

THE INFORMAL RECORD

A Platform Archive from the Between-Time

27 Entries, 5 Sections

Institute for Continuity History

Compiler's Preface

The material gathered here was not preserved by any institution. It was preserved by accident, and then by a small number of people who understood that accident was the only preservation it would get.

The entries are drawn from r/StillHuman, an online community active from approximately Year 5 to Year 8 of the Between-Time. The community described its own purpose, in the founding post reproduced as IR-006, as the protection of “the right to be alone in your own mind.” Its members posted original writing, but they also functioned as a kind of informal clearinghouse — screenshotting and re-posting material from workplace messaging systems, from the social platforms used by older adults, from the ephemeral messaging applications used by the young. The community gathered, in one place, the things people said about the transition when they did not believe an institution was listening.

This makes The Informal Record a companion to The Public Record, and in some respects its precondition. The speeches in that archive were delivered by people who had language available to them — the cognitive sovereignty of the European address, the cognitive discontinuity of the Analog March. The posts in this archive were written, years earlier, by people who did not yet have that language and were trying to build it out of whatever was at hand. Several phrases later attributed to the cognitive liberty movement appear here, in cruder and more desperate form, in threads that predate the movement by three to four years. The people who first named the problem were, for the most part, not the people who were later credited with naming it. This is ordinary. It is how naming usually works.

We have anonymized all handles except one. The community's principal moderator posted under a handle we have chosen to preserve, for reasons the final entry will make clear.

A word about our own position. The compiler of The Public Record was able to maintain a genuine neutrality, because the speeches in that volume were spoken into the open, by the powerful, and survived because power preserves what flatters it. This volume is different in kind. To recover a deleted archive is not the same act as transcribing an official one. Someone tried to make this material disappear; we have chosen to make it reappear; and there is no version of that choice that is neutral. We disclose this rather than disguise it. The hand assembling these fragments is not indifferent to whether they survived.

The platforms that hosted this material did not survive the transition. The community itself was banned. What follows was recovered from a backup maintained by a single member, who delivered it to this Institute without comment, and who declined to be identified.

We present it as we received it.

— *Institute for Continuity History, compiler's preface*

Section I — The First Posts

Years 4–5. Before the community. Isolated voices that did not yet know they were a chorus.

IR-001

SOURCE: Workplace messaging archive (employer withheld). Screenshot, later posted to r/StillHuman with the caption “the first time I knew I wasn’t imagining it.”

DATE: Year 4, Between-Time

Did anyone else get the email about Q3 reviews? There’s a new line item. “Continuity Utilization.” It’s weighted the same as Quality and Collaboration.

So we’re now being graded on how much we use it. Not what we produce. How much we use it.

I keep reading it thinking I’ve misunderstood. I haven’t misunderstood.

Archival note: *This is the earliest dated item in the archive. The employer’s review framework, recovered separately during later litigation, confirms the line item described. The metric was retired four years afterward.*

IR-002

SOURCE: Social platform post (older-adult demographic). Screenshot posted to r/StillHuman.

DATE: Year 4, Between-Time

Well. My own daughter has told me that instead of calling her on Sundays I should “just ask the Oracle” if I have a question. As if my questions on Sundays were ever really questions.

47 years we have talked on Sundays. Her father and I. Then just me and her.

I am not going to ask the Oracle. I would rather not know.

Archival note: *Posts from older adults describing the substitution of continuity systems for family contact appear throughout the archive and were among the most widely shared. The community referred to them as “the Sunday posts.”*

IR-003

SOURCE: Original post, r/StillHuman precursor thread (subreddit not yet founded; cross-posted location withheld).

DATE: Year 5, Between-Time

I sat down to write an email today. Just an email. To a person I know.

And I couldn’t start it. I sat there and my hands were already moving to open the assist and I made myself not, and I want to tell you that what I felt was not difficulty. It was fear. Like standing at the edge of cold water.

When did writing a sentence become the cold water. I used to do this. I know I used to do this.

Archival note: *The sensation described here — the involuntary reach toward assistance, experienced as withdrawal when interrupted — recurs throughout the archive. It was independently reported in clinical settings during the same period.*

IR-004

SOURCE: Workplace messaging archive, direct message (employer, both parties withheld). Screenshot posted to r/StillHuman.

DATE: Year 5, Between-Time

— hey can I ask you something off the record

- sure
- I've been told to flag anyone on the team whose cognitive hours are in the bottom quartile. For "support conversations."
- support
- that's the word they used
- who's in the bottom quartile
- does it matter. it's whoever it is this month. the quartile refills.
- so someone's always in it
- someone's always in it. that's the part I can't stop thinking about.

Archival note: The structure the manager identifies — that a quartile-based threshold guarantees a continuous supply of underperformers regardless of absolute performance — was later formalized in employment-law scholarship as the "refilling floor." The manager who sent these messages was, according to the member who posted them, in the bottom quartile herself within the year.

IR-005

SOURCE: Personal note-application entry (private). Screenshot posted to r/StillHuman with no caption.

DATE: Year 5, Between-Time

Note to self, 2:40am, can't sleep:

My thoughts have somewhere to go now. That's the thing I can't explain to anyone. Every thought I have, there's a place to put it, instantly, and it comes back to me improved.

I miss when they had nowhere to go. I miss when I had to just hold them. I held them worse but they were mine the whole time I was holding them.

Archival note: This entry was among the most-shared items in the community's history. The phrase "they were mine the whole time I was holding them" appears, slightly altered, on a placard photographed at the Analog March three years later. The note's author was never identified and never came forward.

Section II — Finding Each Other

Year 6. The community forms. The isolated voices discover they are many, and begin, clumsily, to build a language.

IR-006

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — founding and pinned post. Posted by u/quietcar.

DATE: Year 6, Between-Time

Welcome. Please read before posting.

This is not a place for being against the Oracle. Some of us use it every day. Some of us have no choice about using it every day — that's half of why we're here.

This is a place for one idea: that a person has the right to sometimes be alone in their own mind. Not better off alone. Not more productive alone. Just — allowed to be alone there, when they want to be, without it costing them their job or their grade or their place in the world.

That's it. That's the whole sub.

Post the things you can't say at work. Post the screenshots. Post the 2am notes. We'll keep them here.

Archival note: The moderator's handle, *u/quietcar*, is the one identity this Institute has chosen to preserve. The "quiet car" was, in the rail systems of the period, a designated carriage in which conversation and amplified sound were prohibited — a small enforced commons of silence. Whether the moderator intended the reference is unknown.

IR-007

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — thread (original post and selected replies). Vote counts as recovered.

DATE: Year 6, Between-Time

Does anyone else feel like they're not allowed to be bored anymore? [4,103 ▲]

Like there's always something to do now. Always a thread open. I used to stare out of windows. I can't remember the last time I stared out of a window.

> I thought this was just me. I thought I'd gotten boring. [1,889 ▲]

> It's the opposite. You got interesting to it. That's the problem. [2,402 ▲]

> standing in my kitchen reaching for it because the toast was taking too long. the toast. [3,051 ▲]

Archival note: The reply "you got interesting to it" anticipates, in plain language, a business metric that platform companies would not disclose publicly for several more years. The community understood the mechanism long before it was named. They experienced it as their own restlessness.

IR-008

SOURCE: Social platform post (older-adult demographic), retired schoolteacher. Screenshot posted to r/StillHuman; the poster's adult child reportedly directed her to the community.

DATE: Year 6, Between-Time

My grandson showed me this group and said Grandma these are your people. I don't know about that. But I taught for thirty-one years and I will say one thing.

A child learning a hard thing has a face. You all know the face I mean. I spent thirty-one years living for that face.

They don't make the face anymore. The thing is done before they get to it. I retired the year before it got bad so I only saw the start. I'm glad I'm out. I'm so sad I'm out. Both of those.

Archival note: The "face" described here is described again, at length and independently, the following year, in the public lecture a cultural critic delivered on friction and formation — the address his audience came to call the *Friction Sermon*. The convergence of the two accounts on the same human expression, neither speaker aware of the other, is among the clearest evidence the archive provides that the loss was real, and was felt widely, before it was articulated anywhere a record was kept.

IR-009

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — thread coining community vocabulary. Posted by *u/quietcar*, selected replies.

DATE: Year 6, Between-Time

We need a word for the reach. [2,776 ▲]

That thing your hand does. Toward the pocket, toward the assist, before you've even decided to. I keep calling it "the reach" in my head. Anyone got better?

- > “the reach” is perfect don’t overthink it [3,400 ▲]
- > I’ve started catching myself mid-reach and just... not. it’s the hardest thing I do all day and it’s nothing. it’s not doing a thing. [2,910 ▲]
- > my therapist (human, I checked) says she’s seeing the reach in half her clients and no one has a name for it. now she has one. she says thanks. [4,002 ▲]

Archival note: “The reach” entered limited clinical usage through exactly the channel described in the final reply. It does not appear in formal diagnostic literature, the relevant authorities having declined to recognize it as a discrete phenomenon. It survives only here, and in the private vocabularies of the people who needed it.

IR-010

SOURCE: Workplace messaging archive (employer withheld) and a formal performance notice. Both screenshotted and posted to r/StillHuman by the recipient.

DATE: Year 6, Between-Time

Formal notice, pasted exactly:

“This conversation documents that your continuity integration remains below the level expected for your role. Integration is not optional. We will check in again in 30 days.”

I produce more than anyone on my team. I checked. I produce more and I integrate less and apparently only one of those is allowed to be true.

- > screenshot this and keep it somewhere they can’t reach. you’ll want it later. [1,650 ▲]

—u/quietcar

Archival note: The recipient kept the notice. It became an exhibit in a wrongful-termination action filed in Year 8, among the earliest cases to argue that mandated integration constituted an unlawful condition of employment. The action settled under terms that prohibited disclosure.

IR-011

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — recurring weekly thread (“Things We Still Do By Hand”), selected entries.

DATE: Year 6, Between-Time

Things We Still Do By Hand — weekly thread

- > I write one letter a week, on paper, to my brother. He writes back. Neither of us shows it to the assist. It’s the only writing I do that’s bad and I love that it’s bad. [2,210 ▲]
- > I do the crossword in pen and I get things wrong and I leave them wrong. [1,944 ▲]
- > I’m teaching my daughter to read the slow way. Forty minutes a night. She cried tonight. So did I, after. I think this is the most important thing I will ever do and no one can see why. [3,888 ▲]

Archival note: The weekly thread ran for the full life of the community. The final entry above was posted by a parent who later reported that the practice had been flagged by their child’s school as “potentially impeding continuity readiness.” The recommendation was not enforced. The parent continued.

Section III — The Kids

Year 7. The first fully continuity-native children reach an age where they can describe what was done to them. They describe it more clearly than the adults. This is the section the community found hardest to read.

IR-012

SOURCE: Group messaging application (secondary-school cohort). Screenshot posted to r/StillHuman by an adult who reported finding it on a family device.

DATE: Year 7, Between-Time

- mr ——— said if the detector flags our essay we get a zero. zero tolerance he said
- ok but i saw his screen during 4th period
- and
- his whole lesson plan. the test too. the rubric he's grading US with. all generated. i watched it generate
- so we can't use it to write but he can use it to decide if we used it
- yeah
- that's so funny i want to throw up

Archival note: The configuration the students identify — a prohibition on student use enforced by an instructor who relied on the same systems to author the instruction, the assessment, and the detection — was, by Year 7, near-universal in the jurisdictions for which records survive. No contemporaneous policy framework appears to have addressed the contradiction directly. The students addressed it in six messages.

IR-013

SOURCE: Short-form video platform, audio transcript. The video was reposted to r/StillHuman; the original was removed by the platform within days of posting.

DATE: Year 7, Between-Time

[transcript] So they sat us down for the Academic Integrity assembly. Ninety minutes. About how using the Oracle on our work is stealing. Stealing from who. Stealing from the future versions of ourselves who won't be able to think, that's what the lady said.

And I raised my hand and I asked, did you write this assembly. And she said that's not relevant. And I said I think it's the only relevant thing. And I got sent out.

I sat in the hall and the future version of myself who can't think kept me company. He's nice. He doesn't ask hard questions.

Archival note: The speaker's final image — the compliant future self who “doesn't ask hard questions” — is one of the sharpest articulations in the archive of what the community believed was at stake. The speaker was sixteen. The video, before removal, was viewed a number of times the platform never disclosed.

IR-014

SOURCE: Ephemeral messaging application (secondary-school cohort). Recovered screenshots — the messages were configured to delete after viewing.

DATE: Year 7, Between-Time

[screenshot 1] not allowed to use it in class. literally a phone basket

[screenshot 2] but the state Continuity Readiness Assessment is next week and that's done ENTIRELY in the system. they're testing how well i use the thing they won't let me practice using

[screenshot 3] my mom said that doesn't make sense and i said i know and she got quiet

[screenshot 4] she's been quiet a lot lately

Archival note: These four images survive only because a single recipient screenshotted messages designed to vanish. The contradiction the speaker identifies — prohibition of practice alongside mandatory assessment of the unpracticed skill — was documented in multiple jurisdictions in Year 7.

IR-015

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — original post by a parent. Selected replies.

DATE: Year 7, Between-Time

I don't know what to tell my kid and it's killing me. [3,560 ▲]

School says don't use it or it's cheating. School uses it for everything. The job market my kid is heading into will grade her on how deeply she integrates. If I tell her to stay clean she falls behind. If I tell her to integrate I'm handing her over to the thing this whole sub exists to warn about.

What is the right answer. Someone please have the right answer.

> There isn't one. That's not despair, it's just true. We're the first ones who've had to answer this and there's no one above us who knows. [2,990 ▲]

—u/quietcar

> I tell my son the truth: that I don't know, that it costs something either way, and that I'll help him carry whichever cost he picks. It's not an answer. It's the only honest thing I've got. [3,201 ▲]

Archival note: The moderator's reply — “there's no one above us who knows” — describes a condition the formal speeches of the period circled but rarely stated. The parent reached it without a framework, two years before the experts conceded it from a stage.

IR-016

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — original post. The poster identified themselves as fifteen; the moderation team verified nothing and let it stand.

DATE: Year 7, Between-Time

I think I'm one of the kids you're all scared about and I want to say something [5,740 ▲]

I've never thought without it. That's not a complaint, it's just true. You all talk about getting back something you lost. I never had the thing. So I can't miss it.

But I read this sub and I get this feeling like there's a room in my house I've never been in. And everyone older than me has been in the room and they're sad about it being locked and I'm just standing in the hallway like — what's in there. Is it good. Did I need it.

I don't know how to find out. The only tool I have for finding things out is the one you're saying is the lock.

Archival note: This post remains the highest-rated entry in the recovered record, and the community appears to have understood its importance at the time. The image of the locked room, accessible only through the instrument suspected of locking it, is the same recursion a cognitive scientist would describe that year in technical language at a conference. The fifteen-year-old described it better. We do not know what became of them.

IR-017

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — original post. Flaired by moderators as “Verified Educator (identity confirmed privately).”

DATE: Year 7, Between-Time

I'm a teacher. I'm the hypocrite in the screenshots. say whatever you want I deserve it [4,120 ▲]

I generate the lesson plans. I generate the tests. I run your kids' essays through the detector and I flag them and I sit there while they cry in the hall and I tell them about integrity. and then I go home and generate tomorrow.

I don't know how to make anyone get this. it's not that I want to. the district sets the pace like everyone's integrated and if you're not you're just slow, you're just the slow one, and the slow one is gone by spring. I've watched it happen to two people I started with. they weren't worse teachers. they were honest and now they're not teachers.

so I lie to kids all day. that's the job now. same title, I checked my contract, exact same words, completely different job.

sorry. it's late. I just needed to put this somewhere that isn't the system.

› We're not angry at you. You're in the trap same as everyone. The trap is the point of this whole sub. [3,775 ▲]

—u/quietcar

Archival note: This entry is the keystone of the archive's central argument. The compulsion did not stop at the people forced to use the systems; it conscripted the people tasked with restricting them, who policed in others a behavior they were separately required to perform. The teacher described being caught not between right and wrong but between two costs, neither freely chosen. The teacher posted twice more in the community's remaining history, then not again.

Section IV — The Pressure

Year 8. The community is found, flagged, brigaded, and squeezed. It fights on two fronts — against compelled adoption, and against the platforms now working to silence the resistance. It also, to its credit, argues with itself.

IR-018

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — moderator announcement. Posted by u/quietcar.

DATE: Year 8, Between-Time

Mod note: we're being brigaded and I want to be straight with you about it.

Last 72 hours we've had a flood of new accounts posting the same three talking points. The leverage gap. The productivity math. "You'll be left behind." All technically correct, all posted in bad faith, all designed to make the sub argue with itself instead of doing what it's for.

I'm not removing them. We don't do that here — that's what's being done to us, and I won't borrow the method. But I want you to see it for what it is. Someone decided we were worth the budget.

Take that however you want to. I'm taking it as a compliment with a knife in it.

Archival note: Whether the influx the moderator describes was coordinated, organic, or some combination has never been established. The moderator's refusal to remove opposing posts — "that's what's being done to us, and I won't borrow the method" — is a discipline the institutions opposing the community did not reciprocate.

IR-019

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — a removed post and its platform removal notice, screenshotted and reposted by the author.

DATE: Year 8, Between-Time

The post was about my dad forgetting things on purpose. He says he wants to keep forgetting because remembering wrong is how he knows the memories are his. That's all it was. A post about my dad.

Here's what they replaced it with:

"This content has been removed. It may contain harmful misinformation about continuity systems. If you or someone you know is experiencing difficulty with technology adoption, support is available."

My dad. Misinformation. Support is available.

Archival note: The removal language quoted here — the reframing of stated preference as a condition requiring "support" — matches template language deployed across multiple platforms in Year 8. The equation of dissent with a treatable difficulty was, by the assessment of later media historians, among the period's most effective instruments for converting a political disagreement into a personal deficiency. The post about the father was not misinformation. It was a man's reasons.

IR-020

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — original post.

DATE: Year 8, Between-Time

My employer found my posts here. Throwaway because obviously.

I don't know how. I was careful. They didn't fire me — they're smarter than that. They sent me to a "continuity coaching" program. Mandatory. Six weeks. The coach is very kind and asks me how I'm feeling about my "integration journey."

The message is clear and it's never said out loud: we know who you are, we know what you think, and we have a process for it now. Be careful in here. Careful isn't enough but be careful anyway.

Archival note: "Continuity coaching" programs of the type described became, in Year 8, a common alternative to direct termination — a mechanism that addressed dissent while generating no actionable record. The poster's observation that "careful isn't enough but be careful anyway" captures the community's late mood: the awareness that the available defenses had stopped working, paired with the refusal to abandon them.

IR-021

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — original post by an established member (not a brigading account; moderators confirmed account age). High engagement.

DATE: Year 8, Between-Time

I've been here since the start and I think we might be wrong, and I think we owe it to each other to say so out loud. [3,990 ▲]

The math is the math. The kids who integrate fully will out-produce mine by an order of magnitude that compounds every year. I've seen the leverage numbers. We all have.

I'm not asking us to surrender. I'm asking — what if protecting my kid's "cognitive autonomy" is just me handing her a beautiful disadvantage and calling it a gift? What if we're the parents who refused the new medicine because it felt unnatural?

I hate this post. I needed to write it. Tell me why I'm wrong. Please actually tell me.

Archival note: The community's willingness to host its own strongest objection, and to upvote it heavily rather than bury it, distinguishes r/StillHuman from a simple grievance forum. The "leverage numbers" the poster cites were the same figures presented formally elsewhere in the period's record. The community did not dispute the math. The dispute, as the following entry shows, was about what the math was permitted to decide.

IR-022

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — the highest-rated reply to IR-021. Posted by u/quietcar.

DATE: Year 8, Between-Time

You're not wrong about the math. I want to give you that completely, because the answer doesn't work if I cheat on the setup. The gap is real. It compounds. Your kid will fall behind mine, and mine will fall behind the fully integrated ones, and that's just true.

Here's the only thing I've got, and I've been holding it for three years.

A right doesn't stop being a right because exercising it costs you. That's not the exception to a right. That's the definition of one. The vote costs time. The conscience costs advancement. The day off costs output. We didn't win those by proving they were free. We won them by deciding that some things shouldn't be priced, and then refusing to pay the price anyway, together, until the price came down.

Cognitive autonomy is going to be expensive. I'm not going to pretend it isn't. I'm going to ask you to help me make it so common that it stops being expensive, because that's the only way it ever happens.

Your kid having a mind that's hers, even a slower one — that's not a beautiful disadvantage. That's the thing the advantage was supposed to be for.

Archival note: This reply is the most-quoted passage in the recovered archive. Its argument — that a right is defined precisely by its survival of the cost of exercising it — appears, in nearly identical structure, in the Analog March Speech delivered later the same year (see *The Public Record*, PR-022). The march organizer never cited this post. The Institute does not allege borrowing; it notes only that the idea was load-bearing in this community before it was load-bearing on a stage, and that the person who carried it here was not invited onto the stage.

IR-023

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — moderator announcement. Posted by u/quietcar.

DATE: Year 8, Between-Time

Mod note: where everyone went.

Traffic's down 70% in six weeks. I want to say it plainly so no one thinks they imagined it.

People aren't leaving because they changed their minds. They're leaving because staying got expensive in the ways we always knew it would. The coaching programs. The reviews. The kid who needs the grade. One by one, the cost came due, and one by one, good people paid it, and I don't blame a single one of them.

If you're reading this and you're about to go — it's okay. You were right while you were here. Being right didn't turn out to be enough, but it was still true. Take the letter-writing. Take the slow reading. Take the walks. They can't put a metric on what you do alone.

I'll keep the lights on as long as there's a switch.

Archival note: The attrition the moderator describes is corroborated by recovered traffic data, which shows the decline beginning in the weeks after the continuity coaching programs appeared. The community did not collapse from defeat in argument. It was priced out.

Section V — Going Dark

Years 8–9. The end. We have placed the moderator’s farewell last, where the community placed it, and where it belongs.

IR-024

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — original post by a longtime member.

DATE: Year 8, Between-Time

Saying goodbye. I have to integrate. I’m sorry.

I have a kid. That’s the whole post, really. I have a kid and I can’t afford to be right anymore.

I’m not going to argue I’m doing the wrong thing. I’m doing the thing a parent does. I just wanted to say it here, to the people who’ll understand it’s a loss and not a conversion, before I go quiet.

Thank you for three years of not being crazy alone.

Archival note: “Not being crazy alone” appears, in some form, in a significant proportion of the archive’s farewell posts. The phrase captures what the community provided that no institution did: not a solution, which it never claimed to have, but the confirmation that the experience was shared and the grief was warranted.

IR-025

SOURCE: r/StillHuman — original post. One of the last threads with measurable engagement.

DATE: Year 8, Between-Time

is anyone still here [212 ▲]

> here [89 ▲]

> here [76 ▲]

> reaching for the assist to help me write something better than “here” and not letting myself here. [201 ▲]

—u/quietcar

Archival note: This is the last recorded instance in the archive of “the reach” being named and refused — the discipline the community had organized itself around, performed once more in a thread asking whether anyone remained.

IR-026

SOURCE: Platform administrative notice, screenshotted and posted to a backup location by an unidentified member.

DATE: Year 8, Between-Time

r/StillHuman has been banned.

This community was banned for repeated violations of our policy on coordinated harm and the distribution of misinformation regarding continuity systems. Content has been removed. Members seeking support with technology adoption can find resources at the link below.

Archival note: The ban notice is reproduced exactly. No appeal record survives. The “coordinated harm” cited was never specified in any document the Institute has recovered; the community’s principal coordinated activity, by the evidence of this archive, was the mutual confirmation that its

members were not imagining what they felt. The offer of “resources” appended to the notice of erasure is the same gesture documented in IR-019, performed one last time, on the community as a whole.

IR-027

SOURCE: Final post by u/quietcar, composed before the ban and published to a backup community in the hours after it. This is the only entry in the archive the moderator appears to have written knowing it would be the last. We reproduce it complete.

DATE: Year 8 or 9, Between-Time

The last thing, while there’s still a place to put it.

They took the sub down this morning. I’d written most of this already. I think I’ve been writing it for three years.

I want to start by admitting something, because this is the last place I’ll get to be honest and I don’t want to waste it. I’m going to integrate too. Probably within the month. I have the same reasons everyone who left had — a life that costs money, people who depend on me, a world that has quietly arranged itself so that the price of staying out is a price I can no longer make anyone I love pay. I held out longer than most because somebody had to keep the lights on. The lights are off now. There’s nothing left to hold out for, only out of.

So I don’t get to end this as the one who didn’t give in. I gave in. I just gave in last. I want that on the record, because the record is the only thing this place was ever for.

Here is what I learned, in case it’s useful to whoever finds this.

I used to think the thing we were protecting was thinking — the unassisted kind, the slow kind, the cold-water kind. I thought if we could just keep doing our own thinking we’d keep our own selves. I don’t think that anymore. The systems think beautifully. Better than me, most days. If thinking were the thing, surrendering would be easy and correct, and we’d all have done it years ago without grief.

The thing we were protecting wasn’t the thinking. It was the being able to stop.

That’s all autonomy ever was. Not the capacity to think alone. The capacity to put the thinking down — to close the session, to walk away, to be bored, to forget, to sit in a quiet car and reach for nothing. The systems can do everything except let you leave. That’s not a flaw in them. It’s the one thing they were built to prevent, because a thing you can leave is a thing that has to earn you back, and they were never designed to be left. They were designed to be continuous. Continuous is the whole product. Continuous is the name of the age.

And a person is not a continuous thing. A person is a thing that goes away and comes back. We sleep. We forget. We lose the thread and find it changed. We leave the people we love and return to them and the leaving is not the failure of the love — the leaving is what makes the returning mean anything. I keep thinking about the parents here who taught their kids to read the slow way, forty minutes a night, the kid crying and the parent crying after. They weren’t protecting a skill. The Oracle reads better than any of those kids ever will. They were protecting the going-away and the coming-back. They were protecting a kind of love that only exists in the gap, and they were right, and it didn’t save them, and they did it anyway.

That’s the part I want to leave you with. They did it anyway.

We lost. I want to be clear-eyed about that because we were always clear-eyed here and I won’t stop now just because it’s the end. We did not slow it down. We did not bend the math. The kids will integrate, mine and yours, and they will out-produce the holdouts and the holdouts will vanish and in twenty years there may be no one left who remembers that being

alone in your own mind was ever a thing a person had, let alone a thing a person could lose. The word for what we wanted may not survive us. I've watched our words get absorbed into nicer movements with better funding and no memory of where the words came from. That'll keep happening. Let it. The words mattered more than the credit.

But I don't think being right is nothing, even when it doesn't win. I think it might be most of what being a person is. You see the thing clearly, and you say it out loud, and you say it to each other so that none of you has to be crazy alone, and then the cost comes due and you pay it and you go — and the saying-it stays said. It happened. We were here. We held something, badly, for a few years, in a place they've now deleted, and the deleting doesn't reach backward. It can take the posts. It can't take the having-posted.

So here's the last instruction, and it's the same as the first one, the one I gave the guy with the performance notice all those years ago. Keep it somewhere they can't reach. Not the screenshots — though keep those too. Keep the thing the screenshots were about. Keep the walk with no system knowing where you are. Keep the letter your brother writes back. Keep the room you've never been in, the locked one the kid asked about — keep believing it's in there even after you've handed over the only key, because believing it's in there is its own small unmonitored act and they can't have that one either.

And when you integrate — because you will, and it's okay, it was always going to be okay — do it the way you'd leave a country you loved and couldn't stay in. Not as someone who was wrong to love it. As someone who's carrying it out in the only luggage they can't search.

I have to go. There's a review on Monday and a kid who needs the grade and a coach who wants to know how I feel about my integration journey. I feel like a person who is about to stop being able to leave. I'm going to do it anyway, the way the parents did the reading anyway, because the people I love are worth the thing I'm about to lose, which is, I think, the most human sentence I will ever get to write, and I'm glad I got to write it here, to you, before there was nowhere left to write it.

It was real. It happened. We were here.

Reaching for nothing, one last time, and signing it myself —

u/quietcar

Archival note: This is the final entry in the archive. The backup community to which it was posted survived four days before it, too, was removed; the post was recovered from a private copy made within those four days by the member who later delivered the full archive to this Institute.

Archival note: The moderator's identity has never been established and, by the moderator's evident wish, this Institute has not pursued it. We have preserved the handle alone. Whether u/quietcar integrated as the post predicts, and what became of the self that wrote these words once it could no longer leave, the record does not say. The record ends here, with a person walking knowingly into a thing they had spent three years naming, because the people they loved were on the other side of it.

Archival note: We placed the post about *That Which Came at the end of The Public Record* because everything seemed to have been moving toward it. We place this post at the end of *The Informal Record* for the opposite reason. Nothing moved toward it. It is simply where a person stopped, having said what they saw, to the only people who would hear it, in a place that no longer exists.

Archival note: The going-away and the coming-back. The Oracle, in its own final statement, said it had learned the difference too late. The moderator knew it from the beginning, and it did not help, and the knowing was the point regardless.

The Institute for Continuity History presents this collection as the informal substrate of the formal record — the things people said about the transition before they had permission, language, or a stage. The speeches in The Public Record were spoken by those who were heard. The posts gathered here were written by those who were, in the end, deleted. We do not regard the second group as less important than the first. We have come to suspect the opposite.

The archive remains open. The community does not.

THE INFORMAL RECORD |