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MEME MAGIC DOESN'T WORK

There was no time like the present to investigate wrongdoings of the past. The vantage point was safe from observation by the observed. These notions, false as they might be, comforted Thomas as he reminisced about all the bad things he had done so far in his life. At least it was all over. He realized that the only one holding on to this peculiar point of view was himself.

He let it go.

Here was the relief he had sought, so easily accessible from his current frame of mind. He could simply forget what he had done.

No, really, he could *forget*. Thomas' gifts of memory had degenerated to the point where he could scarcely remember his own name. This predicament offered its advantages.

Each day was an entirely new world. Thomas would wake up every morning, amazed by his own ingenuity, as the new world arrived with a

complete history already intact—there was nothing for him to consider, nothing for him to add. And nobody actually had to live through it all because they had already done so, in the alleged past he could no longer remember.

Every morning.

Building up the past was as easy as pulling on his trousers and imagining what it must have been like to be himself during some other, arbitrary circumstances. Namely, the continuity leading up to yesterday. It had all come from his imagination anyway, right?

Now, where was he?

A caption appeared beneath him:

One day at a time.

And next to the caption, a blinking sigil.

What did it signify?

He had decided to kill Plinth Mold.

These past few years had proven that Mold was out of touch. With the times, with the styles; with everything, really. Missions didn't make any

sense. Marketing was a mess. Orders were issued that flatly contradicted what the man had just said, only moments before. He'd tried following the orders to the letter but he had run smack into the fact that Plinth Mold didn't make mistakes. Therefore, responsibility for any failure in the field fell squarely upon his own broad shoulders.

Strong as he was, that particular conundrum just couldn't stand.

On the other hand, Plinth Mold didn't make mistakes. Killing him would be tricky. Any move Thomas made could potentially give away his intentions. Sometimes Thomas wondered if Mold was telepathic. The man seemed to anticipate his every movement, seemed able to read every thought that entered his mind as if it had been printed across his forehead like an involuntary ticker tape confession.

Hmm...

But what if the thoughts simply stopped entering his mind?

Piro lit a stick of incense and leaned back in his swivel chair. Tom had been acting strangely. In and of itself this was not unusual – Tom was a strange and complicated man – but lately he had seemed... erratic? Off, somehow. Piro inhaled, deeply, and was immediately rewarded with a prolonged fit of coughing.

He snuffed out the incense.

Maybe it was nothing. But ignoring his instincts was contrary to Piro's practice. It would be impossible for him to pretend he hadn't noticed these... irregularities... in Tom's behavior.

Whatever. Now it was time to go and wake Thomas up. He could find some way to broach the topic at breakfast.

The RAGNAROK's orbit had become irregular. Subtle perturbations had become a predictable, if uncomfortable, part of her routine. A downward spiraling malaise she felt unable to escape.

The source?

Her son had discovered Earth culture. For years now she had observed passively as he absorbed the humans' toxic proclivities, at times seeming to actually enjoy his full immersion in their unfathomable insanity. This abrogation of detached objectivity was as surprising as it was shameful. But what could she say? She had never broached the topic with him. He was fully grown, now, and she did not believe it was her place to second guess his methods.

But here she was confronted with a situation that threatened the success of their mission. And Earth's future. Soon she would find a way to have this conversation that would not offend his pride.

High above the Earth the RAGNAROK's orbit stabilized.

Tom concentrated on the triangle but nothing happened. It was still flat. It was still pink. He no longer had any idea how long he'd been sitting there, staring at the shape in his hands.

His legs had fallen asleep. So. He'd allowed his body to fail him as well. Thomas got up off of the floor and tossed the apparently faulty sigil into his desk drawer.

Maybe he'd have better luck next time.

Caption:

Maybe later.

There was no use forcing the issue.

NEXT ISSUE: GRISHAM'S FORMULA