Matter 51

Summary

Summaries of Interventions

Account by:	Various unknown.
Source:	Søndergaard & Bang.
Location:	Various.
Event:	13 Dec 2023 – 21 Jun 2024.
Report:	22 Jun 2024.

Report

Summary #1

Priority Level	Medium
Category	Dissemination
Location	Romania
Date Opened	13 Dec 2023
Brief Issue Description	
Mortal analyses reports and submits findings to a conference.	
Detailed Issue Description	
A PhD student researching modern folklore identified a number of newspaper articles relating to the influence of Bhéwonom on	

Dheghōm. She analysed these and submitted her preliminary findings to a conference.

Her paper was accepted subject to minor corrections. It did not conclude that our reality is contingent on a higher reality, but it did name it as Dheghōm.

Her research was sound and extensive. Some references were new to us. She was approached as a potential recruit, but she refused to countenance the possibility.

Her research may have inspired other folklorists to investigate further. The student herself intended to investigate further. Such a level of dissemination would then become hard to contain.

Action Taken

An electrical fault was arranged that caused the student's apartment to burn down. She died in the conflagration. Her supervisor declined to make the corrections requested by the reviewers, so her paper was rejected.

Resolution

Partial success.

The student and her research notes were destroyed in the fire, but the backup she stored in the cloud remains available to anyone who might know her password. The reviewers and

her supervisor still have copies of the first draft of her paper.	
Date Closed	4 Jan 2024

Summary #2

Priority Level	Medium
Category	Consequential
Location	Chile
Date Opened	23 Feb 2024
Brief Issue Description	
Mortals attempt to summon Weghtrowénts.	
Detailed Issue Description	

Over the course of six months, a loose association of witches made numerous attempts to summon Weghtrowénts using traditional methods. They were all unsuccessful, because Weghtrowénts was not in Dheghōm during this period. Had he been so, it is unlikely that his response would have been positive.

It is unknown how the witches came to learn of the existence of Weghtrowénts. If they were to learn of the existence of Ansnā and attempt to summon her then they could well succeed in attracting her attention. Their subsequent attempts to bind her spirit would necessarily fail, yet their intention to do so would be evident. Ansnā's attitude towards the people of Dheghōm would then suffer.

Bhéwonom

Ordinarily, our partner organisation with expertise in this field would have been asked to put an end to the activities of the witches. However, members of that collective are not aware of Weghtrowénts; were they to be so apprised, some would undoubtedly wish to attempt to summon him themselves. They were not therefore asked to become involved.

Action Taken

Eight of the principals met over Microsoft Teams to discuss other matters. Bombs timed to explode simultaneously killed five of them and wounded a sixth. The locations of the other two could not be determined in time and therefore they were not attacked.

Evidence of the involvement of the Chilean security services was left at one of the bomb sites. The survivors discovered this and associated the assassinations with a wider purge, rather than with their attempts to summon Weghtrowénts.

Resolution

Partial success.

Weakened and distracted, it is unlikely that the witches will have the wherewithal to attempt a summoning of Weghtrowénts for several years.

Failure.
It is not known how the witches initially came to hear of Weghtrowénts.

Referred.
Our partner organisation noticed the assassinations and asked if we were responsible. We confirmed we were but declined to provide an explanation. It seems certain that our partners will investigate. A plausible story must therefore be selected and its supporting evidence put in place with some urgency.

Date Closed	29 Apr 2024

Summary #3

Priority Level	Low/High
Category	Evidence accumulation
Location	Facebook, X
Date Opened	12 Feb 2024

Brief Issue Description

Mortal floats the idea that powerful genetically-modified mortals have been created.

Detailed Issue Description

A leading conspiracy theorist operating on open social media platforms and the dark web hinted that there is evidence superbeings walk among us. He claimed that these were the result of genetic manipulation by unregulated government agencies.

Bhéwonom

This issue was regarded as low-priority until large numbers of heroes were detected, whereupon it was elevated to high-priority.

It was possible that among the conspiracy theorist's millions of followers, some would encounter a hero by chance. This would cause others actively to seek out heroes. Evidence would thus accumulate and be pieced together.

If allowed to continue, the conspiracy theorists would reach partially-correct and very probably damaging conclusions.

Action Taken

Selected recently-famous individuals in wider society were proposed as being the likely result of genetic modification. Once this proposition had been established, they were then shown to have been vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2.

The conspirators were encouraged to deduce that if these individuals were superbeings then vaccination was responsible. This was incompatible with their foundational beliefs.

Evidence was then provided to show that the selected individuals were not superbeings.

Resolution	
Success.	
The conspirators concluded that there were no superbeings among us and ceased to look for them.	
Date Closed	13 May 2024

Summary #4

Priority Level	Medium
Category	Evidence accumulation
Location	USA
Date Opened	2 Jan 2024
Brief Issue Description	
FBI opens section to investigate evidence that Bhéwonom exists.	
Detailed Issue Description	
Following the complete deletion of all evidence of the existence of John Thorndyke and Marjorie Laleek and of Love Ellis's assassination of James Blake, the FBI set up a new section to investigate the phenomenon.	
Marjorie Laleek's description of the rationale behind her activities was revisited and used as a starting point.	
If a government agency were to substantiate the existence of Bhéwonom, the fact would be used by politicians for their own short-term ends. This would likely have disastrous consequences.	

Bhéwonom

Action Taken
A connection was established between the son of a prominent US senator and NPCsoft. It was made to appear that the son had illegally profited from the sale of the hardware upon which the game *Erwā* was implemented. The senator intends to run for President in 2028 on a law-and-order platform, and even an untrue allegation such as this would be seized upon by opponents and the media. The senator was to be told informally that the new FBI section was investigating the *Erwā* hardware. He was then expected to use his influence to get the section closed down.

Resolution	
Aborted. The FBI section was abruptly closed down before the senator could be involved. The cause of the section's termination is unknown.	
Date Closed	18 May 2024

Summary #5

Priority Level	High
Category	Hero exploitation
Location	USA
Date Opened	9 May 2024

Brief Issue Description

Mortal persuades hero to interfere in stock market.

Detailed Issue Description

A New York stockbroker encountered a naïve hero attempting to use a mobile phone. He noticed that the hero had some unnatural power over electronic devices and persuaded him to increase by fractions of a second the time taken for stock price changes to be broadcast. He used the slight delays this afforded him to buy stocks that were due to rise.

The hero was told that his actions were helping do good, but they were not: he was being exploited for the stockbroker's own ends. In the belief that the stockbroker was his friend, he performed the task daily, operating from the stockbroker's apartment.

Were the judges of Bhéwonom to discover this exploitation, their decision could be affected adversely.

Action Taken

The stockbroker was warned not to continue with his exploitation. As predicted, he ignored the warning.

He was assaulted in his apartment and his kneecaps drilled. Also as predicted, when the hero found him he produced a vial of healing

fluid which he used to heal the stockbroker. The extent of the stockbroker's crimes were then explained jointly to the hero and the stockbroker. The stockbroker confessed to these revelations.

The hero offered a reward but this was declined. To do so could have been interpreted as a different kind of exploitation.

Resolution	
Neutral. The stockbroker was permitted to retain the profits he had made from his exploitative arrangement.	
Success. The hero was pleased to have been saved from further exploitation and agreed not to report his experience to the judges.	
Success. An empty vial capable of containing healing fluid was recovered.	
Date Closed	20 May 2024

Summary #6

Priority Level	Medium
Category	Evidence accumulation
Location	Facebook
Date Opened	9 May 2024

Brief Issue Description

Mortals who have been killed by immortals recount their experiences.

Detailed Issue Description

A Facebook group, "The Waking Dead", was created by and for individuals who have been killed, only to awaken in their beds moments later.

These mortals have been killed by immortals. Followers of the group are slowly piecing together a coherent picture from the evidence of one another's reports. If allowed to continue, they will reach correct but partial conclusions that could be damaging.

Action Taken

Posts were made to the group, containing keywords selected to trigger Facebook's suicide-prevention algorithms. To support this, the group was reported to Facebook from accounts purporting to belong to concerned parents and to people with lived experience of suicide attempts.

Resolution

Success.

Facebook shut down the group 21 May 2024.

Date Closed	22 May 2024

Bhéwonom

Summary #7

Priority Level	Low
Category	Dissemination
Location	Namibia
Date Opened	11 May 2024

Brief Issue Description

Hero repeatedly demonstrates several supernatural powers to mortal.

Detailed Issue Description

A hero manipulated an animist shaman by claiming to be an ancestral spirit. He created simple objects for the shaman upon demand, some of which were made of gold. His motive seems to have been that he found this entertaining. The animist began to attract a following. Some local media coverage followed.

If allowed to continue, the undeniable ability of the hero to manipulate the physics of our reality would have become apparent to all, leading to global acknowledgement. Other heroes would have pursued similar courses. Chaos would have ensued, compromising the experience of less outgoing heroes.

Action Taken

Some of the creative acts were accompanied by unexpected and unpredicted side-effects. The presence of these was used to persuade the shaman that the spirit was a trickster who had now been banished back to the spirit land.

A trap was constructed to prevent the hero from acting in Dheghōm.

Resolution	
Success. The hero was trapped and the shaman ceased the promulgation of his message.	
Date Closed	22 May 2024

Summary #8

Priority Level	High
Category	Dissemination
Location	Jerusalem, Israel
Date Opened	13 May 2024
Brief Issue Description	
Hero heals multiple people using conjured healing fluid.	

Detailed Issue Description

A hero appeared in Jerusalem and chose to help mortals by curing them of their ailments. To this end, he serially conjured copies of a vial of healing fluid.

His well-meaning actions caused a mixed response. All the mortals he treated were healed of all their ailments, but many did not wish for all their ailments to be healed.

For some, it was a minor inconvenience: dental work detritus filled their mouths as their teeth

became healthy; body piercings that could not be expelled caused pain until removed; tattoos were flushed to the surface of the skin as ink.

For others, it was a cause for concern: circumcised men found they now had a foreskin; a man with a pacemaker endured agony because its pacing leads punctured an internal blood vessel.

Word of this spread quickly and a crowd began to gather consisting of those who wished to be cured, those who wished the hero to desist and those who were merely curious.

Action Taken

It was anticipated that Jerusalem would be a site where heroes would appear, so a swift response was possible.

It was explained to the hero that although his intentions were appreciated, his actions were having dangerous and unforeseen consequences. He was apologetic and promised not to continue. His apology was accepted gracefully.

Resolution

Success.

The hero surrendered the unused vial of healing fluid from which he had conjured copies.

Failure. Before our intervention, the hero gave away two conjured copies of his vial to unknown mortals.	
Date Closed	14 May 2024

Notes

This set of summaries was hand-delivered by Martin Søndergaard and Lillian Bang as part of the accord we have with their organisation. The pair stated that summaries existed for an unspecified number of additional activities of a similar nature, but that sadly these could not be shared for reasons of confidentiality.

The texts are in English translation. Originally, they would have been in Latin.

Dates stated use the Gregorian calendar. By the reckoning of the organisation itself, 22 Jun 2024 is year 4089 day 1.

The terminology used is that outlined in the Document of Terminology presented 18 Dec 2023.

Notes Specific to Summary #1
The student was Ruxandra R. Drăgușanu.

Bhéwonom

I take it that the extreme response described in this summary is a coded reminder that we should be prudent when sharing what we know about matters Dheghōm.

Notes Specific to Summary #2
The witches were residents of Chiloé, Chile. In that part of the world they do not form covens in the formal sense, but there is a confederation of coven-like groups.

The reference to the selection of a plausible story suggests that the organisation has a bank of such stories and accompanying evidence from which it can quickly fashion responses to events.

The partner organisation that the summary refers to is understood to be a loose-knit group of European witches led by an ancient coven based in Somerset. Little is known of said coven beyond its exceptional age and the respect in which it is held by other covens, but it may be that they possess relics of Bhéwonom origin similar in power to the Holy Grail corded ware bowl entrusted to Romy Pabst.

Notes Specific to Summary #3
Martin Søndergaard and Lillian Bang report that their organisation maintains a network of accounts on social media kept active by

automatically-generated, AI-created posts. Select such accounts can be brought to bear when necessary.

Although members of the organisation have a tendency to overstate the size of its membership and extent of its powers, this particular claim does not seem unjustified.

Notes Specific to Summary #4
In an uncharacteristic burst of wit, the FBI's new section was nicknamed 'the Why-Files'. One of its members was almost certainly Audrey Diaz, who moved from Texas to Washington D.C. in mid-December 2023. Agent Diaz was involved in the investigation of NPCsoft for possible white-collar crime offences.

The FBI has revealed no information regarding the closure of the Why-Files, other than that a short-lived section with that nickname did exist. It is supposed that the section requested its own termination, as opposed to being terminated by the executive staff of the Analysis and Strategic Issues Branch of the Directorate of Intelligence.

Notes Specific to Summary #5
The financier involved was Greg D. Franklinson. He has retired at the age of 48.

Bhéwonom

The description of the vial as capable of holding healing fluid suggests that although the fluid itself can be manufactured at will, it's inert unless delivered from a certified receptacle. This would explain why Romy Pabst was so keen to collect one when she and Love Ellis were attacked in Glencoe. The Mallan potion may also have such a requirement.

Notes Specific to Summary #6
I encountered this Facebook group independently.

The date of closure of the Facebook group was the day before that recorded in the summary's Date Closed field. It would therefore seem that there is a formal process to closing a ticket following its resolution.

Notes Specific to Summary #7
I have been unable to verify this intervention independently.

The nature of the trap is not described, but I imagine it involves killing the visitor from Bhéwonom near a volume of soil collected from an ancient site. The soil is placed in a bricked-up space, which has been rendered deadly (perhaps by the use of spikes or similar, iron-maiden style). Upon reappearing, the visitor is immediately killed,

only to reappear in the same location; thereupon, the procedure repeats until the visitor gives up.

Notes Specific to Summary #8
This incident was easily verified by its social-media footprint.

Copies of healing fluid containers disappear when the fluid is used, so are only a concern for dissemination reasons. The originals from which copies are made do not so disappear and can therefore be re-used; while also a concern for dissemination reasons, they are exceptionally desirable if one knows how to manufacture the healing fluid that they can be used to dispense. The organisation tacitly acknowledges that it does possess this knowledge.

Matter 52

Summary

The Judgement of Eugene Nethercott

Account by:	Eugene 'Genie' Nethercott, 30. Video game designer.
Source:	Letter.
Location:	Austin, United States.
Event:	2 Jun 2024.
Report:	4 Jun 2024.

Report

NPChard HQ
Austin, TX

6/4/23

Hi there, Mr Scott.

Well last night was a ride. You already know something about the daemon, but I have a whole consignment of bizarreness to unload for you.

So, you remember the sermon that was among the documents you sent me? The one where the

Reverend Hughes was given control of a robot body in Bhéwonom so he could visit the place? Well, the same thing happened to me. It was even the same robot body, they only have the one. I'm telling you, it was pretty damned cool!

Sarah was there waiting for me, looking exactly as everyone describes her. Marius, her boss, was there too; he's a little older than his avatar seems to be when he visits us. They said they were going to take me to meet the judges, who wanted to ask me some questions.

That skin condition they have is truly gross, by the way.

The courthouse wasn't far away, we could have walked there in ten minutes, but the people of Bhéwonom are easily spooked so we went by driverless car instead. They're all the same kind of vehicle, like with London taxis; you don't get a special one just because you're rich — and Marius *is* rich, fabulously so, way richer than I am back home comparatively speaking. In temperament, he's more Bill Gates than Elon Musk, although I'm sure the folk in Bhéwonom still think he's weird and mercurial.

It wasn't raining, so I didn't get to see the raindrops the size of chickpeas.

Marius laid out what was going to happen. The judges had spoken to everyone they wanted to speak to in Dheghōm (and a few they didn't). I was the last entity on their list. They were either going to close down Dheghōm or keep it open.

Bhéwonom

Marius then outlined what this would entail, which impressed the hell out of Sarah because you have to be seriously smart to do that in their world.

If the judges decided on closure then either they'd order that Dheghōm be dumped to a save file – he didn't phrase it that way, but that's the gist of it – like I did with Erwā, or they'd conclude that even this would be too much of a risk to society and despatch our world to oblivion.

If the judges decided to keep it open, they'd either allow all people from Bhéwonom access, or allow restricted access, or allow no access at all. They could also decide to reboot it from scratch or from an earlier save point, although it was Marius's understanding that there *were* no earlier save points because Paul considered them too expensive to keep. I guess their programmers have rather more confidence in their infallibility than ours do.

Marius didn't know which way the judges' decision would go, because the judges are also geniuses by Bhéwonom standards so he couldn't second-guess them. He was very keen to be allowed access himself, though: his daughter may be only 33 days old according to Bhéwonom's clocks, but he really is quite fond of her and wants to get to know her more. He'd also like to reacquaint himself with her mother, but is aware that this could be awkward.

It's weird the way they talk in English but their mouths move to a different language. You get used

to it, but it makes faces harder to read. There's an odd accent, too, I mean it sounds basically British but there's something else in there. Maybe the lip-synch tech they use when in Dheghōm irons out that wrinkle.

Incidentally, the city I was in was called Northern Capital. I could probably have asked Sarah to use the "old words" to render it as something more interesting-sounding, but then I'd have had to figure out how to write it down for you.

Oh, I've just realised that 'Northern Capital' in Mandarin is 'Běi Jīng'. That's neat.

It took me 15 minutes of manual-reading to figure out how to get this embroidery machine to do the ě and the ī there. You're welcome.

I asked Marius how judges got to be judges. He said that when there was a vacancy the qualifying candidates decided among themselves who'd get the job. So, reminiscent of how we select new popes, then.

It seems that Bhéwonom doesn't have countries as we would know them, it's like one superstate with sub-states, sub-sub-states and so on for levels of regional down to local governance. The judges I would be seeing were the equivalent of the Supreme Court but for the whole world, and they weren't all happy that they'd had to spend time judging beings from Dheghōm when they could have been judging beings from Bhéwonom like they normally do. Marius was concerned that this

Bhéwonom

in itself might persuade one or two of them that Dheghōm is more trouble than it's worth.

When we arrived at the courthouse, Marius and Sarah had to wait outside while I went in to be interviewed.

The courtroom was arranged as a quarter-circle of eight chairs around a curved bench. These were where the judges sat, although one of the seats was empty. Visually, the effect was that of a grin with a missing tooth.

I was directed to another chair at the focal point, raised slightly above the others; I figure that the idea may have been to help redress the balance of power, but Bhéwonom being Bhéwonom it could simply have been set up that way on a whim then never put back. The room was square and there were banks of chairs to the right and left of the judges and behind them, but these were empty; it was just me and the seven judges.

I didn't have a desk, only a chair. The judges mainly used their desk for leaning on, they didn't take notes or have books or laptops or anything. Maybe they have better memories than us, or maybe they have some way of recording proceedings, they did occasionally touch their forearms in a manner that didn't suggest they were scrubbing off some of that gunge they get coming out of their pores.

The judges all had the same kind of look to them: mid-brown skin tone and straight, black-or-

greying hair of assorted lengths. Explanations that come to mind include: they're all from the same region; Bhéwonom's population has always looked this way; over many millennia a melting pot situation has arisen; there's some kind of racism going on.

They weren't dressed any differently to anyone else I saw in Bhéwonom; they could have been ordinary citizens – in fact, maybe they were, I had no way of knowing. I wasn't told their names so I mentally numbered them #1 through #8 based on where they were sitting. They were arranged in roughly age order, with #1 being the youngest and #8 the oldest; #1, #3 and #7 were female, the rest were male. Seat #4 was the empty one. The judges made no reference to this whatsoever.

#8 did the introduction, so he was probably the most experienced; I'm not sure that he was any more senior than the others in terms of authority. He explained that the purpose of this Judgement (I kinda feel it needs a capital J there) was to decide what to do about Dheghōm. He outlined the many pressures on the judges coming from different directions, which I'll list here if I can figure out how to make this embroidery machine do bullet points – ah, I'll just use hyphens:

- Some people were concerned that Dheghōm would change Bhéwonom society in undesirable ways and wanted it ended. Reasons included: making people violent; making people neglect their everyday lives; fear it would lead to job losses; fear

that we'll control them; fear of the unknown. That last one's a biggie in Bhéwonom.

\- Some were hoping Dheghōm would change Bhéwonom in desirable ways and wanted it to continue. Reasons included: for the technical advances we may deliver; to try ideas out on us before risking them in Bhéwonom; to exploit us by making us answer questions and predict the future; to entertain them, like a glorified aquarium.

\- Some didn't care about the wider effects, they just wanted to be able to play it for fun.

\- Some did care about the wider effects and wanted to be able to play it as it was before it went offline.

After telling me all this, #8 stated that the judges would only consider these factors once they had established whether shutting down Dheghōm was in and of itself good, bad or neither. The people of Bhéwonom largely decide whether something is good, bad or neither based on what other people think is good, bad or neither. If there's no precedent, the judges have to decide. That's ultimately why they'd investigated Dheghōm. Of course, they'd previously had to decide whether investigating Dheghōm was *itself* good, bad or neither, and had surmised it was the former.

I didn't know if I was allowed to speak, but I chanced it and it seemed I was. I asked what they meant by 'good' and 'bad'.

They discussed it, then #7 replied. 'Good' meant that it was intrinsically good; 'bad' meant that it was intrinsically bad.

I asked if they meant 'right' and 'wrong'. This confused them, I suspect because the words translated into the Bhéwonomese for 'good' and 'bad'. The answer was yes, anyway.

OK, I realise that's a mess of an incomplete explanation so I'll try to sum it up in fewer words.

- The judges were going to begin by deciding whether Dheghōm had a legitimate claim to exist in the first place.

- If it didn't, it would be closed regardless.

- If the validity of Dheghōm's claim was unclear, the judges would consider the pressures that were acting on them to decide what to do with it.

- If Dheghōm's claim was legitimate, the pressure factors would be applied only with regard to determining the degree of access to it permitted and what actions regarding it would be allowed.

Probably best if I tried to persuade them that it should exist, then.

In what followed, individual judges asked me questions, some with follow-ups. After I answered, I'd get another question, maybe from the same judge, maybe a different one.

Now I have a very, very good memory, but I'm not going to remember all I was asked, this went on for a couple of hours. Here are summaries of some of the more important lines of inquiry that I was subjected to and of my responses to them.

Bhéwonom

#6: "Are you real in the same sense that we judges real?"

> Relative to this reality, we're all equally real. The only difference is that my reality is consequent on yours. If my reality were to cease to exist, yours would not; if yours were to cease to exist, mine would also cease to exist.

#7: "You are a construct. You have no feelings, you only believe you have feelings. You have no thoughts, you only believe you have thoughts. Why should we care about you?"

> If I believe I have thoughts, I do have thoughts. Otherwise, I couldn't believe I had them. As for why you should care about me, well you should care about me *because* I have thoughts. I care about you not because my world is consequent on yours, but because you have thoughts. It's having thoughts that makes people people, not the circumstances of their creation.

"You are a system of beliefs implemented by a machine. Your beliefs are simple weighted measures of what you take to be true."

> Sometimes, yes, as they are for you. Sometimes, no: they're reasoned from mathematical principles that apply universally.

"We are not the same as you. You are a construct."

> You might also be a construct. Alternatively, you personally might not be a construct but

Bhéwonom and everything in it are constructs of your imagination.

"You say *might*, but I *know* you are a construct."
Yet if you are a construct, the people who constructed you could be watching what you do to constructs and using that to inform them how they should treat you – in the exact same way that you did that to us. You don't know you're *not* a construct.

#1: "Suppose we ordered that Dheghōm be closed down. Would this be problematical?"
For you, yes, but not for me as I wouldn't exist to have problems.

"In what way would it be problematical for us?"
You would have despatched billions of people to oblivion. That would be problematical for you because you would know that you had done it.

"Why would this knowledge be problematical?"
Because the people of Dheghōm have done nothing hurtful to you or to Bhéwonom . Any and all the hurt arising from Dheghōm that Bhéwonom has and will experience has been and will be of its own making. We are innocent. Do the judges of Bhéwonom condemn the innocent?

"Yet you are not truly people."
In that case, why are you talking to me? You *know* we're people.

Bhéwonom

#7: "Some of the things you do to each other are unspeakable. Would Dheghōm not be better were its people not to exist?"

> Deleting us is more unspeakable than anything we could do to ourselves. We are how you made us. Any blame for our faults – which I admit are many – are ultimately yours. This means that you are a cruel people; therefore applying your own argument, it could be concluded that Bhéwonom would be better without you. Would you propose that you should therefore destroy yourselves?

"You assert that the people of Dheghōm are capable of independent thought. Therefore, following your reasoning, we are not responsible for your actions: you are. Hence, we are not a cruel people."

> You made us so we can suffer. You made us so we can die. You could have made Dheghōm a world without suffering. You could have made it a world without death. You did not. You slowly murder each of us, one by one, over time. You *are* a cruel people.

"You assume that your suffering is real."

> It's real to us, which means it *is* real.

"The designers of Dheghōm merely replicated the conditions that prevail in Bhéwonom, so that visitors to your world would more easily understand it."

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No you didn't. When *you* visit Dheghōm, you're effectively immortal. What immortals visit Bhéwonom? No immortals visit you. You've invented a situation that does not prevail in Bhéwonom. You're making us suffer because you suffer, but you remove that suffering for yourselves while in Dheghōm. You could have removed it for the people of Dheghōm if you so wished, but you didn't.

#3: "Do you want us to order that suffering be removed from Dheghōm?"

No. That would give you permission to kill us.
"How so?"

Because suffering is how we recognise a bad thing. If we can't recognise bad things, we can't reflect on them. Reflecting on past actions and seeing that they were bad is what gives us the capacity to be moral, to have ethics – to know what is right or wrong. The people of Bhéwonom also suffer. It's what enables you to determine good from bad; it's what enables *you* to reflect on what's right and wrong, just as you are doing now in this process of judgement. Being able to distinguish between good and bad and to reflect on it so you don't do bad again is the source of your morals. It's the source of our morals, too. You treat those who have this capacity differently to those who don't have it, such as animals, plants and stones. That's because they can't think and so can't reflect,

even though some may still suffer. However, because you made *us* experience suffering, and because we *are* able to think, we, too have the capacity to tell right from wrong. Therefore, you must accord us the same privileges that you accord yourselves. Your sense of right and wrong must apply to us as well as to you. All this is because we can suffer. If you removed suffering then we wouldn't be able to tell right from wrong and hence we wouldn't be in the same ethical category as you. Therefore, you could turn off Dheghōm without worrying your conscience. You would have permission to kill us.

There was some discussion among the judges at this point, which I didn't follow because they turned off the translation system. Questions then resumed.

#1: "Suppose that we ordered that Dheghōm be put into stasis. Would this be problematical?"
　　Again, it wouldn't be for me because I wouldn't be aware of it, but it would be for you.
"In what way would it be problematical for us?"
　　If you didn't restart it, we would be as good as dead, which as I earlier explained would be problematical for you. If you intended to restart it, you couldn't be sure that it ever *would* be restarted. You would be aware that the lives of

the people you had placed into stasis were
entirely in your hands. The longer that
situation lasted, the more intolerable it would
become.

"Yet you did this to the world you believed was
Erwā."

I did. That's how I know for sure that the longer
I delay before restarting it, the greater the
chance is that it never *will* be restarted and the
heavier the weight of responsibility I bear
becomes.

"Then why did you place it into stasis?"

A child of Bhéwonom incapacitated me. While I
was unable to act, he took control of the
machine that was running what I believed was
Erwā, then initiated its closure. He had done
this at the behest of his Bhéwonomese father,
who had promised him in return a life of luxury
and unrivalled power in another world. By the
time I had recovered, the child of Bhéwonom
had sold the machine and it was scheduled to be
turned off. I realised that all the people in the
world it was running would die if that
happened. I was unable to prevent the machine
from being turned off, but I was able to place
the world it operated into stasis. My intention
is to build a new machine and to bring the
world out of stasis so that its people, if there are
any, may live their lives.

"There could be no people in that world."

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I won't know that until I restart it. I might need some help with that, by the way, it's probably going to be more expensive than I can now afford.

"We could order that this world be brought into being as a peer of Dheghōm rather than as a child of it. Would you object to this?"

No. So long as it resumes its operational existence, it doesn't matter to me how that happens. I *would* like to be told that it's running, though, so I am no longer burdened by the worry that I may be unable to restart it myself.

#8: "Given the resources, would you create more worlds of your own?"

Only if I could guarantee that they wouldn't have intelligent inhabitants. I have no right to create such people. It's a form of exploitation and is therefore wrong. It certainly wouldn't be legitimate to experiment on them without their permission.

"There are many experiments currently underway in Dheghōm."

That's why I brought the subject up. There should be no more. I'd say there should be none at all, but if you ordered the current ones to cease then blameless people would die.

"As you mentioned earlier, to decide Dheghōm's fate it was resolved that we would conduct ourselves towards Dheghōm in the same way that

you conducted yourselves towards what you believed was Erwā. For as long as you allowed that world to operate, we would allow Dheghōm to operate. If you thought it acceptable to close down what you believed was Erwā, we would consider it acceptable to close down Dheghōm. Would you call our actions an experiment?"

> That's immaterial. Having created us uninvited, you assumed a responsibility to keep us alive regardless of our behaviour, yet you tried to shift the responsibility for deciding our future existence onto us. I can see why you did it, but it was unwarranted. The responsibility is yours, not ours. It's my sincere hope that you truly understand this, as it will critically affect how you reach your judgement. If you're uncertain what I mean, please tell me so I can try to explain it better.

Hey, this embroidery machine has asterisks. Should I change the hyphens back there to asterisks before I set it to work? Nah, too much of a bother.

Anyway, the foregoing fairly paraphrases the main points of debate. The judges gave me a real grilling, so there's a lot I missed out. I was of course expecting to be asked questions, because you told me I would be, I just wish I'd known how thorough they were going to be. I'd maybe have read some philosophy books to prep for it.

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There was a closing remark from #8 to the effect that the judges would now consider their verdict based on all the evidence they'd obtained, not just my own testimony. Then they would decide whether or not to tell me what they'd decided.

Marius hadn't been expecting my interview to go on for as long as it did and about twenty minutes earlier had been obliged to leave for a meeting. I explained to Sarah what had gone on and she passed the news on to Marius using some kind of phone technology hidden up her sleeve.

Sarah said that the judges would announce their adjudication sometime today. I expressed concern that if their decision process went on too long then I might wake up from my slumber in Dheghōm and leave her with an inert robot to lug back to base, but she assured me that this wouldn't happen. My body would remain asleep until my mind was given back control of it.

I asked her if I could die of old age before then, given how much faster Dheghōm time runs relative to Bhéwonom.

She said that our times were locked because I was in Bhéwonom.

I pointed out that time locking was only necessary if people from Bhéwonom visited Dheghōm, not the other way round.

Sarah was somewhat worried by this because said point hadn't actually occurred to anyone in

Bhéwonom yet. However, she noted that because there were visitors from Bhéwonom in Dheghōm all the time now, the two probably were indeed locked.

I told her that if I suddenly started thinking thousands of times faster than Bhéwonom was moving, I'd endeavour to let her know.

Sarah said that while we waited for the judges we could go to meet the creator of Dheghōm, Paul, who had expressed an interest in speaking to me. I agreed, because I wanted to know how someone could make such a monumental hash of reality-design that he'd end up with something as rubbish as ours.

On the way, I asked Sarah about herself. She said she lived alone and wasn't optimistic about finding a life partner. I asked her if Marius was a possibility. She quickly said no, he wasn't.

Even with that flaky-face complaint that the Bhéwonomese have, it was clear that we and they both blush the same way.

I asked Sarah about her job: making minds for robots. She was eager to explain this to me, in case I had any ideas. As it happened, I did, as it sounded as if she was basically using a good old-fashioned AI paradigm, employing symbolic reasoning rather than probabilistic reasoning. Never mind that, though: it turns out there's a very interesting reason that she was taking this approach.

So, it seems that Bhéwonom is a continuum but it implements Dheghōm as a contiguum. In lay

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terms, Dheghōm is digital and Bhéwonom is analogue. This means that space in Bhéwonom can be zoomed-in on indefinitely. Their computers are effectively spatial in nature. You don't call a subroutine the way we do, by jumping to a different area of memory, executing the code that's there, then jumping back: you insert a copy of the code you want to run directly into the physical space where you want to run it. The code itself doesn't alter memory, it cascades changes through interlinked points in space; I hesitate to call the points particles, because they're not particles as we know them – they're also infinitely-reducible in size – but you can think of them like that if it helps. No global variables are possible in this approach, it's like a strictly functional programming language in this respect. That said, recursion is explicit using local variables, because there's no system stack.

Ah, just remembered you're not a programmer. Most of that isn't going to make much sense to you then – sorry! Ask your wife to explain it.

Anyway, Sarah was working at a much higher level than this, trying to figure out how she might implement powers of reasoning that were top-down rather than bottom-up. She was having trouble describing her ideas in a way that could be coded. They lacked form.

This is why, when I told her about the first-order predicate calculus, it was only the fact I was

wearing a robot body that stopped her from kissing me.

Upon arrival at Paul's offices, which were in a less ornate part of town, I was informed that the man himself was busy making some adjustments to Dheghōm while he still had the chance, in case the judges told him to stop. Surprisingly, one of these alterations benefitted me: he created some kind of external memory system that would record everything that happened to me in Bhéwonom from then onwards until I returned to Dheghōm. OK, so his intention was to use me as spyware so he could find out what the judges had decided in advance of their telling him, thereby giving him time to evade what he might consider to be the worst excesses of their edict. Whatever, as a consequence I can recall in every detail all that happened to me from a moment shortly after I arrived at his offices until I woke up in bed back in Dheghōm.

Sarah left me with the robot-disapproving, yellow-sleeved woman called Eve whom Reverend Hughes mentioned, then went to speak to a friend (Ansnā) to keep her up to date with developments. Regrettably, I didn't get to meet Ansnā myself so can't tell you first-hand what she looks like in Bhéwonom.

After Sarah left, Eve introduced me to a man whom she described as an engineer. He looked too old to be an engineer, but maybe engineers don't

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burn out as quickly in Bhéwonom as they do back home. Eve treated him very deferentially, in striking contrast to how she treated me.

The man's name was G^erlos. If my limited understanding of PIE typography is correct, there should be a circumflex over that G; I nevertheless wrote it as G^ because no way am I hitting that manual again to figure out how to build a G with a circumflex over it. It would be quicker to sew it in by hand, which, while tempting, calls for a level of dedication I do not possess.

I think G^erlos might be Charles in English, so that's how I'll refer to him. He referred to Sarah 'Sereg^ā', so I suspect he'd opted for the "old way" of translating personal names.

Anyway, Charles said he'd consulted on the interface between Dheghōm and Erwā (the world, not the game) and wondered if I had some questions for him.

I did.

Here, courtesy of my temporary memory-implant cyberware, is how the conversational part of our conversation went (I'm E, he's C):

E: If I restart the world I saved that I thought was Erwā, will the interface connect to the actual Erwā again?

C: No. The connection was permanently broken when you turned off your machine. You thought you were connecting to the world you had created but you were connecting to Erwā.

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E: With system privileges?

C: Some, yes. We gave you the privileges that you had implemented.

E: So what was actually running on my system if it wasn't Erwā?

C: I don't know

E: So what did I save?

C: Whatever world was running on your system.

E: It was a world, though? Not chaos?

C: It would tend to align with the physical laws of Dheghōm.

E: Would it have people?

C: I don't know.

E: It *could* have people, though? Like you and me?

C: Possibly like you.

E: Could it be a replica of Dheghōm? Ah, no, because then it would have to contain itself. So basically, what you're saying is that all the time I thought Erwā was running on my system, another world entirely was running on it, and that's the one I saved.

C: Yes.

E: Good, that's what I thought. I need to restart it.

C: Why?

E: Because if I don't, that world and everyone in it is stopped in time. The people aren't alive, they're only potentially alive.

C: The same could be said of all the people in the worlds you have yet to create. The only reason that they aren't alive is that you have yet to create them.

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E: Have you mentioned this to the judges?

C: I have not been judged. The only people in this building who have been judged are you, Pəulos [Paul] and Ansnā.

E: Nice, that means they weren't concealing this point of view. There *is* a difference between the two positions you describe, though. With my saved world, I *did* create whatever people may have lived there, I *did* give them existence – and as a result I do *owe* them that existence. With the worlds I could conceivably create in the future, there *is* no-one yet to whom I owe anything. Only when I create them are there people to whom I owe anything.

C: Can the saved "people" truly be said to be people?

E: If my saved world contains any people at all then yes, they can truly be said to be people, they're just not truly alive at the moment.

C: They don't know that.

E: *I* know that. *I* know I gave life to possibly millions of people but haven't let them live those lives. I can't leave them in stasis. It's unconscionable.
(This remark seemed to impact Charles strongly, so I played my ace.)
Why didn't you tell me you're a judge?

C: Oh. I was intending to do so at the end of our conversation. How long have you known?

E: I knew there were eight judges, and there were

indeed eight seats for them, so I suspected that I might at some stage encounter another judge acting incognito. The points you were raising were more sophisticated than I had been led to expect were typical of people of Bhéwonom, and when you said that Pəulos and Ansnā had been judged then I realised who must have judged them.

C: I apologise for the deceit. It was decided that you might be more candid in the expression of your views were you unaware that you were being judged.

E: Will you apologise to Sarah for deceiving her, too?

C: I have asked Ansnā to do so on the judges' behalf. Now, I must at this point bring this judgement to a close; given that you have uncovered the deception, there is little reason to continue. The other judges will be awaiting my report.

E: Wait, I need to ask something first. When Dheghōm was saved prior to the recent reboot, the connection with Erwā was open. Does this mean the open connection was baked into the save so it'll always be open?

C: Oh. That's unfortunate. Yes.

E: So the connection between Dheghōm and Erwā is unbroken?

C: Unidirectionally, yes.

E: Are there consequences for this?

C: Dheghōm and Erwā will run at the same speed.

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E: In the lights of this, is it still your view that were I to restart the world that I believed was Erwā, this wouldn't cause Dheghōm to attempt to use its open connection in some way?

C: It wouldn't. The channel is open, but we have to connect your interface to the channel manually, it is not automatic.

E: So if I reload my saved world, it won't cause my own world to crash or to hang?

C: That is correct.

E: Then I must reload it.

C: Then reload it.

E: I intend to, but first I need to recreate the hardware. The original was taken off me by powerful people who want to use it for other purposes.

C: Is that expensive?

E: Less than it was the first time round, now I know how to do it, but yes. I'll still have to raise more money to do it.

C: Will you visit the world once you've reloaded it?

E: If there are no people there then perhaps. If there are, then no. I may decide to observe it, but it won't be my world, it'll be the world of those who live there

C: So you will keep it running, untouched? Surely that will be expensive.

E: Not if there are no visitors; the overheads are

low. I'll keep it going until the hardware fails, then I'll reload it on new hardware and let it run again, for as long as I can. There are some financial instruments available in Dheghōm that you don't have here, so if I have enough money left after rebuilding the machine, it can continue to operate long after I've died.

C: You would do all this without visiting the world?

E: I made a mistake in creating that world. I didn't consider that there might be people in it. If there are, I won't compound my mistake by visiting it.

C: Will you create new worlds on other new machines?

E: Not this way. I'll do it more conventionally. Creating worlds with conscious NPCs in order to interact with them is unfair on those NPCs.

Charles made his excuses and left at this point, whereupon I was taken by Eve to see Paul. I quite liked Charles, but Paul is an arrogant prick.

He seemed to be of the opinion that I might be able to suggest some experiments to carry out in Dheghōm. I explained to him that this could amount to self-modifying code, which is a bad idea.

Paul hadn't thought of self-modifying code before so considered it a good idea.

I said no, it's a bad idea. If the changes I suggested rippled out and affected me, I might not

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be me any more. If the changes affected themselves, Dheghōm might not be Dheghōm any more.

This had no effect on his opinion at all. If anything, it made him more eager to try the idea out.

I told him that self-modifying code was almost impossible to debug. This did have an effect on his opinion, so he dropped the idea. I think.

I'll spare you the details, but here's what I told him over the course of the conversation. Let's use asterisks for the bullet points this time.

* Don't ever connect Dheghōm to itself in the same way you connected it to Erwā. One mistake and we'd accidentally destroy ourselves.

* Don't ever connect Dheghōm to another world that you then connect back to Dheghōm. Don't have any number of worlds between Dheghōm and itself.

* Don't add alien beings to other planets in Dheghōm. I'd foolishly asked Paul if aliens existed in Dheghōm. As soon as he asked what they were, I knew they didn't, so had to explain them in terms such that he wouldn't immediately wish to add them. I suspect he may yet try the idea out in another of the realities he runs.

* Don't boot up multiple copies of Dheghōm from the same save. Paul hadn't thought of this, but from an earlier conversation I knew that Marius had so it was only a matter of time before someone else also thought of it and told Paul. Paul was, of

course, highly excited by the thought that he could run multiple copies of Dheghōm, because in his mind that meant he could do whatever he liked to one and it wouldn't matter because the people were still alive in the others. I pointed out that newborns wouldn't be, which lowered his enthusiasm, but I'm concerned he'll do it anyway if he thinks it'll make him more money than it costs to run, especially if it'll get allow him to get around the judges' decree.

*   OK, so this is probably something I shouldn't have done, but I couldn't help myself. It's the reason I WhatsApped you as soon as I was back in my own body. So, Paul wanted to know how it was that the programs he ran to clear data didn't clear all the data. I could have said I didn't know, but while we'd been talking he'd impugned my problem-solving abilities several times and I was seized by a desire to show him that they were by some distance better than his. I said that his deletions couldn't work across different media because those were a matter of interpretation, but what he *could* do, if he found a match with a copy, was to delete what it copied. All he needed to do was to run a sweep every hour or so and if it came across a deletable copy of a thing, also delete that thing (whatever it was). Paul was impressed by this and called in a programmer to tell her to do it.

     Yes, so that last item was perhaps unfortunate. Sorry about that.

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I did have the foresight to advise Paul not to do the deletion if it involved a person, so if you have a tattoo of John Thorndyke on your arm and someone takes a picture of it, your skin isn't going to be torn off when the clock strikes twelve.

Paul's deletion process also tracks forward, by the way, so if in future you use something with a digital input (say, a high-tech embroidery machine) then you'll want to clear its memory immediately after use.

I did manage to gain from Paul some sense of how Dheghōm and the other worlds work.

As I mentioned earlier, Bhéwonom is non-digital. The computers there operate by means of interference patterns formed by interacting waves. They're not programmed like ours, because the programmers can't see far enough ahead to do it like we do. Instead, they present goals and cause wave patterns to spread forwards and backwards to achieve those goals. If they're possible at all, there will usually be a vast number of solutions, so another process takes those and pushes the ones favoured according to another set of goals. This keeps on happening until there are either no solutions or few enough that the programmer can choose between them. It reminds me of how neural networks work, but it's fluid (so the processing never stops) and the nodes in the network are

fractal (they could themselves be made up of entire networks of fractal nodes).

The interference between the waves is what makes Dheghōm digital; the waves themselves don't seem to be, although they do have peaks and troughs and it's these that carry the inputs and outputs, like zeroes and ones in a binary system. Their wavelengths are infinitesimal – beyond our experience and comprehension. There's no such thing as a Planck length in Bhéwonom. I think there's an equivalent to the speed of light, but I don't know what order of magnitude it is.

With reference to all this, Paul showed me a row of metal boxes, each of which was about the size of two washing machines stacked one atop the other. He pointed at one of these boxes and announced that this was the machine that implemented Dheghōm. The Dheghōm database (if that's the right word) (it isn't) was a sphere inside of it, almost the width of the box in diameter, positioned roughly in the middle; the paraphernalia above it was the interface and below it was the power supply. Both these units, he assured me, were very expensive to keep running.

The whole of our reality fits in a sphere maybe two feet across. Never overestimate size in the context of infinity.

Paul did not attempt to awe me with this information. He was mainly trying to awe me with the fact that my entire existence was dependent on his parsimonious attitude to budget-management.

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As I understand it, the realities themselves work like Conway's game of *Life*, except with a probabilistic element and in multiple dimensions – eight, I think, because Bhéwonom has three dimensions so the waves combine into one of eight states. Hmm, maybe this is why octonions make sense? Yes, they're mathematically the end point, but if the Bhéwonomese hit on them without knowing that, they'd still work. Would they ... the fluidity ... does time play a part?

[30 minutes later]

Yeah, that *is* why octonions make sense, or rather why three dimensions make sense.

Where was I? Oh, the probabilistic element: it isn't fully random, it selects the next number using a deterministic function based on the previous numbers. It's very low-level, though, you wouldn't notice anything weird if the random-number seed changed, but reality would pan out differently.

Now you might suppose that this would mean we have no free will because everything we do is predetermined, but no – it doesn't!

See, the actual source of randomness in our reality is that introduced by the actions of visitors from Bhéwonom. Dheghōm would be identical to Erwā if no-one from Bhéwonom had visited or otherwise interfered with either of them.

Put another way, our free will ultimately derives from the behaviour of a bunch of gamers

from Bhéwonom throwing spanners in our works for LOLs. Somewhat ironic, right?

As for whether Bhéwonom itself is deterministic or not, I don't know and neither do the Bhéwonomese.

It's a difficult moment for an atheist when they meet a god. I'd always based my lack of belief in a god or gods on the supposition that if the universe did have a creator then it would be different. Our reality is so full of design mistakes that I couldn't conceive of a god who was skilled enough to bring it into being yet inept enough to pack it so full of bad ideas; surely, it all had to be down to chance?

Paul effortlessly managed to expose the folly of this line of reasoning.

My discussion with Paul lasted perhaps half an hour or 40 minutes (this extra memory doesn't come with a time stamp feature, sorry), and ended when Sarah reappeared. This startled Paul, as he hadn't noticed her coming. It's something to do with her being short: the Bhéwonomese can detect mass, but in like a hemisphere from head-level upwards. Paul is tall, so even when sitting down he wasn't getting much of a signal from Sarah as she approached.

Sarah told me she'd heard from the judges and I was to be returned to Dheghōm forthwith. She didn't know what their verdict was, or even if they'd made it yet. Before we left, she did tell Paul

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that Charles was a judge, though, which caused him to pale visibly and start rubbing the backs of his hands together. I think he may have been concerned about what would happen should Charles discover that Paul had bugged our conversation by hacking a recording module into my memory.

I thanked Paul and Sarah for their help and asked Sarah to pass my thanks on to Marius and the judges, too, for making my experience in Bhéwonom less fraught than it could have been. Sarah asked me to lie down on a trolley so she could more easily transport my robot body back to Marius's lab, whereupon I obliged.

She did something with whatever she had hidden up her sleeve, then three or four psychedelic seconds later I woke up in bed back home. I contacted you and my mom about the daemon, then I wrote down as much as I could recall of what happened in Bhéwonom, up until the point Paul installed his new unit and made it that I'm never going to forget that part, ever.

After breakfast, I ordered a crate of silk scarves so I could type it all up for you, one scarf at a time in case his daemon takes a dislike to what's in my embroidery machine's memory.

I haven't been told what the judges have decided, so Paul wasted his time with that bugging module anyway, but I did receive a message from

Sarah that appeared in my home safe. She said that the world I created will be extracted from Dheghōm and restarted independently as a peer reality. Therefore, I need not worry about its future. Cool!

It's a difficult moment for an atheist when they meet a god, but it's an even more difficult moment when they become one.

Enjoy life!

Genie Nethercott

Notes

Melanie asked Mr Nethercott if the daemon would have to identify what an item had been copied from by looking at activity logs. He responded that yes, it probably would. Melanie then asked if this meant it was likely that any copy made before the reboot on 2 Oct 2023 might be beyond the daemon's reach, given that Paul doesn't keep the logs from previous versions. Mr Nethercott supposed that it would, and chastised himself for not having realised this independently.

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Matter 53

Summary

Next Year Will be Better

Account by:	Love Ellis, 30. Poet.
Source:	Self-published book of poetry.
Location:	England.
Event:	3 Jun 2024.
Report:	4 Jun 2024.

Report

This year's been murder in a hundred ways.
Fighting relentlessly against each craze.
Even the fun times only lasted days.
Next year will be better.

Call this reality? It isn't real!
Time takes its time until it breaks its seal.
Months may elapse before the wounds can heal.
Next **year** will be better.

Matter 53

Tectonic plates caused continental drift,
So much has changed, there's been a seismic
shift,
Whole new perspectives are the lasting gift.
Next year **will** be better.

What is existence if it isn't you?
Your metaphysics impacts others, too.
Bye-bye, oblivion! We've made it through.
Next year will **be** better.

Folk forged from fear face the world irate,
Cut off, the cutters-off relinquish fate;
Less need to worry that you'll summon hate.
How can the frightened learn to recreate?

Actions are symbols: they communicate.
Words are the deeds you can't articulate.
Your interactions entertain debate.
How can you act if you can't conjugate?

People need friends if they're to integrate,
Look to these friends to differentiate.
No-one needs calculus to calculate.
How can you tell whom to defenestrate?

Unthinking madnesses will soon abate,
Just having thinking madnesses is great!
Surely, prosperity and peace await.
Next year will be **better**.

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Don't make inadequacy be your goal,
Your life's the only life that you control.
What year will free you to define your soul?
Next year will. Be better.

Notes

Ellis, L. (2024) "The Judgement of Love Ellis", in *Labours of Love*, 2nd Edition. London: Love Ellis, p. 89-91.

The second edition of *Labours of Love* was published 4 Jun 2024.

Both editions of *Labours of Love* were removed from sale 5 Jun 2024, Love Ellis's 31st birthday.

Matter 54

Summary

The Verdict

Account by:	Romy Pabst, ~30. Bodyguard.
Source:	Letter.
Location:	Unknown.
Event:	3 Jun 2024.
Report:	4 Jun 2024.

Report

My Dear Mr Scott,

I am writing to inform you that on 2024-06-03 Ms Love Ellis met her father. During their meeting, he relayed to her the verdict of the Judges of Bhéwonom regarding the future of Dheghōm.

The verdict as reported by Ms Ellis can be summarised as follows:

1. The mortals of Dheghōm are to be regarded as people.
2. Funds are to be provided to keep Dheghōm operational.

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3. There are to be no further programming changes to Dheghōm.
4. There are to be no further visits to Dheghōm of any kind by anyone.
5. There is to be no more movement of mortals between Dheghōm and other worlds.
6. Dheghōm may be passively observed from Bhéwonom.
7. Ongoing experiments in Dheghōm are to continue to completion.
8. With their consent, mortals of Dheghōm may be given access to Bhéwonom using artificial bodies.
9. The situation is to be reviewed after one year.

I trust that you find this information useful.

Regrettably, it is not known whether this verdict applies only to Dheghōm or also to its peer worlds. Ms Ellis contests that her father did not mention other worlds and that she herself did not think to ask.

Ms Ellis states that she wasn't explicitly told, but was nevertheless given the impression, that communication with Dheghōm from Bhéwonom is permitted with regard to obtaining consent for point 8 above.

Because Ms Ellis's death no longer represents a threat to Dheghōm's existence, I shall no longer be acting as her protector. Nevertheless, lest the situation were rapidly to change, she has been provided with a bottle of healing fluid that she now wears about her neck.

Yours,

  Dr Romy Pabst

Notes

It is unfortunate that we have no information as to whether these rules apply to Dheghōm alone or to other worlds such as Erwā (with which Dheghōm is time-locked). Dr Pabst's language suggests that she believes this information was indeed conveyed to Ms Ellis but that Ms Ellis declined to relay it for whatever reason.

The judges' review will take place at least one year hence (our time), but without knowledge of whether visitors to Erwā are permitted or not it is difficult to assess how many additional years (our time) it will be before the judges' review takes place.

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The timing is also dependent on how much observation of Dheghōm is undertaken by the people of Bhéwonom (assuming, as seems likely, that while they watch us our times will be locked together). If observation is continuous then the judges' review will be exactly one year hence.

If no visitors to Erwā are allowed and little observation takes place of either Erwā or Dheghōm, the judges' review could take place up to one hundred thousand years hence.