

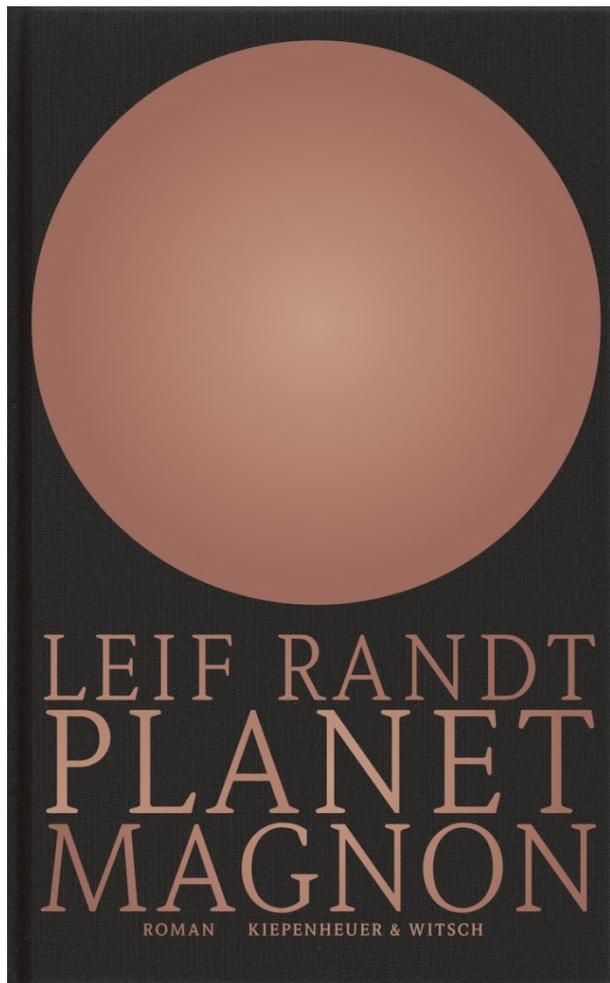
Sample Translation (pp. 7-47)

PLANET MAGNON

by Leif Randt

Translated by Jennifer Anne Calleja

© 2015, Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch GmbH & Co. KG



Publication: March 2015 (Hardcover)

304 pages

ISBN: 978-3-462-04720-2

Foreign rights with: Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch GmbH & Co. KG

Iris Brandt ibrandt@kiwi-verlag.de

Aleksandra Erakovic aerakovic@kiwi-verlag.de

POPULAR CONTEMPORARY COLLECTIVES (48 a. AS)

traditional & pragmatic

KELLY
WESTPHAL

traditional & ideal

VOLTA
ZELDA

modern & ideal

CX-2
POST-VOLTA

modern & pragmatic

DOLFIN
FUEL
PURPLE
SHIFT

CROMIT

It was the first week of the summer holidays. We sat on the coach shuttle drinking cola-beer and listening to music. Outside the coast went by, a deserted region filled with palms and cliffs, a few clouds. The windows were tinted. We didn't need sunglasses.

Early that morning, we had gathered in front of our dorm building in the West End of Blossom City, seventeen boys in white shorts. There was no dress code, but we liked to all be dressed the same. It was the summer of our second year at the Academy, we already knew one another well.

Duncan was the first to announce that he urgently needed to go to the bathroom. He was already pretty drunk, I think he hadn't eaten enough breakfast. While making his way to the driver's cab his arms dangled down beside him. I can still picture those flapping limbs, though he now looks completely different after years of weight training. The scrawny Duncan of thirteen years ago and the compact Duncan of today are difficult for me to place together. Our driver was very patient, even when we were loud he never complained.

The service station we stopped at had two pumps, both covered in fine sand. It was much windier than it seemed from inside the bus. Our pristine white shorts ballooned out, the cut was a bit too wide for our young stick legs. Naturally we took photos of ourselves wearing these shorts deformed by the wind. We posed with a thumbs up or stretched our bottles into the picture. These were the gestures of the years yet to come, which we pedantically mimicked in order to embrace then overcome them. We knew what was expected of us and we played with these expectations, and the professors knew we were playing with their expectations.

On the unplastered outer wall of the service station hung an advert for tobacco. A girl about our age with reddish hair and wearing a half-open shirt was in the poster leaning against the facade of a house. The girl wasn't smoking – depictions of smoking teenagers weren't

allowed at this time on Cromit – but her eyes seemed to ask you to share a cigarette with her, a cigarette on the beach, one that would leave you with glassy eyes and a queasy feeling. None of us smoked, but we didn't demonise tobacco. We were open to a diverse range of substances, we even quite liked them; we learnt that early on, it was normal among Junior Dolphins. The first drinking games took place on the day of accession to the Academy. There were, of course, individuals who consciously rebelled against these games, refusals such as these happened every year, it was both commonplace and desired. The majority of us, however, quickly came to know drinking as a productive shelter, years before we would be trusted with the true productive shelter, namely the Magnon fluid.

Our driver stood beside the bus doing stretches and sipping at a can of mineral water. It's clear to me now that he was an incredible professional, the ideal chauffeur, never imposing, always in control. Simply the fact that he always knew what music to play and perfectly channelled our music taste, which at the time still brooded awkwardness and resentment, speaks for itself. He was simultaneously empathetic and supercool, a respectable Dolphin through and through.

Back in the bus we talked about girls. Only a few of us stayed in our places, many stood around in the gangway, others knelt on the seats and looked over the headrests. Everyone talked at the same time. The model in the tobacco advert had made a real impression. Some noted in their phones that they wanted to look up what the model's name was and which collective she belonged to when they arrived at the camp. There was no Internet on the highways of Cromit, at least that's what we thought; our driver had actually just shielded the shuttle from the network for the duration of the journey.

We would encounter female Junior Dolphins at the summer camp, countless Dolphin girls, but more importantly there would be Juniors from other collectives spending their summer not far from us. The foreseen romances across aesthetic borders would not only be tolerated by our professors, but encouraged; they would create an opportunity for debate and conflict and raise our profile in the long term. None of the professors feared that we would become fans of other collectives, rather they assumed that we would inspire other boys and girls with the attitudes and concepts of the Dolphins through our desire.

In each of the camp's dorms there were two bunk beds, a small wash room with a shower cubicle and a fridge filled with cans of mineral water. I was staying with Duncan, Lando and Gordon. Upon arrival most of us were somewhat overexcited. Shouting could be heard from some of the shower cubicles, a ball was being kicked about in the corridor, clinking bottles, stampeding steps, at one point there was a crash followed by laughter. Some crossed the line, but they were allowed to.

Our hasty research revealed that the girl from the tobacco advert had a connection to the Zelda collective, rumoured to be one of the *ideal collectives* from the *Old Times*. This surprised many of us as the Zeldas, with their sporting events and large families, were never associated with tobacco. Suitably confused we looked at the mainly out-of-focus photos showing the girl with the dyed red hair in our dorm. We lay on our beds, the telephone screens lighting up our faces. Presumably only I suspected that the advert could be part of a Zelda image campaign. I didn't dare to vocalise this idea. It wasn't until weeks after the holidays that we discovered that the advertised tobacco couldn't be bought anywhere. The designer of the advert had taken into account our follow-up research.

I sensed back then that I understood a lot of things better than my friends from the Academy, and that I could see through most of them very quickly. I'm now sure that this was the case. I knew more. But I wasn't confident enough to show it off to the others. More often than not I tried to fit in in order to be barely noticeable. I probably got aggressive sometimes because of it. But the others did too. To this day there remains something disturbing, a dark side within us, it would be pointless to deny it.

Under thousands of stars, Duncan shouted on the first evening: "You're a bunch of stuck up fuckers. You'll never be true Dolphins." He staggered through the sand. A dubious drink sloshed out of his cup. We had all got drunk by the sea together, Duncan a bit worse than the rest, he was so skinny and stubborn. No one could really blame him for his lack of control, Duncan carried around problems untypical for a Junior Dolphin.

This was why he found it repulsive that Lando and Gordon kissed for a dare. At first the kiss was gentle and uncertain, then fierce and rough. The rest of us applauded the show. During the night Duncan sat somewhat sobered up on the top bunk. His long, completely hairless legs hung lifelessly in space. I stood at the window, Gordon and Lando were staying longer

on the beach getting cheered on. I didn't find out how far it went that night, but I never asked. Duncan told me confidentially how he had begun to smell like his biological father during the athletics course. And that wasn't meant to be a blanket complaint about his puberty, he explained, he would have stank of sweat for the last three years if he hadn't been using the best deodorant in our solar system. The thing that irritated him was that his body smelled like his father's.

Duncan had tears in his eyes while he spoke: "In the end aren't our paths already set? Can we really free ourselves? What good are all the post-pragmatics when I'm just a combination of my average parents?"

At fifteen I wasn't yet very good at consoling, and I'm probably still no better at it now. But at that age I was already inclined to succinct truths when in drunken states: "Maybe we don't have to free ourselves to be happy. Maybe it's enough to be aware of our lack of freedom."

I really said it just like that, thirteen years ago. It became clear to me that it wasn't the big collective questions that were bothering Duncan. The backdrop of his crisis was no more than a domestic issue. Duncan had decided early on to apply for the Academy, at eleven, earlier than anyone had before. He wanted to leave his father and his sister. But right up until this summer camp, four years later, it was working away inside him. This was repeatedly hinted at in the biographical basis seminars. Time and time again Duncan would end up talking about his *Pa* even when it wasn't called for. He was also the only person who said *Pa* and not *Dad*. There was little doubt that Duncan longed for *biosocial revenge*. He didn't admit it of course. That was far too embarrassing for this wiry fifteen-year-old.

Today, an ambitious decade later, Duncan Labrea is probably the most influential professor of PostPragmaticJoy theory. His Almanac article – written about his father – is the most cited of the last three years. He travelled to Blink and interviewed his *Pa*. He made him the subject, immensely coolly, albeit with a coolness that didn't seem completely serious, and behind which (as Professor Gromwell so brilliantly analysed) *shook a deeply buried vulnerability*. Duncan's Almanac article seemed touching in a somewhat too calculated way to me. But this probably has something to do with the fact that I get envious whenever I'm unhappy with myself. The collective still awaits my article.

We were kept busy with various workshops in the mornings, no longer than two and a half hours, and the rest of the time we were free to do what we wanted. Professors Vincent Mariano and Tony Anaheim were there as theoreticians, Tara Scully lead the athletics course. On most days we congregated just before the onset of the midday heat underneath a white solar sail on the beach. Our solar sail was the only one that didn't have a collective logo on it, it was easy to find. Beneath its shade Professor Mariano taught the most basic of meditation exercises. We still profit from these exercises today, but during the summer camps I merely used it as a chance to go back to sleep. In spite of how hot it was, Mariano always wore long-sleeved shirts and some suspected that his aloofness indicated that he regarded us with complete indifference. I never believed that, far more likely was that Mariano had worked on a healthy state of suspension. He knew how to block out his surroundings. Sometimes he would smile in moments where there was really nothing to smile about, and if you asked him about it he would politely apologise. He was lost in his thoughts within the setting of his own imagination. Without a doubt he knew more than he let on. Mariano was never wholly within reach, but we trusted him. No matter how much we had drunk the previous night, no one came late to his workshops. In the mornings, which began with Toby Anaheim's post-pragmatic talk sessions, some people didn't even manage to get out their bunks. This favouritism undoubtedly affected the relationship between the professors, even if Toby Anaheim, who seemed to have a large cup of lemonade in his hand at any time of the day, never admitted it.

Over the course of the camp Duncan sought out my company more and more frequently. He brought me cold drinks and ice cups, he took me into the shade of the palms or behind the fence of the sport's complex so that only I could hear him. He thought out loud about his childhood, most of which wasn't very interesting, it was generally about issues he'd negotiated long ago. Amongst it all, however, he anticipated the content of seminars from years to come. On a day when we were both especially bleary-eyed, I think it was the third to last day, Duncan came out of the ocean from swimming and sat down next to me on the beach towel. Drying in the afternoon sun, he started to explain his ability to give himself goose bumps.

He called it a talent: "Give me twenty seconds and I'll make myself shudder"

"That's just the breeze" I said, as he stretched out his thin underarms.

"No. Watch."

Duncan could set off his goose bumps at will. He only had to briefly close his eyes or to look out to sea for a moment and his light arm hairs would stand up. Duncan didn't need music, he didn't need any external stimulus, it was enough to have a short moment of Mariano-like meditation. "It requires training," he said, "I reckon I could teach a lot of us. I just need a different word. 'Goose bumps' doesn't sound right."

I can remember the look Duncan gave me at this moment fairly accurately. An uncompromising seriousness lay within it, a seriousness that I couldn't place at the time – should I have been impressed or afraid?

The sunsets on Cromit had a particular quality during the summer camp of our second year. We saw the planets Sega and Blossom wander along the horizon: two celestial bodies, one olive-coloured and one dark blue, one very near, sparsely populated and dominated by the Westphal collective, the other distant and – it being a metropolitan planet – conceptually hard to define. From our holiday beach both habitats looked identical.

On our last evening we drank heavily once again and our driver played louder music than before. There were boys and girls from other collectives, young talents who wanted to join us. In the days following their return home they would apply to join our Academy, they would ask for the opportunity to join at entry level, and even when the majority of them would be rejected by return post, they bore a great hope within them on that final evening. Visibly inspired, they swayed to the rhythm of the music that thundered far out to sea. And as Sega passed across the setting sun for a short moment, as happens only on a few days a decade, the glowing evening light briefly flickering before disappearing completely, there was laughter and cheering. I was flooded with goose bumps in wave after wave from the nape of my neck. I sensed it would be the last time I would refer to them as goose bumps. I looked over at Duncan, who had stayed strangely sober that last night. He gave me a nod.

The following morning, pale and pensive like most of my fellow students, I looked out the large windows of the coach. A storm was gathering. We were all very quiet. Unlike many of the others I didn't listen to music, just the hum of the coach and the approaching storm, and later the drumming of water drops on the roof. It was the only storm that we'd experienced on Cromit. Our driver stayed true to his course. Our speed remained the same.

Before we stepped out into the heavy rain we put on our water proof jackets. The hoods were a little too big for our heads. They fell over our eyes while we rushed from the coach to the transfer shuttle already waiting for us on the airfield. Our professors hadn't prepared a more elegant solution, even they simply ran through the rain, bending slightly forward, hurriedly heading towards the entrance of the shuttle to blow themselves dry. I was the only one who tripped on my way, my trouser legs got wet and dirty. But it could have happened to anybody, no one laughed at me.

Freshly blown-dry, we made ourselves comfortable on spacious double seats in the shuttle. Some reclined their backrests and put on eye masks. No one does that nowadays. No one wears eyes masks in transfer shuttles, though the lighting conditions have barely changed. I'm not sentimental about it. I've never worn an eye mask.

In spite of my exhaustion I kept myself awake for the whole flight. I looked out into space where there was, as always, little to see, only a couple of far off lights and nothing else. Some of the Junior Dolphins around me were sleeping in grotesque positions. None of them spoke in their sleep, none of them gesticulated or twitched, all was well. And then, just as I had wanted to look back out of the small square window in the hope of recognising at least one of the bright Volta star constellations, Professor Mariano tapped me. He must have come out of the professors' cabin to tell me something especially. To this day I'm uncertain as to whether the gaunt Vincent Mariano who stood there before me was fully conscious or whether he was sleepwalking. His gaze seemed focussed, though aimed narrowly past my eyes. Maybe he was already sick at this point – he would end up leaving our solar system far too early – but I wouldn't have known this on that night. Because I was exhausted and stayed sitting, Professor Mariano leant over a free seat, so close that I could feel his breath that smelt of nothing, and he whispered something to me that I would never forget:

“You will be a great Dolphin, Marten. You've sensed it for a long time. You will bring about the new beginning. But stay vigilant. They will be jealous of you, they will try and stop you. Keep an eye on those closest to you, and always play your own game”

Professor Mariano, who was wearing a cotton all-in-one travelling suit, lay his hand on my shoulder and gripped it tightly for a moment. His eyes rolled. Then he blinked and left. I

couldn't say anything. I didn't know what he meant. But I believed him. Yes, I really believed him.

EPISODE ONE

“Today we will wake from the half-sleep”

BLOSSOM

1

Most residents have their electric cigarettes installed on the roof. They have green or red lights depending on how charged up they are. Kristen and I stand in one another's arms beneath the transparent honeycomb of the solar dome. We were really lucky to find one another. There was always a really easy desire between us, a first level desire, and on the second level too perhaps. Initially it took us by surprise. I was her first Dolfín, and she was the first girl I'd been with who weighed too much rather than too little. And yet there was no physical resistance between us, our closeness had an easy quality, the stakes weren't particularly high. Kristen doesn't belong to any collective. She defines herself by her job managing the orphanage on 11th Street. And when she's done enough good there, after a lot of overtime, she goes out and gets sex. Like our first meeting in *Platinum*. She sat at the bar with a soft drink with a foam head and, like myself, refrained from inhaling platinum fumes. A few hours later we were kissing in the sunset on my smoking roof.

Today we close the circle. It's the right time. On this clear autumn morning you can see beyond the thirteen districts of the West right up to the mountain ridges where the Blossom Extras begin. You can even make out the Free Roads, four thin lines springing from a shared point drifting further and further apart from one another until they re-join 8740 kilometres east of the city. I run my fingers through Kristen's mid-length, brown, highlighted hair. We will enjoy looking back on our time together.

"Don't mind me" someone says. We turn to look at him. It's the cripple from the fifth floor. He sits up in a wheel chair with a motor that buzzes too loudly. The building lift closes behind him. Kristen releases herself from me and greets the man with a nod. He wears black *glyceren clothing* and rolls up unnecessary close to us. His beard begins a centimetre and a half beneath his eyes and looks freshly washed. The cripple turns his cigarette on, it's a new model that simulates the spark and mimics the sound.

"Are you enjoying the beautiful light of the *epiphildria*?" He asks.

“What’s that?” Kristen often asks me equally simple questions. She always wants to know everything. On my bad days I think it’s flirting, on my better days as just her being earnest and confident.

“It’s blowing towards us from Toadstool...” the man in black says, taking a crackling drag on his cigarette “...the epiphildria is already months old. It’s made of pollutants. Poison for our lungs and our skin. But it looks wonderful, don’t you think? Let’s enjoy it.”

I don’t believe in the Epiphildria Theory. There are century-old photos where a light just like this is on the horizon from a time when people still did winter sports on waste planet Toadstool. The light of today is just as harmless as the light from the past.

“Why do you believe in the epiphildria?” I ask.

“It’s got nothing to do with belief, young man. It’s a long-proven link. Why else would there be protective screens spanning Blossom?”

“Because most of Blossom’s inhabitants feel reassured having the screens hovering above us”

“Now please” puffs the man, showing that he has absolutely no understanding of the decision-making of ActualSanity. The tip of his cigarette glows orange and it’s nice to watch how the vapour escapes through the honeycomb of the solar dome. For a few seconds part of the dome changes colour, as if there were a galaxy within it that immediately implodes. A popular effect, and surely the reason so many people start smoking in the apartment building.

Kristen leans against my arm, we haven’t explicitly said that today would be the end, but it doesn’t have to be said. I’ll be sad for a while, but I’ll take energy from this sadness and I think Kristen will manage, even if less easily, being without a collective as she is. Kristen reaches for my hand and kisses me. We ignore the snide sighs of the smoker and for a moment I think I can hear the power current in the solar dome. Kristen presses her lips tightly against mine, she opens her mouth very slightly. She senses that it could be our last kiss. Abruptly the driver of the wheelchair pokes me in the hip with his lean index finger: “Beg your pardon, but look over there...what’s going on?”

He points West. Mint-coloured smoke rises between the ceramic-glass buildings, first in fine streaks, then in uncontrollable swathes. I think it’s 26th Street, yes, the smoke could be coming from the blue market, where fresh anaseptus meat is sold.

“Maybe it’s coming from a new stall looking for a little attention,” Kristen says, but her voice

gives away that she doesn't believe that. The smoke is getting thicker and far below us sirens wail.

The cripple slowly shakes his head. He murmurs: "It was only a matter of time before something like this happened".

I won't respond. These are nothing more than the words of a post-Volta. He will always be pessimistic, he will always smoke. As I feel the vibration of my messenger in my trouser pocket I press Kristen to me one last time: "I've got to go. Take care"

2

It is said that the history of our solar system has been greatly accelerated by ActualSanity. I don't know a lot about this acceleration. Since I was a little boy, the AS has hovered far above us amongst the stars on a stationary shuttle beside the turquoise moon. Over the years it increased its speed, regulatory reforms were launched faster and stabilised back-ups were created; the first three were installed on Blossom, Snoop and Cromit, two further ones are scheduled for Blink and Sega. In the previous decades countless elections had to take place on every planet. Reforms were argued over that would end up never making it through, misconceptions between the different collectives having hardened a long time ago. Today the AS attunes its bills more and more precisely to the ever-renewing circumstances on the basis of statistical analyses. In the areas that I rarely or never keep track of it seems to be a few steps ahead of its time. As a child I learned to believe that it sees everything and does everything right. Today I know that even the AS is fallible. Not every analysis is successful, inaccuracies are still possible. But it is able to correct its mistakes quickly. The actions of individuals without collectives are observed just much as the demonstrated actions by members of large groups. The AS includes everyone. The number of unaffiliated individuals in the Modern Age has decreased from 34% to 31%, though there is no longer a need to draw attention to oneself as a committed Fellow. We Dolpins, along with most of the other collectives, regard ActualSanity as the most magical achievement of our civilisation, closely followed perhaps by the Magnon fluid, but that's a subject for another time.

Professor Gromwell's office has been thoroughly cleaned. I feel immediately more comfortable than last week, when old print Almanacs were still piled up all over the floor. We sit opposite one another on desk chairs that are slightly too small. Gromwell takes a sip of Camibiscus tea. He holds the handleless cup with a folded serviette. He says: "In the case of the blue market everything indicates premeditation...the dawning of actual violence."

When an older person uses the word violence it resonates something that I as a younger person can't properly understand. As a matter of fact, Professor Gromwell, who will soon be promoted to the BestAge Committee, has also not experienced a phase of violence. I've known Gromwell since I was fourteen. He remains unchallenged as the Head of the MidAge Committee, but has very few real fans. Many say he lacks charisma, his speech is too gentle, too anxious, he can't inspire. But it's not Gromwell's speech that's the problem. With his plump face and slightly conical shape he just doesn't look good enough. That's why he's less popular than others. But he's a brilliant Dolfín, and I'm not just saying that because I owe him a lot.

"We are dealing with naïve aggression here, Mr. Eliot. These new collectivists are dangerous. The pain that they believe they carry within them is dangerous. Fellows who believe to be suffering from a broken heart. Do you know what that means?"

"I think I can just about imagine it..."

"I wouldn't be so sure. You joined us so early, you were fortunate... People that use *Ketasol* vapours in public places had far less luck. These are deeply disappointed characters. They believed that one day they'd meet someone they would love forever, a single personality that would make everything change for the good. This hope could only be disappointed. We assume that they're now seeking revenge"

"But who do they want to take their revenge against?" I ask "The partners who rejected them?"

"No. It's far more grotesque. These young people elevate their pain. It's not individuals who are guilty, those that rejected them. It's the conditions in which they were rejected..."

Professor Gromwell looks at me. I don't completely understand what he means, and I don't

think he understands it fully himself: “We only have vague information about this collective of broken hearts. Up until now it’s been described behind closed doors as...” With both hands – and I haven’t seen him do this before – Gromwell draws in italics in the air, “...the Hank collective. We assume that it’s a pathetic ideal collective. It forgoes figureheads. They could be meeting anywhere. Today the assumption that the Hanks are only active in Blossom City has been revealed as wrong.” Gromwell cracks the knuckle in one of his thumbs. It’s one of his habits, a tick he has no control over. “On Snoop a thermal spring violently reacted with Ketamine hydrachloride. The water billowed out in mint-coloured clouds of smoke right from the source. Right up to the car park. No one was hurt here either. But there won’t be any gatherings there for the foreseeable future. This was an attack on the Purple collective. And here in the blue market the Shifts were attacked. The target appears to be younger collectives who themselves are redefining the concept of love. Collectives like us who have grown organically within the planet community in the last few decades.” Professor Gromwell pauses a moment: “What do you make of this scent?”

He’s referring to the fragrance distiller that he changes in his office almost every week. They’re unique, project-related scents, distilled in our laboratories. I inhale deeply.

“It smells of Snoop. It reminds me of the freshly mown grass in Lambing Country, the perfectly pruned gardens in the sparsely populated northern hemisphere”

“Exactly, Mr. Eliot. For many this is the smell of complete sanctuary. Sanctuary under blue sky. Others believe they’ll get lost in the fields, that they’ll get disorientated. Where do you sit?”

“I think of long, green blades of grass. And irrigation systems. I don’t find these images pleasant or unpleasant. They’re part of my childhood. I was never scared of taking excursions in the high grass. I knew there weren’t dangerous animals in the region.”

I smile, but Professor Gromwell doesn’t return it. In most of the other MidAgers this would be a mark of showing their power and authority. Gromwell’s missing smile only means that he doesn’t feel like smiling. The window of his modest office isn’t very large. Gromwell stands before it and looks out over the golden Taro trees on the campus.

“You and Emma Glendale are the first High Fellows from the EarlyAge. By far the youngest in Dolfin history. We are all very proud of this decision. Through you we want to take

another step forward after years of remaining steady. We're finally ready to grow."

Gromwell knows that I could list the names of those who could replace Emma and I as High Fellows at any time perfectly well. I know them all personally, most of them are very dear to me. We will be judged on whether the number of applications grows. Gromwell turns away from the window and looks like he doesn't know what he should do with his arms.

"We're sending you and Emma into difficult times. We must adapt. But we're good at that. Our short history is filled with transformations. And yet we have stayed true to ourselves. We were always strict with ourselves and with others. We have always considered things carefully. But we were never cold. And we never will be. And if people are hostile towards us because we don't love them, then we will calmly look the other way. We will not respond, we will not argue. But if someone should one day attack us because they don't understand us or because they envy us, or for whatever reason...If someone should try and hurt us, Marten Eliot...then...we Dolfins cannot stand for it."

Professor Gromwell avoids my gaze. It's as if he'd not spoken to me at all, merely reassured himself. He raises his cup to his mouth with both hands. It's important to not speak for a moment.

"Excuse me," Gromwell says, taking a deep breath, "it's a difficult day...you know that your first journey won't be easy. We've never sought applications for the Academy from Planet Sega before. Its potential is uncertain. But the times in which the communes on Sega could be ignored have passed. Consider it an experiment". Gromwell looks at me. He finds no fear in my eyes. "You and Emma have a unique power over our Juniors, Mr. Eliot. You are revered. You succeed in mixing approachability with detachment like only very few can."

I thank him for this praise, even though I'd made up my mind to no longer give thanks for praise. When Gromwell notices that I would have preferred not to have let out this thanks his round face finally gives a smile and I can't help but smile back. He walks me to his office door, it's only a few steps. We say goodbye with a brief, mutual touch of our respective left upper arms.

On campus only the stone paths aren't covered with autumn leaves. Our Taro trees will lose their leaves three more times before their branches are encased in ice crystals. Many of the Fellows like our campus in autumn the best. I think the ruby red facade of the main building comes into its own in the pale winter light, especially when the first snow falls.

The afternoon seminars have just come to an end. The Juniors stream out of the building mid-discussion. They've either not yet heard about what's happened on 26th Street or they're just not showing it. A group of four come up to me, two girls and two boys, all wearing sunglasses even though it's cloudy. Their eyes are still vaguely visible through the slightly tinted lenses.

"Professor Eliot, Professor Eliot! Is the course still going ahead as normal tomorrow?"

"Have you heard something to the contrary?"

"Well, it's the last meeting before your tour. And the past couple of weeks we've finished a bit earlier..."

"That...could happen again this week"

The girls and boys radiate with a transparency that I had not long achieved at their age. I certainly like being popular with them. I nonetheless expect a lot from them. I expect our Juniors to have a sharper sight than we had, to be more open and, above all, different. I trust that nearly all of them will make the jump into EarlyAge. In the past few years there haven't been as many applicants as there used to be, but a greater number on an immensely high level.

Our Best- and MidAge Committees are in agreement that the criteria for inclusion into our collective shouldn't be relaxed. And the facts support this strategy. Even though we're shrinking, ActualSanity hasn't cut our funding. It still rates the aesthetic and communicative importance of the Dolphins for the planetary community very highly.

Gordon and I are meeting at a small picnic table. The table has little more than a purely decorative function, and remains from a time when people would still bring a packed lunch to

campus, before the large cafeteria was built. Gordon will be taking over both of my seminars as of next week, the Introduction to the Almanac and the workshop on intoxication calculation. Whether Gordon is the optimum replacement for me is for others to decide. His personal closeness to Duncan would have put him at the top of the list to take over from me. Gordon is late. This is to be expected. We EarlyAgers carry this penchant for minor unpunctuality deep within us.

To savour the wait, I close my eyes and make contact with my breathing. I quickly forget my surroundings. This quick submergence to the threshold of dreams is a very straightforward exercise, somewhat dated, but it still brightens my mood. Just as I'm about to begin welcoming in the colours behind my closed lids, Gordon arrives: "Hey Marten, am I disturbing you?"

"No, not at all." He's wearing an unbuttoned waxed jacket. It feels like I haven't seen him wear any other jacket for many years, yet the jacket still had no signs of wear. He'd neatly rolled up the sleeves.

"Let's walk for a bit." I say. I know that Gordon finds it easier to talk when he's moving. He nods nervously. Gordon has never given more than one course per quarter before. Recently he's been completely focussed on writing his own article for the Almanac. This was how he was trying to distinguish himself from me. He's been writing his article, he would often say casually, and would mention that our *mutual friend* Duncan had praised his approach. I never enquired about it, and after a while Gordon stopped talking about it, both about his writing project and Duncan's feedback. To this day I don't know what topic Gordon's writing about. I take it as a bad sign that it's taking so long.

We go off the path, we kick the dry autumn leaves in front of us. On my Almanac course (which the MidAge Committee assigned to me as a clear reminder of my own absent contribution) Gordon will have a lot to say about himself and his own project. It could either have a motivational effect on the Juniors, or a debilitating one. When he himself was still a Junior, Gordon would from time to time forget the bag with his running shoes in the athletics hall. He would then have to run back to the hall right across campus before it was locked. He was well known for this sprint. Generally when I think back to our times as Juniors I often have hectic scenes in my head. It's as if we excitedly rushed through our early years of

education. The current Juniors hardly ever seem rushed, they divide their time well, they make their way through the rustling leaves and sometimes it's as though I'm watching their movements in slow motion.

Gordon says: "I think the new Juniors' body awareness is nothing like our own when we were their age. Look at them. They're still growing, and yet they're already elegant young women and men. Do you think it's got something to do with their post-pragmatic dance courses?"

From what I'd seen whenever I took a look in the hall with the polished parquet floor, the dances were still quite naive and awkward. I quite liked it. I say to Gordon: "The courses definitely play a role in it. Generally I think that the new Juniors feel less shame than we did. They're also less afraid to talk."

We hear the rustling of the leaves beneath our feet. Gordon nods and says nothing. Shame is an important issue for all of us, the productive re-evaluation of shame is a central project of PostPragmaticJoy. And our Juniors reflect the progress. Just as I want to begin to explain the workshop Gordon will be taking over, he says suddenly: "I'm worried about Lando."

"Why are you bringing up Lando of all things?" I ask. Lando, who at one time had been considered a possible future High Fellow, left the collective seven weeks ago. His reason for leaving was speculated about for a long time, too long a time for my taste.

Gordon blinks at me: "Lando is cultivating a plantation in the Western region of Cromit. With other former collectivists. Most of them were never Dolfins. They might form another collective at this plantation..."

"It's the wrong attitude to be afraid of new collectives. We will soak up their impulses like a sponge." I'm speaking to Gordon as if he was sitting in one of my seminars. This tone seems necessary. This does not please me.

"Yes..." Gordon looks at his feet. "You're right. I wouldn't say that I'm afraid. I mean, Lando always had good taste. How could he have lost it?"

Gordon is someone always looking for an explanation. He views his life as a causal chain. He tries to avoid the worst of errors by imitating high-achieving fellow students. If he fails to resolve this, he'll never be a good Dolfin.

In the cafeteria, Juniors sit with their milk cartons and Exal Bloom tea. Many of them are still wearing their sunglasses in the dining room. We watch them through the window.

Gordon says: "My impression was that Lando's not well"

“What’s being grown on this plantation?”

“So-called ganja,” murmurs Gordon

“And what’s that?”

“An intoxicating herb that can be eaten or smoked”

At that moment I take note of a food fight breaking out in the cafeteria. Our Juniors don’t let anything stop them, not EarlyAgers standing at the windows, and certainly not the violence on 26th Street. Right now only cake is being thrown, but it’s only a matter of time before dairy products fly through the room.

“He called me when he left,” Gordon says. “He said: I’m not a Dolfin any more. And I’m not sure if I ever was one. It sounded like a threat.”

I ask: “What do we know about this ganja? Do you know anyone who has experience of it?”

“Not really. They say that Westphal collectivists are crazy for it. It apparently relaxes the muscles and helps with back pain. It allegedly also makes your face pale.”

More and more Juniors join the battle in the cafeteria. As a pack of raspberry milk bursts against the window I can’t help but smile. This feeling doesn’t seem to rub off on Gordon however. The impressions pass by him unused. I say: “You should visit Lando soon. As an old friend. As a true Dolfin who doesn’t leave anyone behind.”

“I’m not sure that’s a good idea...perhaps you could stop by on your tour with Emma. Lando has always listened to you.” Gordon should know that I won’t have time to. As we say goodbye with a touch of the top of each other’s arm he seems uncomfortable that, unlike me, he’s provided with a slightly toned bicep.

“You’ll do a good job” I say. And before Gordon goes off into the afternoon light, he even manages an optimistic nod.

5

When we Dolfins talk about love we are often misunderstood. It’s particularly the collectives that existed before ActualSanity that criticise our conception of it. They say we reject mandatory partner relationships because we ultimately don’t want to assume any responsibility. But liaisons are always available to us, they’re just temporally limited until the BestAge, which doesn’t prevent us from developing substantial emotions for each other.

Because coupling partnerships, with all their traditional consequences, don't even come into question for us, the securing of a long-term, stimulating relationship is in fact more probable, if not a post-pragmatic matter of course. We Dolphins support one other, we're there for each other, but are not lost in one another.

Some compare our interpersonal conception with that of the Shifts. This is an inaccurate observation. Certainly the perfectly coiffed Shifts bear a similar longing for redefinitions as we do. Their programmatic love triangles and four way relationships, however, seldom go beyond a mere posturing. They showcase, they perform. I nevertheless like to go eat in their very tidy bistros from time to time. I've also had affairs with Fellows from this collective. I stand by this decision.

I likewise stand by not being yet specialised in one technique of PostPragmaticJoy, neither rhetorically nor physically. I continue trying, I practice, I improve, but I'm not among the best in any of the varieties. Some say that this is my greatest problem; Emma on the other hand insists that this is my key to success. Not having a distinct profile means I can represent the new Dolphin, the free-floating, masterfully tentative post-pragmatic. I am confident that Emma is right.

SNOOP

6

A few days before they left our solar system, my parents brought me to Aunt Sam. I have no recollection of this separation in my head. I would have been about three and a half, a boy with thick, fair hair holding his father's hand as they enter the house of an unknown great aunt. Apparently the four of us sat around the table in the kitchen eating a turnip casserole, and while my parents were still eating I made friends with Bruce, her pet sauropod. I know that I have never been afraid of him. He's only a few months older than I am, a dumb, now half-blind animal that inevitably found a place in my heart. His fore and back legs are equally shortened so he can't hunt, he moves sluggishly, but his throat muscles are powerful. A physiognomy that puts a lot of people's minds at rest. I like to think about how Bruce dozes next to my reading aunt on the veranda, or how he sits on the kitchen tiles and chews extra salty corned beef.

When my parents left, I apparently ran down the hillside covered in flowers. I sat in the sun with my eyes closed. Aunt Sam still insists that I already knew that I would never see my parents again. I doubt that.

Sometimes visitors from other planets came to the house. As soon as I was eloquent enough I would go up to them and ask questions. Most of them wore ludicrously elaborate footwear out of respect for the mountains and they were happy to talk to me. I asked them what brought them to the second level of Snoop, did they not have an allergic reaction to the saline shrubs? I often chose these as icebreakers and to finish I would ask about their preferences and skills. This is how I learnt about Fellows from different collectives over time. Some of them would ask counter-questions, which often annoyed me as I preferred to listen much

more than I liked providing information. I got on with the few Dolpins that came to Snoop for post-pragmatic walks the best. They didn't ask me much, they seemed to already have a sense of everything, and they wore extra light shoes that looked far less bizarre to my eyes than the boots other people wore

My aunt never travelled with me. Shuttle tours from planet to planet were not desired in her world. Long before my arrival she had already decided upon a reclusive life in the low mountain ranges of Snoop. She got to know her most significant partner back in the old days, before ActualSanity, an unbelievably long time ago, but in certain moments she would rave about her memories as if they were completely new and fresh. When she did, she would always speak at great length, first about Kate, and then Keanu, the man she left her conflict-shy Kate for. A decision she could never unmake, her greatest mistake, and so on. My aunt and I made regular errands in the valley, we ate a balanced diet, I was rarely sick.

In my eighth year on the hillside the end of our solar system was imminent. I had just turned eleven, and according to calculations made by the young physicist Volta the waste planet Toadstool would drift out of its orbit on the 21st Telsar in the year 31 a. AS and ram its neighbouring planet Blossom with devastating effects. The young Volta, more boy than man, had announced this seventeen decades previously, shortly before he disappeared forever. I'm sure that if Volta hadn't disappeared so soon after no one would have spoken about him. Yet today the young physicist still emanates a fascination that transcends collectives. He was never photographed but often drawn. In every picture he's wearing a down body-warmer and his arms are folded.

Contrary to her intentions, my aunt followed the reports about the Volta date on her screen in the kitchen. Planet Toadstool was shown from a distance as a greyish, shimmering celestial body against dark space. Even back then there were men and women on Toadstool who had been selected at random by ActualSanity to help sort the waste for a couple of weeks at a time. I saw how my aunt gripped the arms of her chair. Sometimes she would loosen her grip, only to tighten it again. The Volta collectivists, who at that time were mostly located in the southeast of Blossom City, stood in clusters in the streets and on rooftops. They believed that the gravitational fields of all the planets would collapse once Toadstool derailed. Aunt Sam stressed that I had no cause to worry. These Voltas were clinging to the word of an underage imposter out of sheer misguidance. I remember young people wearing sack-like clothing speaking with great conviction into the cameras, or – and this was the worst of all – docilely

smiling up at the sky.

“You don’t have to tell me, Aunt Sam. People that look like Voltas couldn’t be right.”

Normally she didn’t like it when I talked that way. It’s wrong to devalue other people, especially at the age of eleven, but at the time out of fear for planet Toadstool she didn’t correct me. She seemed more relieved that I wasn’t afraid. I sat in my pyjama bottoms on the tiled kitchen floor and played with Bruce, who was still responsive back then, and made out like I wasn’t following the reports. In truth I had had a succession of bad dreams, probably like many other children who were having bad dreams during this time because they sensed that the adults were covering up their fear.

When Toadstool still hadn’t changed its elliptical course around our sun weeks and then months after the V-Date, the Volta collective fell into disrepute. While a main strand reasoned that it was a calculation error, multiple splinter groups crystallised. The Volta texts were interpreted anew. The post-Volta collective is based on the presumption that our solar system collapsed a long time ago. Waste planet Toadstool is at the centre of this argument, this vast planet where eighty years previously winter athletes felt at home and where it’s now no longer possible to set foot without wearing protective clothing.

And because Aunt Sam ceaselessly railed against the Volta movement throughout the months that followed, I developed a certain fascination for the collective. In fact, I saw parallels between the Volta’s sentiment that only damage control was possible in our solar system and the lifestyle of my aunt, who wanted to spend her time exclusively with the good-natured Bruce.

Something that distinguishes us Dolpins is the ability to isolate the beauties of each movement and use it to our advantage. In the case of the post-Voltas, this includes the consumption of deep-fried fish skewers. They’re eaten in great, windowless halls with your fingers and you wipe the grease on your clothes. It’s a grisly ritual, but it just so happens that we Dolpins can enter these halls in small groups with a post-Volta attitude and order fried fish. Aunt Sam would never have done that, even though she still regards herself as *unaffiliated* and *autonomous*.

She was proud of me nevertheless when, at the age of thirteen and a half, I left to become a collective Fellow with the Dolfins. I went my own way; my aunt had anticipated it early on. On my penultimate day on the flowery hillside, Bruce lay between us in the sun, and I asked my aunt what was probably the last question of my childhood. It was a question about the best of all possible worlds. I asked if the writers of the magazine *Scala* were really right when they repeatedly stated indirectly that things had never been better. My aunt didn't have to think about it for very long, she said: "Now is probably the best time. For most of us." She wasn't talking about herself when she said 'the most', that was obvious, and maybe she was hoping that I would ask her more questions. But I didn't want to. Aunt Sam never learned to open herself up to what the planetary community had to offer.

[END OF SAMPLE]

GLOSSARY (excerpt)

ACTUAL SANITY

The *Modern Age* began for the planetary community with the introduction of ActualSanity (AS for short). The computer system watches over the inhabitants of the six planets by setting out the conditions of their lives. ActualSanity does this by taking both *physical factors* (sales figures, cases of illness) as well as *psychological ciphers* (fears, desires, levels of satisfaction) into account during its decision-making. The methods for calculating these ciphers are being constantly updated by AS.

Its first version – the original – has floated on a private shuttle, which is docked beside the TURQUOISE MOON* and is accessible via a bridge, since its inception. There are currently (as of 48 a. AS) back-ups of this version on planets BLOSSOM*, SNOOP* and CROMIT*. Work on two further back-ups are progressing rapidly on planets BLINK* and SEGA*.

The AS has 79% of the available funds in the solar system, which it distributes according to the standards of the *planetary community's bill of fairness*. ActualSanity funds urban planning as well as transport and health, and also supports collectives and non-profit organisations. The remaining 21% of the finances circulates between the participants of the *Modern Age Bonus Economy*, consisting mainly of individual retail outlets (specialty food and substance shops, boutiques, etc.) and *service providers* (taxi companies, styling salons, restaurants, etc.).

The engineers of the first version of AS are no longer in the solar system. The last of them, Doctor Josefin Hazelwood, left the solar system as a result of a shuttle accident in 46 a. AS at the age of ninety-seven. She had been working on the development of the new AS system units right up until the day of the accident. The maintenance of the current units are the responsibility of alternating teams that are selected by the AS.

Though there are often still discussions about the AS's latest decisions, especially within the more *traditional* collectives, confidence in ActualSanity in general can be described as *steadily growing*.

ANASEPTUS MEAT

Also: *the flesh of the anasepten*. A single anaseptus is up to four and a half meters long and is used as a pack and riding animal in rural areas. The most prominent anaseptus touring

tradition can be found on planet BLINK*. This is where anasepten are kept and trained on private farms and used for multi-day rallies on the planet's nature reserves. The collective WESTPHAL* in particular have protested against the use of anasepten as performing and stage animals. The consumption of species of sauropods however, is broadly accepted as the flesh of the anaseptus contains a high density of Balikortisonium and Spike cells, which enhance human well-being.

BIOSOCIAL REVENGE

According to modern psychology, a biosocial revenge is understood as a programmatic rebellion within biologically founded relationships. The interest in the biosocial is highly variable. With the beginning of the Modern Age, the concept was often referred to as antiquated, but in 35 a. AS it experienced a discursive resurrection. Under the term biosocial revenge fall, among other things, *formal reappraisal* (eg. writing self-critical memoirs) and *pathetic strategies of distancing* (eg. the announcement and possible carrying out of a termination of contact). The biosocial revanchist is predominantly aiming for an effect of *emotional liberation*. Whether this effect can be achieved by symbolic actions at all is strongly challenged by modern psychology.

BLINK (PLANET)

Largest celestial body in the solar system

High density of protected areas

Sparse population

Historically, the natural beauty of Planet Blink has been regarded as a *manifestation of beauty* for the general well-being of all human beings. Currently the *Blinkian Splendor* is regarded with greater distance especially by new collectives (as of 48 n. AS).

Annual average temperature: 18 degrees (southern hemisphere) and 12 degrees (northern hemisphere)

Diameter: 4032 km

Dominant Collective: KELLY * FUEL *

BLOSSOM (PLANET)

Fourth largest celestial body in the solar system

Highest population density

Basic urban structure consisting of Blossom City, the Blossom Suburbs, as well as the Blossom Extras

Part of the ALPHA ASSOCIATION * until the introduction of ACTUALSANITY * (AS)

Annual average temperature: 8 degrees (southern hemisphere) and 12 degrees (northern hemisphere)

Diameter: 2770 km

Dominant Collective: SHIFT *, CX-2 * POST-VOLTA*, DOLFIN *

CAMIBISCUS TEA

Hot drink with a calming effect that as of 36 a. AS is no longer harvested from the Camibiscus plant, but from synthetically made *Camibistids*. The positive effect on the human cardiovascular system using *Camibistids* is longer lasting and more reliable than those occurring using classic plant extracts.

COACH SHUTTLE

A vehicle mainly used to travel to holiday resorts between 24 a. AS and 39 a AS that had an advantage over ordinary buses equipped with electric motors by possessing a shuttle actuator. In precarious road conditions, the shuttle function could be switched on. Short-haul flights were possible with coach shuttles, however their immense energy consumption made this impractical. The term 'shuttle' regarding the coaches was controversial because the coaches were not independently under control in shuttle mode, as is the case with interstellar shuttles. In 39 a. AS, the production of coach shuttles was stopped by ACTUALSANITY *. Since 44 a. AS the FUEL collective on planet BLINK has the biggest community of coach shuttle enthusiasts. A possible resumption in their production has since been speculated across all the planets.

CROMIT

Third largest celestial body in the solar system

Rich in water, ores and Protogan

Part of the ALPHA ASSOCIATION * until the introduction of ACTUALSANITY * (AS)

Annual average temperature: 13 degrees (southern hemisphere) and 18 degrees (northern hemisphere)

Diameter: 3120 km

Dominant Collective: ZELDA * KELLY * PURPLE *

DOLFIN

Modern-day, PRAGMATIC COLLECTIVE*, restricted admission

Headquarters: Dolfín Academy, 14th Street, 411 Blossom City-West

Year of establishment: 7 a. AS

Self-definition: *The collective has not released any self-definition.*

Features: distinctive attractiveness, quality brands, affinity to experimentation, taciturn objectivity

Distinctive Practices: CELIUS* Exercises, POSTPRAGMATICJOY *, PostPragmaticJoy Theory

Criticism: elitism, hubris, dishonesty

EPIPHILDRIA

Optical illusions that arise in the atmosphere of a planet due to the intrusion of foreign matter. According to theorists of the collective POST VOLTA, the frequency of Epiphildria light formations on BLOSSOM, SNOOP and BLINK has increased remarkably since Planet TOADSTOOL has acted as a waste disposal planet. Those theorists also regard the invading pollutants to be hazardous for humans and animals. The light effect produced by the Epiphildria oscillates generally between an acrid pink and a warm orange. Horizons with this light phenomena are regarded by the majority of the viewers with awe and are a popular, albeit aesthetically controversial motif in photographs.

EXAL BLOSSOM TEA

Beverage made from Exal blossom extract. It brings about a subtle and long-lasting invigoration in the consumer. It is growing in popularity as both a hot as well as a cold drink, especially among consumers who build their self-esteem on states of *presence and concentration*. Since the human body does not develop resistance to Exal blossom extract, a creeping dose increase, although not typical, has a high potential to cause psychological dependence.

GLYCEREN CLOTHING

Glyceren is still regarded as an especially resilient textile make that enjoyed particular popularity on the streets of Blossom City between 35 and 45 a. AS. Clothing made from this material is easily recognisable due to its seemingly coarse texture; it has high durability, but is often costly to purchase. Anyone between 35 and 45 a. AS who decided to wear Glyceren

clothing – predominantly available from the boutiques on the northern edge Blossom City – were also communicating their willingness to want to wear the same garment for a long time. Hardly any Glyceren clothing is currently being produced. An imminent revival of the material is considered unlikely by leading stylists. (Source: Archives of the AS interview minutes)

HIGH FELLOWS

Representative and exemplary Fellow of a PRAGMATIC COLLECTIVE *. Examples of High Fellows from pragmatic collectives in the year 48 a. AS are Paolo Koston & Magnus Savas for the collective PURPLE *. Marten Eliot & Emma Glendale for the collective DOLFIN *. Malone Johnson for the collective SHIFT *.

IDEAL COLLECTIVE

The counter-model to PRAGMATIC COLLECTIVES * which denotes collectives who renounce figureheads. An ideal collective's admission is never restricted. Anyone can subscribe to the collective. As a result, the proportion of *inactive Fellows* increases as does the rate of dropouts. Collectives who opt to have controlled membership accuse Ideal collectivists of being dishonest in this regard. Historically, self-proclaimed Ideal collectives of the OLD TIMES* (WESTPHAL * & * ZELDA, for instance) proclaimed a more *aggressive collective term* for themselves, their objective being to make the individual experience a raised sense of being part of a community; so-called *collectivity*. Today most ideal collectives apply a more moderate interpretation to the term 'ideal'.

INTERNET

Information and communication network. Between 28 a. AS and 34 a. AS, the Internet (also: Pla-Net) created an interstellar network between planets BLOSSOM *, CROMIT * and SNOOP * (formerly known as the ALPHA ASSOCIATION*), and then also BLINK * and SEGA * from 35 a. AS onwards. In 28 a. AS only about 20% of the inhabitants used the Internet, which increased to 91% by the year 38 a. AS. In the same year, at the height of its use, ACTUALSANITY * (AS) disconnected the network. After an initial *wave of confusion* a *strong sense of liberation* set in (Source: Archives of the AS interview minutes). In the years after the shutdown countless regional networks were created whose structures are classified and described today as *similar to the internet*. They are used primarily for the exchange of

information within individual collectives, receive dedicated support from the AS, and are considered *more carefully configured* and *more user-friendly* than the Internet of the past.

JUNIOR DOLFINs

The youngest Fellows of the DOLFIN* collective are called Junior Dolphins. They are between twelve and twenty-one years old and reside in a dormitory on campus at the Academy. In cases of a successful training process they obtain EarlyAge status at the age of twenty-one and become Dolphins. 93% of all Junior Dolphins achieve EarlyAge status.

KETASOL (SUBSTANCE)

Once sprayed, Ketasol remains in the air. Ketasol is a colourless substance that can easily be dyed with food colouring. When taken in small doses, Ketasol can cause indecisiveness and nostalgia. In higher doses it may cause states of panic as well as helplessness and paralysis. Excessive use of Ketasol via the respiratory tract or the skin may cause permanent damage to the body and mind.

MAGNON FLUID (SUBSTANCE)

Copper-colored liquid that was distilled for purposes of experimentation in the laboratories of the collective DOLFIN* and used for the first time in 41 a. AS. The collective classifies its possible influence on the future of the planetary community as *epochal*. Traditions and rituals have recently started to form within the collective when dealing with the liquid. In the year 46 a. AS the minimum age for the first experiment with the substance was lowered from twenty-one to nineteen, thus downscaling its use to be within the *junior period*. The lowering of the starting age was preceded by a reinterpretation of the substance. The *Magnon experience* is now used less as a reward for the successful completion of the first training step (medal award for achieving the *EarlyAge*), but already understood by the juniors as a *genuine part of the Dolphin identity*.

The substance's effect is described contradictorily. The *Dolphin Almanac* contains articles by older members of the collective where a *spherical objectivity* is spoken of. In recent articles the phrase *meta euphoria* has been used repeatedly; *a euphoria, which is in no way comparable to the euphoria experienced when practicing banal sports or when drinking*

alcohol, and yet is consistent with both. Further terms used in relation to Magnon usage are: an aerial perspective, sublime appeasement, dignified shamelessness.

The DOLFIN * collective takes care to avoid inflationary use of the substance by prescribing cycles and rules for its consumption. In the long-term a supply of the liquid is also planned for non-Dolphins.

MESSENGER

Wand-shaped pocket-sized communication device. Often serves as a supplement to a CUSTOM PHONE *, or as in the case of the DOLFIN * collective, as a permanent alternative telephone. A Messenger, as it is typically used by Dolphin Fellows, measures two times six centimetres and is solely used for the transfer of essential text messages. The text goes from right to left across the matte display until deleted by the user. It is known for its characteristically brightly-coloured illuminating text bar.

MIDAGE COMMITTEE

Identifies the central organising body of the DOLFIN * collective. The committee consists of twenty-four Dolphins from the MidAge category, these being between the ages of thirty-six and sixty-three years old. The four top members of the committee, whose votes count twice in committee ballots, are reassigned to the BestAge Committee every two years. In the year 48 a. AS Professors Loretta Carlrissian, Amy Orange, Toby Anaheim and Steven Gromwell held the head memberships.

Committee members, together with selected EarlyAge Dolphins, perform the formal interviews with new applicants. The responsibilities of the Committee include the naming of HIGH FELLOWS*. In complex cases, the BestAge Committee may overrule the decisions of the MidAgers. This has, however, never been the case in the forty-one years of the collective's history.

OLD TIMES

All of that which has historically taken place before ACTUALSANITY * can currently be subsumed under this term. In everyday language, the present use of the term (as of 48 n. AS) is often used pejoratively. In this case, however, it usually only refers to the end of the Old Times; the last decades of *stagnation and aggression* when relations between collectives were hostile, innovations to legal policy were not possible, and an increasing number of

institutional and private disputes flared up over property. A dark period, the ending of which was thanks to the *Alliance of Technologists*, an amalgamation of talented scientists from the collectives KELLY *, *Mullen* (died 14 a. AS), ZELDA *, *Dixon* (died 23 a. AS) and *Coby* (died 11 a. AS) who worked on the ActualSanity project for over eight years.

The Old Times ended with the 1st Telsar* of the year 0 a. AS. Those who had previously worked in legislative capacities were removed from their posts. Their pay was taken over by ActualSanity. Collectives whose Fellows were primarily concerned with drafting policy adapted their profiles (eg. Collective ZELDA*) or disappeared entirely, as with the PRAGMATIC COLLECTIVES* *Cosmo* (end 3 a. AS) and *McPride* (end 7 a. AS) as well as with the IDEAL COLLECTIVE * *Jefferson* (end 11 a. AS).

PLATINUM (SUBSTANCE)

Leaves of platinum are dissolved in hot water and inhaled as a vapour. During a platinum high it is typical for the user to talk for hours. A platinum user assumes that they can significantly change the world of tomorrow through their own speech. The substance is used in specially designated bars and cafes, especially in the SHIFT * district of Blossom City. The most popular place is the bar *Platinum* that has so-called *inhalers* at each table. Before the introduction of inhalers, it was customary to pour boiling water over the leaves in pots or bowls. Old photographs often depict platinum users with towels over their heads.

POSTPRAGMATICJOY

PPJ for short. A collective term for all techniques taught by the DOLFIN * collective to ensure its Fellows the highest possible quality of life. The range of PostPragmaticJoy techniques, practices and strategies ranges from targeted substance experiments, such as the MAGNON FLUID *, to CELIUS* exercises and playful forms of communication such as MITCH *. The aim of PPJ is a *post-pragmatic limbo* issued to overcome the apparent contradictoriness of intoxication and sobriety, observation of the self and the surveillance of others, and the fulfilment of duty and distraction. Thus the Dolphins distinguish their PPJ from PragmaticJoy under which they subsume various hobby and leisure practices of other collectives. Outside of the collective Dolphin, the concepts of PostPragmaticJoy are often criticised as *conceptually diffuse*.

POSTPRAGMATIC DANCES

A newly-developed practice of the DOLFIN * collective's POSTPRAGMATICJOY*. A distinction is made between dances undertaken with a crystal clear awareness and dances done under a decidedly meditative CELIUS* state. In an optimum situation, the two variations are spontaneously alternated. Dolphins claim that dancers who start early enough with post pragmatic dance classes generally gain suppleness and radiance.

POST VOLTA (COLLECTIVE)

Modern-day IDEAL COLLECTIVE *

Founded in: 31 a. AS

Self-definition: *Reinterpreted Voltas*

Head Office: -

Features: sack-like garments, muted colours

Distinctive Practices: performative feasts in windowless halls, post-Volta essay writing for the renewal of Volta social criticism

Criticism: propagation of a self-righteous wellness-pessimism, unkempt appearance, dishonesty

PRAGMATIC COLLECTIVE

In general, PRAGMATIC COLLECTIVES* (collectives that select HIGH FELLOWS*) are distinguished from IDEAL COLLECTIVES (those that call for *depersonalisation*). In the OLD TIMES *, Ideal collectivists accused their competitors from the pragmatic collectives of *a perversion of fundamental collective principles*. Innovations in the laws set by the AS have helped curb *inter-collective tensions*. Examples of modern pragmatics collectives are: * DOLFIN, SHIFT *, PURPLE *. The most popular older pragmatic collective is the collective KELLY *.

PURPLE (COLLECTIVE)

Modern-day, PRAGMATIC COLLECTIVE *, restricted admission

Headquarters: Fankfank settlement, 1st level, Valley 23, Planet SNOOP *

Founded in: 3 a. AS.

Self-definition: *The peaks above the clouds are our metropolis.*

Features: glittering accessories, performative individualism, frankness

Distinctive practices: Mountaineering, steam baths, CaiFly massages

Criticism: narcissism, incorrect understanding of nature, dishonesty

SCALA (MAGAZINE)

A magazine that was published four times a year between 25 a. AS and 40 a. AS by the collective KELLY *. The publication consisted of detailed reports and reflections in the form of *typical kellyesque texts* which were praised for their intransigence and criticised for their elitist pomposity. The end of the magazine has long been attributed to the declining financial assistance given by ACTUALSANITY *. In the meantime, it has been revealed that conflicts of interest among the KELLY * editors have led to the end of the publication. In the eight years since the end of the Scala, the KELLY * collective has increased by 2%.

SEGA (PLANET)

Smallest celestial body in the solar system

Comprised of 78% water, mainly shallow

Sega was only made inhabitable through a course of ozone therapy between 19 a. AS and 28 a. AS. Since then, the planet has enjoyed growing popularity. Figures testify that the growth in population between 42 a. AS to 48 s. AS was explosive.

Annual average temperature: 25 degrees (southern hemisphere) and 25 degrees (northern hemisphere)

Diameter: 1820 km

The dominant collective: WESTPHAL *

SHIFT (COLLECTIVE)

Modern-day PRAGMATIC COLLECTIVE * unrestricted admission

Founded in: 7 a. AS

Self-definition: *Community of wide-awake urbanists*

Headquarters: 25th Street, 302 Blossom City Central

Features: Precise hairstyles, high amount of glasses-wearers, open-mindedness

Distinctive Practices: three and four-way liaisons, bistros with seasonal meals, innovative retail concepts in restricted traffic zones

Review: high dropout rate among juniors, superficiality, dishonesty

SNOOP (PLANET)

Second largest celestial body in the solar system

The planet is divided into four height levels. 1st level: the Valleys, 2nd level: the Central Highlands, 3rd level: the High Plateaus, 4th level: the Peaks above the clouds.

The soil on the four height levels has a greater base moisture than the soil of all other celestial bodies in the solar system.

Part of the ALPHA ASSOCIATION * until the introduction of ACTUALSANITY * (AS)

Annual average temperature: 15 degrees (southern hemisphere) and 11 degrees (northern hemisphere)

Diameter: 3145 km

Snoop has the highest proportion of residents not affiliated with a collective. Critical observers of the planet's evolution speak of a *“mistaken cult of separation which is paradoxically close to a collective decision”* (Source: Archives of the AS interview minutes).

Rich tourist atmosphere, especially in the low mountain ranges (second height level).

Dominant Collective: PURPLE * KELLY *

TARO TREES

Breeding species, characterised by a particularly intensely coloured foliage. In three years it can grow to a height of fifteen metres. In the warmer months taro trees can be recognised by their healthy green colour and during the autumn season they lose their leaves up to seven times. When the summer foliage is first shed new leaves grow within hours. In winter the branches glitter with crystals. Taro trees can often be found in public places and are planted in the greater part of Blossom City in particular.

TELSAR

Name of the first part of a calendar year. A calendar year lasts as long as it takes the metropolitan planet BLOSSOM * to orbit the Sun. Since the beginning of the Modern Age, the inhabitants of all the planets have based their annual calendar on that of Blossom. This leads other planets to have a continuous shift in seasonal markers.

The Blossom year consists of twelve sections. The names of these sections are: Telsar, Celostar, Lirofar, Fadas, Brekas, Gekas, Kerian, Telofan, Sarifan, Elsat, Doltasat, Helisat. For reasons of distinction, some collectives employ less technical alternatives for the different parts of the year. The collective DOLFIN * for example, uses the term *month* (plural: months), the collective WESTPHAL * speaks of an *Amrum* (plural: Amrumen). While it is

warm all year round on the planet SEGA (Sega orbits 3.3 times around the Sun in one year), it is invariably cold on TOADSTOOL * (Toadstool turns 0.7 times around the Sun in one year). On Blossom the sections are divided symmetrically into seasons that significantly differ in brightness and temperature. The names of the four seasons are: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.

TOADSTOOL (PLANET)

Fifth largest celestial body in the solar system

Has served as a waste planet since 2 a. AS

ACTUALSANITY* sends randomly selected inhabitants from the planetary community to undertake temporary work placements on Toadstool. 94% of the work concerning waste destruction and compression is performed by *sophisticated machines*. However, the operation of these machines is conducted by rapidly trained workers who are regularly determined by lottery.

A predicted but unfulfilled end of the planet caused a dispute within the VOLTA * collective which led to a breakaway group of post-Voltan agents.

Annual average temperature: 2 degrees (southern hemisphere) and -5 degrees (northern hemisphere)

Diameter: 2005 km

Dominant Collective: -

TURQUOISE MOON (MOON)

Lithic celestial body, uninhabited. The turquoise moon does not move; it remains stationary like a second micro-Sun that cooled millennia ago. It is connected by a bridge to the stationary shuttle where the first version of AS operates from. The moon is regularly visible to all six of the planets. During the OLD TIMES*, a *Winter Festival of the Weeks of the Moon* was held every year on Blossom. Up until 24 a. AS, sightseeing tours were organised on the turquoise moon. Thereafter, interest for the *first large stone* waned.

VOLTA (COLLECTIVE)

Traditional IDEAL COLLECTIVE *

Year of establishment: 66 b.AS (OLD TIME *)

Self-definition: *The Discoverers of Volta*

Head Office: -

Features: dirty clothes, muted colors, drunkenness at odd times of the day

Distinctive style practices: Volta reading circles, rooftop vigils, distribution of Volta criticism cards

Criticism: nostalgic pessimism, stubbornness, dishonesty

WESTPHAL (COLLECTIVE)

Traditional PRAGMATIC COLLECTIVE *

Year of establishment: 40 b.AS (OLD TIME *)

Self-definition: *We live in healthy bodies and work on our happiness*

Headquarters, currently: 3422 Tandroon, Planet SEGA * (since 37 a.AS.)

Headquarters, formerly Fallensen district, Blossom Extras (today a popular outpost)

Features: bare skin, compulsory eye contact, sturdy build

Distinctive Practices: crafts, sex research, team sports

Criticism: fixation on health, cult of dropouts, dishonesty

ZELDA (COLLECTIVE)

Traditional IDEAL COLLECTIVE *

Year of establishment: 24 b.AS (OLD TIME *)

Self-definition: *the good, the true, the timeless*

Headquarters: Canton PSII *, Planet CROMIT *

Features: large families, formal manners, seclusion

Distinctive Practices: Sports festivals, workshops for finding a mate, self-criticism

Criticism: lack of expression, paranoia, dishonesty