

**The Lost Chapter  
from  
Down and Out  
in the  
Magic Kingdom**

**With Apologies to Cory Doctorow**

**Insert near the paragraph  
beginning, “Zoya had been an  
early network engineer...”**

**Original work by Cory Doctorow,  
<http://www.craphound.com/down/>  
“Lost” chapter by Grant Barrett,  
<http://www.worldnewyork.net/>**

Zed's amiable insanity had more to do with her sexual past than it did her present.

When the sociology students came to agreement with the professors, it was to gamble their Whuffie on an all-or-none proposition which depended not upon scholarly abilities—for the professors knew they would lose, their static lectures stale by decades, their graduate students not one but three Kuhnian paradigm shifts ahead—but upon the most basic method of Whuffie accrual yet found, excepting the nano-ants which granted micropicos of Whuffie when you did not crush them on the pavement. The bet between the professors and the graduate students was to determine who gave the best head.

Such a sexual contest was hardly new: it was only a continuation of the Grand Whuffie Rush, when all things were held up for size and match against the shiny newness of the intangible representation of a community's web of respect. Like the hopefuls in canvas pants who had stormed the slopes of the Rockies in search of untapped veins of gold, in the beginning there had been those who struck Whuffie, and those who made Whuffie off of those lode stars. The resale market was high, and in those new fields of transformative good will, inflation undermined even the strongest stake, so that every action, every breath, was channeled towards the accrual of Whuffie. One result was that the fat chicks and the pimply bastards of the world were screwed into a blissful nonsleep. Another was even more Whuffie inflation, brought into check only after the world-wide population declined and then plateaued at low numbers not seen since those former golden days of the 19th century. The population began to decline after it was quickly determined that pregnancy put a damper on sexual Whuffie accrual, not least because of the judgmental glances from the What, Another Little Bastard? crowd, but also because nest-building and hormonal jags got in the way of high-yield many-partnered rendezvous.

The battle for good head left more professors with Whuffie in the ninety-ninth percentile than any graduate student would have thought possible. Decades of schtupping aspiring multi-limbed, multi-gendered

freshmen had given the greybeards a level of skill only since matched by the gilled and finned river maidens and men of the New Missouri River. That river—more of a moat, really, forming the New Island of St. Louis—was brought into bastard being when the Ad Hoc Corps of Engineers laid a bed of forty-eight-hour nanos. They were supposed to instantly convert the mud flats into levees to divert a flood, but those rising waters never materialized, and without sufficient liquid trigger, the nanos, indistinguishable from the swamp itself and so impossible to remove before their two-day expiration, took what moisture there was, joined it with available carbon, and built a delicate crystal lattice-work which in the forty-ninth hour collapsed into powder, blew away, and left a ragged trench where swamp had once stood. The flood arrived twelve hours after, catfish and all, and so the New Missouri River was born. Washed into to it were the mer-maid and mer-men from the biochemical liquid farms of Pursanto, freed at last.

Another twelve hours later, the trans-species non-Bitchun mer-people and the standard-shape Bitchuns were trying each other on for sexual size. There was much satisfaction.

During that time Zora Maypole Clamdigger Bates stood on the edge of her life. I found this and the other details out when I snapped the locks on a few of her public sub-directories. They were only cursorily protected, with passwords such as “salope” and “betterdeadthanred,” keys so simple that I took it as a sign that she wanted me, or someone, to be there.

There I found her primitive last-generation HUD, losslessly copied from portable medium to portable medium, from magnetic to optical to IC and then, with a leap of faith, to the new neural net then still in its first week. The NN let Bitchun's most devoted whuf by permitting their night-time brains to be press-ganged into serving as a placeless, centerless storage array. Many of them whuffed higher in the night hole than they could in the day hole; several dead-headed at only level nine stasis, brain-live, but body-neutral, the array infinitely plaguing their neurons with the constantly changing map of the Neural Net. Such long-termers and their caretakers called the Neural Net “Schroedinger”: the data had no form, no perimeters. It existed nowhere and everywhere, but could be found when called for. Dead and not-dead.

Zed's HUD file suffered none for the repeated transfers, despite a few resolution stretch-marks from where it had been grown into new formats, and despite the missing columns of metadata which were added to the spec only years after the NN had formed.

The new metadata had been agreed upon by the rogue Transportation Committee of the Schroedinger Net Node ad hoc during one year's annual September of the Net voting. As a diversion, the Transportation

Committee treated all the other committees to a group swim in the shadow of the bungee cocoon suspended from the Arch. Their swimming partners were the mer-folk, who were still so grateful for the sexual attention that they generated Whuffie of blizzard proportions. While everyone else practiced barrel rolls and the three-point lunar gainer (virtually impossible earthside), the Transportation Committee called quorum. Due to a strangely unchallenged amendment passed on the Transportation Committee's initiative the year before, quorum required just four entities be present out of the eighteen-hundred enrolled. That amendment noted that four entities were more than enough for quorum, since that number included one to lead, one to take notes, one to propose legislation, and another to object and propose counter-legislation, and all four to battle for the floor and wave around their leather-bound free terminals, quoting from Robert's Ad Hoc Rules of Order. This ensured nothing would be accomplished while the rest of the Schroedingers were away, and represented a very efficient micro-model of the larger consensus process which took weeks to unravel. Green Cicada Warner convinced the body when he said, "With a quorum of four, we can have the same non-result as if the full body is present. That way, everyone else can take a long lunch and come back when it's over." A majority of members agreed.

So the four members of the Transportation Committee of the Schroedinger Net Node ad hoc were free to impose metadata requirements which included individual chromosomal diffs made against the mapped genome core, full lists of specifications and manufacture of added hardware and non-organic plumbing, and a text dump of travel history to date, which, according to their final addition to the spec, had to begin with, "1. I leave [birth canal] [shell] [chronowomb] (circle one)." The Transportation Committee was tired of viewing HUDS and not knowing where they were looking at. The metadata also included fourteen Easter eggs, including visual clues to which of Green Cicada Warner's eighteen sexual members was the original.

Even without that metadata, Zed's old HUD was a boon. She had been a part of the CopperCollective. They ignored Whuffie outright. While the last vestiges of the metal-wired world gradually disappeared, as those billions of miles were replaced by glass fiber, copper still held a high value on the underground market. Glass did not appear everywhere at once, and the copper began to be stripped from the buried conduits and the towering poles faster than it could be replaced by the new, new thing. The copper left the country: melted into ingots, transported, and then re-rolled and extruded at the destination.

Who wanted the copper? The Emfree Zone. Seventy-five million acres of radio-free land in the dry plains of what was once Chile. Radio blankers and a stagnant cage of lead repulsed all electromagnetic probes and accidental traffic. To communicate with the Seesees, you had to show up. In person. It was unheard of. The Seesees wrapped the copper old-style in

silk and tar, buried it in fantastic shapes on the ground, birds and monkeys and hippos, patterned so as to avoid accidental heterodyne where the shielding might be weak. All their transmissions along that copper were simplex, passing in a circular fashion around the CopperCollective, using an 85-character, three-part system modeled on Morse code. There was one EM device permitted in the whole encampment, and every shelter had one: a switch. Click-clack, off-on, the messages were pounded out 24 hours a day. No conversations were had alone. All were had as a group, face to face or shared on the wire. To speak in groups numbering less than the total membership of the collective would warrant punishment: teeth would be extracted from the criminal's head, then the face wired shut. They'd linger, then die. All or none, the collective said. Everybody and everything for everybody.

But there was no Whuffie in such a collective. Zed wanted Whuffie. When outsiders arrived to the collective to deliver tons of the dully brilliant ingots, she could feel the power of their own self-confidence ripple off them in waves. These were people who knew their own value. They were marketable. While they had given up a good deal of freedom to the whim of their groups, they could put a number to their ego. They knew how to make themselves admired, loved, made love to. Zed knew none of these things. Or rather, she knew what everyone else knew. The CopperCollective promoted identical equality. Everyone had access to the same information, and if one member of the collective made wiser decisions than the others, she could not help but share those decisions, as all conversations and movements were public. All of them. There were no doors and no windows in the CopperCollective, only open walls and roofs, and the stagnant cage of lead overhead.

Only their thoughts were theirs alone. That's what Zora worked with. The one remaining private channel. She planned and executed her escape one Tuesday with a departing copper delivery man.

On the second day outside, she had herself wired and leapt into Bitchunry whole-heartedly.

Whuffie, everyone knew, was a social construct. It had value only because everyone agreed it had value. Those who did not value it, and did not accrue it, suffered, unless they were strong enough to defend against it. That came through group action. You could subscribe to Bitchunry without Whuffie, but it was not easy to do alone. In the early days, some felt that if one's Whuffie reached zero, then they should be liquidated, or at least plasticized and stored for future use in the Bahamian sea-sheds where surplus stocks of species were stored to be packaged and shipped to Mars when the forestation project was underway, where the relocated carnivores would need easy prey to keep them from wiping out the relocated herbivores. Plasticized bodies were as efficient of a food source as there was.

So groups like the CopperCollective had formed from those who reached zero Whuffie. Groups with zero Whuffie making it an asset, and snubbing those who prized Whuffie.

And then there was the other extreme: those for whom Whuffie accrued was everything. The human chemical pattern had been successfully unmade then rewired so that most chemical dependency paths were eliminated, taking the addiction out of crack and alcohol and even chocolate. But it was discovered that to remove the genetic seeds of all pleasure-centers was to create a lump of unmoving organic matter. Babies born without it never sought the nipple. If they were force- or tube-fed and reached adolescence, they passed quietly through puberty without once masturbating. They lived lives according to timers and bells. The SeaWorld ad hoc had discovered that the same training methods for the dolphins worked on the ambition-less (soul-less some called it; the missing genetic trigger was called the "soul," in all seriousness by some). They could only be made to even rise out of bed through constant training and reinforcement, and even then the bed would have to tip and spill them onto the floor. A rubberized floor, because they had no self-protective instincts. They were without human character. Zoids. Zero-quantity-humanoids.

Zed was a Whuffie whore outside the collective: she had several new vaginas attached to the crevices and hinges of her body, and then she let herself be fucked by anyone who was interested. Her Whuffie went through the roof. With that mother lode, she had a scrap of her genetic material retro-evolutionized back to what it might have been if she were born male. She based it mainly on her father's diff file, stored on the Neural Net like that of everyone else who had died in the last hundred and fifty years. She dipped a cotton swab in the PCR soup, threw it in the Kwik-Gro Organ-Izer, and set it to turn out a dozen genetically compatible penises. These she grafted onto all the ridges, humps and edges of her body. She whored for both sides now, and her Whuffie was unmatched.

Her type of crazy came from the chromosomal feedback loop she had coded in her last genetic house-keeping. Since the human genetic baggage was mostly waste, some people cleaned out the junk and used the free space for steganography, to encode hints to their future selves which might be better left out of a HUD, such as bank account numbers, and names of people to add to the intra-cochlear call-blocking. Zed used hers to include a genetic program, its compiler and a machine-level DNA operating system to run it. Since, she theorized, Whuffie was acquired through desire for more Whuffie, if she increased her desire, she could increase her Whuffie. Some back-woods hack in Alberta logging country where she served an army of bucherons rewired her machine-level DNA operating system with a reinforcement loop. In the process, he mistakenly singed her corpus callosum and frontal lobe. Without telling her, he replaced them on the fly with unimprinted cloned neural material.

This new material left her strange: parts wipe cleaned and ready to be re-addressed, but informed wholly by the sexually creature she had become. The reptile brain swallowed the unexposed grey matter for its own purposes. That lizard did not remember why she fucked her way through the backwoods of Canada for Whuffie: all it knew was what it had to do, and it refashioned the frontal lobe toward that purpose.

By the time I met Zed, she was a hell of a lot of fun.