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date: Fri, Dec 8, 1995 at 12:05 PM  
subject: PYRAMID Proposal Rejection

Cynthia,

Please illuminate me. Did Stanton learn how to write for an audience when snuffing his way through Middlebury? He might as well have titled the proposal "How to Disempower the Family of General Starks, that Delicious Prole." I'd have burned that ghoulish proposal in Stanton's face myself had I any family greasing the strings of a sentimental heart.

An amateur genealogist could walk into the US Census Bureau with a phonebook and infer Starks' background by merely tracing the family name. Our troves filter signal from noise, yet Stanton appears happy to gargle static. Most writers can often only half guess who will read their work and how they will respond... A thrill and an adventure, I'm sure. Organizations nationwide have begun migrating records onto terminals networked by lines owned by Haplo. We have minimized such risk to zero.

Perhaps the failing here is mine. I clearly have not shown you how to train your writers to use our databases to maximum effect. As a professional courtesy, I will model for you how to use metadata and public domain information in negotiations.

Starks would resent our prying into his personal life, and his level of clearance might (though it is unlikely) discover Haplo's fingerprints on his records. We look, then, not to Starks but to his family – specifically his father, Allen. We look minimally at the content of Allen's life and focus on abstract data: employment history, public notices, income tax filing, financial transactions, and both the origins and destinations of phone calls. The content of those phone calls is mere gossip. We look at this man as a wad of facts.

Allen lives in Gainesville, Florida. He took clerical work for a Ford dealership in 1983 when his self-owned Ford repair garage failed. He earns \$30,000 annually. Allen married Starks' mother in 1950, and they remained married until she died of bone cancer in 1990. Allen maintains good credit and uses his Visa instead of cash when possible. His card history indicates transactions exclusively at grocery stores near his home, a gas station between his residence and work, and a liquor store located ten miles from his home. He speaks four times a week with his son by phone. He makes few other phone calls otherwise.

We can draft a map of Allen's life. His business and fallback jobs focus on Ford vehicles. It seems he attempted to follow his passion and make his own way, but he failed the American dream. Now he grinds out a life on the margins of what he loves.

Allen's wife of 40 years died recently after a protracted illness. He does not spend money recreationally, and he travels only to work and to a liquor store. Had he friends or a lover,

he might travel around the city and spend money toward those ends; he does not. Further, checking a map of his neighborhood, we find that Allen drives past eight liquor stores on the way to his preferred shop, which suggests that he keeps his drinking secret from his neighbors. He spends no money or time on medical care, indicating either lack of access to grief counseling or a "bootstraps" approach to happiness.

We see a man grieving, isolated, and depressed.

Phone records indicate that Starks calls Gainesville, Florida, four times a week. Prior to his mother's death in 1990, he called Gainesville twice a month. On public record, he tends to endorse political causes in favor of the working class. Comparing his income with his father's circumstances suggests that Starks does not, however, send money home.

We can plausibly deny researching anything much more than Starks' basic records. We have not, after all, eavesdropped on a single phone call. Combining those basic records with our researching his father's life (which Starks would not think to suspect) we can draw valuable conclusions about Starks' personal priorities.

Starks had a loose relationship with his father until his mother's death in 1990, after which Starks began to support his father emotionally. Starks comes from a working class background, and his father's struggles are working class struggles – failed dreams, strict budgeting, uninspiring labor, and turning to booze in the absence of mental health care. Starks does not support his father financially, though he routinely supports political causes that would aid his father's situation.

Starks appears to have a complex relationship with his father, whose well-being he will neither relinquish nor fully commit to. He uses political advocacy for working class concerns as a proxy for interacting with his father's problems directly. By observing mere behavior, we see the erratic, conflicted attachment of a child who loves his father emotionally but struggles to know how to love him in practice.

Why does Starks not bring his father more into his life? Why does Starks not directly support his father's circumstances, given Starks' income and prestige?

We don't know or care. Starks is a target. His life is our weapon.

Metadata gives us actual power in negotiating with Starks: we know the nature of his love for his father and, by extension, his emotional relationship with working class circumstances.

How, then, do you suppose Starks responded when he read Stanton's denigration of "low-level mercantile considerations" within a class portrayed as "risky with responsibilities of self-governance?" Wouldn't such a man find his sympathies riled at Stanton's castigating the "less ambitious, concrete minded lower classes with no real sense of their situations?" Perhaps "empty egalitarianism" would not seem, to Starks, empty.

To verify my intuition, I checked my sketch of Starks' life against his psychological counseling records, for which you have no clearance. My story misses the mark on three or four points – more belt scars and splints for either man than one might guess – but the bigger picture stands.

I drew the above conclusions after looking at our indexed records for 30 minutes, and 30 minutes of my time are worth a whole week of Stanton's. These are powerful tools for negotiation. We can infer the shape of any life. Stanton should not merely have not-offended Starks; he should have played those private sympathies.

The text should use father imagery and language of reconciliation. Present a world of hope, for God's sake, where a failed entrepreneur's only option isn't humiliation, where fewer mothers die of bone cancer. Give him a taste of less ambiguous love.

We win the improbable by singing the audience's most sacred song as our battlecry. We must make Starks feel as though our proposal is his deepest story.

Stanton's story with our organization, I'm afraid, must end. Demote him. Thoroughly.

K Treglazov

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For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,  
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be.  
There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,  
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.