

Episode 4: Return of the Overseer Part 2

[@ angletons orchids fades in.]

[Driver sings “house of the rising sun,”]

Hi friends, it's so nice to see you here ‘round the bend at Wireland Ranch. And here we are again, finding ourselves, back at the beginning. I believe they used to call this full circle. Round trip. Orbiting all the way back to our Driver, friends, navigating south on Highway 78 away from the ravaged husk of downtown Blythe. Now no more than a crater that will eventually become Thillia and then, a crater again. Such is the cycle, down here at the ranch.

[The song is interrupted by fuzz and LFO (lol.) The Driver adjusts the stereo but cannot seem to find anything until suddenly the scan stops and Ghost Tape Number 10 begins playing over the speakers. Above that noise, a voice emerges.]

Radio V1: Wrong tape! How many times must I tell you Vietnam is never coming back no matter how much you play his little black magic incantation. Now get me the right tape. Overseer, please bear with us. I am very sorry for this little mishap, allow me to play the soothing songs of sunspots while you wait.

[the soothing songs of sunspots play]

Our Driver does not seem to notice the voice on his radio or the ghost tape number 10 that had infiltrated his ears, his eyes instead darting back and forth between the windshield, now streaked and muddy from an attempt to wipe what was left of reynold’s curiosities, and the box that sits on his passenger seat. The box given to him by that ghostly light that maybe saved him from a desk monster with her rainbow worm hair pets. But of course friends, our driver does not remember this clearly. Doesn’t remember much at all in fact and finds himself having to look down at his phone to recall exactly what it is he’s doing right now. And every time he looks, he sees the 175 dollar delivery, smiles, and strains again to peer through the mud.

Every few minutes though, a sinking feeling forms in the pit of his stomach, best described as a sort of existential dread, a seed of paranoia and a thought that something is just *not right* here though he can’t seem to place it. Yet, when that feeling begins to sink into his mind, his eyes move of their own volition, beyond his control, to glance at the box and that feeling dissipates to wherever thoughts go once our brains take out the trash. Except during the reign of operation mockingbird, when all those thoughts were typed and stored in servers deep inside silicon valley. And friends I know, I’ve seen them.

Though our driver does not notice, if you or I were to look at that box, even for a moment, we would know deep down in our sad little souls that something is very much *not right* with it. We would notice the way that it vibrates to the touch as though something undulates within, as though something *emanates.* In fact, we may get the sense that “box” is not the correct noun at all, but rather Casket or even, dare I say, Ark may be more fitting.

The receptacle itself is a thing to behold. Dark acacia wood stained in the same style as the desk from the curiosities shoppe, gray grain peering through sable void deep as night, starless and bible black. Runes are carved on the lid. Runes that you and I have come across once before friends, chalked onto cobblestone during the birth of a certain *someone* way back in 1895 when the world was only slightly less fucked up than it is as you hear this. An engraved frame surrounds those bygone markings. Two orchids rooted to the bottom, spinning and swirling around umbilical vines and leaves meeting above dead in the center, petals touching in symbiotic embrace.

Radio V1: Did you find it?

Radio V2: I am LOOKING. You had it last, I dunno why this shit is always on me.

Radio V1: Because shit rolls down hill. Now shut up and find it! We are out of sunspot ambience.

Radio V2: Play the hold music. I don't think he even notices. Do you notice?

Radio V1: Yes, do you notice?

Our Driver does not notice.

Radio V1: He doesn't notice. Walmart or DMV?

Radio V2: Give him the Walmart, that shit's a fuckin' jam. [hums the Walmart jam]

[Walmart hold music plays]

The streetlights shine dirty through the breaks in the filth. Our Driver hits the wipers once more, this time fluid free and large clumps of dirt break off and fly over the top of the car, sliding shadows over his face from the metal halide gleaming through the sunroof. He looks in the

rearview mirror to determine if his actions affected any other cars because at heart our Driver is a genuinely good person and looking was a fucking mistake.

Radio V1: No don't look.

Everything goes dark.

[A number station recording begins looping on the radio.]

The world before him shatters like a broken mirror. Pieces falling away and leaving dead black in its wake and that feeling in the pit of his stomach takes control of his entire body. Overwhelming him with the type of fear a person must experience in their final moments on this plane. A kaleidoscopic nightmare forms around him, mouths and eyes growing arms in his periphery, fast approaching, reaching toward him, lashing at his face and tearing the skin on his throat and chest. Blood pours from the open wounds, soaking through his clothes and a voice begins speaking from inside his own mind.

[Agent Molder:]

Pray, prey.

Pray you never see any of this world again.

Pray you never see mega stores and half off clearance shelves, million dollar super bowl commercials, billboards glowing LED bright and beckoning with promises of secure banking, fruit flavored soda, and plumbing at reasonable rates.

Pray the time for distraction has passed.

Pray you never see roses twining along dirt paths. Pray you never see glass crack shooters and butane torches, rope, extension cords and barbed wire, frilly pink tutus and six inch heels digging into the backs of strange men, torture chambers, meth labs, and toy factories.

Broken bottles glistening on rain soaked city streets.

Pray you never hear your children cry for help, never hear political theorists predicting presidents behind polished pewter roundtables on government sponsored news programs, fire alarms, dogs barking at intruders and visitors, clacking plastic keys tapped fervently in desperate Google searches, static white noise on floor model televisions and low frequency talk radio. Pray you never hear another apology.

Pray you never know your family and the inevitable disappointment that will stem from that knowledge. Pray you never understand the people you know. Pray you never know what makes them tick. Once you do you can never look them in the eye again.

Pray you never feel the tears split into complex saline deltas on reddened cheeks, pray you never experience their causes: funerals, separations, withdrawals, and days wasted away with fantasies of the life you wanted but can never have. Pray you never feel pain, never laugh, smile, or scream. Never feel the eyes burning through your flesh when you enter quiet crowded rooms and your footsteps echo and the door slams shut behind you.

Pray that you never be judged.

Pray you never know the truth. Never realize reality is not your perception. Pray you never grasp the astounding pointlessness of the breath in your lungs, the blood coursing through knotted networks of veins, the memories you hold so dear, the balances of bank accounts, the hand-me-down belief systems built of metaphors and ancient words lacking modern referents, and all the little reasons cited in internal arguments you devised to erase the pointlessness, to eradicate it, pack it in a box and mail it to a monk, all the reasons which kept you from planting bullet into brain, razor into wrist, head into stove. Pray that hate and love defy definition and aren't merely trite four letter terms developed to describe the animal instincts to fuck and kill.

Pray what you have known to this point, to the right here and the here now, meant something.

ANYTHING.

Because it doesn't anymore.

Pray you never view yourself objectively, never play witness to your reptilian motivations, or see a face in the mirror you'd rather peel from your skull than wear as a mask for one more goddamned day.

Pray there is a god above you.
And a DEVIL below.

Radio V1: Stop! Look away. Look fucking away!

Our Driver looks away from the mirror.

[Sounds of shattered glass in reverse and a rise of noise growing louder and louder and then STOP. Everything grows silent.]

His hands shake on the steering wheel and everything seems to be back where it belongs. He feels as though something is different now though, that something within him has changed, that maybe, whatever purity he had left within him had been eaten. Digested. And returned to him twisted, torn, and misshapen. But friends, that doesn't matter where he is going. In truth, not much does.

Radio V2: We told you not to look. They own you now.

Radio V1: And you'll never get yourself back.

Our Driver stares stunned at the road unfolding before him. The box in the passenger seat vibrates. And all is as it was.

Radio V1: We were going to save you.

Radio V2: But that ship has sailed.

Radio V1: We are sorry we could not find the—

[Channel changes]

He changes the channel on the radio, taking note of the call sign to avoid listening to that absolutely ridiculous station ever again. Due to his current set of, shall we call them, influences, the remnant buzz of the voice from his delivery pickup, and the strange ease he feels when he looks down at his phone, and by proxy, the box, he does not seem to notice the starry void that now fills his rearview mirror. But if he did, he'd notice the same through the rear glass. Yawning vacancy with no end, as though the world is just **done** once he passes through, sucked into the abyss along with his old life, his partner, his kids, his hopes, his dreams—as if they were working out anyway— but also his bills, his credit score, his chronic gout, and that lemon of a heart he was unfortunately born with. Yes friends, after tonight, our Driver has a new life, a new mode of existence, a new **niche.** But for now, his gas light is on, and you guessed it friends, in just a few short days from this moment, Mr. Orange will be viewing this footage on Clearview AI, with a sheriff well on his way to a shattered brain, which, I think we can agree friends, is better by leaps and bounds than his normal **cop brain.**

Pop's Gas and Sundries is the last station before the desert swallows a car for an hour and spits it out on the other side in a town that may look slightly different but still has the McDonald's, the Walmart, two courthouses, and more than a few churches. The gas is expensive, as is most last option gas, the hotdogs are on point and the Desert Skies brand burritos are a thing to adore but

as our Driver attempts to turn the car into the lot, he notices the steering wheel push back, almost refusing to make the turn. He has to jerk the wheel hard as he drifts into oncoming traffic in the other lane, the little that there is, but I guess getting smashed into by one car is about the same as a pile up as far as the individual goes so to avoid this he pulls hard and pumps the gas pedal damn near to the floor. The car guns forward and almost jumps the lip of the entrance, barreling toward the pumps and coming remarkably close to a patron, standing with a coke in one hand and a cigarette in the other, eyes locked onto something in the distance. But when he looks the same direction through the driver side window he sees nothing, just the plain ole night sky, but it must be a super interesting star they are caught up in considering most people would be cussing him out about now for their near death experience.

Our Driver waves apologetically, just as he had to the wood paneled wagon he'd almost hit when he got this order to begin with, and he carefully guided his car to the gas pump to avoid further embarrassment and attempted vehicular homicide charges.

Only, when he attempted to open the door, it locked. He pushed the auto unlock button repeatedly, friends, but it would lock again just as quickly. That feeling in the pit of his stomach began to rise in him again. He could feel it in his throat, his face flushing hot and red. Suddenly he found himself struggling to breathe. His heart quickens as he presses the button over and over. Before his eyes, the box that had been sitting there calmly this whole time, just being a box, started to shake, bouncing itself off the seat, a high pitched whine emanating from within. As the sound enters his ears, his blood pressure lowers and his breath comes normal and even and he wonders for a moment where all those feelings came from because as far as he can tell, well, everything is just fine.

He pulls the handle, the door opens, and he steps out into the night.

Now the difference between what our driver perceives and the reality around him is quite the divide. Where our driver sees a few people staring off into the distance in the direction he'd come from, the reality is fucking bedlam. People run and trample one another into the concrete, in a hectic mad dash away from his vehicle. They fight, they scream, they panic and fall to the ground unexpectedly. There are puddles of blood with footsteps splashed out in splatters on the asphalt. And for sure, at least one person has died. But our Driver just walks past all of this as if nothing is happening, eyes focused first on the door and then on the counter at the point of sale which appears to be currently vacant.

Screams erupt from all around him but it all sounds like laughter, if he hears anything at all, which is doubtful. The ground rumbles beneath the store in bursts and if we were to listen close enough and pay attention to the pattern we may recognize those rumbles as footsteps but that would require a careful and studied ear.

A roll of thunder approaches closer and closer and as it reaches the apex of its potential, the windows shatter exploding into the store, cutting our Driver in the process but he does not seem to register this either. A woman shrieks and slams the bathroom door behind her with a loud click of the door lock but friends, she does not want to be trapped in there. I assure you.

Our Driver walks casually to the counter and stands there, staring at the lottery tickets. Maybe after this delivery he might pick one up. One of those twenty dollar guys and with the streak of luck he's on today well he might just win and wouldn't that be the cherry on top of this dope ass money sundae he was treating himself to.

It's a few stretched moments before he realizes that the attendant is not where the attendant should be and he does his best to peer through the no ID no alcohol notices and the we reserve the right to refuse service signs and the winning tickets all taped to the bullet proof glass separating the employees from the nefarious citizenry. He reaches under the dip in the counter where he should be currently sliding his money in for this gas he needed to complete this delivery and get back to his house before midnight preferably, to move aside a NO SHOPLIFTING sign so he could see behind the glass a little easier and then he spots her. A young blonde woman shivering on the dirty white tile floor, following his hand with her eyes the way you would a snake on the ground in the woods. Fervent and focused and still.

He snaps his fingers and she looks through the crack in the papers to meet his gaze, and he says, are you okay?

A tear drips down her cheek, drawing a mascara line as she slowly shakes her head to say no, her lip quivering and smeared with pink lipstick. And he says, can I help you?

Outside, a roar sweeps through the streets. Though the night is dark and the streetlights have gone out, if you were to look close you'd see the outline of a large red and black slime smeared paw reaching up over the back of the store, resting a long cold claw onto the ventilation fan on the roof. A terrible laugh fills the air, blotting out the roars and the screams, but inside our driver says, if there is anything I can do, please tell me. It's okay, he says, I know what it's like to be overwhelmed. But when the woman hears the laugh her tears break free and her head shakes back and forth in a frantic no no no, this can't be happening, this can't fucking be happening.

But it is, I'm afraid and there is nothing our Driver can do to help, except leave and let this disaster follow along behind him into the void, but of course he does not realize *that.* Such a thought would require *faculties* of which he is currently, slap out.

Look, he says, I just need gas so I am going to slide this ten under the window and go. I hope whatever it is that's bothering you will work itself out, I find that it often does. You have a beautiful night.

The blonde woman stares at him. Spellbound and stunned. I cannot verify the thoughts going through her head but I do know they are something along the lines of "oh my fucking god I am going to die" and friends, she is absolutely correct. After our Driver leaves and drags this mess with him, she will watch as an eye holding the embodied gaze of filth and greed and corruption stares through her very being and that stare will strip the soul from her spine and leave her as a shell with her faith in the good old God she has trusted all her life cracked and empty. And, unfortunately for her children and her parents and all of her friends, she will put the shotgun to her head the owner keeps behind the counter, and leave her own skull in the same state.

As our Driver steps back out into the lot over the shards of broken glass, crushed bags of chips, and the remnants of an overturned coffee maker, the paw on the roof reaches further out, slamming down and shattering the residue of the ancient algae you are so reliant on, even the streets beneath your feet are a mockery of the planet. And when you look at things that way, it's no wonder that creature exists, where else do such vile energies go? The claws sink into unconscious bodies laying like parked cars between yellow lines and they go from unconscious to dead in an instant which isn't that much of a stretch friends but our driver pumps his 1.89 gallons of gas and now, he may just make it to wherever he is going.

His phone dings, scolding him for this pause in the delivery saying, "you do not appear to be heading toward your destination, let us know how we can help." This makes him laugh cuz have you ever called one of those companies for assistance?

Our Driver fiddles with his phone and hits play on his podcast app for the background noise. He can't stop thinking about that woman, wondering what was wrong with her and what he could've done to help her, if anything? But none of you have time to help anyone anymore, wrapped up as you are just trying to survive while a few of you have the world in your pockets and those people have never helped anyone, how else do you think they got their money?

Behind his car, in that old abyss swallowed world, our creature has a new friend, a sibling composed of corruption in the guise of the great wyrms of old with a big dumb face. But we must not let that face fool us friends, their eyes may cross when they think and their mouth may hang open but when it comes to fucking shit up, it comes to them real natural like.

The two slither and bound after the vehicle, having left Pop's Gas and Sundries in shambles and having more than a little to do with the nightmare that is now downtown Blythe but that is a story for another time. For now, they have to stop what is coming, they have to cut this off at the head, because they will not stand for another disruption to their future, another threat to their

reign. Such a slight will not BE TOLERATED. And little does our driver know that he is the head that must be cut off, the bud that must be nipped, for with him comes new power, new blood to wash through the ranch and maybe, if things go just proper, usher in a new era for you and everyone you know, and by proxy, me as well. But we will just have to see how that works out, won't we. Spoiler though, not too well.

Outside of Palo Verde the night is brisk. The wind blows dust over vast swathes of badlands (cola,) and rolls tumbleweeds across the burrows of hog nosed skunks, darkling beetles, and desert shrews. His GPS shows 3 miles left but you can see for ages out this way and all there is is nothing in every direction. Our Driver struggles to recall if he's ever seen *anything* out here. And as far as he can remember, the answer is undoubtedly no but this is a leave at the door type of situation so he gets paid regardless, even if that door does not exist.

The idiot worm digs into the ground like a sharp knife slicing through flesh and the hole fills in behind them as if they were never there. The red spotted million mouthed creature leaps forward to close the distance on our Driver and for a moment the moon is blotted out above the desert removing the silver sheen and starlight dance from the earth. Our Driver stares in confusion at his phone, the map shows a sharp turn coming up quickly but the road doesn't show any sign of a break or driveway, just a slightly curved yellow line stretching out for miles and miles.

That panic begins eating at him one last time but before it can go too far the box emits its high frequency squeal and his eyes glaze over once again. He opens the delivery app on his phone and navigates to the drop off instructions. For a single vague, strange moment he recalls the pickup instructions for this delivery and there was something weird about them and it's even weirder he cannot remember them at all. His memory is usually pretty good for smoking as much as he does but for some reason this all sort of seems *smeared* in his mind. Erased or amended. Hard to tell.

On the map he sees that the actual pin for the drop off is not too far off the road. It's common practice for most out of the way deliveries to use a pin and he's dropped things in some weird places in his career so really this would only be slightly out of the ordinary. So he pulls his car off to the side of the road studying the edge of the asphalt to see if there was even the possibility of an overgrown driveway or path to cut back through the desert but alas, there was not. So our Driver pops the car in park but leaves the headlights on pointed toward the direction of the pin and opens the door and—

[BAM]

—The night rushes by him and his head whips forward as his car slides and fishtails, tires scrubbing along the road, filling the air with the smell of burned rubber. An impossible roar

charges down the highway, a cloud of sound gathering the dust and old cigarette butts from the shoulder and pushing toward the vehicle like an invisible wall with the force of hell and all its demons behind it. Before he can even register what is happening, the windows burst, the mirrors shatter and shards of glass fly around him, shredding more of his already bloody face and throat. His whole universe seemed to pause for a moment, hands gripping the steering wheel, eyes wide and bulging, every particle in the air visible and shimmering, and under different circumstances this moment could be one of beauty and deep philosophical inquiry but as it stands, not so much. As it stands, come tomorrow he won't remember a goddamn thing.

The car comes to a stop and the glass and dust fall out of the air, falling to his floorboard with clinks and twinkles and for a second, everything was quiet and peaceful. But that second was just that, gone in an instance and our driver felt a rumble coming out of the darkness. So he runs.

He runs as fast as his feet would move, off the road and onto the hard dry earth. He screams and all he wants is to be anywhere other than here but something calls after him. Forces him to turn and look at the car he left behind and as he does his teary eyes fall on the monster. And while he should have been frozen like a rabbit in the headlights, the mysterious call in his head beckons him back because it seems he has forgotten something very important. It seems as though he left *the box.*

A terrible pain grips his temple as though his skull was being tightened in a vice. He looked back behind him for a moment toward the wide open desert, a place that welcomed disappearance. He could maybe be safe but his feet refused to move in that direction. From the North he could see the giant shadow of a large dog stepping gradually toward his car, it moved sleek and purposeful. Our Driver thinks he has time friends, the thing does not seem to have his location just yet, it does not appear to be headed toward him, so he takes off toward the car, bending low to draw as little attention as possible.

Malfastice: I know you're out here boy. I can smell you. I can hear your fear like sweet music from the orchestra section. [He sniffs at the air] There is no place for you here boy. And I am willing to call this even if you were to just *show yourself.*

The creature cranes its head, looking around but our Driver, moving low and quick in the dark has not yet been spotted. And he's almost there, friends. He's almost to the door, just a few more steps, just a few more and he'll be there.

The thought does not cross his mind once that no box is worth walking toward a massive shadow sniffing him out. No box is worth any of this. All he wanted was to take a little money home, to make his children's life slightly better if only just for a few days, to smoke a joint and eat some fast food and fall asleep in bed next to the woman he loved so dearly even after all these years

but now all he can think about is that FUCKING BOX. The tears stream from his eyes again as he reaches for the door and pulls the handle, the noise loud and sharp in the silence.

Malfastice: Found you.

The dog-like creature takes off toward him shaking the earth with every pounce and leap. He grabs the box from the seat and runs back out into the desert, the package gripped tight to his chest, blood dripping onto the runes from his lacerated cheeks.

Malfastice: We are running to the same place, boy. But for very different reasons. Have you even thought about what you are doing? Have you even asked yourself what is in that box you hold so close? Have you even once considered that thing might be the cause of all of this? That that thing might have already made you a slave to its whims and would you even know Joseph?

Our Driver screamed when he heard his name. Screamed and fell to his knees. Something broke in him, released him, and he found himself, there in the desert, bleeding and horrified, and so so confused. He doesn't know what's happening, he doesn't know where he is, he was just at that weird shop what the fuck is this? What the fuck is happening right now?

Malfastice: Yes. Look around you boy. Where is it you find yourself right now? What are you doing way out here in this dead place, alone and bloody and talking to a fucking monster?

Our Driver cannot answer these questions. The box in his arms begins squirming, something inside knocking back and forth, pulsing, and broadcasting the frequency that activated the neurotoxin in his brain that had been placed there by the voice at the shop. His mouth goes slack and he picks himself up, hugging the box carefully against his chest.

Malfastice: Just when we were starting to get along Joseph.

But this time it did not work. Our driver stares dead ahead, ignoring the creature entirely, the power swaying him stronger this close to the ranch, this close to the source, and well, there isn't much that can save him now. Only one thing that can. And that thing ain't all too preferable either.

Out of the ground, comes the big dumb worm, always eager to be nosey in situations such as this. He breaks free of the desert floor, sand undulating as it pushes upward and cascades away against the body of sleek tourmaline scales rising from within. Rising almost forever it seems, reaching up toward the sky, towering over them both and wrapping its articulated vertebrae around the entire scene, corralling our Driver in place.

The hyena dashes to our Driver, gnashing and snapping at him with his thousand lined mouths, a growl deep inside.

Nilcrisith: PLACEHOLDER Hey guys! Thought I uhhh, thought I lost you there for a minute. I mean if I didn't know better I'd think you were tryna lose me. You weren't tryna lose me were you? Yr gonna ding my confidence again and you promised—

With a quick snap of infinite mouths trailing behind one another in a thousand colors, wavy and lagging, as though time itself stopped when those jaws unhinged. A million tongues lapping at the sky, streams of spit slung in curves forming a knotted sigil in the air but only for a moment. When the jaw snapped shut the sigil flashed and the creature, moving so fast it blurred the molecules in the space around it, curving through dimensions and catching our Driver by the belt around his waist.

Nilcrisith: You promised me you would treat me better. You promised me [sad] you would respect me.

Malfastice: Do not do this to me right now. You are so embarrassing. We are threatening this young man's life. He's in my mouth right now. Right now! So please, can we do this later?

[Nilcrisith begins to cry]

Malfastice: Now is not the time for this! Tighten up!

Nilcrisith: I'm trying. You know it hurts me. You said you wouldn't leave me! You promised me! Do our promises not mean anything anymore? You liar. You're a liar.

The serpent body shudders and convulses, shaking the air in the ring formed by his body. Our Driver's glazed eyes slow stream tears through the blood on his face as if something inside him is horrified but cannot break through. His jaw is set and the package is latched into his arms, blood now pouring into the runes on the lid. A black and red flame forms along the carvings, burning his skin but he does not release, he does not flinch. The squealing frequency emanating from inside sounds desperate as though it is all the box can do to hold onto the chemically stitched mind in its grasp.

Malfastice: Stop this minute! Stop!

Nilcrisith: I can't! Why are you so mean?

The massive serpent bursts into full fledged tears, causing the atmosphere to tremble, sand and dust vibrating on the ground, dancing just above.

Malfastice: I said stop!!!

A disc of pink light flashes from outside the ring, freezing everything it touches along the way in place. The night is hushed and tranquil. Immobile.

From the other side of the serpent's body a light moved, rupturing the darkness around it in infinitesimal fissures like the air cracks and chips away before it. It fades into the outside of the body and for a moment the world is dark again before it steps out into the circle.

Poised and dignified, brilliant as the stars that bore her, she slides to the center of the circle. You can feel the *disappointment* in the air.

Abria: I'm sorry about this overseer.

[a rise of noise]

And with that, our driver is out, gone to the waiting room in hyperspace. And he'll be gone for quite a while. The long haul, you might say, but worry not friends, we will catch up to him there, I promise.

Now I feel I need to describe Our Driver's last few moments before his transition out of this plane to the dream toned limbo designed just for him. This is your trigger warning

I want to thank you for coming to see us again here 'round the bend and we hope you will join us next time when we finally make it inside, official like, I mean, through the doors of Wireland Ranch.

Outro:

Before he had awoken he was placed on a chair. Metal twined and spun to fit his body as though suspended in the air by thousands of razor thin wires equally distributing his weight. His clothes had been stripped from his body and the blood had been cleansed from his skin. His hands were strapped to the sides in netting made from the wires and along the top edge, right along the stitch, needles pierced his forearms and provided a constant drip drop of a lil *something special.*

And when his eyes opened the lids revealed delicate circuitry sewn through the sclerae around his pupils, precious metals mined by children in artisanal mines implanted in a somewhat

permanent fashion. Attached to knots of wires attached to knots of other wires, and we all know that every knot at the Ranch is a sign, friends and, I wonder what these mean?

Hands melted out of the Overseer's chair, liquid metal reaching to a table beside and grabbed a drill with a phosphor bronze bit and positioned the tip directly over the bridge of his nose, just below his eyeline. He didn't feel a thing as it pushed through the bone, headed toward his sella turcica, at the very center of his brain for there is where we find the pituitary gland and a welcoming and pleasant home for our guest.

Abria: See you on the other side.

Shimmering hands put on white gloves and opened the black box that started this cycle of events to begin with. The lid cracked with a hiss and the frequency calmed to a low growl and kept the squirming to a minimum. The molten hands reached into the box and removed, with the care of a newly born infant, a molten golden blob, ever shifting and bubbling, forming limbs and melting back in on itself. The hands placed this thing gently in a petri dish on the table beside the overseer's chair and a sparkling wire reached down from the ceiling like a silken spider web and slid through the shifting golden figment, bringing it to life, after a fashion.

The thing shot strands of silver around the edges of the hole in the Overseer's head and used those strands to pull itself out of the dish and across the table, tiny hands formed along the strands to pull more efficiently, to cover more ground and within minutes had settled itself into the hole and slid inside. The skin grew over and that is all.

The Overseer's eyes opened and adjusted to the light as Abria said, "Welcome Overseer. It's... interesting to see you again."

