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3
4 PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,

5
6 joint with the
7 COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT,

8
9 and with the
10 COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,

11
12 U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
13 WASHINGTON, D.C.
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17 DEPOSITION OF: BRADLEY HOUSEMAN
18
19

20 Monday, August 12, 1985

21 Washington, D.C.
22

23 The deposition in the above matter was held in Room HVC-304,
24 Capitol Visitors Center, commencing at 8:55 a. m.
25

26 Present: Representatives [REDACTED]
27 [REDACTED]
28
29

30 Appearances:

31 For the PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE:
32 [REDACTED]

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For the COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT:

For the COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES:

For BRADLEY HOUSEMAN:

EMILE LIBINKSI

AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP

2001 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 2400

DALLAS, TEXAS 75201

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1 THE CHAIRMAN: The committee and hearing will come to order.

2 Good morning. Thank you Mr. Houseman for participating
3 in these remarkable proceedings. Welcome to the committees
4 and the Representatives present today. We have agreed to the
5 following rules before convening.

6 First Mr. Houseman will be allowed unlimited time for a
7 narrative description of the events in question. We will
8 follow with one hour of questions from each committee, with
9 a targeted end time of 1:00 PM. I am grateful today that each
10 committee has agreed to work without regard to party as we
11 ascertain the facts at issue here in a non-partisan manner.
12 Prior to this deposition, our teams have spent weeks in
13 preparation. By agreement, all Representative names will be
14 subject to redaction to exemplify the unity of the committees
15 and protect the openness of this investigation.

16 Prior to your appearance, you filed a lawsuit under seal
17 in the United States District Court for the Northern District
18 of Texas against the United States of America. Your
19 participation today was contingent upon a global settlement
20 reached with the Department of Justice that included optional
21 participation in the United States Federal Witness Protection
22 Program. Special thanks to the Office of the US Attorney for
23 working diligently to reach the compromise. After this
24 hearing, it is my understanding that the suit will be
25 dismissed with prejudice to refileing.

26 As this is a classified hearing, all information
27 disclosed will remain confidential until and if this hearing
28 is de-classified. Mr. Houseman, you are represented by
29 counsel today and may rely on counsel as appropriate.

30 Before I turn over the floor to Mr. Houseman,
31 Representative [REDACTED] of the Committee on Armed
32 Services is recognized for a five-minute introduction.

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1 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you Mr. Chairman.

2 We're here today to gain first-hand information on a Top
3 Secret Classified project undertaken without the knowledge or
4 approval of this committee, any Department of Defense
5 leadership, or apparently any leadership within DARPA itself.
6 The project was undertaken contrary to the Mansfield
7 Amendment and was wholly outside of the scope of the law.

8 Project Cathode apparently began when a DARPA scientist
9 named [REDACTED] made a discovery related to
10 computer and graphic displays. Though the technical
11 specifications remain classified at a level beyond most in
12 this room right now, the discovery allowed for the creation
13 of a remarkably thin graphics television or monitor that could
14 display more colors than any other display on the planet.

15 After the discovery and creation of the display, the
16 display was submitted for testing and review under the
17 Mansfield Amendment, which is in place to ensure all work
18 within DARPA has a direct potential military application.

19 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. [REDACTED] just to clean up the
20 record, DARPA stands for-

21 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, apologies, DARPA is the Defense
22 Advanced Research Projects Agency under the DOD. It is the
23 agency primarily responsible for our military research. Due
24 to the Mansfield Amendment, DARPA projects must have direct
25 military applications. After the display discovery, the
26 project was submitted for analysis under the Mansfield
27 Amendment. I'm told this analysis consisted of a test for
28 practicality along with a test for potential uses. Though
29 personally I find the project fascinating from a scientific
30 standpoint, further development was declined after the
31 Mansfield analysis.

32 What happened next to Project Cathode is disputed and,

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1 as I'm going to run low on time, I will not convolute the
2 record with the disparate tales. Long story short, a small
3 DARPA team working in Dallas was co-opted by
4 [REDACTED] for further development on the project
5 without the knowledge or oversight of his commanding
6 officers. There were five display screens in total produced
7 by the team using production facilities borrowed from Texas
8 Instruments under a DARPA contract. To our knowledge, the
9 employees at Texas Instruments believed the screens to be
10 low-power, illuminated white boards.

11 After the production of the screens, the DARPA team in
12 Dallas developed a variety of software components and
13 applications to test the screens. For those here that are
14 less technologically inclined, software is what tells a
15 computer what to do. It is our belief that most of this
16 software was implemented to test the maximum amount of colors
17 that might be displayed by the screens and how quickly the
18 display might respond to commands. Apparently, the screen
19 proved capable of displaying more than one-hundred million
20 unique colors, besting our current technology by a factor of
21 25 or more, all out of a screen that is less than an inch
22 thick.

23 What exactly happened next is another convoluted series
24 of disputed facts. The only thing we can say for sure is the
25 most junior staff member on the Dallas DARPA, a Mr.
26 [REDACTED] was working on a color test system that
27 created three-dimensional tubes late one evening and was
28 found the following morning in an unconscious or dazed state.

29 Upon discovering their comatose colleague, on the orders
30 of [REDACTED], the team began to further develop
31 the exact software that caused Mr. [REDACTED] to slip
32 into a coma. Mr. [REDACTED] by the way, remains in

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1 the same state today in a VA hospital in Virginia. A tragic
2 outcome indeed.

3 During additional testing and development of the
4 software, the team began to identify certain colors and
5 patterns that would cause the person testing the software to
6 enter various dazed states. Through trial and error, and
7 fortunately without additional casualties on the team, a
8 formula was developed to determine a spectrum of colors that
9 would cause the person viewing the screen to enter into a
10 progressively more dazed and even a comatose state. That is,
11 some versions of the colors would cause a person to be lightly
12 or briefly dazed while other colors could cause long-term
13 brain damage. Obviously, the prevailing theory regarding Mr.
14 [REDACTED] was that he inadvertently was able to view
15 a color so far on the spectrum that it caused his brain to
16 permanently, well, turn off.

17 The Project Cathode team then conceived of a game using
18 the dangerous software. A computer game or an arcade game
19 where the operator of the game would shoot figures as they
20 approached. The game imported and borrowed a number of
21 features from popular modern arcade games but the game was
22 mostly a ruse. As the player continued down the color tubes
23 and advanced through the game, the player would be shown
24 colors progressively moving down the "daze spectrum" until
25 the player stopped interacting with the game. That is to say
26 that it was expected skilled video game players would advance
27 to the point that they might see colors that would cause them
28 to be dazed or even pass out.

29 In notes that were later found in the Project Cathode
30 offices, [REDACTED] believed this technology had
31 immense military value. It was his belief that the display
32 screens could be used to, at a minimum, daze enemy troops

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1 and, possibly, could be developed to control their minds.

2 We know that it did not take long for the team members
3 at Project Cathode to reject the idea of using themselves as
4 guinea pigs. In response, [REDACTED] ordered that
5 the screen and game be packaged as a working video arcade
6 game. His notes indicate that he believed teenagers would be
7 easy and unknowing test subjects and further that video game
8 players would be less dazed than the colors due to their
9 excessive exposure to vector and raster colored graphics.

10 The record then gets murky as we progress to Project
11 Cathode's public tests. Somewhere along the way the game was
12 given the name of Polybius. The programming of the game, what
13 made it work, was also changed so that it was more difficult
14 to advance through the color tubes due to concerns that novice
15 players might end up in a comatose state. [REDACTED]

16 [REDACTED] notes indicate that advancing in the game was
17 made difficult to the point that no member of Project Cathode
18 could reach any part of the game that caused them to be
19 significantly dazed.

20 In total, only two arcade machines were built. These
21 machines were placed in the two arcade locations closest to
22 the Project Cathode's office at the Texas Instruments
23 complex. One machine was installed in ProVideo Arcade in
24 Dallas, TX and the other at Tilt Arcade in Richardson, TX
25 inside a mall called Richardson Square.

26 WITNESS - MR. HOUSEMAN: Sir. That's not correct. Sir. I
27 think you-

28 THE CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, the witness will wait until he
29 has been recognized by the Panel.

30 WITNESS - MR. HOUSEMAN: Well that is not correct.

31 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Houseman, you're recognized for a
32 brief correction to the factual basis.

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1 WITNESS - MR. HOUSEMAN: The machine at Richardson Square
2 was installed in lobby of the Richardson 3 not in the Tilt.
3 The theater had a few games right next to the ticket counter.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Alright. Thank you Mr. Houseman. Mr.
5 [REDACTED] please continue the background facts. You are
6 over time but the Chair will add equal time to each
7 committee's question time for fairness.

8 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you Mr. Chairman. So two
9 arcade machines were built and placed in Dallas-area arcades.
10 The Project Cathode team purportedly told the operators at
11 the arcades that the games were a joint and secret project
12 between the arcade companies Warner Media, Sega Games, Atari
13 Games, and Midway Games using an untested prototype
14 technology. As such, they explained, the game had no
15 manufacturer's mark or other markings. According to the notes
16 recovered, the game was built using game cabinets from a game
17 called Sega Zaxxon, each painted completely black to remove
18 any markings.

19 The final part of the plan, that was apparently only
20 known to a few members of Project Cathode, was most sinister,
21 illegal, and the reason why we're here today. Because the
22 team was unsure about how different persons would react to
23 the displayed colors and patterns, a decision was made by
24 [REDACTED] to recruit, or kidnap, the game players
25 who were able to progress far enough into the game. He figured
26 these players would be the key to further testing and
27 exploration of the mind control aspect of the project, or
28 alternatively in determining exactly what made people more or
29 less resistant to the dazing colors. There was also apparently
30 the concept of a super game soldier or spy proposed prior to
31 the location tests. A person that might be immune to the
32 effects who could be useful for reconnaissance or asset

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1 recovery. It goes without saying that these ideas were
2 ludicrous and were never really explored. By the time of the
3 location tests, the Project Cathode team was operating
4 recklessly without any permission, sufficient funding, or
5 appropriate manpower.

6 The teams placed the two prototype games at ProVideo
7 arcade and in the Richardson Square Mall. We do not have
8 records of the negotiations but apparently it was not
9 difficult to convince the operators of the arcades to give
10 floor space to a free, new arcade game. The game at ProVideo
11 suffered technical problems and was picked up shortly after
12 its placement by the Project Cathode team. We do not believe
13 any person suffered ill effects during its use. This unit was
14 later used for additional tests on Mr. Houseman during his-

15 COUNSEL FOR MR. HOUSEMAN - EMILE LIBINKSI: Captivity.

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Libinksi, you are not recognized,
17 please allow us to proceed.

18 MR. [REDACTED]: Yes, captivity is the most
19 applicable word. The machine at Richardson Square was placed
20 approximately 4 hours before Mr. Houseman encountered the
21 game. He will elaborate on what happened next but he was in
22 captivity for approximately 93 days before being allowed to
23 leave the Project Cathode lab. The Richardson Square Polybius
24 machine was removed from its location at the mall after Mr.
25 Houseman was kidnapped. The current location of the game is
26 unknown and subject to a nationwide search.

27 All members of Project Cathode have been arrested or
28 reassigned. As part of the settlement agreement with Mr.
29 Houseman, the government of the United States has admitted no
30 wrongdoing though I will say, personally, I am sorry this
31 happened and I hope the substantial financial compensation
32 will go to good use. And with that I have nothing further.

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1 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you Representative [REDACTED]
2 We'll take a ten-minute recess before continuing with the
3 witness testimony.
4

5 [...]
6

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you again for being here Mr.
8 Houseman. Though I know this process appears formulaic and
9 benign, do know that the members of the Panel and the
10 respective committees take this matter extremely seriously
11 and are outraged by the treatment you received. After your
12 testimony, our committees will meet and discuss a number of
13 deep and major changes to DARPA and similar programs. You are
14 not limited by time, you are advised by counsel, and pursuant
15 to your agreement to appear today, your counsel is allowed to
16 stop you at any time from speaking, and he will be delivering
17 an introductory statement.

18 COUNSEL FOR MR. HOUSEMAN - EMILE LIBINKSI: Thank you Mr.
19 Chairman and thank you to the Panel. I met Mr. Houseman six
20 months ago when he called my office one day after finding my
21 number in a law directory. Though I believed his call to be
22 a simple teenage prank, he described being held at a location
23 that sounded similar to the Texas Instruments campus and he
24 gave me a single name - [REDACTED] Fortunately for
25 both of us, my first friend in the Dallas area, an old family
26 acquaintance, is an engineer at Texas Instruments. One phone
27 call to him and I realized there might be some truth to the
28 story, so I took on the case.

29 I want to say before he begins that Mr. Houseman is a
30 remarkably bright kid and made my job pretty easy. If or when
31 he tells you all that he will not be attending college this
32 fall, please know that he is acting against the advice of

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1 counsel.

2 I also want to say that what Mr. Houseman suffered meets
3 the legal and practical definition of torture. Agents of the
4 United States government took him from his world, deprived
5 him of human contact, and subjected him a battery of tests
6 that range from bizarre to evil. And for what? We're told the
7 data was completely unusable and destroyed. We're told that
8 there was no scientific basis or method applied to any of the
9 testing. It was simply sadism and I want to -

10 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Libinksi, this is a private hearing.
11 We don't need grandstanding. You've already won your case.
12 Please allow Mr. Houseman to proceed.

13 COUNSEL FOR MR. HOUSEMAN - EMILE LIBINKSI: I take issue
14 with your characterizations. The United States government
15 abducted and tortured one of its own citizens. This classified
16 hearing is not going to result in justice. Your promises that
17 the monsters behind Project Cathode are subject to some sort
18 of justice system ring hollow. An open trial with full
19 discovery would likely expose systematic public experiments
20 by the Department of Defense, DARPA, the CIA, and all other
21 members of the defense and intelligence behemoth and I -

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Libinksi, I am sure I do not need to
23 educate you on what an executed settlement agreement means.
24 The vague threats are no longer relevant. Is Mr. Houseman
25 going to be permitted to speak? Right now you are the only
26 person here preventing us from performing our duties and
27 addressing potential flaws in the system.

28 COUNSEL FOR MR. HOUSEMAN - EMILE LIBINKSI: My client is
29 about to speak. I've advised Mr. Houseman to tell his full
30 story as he believes necessary to convey and explain to you
31 why he suffered the damages he did. I will not interrupt my
32 client during this narrative section but I would request the

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1 Panel do the same. Please understand my client is eighteen
2 years old, speaking to some of the most powerful people in
3 the world, and it might take him some time to be comfortable
4 in his telling of his story. The damage inflicted to him was
5 severe and will last the rest of his life. It is catastrophic
6 the pain and-

7 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Libinksi, please.

8 COUNSEL FOR MR. HOUSEMAN - EMILE LIBINKSI: My client
9 will now tell his story.

10 MR. HOUSEMAN: Thank you. Thank you to everyone who has
11 spoken so far. Thank you to this Panel for hearing my story.

12 I met Heather in the middle of my junior year at Berkner
13 High School in Richardson, Texas. We had Algebra II together
14 in the Fall semester. I didn't see her much during the Spring
15 semester but -

16 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Houseman, I'm sorry to interrupt you.
17 Is this relevant to Project Cathode or Polybius?

18 COUNSEL FOR MR. HOUSEMAN - EMILE LIBINKSI: Mr. Chairman,
19 I asked you to not interrupt.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Libinksi, your client is doing fine
21 but I don't understand why we're talking about his Algebra
22 class.

23 COUNSEL FOR MR. HOUSEMAN - EMILE LIBINKSI: Perhaps if
24 you would allow him to speak uninterrupted for more than a
25 minute, the narrative could come together. Mr. Houseman has
26 asked for an opportunity to share his story and that is what
27 he came prepared to do.

28 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Houseman, alright, please just try to
29 focus on the facts relevant to today's inquiry. Continue.

30 MR. HOUSEMAN: I met Heather in the fall of junior year
31 but didn't see her much during the spring. That summer, I had
32 a job at my father's company delivering paint to Richardson,

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1 Garland, and North Dallas. We do automotive paint as a white
2 label for Sears and Sherwin Williams. It's called Houseman
3 Paint Distribution.

4 So I was driving the truck one day that summer, probably
5 in late June and I had a full truck for Sears at the Richardson
6 Square Mall. Sears was running a big auto paint touch up
7 special for July 4 and it was going to take a couple hours
8 for the truck to be unloaded and processed. Sears didn't let
9 us unload the truck because of insurance or something.

10 Most of the time I delivered to the Richardson Square
11 Sears, I would go over to Hot Sams and get a pretzel. It was
12 right by the Sears entrance. I had a friend, Todd, who worked
13 over at the Breslers and he would give me a free cone if he
14 was working. The Breslers and the Hot Sams are right next to
15 each other. So I parked the truck and went to Hot Sams. Todd
16 wasn't at the Breslers so -

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Houseman, I don't mean to interrupt
18 again and please continue but let me just be clear, this
19 period of time, this was more than a year ago right? The
20 summer of 1984? And approximately 6 months before the
21 incident?

22 MR. HOUSEMAN: That's right. So I had some time and I was
23 walking around aimlessly. The mall was pretty empty, I think
24 it was about noon on a weekday, maybe a Wednesday. I had a
25 few quarters of change from the pretzel so I thought I would
26 go spend them at the Tilt and see if there were any new games
27 or anyone I knew at the arcade. My high school is pretty close
28 to the Richardson Square so most days I would see someone
29 from school. Not that day though. At least not at the Tilt.
30 There were also no new games at Tilt but the Dragon's Lair
31 was fixed finally. I remember because I made a decent run at
32 the game that day. Maybe played 4 or so minutes into it, which

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1 is good. But it's not really my game. It's cool and all, like
2 looks cool, I guess, but it's more like a really old movie
3 machine with a joystick. It's not as interactive as I like.

4 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Houseman, this is the last time I'll
5 interrupt, I promise, and I'm sorry. Please let us know,
6 during your testimony, if anything about the content or inter-
7 workings of these games is relevant to the Project Cathode or
8 Polybius. I think I can speak for most of the members of this
9 Panel when I say that we don't know what a Dragon Slayer is-

10 MR. HOUSEMAN: It's Dragon's Lair, Lair like where the
11 dragon lives, its lair.

12 THE CHAIRMAN: Ok, thank you. Let us know if any of these
13 games are relevant to Project Cathode and if there is any
14 information we need about the game.

15 MR. HOUSEMAN: After Dragon's Lair, I walked across to
16 the Richardson 3, the movie theater at the mall, to check on
17 those games in the lobby. They had a Pac-Man, a Galaxian, and
18 a Donkey Kong at the time. Not new games but they played
19 better than the games at Tilt because most people didn't
20 really know about them. I had been getting really good at
21 Pac-Man and liked to get a game in there when I could. I could
22 last 45 minutes on one quarter easy and it was a great way to
23 kill time.

24 That day the theater was doing a senior showing so there
25 was a small line of old people, senior citizens, in line to
26 see Splash. Nobody was playing any of the games. But before
27 I could get my quarter in the Pac-Man, Heather yelled to me
28 from the ticket booth. Turns out she started working at the
29 Richardson 3 a few weeks before. She asked what I was doing
30 there and I explained my summer job and things just kind of
31 picked up from there. When I told her I liked to play the
32 Pac-Man, she said she thought it was too difficult and she

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1 liked the Galaxian more. I offered to show her some tricks
2 but since she was working, it wasn't really the right time,
3 and she declined. We agreed that I would come back on a day
4 there wasn't a senior showing and I could show her. After
5 that she got distracted with work and I went over and played
6 Pac-Man.

7 About 20 minutes into the game, someone tapped my
8 shoulder. I don't really look around much when I play and it
9 surprised me. Heather asked if I was still playing my first
10 quarter and I said I hadn't even died yet. And I don't know
11 if I need to explain this but in video games, most of the
12 time, you get 3 or 5 lives per credit. You normally get one
13 credit per quarter. In most games, you can earn extra lives
14 by doing well at the game. Since I had not died yet, I was
15 still using my first life in the game and had extra lives to
16 keep going if I died. Anyway, I don't know if she thought it
17 was impressive or lame that I was doing so well. We talked
18 for a few minutes before she walked off. I finally died maybe
19 ten minutes later and walked away from the game.

20 Heather was still at the ticket booth when I finished so
21 I walked over to say good-bye. She mentioned that her co-
22 worker, an older guy, said that there is an end to Pac-Man
23 and that anyone who makes it to the end gets a special trip
24 to California, a cash prize, and will even meet the people
25 who work on the games and maybe even contribute to a new game.
26 I had never heard about that and, looking back, it didn't
27 make much sense.

28 Pac-Man was old at this point and I'd scored more than
29 a million points before and the game just kept going forever
30 with the same last level. Nobody else I knew had ever come
31 close to a million points and nobody had ever mentioned prizes
32 for beating the game. You would think that the game maker

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1 would have prizes for their new games not old games, right?
2 Plus I think that guy at Heather's work was just trying to be
3 a know-it-all and get in her pants.

4 He also apparently said that he knew people who had done
5 it and made the trip and were now working on making games.
6 That also didn't make much sense. We had a computer lab at
7 school and I was pretty good at messing around with computer
8 programs and working on programing new programs but being
9 good at Pac-Man didn't mean I could make Pac-Man. I don't
10 know, I really didn't think much about it. But it seems really
11 absurd now.

12 But then Heather said maybe I would beat Pac-Man one day
13 and I could take her on the trip. It sounds really corny but
14 that sounded great to me. I told her I would be back in a
15 couple of days to deliver to Sears again. She told me she
16 worked at the Richardson 3 almost all weekday matinee shifts.
17 So I planned on delivering to Sears when she had shifts at
18 the theater. And we said good-bye for now.

19 For the rest of that summer, I pretty much just delivered
20 paint, played Pac-Man, and hung around the mall. I had some
21 summer service projects with my clubs at school but I kind-
22 of blew them off. I still turned something in of course and
23 got credit but I would not brag about them or anything. I
24 really just wanted to beat Pac-Man and see Heather.

25 Then as the summer came to a close, Heather and I were
26 dating sometimes. Like going out on real dates with each
27 other. I think we were together, you know, an item at that
28 point, going steady. But it was slightly murky. We mostly
29 just went to places around the mall or on Plano Road. Nothing
30 really major and we never really talked about what we were
31 doing.

32 We kissed for the first time exactly a week before school

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1 was supposed to start back. I was really anxious about going
2 back to school. Heather was probably going to quit her job or
3 maybe work one shift a week. The thought of anything changing
4 was incredibly scary for me. Everything seemed perfect how it
5 was. One night though we just kissed. I think we didn't want
6 to go through the whole summer without actually doing anything
7 like that. So we kissed.

8 MR. [REDACTED] Excuse me Mr. Chairman, are we
9 really going to be subjected to the dating life of teenagers
10 in Richardson, Texas? We paid more than three million dollars
11 to get this testimony and we're hearing about kissing high
12 school students. This is totally irrelevant and-

13 THE CHAIRMAN: The representative from California will
14 yield the floor and mute his microphone. There will be time
15 for questions at the conclusion of the narrative statement.
16 Mr. Houseman has plenty of time and, no matter how irrelevant
17 this fact pattern might seem, we have been told that this is
18 connected and we will treat it as such. Please continue Mr.
19 Houseman, I anticipate no further interruption.

20 MR. HOUSEMAN: Thank you. So once school started back,
21 our senior year, Heather and I had Advanced Geometry together,
22 which was really great. We spent an hour together every
23 weekday, worked in the same groups, and we would study
24 together pretty often. We still went on dates and at one point
25 I asked her if she was my girlfriend. She thought that was
26 the most ridiculous question and said something like: "Of
27 course." I had forgotten about Pac-Man pretty much.

28 Then one Thursday there was a big ice storm that hit our
29 town. School was shut down and everyone was looking for
30 something to do. Heather and I decided to go to the Richardson
31 Square and see what was open. The place was empty and many of
32 the stores were locked up. The theater was locked up too.

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1 After we walked around for a while, we realized that none of
2 the food stores were going to open and that we needed to
3 figure out lunch somewhere.

4 Heather was still working occasional shifts at the
5 theater and said that she had a key. She said we could pay
6 for some snacks and maybe get the popcorn machine turned on.
7 I didn't like the idea of it because it seemed a little shady
8 but, to be honest to the Panel, I probably would have robbed
9 a bank if Heather asked me to. So we went into a little access
10 hallway near the theater and Heather just kind-of jiggled the
11 handle and it opened. It didn't even need the key.

12 We paid for some Goobers, Reeses Pieces, a bag of nacho
13 chips, and two Cokes. I think it was \$4 or so. We ate on the
14 benches near theater two. I was nervous that someone was going
15 to find us. Heather wasn't nervous at all and just said if
16 anyone showed up, she would tell them that she left her bag
17 at work and needed it for school. By the time we finished the
18 food, we heard the mall music stop and someone announce that
19 the mall was closing for the day due to inclement weather.

20 Once the music turned off, it was totally silent. Every
21 time we moved it seemed like the entire mall would echo it
22 back to us. We whispered a few times but stayed pretty silent.
23 At one point the security guard walked near the lobby and I
24 think checked to make sure the security gate was locked. I
25 was getting terrified.

26 After, well, probably twenty minutes, the lights in the
27 mall turned off. I didn't hear any other noise at this point.
28 I wasn't sure at the time, I was maybe too naive, but it
29 actually seemed like Heather was up to something. But before
30 I could suggest leaving, she said something that I'll never
31 forget, she said, "Want to play Pac-Man?"

32 The arcade games in the lobby were always plugged in and

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1 on. I asked her if she'd rather do something else like go
2 find our friends, go to the park and try to sled or something.
3 I don't know if I was scared I wouldn't play well or I was
4 scared she wouldn't have a good time or I was scared we would
5 end up in handcuffs. But she insisted.

6 So we put in a quarter and I started to play. The sound
7 echoed in the entire mall and I knew if anyone was there,
8 we'd be found out fast. But nobody ever came. After about
9 fifteen minutes, Heather disappeared for a bit. She came back
10 and read a book, ate some more candy, and we just kind-of
11 talked while I played. I think it took me about an hour to
12 get to a million points.

13 The thing about Pac-Man is that the game doesn't really
14 change after level 21. It's always you versus the ghosts on
15 the same level. So you can learn patterns and places where
16 Pac is safe and you can last a long time. It becomes more
17 about concentration. You just have to stay alive and not make
18 mistakes.

19 So I got to a million and I asked Heather if she wanted
20 to do something else. She said no and I kept playing. It took
21 another hour or so to get to 2 million points. I had never
22 scored 2 million points before. I don't know if anyone else
23 had either. I know people talk about scoring a lot of points
24 but you can't really believe them normally. Everyone knows
25 records in places like Twin Galaxies are fake because there
26 are scores in there that are impossible.

27 Around two million points, I think Heather finally
28 started getting bored and she started trying to get me to
29 lose. First she threw candy at me. Then she started kissing
30 my neck and stuff while I was playing. She asked how long I
31 thought I could last. I said I think I can play forever. She
32 asked if I could beat the game and I said that if there is an

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1 end, I think I could reach it. She was whispering in my ear
2 when we heard a huge door slam shut somewhere in the mall.

3 Instantly, we ran to Theater 1 and hid. I could hear my
4 game dying off and I thought that meant for sure someone was
5 going to find us. I told Heather that we should just walk out
6 and tell them that we were getting the bag when we got locked
7 in. She grabbed my hand, tugged, and ran up to the projection
8 booth. We sat on the floor of the booth. I could tell this is
9 where Heather had been earlier. There was a blanket on the
10 floor and a movie in the projector reel. She kissed me and
11 more happened and it advanced beyond that and well-

12 I don't know the right way to say this but we-

13 THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Houseman, I think we understand where
14 you are going. You and Heather - did we get Heather's last
15 name?

16 MR. HOUSEMAN: It's Rubio.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Ok so you are trying to explain that you
18 and Ms. Rubio had sexual intercourse in a projection room in
19 the first theater at the Richardson 3. Is that what you wanted
20 to tell us? I certainly hope this is necessary and you are
21 not wasting the Panel's time Mr. Houseman. And unless it's
22 absolutely necessary, I don't think we need additional
23 details about the encounter.

24 MR. HOUSEMAN: Yes. I guess that's it. It was also the
25 first time Heather told me that she loved me. My parents are
26 great and all and I know they love me but they don't say it
27 much. It was the first time I can really remember anyone
28 saying that to me. That's weird right? I don't get a lot of
29 positive reinforcement in my life I guess.

30 But I was also thinking about Pac-Man. I knew I could
31 beat it and that I might be the first person in the world to
32 really beat it. So it was all kind-of intertwined in my head.

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1 I know that sounds strange. Pac-Man and Heather have always
2 been a bit connected.

3 After the, well, you know. Heather put on an old copy of
4 the Spy Who Loved Me that the theater had kept for matinees
5 and we watched it from the top row. I probably wasn't the
6 best critic at the time but I think it was a pretty good
7 movie. After that, we cleaned things up, left all the money
8 on the counter with a receipt Heather printed, and left out
9 of the side exit we had entered five or six hours earlier. I
10 remember thinking about trying to get another round of Pac-
11 Man in at that point but it was getting late in the afternoon
12 and we needed to check in with our parents.

13 The door to the outside was frozen shut and both of us
14 had to time our shoulders perfectly to break it open. It was
15 so bright outside that I think it took the entire walk back
16 to the car for our eyes to fully open again. During the ride
17 to her house, I told Heather that I loved her too. Despite
18 everything that happened to me, that's still the most
19 memorable day of my life. Or maybe just my favorite.

20 Sometime in the next week or two at school though, I was
21 called down to the counselor's office. I had been submitting
22 college applications already and I assumed it was about my
23 recommendation letters or something. But it wasn't about
24 that.

25 It turned out that my teachers had contacted my counselor
26 and my parents because I wasn't doing as well as normal in my
27 classes that semester. It was an overreaction, there was no
28 reason to involve my parents, but one thing about it stung.
29 The counselor said that there was a good chance I would drop
30 out of the top 5 grade-point-averages for my class year. And
31 not just a good chance, that it was all but certain. It seems
32 really inconsequential now but it was a shock for me at the

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1 time. I thought I was going to be the salutatorian.

2 My parents were also pretty upset. I told them that I
3 would focus and do my best to salvage the semester. I told
4 Heather about it too but she didn't seem to care at all. I
5 told her that I needed to focus on school and not on her. She
6 told me that she was going to graduate twentieth or something
7 in the class but that wasn't a big deal. She said that our
8 rank wouldn't change anything about our life or who we were.
9 I disagreed. It escalated and she dumped me when I told her
10 that she didn't care because it was impossible for her to be
11 top 5 and she just couldn't understand.

12 I know it doesn't matter now but I honestly wasn't trying
13 to be mean. I really just meant that no matter how well she
14 did at that point, she couldn't be top 5. I mean,
15 mathematically. I think it's important that you know that. I
16 wasn't trying to insult her. I was just hurt that something
17 I'd taken for granted was gone and there wasn't much I could
18 do about it.

19 Needless to say, I had more time for school after that.
20 But the breakup had its own downward impact on my school work.
21 I saw Heather everyday. She didn't talk to me anymore. It was
22 not prepared for that level of, I guess heartbreak. She either
23 ignored me. Or her friends told me to leave her alone. It was
24 embarrassing.

25 In the grief, I started playing video games more. A lot
26 more. Probably an unhealthy amount. I spent maybe 1000 hours
27 playing Astro Chase, Space Dungeon, and Rescue on Fractalus.
28 I had the world record on all three pretty quickly but they
29 were comforting, I guess, so I just kept playing them.

30 Then one day, probably in early December, as the semester
31 was wrapping up, I went to the mall to find a new game. I
32 also had a habit of walking by the theater. It was pretty

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1 pathetic.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: This is the Richardson Square Mall,
3 correct?

4 MR. HOUSEMAN: Yes, sorry. And that day, at a kiosk in
5 the mall, there was a guy selling these knockoff or weird
6 games. Mostly Atari and Intellivision stuff. He had this loose
7 cartridge of a game I think I had heard about before called
8 Zenji. I guess nobody liked the game or something, because it
9 wasn't a knockoff or anything, it was a real release, but he
10 only wanted ten dollars for it. So I grabbed that and went
11 home to play it.

12 And I really loved the game. It's not a pretty game. It
13 doesn't look good on the screen. But it's fast. Very fast.
14 It's a puzzle game but the puzzles are not really the
15 challenge, the enemies are the challenge. Maybe it's an action
16 game hidden as a puzzle game. You connect a maze as fast you
17 can and there are flame enemies that move around the maze
18 pieces and shoot at you. It's really hard until you get the
19 hang of it. Then it's just great.

20 So even though I was trying to finish the semester strong
21 at school, I mostly just played Zenji after that. All night
22 Zenji, then school, then Zenji. My dad doesn't make me work
23 during the school year because school was my job he would
24 say, I guess. But I didn't care about school much. I cared
25 about Zenji. It also really helped forgetting, or numbing,
26 everything about Heather. So Zenji became my life in December
27 1984.

28 Since the game was so obscure, I didn't really have
29 anyone to talk to about it. So I started writing letters to
30 Mr. Matthew Hubbard, who had made Zenji. I was getting far
31 into the game and I wanted more information. I also wanted to
32 figure out if there was an end. After level 19, which isn't

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1 easy to get to, it loops back to level 12, over and again,
2 except there are these small differences. Very, very small
3 differences. Like pixels being in different places or the
4 enemies acting slightly differently. I started keeping a
5 journal and counted up to 201 levels but the enemies always
6 tripped me up around there. It felt like there was no way to
7 beat them. Since it would take me nearly two hours to get
8 there, and I kept failing, I just wanted to ask Mr. Hubbard
9 if I was wasting my time or I was going to see the end of the
10 game.

11 After Christmas, my family took a trip to California to
12 ski and also to go to Disneyland's thirtieth anniversary. I
13 scheduled a tour of Stanford while we were going to be there,
14 although I didn't realize it was 10 hours by bus from Los
15 Angeles so I missed a couple of days of vacation dealing with
16 the Stanford tour. After I toured Stanford, I went to
17 Sunnyvale, where Activision is. Activision was the company
18 that made the cartridge for Zenji. I was trying to find Mr.
19 Hubbard there as he had not responded to any of my letters.

20 When I finally found the Activision offices, I asked the
21 receptionist if Mr. Hubbard was there and she told me he
22 normally worked from home. I guess she could see how
23 disappointed I was and offered to find me someone who could
24 help me. I told her that I was the best Zenji player in the
25 world and that I was trying to figure out how or if the game
26 ended.

27 She didn't even really seem to know what Zenji was but
28 she went to find someone who could help me. She brought out
29 Bob Whitehead, who was very nice. He made Skiing for the
30 Atari. He took me to the break room and gave me a Coke, asked
31 me about school, asked me if I did any programming and stuff.
32 In the break room, there were three arcade games. I thought

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1 they must be doing really well to have arcades in the break
2 room but Mr. Whitehead said he didn't even work at Activision
3 anymore because times were so hard, that he was just picking
4 up some stuff from his old office. He was starting some new
5 company. I guess he was just doing the secretary a favor.

6 But he asked me about Zenji and-

7 MR. [REDACTED] Mr. Chairman, it's my turn to
8 interrupt. What is the point of all of this? We have serious
9 matters to attend to and I will not tolerate wasting an entire
10 day hearing about what video games or girls a teenager, who
11 is not from my district by the way, might care about. It's
12 positively ludicrous that-

13 COUNSEL FOR MR. HOUSEMAN - EMILE LIBINKSI: Excuse me. My
14 client had one primary request and it was that the United
15 States government listen to him while he-

16 MR. CHAIRMAN: Sirs, please yield the floor immediately.
17 Mr. Libinksi, you are correct. Your client will be permitted
18 to tell his story. I would request that the aides now mute
19 all microphones except for those belonging to Mr. Houseman,
20 Mr. Libinksi, and myself. Further interruptions will not be
21 tolerated. And to my colleagues, this narrative presentation
22 is part of the final settlement agreement with Mr. Houseman.
23 If you fail to honor the agreement, Mr. Houseman might be
24 released from the same. Please consider the potential
25 consequences of your actions. Mr. Houseman, please proceed.

26 MR. HOUSEMAN: Well. I lost my place. One second. Oh yes,
27 I was meeting with Mr. Whitehead. I will try to speed up the
28 story.

29 Mr. Whitehead said he loved Zenji, especially the
30 movement and speed. I asked him if he knew if there was an
31 end to the game and he laughed. He hadn't made it past the
32 first few levels. But he said he had an idea.

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1 He took me with him through the offices to a big storage
2 room that was filled with boxes, game disks, tapes, and parts.
3 He pulled down a file box that had Zenji written on the
4 outside and opened it up.

5 Inside there were a number of different disks for
6 different systems and a set of videotapes held together by
7 rubber bands. He pulled out the videotapes and handed them to
8 me. The tape label said "Zenji Full Test." Mr. Whitehead said
9 that if there were any clues, they would be in there. Those
10 were Mr. Hubbard's own playtest videos and Mr. Whitehead gave
11 just them to me, like for free.

12 With those tapes in my hand, we walked around the office.
13 I mentioned that I was really good at Pac-Man and asked if
14 he'd ever heard of someone making it to the end. He said there
15 wasn't an end but maybe the game would break eventually if
16 you kept trying to progress because it would run out of
17 storage space. That was a problem with lots of games
18 apparently that the programmers never expected the customers
19 to discover. There was only so much space to fit the level
20 counters and it could break if the counter got too high. When
21 I asked him about the trip and cash prize for finishing the
22 game, he said that Pac-Man was a Japanese game and that the
23 US guys didn't really have anything to do with making it so
24 you'd have to go to Japan to meet the people who made the
25 game.

26 I guess I should have known that but almost all of this
27 was new information for me at the time. I spent another half-
28 hour at the office before I said good-bye and went back to
29 the street.

30 I thought about the tapes the whole bus ride back to Los
31 Angeles. I checked out a VCR from our hotel as soon as I
32 walked back in and played the tapes in my room. It was surreal

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1 because each tape had Mr. Hubbard at the start standing in
2 front of a TV and explaining what he was going to do. He was
3 doing long runs at the game where he would play as deep as
4 possible. Each run was on each tape.

5 The game he was playing though wasn't the same as mine.
6 He had some sort of trick where he could start at a later
7 level. On the first tape, he started at level 1 and played
8 until level 100, playing as slowly as possible to show there
9 were no bugs or other issues with the game. On the second
10 tape, he started on level 100 but played as well as he could.
11 He died around level 200 but says the trick to beating those
12 levels is to let the computer make the mistakes rather than
13 trying to simply attack them. He said all of the levels are
14 possible but most players would never see the later levels.

15 On the third tape, he starts at level 250 and plays these
16 basically impossible levels I had never seen before. He keeps
17 running out of men on level 250 and restarts. Slowly he gets
18 better and he gets through the levels until he gets to 255
19 and warns the viewer to watch what happens as he completes
20 the level. He does and boom, the entire screen is filled with
21 jumbled stuff. He tells the camera that nobody would ever see
22 it but that's the end of the game, the end of Zenji. He
23 discusses the amount of programming it would take to change
24 the level counter design before saying that nobody is paying
25 him enough to overcome the 8-bit integer problem and that it
26 doesn't matter because nobody would play long enough to see
27 it. It was all mind blowing.

28 The rest of the vacation, I could not wait to get home
29 and play Zenji. When we finally got home on January 3, I ran
30 to my room and started playing but only few minutes into my
31 first game, my parents came into my room with a letter. It
32 was my report card.

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1 My rank was now sixth in the class. Not as bad as I
2 expected but still not top 5. That said, I knew if I had one
3 good semester, I would climb back up and maybe even have an
4 outside shot at salutatorian again. It was honestly a bit of
5 a relief. My parents weren't happy but not that irritated
6 either.

7 Then I started Zenji again. Having absorbed a few tricks
8 from the tapes, I sped through the levels faster than ever.
9 I didn't have my normal notebook I used for keeping track but
10 I must have hit level 200 in about an hour and forty five
11 minutes or so. And this time, I didn't get tripped up by the
12 bad guys. I had seen the creator's tricks. I had my own tricks
13 too. I quickly advanced far beyond his best runs and made it
14 through about level 230, farther than I had ever made it.

15 That's when things got rocky. My mom tried to get me to
16 come eat dinner. My whole family started to yell from the
17 dinner table. I yelled back but lost my concentration. I
18 burned four lives fast before making it through that level.
19 And then my family came to my room to see what was going on.

20 While they were watching, I made it to the level I
21 thought was 250 with two lives left. I was shaking a bit. My
22 family was still in my room. They didn't understand it but
23 they knew what I was doing was important. I dropped a life at
24 252, leaving me with one left. I made it past level 253
25 through sheer luck. I missed a turn but somehow the game
26 didn't register the shot that hit me. I don't know if it was
27 a bug or things were just happening too fast for it to work.
28 I doubted I could finish the game but that's when the next
29 level loaded. And that's when it all hit me. I was totally
30 wrong, I was off by one level. I was actually already at level
31 255. I knew what level 255 looked like because I had watched
32 the level so many times on the tape. And I knew how to beat

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1 255. When I landed my final turn, the game went to level 256
2 and displayed the garble of images just like on Mr. Hubbard's
3 machine. And that made me the first person in the world to
4 complete Zenji without skipping levels. I was probably the
5 only person who had tried of course but even my family seemed
6 to understand that there was some sort of accomplishment on
7 the screen.

8 And just then, just like that, I realized that Pac-Man
9 did have an ending. Level 255 was last level. It was old
10 enough that there was no way the programmers had figured out
11 how to add more levels. And I could make it to Level 255. I
12 could beat level 255. I could beat Pac-Man. I ate dinner that
13 night, went to sleep without playing any more games, and
14 planned to get to the mall as early as possible to play Pac-
15 Man.

16 So January 4, 1985, a Friday, I went to the Richardson
17 Square Mall at 10:00 am. The stores were still opening when
18 I went in but I think the doors were actually unlocked at
19 9:00 am. When I got near the Richardson 3, I saw Heather
20 opening the gate. I stopped and then chickened out. I knew
21 she was going to be there too. I don't really know why but I
22 couldn't go in yet.

23 The Tilt in the mall was still locked up but there were
24 employees inside and around 10:30 it opened up. I hung around
25 there wasting money until a little after noon, when the mall
26 really started to fill up with people. I was going to go get
27 lunch but I overheard some people talking about a cool new
28 arcade game at the Richardson 3. That seemed odd because the
29 Richardson 3 never had a new arcade game since arcade games
30 became a thing, the games there were always a few years old.
31 I was also worried that maybe the Pac-Man had been moved out
32 and I would have to go somewhere else to try my run at

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1 finishing the game.

2 That's when I ran into my friend Jonathan Thompson. He
3 claimed that he had played the new game at the Richardson 3.
4 I asked him about it but he seemed a little weird, like off,
5 like not all there. I thought maybe he was high or something,
6 which would not have been out of character for him. He seemed
7 like he wanted to tell me to not play the game but instead he
8 said that it was different, fast, and really hard and
9 colorful. He said it might be the best game he'd ever played
10 because it totally absorbed him. I wasn't sure what to believe
11 but it sounded pretty exciting. And like that, I wasn't even
12 really thinking about Pac-Man anymore. I asked him the name
13 and he was not sure but it looked like a Zaxxon cabinet so it
14 might be a Sega game. I thought that sounded wrong. Such a
15 simple and old-style cabinet for a new game didn't make sense.

16 So I finally walked over to the Richardson 3 and saw a
17 huge crowd around the arcade cabinets. I made eye-contact
18 with Heather as I walked in and she didn't seem very happy to
19 see me but I was so excited to play the new game that it
20 didn't even shake me. All of the arcade regulars and mall
21 regulars and, well, everyone that I knew seemed to be there
22 somehow. There were at-least 10 quarters in line and I wasn't
23 sure I could keep track if tried to play. I didn't put my
24 quarter in line yet.

25 The game was mesmerizing. At-least what I could see of
26 it over the crowd. The sounds and display were so different
27 from everything else. It was like a color vector screen but
28 bigger and with many more colors at once. And the gameplay
29 was also a bit like a color vector game. It was like Star
30 Wars meets Tempest but from a whole different planet. And the
31 game was fast. It was so fast.

32 That was my theory initially. I watched a few players

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1 finish and look sick or dazed. I thought maybe they were
2 getting motion sickness from the speed. The game was a shooter
3 but I couldn't tell if there was much point in shooting
4 anything. Like the players were just flying sometimes through
5 bright lights or space or lines. Inevitably everyone would
6 crash into something and die. I think most people were only
7 playing a minute or two before dying. It all happened really
8 fast.

9 I watched for like 15 minutes, getting a little closer
10 to the game as people walked off after playing, and started
11 to feel a little lightheaded myself. Then I looked over at
12 the counter and saw Heather looking right at me. It was
13 unsettling so I walked back out to the mall. I thought maybe
14 some food would help the dizziness. Like always, I ended up
15 at Hot Sams and got a couple of pretzels with cream cheese.
16 I know everyone really likes chocolate or nacho cheese but I
17 think the cream cheese is the best. It melts so perfectly to
18 the pretzel. The chocolate is so messy and the nacho just
19 tastes really artificial. But the cream cheese, it's just so-

20 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Houseman, if you could continue.

21 MR. HOUSEMAN: Yes, sorry. So I ate my pretzels and walked
22 back to the other end of the mall where the arcade and theater
23 were. While I was looking into the theater to see if the line
24 was still long for the game and to see if Heather was still
25 there, I was approached by [REDACTED] It was weird
26 because I only knew him from [REDACTED] but he
27 wanted to talk about that new game in the theater. He said
28 that Andrew Yarbrough, or maybe Andy Rosenstein, had said
29 that I was one of the better game players at the mall. [REDACTED]
30 [REDACTED] said that he could arrange a private time for
31 me to play the game if I thought I would be able to do well
32 at it. I said that I thought I could probably learn it quickly

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1 but that vector games were not normally what came naturally
2 for me. [REDACTED] asked me to stay put for five
3 minutes and I saw him walk over to some guys in suits. I
4 assumed they were the guys from the game company. I hoped I
5 would get to meet the people who made the game. After they
6 spoke for a second, [REDACTED] came back to me.

7 [REDACTED] said that I would have the game
8 to myself at 2:00 PM after the theaters emptied from the
9 morning shows. He asked that I try to get as far as possible.
10 He handed me a handful of quarters from his pocket. I thought
11 it was weird that he'd have a bunch of quarters instead of
12 just opening the game and playing for free but I didn't say
13 anything. That meant I had about 30 minutes to wait until I'd
14 get to play the game. I thought about trying to go play Pac-
15 Man a bit but just then the men walked into the Richardson 3
16 and started to shut things down, they turned off all of the
17 games in the lobby and even went to the ticket counter, said
18 something, and the employees left the theater. They then stood
19 guard around the games and waited. It was a pretty interesting
20 event at the Richardson 3, that's for sure.

21 But then Heather walked out of the side exit of the
22 theater and walked right up to me. I didn't have time to
23 prepare and I worried I looked like a zombie since I didn't
24 sleep all that much the night before.

25 She asked if I saw the new game in the Richardson 3. I
26 said I had. She asked if I knew the men who just kicked her
27 out of the theater. I said that I thought they were with the
28 game company and that they were setting up a special time for
29 me to play the new game. She said that the men were with the
30 government and were paying the theater to test the game. I
31 asked her how she knew that and she said she overheard it
32 from her boyfriend.

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1 She had started dating Steve, I don't know his last name,
2 the shift manager who worked with her at the snack counter.
3 I don't want to say too much about Steve but I think it's
4 important that the congressional record reflect that he's a
5 complete idiot. All I know, and need to know, is that he
6 thought that Bolero was a good movie and wasn't sure about
7 Amadeus. That might not be a big deal except his only prospect
8 in life is to work at a movie theater. He makes \$4 an hour at
9 a concession stand. He is 23 years old. He's never gone to
10 college. He doesn't even own a-

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: Once again Mr. Houseman, please proceed
12 with only the relevant facts.

13 MR. HOUSEMAN: Sorry. So Heather was dating Steve. I asked
14 her why and she said he would be a great person to date for
15 her senior year because he wouldn't make it weird when she
16 had to move away for college. I asked her if I would have
17 made it weird. She nodded. She said that I was young and that
18 I would learn over the years that something might be the most
19 important thing in the world to one person but not mean
20 anything to another.

21 It was not the best conversation to have before playing
22 a new game. I was pretty upset. I got a knot in my throat. I
23 was probably close to crying. I just thought that, somehow,
24 Heather and I were going to be in range of some of the same
25 colleges and, I don't know, that things might just work out.
26 I had considered that I might go somewhere she got in if they
27 offered me a big enough scholarship. I guess that is naive
28 again, or was naive, but I didn't do a very good job handling
29 the conversation. I told her that even if she didn't like me
30 anymore, I thought I might still love her. She asked me to
31 stay away from the theater.

32 When she said that, it helped ground me some and get

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1 ahold of myself. I told her that I wasn't at the theater for
2 her. I had no interest or care that she was there today. I
3 told I was there for Pac-Man. I had new information from my
4 trip to Stanford. I could beat it. I could beat Pac-Man. And
5 I told her I wouldn't take her on the trip when I beat it.

6 That's about when the guys in the suits came up to me
7 and said that the game would be ready in five minutes. It was
8 probably 1:45 PM at the time. I asked them the name of the
9 game, what it was called. They said 'Polybius' and walked
10 into the theater.

11 Heather then said something about the game. I think she
12 was trying to calm things some, that it looked cool or
13 something. I asked her if she had played it. She said no but
14 that she had watched them install it around 9 am. She said
15 they were all really hush-hush and had logged every person
16 who had played it so far. She said that Steve played it but
17 didn't like it. I asked if it made him sick. She said yes.
18 That made me smile. She said that a lot of people who played
19 it really liked it but still complained about what it did to
20 them - made them dizzy, or gave them an upset stomach, or
21 dazed them. I told her that they wanted me to play it because
22 of my reputation for video games. I think that's when she
23 fully realized it was my fault she got kicked out of the
24 theater. I told her good-bye and she told me good luck.

25 I walked to the theater where the men in suits and
26 [REDACTED] were standing around the game. I asked
27 if it was ready and they nodded. There were a bunch of people
28 leaving the theater at that time from the movies but the men
29 had roped off the path and were creating a barrier between me
30 and the arcade. I walked up to the game and hit the button
31 and nothing happened. That's when I remember my pocket full
32 of quarters. I asked how long I had to play and they said 20

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1 to 30 minutes. Since most people had died in a minute or two,
2 that sounded good to me. I put in a quarter.

3 The game only had two buttons and a joystick that went
4 two ways. That's not a lot of control for a modern game.
5 Polybius started with a spaceship in the middle and a ton of
6 speaker noise. The sounds reminded me a bit of Gyruss but
7 they were far more complicated and - I don't know the right
8 word - maybe evolved. It was music I had never heard before.
9 I don't know how they made those noises. And, up close, the
10 game was loud.

11 Just like that though, my ship was off. I dodged some
12 obstacles but the level kept getting faster. I planned on
13 dying a few times to get a feel for the game. At first, I was
14 mostly observing the massive screen inside the cabinet that
15 seemed to wrap around my view. Like, I think the screen was
16 curved but unlike most screens, it was curved toward me. The
17 first level was coming fast, like a race down a tunnel almost,
18 but the game wasn't really that hard. The obstacles came and
19 went. I didn't do much to dodge them. The game looked and
20 sounded incredible though. It was entrancing. And I was
21 definitely sure that I could get more than a minute or two on
22 my first game.

23 Then, weirdly, after maybe ninety seconds of playing,
24 the entire screen flashed more colors than I'd ever seen out
25 of an arcade and then went black. Except my ship was still
26 floating in space. It stayed like that for a small eternity,
27 maybe two minutes, before the next level started. Level 2 was
28 faster and much more complex. I found myself laser-focused on
29 the screen, on my ship, and I wasn't paying any attention to
30 anything else. After another two or three minutes, I was
31 feeling dazed but still moving through the game. I beat that
32 level and the screen went black again except my ship. I

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1 realized I hadn't really talked to the guys about what I was
2 supposed to do in the game. I stumbled back to the suits and
3 asked if they wanted me to die or keep going or if I was
4 testing anything specific. They asked me to keep playing as
5 long as I could.

6 The next level started and it was almost a perfect like-
7 inverse-tube of the second level and much more difficult. I
8 kept my ship moving but the speed, colors, and distractions
9 were amplified quite a bit at this point. It felt as though
10 I was actually in a spaceship and traveling through some sort
11 of hyperspace. I beat that level too.

12 When I let go of the joystick after the third level
13 though, I stumbled and could hardly walk. I tried to speak to
14 the guys in suits but I couldn't speak. Or I don't think I
15 could speak. My words were like stuck in my throat. I got
16 back to the game in time for the next level but I was nervous
17 and anxious about what was going on. I focused on the game,
18 which should have been impossible at that point, but I was
19 able to guide my ship through the obstacles and survive to
20 another two minute break.

21 I guess it's important to say that, at this point, I
22 can't say exactly how hard the game is. It induces this total
23 haze in your head so fast that I wouldn't be surprised if it
24 was very easy but players lose focus and start to feel bad so
25 fast that it seems harder. I don't know. But I was relying on
26 the game cabinet to stand by the end of the fourth level.

27 The fifth level starts with a blaze of colors. It's so
28 overwhelming that I lost track of the ship. I didn't die
29 simply because there wasn't anything there to kill you. It
30 was just overwhelming colors. Over and over. Then total
31 blackness for a bit. Then more color. Then the level was over.

32 I don't know if the programming wasn't finished but the

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1 whole level was just colors and no obstacles. My body was
2 definitely starting to crash though. Everything felt really
3 heavy. Like gravity was being turned up. If I wasn't holding
4 onto the joystick, I would have fallen down.

5 Then the sixth level started. I could see obstacles
6 coming up but the game started flashing colors too. Then I
7 could feel my eyes closing. Then I looked to the side and got
8 extremely dizzy. Then my legs just, they weren't working
9 anymore. I leaned against the game trying to keep my ship in
10 the right position. I don't even know why I was still playing.
11 It was like I wanted to prove something. I don't know.

12 Then I started to finally fall. I lost track of the
13 joystick and grasped around for support on something. I almost
14 got the Pac-Man joystick next to the game but couldn't. I was
15 headed to the ground and nothing I could do was going to stop
16 me. I saw my ship explode on the Polybius screen and my body
17 hit the ground hard. I looked toward the mall and I could see
18 Heather with her hands over her mouth. I think she was
19 screaming. I was so scared for a second. Then things just
20 went black. I don't have any idea-

21 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you Mr. Houseman. I don't mean to
22 interrupt but this seems like a good place to take a very
23 short break. We'll take a ten-minute recess and return to
24 continue your testimony.

25
26 [...]

27
28 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you everyone for returning promptly.
29 I know there is a lot of business today that needs to get
30 done but we are here listening to Mr. Houseman's testimony
31 regarding DARPA and Project Cathode and the Polybius machine.
32 Mr. Houseman, you had just stated that you passed out while

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1 playing the device or machine at issue.

2 MR. HOUSEMAN: I remember falling and hitting the floor.
3 I remember Heather. Then I remember waking up. I woke up in
4 the bathroom of some sort of office building. It had two
5 sinks, two stalls, and two urinals. The overhead lights were
6 bright but there wasn't a switch for them on the wall. I was
7 on a cot that looked like it was from the military but I
8 didn't see any writing on it. The ceiling had the tracks for
9 tiles but all of the tiles had been removed and the walls on
10 the side went to a concrete or solid ceiling. I was groggy.
11 When I pushed on the door to leave the restroom, it pushed
12 open a little but ran into something heavy and did not open.

13 I don't know how long I was out. There wasn't a good
14 sense of time in the bathroom. I would guess maybe three hours
15 but it could have been thirty. I yelled for someone to come
16 help me. I would yell every few minutes. It was awful.

17 After a long time, maybe hours, I heard talking outside
18 the bathroom door. I ran as hard I could against the door and
19 pushed it against the heavy object. You could tell I startled
20 the people outside.

21 That's when a voice said: "Mr. Houseman, please back
22 away from the door and sit on the cot."

23 I yelled about getting out of there, trying to figure
24 out what was going on, and generally said I wanted to leave.

25 Then the voice said: "Mr. Houseman, please back away
26 from the door and sit on the cot. If you want food,
27 toiletries, or information, you must sit on the cot."

28 I didn't like it but I went to the cot and yelled that
29 I had complied. Then three people walked into the room
30 carrying two small boxes. They were all in labcoats and the
31 person in the middle, who wasn't carrying anything, had a
32 [REDACTED]

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1 [REDACTED]
2 [REDACTED]
3 [REDACTED] He explained that I
4 was being held for testing. He said that my parents were aware
5 of the testing and that they had signed off on the my
6 participation. I told him that I was eighteen and could leave
7 whenever I wanted. That's when he said that my parents were
8 still my legal guardians until I graduate high school and
9 that, after my behavior at the mall, that I had been placed
10 on a psychiatric hold that could only be released by my
11 parents or the judge overseeing the case.

12 I asked to me see my parents. He said that he would tell
13 me when they came to visit. I asked to see the judge, he said
14 I had a hearing scheduled on April 8. I remember that clearly
15 because the date seems so random. I asked why April 8 and he
16 just said that was the earliest they could get me booked. I
17 asked for a lawyer. He said that my parents would have to
18 handle that part of it.

19 Then I asked why I was in the bathroom. He said that
20 there was a budget shortfall and not enough rooms right now.
21 I asked if the police knew what he was doing. He said that
22 the police are the people who had dropped me off.

23 He said that this testing was much better than being in
24 jail because I would get to play video games and eat fast
25 food as long as I was there. I asked what the testing was
26 about. He just said: [REDACTED]

27 I said that it seemed like this was all about the game
28 I was playing at the mall. Polybius. And that this was all
29 connected. That's when the middle guy yelled outside the room
30 for the TV. Someone else in a labcoat rolled in a TV and a
31 tape player. That's when they showed me what happened at the
32 mall.

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1 I don't know why I did what I did at the mall. I don't
2 remember doing it. It's not what I would have done normally.
3 But I was pretty embarrassed and ashamed seeing myself, on
4 the screen, run to the fountain in the middle of the mall,

5 [REDACTED]
6 [REDACTED] I thought, at the time,
7 it must have been doctored. But now I've been told it really
8 happened. I still don't know how that fits into anything but
9 I guess my loss of consciousness wasn't complete, or
10 something.

11 So for a minute, I thought things might be real. I
12 thought what they were saying was true. Like I thought they
13 might be doctors or something and that this hold was a real
14 thing. I thought I might have ruined my life. The guy in the
15 middle who did all of the talking, who I later learned was
16 named [REDACTED], told me that I would have a bit
17 to settle in before the first test of the day. He said
18 everything else I would need was in the two boxes. Then they
19 left.

20 The two boxes had a bar of soap, toothpaste, a
21 toothbrush, floss, a sports bottle filled with something,
22 some white shorts, and a weird button that had an antenna
23 attached. I spent the time getting as clean as possible and
24 searching the room for some sort of other way out. I didn't
25 find anything.

26 Hours later, there were noises outside of my room and
27 the door opened. It was [REDACTED] He asked if I
28 was any good at Atari Centipede. I asked him what the button
29 was for. [REDACTED]

30 [REDACTED]
31 [REDACTED]
32 [REDACTED]

CLASSIFIED

1 [REDACTED]
2 [REDACTED]
3 [REDACTED]
4 [REDACTED]
5 [REDACTED]
6 Then he said I wouldn't get any food that day unless I
7 scored 500,000 points on Centipede. [REDACTED]
8 [REDACTED]
9 [REDACTED]
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21 I made it to 479,000 points and died. I asked if I could
22 have something to eat and I would try again. I didn't have a
23 clock but I think it took more than an hour to get to that
24 score and I was not doing well, mentally or physically. All
25 I had to eat that day were two pretzels. They told me to back
26 away from the door and get back on the cot. One of the labcoat
27 guys walked into the room and began to wheel the game out. I
28 said I can get to 500,000 but I need a break and some food.
29 He told me goodnight and wheeled the game out of the room. I
30 heard them place the heavy item in-front of the door and the
31 lights turned off. I sat on my cot for hours crying.

32 The next day was no better. [REDACTED]

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30 It had been a few days, or maybe a week or two, but
31 [REDACTED] finally came back into the bathroom. He
32 was carrying a bag of food from McDonalds. Now I'm not one of

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1 those guys who is snobby about McDonalds at all, I like
2 McDonalds, but I was so hungry at this point it could have
3 been my Aunt Pam's cooking and I would have cleaned the plate.

4 [REDACTED] wanted to talk about Polybius and how I
5 thought the game could be made better. I asked him if I could
6 please eat first. He said no. I asked him why and he said he
7 didn't think I would do much talking once I ate the food.

8 I told him that maybe they should make a slower game
9 that introduces the players to colors and speed of the screen
10 gradually. I said I was dizzy after only a few minutes and I
11 could play more than anyone else. If everything happened on
12 a much less steep slope, I figured they could at-least get
13 some sort of baseline for what a normal person could actually
14 take. As it was, basically everyone was quitting the game
15 after a minute or two. Except me of course. I asked him why
16 it was important. Why the government cared about how long a
17 person could play a video game.

18 That's when he told me that the only other people who
19 had directly seen the screens or colors that I had seen were
20 either dead or might as well have been. Then he asked me again
21 if I thought Polybius would do well in an arcade if it didn't
22 cause the brain damage. He seemed insecure about it.

23 I said there were lots of bad games that were successful.
24 Look at Kangaroo or Dragon's Lair. But I didn't understand
25 why he cared if more people played the game or wanted to play
26 the game.

27 That's when he tossed me the food from McDonalds and
28 left the room. They were the best tasting McNuggets I ever
29 had. I stashed a few packets of ketchup under my leg to hide
30 in the toilets with the [REDACTED] I wasn't
31 sure the next time I would have a chance to eat and even
32 ketchup would be better than nothing. As I was eating the

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1 food, like normal, I started to lose consciousness. I quickly
2 got the ketchup in the toilet, made sure I ate every single
3 crumb in the bag, and passed out on the bed.

4 The next day, and again, I'm not sure exactly what day
5 it was, I woke up with fresh shorts on the sink, a sports
6 bottle filled with the juice in it, and this time Mr. Do was
7 in the room.

8 I got my teeth brushed and yelled through the door for
9 the day's terms. Nobody was there. I started a game to mess
10 around and someone on the other side of the door told me to
11 stop playing. Then the game turned off.

12 I again asked for the terms of the day. They said that
13 I needed to score 500,000 points and that would be the only
14 test of the day. They also said I could pick which fast food
15 restaurant my dinner came from if I got the score.

16 It was the best day of my entire captivity. Mr. Do is a
17 like Pac-Man meets Dig Dug and I already knew I could get
18 500,000 points. It might take an hour or so but it was going
19 to be easy. They turned on the game and I got to work. Mr. Do
20 is pretty weird actually, you play as a clown and there are
21 all these strange monsters trying to eat you before you get
22 all of the cherries. There are also apples that drop and
23 squish everything in their path. Very cool game.

24 Anyway, I got to 500,000 in maybe 50 minutes, or longer,
25 I'm not sure. It was a really strong performance though. I
26 yelled that I had the score and a voice I had never heard
27 said: "Already?" Then the voice said, "Please back away from
28 the game and return to the cot."

29 The door opened and that's the first time I met
30 [REDACTED] She was wearing a lab coat but
31 looked at me in a different way compared to the others. I
32 think, honestly, it was the first time she realized exactly

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1 what was going on. I know I looked bad and even though they
2 had finally given me deodorant, I was in desperate need of a
3 shower. She asked me how I was able to get the score so fast.
4 I said that there are a number of games that they could have
5 me play that I already know quite well. She asked me what
6 other games, I said that I didn't want to say. She asked me
7 what I wanted to eat. I said I wanted a Griff's Triple
8 Hamburger and a Vanilla Shake. Not only was it one of my
9 favorites, I knew it had a ton of calories and I never knew
10 when I might get to eat again.

11 She nodded and asked me if I needed anything else. I
12 said that I wouldn't mind a shower. She said that was
13 impossible. I said maybe some washcloths would be nice. She
14 said she would see what she could do. She left and I heard
15 the large object move back in-front of the door. They left
16 the game, probably because nobody that normally moved the
17 games was there at the time. My best guess was that it was
18 either pretty late or pretty early but I had no idea.

19 And I think, at the end of the day, beyond being
20 constantly drugged, beyond being trapped in a commercial
21 restroom for weeks on end, beyond being starved and desperate,
22 and beyond slowly becoming a zombie, the absolute worst part
23 of the experience was losing track of time. Losing track of
24 my days. Losing track of the world. There was no semblance of
25 outside light or any other way to track time. None of the
26 staff wore wristwatches, at least not when they were with me.
27 And I did not have control of my lights. They would turn off
28 sometimes and on sometimes, but I do not believe, though I
29 don't know, that they were on a timer. Instead I think they
30 were using the lights as another way to mess with me. To
31 torture me. But without time, you lose yourself.

32 The bathroom became a world unto itself where cold, quiet

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1 and emptiness came together to slowly poison me. It goes deep
2 inside of you, the poison, first your feet hurt, you don't
3 know if you should stand or sit or exercise, then it works
4 into your spine, seeping into your fluid, until it reaches
5 your brain, where you finally lose your mind. The first days
6 were scary but I thought I would surely survive, once my
7 parents or the police found me. Then I spent most of my days,
8 my time, starving, shivering in the corner, waiting, grinding
9 my fingernails against the painted cinderblocks of the
10 restroom, slowly pulling the paint off, wondering what it
11 tasted like, whether it would satiate me or not. My sense of
12 human decency dissipated over time. I wondered what would
13 happen if I attacked them, shoved my fingers in their eye
14 sockets, spit on them, or saved my feces to throw at them. My
15 sense of normalcy was gone within weeks. Now I was asking
16 myself, can I do this? Should I do this. How could I end this.
17 I was not sure about anything anymore. My mind was gone. The
18 ability to hold good thoughts were leaving me. I tried to
19 focus on things I liked. Pac-Man, my parents, maybe Heather.
20 But I couldn't last forever, I knew I couldn't. I was going
21 to break forever at some point. It was hell.

22 But at that point, at that exact second, I still had a
23 Mr. Do in my cell. So I played more. I wasn't trying to score
24 points. I was just trying to have fun. I cannot say that it
25 worked but it was better than sitting on my cot or on a toilet
26 or seeing if I could finally get the water line to pop off
27 the sink and flood the room. So I played and distracted
28 myself. At some point, the game shut off.

29 "Please back away from the game and sit on the cot" said
30 the same voice from before. She brought me Griffs and she was
31 my angel. Not just for the food but because she had left the
32 receipt stapled to the bag. Which had a printout that was

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1 hard to read, but it definitely said zero-one slash twenty-
2 four space space ten colon sixteen. It was January 24th, 10:16
3 PM when the food was picked up. I had been there for three
4 weeks. Before I could finish my milkshake, I fell asleep
5 again.

6 A few hours or days later, the lights on my room turned
7 on, I was again tucked tightly into the covers of my cot and
8 [REDACTED] was standing my room. He wanted to
9 discuss upcoming tests for the day. I guess for the first
10 time ever, they were going to try every color on the Project
11 Cathode screen on me. I wasn't fully awake but based on
12 everything I knew, I assumed this would be the day I died.

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1 To be honest to the Panel, I grew quite fond of playing
2 Polybius. As my senses dulled to the colors, as I was able to
3 progress further and further into the game, I started to look
4 forward to days where I would get to play the game. It was
5 never a good game but there was something almost addictive
6 about it.

7 Sometime in what was probably the middle of February
8 though, I finally got the leg leveler off the partition
9 between the toilets during one of my periods of solitude,
10 which seemed to last days at that point. It worked perfectly
11 as a wrench of sorts to slowly turn the water line connectors.
12 I probably should have waited for a better time but I simply
13 went right to the sinks and loosened the lines until I could
14 pull off all four at once. And then I pulled.

15 Water began to cover the floor of the bathroom. At first,
16 the drain in the middle of the room, which I had forgotten
17 about, did a good job keeping up with the water and nothing
18 was flooding but I pushed the sheet from my bed over the drain
19 and water started to build fast. My plan was to wait until
20 someone else noticed water coming from under the door. I hoped
21 it would take awhile because I wanted the water to run out of
22 the room and cause as much mayhem as possible.

23 And it took a very, very long time for anyone to notice.
24 Maybe an hour or two. Maybe even three or four hours. The
25 water wasn't getting deep in the bathroom since it was all
26 running under the door. Eventually, I pushed on the door but
27 whatever they used to hold it shut was still there.

28 Finally, I heard screaming. There was a massive crash
29 outside of the door. I ran over to the side of the room by
30 the urinals. The door opened and someone I had never seen
31 before ran in, looked around, and ran to the sinks. While
32 they were there, I ran out of the restroom. Outside the

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1 restroom, it looked just like a normal office, although now
2 everywhere I stepped, it was wet. There were cubicles and
3 file cabinets everywhere. There was a file cabinet knocked
4 over near the restroom door.

5 I followed along the water and found it running down a
6 staircase. I started to go down the staircase but slipped and
7 fell and was dazed for a second. I kept going down the stairs
8 for a few flights. It was too dark to make out what was
9 written on the stairwell but I got to the bottom, where I
10 couldn't keep going and I opened the door. I was in some sort
11 of basement or parking garage. It was empty and I didn't see
12 a good way to get out.

13 I went back into the stairs, went up one flight, and
14 went out the next door. It was more of the same, some sort of
15 basement or garage. I went back into the staircase but I heard
16 people coming down the stairs talking loudly. They had
17 [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I ran back to the bottom
18 of the stairs, went into the garage area and hid behind a
19 corner. A few minutes later, the door from the stairs opened
20 and I saw [REDACTED] come into the garage room. He
21 was holding a [REDACTED]
22 [REDACTED]. When he walked to the other side of the
23 garage room, I started to run along the only path I could
24 make out. I made it to the other side of the room where I
25 found a door that went to another staircase. I opened the
26 door but I was grabbed from behind before I could go up. I
27 didn't hear them coming but they were right on me. They threw
28 me back into the garage and [REDACTED]
29 [REDACTED]

30 I woke up tucked in the cot in the restroom. Everything
31 was clean, dry, and the water lines were fixed. [REDACTED]
32 [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

That was the last time I saw [REDACTED]. You could tell that things were getting dire for all of them and maybe things weren't working out as they had hoped. I could tell that they weren't sure what to do with me. I had been counting my ribs as a way to try and keep up with my weight loss and malnutrition. I could feel myself slowly wasting away. I thought we might be nearing the end but I wasn't sure exactly what the end was going to look like.

Later that day, or night, I heard commotion outside the door and the door eventually opened. It was [REDACTED] I hadn't seen him since the very beginning of everything, since January. He said that he heard I was asking for a Pac Man machine to play for one of the challenges. He said he didn't have one yet but that he could get one in the next week or two. I had forgotten about even asking about that. It had been a long time, maybe more than a month, since they asked me what game I wanted to play.

[REDACTED] told me that he could get me something to eat if I wanted. I told him Griffs, a triple hamburger with

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1 a vanilla shake. He nodded and went to the door to tell
2 someone about the food. We then talked for thirty or forty
3 minutes about Polybius. He asked if I had any idea what they
4 were testing. I said I thought that they were trying to
5 weaponize the light. He said that I was right, at least at
6 first, that they had done some tests using the light and
7 colors from the Project Cathode screen but they had stumbled
8 onto something else. They had discovered something far more
9 powerful. That now, after they had me for a few months, they
10 were working on mind control. For the first time in a long
11 time, I laughed.

12 He said they thought they were making a breakthrough.
13 That him even telling me about it might mess things up but
14 that he felt incredibly bad for how I had been treated and
15 how everything had gone. Then he told me he had been asked to
16 discuss a few events that had happened during my captivity.
17 We talked about the Mr. Do game, [REDACTED], my attempted
18 escape, [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]

19 [REDACTED]
20 [REDACTED]
21 [REDACTED] He nodded for a bit and said he'd
22 be right back and left the room.

23 I remember feeling so alone when he left. More alone
24 than I had felt before he came into the room. I didn't know
25 if the mind control thing was being mentioned just to mess
26 with me or if there was a real test happening. Then I thought
27 about this quote that was in the introduction to my class
28 copy of The Great Gatsby. Some professor had looked through
29 F. Scott Fitzgerald's notes and found a something that was
30 supposed to be in the book but F. Scott Fitzgerald omitted it
31 because he wanted the reader to feel it without him having to
32 say it. It goes: "The loneliest moment in someone's life is

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1 when they are watching their whole world fall apart, and all
2 they can do is stare blankly." I know it sounds weird, given
3 that I had been in a restroom for months at that point, but
4 that's how I felt in that moment. My entire world was,
5 finally, imploding. My memories, my brain, nothing worked
6 anymore. That's all it took for me to no longer know what was
7 real and what was something else. And I just sat there.
8 Stunned.

9 [REDACTED] returned after some time. Before he could
10 say anything, I asked him if my escape was real. If I had
11 flooded the building. He did not respond. I asked more
12 questions but he didn't elaborate or respond. He said he was
13 not permitted to go over any of those details.

14 He eventually told me that suffering and pain were
15 necessary in the world. That there was a scale that had
16 suffering on both sides and that all we could do is make sure
17 we suffered less than the other side, that our side was higher
18 than theirs. No matter what though, he said, suffering
19 happened on both sides. Then he left.

20 A few minutes later, [REDACTED] returned with
21 my food from Griffs. I only ate a few bites. I was totally
22 defeated. It was then that all of my scheming was hopeless.
23 All of my plans were simply ether. Then I fell asleep.

24 I woke up and something had changed. It was obvious.
25 Everything smelled like bleach and paint. My head hurt. But
26 everything was back to mint condition. All of my little
27 scratches, my notes on the walls, they were gone. And the
28 door was open.

29 THE CHAIRMAN: Excuse me Mr. Houseman, which door was
30 open? The main door to the restroom?

31 MR. HOUSEMAN: That's correct. The door I'd been looking
32 at for months as the only thing keeping me from freedom. It

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1 was slightly ajar, resting open toward freedom.

2 I assumed I was dreaming or that this was another test.
3 I didn't rush out the door like you might expect. I carefully
4 walked to the door and looked to either side. Nothing was
5 there. Nobody was in the area. I walked out of the door. The
6 office floor looked normal. There were these desks and
7 cubicles but nobody was there. I slowly walked to the
8 staircase I had used before. I walked down the stairs.
9 Everything was bright enough to read. After a two floors, the
10 sign on the door had a big L on it and said, "Lobby". I opened
11 it. I walked down a few hallways, pretty lost, until I walked
12 into a bright, white room that had a bunch of windows on one
13 side. I could see that it was dark outside, nighttime.

14 I really thought I was dreaming. I knew I was dreaming.
15 I was only wearing the [REDACTED]

16 [REDACTED]
17 [REDACTED] That's when I saw two guards at a security
18 counter. They saw me and nodded.

19 I didn't understand. I waited for them to rush and attack
20 me but they didn't. They actually pointed to the front door
21 of the lobby. So I slowly walked to the door. I pushed on the
22 door and it opened. It was a little cool outside but not cold.
23 I looked back at the security guards, who smiled and waved.
24 It was definitely a dream, I thought.

25 I walked out the front door and was just, there. Like I
26 could smell the fresh air, I could see trees in the parking
27 lot, there were a few cars. I was back in the real world. In
28 Richardson, Texas. I started walking. I wished I had [REDACTED]
29 [REDACTED] but I knew being outside was far more
30 important and I wasn't going back.

31 The parking lots were massive. I didn't know which
32 direction I was facing or where I should go. I just started

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1 walking out toward what looked like a gate and a street.
2 Things were very, very quiet. It was dark. I would discover
3 later that I walked out around 2:00 AM. I reached a guard
4 tower at the end of the office complex and there was a sign
5 that said: "Texas Instruments" and under it said "Expand Your
6 Horizons." I just kept walking, my feet sore and I could feel
7 the blisters forming but obviously sore feet and some blisters
8 wouldn't stop me, even if it was a dream. There was an old
9 man in the guard tower with a white mustache. He nodded and
10 motioned me forward.

11 I know it sounds crazy. I think it is supposed to sound
12 crazy. I was thinking about it as I walked down Drive D after
13 leaving the parking lot. In the distance, I saw signs for
14 Highway 75, which is a road I've used before to go to Dallas
15 and Sherman on occasion. So I followed the path for US 75
16 North. There were no cars around. But I was consumed with
17 this thought that none of it was real. The weather was so
18 great. Like perfect. What are the odds of that? I saw nobody
19 once I left the campus of TI, Highway 75 was completely empty.
20 Even the police station, which I considered going to, seemed
21 empty and closed. I don't think police stations close. I
22 wondered if I had gone completely insane. Then I remembered
23 a book I read by Philip K. Dick called Valis. In the book he
24 writes: "It is sometimes an appropriate response to reality
25 to go insane." I thought about it and, given my reality, if
26 I was going insane, perhaps that was appropriate. Regardless,
27 I made it down Main Street to Plano Road. I started to turn
28 left toward my home when I saw four white vans come flying
29 down Plano Road toward my house. I turned right instinctively
30 and ran behind the nearby closed gas station. While I sat
31 there, I looked across Plano Road and saw the Richardson
32 Square Mall. I waited until I was sure no vans or other cars

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1 were coming down the road and I sprinted across. My feet ached
2 and bled from the rough concrete but I ran straight to Sears.
3 I knew there would be an unlocked door at the loading dock.
4 There was always an unlocked door at the loading dock. Once
5 inside, I sat in the loading warehouse for maybe 30 minutes.
6 There was an old neon advertisement sign inside that was
7 plugged in, making everything inside red, and it said: "Trust
8 your house to Sears" but the "your house to" were burned out
9 so it just said "Trust Sears". I knew I must be losing my
10 mind because that made me feel better.

11 I also noticed, in the corner of the room, there was a
12 large crate that was stamped with a Project Cathode logo. It
13 was the same logo I had seen on labcoats for months. I didn't
14 investigate it but I'm assuming that's how the Polybius
15 machine originally arrived to the mall. In that shipping
16 crate.

17 After a half-hour, I knew I needed to get home but I
18 wanted to go through the mall and see if I could find a
19 working water fountain and maybe some shoes. I was going to
20 steal them but I promise I was going to bring money for them
21 later. I just wanted my feet to stop hurting.

22 I found some shoes sitting on display at Sears. I started
23 to put them on but I heard a loud bang coming from the loading
24 dock warehouse that I had just left. Terrified, I ran to the
25 mall entrance where Sears had a pull down gate. Luckily, it
26 stopped about 18 inches from the floor and I was able to
27 squeeze through. I thought about the fact that, had I not
28 been malnourished and starving, I might not have fit. I ran
29 as fast as I could toward the other side of the mall. I saw
30 all of the food businesses and I was tempted to stop but they
31 were dark and closed and I kept running. Eventually, I ran by
32 the theater. Inside, I saw the sodas and I remembered the

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1 door on the side that doesn't really shut. I ran to it,
2 jiggled the handle, and fell into the lobby behind the snack
3 counter. That felt safe. Or at least safer. There I ate some
4 Runts and had a can of Coke. I stayed there a while, eating
5 more food and waiting. Around maybe 5:00 AM I decided to get
6 up and head home.

7 As I pushed up from the floor, I felt something round
8 pushing against my hand. I stood up and examined it. It was
9 a quarter. Just a normal quarter that I guess the staff at
10 the theater had dropped. But that's not why I started playing
11 Pac-Man.

12 As I started to walk out of the door, the game, Pac-Man,
13 made a noise. It was the same noise it makes at the start of
14 the game. I nearly leapt out of my shoes. The thing about
15 Pac-Man is, it doesn't make noise until someone puts in a
16 quarter. It's pretty famous for that. Later games would have
17 an attract noise to entice players. But not Pac-Man. It was
18 too old.

19 I debated in my head if I should bother walking over.
20 Then I thought, since everything seems like a dream, maybe I
21 should have some fun before I wake up. So I walked over to
22 examine the game. It looked normal. Something pulled me there.
23 And I put in the quarter.

24 It made the noise again and the game started.
25 Instinctively, I grabbed the joystick and started playing. I
26 wish I could say why, in the chaos of everything, I ended up
27 at Pac-Man. But that's where I was and that's where I stayed
28 for hours. And for hours, I played the same level, level 21
29 forever. Over and over. I used basically the same pattern
30 although sometimes I would lose focus and have to scramble.
31 But I never died.

32 After a bit, I could hear activity in the mall. Not bad

CLASSIFIED

1 activity. Normal activity. I should have stopped but I kept
2 playing. I lost complete track of time and levels and mostly
3 score, except I knew I was over three million points. That's
4 when I knew I was getting close.

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry Mr. Houseman. Close to what?
6 Close to leaving the mall?

7 MR. HOUSEMAN: Close to the end. Close to finishing Pac-
8 Man. Close to seeing the last level. I was methodically
9 playing, simply being at peace with my choice to stay and
10 play. I was in a certain mood, relaxed almost, though I know
11 I shouldn't have been. Then I beat a level and as the next
12 screen came up, the game broke.

13 Not broke in that I couldn't keep playing like Zenji. It
14 was far more interesting than that. Half of the screen looked
15 normal and half of the screen was a jumbled mess of characters
16 and digits. I started my normal pattern but lost Pac-Man when
17 I went into the broken side of the maze and he died. It was
18 my first life lost. The score was three-million and three-
19 hundred-twenty-five thousand. The next Pac-Man appeared and
20 I moved around differently, exploring. I found that it was
21 pretty easy to stay alive if you kept to the left side of the
22 maze, where things looked normal. There were a number of spots
23 it seemed like the ghosts couldn't reach you. You could just
24 relax. But you also couldn't finish the level with the right
25 side broken.

26 Then I felt a hand on my back. I shrieked and turned
27 around in horror. It was Heather. I told her I did it, I beat
28 Pac-Man. I started to explain what was happening. She looked
29 like she had seen a ghost. I told her I loved her. Then I
30 lost balance and fell to the ground.

31 I watched, lying on the ground, as she ran to get her
32 boyfriend. There was a puddle of blood where I had been

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1 standing, I guess from my feet. Someone got security and
2 eventually the police showed up. I was awake the whole time
3 and responded to each question. Eventually I was able to lean
4 against the Pac-Man and sit up. Nobody was interested that my
5 Pac-Man was still sitting on the very last level of Pac-Man.
6 That I was the first person to see the screen. That they could
7 be one of the first five or six to ever see the screen. They
8 didn't care about it at all. Heather didn't really even say
9 anything to me.

10 My parents came and took me to Medical City. I spent
11 three days at Medical City. My parents did not allow any
12 visitors. On my third day, I asked a nurse for a phone book
13 and called Mr. Libinski and he helped me from there. I woke
14 up in my own bed for the first time on Thursday, April 11,
15 1985. I remember thinking about how nice it was-

16 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you Mr. Houseman for your time and
17 your story, I believe we are going to take a one-hour recess
18 and then allow the various committees to begin asking
19 questions. Please stick around as we have a few documents
20 here that need to be executed as part of your settlement
21 agreement. The committees will return ready and I will have
22 the chamber staff unmute the microphones and prepare. Is there
23 anything else that you'd like to add to this part of the
24 record Mr. Houseman?

25 MR. HOUSEMAN: Well, I actually had a lot more but I can
26 stop. I just had one more quote I wanted to get into the
27 record. It's from something I found accidentally recently by
28 from Publilius Syrus, he was a slave before the time of Christ
29 who suffered countless cruelty before he was able to achieve
30 fame, freedom, and wealth through luck and wit. He said, as
31 one of his maxims: "A noble spirit finds a cure for injustice
32 in forgetting it."

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1 MR. CHAIRMAN: Alright, thank you Mr. Houseman. That
2 concludes this portion of the hearing, we will adjourn for
3 one hour and meet again for the question portion of the
4 hearing. Again, Mr. Houseman, please remain in the room for
5 a few minutes so we can execute the documents.

6
7 [...]

8
9 [END OF BOOK 1 of 2]