Structure 74-100928

Seth Cable

The following dramatic narrative provides background to the structure currently on display.

Margaret Bowlder discovered the photograph in an old cash box. The box itself, beaten and rusted, she found tucked into a corner shelf of her father's basement. It had apparently lain undisturbed for decades, until that weekend, when her father's impending move required Margaret to purge the many items long untouched from his basement. Idly curious as to what the box might hold, she had picked it up and turned it sideways, in search of the opening lever. The closing latch, however, had long rusted off, and so the top swung open as it tilted back, spilling onto the floor a single unmarked envelope. Within the envelope was the photograph.

In the center of the photograph was her mother. She appeared to be about the same age as Margaret currently was, which was also about the age when Margaret was born. Margaret was momentarily struck once again by the strong resemblance long noted between them. Despite that resemblance – or, as she would soon understand, because of it – her mother had always remained as distant to her as she had to her father. Margaret was barely seven when her mother finally left; a few years later, her father received a phone call informing them of her passing. Margaret was never told how, and never inquired after it.

From the background of the photo, it appeared her mother was in the master bedroom of their first house, the house Margaret had lived in from the time she was born until she was 12. Although she was deeply familiar with that space and, she believed, that time in their lives, there stood in the foreground of the photo three men entirely unrecognizable to her.

Each looked exactly the same, and not a one looked in any way like the kind of person her parents would keep as a friend. They were draped in the same worn, brown topcoat, covering the same drooping green sweater. Oily hair hung in tangles encircling their scabrous, balding heads. Their eyes sank darkly and sat strikingly far apart, above swollen sallow cheeks flecked with irregular patches of thin orange scruff. Each was smiling lewdly into the camera – directly at Margaret – while her mother looked mournfully away to the ground.
From the translucent date in the corner, Margaret could see that the picture was indeed taken just a few weeks before she was born. Turning it over in her hands, she found scrawled in red ink on the back the following words:

*As soon as your daughter (or you) finally finds this, we'll begin the process over again.*

*Yo-de-lay-hee-hoo!*

Margaret struggled for a few moments to take in exactly what she was seeing. She turned the photograph over in her hands, dividing her attention between the disturbing image and the equally perplexing words. Just as the import of those words finally began to take hold, there rang out from upstairs the familiar slam of the back screen door. Believing her father to have arrived early, she pocketed the photo and scrambled up the stairs, anxious to confront him with this discovery and probe him for answers. She called out as she came, but heard no reply.

At this point, it is well to remember that our constructors are punctilious and that this structure is firmly established.

Upon reaching the top of the stairs, Margaret startled to find three now familiar figures occupying her father's kitchen. They stood equidistant in an arc traversing the path to the back door. Each looked just as they did in the picture, down to the identical topcoats draped over identical green fishermen's sweaters. They greeted Margaret with the same leering smile she'd seen just moments before.

She could barely choke out a 'who' and a 'what' before the three squat forms took a step forward in unison. Blistered mouths stretched wide, and from within gum-lined hollows there emerged a searing high whine, almost imperceptible at first but quickly filling the entire house. Margaret recoiled a step towards the stairs, but found her legs could now scarcely bear her own weight. As the ceiling inverted above her, the color drained from the world.

When she awoke, she knew at once she was no longer in her father's house. Although they had long been distant memories, every detail of the surrounding space quickly snapped into crisp recognition. The first was the feel of the bedspread. The second was the hue of the midday sun through the window, followed closely by the mirror above her mother's dresser. The last was the pattern of her mother's nightgown, enveloping her warmly.
The only perception unfamiliar to Margaret was the shape of her own body. Though the mirror revealed her face unchanged, below it were painfully swollen breasts and a noticeably distended abdomen, which – peering through the neck of her nightgown – she could see was capped with a herniated navel.

Then, violently thrown by an unseen force, the bedroom door slammed open. Beyond the doorframe lay not the upstairs hall of her loneliest memories, but instead an impenetrable blackness, the space within as if cropped from her vision. Materializing swiftly from this darkness, stepping purposefully into the rich light of her mother’s room, our three constructors again greeted her with defiling smiles. One carried a camera on a tripod, and began arranging it a few feet in front of the door.

In her fear and rage, Margaret’s body froze. She swept her eyes away and to the ground, as the three surrounded her. Just after the click and whine of the camera, they spoke the words in unison, using the piping and keening falsettos that we expect from those of their calling:

As the single point of subjectivity and indeterminacy within this structure, you consent to remain within by continuing metabolic activity. Variations within the structure are appreciated, but not required. For your own safety, know that any attempt at disrupting the continuity of the structure will be unsuccessful, and will result in a subjectivity reset to this approximate point in the cycle. Otherwise, the determination of your trajectory within the structure will now be ceded.

By the time she had summoned the courage to look up, Margaret was alone once again.

Through the floor, from downstairs, there came softly the electric purr of their family’s kitchen cordless, followed by the muffled tones of her father’s voice, carried with the strength of a future undetermined and ripe to be shaped.

Current Position in the Structure: 65% Complete

Faithful Iterations: 3487774899103

Variant Iterations: 7

Should you require further information about this structure, excite frequency 891.4