

...I'M YOUNGER THAN THAT NOW

RAVENSGATE: THE FOUNDRY, ISSUE 41

SUNDAY, 17 AUGUST 2003

STUDIOS OF KROT-AM

RAVENSGATE, OREGON

"I think this is a bad idea," Francois mutters to Captain George Diem, his voice raising the VU meters and graphic equalizer readings on the other side of the glass. "Long is a demagogue, and this will be a kangaroo court."

The commander of Mid-North Precinct, a stocky Southeast Asian man in his late thirties, nods in half-agreement and pulls back his right hand before he can make the reflexive reassuring gesture of placing it on Francois' shoulder. He knows better; he is sensitive to Francois' apprehension regarding physical contact. Instead, he smoothes out his necktie and exhales sharply before replying.

On the other side of the glass, the sound engineer adjusts the microphone gains with the click of a mouse.

"Francois, the work you've done—and the rest of CASTLE's work—needs to be defended," Diem says in measured tones. "I'm counting on Long to be a demagogue, and I for one will stand up to him. He's a hypocrite and a liar."

"I fail to see the point of pandering to his audience of couch potatoes and trailer-park patriots," Francois whispers, noting in the corner of his eye that his comment amuses the sound engineer. "His audience has already made up their minds."

"Maybe, maybe not." Diem leans over and whispers: "Phil Snow's listening tonight, and the department can make political hay out of any misstep by Long."

"Fine. But I'm leaving the instant it becomes clear we're here only for Long's personal edification. The man can't even show up on time to greet his supposed guests!"

"Here he is now," says the engineer as a portly mountain of a man, a diet soda can clenched in one meaty hand, approaches the studio door. He enters, places the soda can on the desk perpendicular to Diem and Francois, and says, "Miles Long. Nice to meet you."

He extends his hand, but only Diem shakes it. Francois bows, to which Long smirks.

"I'm Captain George Diem, this is Francois Champeaux from the CASTLE Program."

"Hunh. You do anything for a full-time job, Francois?"

"I'm a teacher."

"One minute to showtime," says the engineer over the studio intercom.

"Okay, Billy," replies Long as he dons headphones and leans into his microphone. "Testes, testes. One, two. Ha, ha."

Francois rolls his eyes at the juvenile crudity as fanfare music starts up and a canned announcer hypes the show: "*You're listening to Stimulating Talk Radio 690-AM K-R-O-T, Ravensgate-*

Tillamook-Astoria!! And, now, it's time for...Miles...Lonnnngggg!! Yes, he's Miles Long—just ask the ladies!! Miles Long, the people's ombudsman!! Answerable to no one—especially not the special interests who run this city—Miles Long asks the tough questions others don't!! And now, Miles Long!!

“Thank you, Jeff, and good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Last year, Salome Throckmorton-d'Aubaine, Mayor of One Tenth of the People, did an end-run around our Assembly when they rejected citizen oversight of the Bureau of Public Safety.

“Our billionaire ex-supermodel nymphette decided to saddle the Checkerheads with so-called ‘helpers’ from a program called Citizen Assistance To Law Enforcement, or CASTLE for short. It's affiliated with Slick Willie's AmeriCorps boondoggle, which goes to show you she's not as conservative a Democrat as she claims.

“In fact, our mayor—of one-tenth of the people, I might add, thanks to that well-timed flood the day of the runoff election—has shown herself to be Clintonian right down to her libido. And her use of lackeys to spy on confidential police business.

“But enough about her. Tonight, we have in our studio two defenders of the CASTLE Program who are willing to brave the onslaught from you Long Bombers out there, and from Yours Truly. Captain George Diem is commander of Mid-North Precinct, home to the city's most crime-ridden neighborhoods. Joining us from the CASTLE Program is schoolteacher Frankie Shampoo—.”

“Francois Champeaux!”

“I'm sorry, what? This is a radio station, not a French restaurant. Francois Champeaux—aw, sit back down, I'm just screwin' with ya—is a criminologist by education and a teacher by profession. He spends 25 hours a week at Mid-North Precinct processing and examining police reports.

“Our first question tonight is via e-mail from a Long Bomber named BuggleFan81, who writes—*what the fuh—?*”

Diem and Francois exchange looks of shocked realization as The Buggles' “Video Killed The Radio Star” blares over the studio speakers, the engineer frantically and in vain adjusts sound levels, and fast-flickering images on Long's monitor cause him to twitch out. Long's violent convulsions tip over the soda, spilling it onto the floor, and pop bolts on his chair.

Long falls silent and still as the seat detaches from the base of the chair, rocking to and fro on the studio floor. Blood trickles from Long's ears and nose as he stares blankly at the ceiling.

The Vidiot has struck again.

Francois darts from the studio to catch some air as Diem reaches for a carotid pulse while barking orders into a handheld radio. As he stops in the hallway, breathing in and out deeply, his VoxDot begins buzzing.

**SUNDAY, 17 AUGUST 2003
CIRO NORTE (HOME OF MAXIMILLIAN MORELL
AND MAYOR SALOME THROCKMORTON-D'AUBAINE)
RAVENSGATE, OREGON**

“I don't know what happened,” Max hears Salome telling someone, most likely Noel deCuir.
“My Windows XP twitched out when I received an e-mail, he went to examine my settings, then he fell over unconscious.”

Not unconscious, Max muses to himself half-dreamily, *just in a meditative trance*. He was examining the sensory-overload experience The Vidiot had embedded in an executable file—dangerous to those with slower metabolisms than Max—when someone intruded upon his thoughts.

The Vidiot?!?!? Max sits straight up, almost smacking his forehead into Salome's nose, and snaps, "Noel, do a search of the premises and ***under no circumstances*** let Salome answer her own e-mail ***until further notice!!***"

"Are you alright?" Salome asks, cradling Max's head, as the security personnel scatter about the den.

"I'm fine, really," Max replies. "The Vidiot's streaming video doesn't affect someone who moves as fast as I do. However, I had the misfortune to receive a telepathic burst transmission at the same time."

"Maybe that's how The Vidiot kills," Salome says, to which Max replies, "No, the burst transmission wasn't him. He is, however, capable of sending pulses of psychic energy via e-mail, and that certainly was present in his executable. No, the burst transmission was from..."

"From...?" Salome prompts.

"From myself," Max says, incredulous.

"*Yourself?*"

"Yes. Apparently, sometime in the future, I will become unstuck in time and capable of meeting, and conversing with, myself without impacting the time-stream. I was unclear with myself about how this is possible, but I did give me the formulae for manipulating degraded Nth particles. Apparently, someone—possibly one of my colleagues in The Foundry—discover them on Earth, of all places, sometime tonight."

"Max, ***what*** are you talking about?"

"I'm not quite sure yet. Somehow, when I'm 71, I will be in charge of, or advising, a group of time travelers charged with cleaning up the time-stream. I think that's the reason behind my use of a merged-particle beam—um, possibly an inverse-tachyon beam infused with psi-particles—to embed information in my mind. Unless that's me from an alternate future. I'm not sure yet."

"Max, I'm getting worried. ***What the hell*** are you talking about?"

Max kisses Salome on the lips, rises, and guides her to her feet: "*Mon chere*, I'm from the future. You know that. Something soon will become terribly wrong with the time-stream, and it is up to me, with The Foundry's help, to fix it."

"What about The Vidiot?" Salome asks, as Max's VoxDot begins buzzing.

"Call the Checkerheads and stay away from the PC for now. Francois and I will follow up any leads when we get back."

TO BE CONTINUED IN ISSUE #42, "TIMES HAVE CHANGED"