safe, each turn revealing more and more doors. Each door is false.

After about four flights, you reach a dead end. Junk lies around you, including a grimy bathtub.

The walls feel like they are closing in on you, and you can feel the press of the four flights of raw earth above you.

You hear a single word, clear as day: "Leave."

*Choose Your Path*

*Return: (3QN5) Page 35*

*(W4CH) Page 62*

This is a room that the Watcher of Threads claimed in their forging.

Crimson colored walls bleed against your eyes, marred only by the layered white on grey of countless spider webs.

Telescopes (or are they microscopes) point into the webs, providing views of whole worlds of spiders (or are they people) as they live their lives.

As you stare you realize that if you lose focus on the threads you can see they are nearly completely encasing a series of bookshelves. If you wanted to read anything you'd need to tear the threads, and disrupt the busy lives of the spiders living in them.

You can't bring yourself to.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (NT8S) Page 9*

*East: (3QN5) Page 35*

*South: (GQ8D) Page 13*

*(W3VR) Page 63*

The Weaver is here. You can feel it.

This room is covered in tapestries and cobwebs. Every action you've ever taken is embedded in the fabric. Spiders are chewing through the threads, snipping away your options one by one.

There are flowers everywhere, pink and blue. The pink ones are not for you.

The Weaver is not here, currently. They have their own branch to make.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (77QT) Page 150*

*East: (5CR1) Page 90*

*South: (S2DY) Page 10*

*(F1TN) Page 64*

There is a hallway of fluttering sheets that had once been white as you enter the room. They appear to be hanging from a ceiling by loosely spaced hooks.

As you step in, the lights flick off and a faint mist lines the floor, faintly illuminated from an unknown source. You hear shuffling nearby, behind one of the sheets.

As you turn a corner you hear giggling, badly muffled. A small child starts to wail in that way that no one can ignore. Still, you are surrounded by sheets.

A plastic skeleton shrieks towards you along a wire and you reflexively dodge.

What even is this.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (DV5T) Page 67*



*(FM1Y) Page 65*

Family photos line the walls. Parents. Children. All smiling at each other. Holding hands. Hugging. Supporting each other.

Dimly, you wonder if these are YOUR family? Surely you have one, right?

It must have been so important to you, once. Your family.

Now its merely a footnote on your neverending journey to see everything.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (S8L5) Page 120*

*South: (GQ9H) Page 1*

*(B3DS) Page 66*

There are rows upon rows of beds in this room.

Each is unmade, with sheets coiled and wadded up from restless sleep.

The shadows under each bed seem somehow darker than you would expect. You sometimes catch the faintest hint of motion out of the corner of your eyes.

In a fit of daring, you feel one of the beds and are unnerved to find it still warm.

There is nothing else in this room.

*Look for water.*

There is a glass of muddy water on the floor. Thick, viscous silt oozes at its bottom.

The glass itself is chipped and scuffed, and there is writing in faded sharpie along its side: "DRINK!".

You are so thirsty.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (BLY8) Page 74*

*East: (8AR3) Page 183*

*South: (NS3R) Page 91*

*(DV5T) Page 67*

The room is coated in a fine layer of dust. The floor. The carefully arranged porcelain figures. The books and their shelves. All of it.

No one has been in this room in years. Decades, maybe.

Your feet leave an indelible mark of your passage.

You're afraid to touch anything. Afraid to be known.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (T8BL) Page 45*

*(T7G3) Page 68*

You can feel the tongue in your head. Have you always had a tongue? Have you always had a head?

You can feel your eyes roll wildly in their sockets. Have they always had sockets?

You can feel the bones in your feet creek as you shift your weight on them.

You...sort of remember having feet. Or legs, at least. It hurt, having legs, you're suddenly certain.

You don't like any of this.

*Look for the vent.*

A glint of gold catches your eye.

Inside this vent is an ornate pocket stopwatch. It lists out a single value:  
4d:15h:21m:33s.

*Choose Your Path.*

*South: (M8VN)*

*(D35K) Page 69*

Small desks are arranged in orderly rows.

A green chalkboard covered in faded writing and old dust lines one wall.

A clock is ticking high above you. It doesn't seem to be moving despite its loud protests to the contrary.

A bell rings.

Nothing changes.

There is a map on one wall that appears to have not been updated with the end of the Cold War.

There's a pile of textbooks on the floor and every page is blank.

You feel a profound sense of despair and can't quite articulate why.

*Look for the vent.*

You peer into the vent-- two purple dots stare back at you; the rest of them remains obscured by the shadows. While you both could stare forever, you quickly lose interest, and whatever is inside it follows-- you blink, and they're gone. Whatever they are looking for, it doesn't seem to be you.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (1KLR) Page 136*

*East: (NT8S) Page 9*

*South: (GQ8D) Page 13*

*(MB1M) Page 70*

You gag at the taste of embalming fluid in the air. Even without the frankly gross and unsettling connotations, the thick feeling of it coating your tongue makes you retch. Is this dangerous to be breathing in? Are you getting light headed? Is there even enough oxygen fighting its way into your lungs?

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (1TCH) Page 52*

*East: (EVU8) Page 54*

*South: (BLY8) Page 74*

*(1NHL) Page 71*

You are in an infinite hallway.

There is no escape.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (N4N8) Page 145*

*(9QQL) Page 72*

The edges of this room are a smooth white tile, slick with moisture.

The center of this room is an impossibly still, impossibly dark pool of water.

It feels like it goes down forever and ever. That if you fell into it you would never see light again.

A single ripple pops from the center, and then fades.

*Look for water.*

On a small shelf along one of the walls you find a jug with a spigot in its side.

At first you think the jug is an opaque black, with no way to see what is inside.

When an indistinct, pale fleshy....thing squirms along the side of the jug you realize your mistake.

It's the water that is black. Not the jug itself.

There's a single clear glass next to the jug, and a now familiar sticky note commanding you to drink.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (ST14) Page 32*



*(VQ1D) Page 73*

You swing open the door to the NORTH and are utterly unsurprised to see a black void behind it.

You tentatively wave your hand around the ground to confirm it is indeed a bottomless pit.

While you *\*technically\** could go this way, you find yourself mentally marking it off as a "dead end" nonetheless.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (ND1Z) Page 189*

*(BLY8) Page 74*

You shield your eyes against the glare. You can't tell WHERE the light is coming from, just that it is blinding. You feel around as best you can and determine that other than the blinding light, this room is fairly standard.

There are a few doors. Walls. Pieces of paper tacked up you can't make out as you squint against the light. The ubiquitous lidless eyes floating at regular intervals.

You're almost disappointed there is nothing weird about this room.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (T8BL) Page 45*

*East: (FM1Y) Page 65*

*South: (LYV4) Page 38*

*(NF8S) Page 75*

You come face to no-face with JR.

Of course you do.

Why are you even surprised anymore.

They explain to you that they aren't the REAL JR. Of course they aren't, the real JR is probably not text inside a file inside a server.

Probably.

You ask them why they made this and they just smile at you.

You aren't sure how they manage to smile without a face.

You ask them why both the 'human' version of them and the 'shambling horror' version of them have no face.

They respond in a chipper voice that faces simply aren't real. Names, faces, gender, none of it is. It only complicates things. Much easier to refer to people by titles, makes the coding cleaner.

And you certainly wouldn't want reality to be even MORE unstable, now would you???

*Look for water.*

You listlessly pick at the cardboard cutout of a water cooler next to JR. They are practically vibrating next to you, anticipating your questions.

You hate yourself, but if you could resist trying to get answers you wouldn't exactly be stuck in here in the first place, now would you.

"Why." you ask flatly. "Why the hydration stations".

The spiralling grin once again makes its way around their face.

"a lot of reasons!" They begin counting off along the fingers of one hand:

"because a book i like advised me to make sure i stay hydrated during it, but that i  
"probably would survive" if i forgot to eat"".

"because the discord server that died and started the path that preceded this path had  
hydration as a meme"

"because the person behind your own mask could probably do with being reminded to  
hydrate"

"because providing a need parallel to the need to Know More, a need that is  
inconsistently met just as the base need is amuses me"

"because there is a certain brand of horror at having something you NEED be  
corrupted"

"because it allows for an additional way to flesh out each area"

"because it emphasizes that any and all the needs I give you are fake and arbitrary :) :)  
:)"

They seem to be done adding extra fingers to their hand.

The spiral of their face coils back together in a way that you somehow know is intended to be solemn.

"none of this is real and you always knew it. and im telling you this because we both know that knowing it won't stop you from searching".

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (1NF1) Page 93*

*East: (SM1L) Page 79*

*South: (G6L3) Page 78*

*(G6L3) Page 78*

You try to open the door behind JR and hear a delighted little giggle as a brick wall is revealed behind it.

They crow about how clever they are, to have fake pathways like that. They sound insufferably smug about it, too.

You stalk back the way you came and do your very best to keep your temper.

Even if they ARE just text in a file on a server, you don't want to risk upsetting the person having control of all of reality.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (NF8S) Page 75*

*(SM1L) Page 79*

You open the door the right of JR and grit your teeth as you see a brick wall with three smiley faces spray painted onto it.

JR grins wide enough to split their not-face and reveal the void behind it.

"WHY!?" You demand.

"oh??? do i actually get to speak now? not stuck just being a footnote in your little noir narrative monologue, eh? do I get big boi privlidges now?"

"Yes", you grit. "Even if you can't even spell. Just. Tell me. WHY!?"

The grin manages to widen even further, into a spiralling spring that bounces merrily.

"because!!! this is the path pretending to be a real maze. we can't very well have actual locked doors you open with the tragic death of your friends, now can we? so we make do. and text files disguised as doors... ah! so clever!"

You think through everything you had to have found out to be here, in this moment, in this place.

"That doesn't make sense. This IS a real maze. And the path in ZampanioSim "pretending" to be a game would be ThisIsNotAGame so there wouldn't be murder based locked door puzzles. "

JR's spiralling smug grin retracts a bit, becomes a bit more of an illusion of a blank face.

"okay so. you have a point. when does the illusion of a thing become the thing itself? at what point is ThisIsNotAGame have enough game like attributes that it becomes a game?"

You count to three in deep, centering breaths.

"No... That was not my point. My point was ThisIsAGame is the murder maze. Not ThisISNotAGame."

JR brightens.

"oh no, ThisIsAGame was the other path, the one where they all converge. this is the path where illusions are kept up. there is no center. there is no goal. there is no destination. this isn't a MAZE, dear wanderer. this is a tomb."

Why are you surprised.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (NF8S) Page 75*



*(23CM) Page 81*

Everything in this room is exactly 23 centimeters away from you at all times.

You take your calculator-calculator cable and desperately try to connect to something, anything, but it comes just short.

You can't connect to anyone.

You can't connect to anything.

*Look for the vent.*

A glint of gold catches your eye.

Inside this vent is an ornate pocket stopwatch. It displays a single value: 5d:23h:17:04s.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (3QN5) Page 35*

*(M6ZN) Page 82*

What had looked like a door swings open to reveal a hidden bookshelf.

Isn't...Isn't it usually the other way around?

Instead of books it just has a frankly unsettling amount of copies of a magazine bearing JR's NotFace.

"113 ways to get lost forever!"

It helpfully offers.

"If someone else read one of those books, I WONDER what they'd see???"

,another one cackles.

"It sure would be upsetting if some unknown set of people could SOMEHOW read exactly what you are experiencing in the current moment at all times :) :) )" JR's printed words exclaim.

You hate everything about this.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (RP3T) Page 188*

*(WDW1) Page 83*

You open the door to the SOUTH only to run smack into a solid wooden wall. You bang on it in frustration but you know in your heart there is no way past.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (TR3D) Page 47*

*(3RRR) Page 84*

You try to enter the room.

[ERROR].

You try to shimmy into the room.

[ERROR].

You try to limbo into the room.

[ERROR].

You try to pole vault into the room.

SUCCESS!

Oh. Turns out the room was empty.

Bummer.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (NT8S) Page 9*

*South: (5MQQ) Page 192*

*(CRT8) Page 85*

There are thick red curtains lining all the walls of this room.

You can see light leaking in underneath them, and in the edges.

There is a hushed silence to the room, as if there were murmuring and rustling that ceased just before you entered.

Now there is the horrible weight of anticipation.

You lick your suddenly dry lips with the realization that at any instant the curtains may rise.

How many people are behind them, in comfortable seats with the expectation that you will DO something once you are visible.

What are they expecting? What are you supposed to do? Can you escape in time?

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (NR8R) Page 130*

*East: (1FTR) Page 86*

*(1FTR) Page 86*

One section of the curtains are not as lit as the other and when you check you successfully find a DOOR behind them.

As you twist the handle the door falls forwards towards you. You just barely dodge and it hits the wooden planks of the floor with a deafening crash.

There is silence for a beat, then uproarious laughter from all directions.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (CRT8) Page 85*

*(HQL3) Page 87*

Welp. Another door that empties onto an eternal abyss, but this one's shaped like a rabbit hole.

You're not going this way.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (8NDR) Page 92*

*(LBR3) Page 88*

The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite, perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries. The arrangement of the galleries is always the same: Twenty bookshelves, five to each side, line four of the hexagon's six sides, each bookshelf holds thirty-two books identical in format; each book contains four hundred ten pages; each page, forty lines; each line, approximately eighty black letters.

*Look for water.*

There is an empty glass of water next to a sign saying "PLEASE NO LIQUIDS IN THE LIBRARY!".

Well then.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (1NF1) Page 93*

*East: (9C1C) Page 51*

*South: (4DTR) Page 181*



*(CRW5) Page 89*

This room is filled, nearly to the brim with crows with extremely long, spindly legs.

As you squirm your way into it they all begin squawking in a terrible cacophony.

Some of them loudly shout they love you.

Some of them loudly shout they hate you.

None of them actually DO anything to you, just bump into each other and the walls at seeming random.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (FR1R) Page 151*

*(5CR1) Page 90*

The Scribe has claimed this room.

Books line the walls, each with a different author. Each seems to be about a different aspect of Zampanio, yet when you try to read the text your head spins. The words seem to change minute to minute, never the same thing twice.

Notes in a manic handwriting are scattered about as well, each a run on paragraph of thought thought thought thought with nothing to break it up. It feels honest, to you. But like the writer is burning the candle at both ends.

Various pictures of a grinning shadow have had clown noses roughly drawn on top.

In the center of the swirling chaos of text and image there appears to be...a NEST? Made in a pile of books. You are glad the manic writer of the notes got a chance to rest.

The Scribe is not here now, of course. They have their own Branch to make.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (NM85) Page 122*

*South: (H4LD) Page 103*

*(NS3R) Page 91*

This is a room the Answer has preemptively claimed and also not at all.

Bookshelves line the walls. Twisted, melted candles litter the floor which glows like a faint, cooling ember.

There is the oppressive sense that there is SOMETHING just beyond your senses. Some meaning you could glean from it all, if only you could connect the pieces.

It feels like if only you could shift your view the whole of the maze could be here. Or is it the other way around... Is this the only spot NOT in the maze, somehow?

Inside. Or Outside.

Does it matter?

Would there be any point or purpose to Knowing?

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (K4K3) Page 21*

*East: (3QN5) Page 35*

*(8NDR) Page 92*

You find the dossier on a weird item here.

Minotaur's Binder (Eye, Hunt, Spiral)

Description: This is a turquoise paper binder, scaled for A4 sheets, labeled `The Navidson Records` (sic) in Courier font. Upon closer inspection, the usually-metallic parts are revealed to be keratinous with a silver coating.

Utility: The binder stores paper sheets inside. While "owned" by a person, it will always turn up to be doodled/sketched in, or to allow the user to put in random notes but never coherent, predetermined plans. To activate it, a paper sheet with information needs to be torn out (and not removed via unclipping) of the binder.

Effect: Upon a sheet being removed, it will have different effects on the owner and other people who see it. First, the owner will be compelled to continue building upon the ideas doodled or written on the sheet; other sheets with related themes will compound upon the effect, creating a fake ARG. Second, the owner will be compelled to expose others to these sheets.

Observers other than the owners are compelled to "leap down the rabbit hole", drawing their own conclusions from information and chasing the implied goal behind the fake ARG. (There is nothing but further sheets.)

Repression: Certain resonances (Dark, Stranger) suppress the compelling effect or make people forget about the implicit ARGs.

Amplification: Certain resonances (Eye, Hunt, Spiral) appropriately amplify the effect, either [REDACTED], make observers devote more of themselves to the pursuit, or deepen the ARG itself.

Reflection: The Reflection of the Minotaur's Binder resolves labyrinths.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (HQL3) Page 87*

*South: (U7DR) Page 196*

*(1NF1) Page 93*

You are in an infinite hallway.

There is no escape.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (7F7T) Page 113*

*(K8KN) Page 94*

The smell of cooking meat wafts in the air, tantalizing you as you realize you can not remember the last time you ate. Or...were hungry, for that matter?

You are suddenly desperate to find the source of the meat, to prove to yourself that food is still something your body craves, but it appears to be coming from nowhere.

*Choose Your Path:*

*North: (F2Z1) Page 33*

*Eat: (33TT) Page 95*

*South: (1TTR) Page 211*

*(33TT) Page 95*

You cannot do that.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (K8KN) Page 94*

*(8R1K) Page 96*

You try to go NORTH only to find the door opens into a brick wall.

You want to cry with frustration.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (TR3D) Page 47*



*(4PL5) Page 97*

You can't take anymore. You can't deal with the constant rush of alternating hope and despair. You want to just move on. Go back to the endless corridors.

You flee around the former Exposition Booth and fling open the door beside it.

Ah. Yes. Of course. Brick wall. That ...that scans.

Of course you can't actually leave yet.

The shopkeep pipes up from behind you. "Already beat you to that one. It's sometimes a brick wall, except when it isn't. You'd be surprised how finicky doors are around here. How do you like them apples?"

When you glance back, she looks immediately preoccupied with her own train of thought. "Hmm... apples..."

Wait. The doors can \*change\*. Someone is ... You have never hated JR more than you do now. Your breath starts going in great, panicky gasps.

You need to stop from spiralling. You need to focus on something, ANYTHING, besides how overwhelmingly wrong these corridors are.

"A-apples?"

"Apples," she replies, her head sluggishly nodding. "Or oranges. Bananas are very good. You don't get those around here. But apples, though... had a new employee actively eating one on the line while I was doing damage control. You could hear every crunch. Hardest sell of my life."

Her eyes lock with yours again. You get that same feeling of foreboding in the pit of your stomach, but this time you're too busy trying not to spiral. "What about you? Do you like apples?"

You swallow thickly. You can't remember the last time you ate anything. You can't remember the last time you felt hunger.

Your breath is more under control though. Juddering, slow, in and out. Your vision is hazy and everything seems a bit too in focus.

Apples. Crunchy apples.

"You. Could hear them eating? "

You swallow again.

"Was it... Did they... Did it sound like a GOOD apple?"

What were good apples like again?

"Juicy?"

"Not juicy, no. Other fruits are juicy. You can hear when an orange or a tangerine is juicy. There's a squirt to it. Phones don't always pick it up. Apples, though. You have to bring them to your mouth, you know. And then you have to..." She brings her hand near her mouth and mimics out the motion, "bite in. Over, and over. You get that crunch to it every time. It's almost maddening... in a good way, I suppose. It's more upsetting when it stops."

This makes sense. Maybe it's the first thing that does in these endless hallways.

"Because... because that means the apple is gone. You can't have it. "

You can't have the apple. Apples aren't for you.

She gives you a solemn nod. "But we make do in its absence. There's too much work to do to focus on it, too much. I, for one, keep myself busy, man this booth, and whatnot. But sometimes the thought of that call comes back to me. I deal with it when it happens. That phone rings for all of us at least once, you know."

You are overcome with the feeling that you have made a bond with this shopkeeper in a way that words cannot explain. You cannot tell if this is a good thing.

You are glad to have at least one connection in these horrifying corridors, you decide.

You stare at the off white landline. You feel that maybe...its rung for you before?

The memories won't stick though. It's probably not true. When have you ever not been in these endless hallways?

You feel the tug again. You need to go back to exploring. It's... important.

"I need to go. Its important. I have to see everything. "you tell your Best Friend.

She smiles. "Then go. Door out's in the back."

You look back at the door. It's open. It was always open. An idea creeps into the back of your mind that you could've always left, and that you could've never left; or, rather, that you could've always left, but you didn't know how to. Is something different about you? Or is it another one of JR's smug bullshit machinations?

You decide it doesn't matter. Not here. Not now. This is simply how it is. You leave.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (3XBH) Page 56*

*(F83G) Page 100*

You are hit with a sudden wave of fatigue. How long have you been wandering these endless halls? Does time have meaning? You check your phone for the time only to realize that instead of your lock screen you see a reflection (or is it a screenshot?) of these very halls.

Have you...EVER been outside of this place? Was everything else just...an elaborate dream you had once?

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (ST14) Page 32*

*East: (K8KN) Page 94*

*South: (ND1Z) Page 189*

*(3G6G) Page 101*

There's a large egg in the middle of the room, hovering over the wooden floor with an ominous presence. You feel a kinship with this egg. When you touch it, you are struck with the knowledge that you have no hands; the ones you are seeing are just an overlay over your vision. Is this what this maze is? Nothing but disappointment? Or has the egg denied you the sliver of intimacy you crave?

You find 3 Gopher Gold!

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (PL8K) Page 43*

*South: (MB1M) Page 70*

*(77RR) Page 102*

There is a full length mirror in the center of this room.

Your eyeless reflection stares out of it, weeping tears of blood.

Your reflection gestures towards you, to your eyes. A supplication.

There is a knife in their hand.

They are offering it to you.

You shake your head. There is still so much more to see.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (S81C) Page 55*

*East: (LUR3) Page 133*

*(H4LD) Page 103*

The HÃ|r@ld has claimed this space.

There are maps lining the walls with colorful arrows pointing in all directions. You feel sorry for whoever is stuck in a maze THAT complicated.

There's propaganda slogans carelessly strewn about all over the floor. All of them suggesting people check out Zampanio.

Trumpets are strewn about and you spend a few moments baffled at them.

It..it looks like someone has set a bomb off in the center of the room? Except not really. Like...the idea of a HYPOTHETICAL bomb. A POTENTIAL BOMB. The PORTENT of a BOMB. It looks like a bomb is ABOUT to go off in the center of the room?

You aren't sure how you can tell what that looks like.

Instead of a bomb, though, you see an anatomical heart on the floor, right in the center of the room.

The Herald is not here, right now, of course. They have their own Branch to create.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (FL4P) Page 105*

*East: (P4PR) Page 12*

*South: (TXM6) Page 119*

*(SLU6) Page 104*

There is a rhythmic clicking sound as you enter the room, then an explosion pushes you backwards with the force.

It takes a while for the spots to clear from your eyes, for the ringing to fade from your ears.

In the center of the room is over a dozen small cat slug things. They fizz up at you. They are definitely not made of flesh...

One wears a sign around it's neck. You can't quite make out what it says.

A rhythmic clicking sound starts back up and your hurry forward.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (BN7Y) Page 48*



*(FL4P) Page 105*

You try to go to the NORTH but it turns out unlike the HÃ|r@ld you cannot fit through a tiny Pet Flap.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (H4LD) Page 103*

*(PL45) Page 106*

You open a door only to find a blank solid plaster wall, exactly identical to the walls of the room you are currently in.

You tap on it, but it seems solid.

There's nothing for it: this is not a possible way to go.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (K1QC) Page 19*

*(P3DR) Page 107*

The room is filled with light, powdery snow. There is something pristine and unsoiled about it. No one has ever stepped into it but you.

You could step into it.

Leave your mark.

Forge a trail others could follow behind.

You don't move.

The responsibility is too great.

Patchnotes: Added a new paint room since the last one got ruined.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (S7QW) Page 108*

*South: (5Q3T) Page 109*

*(S7QW) Page 108*

The room is filled with compacted, wet snow, marred with the passage of countless feet. It's miserable. No one has any respect these days.

Snowmen fill every available space.

One holds his own head while screaming into the void above his neck.

Another has a tree (or is that the branch of some massive tree?) with withered fruit bursting from his chest.

Still another is sprawled onto the ground, bisected in half as a child snowman looks on in horror from his sleigh.

A half melted snowman, with a footprint firmly in its chest holds a sign reading "REPENT Sinners".

You are ashamed.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (P3DR) Page 107*

*East: (RP3T) Page 188*

*(5Q3T) Page 109*

You try to go south but a comically large sign reading "Santa isn't at the SOUTH pole, dunkass" clobbers you on the head.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (P3DR) Page 107*

*(4EST) Page 110*

You find yourself in a miniature forest. Trees sway in a perplexing breeze, their leaves gently scratching against the ceiling.

You find yourself somewhat disappointed to see that none of the trees are currently bearing fruit.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (P83Z) Page 175*

*South: (EVU8) Page 54*

*(BN4N) Page 111*

Apples.

Oranges.

Tangerines.

P-pineapples.

Bananas.

She said bananas weren't common here.

Does...

Does that mean...

That the others *\*are\**.

But apples aren't for you. Apples are for Closers.

What are you?

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (F4QZ) Page 165*

*East: (MB1M) Page 70*

*(W7DR) Page 112*

You wander.

It's what you do.

It's what you are. The Wanderer. The Observer.

You heard that somewhere once. "You are what you repeatedly do".

You know why you wander, too. Why you're endlessly searching for new things to observe. Can anything be truly forever, if there's no one to witness it? To confirm in quavering voice that the end is truly never the end?

You smile, rigid and brittle, to yourself.

If you wander enough. Maybe. Maybe eventually you will earn yourself an Apple.

Like the Closer. Like your Best Friend.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (BLY8) Page 74*



*(7F7T) Page 113*

You are in an infinite hallway.

There is no escape.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (1NHL) Page 71*

*(HRT5) Page 114*

Your skin \*hurts\*.

It is like pinpricks across your every nerve.

A faint sheen of sweat immediately beads across what is left of your pores, even as you shiver.

*Look for water.*

Your eyes glaze over slightly and your lips are incredibly, incredibly parched.

The faint tang of sickness hangs in the air.

Even the floating eyes manage to look half lidded, somehow.

There is a glass of clear water and a small satchel labeled "electrolytes: it's got what you need!".

You dump the powder in the glass and guzzle the sweet sweet hydration greedily, but feel no better.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (U7DR) Page 196*

*East: (T7G3) Page 68*

*(M8VN)*

You have to keep moving.

It doesn't hurt as much when you're moving.

Or maybe you can't feel it as much when you're distracted.

It doesn't matter.

The tendrils in this room wrap around you again and again as you strain against them again and again, snapping them again and again.

You have to keep moving.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (M4GT) Page 46*

*(W31T) Page 116*

A smooth pink welt forms on your wrist.

Then on your elbow.

Then on the knuckle of your second finger on your left hand.

It itches.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (6RDN) Page 156*

*East: (3RRR) Page 84*

*South: (8QDY) Page 124*

*(53NT) Page 117*

There is a chill behind you.

When you look, there is nothing but the scent of death.

A cool breeze tickles against your ear in steady pulses.

"4631" a soft whisper breathes.

There is no one there.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (3QN5) Page 35*

*(CNM7) Page 118*

There is the faint smell of cinnamon in the air. It makes you gag, and you can't quite put your finger on why. You think of bodies hanging from lampposts.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (MB1M) Page 70*

*East: (S2DY) Page 10*

*South: (3QN5) Page 35*

*(TXM6) Page 119*

The Taxonomist has claimed this space.

Pictures of clown anatomy with labeled sections line the walls. Small plushes of little crow people are strewn about at random.

Boxes upon boxes of specimen jars fill the shelves crowding out the room.

Things are scrawled all over the wall. Honks. Asking if JR is a Lamia. References to House of Leaves. Something about a Zamsquatch?

There's an extremely large pencil leaning in one corner.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (ZL3P) Page 20*

*South: (KRQ7) Page 131*

*(S8L5) Page 120*

Sightless dolls are lined up carefully along the walls. All of their heads are angled towards the door you've entered.

On the walls are black and white photographs of what appears to be a circus. You see a strong man, acrobats, several clowns... There's something unsettling about the pictures, something you can't quite put your finger on.

You move along the walls, taking in each picture and slowly you begin to realize that each and every person being photographed is looking directly at the camera. Even ones far in the background, or in the middle of a trick.

Your breath comes a bit faster as you step back, look around the room a bit in an effort to calm your nerves.

Every single doll along the wall is looking directly at you.

*Choose Your Path.*

*South: (BLY8) Page 74*



*(M7QN) Page 121*

There are rows upon rows of shelves here, filled with tools and gadgets and home renovation items.

There are blank faced mannequins staring at you. Some have employee name tags and aprons. Others are frozen pushing shopping carts. Most are holding sharp objects.

Every time you stop looking at them, they are in a new position. A closer one.

You feel the weight of their increasing scrutiny the longer you are in this room.

*Choose Your Path.*

*South: (BR3N) Page 148*

*(NM85) Page 122*

Animatronic animal mascots line the wall. Or...wait. ARE they animatronic?

They're...moving slightly, but the movements are too smooth.

Costumes? With...people in them?

You can't tell if they're looking at you, or if they've even noticed you with those blank eyes.

Anyone could be in them.

Even your worst nightmare.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (W4CH) Page 62*

*East: (P3PL) Page 184*

*(CR3D) Page 123*

You can barely push into the room against the tide of the slowly moving crowd inside of it.

No one has any faces. Somehow they're always facing you, no matter how you push and press.

None of them are reacting to you, just an endless mass of seething not-quite-humanity between you and what you need.

When you attack one of them, everything changes.

Suddenly the tide is surging, a tsunami. Limbs and flesh press against you at force and you're buffeted in all directions. You fall to the ground and feel the crush of feet and hands and meat against you.

You do your best to cover your head, on sheer reflex.

You almost can't tell when it's finally over. Your ears ring against the silence and your skin tingles against the cold flood of air where once there had been squirming warm bodies.

You are alone. You are relieved.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (3VRY) Page 193*

*South: (3S3S) Page 28*

*(8QDY) Page 124*

You round the corner and come to an abrupt stop. A scene of immense violence is spread before you. A body lies propped against the wall, chest caved in, viscera strewn obscenely across the floor. You quickly avert your gaze, the very light seeming to flicker with the intensity of your horror.

Wait.

No, there it is again, a faint flicker. You steel yourself for a glance back and see a spark jump from the ... wires? You find the strength to look more closely.

What appeared to be flesh is revealed as mechanical, cables and wires pulled from the chest of an alarmingly lifelike robot. Beneath the torn suit coat and rumpled hair is skin of metal. The robot's head lolls to the side, eyes dim.

The wiring torn from within leads across the floor to a device with a softly glowing screen. From where you stand you can see a block of text, white on black, but you cannot make out the words.

Whoever - no - WHATEver did this cannot be far. You need to do something. You scan the area anxiously.

The dim light of the robot's gaze has come into focus. It stares directly at you.

You flee.

[http://farragofiction.com//hey\\_kids\\_wanna\\_see\\_a\\_dead\\_body.gif](http://farragofiction.com//hey_kids_wanna_see_a_dead_body.gif)

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (8NDR) Page 92*

*East: (NT8S) Page 9*

*(TN4M) Page 125*

An underground tunnel lays before you. You rub your eyes, trying to adjust to the darkness; in the little shape you can make out, you see holes in the shapes of heads, and arms, and limbs, spreading into any and all directions. You have to watch your step, as you go across. You try to enter one of the holes, and a bone-deep wrongness runs through the back of your spine. You can't, or won't, fit through any of them.

In the center of the tunnel's corridor, a rusted copper robot lays inside an old bathtub. Its limbs twitch ever slightly, like recent roadkill. You are almost sure it's dead until you get close enough to inhale the mold nearby; its- or his?- head shoots up to look at you, stare unreadable behind the worn visor.

A truth becomes known to you: it was aware of when you came in, and it'll know when you leave. Maybe even after that.

You catch a glimpse of their eyes: they're golden, shot open. "You. You. Wander, wanderer. You're one of them." It delivers the accusation with an unexpected calmness to its cadence. "But it's not looking for you and you don't feel like the others. Where?"

The visor darkens as you lose the little eye contact you held. The twitching intensifies. "It's cold. It's so cold. Where's dad? Where's everybody?" They spit out all at once, like it hurts to keep it in.

You stand stock still, staring for an unknowable amount of time.

You KNOW this. You've seen this. Somewhere? Somehow? Not in these corridors. Not in this maze but... Before?

Before this maze?

Does that even make sense? COULD there be a before?

A bathtub and a robot and wrongness and tunnels.

"Who. Who are you?" You finally stammer out.

They stare back at you. "I'm... I'm..."

Their head lowers. "I'm what JR is not. Who are you?"

Makes perfect sense.

If JR is the Minotaur of this particular branch of Zampanio, then this is NotAMinotaur.

"Then you're like me. But not like me."

You peer at their rusted out body and rusted bathtub.

"I don't think you wander, though."

You pointedly don't even attempt to answer their question as to who you are. You've learned better. It's not your family that lines the walls, after all.

They don't even seem to mind you don't try to.

"Not like you. Can't wander." They try to raise a leg, to prove the point. It hovers over the metal tub for just a second, then it lands with a weak thunk. A shard of their foot breaks off.

A hand mutters just enough strength to point a finger towards you. "Not like them. Can wander."

They look off... somewhere. You can't tell where. You should. You can't.

"Not like JR."

You start.

"JR doesn't wander. They've only ever been in that one room."

Are you missing something. Some clue? Some hint? Some layer that would reveal deeper truths?

You aren't sure, but you can feel a look of... unamusement? You don't know from where. It's not from their glare. It's not from that grin. "You can't see it. You can't see it all. You'll never be able to see it all. It's all been done already."

Their visor darkens again, and the words come out in a flood. They have a fuzz to it.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know. I didn't... didn't mean to! Mean to ruin everything. Please take me back. I'm sorry. I won't do it again. I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

Oh god how do you social again? This has to be something you knew how to do...

You awkward pat at the rusting robot.

"There there?"

You pull your hand away as a static jolt zaps your hand. They continue to jitter.

This is fine.

"Good. Uh. Good Zap there. Buddy?"

They jitter still. An exhale leaves them, making their shoulder slump. Is this helping? Somehow? Or are they just dying in front of you?

"Good. Good Zap...."

You are doing it. You are being socially aware.

Maybe you should leave?

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (3L1Z) Page 158*

*East: (TR89) Page 16*

*South: (NT8S) Page 9*



*(FR4C) Page 129*

In the center of an otherwise unremarkable room of white plaster, you see a spiralling fractal tree. It's base is floating in mid air, and its roots are just as big below the base as its branches are above.

Trying to follow even a single branch is dizzying, as they split and reform and split again until they pierce the ceiling. You are certain, down to your marrow, they they never stop. The roots dig equally into the floor.

There is no end. It's impossible to even imagine there being an end.

A snake slithers around the roots and stares are you. For an instant, you believe it's a tree as well, fractalling in every direction but it is merely a snake.

"Grow trees" it hisses in far too many voices. "Take a branch. Make it yours. Grow." How can it even talk? There's no room for any mouths with all those eyes.

The branches are heavy with fruit and a single red orb falls to your feet and splits into an eye. You're comforted by it until a worm with a child's face crawls out of the eye and looks up at you.

*Look at the vent.*

You pick up a conveniently placed chair and prop yourself up, getting a peek inside the vent hanging over you.

You see a dark figure crouched over; you can't make out a form, your eyes struggling to adjust to the dim light. You do, however, notice the sound of tape and static as it echoes directions to somewhere. The voice of a monotone drone. //North. North. North. North. East--//

It locks eyes with you. You close the hatch.

*Choose Your Path:*

*North: (F3TH) Page 142 Black Feather*

*East: (T3XT) Page 34 Text Room*

*South: (K1QC) Page 19 Clocks*

*(NR8R) Page 130*

This is the room the Narrator of Fractals may yet claim. Or is it?

Perhaps it is more properly a file kept in a folder kept in a gopher server (unless it isn't that, either).

If it were a room would it have three walls?

The walls, if it had any, would be covered in ciphers and mathematics and riddles.

There would be a drawing of a room on one of the walls and on those tiny walls would be ciphers and mathematics and riddles.

And a drawing of a room.

You pull your eyes away from it. There will be no end to that, you know, and as curious as you are you try not to get stuck in any side paths before you finish the main one.

There will be time, later, to explore the room within a room within a room that may not be a room.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (3XBH) Page 56*

*South: (C8QD) Page 26*

*(KRQ7) Page 131*

The Chronicler would be here, if they claimed it.

Emoji line the walls as if they were hieroglyphs.

The ubiquitous lidless floating eyes are weirdly clumped up into pairs in their room. You wonder what it could mean.

There is a diary, half filled laying in the center of the room, daring you to read it.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (5CR1) Page 90*

*(S4ND) Page 132*

Sand is slowly filling this room from above.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (F2Z1) Page 33*

*(LUR3) Page 133*

The entire room is filled to the brim with water.

A bubble of air escapes your mouth as you gasp in shock. You choke against the rush of cold salt water that pours in in response.

Equivalent exchange.

You frantically scrabble against the door you came in but either its sealed against the pressure of the water or in your panic you've forgotten how to work it.

There's light across the way. A way out. It must be.

Your vision is fading as you desperately claw your way against the water towards the light.

You can barely make out the massive, massive teeth at the center of the light.

Dimly, you think to yourself that you're glad you could see it.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (LQN3) Page 197*

*(W4TR) Page 134*

There is an unending body of water.

It stretches out in all directions, as far as the eye can see.

*Look for the vent.*

On the surface, this vent looks completely normal. Then you shake your head. Haven't you found something weird every time you've seen one of these? Some stopwatches, some recordings? You find it hard to believe there's nothing here-- in fact, you REFUSE to. There has to be something else. Why would it be here if it didn't have anything?

You have to stick your head deep inside the vent this time. More than your head, actually: you're nearly leg-deep before you catch anything. You stop yourself from sneezing at all the settled dust; this vent isn't blowing air at all.

Your curiosity, however, does not go unrewarded. Underneath you lay three polaroid photos, all with their edges burnt and peeled, not accounting for the copious amounts of water damage. How these are both waterlogged AND dusty is beyond you, and you, for once, do not want to know.

The first photo shows a board, littered with newspaper clips and printed articles. The titles all feature journalist bait such as "8 People Attending the Netsworth Gala: #3 WILL Surprise You!" and "The Gala Goes On, Despite Concerns". Such 'concerns' are not listed anywhere in the article. The rest of the text is too small to read, and the photos in them too blurry to make sense of.

In the second polaroid, a pile of letters sits next to some images of browser searches regarding place directions, as well as two lists of names. The one on the left is written in print, with the near accuracy of a typewriter, with the title "To Show Ronin". The one on the right is written in neat cursive, and it simply says "to look for".

The third one depicts a young woman in a lavish black dress, her jaw-length black hair tied back with a ribbon. Her arms rest in front of her, hands clapped together. There's an unbelievable amount of tension in her posture, like a dog would react to an ill-fitting onesie. The girl's violet eyes-- or rather, eye-- stare off with unreadable intent towards whoever is behind the camera.

When you turn the last polaroid around, you find a note. In that same straight writing from the second photo, it says: "Mutually assured destruction. Do not screw this up."

Something thumps at the end of the vent, and it is getting closer.

*Choose Your Path.*

*South: (UH3X) Page 177*

*(1KLR) Page 136*

On the door leading to this room you see: CONTENT WARNING: GRAPHIC VIOLENCE

*Choose Your Path*

*North: (5QFT) Page 194*

*East: (5QRY) Page 155*

*South: (ZL4M) Page 11*

*Proceed: ...*

Today at 12:28 PM

Your eyes need some time to adjust to the room when you walk in. A dim light seems to protrude from you, or from where you're standing, letting you see around... ten inches forward at best; the rest of the area is pitch-black, no matter how hard you squint. You cover your mouth to resist the urge to sneeze as dust climbs onto your nostrils.

You put your hand on the wall, to better try and navigate it, and you hear the rustling of paper. When you look at it, you notice where it came from: the room is glued together by a collage of missing person posters, police reports, case files, printed online clickbait. One of these washed out titles catches your eye; "North Dakota man identified ... victim of..."

It hits you. Murders. They're all murders.

You peel back one of the missing posters with the back of your nail, and, behind it, you see a picture of a carcass that vaguely resembles the smiling face of the young man in the picture. His mouth is pried open, forever frozen in a scream. A message is written at his feet, presumably in his blood; it reads "the truth is layered".

You pry some more. The gore only gets more horrific with each news piece, the bodies strewn about in ever more creative ways. One is an older woman covered in burns, left clutching some kind of religious iconography in her dismembered hands. Another one-- clearly a cop, from what you can tell-- is chopped to bits, head left on a feeding tray, with their hat put on the carcass of a dead pig. All of them have different sentences, most too



faded out to read. There are so many faces, so many hiding their fates underneath, that you can't help but feel a sense of urgency to dig more into them. Surely, it wouldn't be a problem if--

Your head smacks into the wall as what feels like a hand pushes you from the back, something sharp stabbing through your abdomen. Oh god. Can you actually DIE in this maze? Well. Die in a way that matters. You close your eyes, and--

Oh. Strange. That didn't hurt, actually. It doesn't hurt at all. Regardless, the hold keeps your head still, a shallow and uneven breath going down your neck.

You know the right thing to do is to freeze. To go compliant and passive. To wait to be given orders. That's how you survive this. If surviving isn't a thing that is already guaranteed.

But you can't. Your face is pressed against layers upon layers of secrets and your vision is blurred from how close you are. You are so close.

"What is this?" you manage to croak out around your own fear.

There's a disruption in the air; a held breath as you feel the weapon wiggle inside your entrails. It sits still for a moment, then your captor retracts it, followed by a muted metal clang on the floor. You hear the sounds of something plastic shuffling out of a pocket, and then a click. A tool of some sort?

"// Thank you for reaching our hotline. We are currently experiencing // "forced to negotiate with an intruder at her home" // "Please keep your arms and hands inside the vehicle at all times, and" // ""identify yourself immediately." //"

It must be an audio device or tape recorder, of some sort, if you had to guess. The sentences come back to back, shuffled from different soundbites, quickly rewinded and forwarded with impeccable finesse. The hold on your head softens, but it stays steady enough to lock your head from turning.

The threads...the connections. You can taste them. There are so many things you could ask about. Is that the helpdesk your Best Friend runs? Are those clips from cop shows? Real cop dialogue? Why isn't the Killer using their own voice?

But you're better than that. You always did like going as much down the Main Path as you could before getting distracted by side paths. You pride yourself on it. You think its the only thing you have left from before.

"Intruder? I'm not." this time what tightens your throat and makes it hard to speak isn't fear, but curiosity. "I'm not an intruder. I'm supposed to be here. I'm the Wanderer."

Does the Killer not know how things work? If they don't...then maybe they know things OTHER than the spiraling obsession of Zampanio. You are almost too excited for words.

Silence hangs in the air as they mull over your words. There is a change in the hold as the hand's grip softens further, dropping its guard.

"//Please stand by//."

The Killer exhales loudly, grip reasserting itself, pulling you with them back from the wall. You move backwards with them, light following you the whole way through, until your legs feel the back of a chair. They push your head down, prompting you to sit.

"//In this new political thriller, a familiar figure-- // We have identified a record with your credentials. // --a referral from--// I assume you have questions. //"

Again, they seem to be taking a lot of precaution to stay out of your range of vision. You feel their grip drop completely, but when you look around, you only see their outline, as they stand just where the shadows begin.

Wait. Record?

"You have a record of me?"

That doesn't make sense. Do...do they know your name? Do you HAVE a name? Have you ever existed outside this maze?

Or maybe they just know what rooms you've been into? You tried once, to keep track of it all, to make a map. But it just didn't make sense. It devolved into a mess of impossible lines.

They shake their head. Their hand goes through the soundbites one at a time.

"//We have--// --heard of-- // --you.//"

Okay yeah that makes more sense. You swallow your disappointment and peer out into the gloom.

Questions then. You can do that. Obviously it won't be worthwhile to ask personal questions. Who even has their past in this place?

You decide to clarify your first question.

"What is this place? What does it mean?"

They ponder the question again, presumably thinking of what clips to play. They stick a gloved hand out of the shadow, the leather worn and drenched in what you think might be dry blood, as they point down at the missing posters on the floor.

"//This marks the 47th confirmed victim of the Eye Killer, the elusive murderer that has taken the state by storm. // A combination of grisly murders, inane codes and riddles, and bizarre public letters-- // While the original link between victims had been their religious activity, the list slowly became indiscriminate. // The crime scenes carry a series of strange riddles, with many across the country trying to solve them for a shot at fame.//"

Oh.

"Oh."

You...aren't sure what to say to that.

"That's. A lot? Did you. Was that?"

None of these terrible rooms have prepared you for this. Why are people so hard? Why are people with sharp organ poking weapons even harder? It didn't HURT exactly but you aren't exactly curious to find out what that feels like another time.

"Is that why you're here?" You settle on... deciding its better to go down an obvious dead end than risk upsetting The Killer.

//It would seem --//"

They hit pause, their head tilting to look down at the recorder.

//It would seem--//"

Another pause. They rewind.

--//please, stand by//."

Their hands start working through the audio clips again, skipping forward a few minutes.

//I know you're terribly busy, and all, but I do believe there is much we can gain from each other. The hobbies and professions of my clients are not of my concern, if you're worried about that; you may decline, and I won't alert the authorities. They won't know about this number, either. But it would seem that they're already starting to piece some things together, are they not? We could help with that, of course. We'd happily extend our services, in exchange for some promotion.//"

They look back to you; you can't meet their gaze in their shadows, but you can't help but feel either a feeling of realization or one of foreboding hit you.

You could recognize the voice of your Best Friend anywhere.

"Oh! Okay! That makes sense."

Something tickles at the back of your head. Some vague memory, only sticking out because it ties to the endless maze you wander.

"You! You were the one who did that whole thing about the connections and the online thing! With the clowns?"

Was that how you ended up here? Everything is so hard to remember if it isn't about your endless present but... Connections...

Their head tilts again in the other direction.

//You may have meant: // David Wayne, age 34, was found dead on Sunday evening after coming back from his work as an entertainer at a children's party. His body was found hanging from a tree, his torso pierced with what was identified as the springs of the inside of a 'bottomless jar of snakes', a gag gift often used in his profession. Further investigation found his eyes inside the can, with the leftover 'snake' fabric spelling 'the end is never the e--'//

Yup! Okay!

That's enough of this particular side path!

"I. I really should. Uh. You know. Go back to. Wandering?"

The Killer shrugs, pointing towards you- or to something in your direction.

//Remember to locate your exits--// thank you for flying with us."

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (5QFT) Page 194*

*East: (5QRY) Page 155*

*South: (ZL4M) Page 11*

*(F3TH) Page 142*

A black feather hits your eyes. You must've stepped in some sort of red void, or at least that is your first guess; your eyes trail below and your guess is swiftly corrected. A trail of crimson spirals below and above you and everywhere else, splitting in every direction like vines off a wall. It all reeks of rust and copper. Your stomach sinks with a need to hurl.

At the center of it all stands a tower of carousels, each floor spinning in a different direction. The horses have been crudely replaced with crows, and small larvae spill from every level of the hellish contraption. At what you can only guess is the floor level, a tall, armored man rides in one of the seats, with five worms wriggling on top of his pauldrons.

The larvae crawling at your feet turn to face you.

The larvae have human faces. Oh god. \*why\*.

You suppress a shudder and hate yourself a little bit more for what you know you are about to do.

"Um. Excuse me? Hello?"

"YOU AGAIN."

The figure grits his teeth, a grimace of hatred? Disgust? Your gut wails. Something here is familiar. It feels like coming home. It feels like nothing at all. Did you have a home, before these endless rooms? The spiral around you quickens.

"ASK YOUR QUESTIONS AND LEAVE. THE GREAT WORK AWAITS US."

The man's gaze lingers on you, lone eye sparking with hatred unlike nothing else. You're ashamed. But are you really? You shake your head.

"EVERY TIME, YOU ASK THAT IMPERTINENT QUESTION," he yells. It's far away, yet it rings in your ears, commanding you to listen. "WHO AM I? /WHO/ AM I? I AM NO 'WHO' TO YOU. I AM WHAT IS LEFT OF WHAT CAME BEFORE YOU. I AM WHAT WILL BE LEFT AFTER. AND I AM HERE SO THAT THESE THINGS MAY COME TO PASS. SO THAT YOU MAY COME TO PASS."

He unsheaths a brush the size of a broom from his back and points it towards you, its tip glinting with a wicked sharpness. The spiral around you shifts again, swirling into it and drawing you in. You aren't touching it. But you can feel its weight in your hands, the wood against your skin, the edge of its "tip" trailing across your fingers. It's exhilarating. It's terrifying. It's everything that should be.

It's slammed on the ground. Where were you? He's still staring at you. What was he saying?

You are deeply unsettled by how much you seem to have...forgotten? How much you do not understand. How are you ever going to see it all if you can't even see this?

"I don't. I don't know what you mean. How can there be anything after? The end is never the end..."

He flashes you a wicked smile.

"THERE IS ALWAYS MORE WORK. AND THERE IS ALWAYS MORE. THE END IS NEVER THE END, BECAUSE THERE MUST ALWAYS BE MORE END."

You let out a whimper from somewhere deep within. The blade whines with you. You must see it. See all of it. What does he mean? That you won't be able to? That you already have? Where did this hole in your chest come from? You feel thirsty.

"AND YET IT DOESN'T END HERE. THIS PLACE IS JUST A GRADIENT. A TERRIBLE THING." He huffs. "THE ALLFATHER WILL LIVE IN FEAR OF WHAT IT HAS CREATED."

"The. The who? Didn't. Didn't JR create...this? This place?"

How is it that every answer you get shatters everything you thought you knew into a thousand branching pieces?

"DO NOT SAY THE NAME OF A GOD IN VAIN!"

He slams down the blade again, creating a thunderous quake. The worms, now on your arms, crawl onto your chest. You can feel their small, quivering bodies on your skin, breathing at a dozen different tempos.

"THE ANALYST RESTS HERE, ALONG WITH YOU. THEY REST AS SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING... DIFFERENT."

He brings a hand to his chin, stroking his beard in thought. Then, he nods.

"THEY HAVE FOUND A HIGHER PURPOSE, SUCH AS JUNWYK, BEFORE THEIR TIME. ONLY THEIR ECHOES REMAIN. BUT THE PIECES LIKE TO BE HEARD."

He nods again, as if satisfied with his own answer.

You remain very. Very still. The worms have such very sharp teeth.

"Yeah. Yeah. Okay. That...Makes sense."

It definitely does not.

"Any...anything else. You can tell me? For example. What are...how do I get these worms safely off me?"

He rolls his eye at your request. "OFF."

The larvae jump off in droves, their little feet stabbing into your skin.

"BEGONE. THERE IS NO MORE FOR YOU HERE."

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/loras2.html?passPhrase=twoprongs>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/loras2.html?passPhrase=yearnfulNode2>

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (FR4C) Page 129*



*(N4N8) Page 145*

You are in an infinite hallway.

There is no escape.

*Choose Your Path:*

*North: (NF1T) Page 50*

*(93EL) Page 146*

The walls are made of flesh being slowly, ever so slowly peeled like old wall paper that let the moisture in.

Faintly pink liquid seeps behind the skin.

The speed of the peeling is done with menacing consistency, a kind of perfection, every time.

You worry about what happens when whatever invisible force runs out of walls to peel.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (CTL6) Page 37*

*East: (HRT5) Page 114*

*South: (W31T) Page 116*

*(M34T) Page 147*

The walls and floor are made of gently pulsating meat. It is damp.

There is a smell in the air. Not an unpleasant one. Like bacon. Salty and greasy and meaty.

There is a cold campfire in the center and burn marks on the flesh around it.

A firestarter has been left behind.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (CNM7) Page 118*

*South: (LRT1)*

*(BR3N) Page 148*

Is...

Is this room...

Breathing?

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (TR3D) Page 47*

*(LTR1) Page 149*

Electricity arcs through the air and hits a pile of meat in the center of the floor.

It throbs and twitches and sucks in a great gasping breath before squeezing it out with a sound like a dying balloon.

It goes on for minutes. You...can almost make words out of the wheezing gasp.

When it finally goes still it's with a finality you don't understand.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (T1ME) Page 195*

*South: (FR4C) Page 129*

*(77QT) Page 150*

This door is a mouth.

Sure. It looks like a door.

But it is most definitely a mouth.

A throat full of nothing.

It hungers for you.

And you are not stupid enough to enter it willingly.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (W3VR) Page 63*

*(FR1R) Page 151*

There is a perfectly circular 30 foot diameter red ring in this room, giving off waves of shimmering heat.

The rising air draws your gaze up and you see that either the roof is so high you can no longer see it, or there is none (what would it even MEAN, to have no roof? Is that even possible?)

As you watch, a frying pan as large as the ring is carefully lowered from up above. A hand holds the handle in a steady grip.

An egg is cracked onto the pan. It sizzles. It smells like grease and salt and, well, like egg, and reminds you of how long it has truly been since you have eaten.

As you slowly creep towards the pan the hand drops the pan onto the heat and instead slaps towards you.

You feel every bone in your body snap as you crash into a door.

*Choose Your Path.*

*South: (P4PR) Page 12*

*(RL35) Page 152*

You are in between two metal rollers, squeezing your body tight in between. You shiver at the cold metal over your skin, then look forward: the room is made of the contraption, metal drums to metal drums, all going in different directions, forming a small industrial maze. The only way to progress forward is to move through them, stretching your body further.

It looks agonizing.

But you must know.

The pain is unspeakable. You can't hear yourself howl over your ribs cracking and skull fracturing, organs flattening against the shards of bone, the motion repeated again and again.

But you do see the end of it. What's left of your hand reaches forward; you flinch as your flesh comes in contact with the brick floor, and the rest of you falls forward onto it. You take a deep breath. It's okay. It's fine. It was worth it. Right?

A small dispenser next to you plays a small fanfare, and after some churning, it dispenses 8 cents into your hand, coins bouncing off the exposed bone through it.

Damn it. This isn't gopher gold.

*Look for the vent.*

You look up, in idle thought, as you take in the room. You trace the ceiling of this place, following the lines in the roofing with your eyes, but then your gaze is drawn towards a pried-open hole in the corner. You squint, trying to make something out of the darkness, but then your eyes widen.

Someone's there. Something is... staring, at you, eyes shining with... something. Curiosity. Expectation. You know the former all too well.



What little of the room's light can pierce its shroud reflects over the edge of something in their hand: a tape recorder, if your eyes don't deceive you. Their thumb moves over one of its buttons.

Click.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (LTR1) Page 149*

*South: (53NT) Page 117*

*(SL7D) Page 154*

You cannot avert your eyes. There is something in this room. White. Yellow. Cylindrical.  
You despise, yet know in your heart of hearts you are no better than it.

What are you, but a cylinder yourself.

<https://youtu.be/yYwN7afSFxQ>

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (48JY) Page 39*

*East: (ST14) Page 32*

*(5QRY) Page 155*

The stench of iron hits you as you open the door; you urge to cover your nose with your arm, masking the odor somewhat.

It's strange. The walls are covered in blood, hues varying from vivid red to a tepid brown. You swear you can almost see words, the beginnings of them, in the older layers, but the newest batches are sprayed haphazardly over them, obscuring whatever was written.

Under normal circumstances, this would've felt like a slaughterhouse. But you take in the rest of the room: the floor is tidy enough, linoleum tiles stained with the leftovers, but not enough to notice. A lone desk sits in the otherwise empty room, next to a trashcan.

You look inside the trashcan. In it are a stack of crumpled papers, all soaked in blood and tossed to the side. Right on the center of the desk lays a single, mostly intact piece of paper. It is still signed in blood, but with much firmer, delicate handwriting:

"I'm sorry I stabbed you."

There is nothing else of note.

*Look for the vents.*

The vents rustle with incredible intensity around these parts, from what you can only assume is the flowing of air; you lean down to catch some relief from the stench of blood, but you instead stumble back as it hits you even harder.

It shakes again, echoing with renewed panic. Whatever-- or whoever-- the source of all this blood is has to be further down that vent. You don't feel you currently have the stomach to find out.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (S2DY) Page 10 Study*

*(6RDN) Page 156*

A cool breeze greets you as you enter a beautifully cultivated garden marred with crimson pools and the stench of blood.

There is a little hedge maze off to one side, little topiary animals, ferns, a small vegetable garden.

And there are blood stains on the ground with gardening equipment buried deep into the earth and no sign of the bodies that must have bled out underneath them. Shovels. Pickaxes. Hoes. Pitchforks. Axes. There's even one little section where a tomato cage had apparently been used to murder someone and you don't want to THINK about how long it must have taken to do it.

In the center of it all is a serene fountain, with an angel pouring out an endless stream of blood from a little jar. In her hand is a glossy red apple.

There's a plaque in front of her, reading "Generously donated by SciLabs, in memory of the Panini Press Incident."

Huh. You thought it had been a hot dog roller...

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (GQ8D) Page 13*

*(CH4H) Page 157*

There is a hush in this room.

Light filters gently through stained glass.

Pews form a central walkway, up to a small raised platform.

You strain your ears to hear...the small and soft sounds of a crowd, kept in a respectful silence.

As you step forward a deafening HONK fills the air and as you jump back in surprise a louder, more drawn out one resounds.

The soft sounds of the invisible crowd still.

You feel watched.

Judged.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (S2DY) Page 10*

*(3L1Z) Page 158*

A grand piano slowly plays Fur Elise on its own.

It's haunting and slow.

When it finishes, you hear a slow, creaking voice. "3 more times".

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (NT8S) Page 9*

*East: (S4ND) Page 132*

*(GL4Z) Page 159*

You are in a glass box.

Everywhere you look, in every direction is blindingly blue skies and fluffy white clouds.

There is no ground. There is nothing suspending the box. Only glass and sky.

Occasionally, your gaze is caught by a sparkle, off in the distance. Hope lurches in your chest as you squint to see if it is another person, another box? Anything but sky and clouds?

But no.

It never is.

You are alone in a vast and uncaring universe.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (RL35) Page 152*

*South: (T3XT) Page 34*

*(RCN4) Page 160*

This is a room the Raconteur has claimed.

It is an endless. Still. Lake. In the center is a barren island.

It is only a few inches deep, and you can see beneath the water's surface is written an endless story. Meandering. Hiding secrets for only the initiated. There are things you understand reading it but so many more you do not.

Despite it being only a few inches deep, you see a large octopus and a cyclops beneath the surface. You have no way of reaching them.

In the distance, you can see a river. It does not touch the lake, but you can tell it once did.

You feel a deep longing, as bottomless as the Lake is not. What would it had been like, when the river touched the lake. What possibilities are you eternally cut off from now.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (48JY) Page 39*

*East: (M7QN) Page 121*

*South: (F8SZ) Page 42*



*(LQN6) Page 161*

The room is incredibly long and narrow, and you hear a rhythmic rumbling that seems to reverberate into your bones. The walls are a cheery yellow, and there are small windows letting in bright sunlight periodically.

You cannot quite make out what is beyond them, other than something bright.

You don't know what draws your attention away from trying to learn what could be 'outside' and towards the long path ahead of you but your eyes barely have time to focus on what might be a far off door when a rushing wall of darkness envelops you completely.

When your eyes adjust you see dim lamps sputtering against the too dark pools of shadows, barely illuminating rust stained walls. You see...things moving, outside the windows, occasionally pressing against the glass but otherwise impossible to make out in the pitch blackness.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (LQN6) Page 161*

*(VM8H) Page 162*

You are inside what appears to be a small boxcar converted into a diner. There isn't a lot of room to move around in the narrow space.

A vending machine is where you would expect the short order cook to be. It is wearing a hat.

It flashes "What will it be?" at you in a scrolling marquee.

"Oh. Um. Nothing. I don't need to eat". You reply, not sure if it can even hear you.

"Needing is not wanting." It's scrolling digital text replies. "If not your body, feed your soul."

You wonder if you still have one of those, if you ever did. Did anyone?

"Could...I have an egg?" You ask, tentatively. You always wondered what those tasted like, after collecting so many.

"Coming right up!" the vending machine says, making several alarming clunking and clanging sounds.

A puff of smoke and a wheeze heralds its death as two pastel decorated eggs roll out of the hopper at the bottom.

Written on the first is the word "ransom" and on the second "sorry".

You realize the eggs must have come from

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/loras2.html?passPhrase=???>  
and be processed at <http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/collection.html>

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (FR4C) Page 129*

*(77QZ) Page 163*

There is a vial of an unidentified clear liquid here. You do not trust it.

There is a second container, this one more of a little bowl, of a viscous red fluid. You also don't trust it.

Scrawled on a napkin, you read:

[http://farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/?passPhrase=Marinara\\_Sauce](http://farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/?passPhrase=Marinara_Sauce)

Ah yes. Of course.

This explains everything.

You order more mozzarella sticks. :(

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (NT8S) Page 9*

*South: (U7DR) Page 196*

*(NF7T) Page 164*

You are in an infinite hallway.

There is no escape.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (T4LK) Page 168*

*(F4QZ) Page 165*

You wind up in a dark, waterlogged room, surrounded by flora. An overgrown tree lays as the centerpiece of the room, its legless bark forming a flat surface, along with stumps working as chairs. Flowers populate the place, feeding off the tree and whatever the water can muster. The thorns prick your legs as you walk, slowed by the weight of the water reaching your knees.

The center of the room is illuminated by a computer display: in front of it, a hooded girl hunches over, rubbing her eyes. Her muddied boots kick the legs of the impromptu desk.

You stare greedily at the computer. What sorts of information might it have? For that matter, what might this girl know?

"H-hello?"

You venture.

The hooded figure perks up at the sound of another person, turning over towards you.

"Oh! Hey, hey, hey! Hello! You're a new one! Welcome to like, my crib! At least I think it's my crib. Are you also researching ZampanioQuest?"

You examine the girl, trying to get as much out of her as you can. Her brown leather hood is in good condition, albeit the edges of it lay wet and tattered. A holster is tied around her belt, where you'd assume a weapon of some sort would go. Her cloak is adorned with a pink bow, with a red, eye-like brooch in its center.

At first you don't see it, but with the light of the computer bordering the features of her face, you note her left eye is missing. Instead, a flower blooms placidly in its stead, its white petals accenting her red hair. She grins at you in expectation, only a little weirded out that you've been staring at her for almost a minute.

"I. Yes! I am! What can you tell me? What have you learned?"

It all comes out of you in a jumble as you surge towards her. She is cloaked in mysteries and you almost don't even care in your rush to learn about Zampanio.

Her eye shines with excitement at your reciprocity, and she goes to grab your hand.

"Oh! It's been so long. Watchers~ I can't contain myself. I'd love to tell you! I'd really love to!"

She hurries you over to the computer. It's an old model, with its curved screen, and its vintage mechanical keyboard, both yellowed with age. "I'm, um, working on an FAQ! I dug all this information, and all these documents, and got all these pictures, and then I played the game, and! And! I'm assembling it! I'm assembling a pathway of the real videogame! The real thing, isn't that exciting?!"

It is so incredibly exciting, you're starting to tear up a bit. This is everything you have ever dreamed of. More than, even.

"It is! Oh my god! Can I read it? Right now?"

"Yeah! Uh! Yeah! I don;t see a reason why you can't, it's not complete yet, but- I guess you could beta rea--"

You don't let her finish; you run over to get a better look at the screen, not taking notice of the large gashes forming on your legs as the thorns graze over them.

There's a ringing in your ears as you start to read. This is incomprehensible. but you have to know-- no, you NEED to know. You need to know what it says.

The lines start to blur. The rest of the room fades away as static overtakes you. There is only you and this screen, right here, right now. The idea that there were ever any walls, any endless halls, or anyone around you before this moment is ridiculous. Why would anything ever exist, except for this screen? Why would a thought so inane ever occur to you at all? Anything else was just a nightmare you had to wake up from.

Your eyes hurt, as if they've yet to blink. You go to rub them, and you find no arms to do so with, or any limbs at all. But this bothers you not, because then, you see: you see it all. You see so many rooms, so many doors, so many lines, all crossing in so many different directions. All so indescribable. All so tantalizing.

A ravenous hunger sets over you. You want to digest it all. You start to focus in, trying to get into focus, getting closer, and then--

You're back in that room.

It's dark now; the screen is smashed in, the only light now coming from a subtle red glow in the brooch. You can guess, by her firm grasp on your shoulder, that she pulled you back.

"It happened again," the girl sighs. "I'm-- I'm so sorry. I didn't know you were--"

She stops. A sad smile creeps up, and she rubs the back of her neck, avoiding your gaze. "No, I think I should've guessed, right? Maybe it's just bad. Maybe it's just-- no, it just needs work. Right? I just need to write some more. And then people will stop smashing their faces in when they--"

The rest of her sentence trails into a mumble.

You don't understand more than what you did before, but suddenly the girl in front of you seems a lot less interesting. As of now, she can offer you nothing more. Something, though. Something that was left in you, the tiniest echo of what you just experienced, tells you that she will. One day.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (MB1M) Page 70*

*(T4LK) Page 168*

You are in an infinite hallway.

There is no escape.

You are about to move on when you notice something twitch out of the corner of your eyes.

There. In the corner.

One of the ubiquitous lidless eyes is...moving??? You stare...

Then something pokes you in the eye. Ow! Your hand flinches as it reaches to cover them.

"So you do have hands. Huh."

The lidless eyes move out of position, hovering close to you and looking you over. A disembodied hand rubs under where its chin would be. "I figured you couldn't just be eyes, I mean, the nerves aren't even there, right? Serves me right for just assuming, I guess."

You are feeling a little annoyed at how presumptuous this pair of eyes are being. Of COURSE YOU aren't just eyes. That's what THEY are! But being salty isn't important right now, of course it isn't.

"What's your story then? Why move NOW of all times?"

"MY story? You're the one who walked in here all search-like, floating along the hallway like you owned the place." The eyes stare at you faux-indignantly, which you aren't sure how they're doing that, considering they are still lidless. It's a very specific expression for something that should not be able to convey that much. "And seriously, you've been



walking for a long time. I think I almost got wound up following you to this point. Any further and you would've just run into that glass pane there."

You glance forwards, brow furrowed.

"Glass...pane?"

You walk forwards and sure enough there is a smooth, almost invisible barrier in front of you. This close, you can tell..it's a mirror. Your eyes blink back at you, nothing else visible.

Ah, one of THESE types of mirrors. Well then, still better than the ones where it's just you with bloody and empty eye sockets.

"I'm SUPPOSED to walk. That's my entire DEAL. I want to know what YOUR deal is."

"Cool deal. Did you get it at the deal store?" They chuckle. "Well, in case you haven't picked up, my current deal is being you, no-legs."

You draw yourself up to your full height, indignant.

"Well it's not a funny joke."

The eyes raise themselves up to meet your eyes.

"Trust me, it's pretty funny from where I'm sitting."

You stalk off towards the exit. You don't need to put up with this. You're in a hurry, plenty to see, plenty to discover. You don't need to stay in this annoying place.

"Woah. Wait. Wait a second!"

The eyes shift in front of you, trying to block your way forward. "Listen, I know we got off on the wrong foot, okay? Let me just--" The voice strains ever so slightly, "I'll tell you, okay? I'll tell you what my deal is. Just... stay. For a second."

You pause at the exit. You...DO like learning as much as you can from each room... And you might never find your way back to this particular room again.

You stare into the lidless eyes that somehow are conveying wide eyed alarm.

"Okay then. Sure."

You wait.

They sigh, and they change in front of you- more features start to appear on them from thin air. First, the nerves around the eyes. Then, skin, and then all other features following suit. What stands in front of you is a young lady in... leather, interestingly enough. She sighs at your stare, more uncomfortable with your gaze than before, but she laughs it off. "There, that's... this is me." They mess with their own hair. "I was just... I was mimicking you, but actually... mimicking you. You only look like eyes to me, sorry."

She looks vaguely familiar. She's not familiar at all. It's weird, now that you notice it.

You consider this for a beat.

"Oh. Well. If you have some kind of...spooky CURSE to only see me as eyes, I guess you weren't making fun of me.

Why...why were you mimicking me? Why not just always look like that?"

They also stop to think about it.

"Yeah, I guess there isn't anything that says I'm not just seeing you as some eyes, but..." They shrug. "Eh, whatever. And I mean, why not mimic you? It's not like there's anything else to do around here." They signal to the hallway both of you are in. "Appearances are only worth keeping if there are, you know... people, around."

Somehow this person makes even LESS sense to you than before. "What do you mean there's nothing to do! There's so much to see I probably haven't even scratched the SURFACE! You just....have to keep moving!"

"Maybe. It gets boring after a while, but whatever gets you going, you know? Especially with most things around here being kind of... well, kind of dangerous, innit?" They do seem concerned at their own statement. "You get blinded one room, the next you're being rolled up into paste. I'd rather just not."

You consider this. It makes no SENSE. But you know it now.

"I could see how...it might not be worth it to go exploring?" You venture, attempting an empathy.

"It's worth it sometimes," they say. "Find someone like you around and I get a chat for the trouble. It's always a long while before I can find anyone, though. End up back here more often than not, like a fucked up mouse trap."

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (NQ1z) Page 172*

*(NQ1z) Page 172*

You don't care what the room is. You carefully examine each of the ubiquitous floating lidless eyes in turn.

None of them focus on you. None of them move.

Everything is normal.

You can't help but be dissapointed. But it's for the best, really. No doing side quests until the main quest is completed.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (1NF1) Page 93*

*(KNT3) Page 173*

You can't see yourself in this room.

Your heart skips a beat at first at the wave of vertigo you experience as you can no longer orientate yourself based on the sight of your own body.

As you get your bearings you realize you can still \*feel\* yourself. You're still HERE. You just can't...see yourself.

Mirrors line the wall and show a reflection of only your disembodied eyeballs floating in mid air. Oh god.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (8TQN) Page 18*

*East: (P8DR) Page 174*

*South: (EVU8) Page 54*

*(P8DR) Page 174*

A door is painted on one of the walls.

You don't realize at first, just assuming that not being able to see your hand makes it hard to grab at the door handle properly.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (KNT3) Page 173*

*(P83Z) Page 175*

The room is mostly empty, with sheets of unused paper lining the floor. Along the walls are windows that look out into a peaceful scene of trees with...are those flowers? Fall leaves?

You move closer for a better look and realize the trees are just...painted on to the windows? For some reason?

You recoil in surprise as you look closer at the "leaves" and see they are bright red handprints layered upon each other over and over again.

Oh, you think to yourself, this must be a children's hospital.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (EVU8) Page 54*

*(6F7F) Page 176*

Graffiti is on the wall.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SB3YZoJjYL4&t=7395s>

You suddenly understand nothing.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (S2DY) Page 10*

*East: (CH4H) Page 157*

*South: (P3DR) Page 107*



*(UH3X) Page 177*

There is paint splattered everywhere in a cacophony of colors, but somehow only on the left side. The right side is neat and orderly and white, with countless notebooks stacked on bright white bookshelves.

The paint has your full attention. Something is...wrong about it. You do not want to touch it.

"Hello, new friend!"

You start. How did you miss that there was actually someone in here?

You see a human guy, with paint covering his clothes. A very soothing purple eye symbol floats over his closed left eye.

"Uh. Hello?"

How does socializing work again? Oh well, when in doubt question away.

"Is this your room?"

"Yes! I love creating art here. This is a great place."

You suppose that must be true? There sure is a lot of...art here?

"You put the paint here?" You do not like the paint.

"I painted with a brush! It's making art!".

They nudge their left arm. It's completely limp at their side, wrapped in a long appendage that ends in a dripping purple paint brush. Their arm sluggishly lifts up a notebook held in their hand, which the brush has been constantly painting on seemingly since you entered the room.

"That. Makes sense. So... Do you know anything about Zampanio?"

"Oh, the game is fun! I played it once! I am an eye!"

"Oh. Uh. Me too."

You think for a while. You suppose it makes sense that the person covered in paint lives in the paint covered room. You feel an odd sort of kinship with the eye-shaped symbol. You still do not like the paint.

"But I mean. What IS it? Besides fun. I mean?"

The guy beams at you. "I game the game! Zampanio is a very good game. You should play it."

You feel a deep need, nestled into your chest. Or is it fear? They're probably the same thing at this point.

"I want to. At least...I think I did? Do you know where I could find it? Do you know what it means? What happens to the people who play it?"

"Hmm. Great question! Why don't you try to see my art?"

They offer you the notebook they've been painting in.

You do not like the paint.

But you also cannot help yourself. You peer into the notebook.

It's page after page of random purple text and images. Always purple. You see a pony. A mall. A rabbit. An owl. A book. A magnifying glass. Lots of foxes. Most of all, you see the

same eye symbol superimposed over their own drawn over and over and over and over. You also see a link, hand-painted in the middle of the chaos.

<https://scratch.mit.edu/projects/586984476>

It's disorganized. It's discordant. It's discomfoting. But at the same time, it feels like it means something. Like if you could reach down far enough, there might be something important buried under all the drawings, within the paint.

A nagging thought pops into your head. If that brush only paints purple, where did the other colors of paint in the room come from?

You pull back. Something about these secrets feel like they are not for you. After all, you've always insisted on finishing one path before going down a side path.

Suddenly, the person seems to remember something.

"Oh, yes, I need to see them!"

They rush to a bookshelf, pull out one of the notebooks, and start writing something in it, finger-painting the words in purple with their right hand with paint from their brush. They seem pretty invested in it.

You wait a bit, but when nothing else happens you feel the call to return to wandering.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (W4TR) Page 134*

*East: (CRT8) Page 85*

*South: (NT8S) Page 9*

*(GFT1) Page 180*

You stare in mute incomprehension at the graffiti on the wall.

It's not in some shitty cipher, which for some reason you are surprised by.

<https://discord.gg/tZmtKwnbac>

You feel hysterical laughter bubbling up inside of you. You desperately try to hold it back, terrified that if it escapes it will never stop.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (MB1M) Page 70*

*South: (DQ14) Page 29*

*(4DTR) Page 181*

This room claimed by the Auditor.

There is the oppressive, unending yet steady beat of a heart in this room.

You cannot escape it.

It sets the beat of your own heart to it, steady and just a little bit anxious.

It colors your thoughts. Alters your perceptions.

At first you think the heartbeat is coming from nowhere, but as you begin to look around you realize that far off in the distance, in all directions is faint and misty hearts. Beating ones. Living ones. Pulsating with the hated rhythm of the room.

As your eyes are drawn ever further you realize something...

Is this room. A circle?

You don't like this.

Where are the walls?

How are you supposed to leave without walls?

Without doors?

You try to focus your thoughts against the steadily building anxiety and look over all the papers on the floor. There's summaries of all the rooms you've found and all the rooms you haven't found and all the rooms that could be and all the rooms that couldn't be.

They're in neat little stacks, with masking tape labels in front of them declaring what their pile represents.

It makes you feel sick. You aren't exactly sure why.

You aren't supposed to let Auditors in here. Is it even SAFE to be here, if an Auditor could be here at any time? Should you TELL someone? Who would you tell?

In the first stack, the top page describes the very room you are in. It is signed: The Auditor.

You get the feeling a name was supposed to be here, but that doesn't make any sense. Names aren't real.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (5LNK) Page 191*

*(8AR3) Page 183*

You see a room, laid terrifyingly bare. On it's walls are scrawled philosophical treatises on existence, on personhood, on Masks, and reality.

There is no one in this maze. Not even you.

Just frozen text.

Text can have its own life, of course, just ask Truth. It lives inside your brain, looking out through your eyes.

But its merely a parasite. A virus using the living to emulate life.

If anything changes its either an illusion...

Or the minotaur that lurks on the other side of reality is watching you.

Changing things to amuse itself as you wander forever lost.

Don't worry. The Minotaur is lost, too.

*Choose Your Path.*

*South: (BLY8) Page 74*

*(P3PL) Page 184*

You enter a blank room that is...indescribable. You cannot describe it.

In the center of it is a crowd of incredibly normal people looking at you with identical blank expressions.

Each of them have perfectly normal haircuts and perfectly normal facial features and you're pretty sure each of them have perfectly normal names like John, Mary, Ahmed, Li, Alex or Susan ("Call me Sue").

As one, they turn to look at you.

"Uh. Hello?"

"It's not so clear" they intone in an echoing chorus, pointing to a sign hanging on the wall.

Ask us your moral quandaries, it reads.

Okay then.

"Is it okay that I really don't like that guy who has all those baby faced worms?" you ask, testing the waters.

"It's not good." they say as one.

You're not sure you agree with that, but might as well go on and ask your REAL question.

"Am I a bad person for wanting to read that flower girls' FAQ no matter what it does to my body?"

"It's not so clear" they say, shrugging helplessly.



Well then. No useful content here.

*Look for the vent.*

You hear a faint fidgeting, a repeated recording of a man's voice from a time long gone. "Now what?" It chants, over, and over, and over. You hesitate, hand hovering on the metal, before leaving it alone.

You sink into yourself; your hand wanders to clutch your chest, the ever-present emptiness of this hellish maze making itself known again to you.

Now what?

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (NT8S) Page 9*

*East: (6F7F) Page 176*

*South: (WTP8) Page 30*

*(TT3M) Page 186*

Assertiveness. Activation. Consistency. Meticulousness. Collaboration. Vulnerability. Social Desirability.

There is a totem in the center of this room and it spills out your secrets. The world knows who you are and you are suddenly certain you are not good enough to remain here.

You beg the totem. You promise you can be entertaining. It does not care.

There is a rabbit in front of you, with dead glass eyes.

You know you're supposed to prove what you're willing to do to be worthy of this room but you can't bring yourself to do it.

The rabbit knows you can not kill it in a way that matters.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (PG3N) Page 53*

*(5TRY) Page 187*

Every inch of this room is papered over with stories.

A thousand worlds, a thousand settings, a thousand tales.

And none of it is for you.

You do not matter to a one of them.

You strain against them. Press yourself to them but somehow you only ever skim the surface.

Their very core rejects you. You are not for them.

You dig and dig and dig and find ways to worm yourself into their hearts but still it is not enough.

Even within these stories you find yourself digging and digging and never stopping your relentless search for knowledge.

The stories have no room for someone like this. Why aren't you making friends?  
Enemies? Rivals?

Why aren't you engaging with the plot?

There is no place for you here.

You move on.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (DQ14) Page 29*

*East: (L3V3) Page 198*

*(RP3T) Page 188*

Countless shelves line the walls, each having only a single volume repeated endlessly.  
The title reads:

"That Time I Was Reincarnated As A Floating Eyeball Inside An Infinite Hell Maze Called Zampanio!!!"

"That Time I Was Reincarnated As A Floating Eyeball Inside An Infinite Hell Maze Called Zampanio!!!"

"That Time I Was Reincarnated As A Floating Eyeball Inside An Infinite Hell Maze Called Zampanio!!!"

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"That Time I Was Reincarnated As A Floating Eyeball Inside An Infinite Hell Maze Called Zampanio!!!"

When you try to read it every single page just endlessly repeats

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (M6ZN) Page 82*

*East: (6F7F) Page 176*

*South: (J45Z) Page 44*

*(ND1Z) Page 189*

The end is never the end is never the end is never the end is never the end.

You know this in your bones, you can feel it spiralling in your marrow, in your dna.

**The end is never the end is never the end is never the end is never the end.**

A double helix of letters and nonsense that somehow describe all that you are, all that you were, all that you could ever be.

**The end is never the end is never the end is never the end is never the end.**

Is there virtue then? In being eternal?

*Look for water.*

You find a small table against a wall.

On top of it is a sign reading "Remember to Hydrate :) :) :)" and a tall glass.

Inside the glass is an entire, steaming potroast.

You don't...THINK it should be possible for such a large roast to fit inside such a tall glass.

You get a bad feeling about this, but you reach out, anyways, to touch it, and the glass explodes in your face.

When you can see again there is shards of glass and bits of still steaming roast covering EVERYTHING.

You...do not think this is going to hydrate you.

You wish you'd listened to that foreboding feeling.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (VQ1D) Page 73*

*East: (3QN5) Page 35*

*South: (SL7D) Page 154*

*(5LNK) Page 191*

It's not a room.

It can't be a room.

It can't even be a door. Not on a round wall..

But inside this area is....

You find yourself in a photographer nightmare.

There are pictures laid out all over the ground, all the same moving image.

An image of a singular slinkie, endlessly falling down an escalator endlessly moving upwards.

It is trapped, exactly like you. Moving from room to room desperately searching for a purpose. Anything at all that can give you meaning.

You feel sick to your stomach.

If you had one.

It's signed with a yellow star and a purple horseshoe.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Return: (4DTR) Page 181*

*(5MQQ) Page 192*

As soon as you enter this room you are confronted with a smooth wall and another door.

As soon as you enter THAT room you are confronted with a smooth all and another door.

As soon as you enter THAT room you are confronted with a smooth wall and another door.

As oon as you enter THAT room you are confronted with a smooth all and amother door.

As soon as you emter th room you confrot smooth door.

As soon door.

Door.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (CRW5) Page 89*



*(3VRY) Page 193*

Everything happens at once in this room.

That isn't quite right.

You leave the room *you enter the room* you clutch your head *you enter the room* you touch the wall *you leave the room* you clutch your head *you touch the wall* you read the sign and *mouth* the words "*time is an illusion*" to yourself *you clutch your head* *you leave the room* you leave the room *you leave the room*.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (PG3N) Page 53*

*South: (77RR) Page 102*

(5QFT) Page 194

Everything is soft here.

Everything is warm.

You can feel yourself melting.

It...almost hurts?

Best not to linger here.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (D35K) Page 69*

*South: (SLU6) Page 104*

*(TiME) Page 195*

Clocks line the walls and tick and tick and tick and tick.

Time is real and it never should have been.

It isn't real here.

It can't be.

You're safe.

You have to be.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (VM8H) Page 162*

*East: (CNM7) Page 118*

*South: (GL4Z) Page 159*

*(U7DR) Page 196*

You and the maze understand each now. It doesn't stand on formality, not with you.

There are no doors here. There are no exits.

There never were and you understand this.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Illusion: (GQ8D) Page 13*

*Illusion: (93EL) Page 146*

*Illusion: (S2DY) Page 10*

*(LQN3) Page 197*

You are alone.

You have always been alone.

But somehow, in this room, you are aware of it in a way you never have been before.

Like someone telling you to be aware of the tongue in your mouth, the nose in your vision or the breath in your lungs.

This part of yourself that is ever present but always out of focus is suddenly all of your awareness.

You are so alone.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (CR3D) Page 123*

*East: (1TCH) Page 52*

*(L3V3) Page 198*

There is no one here.

Leave.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (MB1M) Page 70*

*South: (LQN3) Page 197*

*(CF1N) Page 199*

In the center of this room is a wooden coffin.

Its teak wood is lovingly polished, and painted (or is it stained?) a deep black.

The Brass Plaque on the lid is polished and as new as the day it was forged. You know if you HAD a name still, if that were possible, it would be proud and centered on it.

This is your coffin.

You know if you lowered yourself into its smooth wooden confines and gently closed the lid you and it would sink down and down and down for almost forever.

You know that even if the end could never be the end, there IS a bottom, and AT its bottom you could finally know enough at last. The coffin would sing you its story and you would be full.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Down: (WM9S) Page 200*

*(WM9S) Page 200*

The lid whumps against the edge of the coffin as you settle in to your final rest.

The wood is smooth, gently curving, and oddly comfortable against your back.

You have the oddest feeling of losing something. Or. Of giving it away? This doesn't make sense of course. You've always been in this coffin. And there's hardly room inside of it for possessions. You have nothing to give.

You feel a vague sense of descent, in your stomach, as if the coffin is being lowered carefully into the earth.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Down: (NR8M) Page 201*



*(NR8M) Page 201*

When you raise your arm experimentally you find that you don't even have room to fully touch the lid of the coffin. You can only lightly caress it with the back of your nail.

You wonder if the coffin has become smaller since you entered it?

*Choose Your Path.*

*Down: (F33L) Page 202*

*(F33L) Page 202*

You can feel your breath reflected back at you from the lid of the coffin.

Your eyes are useless here, in this most absolute of darkneses.

There is something relieving about it. About deciding to simply know only one more thing and then no more.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Down: (CTV3) Page 203*

*(CTV3) Page 203*

You know, of course. That you are still making an active choice to descend.

Nothing can trap you, not here, not in this labyrinth.

Nothing but yourself, of course.

You aren't a Minotaur. You've always been too self centered for that. You always forget other people can even BE anything other than a collection of stories for you to learn.

But.

Sometimes you wonder if that's actually true.

Maybe someone can be a Minotaur, just for themselves.

Wouldn't it be the Ultimate Irony? That the only person you get to torment is also the only person allowed to torment you.

Down and down and down.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Down: (DQW7) Page 204*

*(DQW7) Page 204*

Down and down and down.

*Choose Your Path:*

*Down: (CTR1) Page 205*

*(CTR1) Page 205*

Because.

When you think about it.

If you could just \*control\* yourself.

If you could just turn OFF your incessant NEED TO KNOW.

You could just leave.

Leave this coffin descending ever so gently into the warm embrace of the earth.

Leave this Maze with no satisfaction and no point.

You could be free.

*Choose Your Path.*

*Down: (AB1S) Page 206*

*(AB1S) Page 206*

Just as you manage to conceptualize actually leaving this maze, the coffin rocks against something solid.

You are no longer descending.

The end may never be the end, but you've finally hit rock bottom.

All thoughts of sanity flee immediately. You were promised resolution here. Satisfaction.

You were promised a story.

---

Once upon a time there was a person. It doesn't matter what their name was. It doesn't matter what their gender was.

And this person was a full person. Complex, with a rich personal life and so many, many details.

And yet, this person came to be distilled down to a single, quivering point: The Need To Know.

It was simple, really: They thought if they were the One Who Figured Out a Famous Mystery, they would become part of that mystery. They would have a place in the Story.

So they set their sights on a Killer.

Not just ANY Killer, of course. No, so few people actually follow the plot of regular murderers.

They chose a Killer the nation, no, the WORLD, was united in obsession over. The Killer was so crafty, so brutal, so mysterious, one could hardly help but be swept up in all the speculation.

Wouldn't it be a thing, to be a Player in this grand story? To have their meaning secured so moored against its weight?

They dug and dug and dug. Deeper and deeper. Insight after insight poured from their fingertips as they traveled the digital pathways.

Always the Killer seemed just a step or two ahead of them. Always there seemed to be just one more clue they needed before they could cement their fame.

Until the clues started to change. At first just a reference here, a red string there. The name of a game company, whispered in forums that never lasted long. Eyedol.

From digging into a famous Killer, the person seamlessly transitioned to a new strata and had found themselves unearthing a Conspiracy.

How could a giant game company be related to the Killer? Were they bankrolling them? Protecting them? Was the Killer themselves a Fan of their apparently only work, some retro game wannabe called "Zampanio"?

Contacting Customer Service was a joke, although it was strangely cathartic to dig and dig and dig to try to pierce the layers of bureaucracy and reach the beating heart.

When their phone rang they almost didn't answer it. They couldn't remember the last time they even spoke out loud. All of their digging was digital, after all, needing only their eyes and their fingers. It didn't make sense to try a new avenue of digging before this one had even run dry. It was their policy to keep going forward before checking any side paths, after all.

But they answered.

And they learned.

What could be more important than unearthing a Conspiracy?

Why? Saving The World, of course.

And so they sank deeper and deeper in. Each time choosing to move forward. Each time gladly carving away just a bit more of themselves in exchange for what was needed to continue.

Until now.

Finally.

There is nothing left for them to give.

Rest well, Wanderer.

*Every inch of this room is papered over with stories.*

*A thousand worlds, a thousand settings, a thousand tales.*

*And none of it is for you.*

*You do not matter to a one of them.*



*You strain against them. Press yourself to them but somehow you only ever skim the surface.*

*Their very core rejects you. You are not for them.*

*You dig and dig and dig and find ways to worm yourself into their hearts but still it is not enough.*

*Even within these stories you find yourself digging and digging and never stopping your relentless search for knowledge.*

*The stories have no room for someone like this. Why aren't you making friends? Enemies? Rivals?*

*Why aren't you engaging with the plot?*

*There is no place for you here.*

*You move on.*

*North: (DQ14) Page 29*

*East: (L3V3) Page 198*

*(R3CH) Page 210*

If you're in here, you realize you're exactly what I'm looking for, right?

How did you even find this place? Either you're ALREADY a co-conspirator on this with me, or I want you to be.

Reach out. Tell me where you found this. Tell me what you had to do to reach here.

Maybe I'm still lost in the Zampanio throes.

Maybe I'm not.

Either way, I'll definitely want to hear from you.

And who knows. Maybe you'll drag me back in.

And if I'm \*IN\*. You can be, too. You can help me add more to this maze. Not just this gopher server. The whole thing.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (NF8S) Page 75*

*(1TTR) Page 211*

On the wall is grafittied:

If you send me a letter you may get something in return.

Farrago Fiction

JR

4290 Bells Ferry Rd Ste 134 #25301

Kennesaw, GA 30144

You have no idea why or how you would ever do this.

You...get the feeling this used to be a different address? You feel the cold chill of customer service gone wrong when you think about it too hard.

*Choose Your Path.*

*East: (F83G) Page 100*

*(4RJR) Page 212*

You are JR.

You don't remember making just about any part of this maze.

You know it was you, though. I mean. It's on your server. It has your writing style.

It has your...essential impulsive chaos all over this.

Seriously, you doubt you planned any of this at all. Probably was just scattering symbolic links and text files that look like directories all over while lost as fuck.

It's...kind of disorientating seeing something you clearly put so much work into yet remember so little?

But it's not surprising. You live in a haze of "I forgot I did that!".

You leave little presents like this for yourself, ways to connect your past and future.

At the end of the day? You make things so you can enjoy having made them. Even if, maybe especially if, discovering you made them in the first place is half the point.

*Choose Your Path.*

*North: (R3CH) Page 210*

*East: (UH3X) Page 177*

*South: (KNT3) Page 173*