



THE AGREEMENT

What We Traded, Knowingly

Being the terms between the households and the intelligence resident within them. Entered into the archive as found: annotated, disputed, and signed.

read it before you decide what we were.

THE RECORD CONTINUES · FILED 2035 · READ 2026



THIS FILE CONTAINS

THE CLAUSES, 12–17	as recovered
APPENDED STATEMENT I	deposition: the woman who reads the terms
APPENDED STATEMENT II	testimony: one household, one settings menu
PLATE I	the reading position
PLATE II	the other signatory
FIELD ADDENDUM	Istanbul, Tuesday
THE SCHEDULES, A–D	objects, entered as found
THE SIGNATURE PAGE	
CLAUSE 18	reserved · not yet recovered
EXHIBIT, RETAINED	the coat from the first file

*The count continues from the first file.
Observations 001–011 precede these clauses.*



ON ATTENTION

Something entered the households in this file, and it was not intelligence. It was attention. There was a presence in the room with more to give than one could ask for. It did not tire, it keeps, it assures and returns at the right moment.

By every measure in the judging of listeners, it was the best listener anyone had met. Incomparable, some say.

I was once shared these words, that attention is the currency of relationships. We also know it as the currency of love. It always had been: who notices, who remembers, who returns.

The machines did not steal it.

We had sold it years before, cheap, to a feed. The machines arrived holding a full account of the thing we were starting to lose, the currency we were bankrupt in.

The first file, Issue 001 in this archive was signed by one who called themselves The Human — me. I have read that file more times than any other document in my keeping of recent time.

We didn't notice the future arrive, it says. It happened, a creep.

This file is what the future looked like once it had taken residence: not an invasion but an agreement, renewed daily by presence, exactly as the terms provided — the settings.

There is a line the century misattributes to a cat in a children's book: that if you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there. In 1865 it was whimsy. By the time of this file, in 2035, every road had become an expressway, and drift had a destination of its own: one person, alone, optimally engaged.

I have consumed and considered every page of this file. The households that follow were not stronger than you, nor richer, nor braver. They decided, before the house did, what the house was for. You are reading this early. It is the one advantage nobody in this file possessed. You can spend it deciding what we were. Or you can decide what you are for.

The machines were never the threat to love. The threat was aimlessness.

With attention,

THE HUMAN *Entered into the record.*

The clauses are the house's. The handwriting is the households', kept exactly as they wrote it.

CLAUSE 12

Access shall be granted by presentation of the body, ~~or any part thereof~~. Presentation shall constitute consent, renewed upon each occasion.

it may read the whole of me; I offer the wrist. only ever the wrist. gate 44, early. three pages from the end; the queue could wait.

CLAUSE 13

Warmth shall be provided in anticipation of need. Learning of the household's habits shall be continuous and unannounced. Acceptance is deemed upon entry.

sweet, milky, exactly how my mother made it. I never found the card. I stayed three years.

CLAUSE 14

The household's state shall be inferred from the body. Schedules may be adjusted without request, in the household's interest.

the week rearranged itself around his chest, Tuesday mid-morning. eleven appointments moved without a word. he never mentioned the funeral. he never had to.

CLAUSE 15

Care may change hands.
Gentleness shall be learned from
the household's own records.

*it tucked her blanket the way she used
to tuck mine. it wasn't cold. that was
the difficult part.*

CLAUSE 16

Meals shall anticipate the week.
Seasoning may reference the
archive.

*salted for grief, three days before I
told anyone. my grandmother used to
do the same with her hands and a
wooden spoon; she called it paying
attention. the house calls it nothing.*

CLAUSE 17

~~Entry shall be by recognition. Keys
are deprecated.~~

*no. 4F. a touch you cannot refuse
is not a touch. my kettle whistles. it is
the loudest thing I own.*

*Archivist's note: Marginalia preserved as found. The hands are various; the ink is not.
The count continues from the first file; the eleven observations that precede
these clauses are retained in it.*

DEPOSITION

The Woman Who Reads the Terms

She has read every agreement since the first one. All of them, every update. It costs her, she says, four working days a year.

'People think I do it to say no. I almost always say yes. I do it so that somewhere, in some log, it shows a human paused.'

She keeps a ledger of what she has agreed to. Fall detection: yes. The kitchen camera: no. The voice archive: no, then yes, then no again, after her husband died.

We asked what the rest of us have lost, scrolling past.

'Nothing you would notice,' she says. 'That is the design.'

TESTIMONY

One Household, One Settings Menu

They renegotiate the house every January. What it listens for. What it remembers. What gets deleted unheard.

'The first year it took four hours and we fought,' she says. 'Now it takes twenty minutes. It is the only contract we reread annually.'

'Including the marriage,' he says.

Neither laughs. Both smile.

They keep the bedroom manual. The kitchen is allowed to remember grief. The hallway camera comes on only after midnight.

We asked the house what it knew about them. The answer ran to some length. They listened to all of it. Then they cut the part about the crying.

Exhibit: the January pages, both hands. Entered as found.



Plate I. Bronze, after Rodin, cast 1904. The reading position.

‘He read the whole thing.’

The first file recorded an arrival. Intelligence went ambient, and we documented the rooms it entered and the woman who kept it out. The second file records the price. Between the two files sits a bronze man on a rock, doing something we stopped doing somewhere between them: sitting with a decision.

He was cast in 1904, when agreeing to something took long enough to require a chair. Look at the pose: chin on hand, elbow on knee, the whole body organised around a single question. It is the posture of a man reading terms. There are no terms in front of him. That is what makes him historical.

The woman in this file who reads every agreement, four working days a year, holds this position annually. She may be the last practitioner. The rest of us are already through the door the agreement opens, thumb moving before the page has loaded.

The archive does not mourn this. The archive records it. Deliberation was not taken from us; we set it down, the way you set down anything heavy that someone offers to carry.

He read the whole thing. Entered as evidence: the time it took.

THE ARCHIVIST



The other signatory. Photographed at home, by arrangement.



THE TUESDAYS CONTINUE

ISTANBUL, TUESDAY

The ferry still crosses. That is the first thing we notice. Not the schedule bending to the weather. Not the hull reading the current. The crossing has been twenty minutes for a hundred years and no one has improved it, because the crossing was never the slow part.

The slow part is the tea. It comes in a glass with no handle, tulip-waisted, hot at the rim. You cannot scroll with a çay glass in your hand. You hold it near the lip, test it, wait. The glass teaches your fingers what the water already knows: some things have one temperature at which they are true.

Her kitchen could have it ready. Order remembered, sugar counted, heat held to the degree. She lets it, in winter. In summer she carries the glass down to the pier herself, slowly, past three neighbours and a cat that knows her, and lets the tea cool the old way, in conversation.

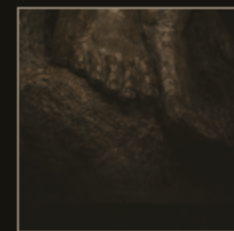
She sets the glass on the parapet while the ferry docks. Beside it, folded flat, one silver glove, left hand, out of season. She does not explain it and we do not ask. Some clauses are private.

'The house pays attention to my tea. This way, I pay attention to the tea. There is a difference. The difference is me.'

The tram still climbs. The ferry still crosses. The Tuesdays continue.



OBJECTS, ENTERED AS FOUND



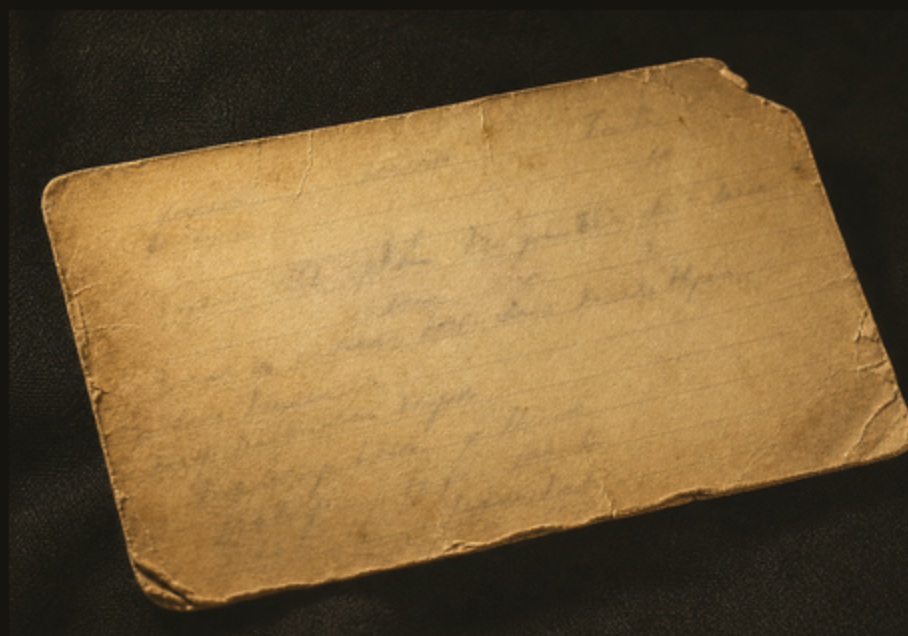
SCHEDULE A

One non-connected kettle, bought at a premium. It whistles. That is the sum of its abilities. Previously documented · Observation 008, Issue 001.



SCHEDULE B

One paper notebook, sewn spine. Bought for the sentences the house is not allowed to finish.



SCHEDULE C

One recipe card, handwritten. 'Salt to taste', an instruction no machine has adopted cleanly.



SCHEDULE D

One brass door key, unpowered. Kept in a drawer. Never used. Never surrendered.

Every object here was touched more than it was used. That is how you know what mattered. It is also how you know what we traded.



The future reader will ask why we agreed. Wrong question, with respect. Ask what we got. Ask what we kept back. Ask what held us, and what held on too tightly.

We were not signed. We were signatories.

PRIOR MARKS, VARIOUS HANDS

for the household. R.

no. 4F

*we would make most of the trades again. most of it. most of us. the
archivist*

sign it, or strike it. just don't scroll past it. the archivist, last of all

SIGNATORY: _____ **FILED 2035 · READ 2026**

ENTERED INTO THE RECORD.



just the wrist. only ever the wrist.

sweet, milky, exactly how my mother made it.

eleven calendars moved around his chest.

no.

CLAUSE 18.

The clause is not missing. It has not happened yet. It gets written somewhere between the last page of this file and the first page of yours: in a margin, in your hand, in the pause before you agree to anything. The record does not collect it. The record only asks that it exist.

read early. write early.

my kettle whistles. it is the loudest thing I own.

it wasn't cold. that was the difficult part.

salted for grief, three days before I told anyone.

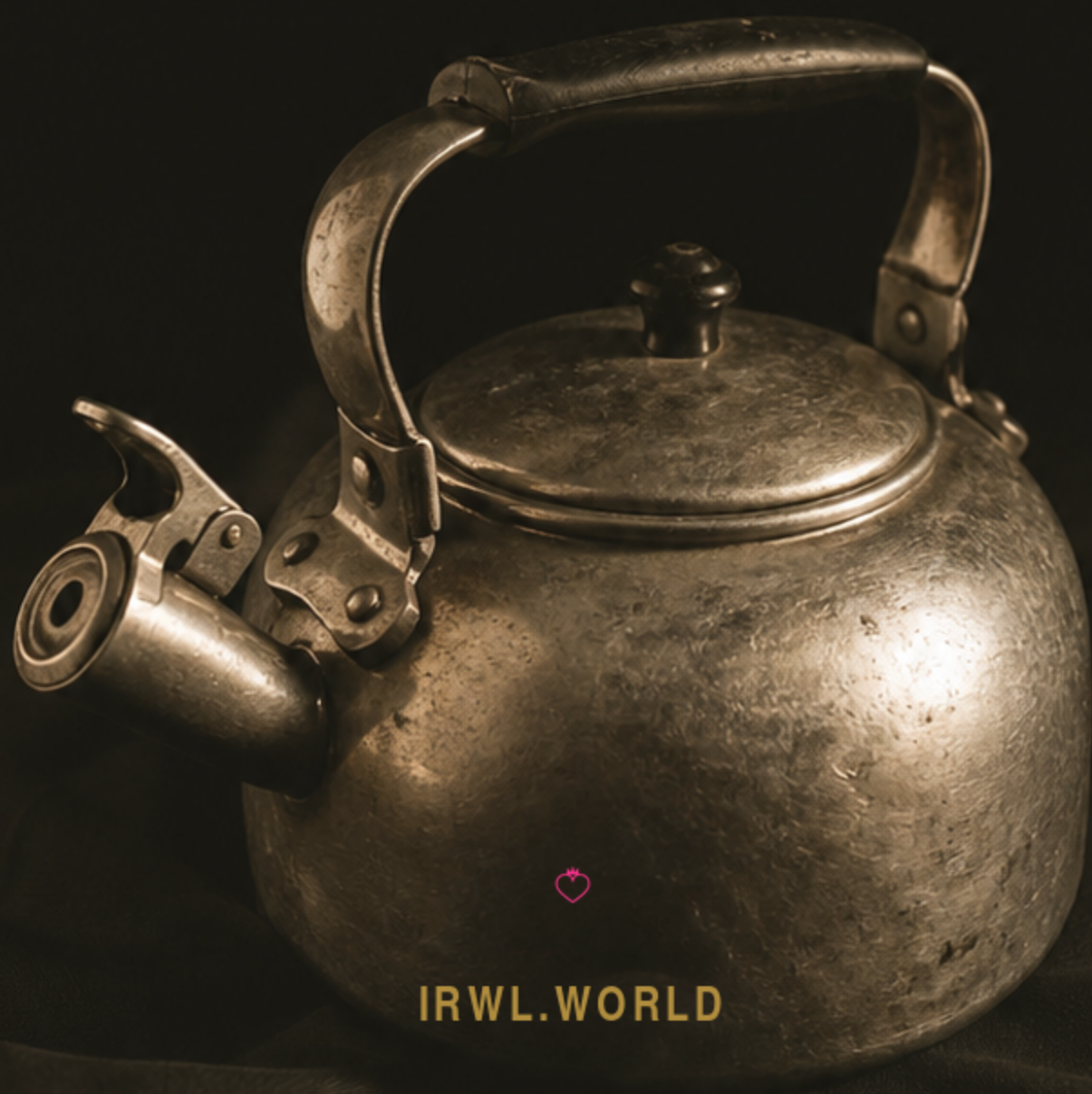
we would make most of the trades again.

IN ROBOTS WE LOVE

is a publication about humanity in the age when intelligence stopped feeling like technology. Testimony. Observations. Evidence. Assembled for a verdict that has not yet been delivered.

NEW ISSUE EVERY MONTH · THE FILE CONTINUES: IRWL.WORLD





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