

BIRD

"New Ad came out!" was heard from the next room. Elon shuddered, quietly muttering to himself: "What did they remember this time?" Eloise excitedly came through the door, "Did you see? We've all been waiting for that. I'm so excited! We all are! I would even dance right now, can you imagine?" He frowned and grunted: "First, explain to me who everyone is?" "What did you say, honey?" "I said nothing, I asked who everyone is?" "Oh, don't be silly," she smiled. "You're so old fashioned, honey, you should be more interested. I love you anyways," she kissed his forehead. "I am going now. I can't wait to meet Hyacinth. We need to talk about our strategy. I will tell you everything, I promise!" And already she had disappeared along the hall, only her perfume lingered.

Elon was not interested in all these innovations. He preferred to sit by the window and stare out over the vast grey sky, to see the Bird. When was the last time he thought he might have seen it? He couldn't remember anymore. But he remembered well, the shadow that flew past the window. He opened his plastion, already whistling furiously. It reported it was breakfast time and Elon sat in the chair. Even before the feeding was over, the plastion informed him, it was time for a social commitment. The suit was already waiting for him, as usual. He typed a series of commands into the plastion and also slid down the long hallway, where he could still sense Eloise's perfume. He'll surely find out all about the new Ad this afternoon: when his wife decides to say something, it's sure to happen.

Hyacinth was as accurate as ever. Her plastion was still and silent, Eloise should be here by now. She could hardly wait to tell everyone the latest about her Ad, to anyone who wanted to listen. "Hey, Eloise, I'm here," she waved, with a carefully controlled smile. "I'm sorry I'm late, there's something wrong with the home hallway, it didn't let go of me. And the plastion went crazy. It can't even be turned off and let me tell you: it's not my fault I'm late. Something will have to be done with this hallway," Eloise gasped, sitting across the elegant lady. She looked at her from beneath the hat, "You want me to tell you?" "Of course, that's why we've met, right?" She returned her smile, trying to keep herself as natural as possible, her head just tilted sideways.

It took them both a few tiny moments to rate the postures they presented, and Eloise tried her best to make sure her every move was as planned for this encounter. Hyacinth studied her acquaintances' social movements and at the same time managed to raise her chin just high enough, to reflect her best profile from the viewer's point of view. "Did you open the Ad?" "But of course! Same day you told me about it. I am now at 17th grade and I'm having such a fun time. I barely had time to eat. You were right, the Ad is really phenomenal." "I'm already at grade 49, you'll see when you get there. You'll be thrilled. Good thing we have plastions, otherwise it would be hard to focus on anything else, wouldn't it? But this Ad is so important. I am telling you: everyone has to be told about it." "Elon can't wait for me, to tell him everything. I just have to make a social commitment and I'll let everyone else know. You probably already did that? I have to go now, you hear it beeps. Tomorrow, same time and place?"

Elon stepped onto the balcony, moved the lever and returned to the ground floor. He opened the 7th hatch in the second row and pressed the button. Then he opened the 134th flap in the 319th row and pressed a button there. He carefully closed the hatch and thought for a moment. Plastion began with warnings that the corridor would close. "I know, damn it!" He grabbed the device and left. He was grunting all the time and always made sure no one understood what he was branding. He

smacked straight into the corridor, and it spit him out at the target, which had been introduced into the plastian. At a suitable distance, the lieutenant awaited him and Elon loudly ensured, with the protocol of ciphers and passwords, he did press both buttons in accordance with the instructions glowing from the plastian. The lieutenant assured that instructions for future social obligation would be provided by plastian, and Elon relaxed.

Over the last few days, he has repeatedly taken the plunge into thinking that the new Ad might change something. He couldn't live like this, it became boring. "If I could at least see the Bird," he muttered in solace. "Any time now, Eloise will come in, so fresh and beautiful. She reminds me of a Bird," he thought. And in the hallway, her image began to emerge. "Hello, honey," she put down the plastian and sat down for dinner. "I just hooked up, but the fucking thing still beeps!" he complained loudly. "Don't be upset, you know it eventually stops. I can't wait for our private time to tell you about the Ad. Now, I would just take this dinner in peace, to silence my thoughts. Let's talk about it after." She lay back in her chair and covered her eyes. Elon, meanwhile, was already extinguished and his head rested on the backrest. Both plastions went silent.

When Eloise woke up, her beloved husband was already sitting by the window. She sat down next to him and put her feet on his lap: "did you see any?" "I wish so." "I haven't seen one yet." "I know and I'm worried you really won't. That none of us will." "There are enough of you watchers out there, someone will see it. I wouldn't worry so much." She was so beautiful when she closed her eyes. Sometimes he would rather look at her than wait for the Bird. But he would also like to see the Bird one day, otherwise he wouldn't watch for it, but rather catch the Fox. Eloise handed him a tube and he snapped it on with a single click: "today I'll go with Ramon..." "You always go with Ramone... I'll go with someone from C19 to talk about the Ad. Oh, shit, I forgot to tell you, I've passed grade 20. You have to try it." "We're in no hurry, we'll do it tomorrow..." Elon quickly concluded before joining the Ad where Ramon was already waiting...

"Hey Ramon, are you ready?" "I was born ready!" they were already blubbering in their skills. To Ramon, their meetings meant a lot. He always hooked up exactly on time, expecting Elon with a plan, on how the two would act a better strategy this time. They chose between "Elephant Hedgehogs chasing through the Indian forests" and "Shoot the Fox". They decided on the latter, as they now knew where to get the next clue. They picked weapons, uploaded it to their library. They carefully selected the accessories that will be necessary in the ad they were attempting to enter. They discussed a strategy to move forward and decided Ramon to shoot the Fox. To the next stage, he only lacked one item, and then they could both start with the ad: "Where's the Bird," which has long hung on the ads platform.

Eloise was thinking about what to choose among the numerous options in the New Ad, when she enters today. Plastions beep reminded her that it was time to attach to her virtual commitment.

Hyacinth enjoyed working on the ad. Everything went as planned. The ad was a complete success and the players followed it faster than she had hoped for. Eloise was a good recruit and Hyacinth paid her well. "I'll need to talk to her, Ramon." "We'll talk about it tomorrow, I'm meeting Elon in a few minutes. Why don't you ask Eloise yourself?" "You guys meet regularly as well." "If I press him, he will unplug," Ramon replied, plugging his tube in." "And you haven't even reached the tenth grade!!!" Hyacinth shouted, but he could not hear her any more, though he was lying next to her. His avatar was already waiting for Elon to go and try to catch the Fox. Hyacinth knew very well that it

was in vain to yell at a man who could not hear her. She will find out tomorrow. When they meet, she can pressure him.

Elon didn't want Eloise wasting time with a New Ad. He really didn't like new things, this last ad seemed suspicious. It promised too much, empty dreams. All he wanted was his routine and peace to see the Bird. And his Eloise and her unique scent would always fill his proximity. Because he loved her, he learned to listen to everything she told him, although many times she also talked about ads that he did not like. "Why don't you try, honey?" "Why should I? I like the selected ads, I don't need a new one." She smiled and looked him straight in the eye, "You don't even know what you're talking about. And it is so difficult to explain. Come on, why wouldn't you try? I'll help you, I'll explain everything, is really not that difficult." "If you have to," he nodded more politely, not really interested. "What we have with Ramon brings me enough fun. We've almost caught the Fox. I think we can really succeed this time." Eloise maintained her good will and was not disturbed by him, changing the subject. "How are you going to get to know someone new if you always stick to the same old things?" "You're enough for me," he tried to smile back. She has already opened the latest Ad on Elons plation.

She had patiently led her husband true the first stages of the Ad. Elon was bored to death, and Eloise was adamant: "Press your finger here..., now, look straight in here... The tube goes through as usual." First he had to confirm and ensure his identity, the plation number was entered automatically. Just as he regulated the device to follow his voice, his plation rang a reminder, he could announce with further scrutiny as the site was now pending. He was called out to his duties. "I'm sorry, dear," he smiled at his wife, disappearing through the hallway. Recently, it seemed that something was wrong with the corridor, because when he came out of it, the machine was beeping terrible delay, even he was leaving home in time.

Today he had to open valve 3489G in SDF34, and close the flap on section 918 of the RE34 / 6j tract. He encoded everything carefully, checking the password sequence several times. As always, he reported flawlessly to the lieutenant. "Maybe I could really do something else tonight?" he said to himself as he typed into his plation his daily routine. "Maybe we should dare a little more to catch a Fox. Without it, we would never get on a Bird advertisement." At the time, the idea awakened in his head. So magnificent that he could hardly breathe. "Eloise, Eloise!" he called impatiently, even before the hallway fully opened, but Eloise was already plugged into the feeding tube. "Damn it, I have to rush my dinner." While plugging the tube, he kissed her comfortably on her cheek. He hasn't been so excited for such a long time. Before he could explain to Eloise, their eating plan had to finish.

"I got you a chair, honey. I watched the birds instead of you." "Did you see any?" "Never." They settled down comfortably and peered out the window. "Listen, Eloise. I have decided. You were right, I should try something new." "Seriously, will we open the Ad again?" "Oh, not that! Listen: I'm not meeting Ramon today!" "What do you mean?" she nodded curiously at the man who was constantly staring out the window. "You always do." Elon didn't bother to turn around, he kept staring after the Bird. "I'm not going. I will look for others." "What others?" she was more impatient than usual. "You mean to get the New Ad?" He turned his head towards her, "I am not talking about the Ad, my dear. You are not listening to me!" "Sorry, my intention was not to interrupt, I just have so many questions in my head..." Elon took a deep breath, saying: "Other observers are out there too, you know. I don't

have to pick Ramon, do I?" "No, no, honey, you don't. What's up with the Fox?" "If I can't catch it myself, I will find someone that has already succeeded. Let him tell me about the Bird."

Ramon was waiting in vain. Elon's plation was unreachable, and he found himself alone in the ad. For the first time, he noticed that there were other players there. Everywhere he looked, everywhere players, unfamiliar faces. All avatars were unnatural in color, with multiple eyes or hands, horns on their heads, as well as angel-like creatures. Ramon had chosen the human image when he plugged in ages ago. Colors in other accessories were not available at the time. He had not been on this platform for so long, he had been completely forgotten about it. He was amazed at the variety of players posing on the platform, with a fantasy that he did not contain. It was so magnificent that he could only close his eyes and wait for the tube to pop out. When the docking was over, he tried to illuminate his new understanding with reason. He will have to explain to Hyacinth what happened to him. He was sure she would be interested, but she openly mocked him: "You're really stupid, what made you think Elon and you were the only ones in the world?" "All the time, damn it, we didn't even think about it. Or talk that much. Did you know about this?" "You really don't understand why I wanted my Ad to go out? Think about it! That's how it's always been and you still can't see what you have in front of your nose. You will never be able to succeed, I've advertised you numerous times." Ramon was speechless. His mind was occupied with the idea of the whole crowd being in there. He thought there were less people in the world; his was quite small to this day. His plation never whistled to chase him, for he was a consistent man. He hooked up before the warnings, always waiting for Elon to plug in at the exact hour. They always agreed on some strategy to keep the rules in the game flowing. Even with the other three players, he never had a problem and was never proposed hanging out with more than one player at a time. No one ever reported him for disobeying or not following. He was angry, he would not even think about it, in disgust at his own ignorance. "If I'd thought about it, I would surely have caught the fox with Elon and maybe someone else." His wife apparently knew a little more than he did. "And now you, my own wife is trying to make me feel stupid!?" he gasped and decided to show her that she was wrong. He told her straight: "I will find someone who has already caught a Fox!"

Elon opened the big screen and look at the ad. Among many windows, he clicked on a random one. He made sure there was a man on the other side, because he was definitely a Birdwatcher and asked him straight: "Did you see one?" The man who looked confused for a moment, replied: "I didn't." "Sorry, my name is Elon. I'm looking for someone who saw it." "Has anyone seen it?" the man immediately got interested. "I was hoping you would tell me," Elon sighed. Still, he managed to smile and thank him. "If you ever meet anyone who saw it, let me know, ok?" "What? I can just ask?" the man startled, as if he couldn't believe the question he had just said. Elon was already laughing widely: "Isn't it simple? Sorry if I confused you, I'm going to look for whoever saw it. You just ask, don't be afraid..." and he turned off.

Eloise hurried to a publicly useful task. She was already at the 92nd grade of the Ad and needed three new players to move herself forward. Elon has not even completed the registration yet, and Hyacinth always asked her about it. Despite the prescribed distance, they did not seem to be sitting apart enough at all. And none felt at her best. Both tried to look prettier than ever and play out a meeting that was chosen by the plation. "You only need two more. Go force your husband. You see each other every day," Hyacinth persisted. "Something strange is going on with him, you know? He keeps laughing." "What do you mean, laughing?" Eloise had no idea what to say. Elon was the

grumpiest person she had ever known, but now he was always smiling and laughing. Eloise did not know what to think of it. Plastion called for commitments and rescued her from embarrassment.

Hyacinth came home and rushed to find Ramon. She found him motionless in the armchair, even though he wasn't plugged in at all. "What's the matter with you, man, you haven't eaten all day?" She took his tube and plugged it, to silence the plastions beeps. "We'll talk this over, when our time comes," she told the disconnected Ramon. He no longer regularly hooked up, and she wondered why. She didn't dare to ask him straight. He didn't even collect Stars or look for ways out of the Maze, and he never mentioned the Fox again. He was no longer interested in gaming ads, but Hyacinth didn't care why. Since discovering a plethora of players, he has changed completely. He observed them from afar, and he did not manage to gather enough courage to ask anyone. He watched and waited, if Elon might return, he would surely be able to advise him.

Disconnect was not even fully over when Hyacinth began to question. "Tell me why Elon would laugh?" "Laugh? Who will laugh?" Ramon said more confusedly to himself than answer the question. "You better listen to me, I'm asking you why Elon is laughing?" she was impatient, and Ramon tried to pull himself together and figure out what was going on. Hyacinth continued: "I've met Eloise and she said Elon was laughing. What did she mean by that?" "How am I supposed to know?" "You're dating her husband, right?" "I was trying to explain to you that he wasn't there. He's been gone for few days." "Then what are you doing in that fox add? If he's gone? Why don't you go find him?" "That's what I'm trying to explain. I don't know what to do when he's gone. And I don't know where to look for him!" She thought for a while: "he didn't just disappear into thin air. I am sure, there is a way for me, sorry, for you, to find him," she bite her tongue and continued silently: "even if I have to invade and trick his damn plastion."

Again, Elon clicked into the unknown. A smile flashed across his face that was totally naturally formed. It made his heart laugh as he visited random Observers, men looking for a Bird and asking straight. No one saw it, but Elon persistently asked everybody to seek and ask the question. He believed that somewhere was someone who has already seen it. And the players were asking a question that spread like a plague from ad to ad. Instead of playing, they would visit each other and chase after ads and ask about the bird and look for the one who might saw it.

Eloise was not impressed. Elon still hasn't opened a new advertisement and she was now unable to take it to a higher stage herself, because of this. Ad demanded that all her family members be included. Only he was missing, but he preferred to deal with strangers and look for a Bird no one ever saw. She will have to explain to him that this is important to her, and if he is not prepared to do so, she will tell him that she knows, he doesn't love her at all. She thought so and also skillfully played the scene, so her husband would only please her. Elon didn't take his time and didn't think too much: "I have to look for the Bird, honey, you know?" He smiled at the sound of the tube while plugging in. "Maybe you can look out the window a bit, while I'm gone?" Lately he didn't waste time to seek for the Bird and had no longer waited by the window alone. He decided to find the lost Bird once and for all.

"Hi, Ramon. Are you all alone?" Elon greeted, delighted to find him there. Ramon was still waiting every day, at the agreed hour, for Elon to return. Perhaps he will help him choose who to ask about the Fox. Hyacinth, too, persistently demanded answers to questions she had about Elon, but Ramon didn't really know anything about the adventures of his friend. Although his wife seemed to ask him

too much about a teammate, he was determined to extract everything from him, about his departure and the laughter that his wife spoke about: "I've been waiting for you, you fucking fool! You left me alone and not even said something! Where did you go? I hear you started laughing! Speak to me man!" "Listen Ramon, sorry, there's nothing like that going on. I'm just looking for a Bird, and I'm happy." "You've been looking for a Bird before, what's different now?" "Now I'm not looking for it at the window, I'm looking for it around." Elon explained him about his work lately and that he looks forward to the day he meets someone, who tells him what a Bird is. "Why would you chase a Fox if we can find someone who has already found out where the Bird is?" Ramon nodded: "We haven't seen it in a long time. You know what? I won't wait here anymore. I'll help you find the Bird. So far, I have not gathered the courage to ask if anyone has caught a Fox. Tell me, how are you asking?"

Hyacinth didn't care the least about what was happening to Ramon. Her husband had a smile on her face that she didn't understand. More than that, he has not opened her ad for some time. She may need to adjust his coding plan if she cannot force him to follow the instructions. This ad is really the best idea she has ever had. The number of players has been increasing day by day and since exceeded half of all the players available to participate in her ad, she was pleased. She was still devoured by Eloisa's husband not moving from the second stage. Will she be forced to modify algorithm codes because of him? Somehow she has to find out what's going on with him? She was afraid of Elon in a way, she felt he was dangerous and felt he knew something she didn't.

The corridors were locked every time she tried to break the protocol. Plastion didn't allow exceptions. Even Eloise noticed that the hallways were not working as they should. She should be more careful. When Hyacinth was looking for coding paths and passwords for her ad, she had to change the algorithms many times to get her corridors open to people with whom she wanted significant reputable remote contacts. Elon's name has long been known to her. When she created paths for her ad, she came across it several times. But she never managed to get his algorithm. She scoured the corridors and started a social commitment through a plastion with Eloise. But this fucking woman never purposefully said anything she could use against her husband. However, she was pleased that Elon's wife was a great promoter of the new ad and followed the prescribed distance protocols very carefully. Hyacinth wasn't stupid, she made good use of tailor made social contact. Many times in the past, she has been able to access some of the coding keys she needed to accomplish her goal. Why would Elon be the exception? It angered her.

Eloise was sad and Elon didn't even notice. He hasn't noticed anything lately. She tried to approach him and encourage him to enjoy the ad, but he did not hear her. For the first time, she felt rejected and did not know what to do. Recently she only meets with Hyacinth, who, with her kindness, pulled everything out of her. "What kind of nonsense is this? Looking for the Bird, Eloise?" "I'm telling you, he's so distracted. I tried to talk to him, but he acts like I was not there. I don't know what to do! I can't go beyond 203rd stage of a New Ad because he's not participating. I so wish I could buy one of the old ads at stage 204. Do I really want too much?" Hyacinth saw an opportunity throughout and began to persuade a desperate woman to find another husband, as there were many in the New Ad. If this changes the logarithm to Elon, it may be easier to reach him. She may even be able to arrange for him to get a wife of her own choosing. Hyacinth felt on top of the world. "So he's looking for a Bird," she mused as Eloise left. She'll have to think about something before it gets out to the mass. A Bird appeared in her ad at the outset and was the only mistake in her ad. She had spotted it herself as soon as it appeared, and by now she had done everything to prevent the Bird from being noticed

by anyone else. She managed to move it to higher ad rates, but she trembled it was a little too late. Several players have already spotted it, but fortunately no one has set out to hunt it. Hyacinth didn't know where the Bird came from. Algorithms and codes indicated that the ad created the Bird itself, though she was convinced that she had done everything to prevent something like this from happening. She was calmer now. She was constantly inventing new and new rules for the players who craved her instructions. Without directions, they moved nowhere and she happily lavished them with new and new ones. Here and there, someone asked for a Bird, and each time Hyacinth successfully moved it to a higher Ad stage. She set up the algorithm so that the codes themselves moved the bird further, each time someone asked for it. Then she thought her best idea ever: "I'll make a new platform!"

Eloise didn't like Hyacinth's wink about a new husband. She loved Elon inspite his strange behavior. She was perfectly able to persuade him to please her. Recently, during their private time together, he only talked about the Bird. In the last few days, he had even dreamed of someday finding it. "I'm close, I'm telling you!" he assured her the last time they saw each other. She was of the opinion that this would not end well, but she was confident that she would find a way to approach him again.

Ramon came across an upset Hyacinth who was just preparing to plug into the tube, through which she would eat breakfast: "I'll find the Bird, you know?" She looked at him with bulging eyes, surprised to extend she would barely hide an uncontrollable expression on her face. She played ignorant: "What kind of Bird are you talking about?" Now she knew she would have to act faster. "You never listen to me, woman? In the old ads, we have long been looking for someone who would see a bird. We seek even in the oldest ads! Elon and I will go to one ad that was left forgotten and found again by some Birdwatchers yesterday." Hyacinth was furious. She failed to outline the plastion and contact with Elon was still denied. Time was passing recklessly and the plastion persistently discouraged distance contacts between unmarried people of the opposite sex. One could only keep a proper distance with certain individuals of the same gender, while being encountered in social obligations. Algorithms made sure that there was no such contact between men and women. It was believed that such contacts would not be able to keep people up with the rules of social distance. Birdwatchers, males, dared to rename the search engines of the plastion! They now named themselves Seekers. Instead of following Hyacinth's new Ad, they were looking for a Bird that no one has ever seen. She, the almighty, could not override the plastions passwords herself. She was furious. And the woman she had count on to reach Elon for her, was now hunting Birds with him! She took the position of a superior body, looked at him with a glance that commanded, and whispered to her husband: "You know what, you will never find what you are looking for, you are just wasting time and nothing else!" devised her own brilliant plan.

Eloise did well in the Ad. She got everything she wanted and even brought Elon to the right grade so that she was able to make progress of her own. Hyacinth was a little less rough with her now that almost every possible player has been reported to her Ad. Only a few individuals preferred the search for a Bird, but there were so few that it no longer mattered. The business between the women was slowly coming to an end and Eloise was already thinking about who the plastion might choose for her next socially beneficial obligation. She was glad that she would no longer have to meet Hyacinth, and she was getting strange. All the way to the end, she tried to keep her body expression right, smile and mimicry of the body perfect as required by protocol. She never violated social distance because she wanted too much to occasionally distance herself with the real people,

not just avatars. She would never let her lose her right to meet them, not because of a mistake she would make in those contacts. Virtual contacts in the ads may have pleased the rest, but Eloise needed more. So she eventually agreed to become Elon's wife in the first place.

"I was thinking of coming with you. What do you say?" she asked cautiously. "With me? We never go together." "Why is that?" "What could we do there together?" "I don't know, I would just go with you. Why not try it together once? I'm tired of the new Ad, the deal is almost over. I would like to take a little break. Why not make it a little different once?" Elon thought deeply. He glared at the ground for a while and then began to laugh: "It's valid! Are we going to look for the Bird together?" "But how will I know what it's like, I've never seen one?" Elon grabbed her arm, looked her in the eye, and said gently: "They say it's the most beautiful thing you can think of. It has amazing colors and it is carried by air itself. Its sounds are such, as to enchant you and then you can no longer live without it. I can't tell you what it is and how it look likes, but I don't want to experience anything else. They say that everyone would recognize the Bird as soon as they saw it." "Then we will look for it and find it together," she whispered in his ear before attaching to the joint advertisement.

Hyacinth worked hard, as she always did, when she decided to achieve something new. She tried to introduce as much novelty into the New Ad as possible, and began to suggest to the players that something big was being prepared, which would be revealed as soon as all the players in the world followed. Everyone waited eagerly for a while, and then began to hunt for those who had not yet joined. Most were looking for a handful and forcing the non-followers to activate the Ad. It was so funny. Hyacinth was able to achieve total success without much effort. On the day she announced the involvement of all players, a new platform emerged. Suddenly a nice glittery button appeared in the middle of the Ad. It said in big, shiny letters: HERE IT IS! WE WERE WAITING FOR IT! In even bigger letters, it said: CONNECT! DO NOT DELAY! THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO THRIVE! There was something else, written in small letters below, no one bothered to read. At the push of a button, the players one by one entered the fresh platform they had been waiting for. One by one, without exception, all of them fell for the novelty offered to them by the Ad owner for free. When the last player pressed the offered new button, the old platform disappeared along with it the Bird that came along. Hyacinth's face glowed with the chosen pleasure response. She has never looked so good.

Only Elon, Eloise and Ramon were still looking for a Bird that no one had seen such for a long time. In the dining room, the plation whistled like a wild animal and Elon responded. Ramon was excited and told them Hyacinth hadn't opted out of the Ad this morning. "This is not possible, it detaches itself," worried Eloise. "I'm telling you: it didn't go off! I went to the Ad and asked her what was going on. And she doesn't want to go out. Think about it, she is laughing and doesn't want to go out! She said we're looking for a Bird in vain and she laughed. She also said that no one will come out anymore because everyone prefers to look for a Bird."

Elon looked thickly, "did you just say the Bird is there, in her Ad?" Ramon just shrugged: "most likely, we didn't find it in other ads." Elon chuckled to himself: "What? Am I really so stupid for following a Bird where it isn't? And you dear Eloise, you invited me regularly to look for it in the Ad. How could I have been so stupid that I didn't listen to you?" "Shall we go out there and look for a Bird there?" Eloise was delighted. "Let's go," the two men cheered.

They hooked up to the New Ad. The Bird was nowhere to be found, but the Ad promised to reach it as you wade through all the pages of the Ad. Ramon and Eloise decided to find it in there and began

to come up with good and sophisticated strategies to accomplish whatever tasks could bring them closer to the Bird. Neither of them heard the plastions again, loudly reminding them of their socially beneficial obligations. Plastions pointed time to sleep, time to attach a food tube, time for virtual engagement in ads. They also warned of opening and closing the flaps, tightening the valves and pushing buttons.

Elon was asking. On his own. From player to player, he asked about the Bird and soon realized that no one was able to answer his question: "Did you see the Bird?" Instead of answers, he was getting surprised looks. Someone even reproached him for disturbing his Ad. The truth was horrifying: there were no more Observers and the Seekers forgot to seek. The realization gave Elon extra energy, because long ago he had decided to get to the bottom of this Thing. When he clicked off, he waited in vain for his Eloise to wake up.

Hyacinth continued to laugh and reign in the cloud of her Ad, making the whole world hers. The socially useful obligations seemed futile to her, and she managed to outsmart all the players and all the plastics at the same time. Except for the three. Ramons was out of reach and she could not find the poor fool. Elons and Eluises still acted on demand, but Eloise did not report to social distance projects for a while. Elon took care of both beepers. Others players plastions whistled and blinked in vain, there was no one to hear them, no one to open corridors for. There was no one pushing buttons or playing social distance while performing a socially beneficial obligation. Hyacinth outsmarted everything. Now was the time to win the victory of all victories. The new platform was designed so well that players didn't even think they were stuck in Hyacinth's virtual Ad forever. Just, as she had imagined. She also knew that Elon would come to her alone, sooner rather than later. True the design and codes of the algorithm she installed.

Elon really showed up one day, thru the corridor of movements. He had already got to each player, now it was her turn. He swore to find her, as he suspected she had something to do with his wife being stuck. One day he managed to put together a coding password that opened the hallway between them. "Who are you Elon?" She asked him with a perfect accent on his name. She elegantly distanced herself at a suitable distance, and her hands stopped in exactly the right position. "You're a great actress," Elon gave her a tribute. He had imagined her differently. "Thanks for noticing," she waved her hand back and restored her position. "I'm looking for a Bird." "Why did you come to me? Women know nothing about birds." "Ramon warned me you talked about it in the New Ad. But I didn't find it and trust me, I've searched everything." Hyacinth laughed and responded an answer: "Bygones, old man. The Bird was on the old platform, and that one is gone for good." "What do you mean it's gone? But you promised everybody a Bird, in your great new platform!" "You're really stupid. First you weren't interested in it, but now that it's gone, you are looking at me weirdly? The Bird was always there. It was the only game to choose, with no stake and no profit, but no one was looking for it. You searched for it outside, where she had been gone for decades. Instead of looking for it in a New Ad, you preferred to choose meaningless games and fulfill irrelevant tasks, following the instructions in detail. All to access other ads, didn't care about the Bird. All the players were waiting for me to come up with a new platform, and they thoughtlessly hooked up. That's the only way I got rid of the damn Bird. I don't even know where it came from." Elon couldn't believe his ears. He felt desperately cheated. He didn't even have the words to say goodbye as social meetings required. He could not close the corridor behind him, nor did he try too hard. He sat curtly beside the docked Eloise, thinking of the lost Bird he would never see.

Hyacinth was pleased. She had all the players in control and everything was as she wished. Elon was no longer dangerous to her, since it had no sense to participate in looking for a Bird at her New Ad. When he entered, the new platform was already operational and he was not even aware it was ever any different.

Ramon questioned around for the Bird for a while. Eloise and him split the tasks and went on to search individually. He went according to plan. Since then, he just occasionally still remembered and asked the Question. Something strange was happening all around, he didn't understand. Then, even before he could open his mouth to ask, one of the men in the Ad grabbed him by the neck and shouted at him, he had been disrupted by his entrance and he enabled him to track the Ad. Ramon shuddered: "She caught me in the damn Ad!" He remembered the questions and didn't stop asking about the Bird until he managed to tear off the sticky platform. Hyacinth lay beside him, a smile on her face. He smashed his beeping plastion and plugged in one last time. He fled into an old ad, where he now found peace. Away from Hyacinth and her deceiving Ad, which has stopped the World. He will never return there. He preferred to hunt a damn fictional Fox to his death.

Elon stared at the beautiful woman whose consciousness was swimming somewhere in the Ad because she had forgotten about the Bird and the questions. However, he cannot forget it and therefore cannot remain connected. Now he knew the Bird was lost, there was no way back. His plastion was still reporting obligations, so Elon made sure it didn't whistle too much. He tried to do the everyday socially useful tasks that plastion proposed, at least there was something helping him to distract himself from the sad image of his wife. He was determined that his love did not miss the meals, now he was plugging her tubes for her. He sometimes joined Ramon and played "Fox hunting" with him. Most of the time, he sat in front of the window and stared at his beautiful Eloise, daydreaming about the missing Bird.

Hyacinth's New Ad gave him the chills and he had no peace of mind. At times it seemed to him Hyacinth is mocking him through circuits and plastion codes. He resisted the urge to be blown through the corridor and violate all the rules of social distance, and question her radically. One question regularly popped up in his mind and suddenly he could not resist any longer and went to see the beautiful one. He managed to stop himself within the prescribed distance, safely far away, though he seriously had a chance to get closer and take a closer look. What he could politely ask was: "what platform did you offer them!?" He needed to know how she was able to transcend the world. How did she manage to destroy his Bird?

Hyacinth twisted in the armchair to be seen her from the left profile. She turned her face slightly toward him and raised her chin. She crossed her legs and tilted them sideways, her hands resting on her lap. She gently opened her perfect mouth, stunning smell soothingly spread around her. With the sweetest voice overpowered by her algorithm, she rang her voice flawlessly in response to the distraught of a man: "They chose what they wanted, what they were waiting for." She thought a little and began to giggle as if she couldn't believe her own deception: "the fools were so quick to press on it, no one could stop them. If anyone read the Ad to the fullest, they would see what the new platform is called!" "What the hell did you offer them? If you don't tell me, I swear I'll come over and grab you by a part of your body!" She didn't believe him to dare to violate the ultimate order, so she remained perfectly positioned. "You had all the time in the world to go in and read the Ad!" Elon couldn't help it, he had enough. He just didn't care. He ran through the spacer and grabbed her by

the neck. He clutched his hands to the perfect woman by her perfect neck. Her algorithm calculated the potential for distance breach and ran from code to password and back. Elon shouted: "are you going to tell me or not? I will not let you go!!!" Hyacinth still maintained her perfect posture as required by the protocol. "VIRUS! The virus, it said! I didn't hide anything. Everything was written down. Everything was fair and honest, I acted in the name of prescribed protocols! I did nothing wrong!"

Elon ran down the hall to escape the mechanical laughter of Hyacinth's algorithm. He broke codes and passwords to crash the hallway between them. He secured it with all the possible encryption keys, constantly inventing new ones. He pulled Ramon out of the old ad and took care of the extra tubes so Ramon didn't have to go to the woman laughing from the armchair attached to her crazy Ad. Hyacinth was secured and the men were looking for a way to turn her off as soon as possible, along with the targeting Ad. But still, they had to find a way to save Elon's beloved wife from the monster. He stayed with Eloise himself while she lay motionless in her feeding chair. Bravely, however scared Ramon volunteered to go look for her in the Ad.

When they were together, they searched the algorithms for the remnants of an old New Ad platform. They both still strongly believed they could find a Bird there and if they found it, everything would be different. When Ramon accidentally bumped into Eloise, she almost reported him spoiling her Ad. He had to violently rip the plastion out of her hands, so she didn't file the report. Just in the last available moment. He was forced to tie her arms and legs as she went wild and tried to tear the plastion from him. Then she screamed and spat and her mouth had to be tied as well. Then he left her alone and returned to Elon. He didn't know what to do with her now that she was found. Elon noticed that his immobile wife's body was beginning to tremble, and he was seriously thinking of unplugging the tube. That's when Ramon snapped out, "I found her! She didn't want to listen to me, and I had to tie her up. But now I don't know how to get her to her senses. She didn't really like me dropping by." Elon's heart began to pound, and this time he did not hear his beeping plastion for the first time.

For several days, he was constantly immersed in his thoughts, calculating and coding, writing passwords, inventing codes and new algorithms. He needed to find his way to Eloise, fast! Ramon meanwhile took care of attaching Eloise's tubes and periodically checked if she was still securely tied in Hyacinth's Ad.

Days passed and Elon was exhausted. The algorithms offered possible solutions, but when put to the test, they turned out to be false. One by one, the theories collapsed and he was desperate to get his wife back, speak to her again. When the last theory of multi combinatorial calculus collapsed, he sat down sadly in his bird-watching chair: "You know, Ramon, I'll have to go there! In a fucking Ad to meet my wife! I don't know how to pull her out, I've tried everything else." "I'd like to help you, my friend, but I don't know how either." Ramon agreed, he will take care of Elons tubes if he's not back soon, and also promised to forcibly remove both tubes if they got stuck inside for too long. Elon didn't participate in the Ad for a very long time, he was honestly scared. He'd rather die than stay plugged in forever.

Eloise was furious. To tie her up and leave her like this was an excess of insolence. Who does this man thinks he is, such a weirdo, that he can allow himself to treat her like this. "What's up with that?" she wondered out loud, trying to break the bonds. The corridor made a sound and she was

convinced it was an intruder who was going to check how much she had loosened. She prepared to look at him furiously and tell him a few hush words, if only he would give her a chance to speak. She tried to remember the rules of social contact, because maybe she just did something wrong and that's why all this weird stuff happened. The arms were set straight, the shoulders too. She couldn't move her legs, they were so shamefully placed. A smile covered her face, and she was ready to outwit the visitor who would be spat out by the hall.

Elon had made up his mind: he wouldn't bend anything. He'll just lie to her, and simply tell her he has found a bird. "Yes," he will do so. He'll say that he had found it and that he has it at home. But only he will overdo if she refuse to go back with him. And only if she doesn't go crazy against him. Eloise didn't even think to believe him: "you're lying!" Only by untying her mouth she's gone wild. Yelled at him, what a liar he was. "All the while, you were just thinking of not letting me go to the New Ad. And you made me thought about some stupid, made up Bird? I don't believe a word you are saying." He bound her mouth carefully so that she didn't scream after him and he returned to the sleeping image of his beloved wife. It was unbearable; he couldn't go on like this. If she continues to refuse to come back to him, then there is no hope anymore. Ramon was feeding on an armchair, and Elon was crying at the disconnected woman who was lying silently in the backrest, while the rest of her was stuck tied up in an Ad she did not want to disconnect from. It was unbelievable that she loved him so little and preferred the Ad over him. "Damn the day I let you lure us in."

First he unplugged Ramon's tubes then he unplugged Eloises and his own. He was waiting. They both lay motionless, although the tubes were protruding freely. Elon was convinced that they would wake up if they were turned off by force. "Nothing! Damn it, nothing!" he frantically tossed the furniture around, hopelessly cursing how he could think he would feel better afterwards. "Damn, nothing! There's nothing I can do! NOTHING!" He cut all the passwords out of rage and dismantled the codes. He disassembled the corridor to the last atom and pulled out all the circuits. "Still nothing!!!!" It was hopeless. He was left alone. He was wrong to overstate that Ramon would wake up if he got the tubes out. That his love as well will wake up. "Something will have to be done, I can't be alone anymore," he growled, walking up and down the room. He sat in his chair and stared out, where he used to naively wait for the Bird. "I'll throw myself out of that damn window!" Without thinking, he grabbed the chair he was sitting on and threw it through an opening in the wall.

It hummed and unbearable light struck the room. Elon pressed his hands to his eyes and retreated into the adjacent space. There was too much light. He tried to imagine how he could see through the beam of light coming from the other side of the window. So far, there has only been a half-gray darkness in which he glared day after day to see the Bird. He closed the door behind him, unable to pass the light. It was so sharp that his head hurt, even with his eyes closed.

After a while, he opened the door and became accustomed to the glare that filled the adjacent space. This was filled with voices he did not know, coming from the other side of the window, along with light that would not allow him to see through. Elon dismantled almost all the algorithmic devices around him to find a component through which he could peek into what was coming from where there used to be a Birdwatchers window. Finally he was able to put it together, he hoped it would work as he had imagined. The device was black in color, allowing only a tiny fraction of the light to find a way through it.

He carefully fastened it to his eye and gently opened the door. The eye didn't hurt, the lens worked. He had carefully covered the other eye with layers of textiles to prevent light from damaging the optic nerve, then slammed the heavy door, and bravely walked thru the room. He was focused to get to the window that led in the room magnificent voices and shiny light. That was new to him and he was curious. He couldn't resist. He looked out. Outside, it was everything different than any Ad he ever saw. Everything was green, there were other colors here and there, and colorful patches fluttered through the air. One of those things approached Elon and let out a voice that enchanted him. With his mouth wide open, he stared at the wonder of all wonders, a thing, holding its wings open and automatically floating through the air. It was not attached to any tube and did not appear to have any buttons. The thing sailed through the air in a circle over Elon and called again with her magical voice. Elons mouth was still not closed from mesmerizing surprise when the thought was already crawling into his head: "What a fool I am! Instead of ever going out, I scampered through ads looking for something that never was and never will be. Bird? Who invented this idea? And I, fool, believed I could find it!" Elon stared at the wonder that fluffed in the air and sang magically as it approached the window. "And me, fool, believed the Bird was real!?!"

I-Nat Espera Tree, April 18th 2020