

ANCIENT LORE FOR A RECENT TRADITION

Leaving Plinth hadn't been easy. When he finally found out, he simply had her name taken off all their accounts. She'd wave her hand at an official and nothing would happen, data gloves or not. Cute. And then there had been the small matter of getting off Mars.

Traffic at the test site was at an all-time high. Lots of gods and men in and out of the mancamp, all enjoying the benefits of different levels of access, eager to mint their own burgeoning legends, but wary of tarnishing their public-facing cover stories by publicly cavorting with the boss' wife. On the other hand, most of them were quite lonely.

In her usual way she figured something out.

THE DIN OF THE RELIGIOUS MARKETPLACE

Back on Earth there had still been a lot of Plinth-y business to attend to. She was able to wring some residual clout out of their very public—well, in some circles—relationship, but word traveled fast in those same circles. Before long she'd found herself all but unemployable.

Nothing left but to join the church.

She hefted one of the outsized telephone directories from her kitchen closet and plopped it down on the Formica® table with a thud. Let her fingers do the walking. It had been a lifetime since she'd turned to the Scriptures for guidance. Now, she couldn't even remember her own telephone number.

She read out:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that information wants to be free, and that a computer can never be held accountable, therefore a computer must never make a management decision.

It all made sense to her. There was something comforting in this affirmation of humanity's priority atop the hierarchy of life forms kicking around the cosmos. Plinth, after all, was hardly human, so she couldn't have been wasting her time.

But enough with the staid contemplation. A soul could only stare for so long into its own bio before some form of consciousness was likely to emerge. She returned the book to its home in the kitchen closet. Realistically, probably for good.

It was going to be a long epilogue.