ELECTIVE AFFINITIES

9 August.

"Fuck, Mom!"

Spiro Mold, age seven.

"Jesus Christ!" he soon added. His scream reverberated in the strings of the family's upright piano, untouched by slender hands these past few weeks.

"There is no Jesus Christ," scolded Maude Mold. "Figure it out."

Spiro was seated at the kitchen table, upon which had been mounted various bits of sinister looking hardware, most of which probably weighed more than he did. A CRT, a beige rectangular box, and a heavy, mechanical keyboard, each resplendant in its own metal casing. The woman had called it a computer. Spiro remained incredulous. The power requirements alone would have dwarfed that of his RF rig, which was already ridiculous. And its shielding seemed dubious. What was he supposed to do with this thing?

"You're gonna need to know all about this kind of stuff if you want to get a job someday," Maude continued.

Ah.

"But, I don't *want* to get a job someday," Spiro stated the obvious, redundantly, again. *"You're* always gone. *You're* never happy. *You* have no idea who *I* am."

She allowed as much.

"Furthermore, you don't make enough money to convince yourself that any of this is worthwhile. You haven't joined the search for a new asset class, nor have you innovated a new commodity at virtually zero cost. You're surviving, not living, no matter what the stats say. Lacking any sense of ambition, your actions are a net drag on the economy. I don't suppose this crude device has fixed any of that."

Again, she couldn't argue.

"But you're going to keep doing it anyway," he said. "Going to work, coming home. Turning on the computer. Hypocritically micromanaging *my* future at the expense of straightening out your own life."

"Yes," she said.

Spiro turned on the machine.

The bootloader crashed.