CYBERIA

A SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN FANZINE



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A SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN FANZINE

TWENTY-EIGHT ARTISTS AND WRITERS COLLABORATED TOGETHER TO CREATE A FANZINE DEDICATED TO THE 1998 CULT CLASSIC ANIME: SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN. WE ENCOURAGE OUR READERS TO CHECK OUT THE CONTRIBUTORS' SOCIAL MEDIA AT THE END OF THE ZINE. ENJOY!

02.20.2022




erbezdiez
present day
present time

01001001 01100100
01100101 01101110
01110100 01101001
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01000111 01101111 01100100

CAUTION

layer13.neocities.org



COME TO THE WIRED







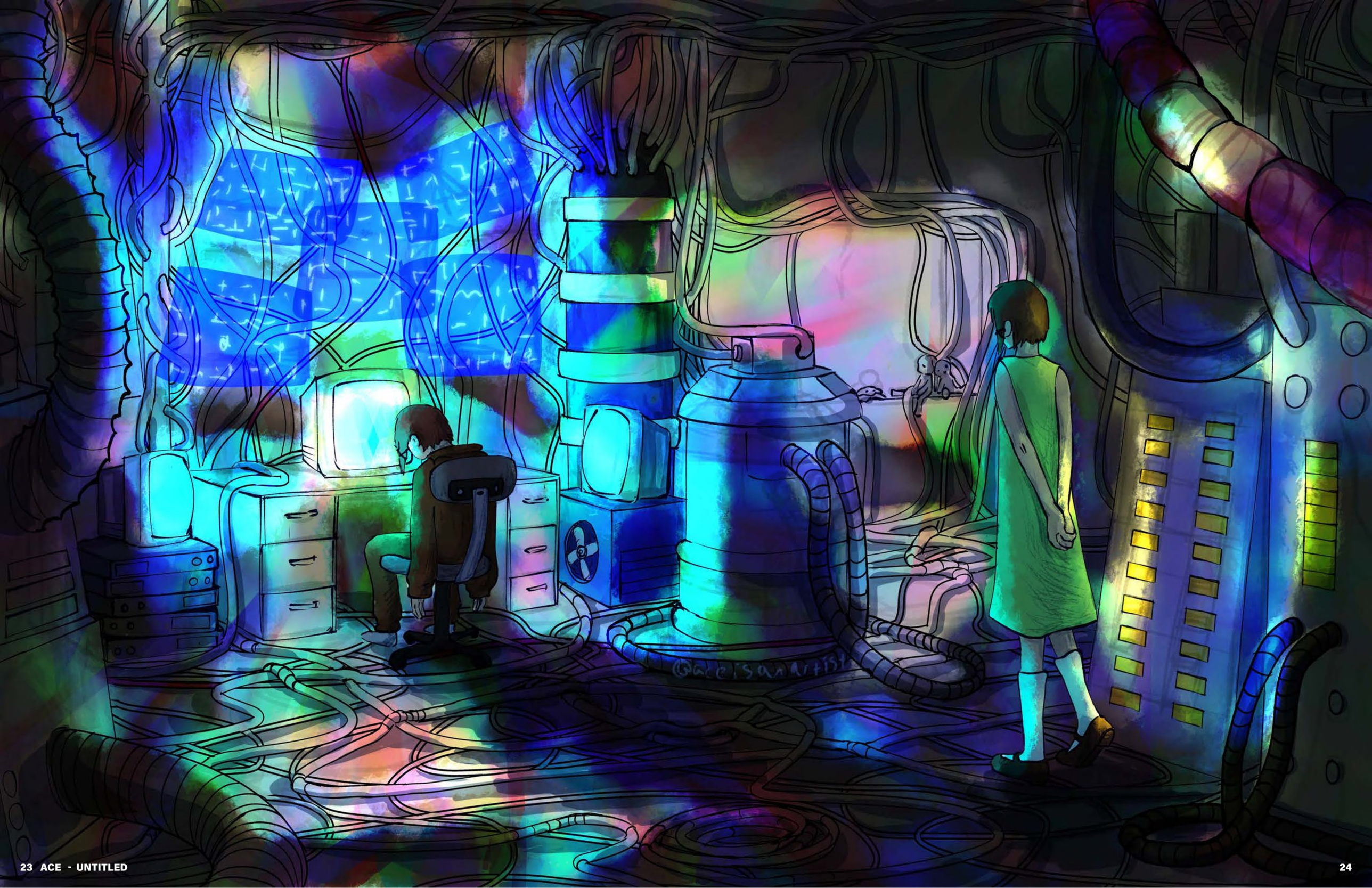
SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN



RYUTARO NAKAMURA · CHIAKI KONAKA · YASUYUKI UEDA · YOSHITOSHI ABE



有線 THE WIRED LAIN



THE OTHER SIDE IS OVERCROWDED,

THE DEAD WILL HAVE NOWHERE TO GO.

FULFILL THE PROPHECY

19

lain

Lda019

lain'S DIARY

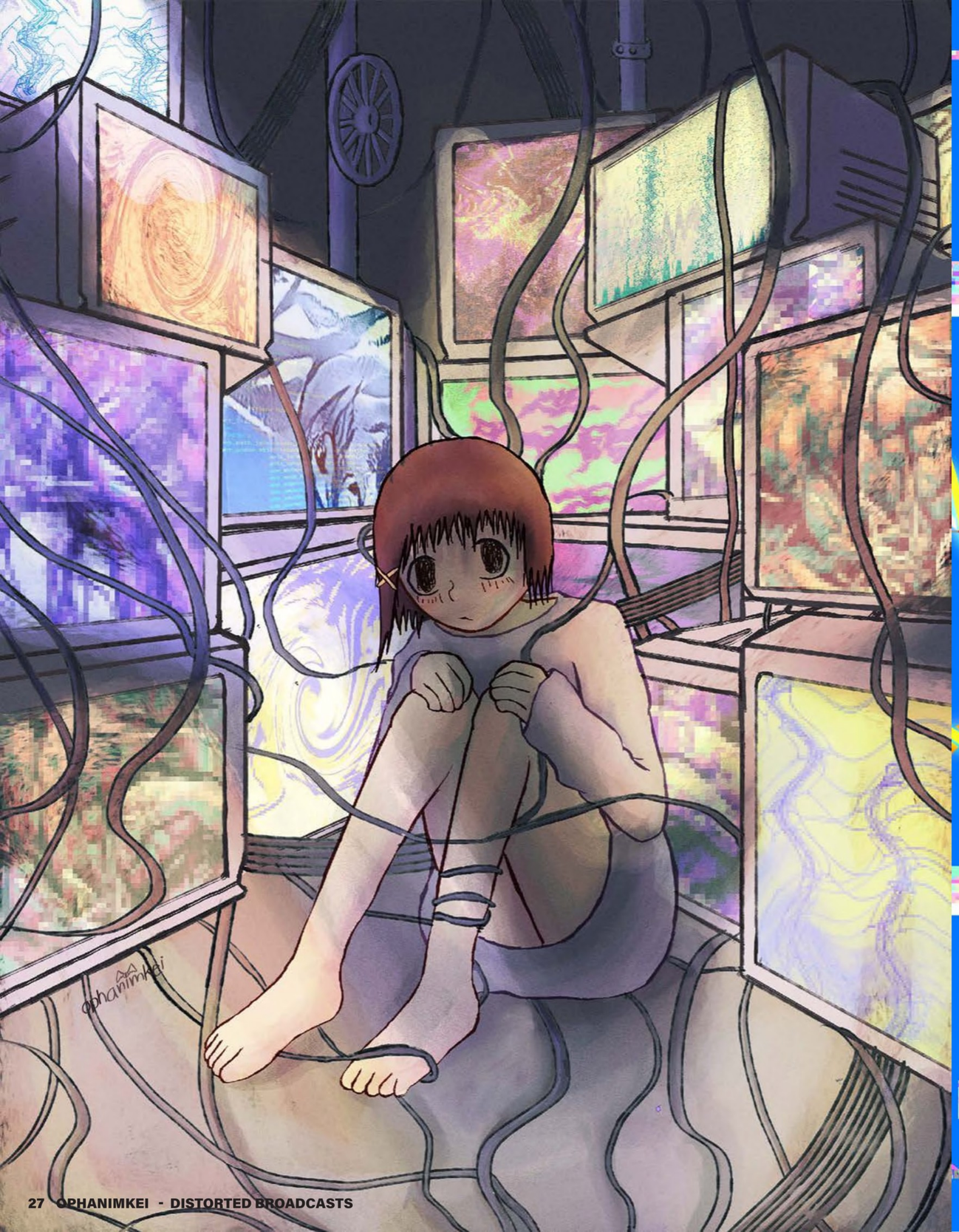
black tea

obstacle

Play

```
{ //create elements
element.SetAttribute(
"god", "girl");
element.SetAttribute
("close the world",
".ɟxǝn puɐ nɐǫo");
element.SetAttribute
("connection,");}
```

THE WIRED





Present Day

Present Time

the WIRED

What's NeXT?

serial experiments





While technically contemporaneous with Lain ("Wired" started in 1993), I doubt the publication had much traction in the Japanese Apple geek circuit. However, it was too hard to resit using it to make reference to "the Wired".

This is Z80 assembly language code for data communications protocol not-version-7 at the hardware level, circa 1989. The language is a bare step above using '0's and '1's. The Zilog Z80 is an 8-bit microprocessor invented in the mid-1970's and the spiritual uncle to today's Intel CPUs. The Z80 is still in use today in embedded systems.

You'll recognize "Present Day" and "Present Time" from the series, but the font is "Chicago", the iconic Macintosh font at the time (1984-1997). It would have been both part of the Copland previews (1994-1996) and Mac OS Enterprise, code name for Mac OS X Server (preview circa 1997). "Copland OS Enterprise" is a mashup of those two OS names.

FYI, the episode titles were read by Apple text-to-speech using the voice "whisper."



The color is based on amber monitors, which were one of three common monitor colors in early computing (green, amber, and white). The background was black and the pixels could only display one color - period.

Upside down Copland logo!



Do you remember "snow"? In old analog televisions and VHS tapes, you got snow when your signal was bad.

"NeXT" was referenced in Lain, but it was also a computer hardware and software company that was founded by Steve Jobs after he was forced out of Apple. It was, and continues to be, highly influencial in modern computing. Apple acquired NeXT in 1997, and reaquired Jobs at the same time. NeXT was used as the basis of MacOS X, competing against Copland and BeOS, both also obviously referenced in the series. The design principles of NeXT continues to influence macOS and other UNIX-like operatig systems like Linux.

The piece was inspired by Zukerberg's Time Person of the Year edition due to FB's role in social media and Lain's themes.

RED STRINGS

BY TAE

I'm watching you as you garden. You don't know I'm here- I make sure of this when I visit. At times, though, it almost seems like you can tell when I'm close. It must be some innate, human sense that lingers through evolution. I can't bring myself to check, though. I've rummaged enough in the workings of you, you deserve your privacy, as meaningless as it may be. Granting you this distance is a start at repentance, I tell myself.

That doesn't mean I don't want to. Doesn't mean I don't yearn, don't desire. How badly I wish to lift that veil- how tempting it is to let you feel the weight of my hand in yours. Would you be afraid of me now, Alice? Would you still look at me the same? I miss your gaze, no matter the lens it may be in. You saw me, Alice. Me, not whatever I was made to be or whatever I made myself.

I'm watching you do your dishes, preparing your meals, studying. When you dream, I watch too. Watch you live your life without me and ache. There's no guarantee my presence wouldn't hinder your life, and I can't bring myself to be that selfish yet. Maybe if you look really hard, I'll think about it.

——

I finally remembered your name, friend.
Lain Iwakura.
You had that super cute hair clip and a bear keychain.
When I visited your home last, you were connected to all those wires in your room.
You looked like a wisp in the sickly glow of all those monitors, your nightie strap slipping
down your shoulder.
I miss you, my friend.
Where have you gone without me? Can't I follow?
It frightens me but I miss you more than anything could ever terrify me.
You were different, Lain. You made me feel different.
Like I mattered.
Are you scared too, friend? I'll still hold your hand.

I think that if you were still here, and not wherever you left to, we could be good friends to this day. Go out for drinks and to each other's homes for tea and book clubs, maybe. We could be real people in our real world and live our real lives.
Or maybe that's just wishful thinking on my part. Regardless, I miss you terribly.
I still love you, Lain.

——

Sometimes, in the shuttered dark of early morning, I curl up next to you like we're children again. Just to hear your heart beating sweetly in that quiet. And I'm gone before you wake, but I carry the rhythm of you for long after.

——

If loving you is the wrong choice I will make it every time. I will put the fruit to my lips time and time again. What is paradise if not loving you?
Like Persephone chose the god of death,
I choose you, you, you.
I will savor the taste of my unforgivable sin trickling down my throat. I will gladly ask for more of you every time.
Damnation pales to your companionship.

——

I heard a story once, of two hearts linked by a thread—a red string. I think we're connected too.
It's probably just closer to a web, a fatal kaleidoscope of bloody devotion from my lips to yours.
Your love is too good for me, Alice.

——

I'm forgetting you again, friend. I don't want to, but I am.
I am lingering in my real life with my real husband and my real home full of nothingness.
Will you miss me as much as I will miss you?



AS THE CROW FLIES

BY ZOMBIFIED-QUEER

Caw! Caw!

When Lain Iwakura comes home from school, there's a murder on the wires. Each black feathered body seems to turn toward her, silent against the background hum of the electrical wires.

Something rustles on the sidewalk, caught by the wind. Lain only glances at it. It's just a plastic bag. Someone's old takeout left on the street. Nothing more.

She ignores it, bounding up the stairs to her house. Once inside, Lain kicks her shoes off. Not that her parents would notice. Everyone seems to forget she exists these days. For the better, really.

Taking the stairs two at a time, Lain enters her room and places her bag down with care.

Caw! Caw!

She huffs and closes the blinds. All those eyes on her are beady and waiting. But they're just crows, Lain reminds herself as she changes out of her school uniform.

She pauses, halfway through folding her uniform for tomorrow. When did she last wash it? Lain balls the clothes up, aiming for the new space allocated for her hamper. She misses, but it's not a priority. Not right now.

Lain settles on her bed, fishing in her bag. How lucky to have a public library on her way home from school that stocked the latest books. Thick technical manuals that fit just right in her small hands.

Those magazines wouldn't cut it. Every one of them was just a flimsy sales pitch. Lain Iwakura needed the industry stuff to help with her new projects.

She glances at the table of contents, each section cordoned off so neatly. She fishes a pencil and pad of paper out of her bag. There, on the page, are neat diagrams. To the best of her ability, Lain copies them down and mentally considers the pros and cons of each.

Space? Not an issue. Her parents rarely come into her room. She could do as she pleased with the space.

Caw! Caw! Caw!

Lain's hand draws a ragged line across her copy of the coolant system on this page. She glances up. There's a crow flying.

No. Not flying.

It makes the motions of flying, but the crow is stuck in the same place. Lain's seen this before in The Wired when someone had a poor connection that made them lag. Rubberbanding, they called it.

Lain narrows her eyes. She erases the jagged line of graphite, but its ghost is still there, marring the diagram.

"Useless." She shoves the notebook back in her bag. It's not necessary to copy anyway. She can commit it to memory. "Obsolete, now."

When she looks back up, there's a few crows flying. No more rubberbanding. She knows, of course. How could she not? None of this is real and the only real thing is The Wired.

But Lain Iwakura knows she's not ready for that bright, terrible reality. It will sting. She hunches over the diagrams, eyes wide in the dimming sunlight. Every bit of this has to be memorized.

Caw caw!

Outside her window, the electrical lines hum. If she loses her focus, Lain can hear every conversation taking place. Every phone call--"Oh, how did that go?" "Happy birthday!" "When will you be home?"—and every conversation taking place in The Wired—"You know that's just a rumor, right?" "Hey, anyone heard about the new processors?" "Heading to Cyberia!" "See you all there!"—each one carried on those bird-heavy, humming lines.

It's too much. Lain squeezes her eyes shut and exhales a shaky breath. It's too much.

Caw!

She opens her eyes. There's just the crows, the faint hum of the city. No more voices. Not now.

Caw caw!

A crow tears into a plastic bag. It's been sitting there for days, never smelling rotten or growing mold or covered in bugs. It's another component of the illusion that any of this is real. The crow lifts out a scrap of takeout, swallows it down, and preens itself.

Lain Iwakura watches. She locks eyes with the bird. Two pieces of black obsidian surrounded by dark, sleek feathers.

No.

For the briefest moment, the crow's eyes are blue. Like a spark when plug meets socket.

No.

They're black eyes. Bird eyes. Vacant eyes. Nothing more.

Lain watches the crow bury its head in the trash again. She blinks, looks away, and turns the page of her manual. This cooling system should be more efficient than her current one, which would preserve some of the components. The motherboard worries her.

Caw caw caw.

Who could leave trash out on the street like that? Lain stares at the rustling bag, watching the crow root through it.

The crow stops and looks up with a scrap of wire in its beak. It locks eyes with Lain. She can feel it.

Before she can blink, the crow swallows the piece of wire. Then it freezes in place.

Lain rubs her eyes. It's not real. It's another trick.

She keeps her eyes on the manual in her lap. As hard as she tries, none of the words make sense. All of the diagrams swim before her eyes, each carefully printed line bowing. The angles smooth into curves.

Throwing the book down, Lain doesn't cry or yell. She just stares as the words on every page swim like a school of fish. Each character stops exactly where it shouldn't be. The page is nothing but nonsense.

Each diagram unfurls like stubborn wire. fighting itself until the original shape is only a distant memory. She's not sure she could ever put the cooling system in place with diagrams like this.

Caw! Caw!

THUMP.

Lain stares at the window, the view outside blocked by a mass of black feathers and black beak. And neon blue eyes.

The crow doesn't fall. It doesn't slide down the window. It stays plastered there, body caught in a loop.

"What do you hope to achieve?" she asks, staring at the bird with a mild fascination. "You should be doing the opposite."

There's no response.

The crow continues to loop until it dissolves into a blue shape without depth. A flat shape, like a screen.

Lain nods her head. "I see."

Through the blue, she can see text. Diagrams. Images. They flicker, like the screen is broken. But Lain understands. She slides her window open.

The squawk of the crow is warbled, tearing and distorting. The static hisses as she reaches out. Her fingers sink into the blue, like water. It's cold the same way an empty room is. Not a temperature-based sensation.

Lain blinks.

Her hand is extended into the open air. No screens or crows or anything. She blinks again and she smiles.

"I get it now." She closes the manual she's been holding onto. With care, she places it on top of her pillow. "It's not going to work, I think."

The power lines hum like summer cicadas. The first few streetlights come on soundlessly but add to the hum. Lain stares at the street. The bag of trash is still there.

When was the last time cicadas sang? It had to be summer. This year? Or was it last year? When were all the bugs stamped out of this simulation?

Lain shuts the window. She has work to do on the new cooling system.

SYSTEM REBOOT

BY ZOMBIFIED-QUEER

Alice knocks but no one comes to the door. The windows are covered in a thin layer of dust. When she knocks a second time, the door swings open on its own.

"Lain? I'm coming in." Alice hears her voice swallowed by the house. "I hope I'm not intruding!"

After closing the door behind her, Alice pauses to slip off her shoes. There's only Lain's shoes by the door, lined up neatly. A pair of school loafers. A pair of winter boots.

Alice squats down and lines her shoes up.

When she gets to her feet, she catches the scent of coffee brewing. It's stronger than her parents drink. Acrid, almost.

"Lain? Are you here?" Despite the bright sunlight, Alice can't shake the feeling she's doing something intensely wrong. "You didn't show up to school this week."

Alice turns, pausing in the doorway to the dining room.

Lain pours a cup of coffee, adding milk and three heaping spoonfuls of sugar. She stirs it, sips it, and stares at Alice.

"Lain?"

The clock on the kitchen wall ticks down the seconds. Tick tock. Tick. Tock.

"Alice."

Tracing idle shapes on the doorway, listens to the seconds ticking by. Finally, she says, "I was worried about you."

Lain hums, sipping her coffee. The circles under her eyes are dark, like bruises. The hand holding her cup of coffee shakes.

"Are you getting enough sleep?"

Lain sets her cup of coffee down, too roughly, and Alice jumps. "I can't sleep. Not now."

"You can't?"

Staring up, Lain continues, "When you sleep, you install a system update. I can't allow them to change my programming anymore than they already have."

Alice shudders. "Who?"

When Lain turns her gaze on Alice, it's a vacant stare. Like she's looking past the person standing there.

"You know who," Lain answers.

The distance between them is like a yawning maw. Alice clings to the doorway with one hand. Lain swims in her vision.

This is that imposter, Alice thinks, it has to be.

But Lain raises the cup to her lips again and drinks. She's tangible. She's real. She has to be real.

Tilting her head, Lain asks, "Do you want a cup of coffee too?"

"S...Sure?" Her voice wavers as Alice steps into the room. The chair scrapes too loudly on the wood floor. "Um, Lain? Where are your parents?"

Lain removes the old filter and grounds, throwing them away. Tick tock. She rinses the coffee pot, filling the tank with fresh water. Tick tock. Tick tock. Lain takes the bag of coffee grounds—a black package with a skull and crossbones on the front—and scoops the grounds, adding more than Alice thinks is necessary.

"Lain?"

Lain looks up, startled out of her task. Her hand shakes, spilling coffee grounds.

Alice bites her tongue.

“You could turn off your programming too,” Lain offers, dumping the grounds in the basket. “It’s easy.”

“No thank you.” Alice isn’t even sure what Lain’s offering.

Lain shrugs, shuts the top of the coffeemaker, and sets it to brew. She swirls her cup before swallowing the last bit of coffee.

“Lain, why aren’t you coming to school anymore?”

The coffeemaker burbles. The clock ticks. But Lain doesn’t answer. She doesn’t look at Alice.

It looks like Lain hears something that’s not there. She cocks her head to one side.

“Lain? Um...” Alice’s voice falters when Lain looks at her. “C...Could I use your bathroom?”

“It’s upstairs.”

The chair scrapes too loudly on the floor as Alice gets up from the table. She tries not to run out of the room. But she moves quick. She scurries up the stairs, so

close to taking them two at a time.

The upstairs hallway has five doors. Alice doesn't call downstairs. She tries them one at a time.

The first door leads to an empty room. Stepping inside, Alice can see the shape of furniture that must have been here. Maybe this shadow on the floor was a dresser and that one a bed. The closet is empty except for a single hair clip, a butterfly moulded on it in plastic. All the rage with high school girls these days.

The second door is the bathroom. Alice steps inside. She runs cold water over her face. Her eyes are red in the mirror, like she's been crying. Alice reaches for the hand towel and notices the extension cord plugged into the wall.

Snaking out from it are eight black cables, each the size of her thumb. They coil along the wall, held in place by a set of hooks. These cables slither over the top of the bathroom door and through a groove sanded specifically for them.

Opening the door, Alice finds the cables continue, hung from the ceiling and snaking down the hall. Following them, she comes to a closed door.

Behind the door, things hum and chirp mechanically. Her hands shake as she opens the door.

Part of the room is flooded with coolant. The wires snaking from the bathroom join a wider tangle. There's room for one person to stand in front of the lit screens. The window lets in only a fraction of the afternoon's bright light. The shadows in this room are cold, dark, and yawning.

Alice stares at the screens. From her place in the doorway, she can just barely make out some of the images if she leans the right way.

There's stock images of beds and research paper text that blurs together on the screen.

Lain's bed is consumed by wires and computer parts. Debris on top of sheets. A manual's open, resting on top of her [bear pajamas].

Yanking the door shut, Alice jumps when it slams. She listens. But there's only silence.

When she can move, she takes the stairs slowly. She's lightheaded, dizzy. And she's grateful when she sits back down at the table. There's a cup of cocoa waiting for her.

"I thought the coffee might be too bitter," Lain explains, sipping from her own mug. It smells so bitter. "So I made some cocoa for you instead."

It's decidedly powdered cocoa in hot water, gritty and bland. But Alice is grateful and sips it slowly. The small marshmallows in the mug brush against Alice's lips, threatening to stick there. She licks her lips.

"So..." Lain shrugs.

"So what?"

"Have you decided?"

"On what?"

"To turn off system updates," Lain says, as if it explains anything.

Alice stares down at her mug of cocoa, each dehydrated marshmallow dissolving on the surface. "I don't understand, Lain."

Lain nods. She doesn't say a word. She finishes her coffee, takes her mug to the sink, and washes it.

"Where are your parents?"

Lain shrugs. "What parents?"

Alice gets up from her seat. This time, the scrape of the chair doesn't startle her. She turns and, without looking back, pauses only to put her shoes on before leaving.

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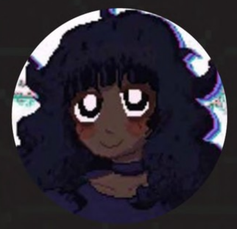
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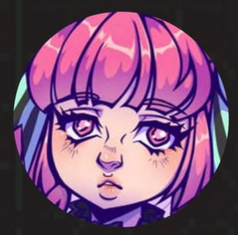
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