

Steve Tomasula

C-U SEE-ME

Now we see but a poor reflection, as through a glass darkly; then we shall see face-to-face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.—I Corinthians 13:12.

06:12:17:23:59

Pecker hopping. Bare chest and thighs shiny with sweat. Nothing they hadn't seen before, thought Luke, making out through the glare of an apartment window across the courtyard someone watching him as he jumped rope naked.

He kept up the rhythm while the someone—a woman?—a man with hippie hair?—settled in, watching. As steadily as a camera.

1011 1101 0110 1111 1100 1101 0101 1100 1101 1....—a choreography of bytes....

Standing before glossy grins on the magazines in Gas-N-Go, J. felt eyes on her. Instinctively she looked up—a bowed mirror collaged her own bowed face with the reflections of two men behind the cash register, watching.

Odd, thought Luke, skipping rope in his living room, that he, an investigator for Family Pharmacy and Foods, Inc., a person who knew how surveillance could turn anyone to glass, could be so untroubled....

Name: _____

\$13.13

Voice of the cash register instead of the cashier.

Webs of laser light parse melons and cupcakes. Then the cashier scrutinized F.'s signature—an X that he had purposefully made illegible—

1011 1101 0110 1111 1100 1101 0101 1100 1101 1....—a choreography of bytes to and from massive data banks....

The cashier handed back his card.

The system always gets you in the end, F. thought, needing a shower for giving in, for admitting by using the card that if a tree fell in the forest and there was no one there to watch, it didn't exist. At least he'd goosed Big Brother by getting plastic *after* he'd been canned. He returned the card to the wallet chained to his jeans, hoisted his paper grocery bags, then left, puzzling out how he'd lost that job.

An electronic eye opened the door.

Calls to OSHA were supposed to be anonymous.

Find out the names of everyone on your block: <http://www.anywho.com>

From up here, he could see everything: luscious melons, a rack of cupcakes....

This is stupid, J. thought, eyes weighing on her in that old exhausting way.... She didn't want a magazine, was only buying one because—

Just because she hated having to *ask*.

Stan said the name on the cashier's Gas-N-Go uniform. She placed a copy of *Look* on the counter, fished around in her purse—eyes unbuttoning her blouse—

1011 1101 0110 1111 1100 1101 0101 1100 1101 1....—to and fro and up into the card reader of the cash register.

On the monitor below the counter, *Jane I. Smith*, and other info linked to the credit card he'd just swiped appeared across a video of her face.

Approved.

After paying, J. stared straight ahead as she asked, "May I use the key to your restroom?"

Store 03513
06:13:08:31:57

...firm melons....

Luke pressed up on a ceiling panel to expose the grid of video cabling suspended above the aisles of Family Pharmacy 02830. Was it the casual way his

neighbor spied on him? Was that why he was so casual about being spied on? He plugged a palm-sized camera into one of the jacks that fed a VCR housed deep in a locker, deep, deep in the manager's office.

Name: _____

The *infanta* in the painting looks out through 400 years of yellowing varnish at the back at her be- the *menina* who viewer who is mirror in the darkly reflects queen looking standing where gazed at by standing before painting, look- viewer looking



viewer, looking
ing looked at by
is seen by the
looking at the dim
background which
the king and
back at the viewer
they should be,
Velázquez
an easel in the
ing out at the
in at him....

The only one who isn't giving their eyes a workout is the dog.....

The cookie-cutter architecture of every Family Pharmacy was as comforting to Luke as the contours of his own living room. To get to Store 04902 he navigated a landscape tagged by gangs—*¡Latin Kings!* The chrome and glass of Store 02786 mirrored mini-vans and condo landscaping. Like some oddly-shaped congressional district, his territory encompassed customers in mechanic's coveralls and customers in tennis whites. And yet, the Great Equalizer, the identical nets of video cables that hung above all, the identical one-way mirrors and surveillance software lulled him, as he climbed a ladder, the way the blind must feel returning from the bustle of streets to their own home.

He hummed as he worked, inserting the needle lens of a camera through a ceiling panel. He trained the camera down upon the spot where the cashier's hands would be, once the store opened, his thoughts drifting all the while to his neighbor. Who hadn't been trying to hide his spying. If so, the guy could have easily peered out from behind his blinds. But no, he'd stood full faced in the window—as if to make sure Luke saw him seeing him.

Back on the floor, Luke checked his handiwork—the lens was a pin-head, lost in the pebble-grain of ceiling panels molded for just such purposes. Identical in every store. Identical to the ceiling in his living room.

Now he had to find a new gig.

In the privacy of the Gas-N-Go washroom, J. lifted her skirt.

Name: _____

Nice legs and firm buttocks—probably a jogger. Or belonged to a gym.

The museum line inched forward bringing another suit and all the other tourists, children, and art students down the velvet rope that channeled them toward the exhibit—and me, N. thought, speeding through her thirty-sixth hour without sleep. Behind her was the gallery she was guarding, bare except for the single painting that the line was waiting to see: *Las Meninas*. Every time the Art Institute mounted a traveling old master, it was hunks on parade, and N., dressed in her museum-guard's uniform, took up her position at the doorway to get a better look at the suit that the line was now offering up: older than the college guys she usually dated—even a hint of gray. Trim bod. Unless that was the cut of his Armani talking.

Should she smile at him?

Transit Authority Driver Application.
Name: _____.

In the janitor's closet adjoining the women's washroom, S. stepped up on a chair to reach the rolls of toilet paper on the top shelf. Noiselessly, he moved them aside, one by one, until a pinpoint of light shined out from the peephole he had drilled through the wall. He pressed his eye to it.

Ritalin tabs gave the whole museum the hyper clarity of a Surround-Sound, Wrap-Around photo-realist painting. Even with her eyes shut she could see the suit's graying hair—distinguished—like the banker in that daytime soap she'd been getting into before the museum hired her.

When she opened her eyes, the arched entrance of the gallery loomed before her, the guard in it dressed exactly like her, also watching, and past him another archway with another guard and receding into the distance be-

yond that guard and archway other archways and other guards.... For a moment, N. had the disorienting sensation of falling into mirrors facing mirrors facing mirrors facing....

Name: _____

Loose strands of hair, face flushed, squinting out from under him, his back dough-pale in the mirror on the ceiling....

Name: _____

Toilet paper trailing from her heel, J. emerged from the Gas-N-Go wash-room, got in her car and pulled away from the pump, a camera filming her license plate.

55.7 said the radar gun of the first speed trap she drove through.

53.4 said the second.

102.5FM said the scanner making a survey of the radio stations being listened to in every passing car.

Just then, the truck that had been tailgating her roared past and cut her off. "I'll fix your wagon, mister," she muttered, using her cell phone to dial the number stenciled across one cargo door: *How's My Driving? Call 1-800-2-ADVISE.*

A half hour later, she pulled into her reserved parking space, cameras the size of bazookas panning the lot from the roof of the office building—her efficiency evaluation was coming up, she remembered. Surely Mr. W. was compiling data on her for his report—no matter what favors she did him—and she made a mental note to look in on the e-mail of her subordinates—just to make sure they weren't goofing off.

NY officials propose national warehousing of not just the DNA
profiles of criminals, but of everyone, beginning with newborns.

View people at work in an office in England (or pick from 62 other countries):
<http://www.camvu.com>

Grunting?

Modulated by the squishy sound of suck?

Monitor #5 showed J. get out of her car. Monitor #4 showed her walk across the parking lot. Monitor #3 showed her enter the lobby where K., the recep-

tionist, was watching rows of banked monitors. “Have a good meeting, Ms. Smith?” she asked, and J. answered in sync with her gray-scale video puppet, “Very good,” hurrying by to an open elevator.

Monitor #1 showed Mr. W., her boss, already in another elevator, unbunching his crotch.

In the privacy of the elevator, J. adjusted her panties. Probably better shadow a few of their cases too, she thought, just to make sure that they weren’t padding their time sheets. The elevator opened onto the glass facade of her office suite: *Employer Information Services*.

View live what other people are searching for on-line:
<http://voyeur.mckinley.com/cgi-bin/voyeur.cgi>

The door swings open so smartly that at first you believe it: *Welcome To Family Pharmacy*. But then there you are, framed like a criminal on a wanted poster that was a 21” monitor. As he did whenever he transferred buses at this stop, he walked quickly to the liquor department. He grabbed a bottle of gin, stepped to the blind side of the cameras, took a deep draw, then recapped the bottle and put it back on the shelf.

In the ceiling mirrors she could see a bald spot on the back of his head, shiny with sweat....

06:12:17:23:59

Melons.

Rendered in the grays of black-and-white surveillance, the Family Pharmacy cashier looked older than the nineteen years recorded in her file, the angle of the ceiling-cam exaggerating her cleavage.

“Riggggggght—now!” Luke pushed the pause button.

Freeze-frame held the cashier’s arm midway between the till and the apron of her Family Pharmacy smock. Using his laptop, Luke ran the history generated by her cash register one more time, and one more time the software alarm that had alerted him to her in the first place went off. Time and date stamps on both video and receipt log confirmed the aberration: she’d rung up \$13.13. Family Pharmacy didn’t sell anything for \$13.13. Even so, even though she’d rung up \$13.13 three times that day, he still might have passed over it as an honest mistake if she hadn’t done that thing a lot of the guilty did in the

videos he made: as the tape continued to play, she glanced up at the camera, even though it was impossible for her to know a camera was there.

Guilt. Melons. Guilt. \$13.13.

He bit his knuckle; six billion people on earth and everyone but him had some reaction to being watched:

Store 02830: Embarrassment:

The teenage girl's giggles dampened into tight-lipped silence as she realized Luke really wasn't going to let her go until she emptied her purse. Her face went scarlet as she did so, a home pregnancy test tumbling out.

Store 03033: Anger:

"Are you calling me a thief?"

In answer, Luke laid out the employee time sheets that had been short-changed in order to make the store look more profitable. The shift manager suddenly lunged at him from across the table.

What was his problem?

Say YES! to Caller I.D. and see who's calling before you pick up the phone!

"Hey, the Candy Man's here." The pharmacy technician stepped off the bus and into the grip of four Kings. From behind, one tore his backpack from his shoulders. "You're late, Candy Man." They shook out homework, textbooks and smock.... When the Ritalin he'd pilfered from work also spilled onto the sidewalk, they dove on it as if a piñata had burst. Fighting each other, they stuffed the pills into the folds of the red ski masks they all wore as berets. Then they were off, hooting and bobbing away. "See you next time, Candy Man...."

Slowly, he picked up scuffed papers, books, and his own red ski mask. *Family Pharmacy, Inc.*, said the bronze name tag pinned to his smock. His theft but not theirs would show up in inventory and seeing his face reflected in the dull metal, *Timo Garcia, Pharmacy Technician*, he wondered how he was ever going to cover it up....

E. spread her legs to give the camera a better view....

If five years in the FBI and another four as an investigator for Family Pharmacy had taught Luke anything it was that six billion *Homo sapiens* eat and shit

...Baby E. coming into the world at www.ahn.com/livebirth...

and react to being watched in so few patterns that it had to be the heritage of some deep-seated animal instinct. Yet here was another case, underlining his own apathy at discovering that he himself was being watched.

He switched off the monitor and its screen went black, reflecting the longing in his face for the cashier's fear. Oh yes, it was fear. Every time she rang up \$13.13 she put a hundred dollars in the till. And whenever he caught someone putting extra money in the till, it was because they were actually putting it back—covering up a previous theft after the wee of their suspicions began to swell with the presence a data double, caught forever in an embarrassing moment like the poor slob on *Real Cops*, hauled out onto the front lawn in his underwear, over and over, the cops wrestling down his buttocky girth in the forever of rerun syndication—just because he'd had the bad luck of being drunk enough to fight back on the night cameras were out cruising with cops, looking for just such a spectacle.

So why was the only bump in his night the fact that he didn't care someone was spying on him?

He closed his eyes to see the hippie's expressionless face watching him exercise naked. If only he could hate that face. If only he could summon embarrassment. Or shame or violation or....

Nothing.

Back in the FBI, there were shrinks for agents who had burned out. Who had dealt with so many lying punks that they couldn't see anything but deceit, even in the mirror.... Had something similar happened to him?

The video showed the employee check the hallway, then turn back into the lunchroom and piss in its coffee pot.

It wasn't like he never gave a damn whether he was watching or being watched. When he'd first jumped companies, he'd actually felt cheezy using all his high-powered government training to expose the criminal

nature of stock boys, setting up cameras in washrooms and lunchrooms to do so.... Now he knew better than even portrait artists that when a person looks in a mirror, the 'life sized' reflection they see is only half as big as their actual face. But anymore, he couldn't even pretend it mattered.

Store 03484: Denial:

"That's not me." In slo-mo, the tape showed the pharmacist forging a prescription for himself. "I swear to God, that's not me."

The bus-driver applicant slid open a tiny slot in the wall of a dim, pocket washroom and was shocked to find an expansive lab on the other side, bright with fluorescent lighting. White-coated technicians bustled about. "Thank you," one said as a command, sitting right there, hand out for his urine sample. Humbly, as if in a confessional, he passed her the Dixie cup.

The bus lurched and F., juggling a gallon of house paint, collapsed into the nearest seat to keep the paper grocery bags he also held from bursting. A chick dressed in the uniform of a museum guard giggled. She held one of those bags with handles—a plastic bag from Family Pharmacy that would still be choking the earth a thousand years after the paper ones he used had decomposed. Go ahead and laugh, jerk, F. thought. Plastic bags—just so she could get her deodorant and whatever other shit she had in there home a little easier.

Was that a gun sticking out?

The driver's eyes switched to them for a moment, filling the big mirror above the windshield—the mirror used to watch passengers, not traffic.

"Well, where are they?" Luke sighed, going behind the camera counter in Store 02834.

"Right here." The lab technician pulled out one of the yellow envelopes used to return photos to customers. Usually, when an employee reported that a customer had turned in kiddie porn or other illegal pictures for processing, they turned out to be just naked baby pictures. Or naked husband and wife pictures. Or naked boyfriend or girlfriend pictures—sometimes screwing—but always a waste of time. Still, he had to check out every report because the company was worried about lawsuits.

The first ones she showed him were just what he'd expected: blurry photos of naked bodies, shot from the ceiling, a balding guy puffing away on top of a young girl, loose hair obscuring her face, contorted by laughter. Or was it a grimace? He shrugged. But the lab technician said, "There's more." She shuffled through the birthday snapshots of another customer until she found a photo of a teenager wearing a red ski mask and pointing a gun at passengers on a bus. A Smith & Wesson 9mm Semi-automatic, from the looks of it.

"See, I told you."

“Yeah, I’ll check with the police to see if there’s been any car-jackings lately. Sometimes punks like to reenact their crimes for their friends. You have the customer’s address?”

As T. slept, his mother crept into his room. His book bag and Family Pharmacy smock hung on the door—such promise—and as she brought her shears near his neck she grieved for the rumors Raul had told her about gangs and her son. Last week she had even found a gun hidden in his underwear drawer and she crossed herself—how complicated the world had grown. Her mother would have simply taken a few of her son’s hairs to a *curandera*, but she....

She snipped off the hairs she needed for a home DNA test. If he had a drug problem, she had to find out—before his father did and beat him for the overtime, for the tons of flock, even, that he had heisted from the paper factory he slaved in to pay the boy’s tuition.

As T. slept, his father crept into his room. Why couldn’t he just let sleeping dogs lie? he wondered, standing over the boy’s snoring form. T. was in college—to be a doctor. Had a good job, a girlfriend.... Then he remembered the boy’s sneaking mother. Neighbors talking. She and Raul, her old flame, still whispering together about?—What? *Hijo de mi esposa es suya*, went the saying, *pero mijo?—quien sabe*. With a Q-Tip, he swabbed up drool from T.’s mouth for the home DNA test that would confirm whether or not they really were father and son.

Call 1-800-DNA-TYPE

Name: _____

The world conspires to make you conform, F. thought, wishing he still had the hemp bag one of the Mexicans at his old job had given him. Weary from riding the bus from job application to application, he clutched the plastic bag that held his paint brushes and rollers. The hardware store didn’t even offer paper bags and the plastic ones they did have gave off a sickening petroleum smell. The bus lurched—new man at the wheel—the smell of the bags and the smell of the bus beginning to make him nauseous. He closed his eyes against the motion. Tried to sleep, tried to imagine himself in one of the jobs he’d applied for that day. But his mind turned as it always did before sleep to his last day at Williams Paper Products. He’d been running the machine that ground up mis-made tissues and Kotexes

Net Detective: the easy way to find out
anything about anybody: <http://www.net-detective.net>

and turned them into Christmas tree flock when the employees' toilet backed up—again. Making sure his supervisor was at the far end of the plant, he'd slipped into the lunch room and called OSHA to report it. As he'd done the week before. And the week before that. And had been doing since a heart attack put Old Man Williams in the hospital and put the plant in the hands of William Jr., the balding yuppie son who refused to do anything about the toilet.

The bus lurched. As it groaned along, the stench of the clogged toilet seemed to waft to F., the one employee john just off the dirty little closet that served as a lunch room. It wasn't the stench so much that had put him on a crusade. It was—dare he use the anachronism?—being treated like an animal, William Jr. with his Armani suits and art collection, and brass and paneled office where he didn't have to breath the dust of ground-up Kotexes. Where he didn't have a hole to shit in, ten minutes in the morning, a half hour at lunch, and ten in the afternoon to do so.... Then Junior fired him—for taking home a pound of flocking for his own tree—Everyone did *that!*—convincing F. that Junior had somehow found out he was the one who kept reporting them to OSHA. But how? Were the phones tapped? It wouldn't surprise him. The fuckers would jam a telescope up your ass if they thought they could make a dime by examining what you had for lunch. Yet whenever he tried to pin down the moment he was seen, his mind went spinning out of control, the question too big to handle, like thinking about God or Infinity—

The bus lurched.

Is someone barfing?—that fucking hippie in the back of the bus!

“Hey,” yelled the chick in a museum uniform, “don't do that shit in here! Hang your head out a window!”

You are on a video camera an average of 10 times a day. Are you dressed for it?
— Kenneth Cole Footwear, Clothing, Accessories,
Fall Catalog.

The bus driver's eyes scowled in his mirror.

“Don’t worry man, I got a bag,” the dude said, holding up a plastic bag, pendulous with vomit.

“You see the vomit in that bag?” one black woman told another. “He ain’t foolin’ me. That was *gin* vomit. There weren’t no food in there. Nu-uh, not one single chunk.”

The window across the courtyard remained empty as Luke uncoiled his jump rope. He turned on the TV for the noise. Slowly, he unbuttoned his shirt. He dropped his pants. The window across the courtyard remained empty. He stepped out of his BVDs and the breeze hit his pecker. Should he close his blinds? The window across the courtyard remained empty. He pulled on gym socks and laced up gym shoes. Already he’d broken a sweat and if he closed the blinds—

Suddenly—a flash of movement—

The hippie appeared in the window.

Not wanting to tip off that he knew he was being watched, Luke began to jump, telling himself that he was simply willing to pay the price for the fresh air. Yeah, everything had a price.

After work tonight, instead of putting up with drunks on the bus, maybe she’d ask him for a ride home.

Candy Man Special: pink Tranxene t-tabs, capsules of Darvocet, Seconal.... She chugged a Vicodin to iron herself out. She had to get it together, especially the giggles. The last time she babysat, Mr. W. had looked at her kind of weird—suspicious-like....

The next night, the hippie was already there when Luke got home. He had pulled a recliner up to the window and was sitting in it, hands clasped behind his head. Watching. Waiting for the show to begin.

I call on NASA to build a satellite that would provide continuous, live images of earth from space.... —Vice President Al Gore

Compared to the taut college boyfriends she'd had, his body was surprisingly soft. She squeezed her knees together to see how far she could make them sink in, the effort gritting her teeth in the mirrors above....

What a hotel! He wouldn't have ever brought her here if it weren't so close to his father's hospital that he could visit afterwards. But the mirrors! Mirrors on the walls, mirrors on the ceiling, a slight convexity making him look thinner in them, younger. Even with her. Didn't the size of his meat-injection grit her teeth!

Plus the walls were thin enough to hear through.

W. got up off his knees.

He closed the cabinet to hide the video camera he'd bought to spy on the baby-sitter.

White House Debriefing, 1806

Upon completing the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the 19th century equivalent of landing a man on the moon, Lewis met President Jefferson to report on all they had discovered; there were no tape recorders, of course, and since neither man bothered to write about the meeting, nothing is known about what was said.

Odd enough that she showed up last time in her museum-guard's uniform—as if she'd forgotten to change—but when he pointed it out to her, she couldn't stop giggling. At first he'd hesitated about spying on her in his home. But it was her place of employment, after all. And on the coffee table was a baby monitor, and through its transistorized speaker came the sucking sound the baby made whenever it lay in innocent sleep and if the sitter was doing dope he'd fire her—as quick as he'd fired that fuckup at work.

Unless.... W. felt a stirring in his groin over the thought that he could do her right there on the couch. Right in front of the camera as the baby slept.... It's me or the narcs, baby!

White House Debriefing, 1998

Monica Lewinsky: Can I be Assistant to the President for Blow Jobs?
President William Jefferson Clinton: I'd like that.
—*The New York Times* and 1,273 other newspapers world wide, not including Internet coverage.

"You sly fox," he chuckled, sitting down with the warranty card of the new camera. *Name:*_____. As he waited for the sitter to show, he began to fill it out, warmed by how slick he'd already been at work, comparing the minute-by-minute operation log of the paper-grinders to the log of the pay phone in the employee lunch

room. Click-clack, just like that the trap snapped and he'd bagged the fuckup who'd been stealing flock to clog the toilet in the employee's break room.

Own a computer? Skis?... The list of questions was longer than a loan application. Everything is more complicated these days, he sighed, continuing. Between work and home, he had six places to check for messages.... Birthdays of Children: _____. Now why did they need to know that? For a moment he considered leaving the line blank. But if he didn't tell them everything they wanted to know, couldn't they void his warranty? *Tiffany*, he wrote in, *Age 10 Months*.

1826: President Thomas Jefferson sighed a dying breath, comforted by his life of public service, monumental enough to warrant carving a mountain into a likeness of his face even though his private life... Well, as he'd said about secrets when Lewis confessed his own improprieties with Shoshone squaws, that's what graves were for....

“Mr. W., could I have a ride home tonight?”

You sly old cock master.....

1998: DNA testing reveals that President Thomas Jefferson fathered children by his slave Sally Hemings.

Aberration Reports		
Region 0008		District 0389
Scoring Type: All Cashiers		
Number	Score	Title
Report 1	3	Cash Return/Sales
Report 2	3	Avg. Check Returns
Report 3	4	Returns to Same Acct
Report 4	3	Exchanges
Report 5	3	Post Voids/% Sales
Report 6	3	Cash Post Voids/Sale
Report 7	4	Post Voids/No Sales
Report 8	3	Post Voids/5 Trans.A
Report 9	4	Voids Employee Purch
Report 10	4	Transact. Voids
Report 11	3	Line Item Voids
Report 12	4	Price Modifications
Report 13	4	Sales Not Scanned
Report 14	3	% Sales Keyed
Report 15	4	% Credit Card Scan
Report 16	3	Gift Certificates
Report 17	4	Payouts
Report 18	2	No Sale Transactions
Report 19	2	Sign Off Transaction
Report 20	-	Cashier Profile

Back in the FBI, Luke had had teams to help him shadow suspects. One team would follow the rabbit while two others traveled up parallel streets. That way, if the rabbit turned, one of the other teams could pick him up without arousing suspicion and the teams would leap frog each other, taking turns being the shadow, or traveling a parallel route, waiting for the rabbit to turn their way.

Pouring over the drug inventory for Family Pharmacy, Luke felt an adrenaline rush similar to the one's he'd get on those hunts. Did you want to know which cashier worked slowest? It was all right there in the volume-against-time summary report. Were you more interested in which pharmacist filled the most Xanax prescriptions? Or who had last touch? Again, the numbers told the tale. No matter which way a rabbit dodged, their shadow would turn up in another parallel data stream.

Then suddenly the trail went cold. For weeks he'd been tracking cashier 00000501, Maria Martinez, following the money, a pattern beginning to emerge: often, a woman in some kind of usher's uniform would show up at her register with a prescription she'd gotten filled in pharmacy. But the pharmacy inventories showed no aberration. Then just when he asked the store manager to rotate the schedule to see if he could get any flags to pop by letting the data play out through a new configuration, it stopped.

Had he been spotted?

Back in the FBI, the only rabbit they ever lost was that spy for Airbus. Not shackled to the politics of purchasing committees, the rabbit's corporate-backed counter surveillance team had used the latest in de-encrypting scanners to trump their counter-counter-surveillance, outfitted with an old administration's government issue, and the first thing that occurred to Luke now was that he had stumbled onto a bigger, more sophisticated operation than one nineteen-year-old cashier.

Activity Aberration Scores		
Store	Cashier	Score
02830	00000501	35% *
02798	00000402	22%
03489	00000470	20%
04902	00000312	20%
03142	00000300	19%
02786	00000201	17%
03065	00000233	16%
03153	00000550	16%
03098	00000781	16%
03241	00000250	15%
02799	00000342	14%
02952	00000215	14%
03065	00000482	14%
03486	00000550	14%
02792	00000874	14%
02830	00000208	14%
02931	00000340	13%
03045	00000203	12%
02076	00000339	12%
02789	00000348	11%

In

Out

Huffing

Puffing loose hair from her face, her camera aimed at the mirrored ceiling. Pinned to the mattress by his weight, she squirmed for leverage, grimacing with the effort. If only she could roll him to the bottom, the picture would be of her bare ass and his face, and she'd have all the evidence his wife would ever need. Then the two of them would be free. Free forever....

Withdrawal.

Withdrawal.

Withdrawal.

J. sifted the ATM data and saw by the locations of his withdrawals where William Williams Jr. had traveled in Europe last summer. Lots of lunches at art museums. This month he'd been spending a lot of time at Memorial Hospital. And the Paradise Hotel.

As she worked, merging data bases, her mind wandered back to a marketing class she'd had as a sophomore. Sales of televisions had been originally stunted, they'd learned, because people were afraid that the TVs could be used to watch them. The class had snickered at that naïveté. But she now smiled at their own, the bit stream that came back from William Williams's digital TV allowing her to create a pointillist portrait of him out of what, how and when he watched, the bookmarks in his silicon memory—no porn, lots of golf—a gold mine of demographic information, his activity while surfing detailed enough to reconstruct even the movement of his eyes.

As a sophomore, such nakedness would have made her blush. But his home was her client's store, after all, at least while he was logged on, and she now understood that she was only helping him get the products he wanted. And anyway, no one could copyright their own name so what did he lose if she sold it to others? A double-click on *Daughter Tiffany* and the infant's file opened up, already two screens long.

1951— The Miracle of Television: Viewers from coast to coast are amazed at the God's-eye view offered by the first national broadcast—*See It Now*—bringing together on one screen both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Live!

Before Luke could turn on the lights in his own apartment, he saw that the apartment across the courtyard was lit up unusually bright. In darkness, he went to his window, not believing—

The window across the way had been stripped bare.

The man had moved out. Even the walls were bare. Luke couldn't remember what had hung on them, but there had been something, Indian dream catchers, family portraits, something other than the bare wall he could now see through the curtainless window.

Then the man appeared.

Paint roller in one hand, he was bending and straightening, painting the wall, flood lights in the emptied room making the swatches of red paint he laid down brilliant.

And he was naked.

1999— A God's Eye View: Intervention Specialists simultaneously monitor from a single "command center" hundreds of office cleaning crews, stock rooms, cashiers, customers, ticket booths, clerks, alleys and pedestrians scattered from coast to coast. *Westec, We're Automating Management.* 888-947-8110 (www.westecnow.com)

01010101001010101011110101101111100110101010111110010101010....
UPC codes streamed through bundled wires, transforming the slow proces-

sion of Granola, goat cheese and other groceries on the conveyor belt into multiple packets of information, their prices adding as on an abacus run at the speed of light, generating a personalized coupon for F., collating the purchases into a profile of F., reporting F.'s name back to a cat-food manufacturer, adding F.'s name to a mailing list for the health conscious—but then, as cupcakes broke the web of laser beams, taking it off again—setting a marker that would also drop from inventory F.'s organic apples for being too far off the great bulge in the bell curve of volume.

National Identity Card, she snickered, Thy name is VISA....

“I’d like to report that my sex is being harassed.”

Luke had gotten so used to seeing cashier 00000501 as a collection of data that he had to work to get over the disorientation of seeing her in the flesh. Profoundly alive. Eyes shining, hair a black no monitor could match, flesh tones without raster. A work of Nature. Each breast a ripe pear, between which a tiny gold man was wrecked, crucified from a neck that had been caressed by?—lightly brushing hair, and hair heavy with a shower’s wetness. Shoulders, tummy, knees: bone and flesh bearing the memory of exhaustion, and also goose-bumped suspense, her legs a wonder of utility and sensuousness. In black nylons. And a miniskirt, Ace-bandage tight, that made the Family Pharmacy smock she also wore into the habit of a corporate nunnery.

“Tell me about it,” he said, switching on a tape recorder under his desk, and she began what was obviously a prepared speech about David White, the store manager: how he kept wanting to have sex with her, how he had started by telling her that she had nice melons, that before he was married, the girls used to call him Sir White Lightening Rod, and Davie Cracklick. In his office, he went weepy because his wife didn’t appreciate him. He began calling her at home, telling her he could take care of her—in every way. In the break room he tempted her with promotions. Then he threatened to fire her, insisting that it was her choice and he kept threatening until finally she did it.

“You had sex with him?” Something didn’t sound right.

She began a dry cry. “Where else would I find a job with benefits?” Luke sat silent, an image of the doughy middle-aged manager and the young girl.... Then from nowhere, she continued, “Timo, my boyfriend is a technician in pharmacy. He’s not a thief. He’s just.... He’s going to college. He wants to be a doctor but a gang in his neighborhood, they make him steal for them. Every

week he got to pay their toll to get home. When the manager found out, he said he'd have Timo arrested and kicked out of school if I didn't have sex with him. So I did. But it wasn't enough. I had to keep doing it or he'd tell Timo. Then, he wants a piece of the drug money too. So he sets it up so that Timo fills the "prescriptions" of customers he sends him; I ring them up and he makes sure the records keep everyone clean."

"You were scrubbing the books right at the register?"

"It's all that motherfucker's fault. He made us do everything."

Luke leaned back, trying to figure out what didn't sound right. When he couldn't, he asked, "Will you wear a wire?"

Every night now, he skipped rope naked, lights on, while the hippie painted naked, lights also on.

Static, then the wet suck of sex....

He massaged his prick, one of the *Victoria's Secret* catalogs he regularly received open to buttercup panties. It had begun with the thrill of saying "buttercup panties" to the female operators who took orders. But then during one of these dates, he discovered that he could use the cordless phone to eavesdrop on neighbors. Then he got a scanner so he could zero in on active cell phones. Now he sat below the antenna he had strung across the ceiling of his living room to improve reception of the neighbor—which one was it?—who was into phone sex every Thursday at eight.

But this!— Moans became squishing, crosstalk, multiple connections—he sealed his ear to the receiver—the sucking continuing even as a fourth voice moaned, "O Willie, do me!"—

W. hated making love with the baby monitor turned on, the sucking transmitted by the baby in the next room a Viagra antidote. He suddenly had a horrible thought: Was the Candy Man selling him placebos?

Was that a death rattle? W. leaned in between the wires and bio-sensors that cocooned the hospital bed his father lay dying on, a moist suck coming from the tube in his throat.

Why couldn't he get organic apples from the store any longer? F. wondered.

How did my life become so murky, T. thought, breathing so heavily he sounded like that balding manager. Below, his girlfriend kept working, kissing and licking, still trying to suck some life into him even though he just knew he couldn't do it—not with that radio turned on.

To remove rebel General Savimbi, a cruise missile could be programmed to home in on and follow the transmission of a conversation as it travels from a communications satellite to his cell phone. —CIA report.

Wearing a wire was pure theater, Luke knew. The tapes he made would never stand up in court. But he wasn't a cop so didn't have to worry about that and employees were still somehow more moved by photos and other low-res cloud formations of their crimes than the hard-edged portraits that could be composed from ones and zeros.

He turned back to the fine-grained profiling program running on his laptop, Timo's life so crystalline in it that it was a thing of beauty.

J. thumbed through *Look*, glancing up from time to time at the alphanumeric filling her screen with the herky-jerky rhythm of a human typist. The cursor slid Ouija-board smooth to a new field, the profiler that she was monitoring using it in an office two floors down to compile data on a job applicant, one Fred C. Johnson, for Ever Ready Security. Along the bottom of the screen, a counter tracked keystrokes per minute as the woman applied various demographic slucers, massaging the data on 300,000 names. Fred's profile was blurry due to a scarcity of data, which seemed odd these days until M. called up his college files and saw that he had majored in being poor: i.e., philosophy. She skimmed a long list of books that he had paid fines on only after the college turned his account over to a collection agency. Weird stuff from ex-commie countries—Dostoyevsky, Kafka—countries that had recently become less secret but were still iffy. What was he applying for? She scrolled up to *Position: Night Watchman*. Did their warehouses ever store explosives?

1826—James Fenimore Cooper publishes *The Last of the Mohicans* under the name "A Gentleman from New York" because it would have been vulgar for his family's name to appear in the news.

Luke skipped rope faster, adrenaline kicking in—Tomorrow it would all go down, manager, cashier, pharmacy technician. He'd even coordinated the

police so they could grab their most regular customer—that girl in the video who was always dressed like an usher.

1996—Jenny Ringly, a junior at Dickenson College in Pennsylvania, sets up the *Jenny-Cam*, a camera that allows anyone to see into her dorm room 24 hours a day, whether she is doing homework, making out, not there, talking on the phone, taking a shower....

(now on-line at www.jennicam.org)

Catalogs for pre-assembled log-cabins.

The Utne Reader.... The slick catalogs that had begun to arrive since F. started using his charge card avalanched into his lap when he sat down at the kitchen table. A new John Denver CD played instead of real folk music; Robert Redford's Navaho Dream Catcher hung from the ceiling instead of the *Ojo de Dios* made by the wife of that Mexican at his old job—to watch over their machines, he recalled wistfully. When he'd been fired, Timo Sr. had given it to him. *Para suerte*. But it now lay where he had tossed it when he'd begun to paint, its shabby yarn sticking out from under slick brochures for organically-fed steaks.

The unexamined life is not worth living.
— Socrates, and www.homecams.com,
the site that lets you see inside 1,024
private homes....

He cradled his head. What a burlesque of himself he'd become, running up debt for junk instead of living off his charge card, as he had planned, to read. To write a little poetry. To take up the didjeridoo, even painting. The mural he'd begun on a wall of his living room wasn't even half finished: a cartoon landscape peopled by thousands of stick figures: cave dwellers and soccer teams wearing jet packs. Dervishes ascending into heaven. He'd wanted to create the mother of all landscapes. Of canyon vistas, but also of NASA-eye views of earth, travel posters to Holland, TV footage of suburban sprawl, Jackson Pollock's abstract *Summertime*.... So he'd rendered the sky as a nude woman, one breast the sun. The other breast a sun too. But between fell the shadow, and his Ur-landscape captured the essential no better than the words "bow wow" mirrored the sorrow of a dog. Which the Turks pronounce "how how." The Jews "huf huf." The Danish "vow vow." The French "wah wah." The Dutch "woof woof." The Italians "bow bow." The Thai "hong hong." The Koreans "mong mong." The Chinese "wang wang." The Swahili "wow wow...."

Then he'd run out of paint. And he didn't dare risk maxing out his card for more.

He picked up the classifieds again. How could he have gotten so far from the one thing he learned in college?—That the only honest man is a naked man. When a daily reminder?—

Looking out the window, a sickening thought occurred to him. Had he simply misread the dude across the courtyard as well? For weeks now, he'd been assuming that the naked rope jumping was an act of philosophy by an honest man, unafraid to exercise nude in the free air—like the ancient Athenians. But was it more base than that? Was it possible, even, that the dude was just coming on to him? He moved back into a shadow. Gratefully, there was no one across the courtyard now and he collapsed into his recliner to think.

He blew a mournful note from his didjeridoo. To be or not to be.... Hard to believe, what with the way everyone went around parading their thinks, that there once was no such thing as a soliloquy, that Shakespeare had to invent it, and F. longed for the solitude to think soliloquy thoughts instead of worrying about the rent.

1999: A multinational effort (code named Echelon) attempts to monitor all phone, fax and e-mail transmissions world wide and sort them by keyword and voice print.

Bus Drivers Wanted...

Again, the want ads offered no relief.

Ready-Men Now Hiring. No Experience Necessary....

If only he could find a dream job like he'd had as a philosophy student. Working in the bowels of an all-night bowling alley, he'd been able to live like a hermit, reading, and reading, *Don Quixote*, Russian novels—*The Overcoat*, Kafka—the only time he'd had to do anything was when one of the automatic pin setters got stuck. And even then he could usually fix it by rolling a ball down the gutter....

A classified suddenly grabbed F. by the short hairs. It was so obvious, he couldn't believe he hadn't thought of it before:

Wanted: Night watchman for midnight shift in warehouse....

...iffy reading habits; iffy credit; complaints to OSHA; fired for stealing, she wouldn't even have to tie into the data banks of urine analysis for this one.... Sure enough, the profiler that J. was shadowing typed, *Employer Information Services recommends that the candidate NOT be hired for the position of Warehouse Security Guard because he distinctly matches the following profile: Malcontent.*

But instead of going on to the next case, she milked her report for an extra thirty-five minutes.

The Ritalin wearing off, N. looked from the *meninas* in the painting to the bored expression of another museum guard—"Please, don't touch"—to the coy smiles of the *meninas*, to the tourists she was watching, to the back of the guard in the next salon, who could see the back of the guard in the next, and that guard seeing the guard after that and so on all around the museum until the guard in the salon behind her could see her back, and sure enough, when she turned around, there he was, looking at her.

The revelation gave her a chill, warning her, for some reason, to not stop by Family Pharmacy today on the way to her baby-sitting gig.

"We're ready to go, Luke," said the undercover narc. "You want us to take along these two as well?"

The cashier and the pharmacy technician cowered on the couch of the manager's office like the two scared kids that they were. Let them sweat a minute, Luke thought. Let them shit a brick. In a squad car outside was the manager—probably still screaming that he had been set up, that the little gold digger had wanted him to leave his wife, and when he wouldn't she said she'd get him. But Luke knew better. He had it on tape.

"I'll take care of them," he said at last and the technician went limp, whispering, "Thank you, thank you...."

"Suit yourself," the narc said. "If you have a change of heart, you know where to find us," and he waved a goodbye salute.

The kid buried his face in his hands but the girl sat upright, suddenly blinking back, expectant, as if it could have gone no other way.

Finally alone with them, Luke allowed himself the satisfaction of the moment's taut minimalist logic: bare office, metal office desk, single video monitor on the desk. And the rabbit. Outside, bell-clear skies; inside, clammy palms and the buzz of fluorescent lighting. He took a breath, then began: "There is something that people have that no one can take away. A gang can beat you up, steal your money. But even if they kill you, they can't take away this one thing." He paused for effect. There was none from the girl. "But you can give it away. You can give it away because that one thing is your reputation. Sometimes when we're young it's easy to make a mistake. You might want to do something later in your life, though, like go to med school—"

"I do!" the boy interrupted. "How did you?—" Recognition sobering his features, he turned to his girlfriend. She took his hand—patted it the way an older sister might quiet a child.

"Well," said Luke, "a conviction for stealing drugs would ruin that forever." Looking at the girl now, he continued. "We do what we think is right at the time, but later we see that it's very wrong. An older guy comes along, he takes you to a grand old hotel...." Then dropping a name the manager had sworn by, Luke finished, "Like the Paradise—"

The boy's head snapped toward his girlfriend. "You never went to the Paradise," he said, some bigger story flashing between them.

"Yeah," the girl protested, following another's lead for the first time, that high-strung tone that said, You ain't got nuthin' on me, copper, creeping into her voice.

For her benefit, Luke arched an eyebrow as if she'd just claimed that the earth was flat. He wanted to tell her of corpses, back in the FBI, with bruises on the backs of their hands that told how they had given their last trying to shield a face from blows; he wanted to tell her how even a field mouse bends the grass; how a person walking down a sidewalk leaves infrared hot spots; how e-mail could be recovered from a hard-drive that had been totally erased....

Instead, he began a slow show of stacking blank video cassettes on the desk, as he did whenever he didn't have any evidence. Often, just the sight of cassettes was enough to make the guilty ones confess—the ones, at least, who were basically good. Or at least still had a conscience, even if in a way, those tapes were their conscience.

As he suspected, the girl was basically a good kid. She fell silent when he switched on the monitor and remained mute as a saint, eyes transfixed in its blue glow. "There's nothing you can do that doesn't leave a trace of some kind," Luke continued, "and the memory of data banks is long, unforgiving, and world-wide. Wherever you go, whatever you do, no matter what you say, your digital shadow will always be there and believe me, not even philosophers can jump over their shadows."

Turning away from his girlfriend, the boy mumbled, "Maybe we're all living in glass houses."

Shadows long in a late summer sun, Luke practically skipped home, happy over how well everything had gone. True, the buyer, the usher, didn't show, but she was just a lagniappe anyway.

A wind shivered the trees that lined his street and he buttoned his collar. A futile gesture. But that was okay. A time for all seasons, autumn coming so gradually, if relentlessly, that a lot of people wouldn't even notice until some trees were bare.

As he entered the courtyard of his building, a new surveillance camera stared down at him and he couldn't help but smile.

One of the reasons his ex had left him was because he kept bringing the office home. But she would have been proud of the way he gave those two kids a second chance today, letting them resign.

Find out the location of this story's
author by going to the Global
Positioning Homepage
(www.nd.edu/~stomasul/where.html.)

Like the eyes in a painting, the gaze of the camera seemed to follow him as he came up the walk. It was installed because there'd been a rape in the courtyard a few months back, he knew, and it made him wonder why he had been so uptight about not caring he was being watched. Why had his ex been so uptight about him not being able to shut off his watching others? After all, this place, this courtyard, was his home too, wasn't it?

The micro lines of the camera looked absolutely millennial against the ponderous Victorian limestone and iron work of the rest of the building. A Hitachi C-U 24X. The same kind of camera that was used outside banks, and over the drive-up lanes of Taco Bells, aimed at customers as they ordered their burritos; it had a wider field of vision than the cameras they used in Family Pharmacy, mounted so that a customer's video double was the first thing that greeted him or her as they entered—unlike the dummy cameras that simply gave the appearance of watching. Its optics were coated—when the courtyard was bare in winter, the brightness of snow wouldn't white everything out; with 0.3 lux illumination, its circuitry would be hot enough to see by the sodium-vapor lights that flooded the courtyard at night; its weather-proof housing would allow it to operate in rain or summer's heat as reliably as those indoor cousins that watched people shop in the weatherless weather of malls; or work in factories, or play in parks, in hospitals...newborn infants or those dying under observation....

Anyway, Luke thought, only a schizo could be one person at work and another at home.

Then he was before the doorway that led to his neighbor's apartment.

While looking up at the camera, he had taken the path that led to the apartments directly across from his own. Realizing that he was before his

neighbor's vestibule, an urge came over him to get the guy's name from his mailbox.... Why hadn't he done it before?

He pulled open the door, heavy with leaded glass, and a motion sensor switched on a light inside the vestibule. Rows of locked mailboxes gleamed, burnished by generations of fingers. A matrix in brick and brass. Third floor, middle apartment.... A finger push and the doorbell would ring upstairs. Should he introduce himself? In a way, Luke realized, he had his neighbor to thank for making him see that he wasn't nuts. Remembering how preoccupied he'd been with seeing a shrink was like remembering another person: a nail-biter who had pined to regress to a life behind closed doors even though closed doors had become as quaint as the skirts Victorians once used to hide the legs of chairs.

It wasn't that there was something sneaky about what he did; rather everyone just did what they did in front of his eyes, in front of everyone's eyes. May as well curse the sun for making all grass grow.

Footfalls suddenly pounded down the steps; the inner door opened and a man burst into the vestibule. *The* man—the watcher, bowling shirt, long hair pulled back out of his eyes. In that instant of recognition, Luke saw in those eyes that he had also been recognized and that the man had also seen how wrong it was for them to be standing face-to-face. How doing so undermined...whatever it was that they shared—or at least—

Awkwardly, Luke stepped aside to let the man get his mail: high-gloss catalogs and a computer-generated letter that Luke couldn't help but notice—a pay stub?—from **Ever-Ready Watchmen**. Was the guy in the same biz? Was that why they both understood that seeing the other naked deserved no more notice than yesterday's weather? He wanted to say something, but everything that came to mind was too forced and before he thought to ask about the mural, the guy mumbled "Excuse me," and was bounding back up the stairs. Skinny hairy legs, flip-flops flipping....

Luke stood there a long time. If he turned to the names on those boxes, he realized, it would be harder to go home to his workout. And yet how could he not be curious about the man who watched him exercise naked? He drummed his fingers on the heavy outer door. Courtyard before, mailboxes behind. Was it just as well?

The building he stood in with its dark oak moldings, its doors opening onto doors, was built in another century. It was only much later, and gradually, that tenants had lost their taste for heavy drapery. That the privacy hedges

had been cropped to improve visibility from the street. That the night of the courtyard had been turned into halogen day....

He pushed into the open air. From where he stood he could see that the shades were up in not just his apartment, but in lots of apartments. A wall of windows. Through them he could hear a mournful, aboriginal *wa-waaa*—someone playing a didjeridoo?—then a man and woman having an argument. Or was it that poor slob on the *Real Cops Show*? The flicker of two or three other TVs played more momentous moments, no doubt: ex-commies pouring onto the techno-color side of the Berlin Wall. And smaller moments: secrets of incest blooming across the electronic skies of talk shows, masturbators, the overweight, adulterers, the lonely, the angry, the happy, the sad and other plain folks calling in from home, all of them going about their lives while he.... Cured, a shrink might say, if being normal only meant acting like your neighbors, and he took a step toward them. Home. For the first time in months he felt at home.

His shadow rose up to meet him, clinging to each step with a fierce, animal tenacity, though it was now being cast by the light that had switched on automatically as he approached.