

The steel doors Joseph talked about are serious stuff, and the software in their lock systems is beyond state-of-the-art. It must be the work of the Decoder, who evidently isn't half bad at encoding either.

Joseph notices your pessimistic expression. "I thought as much. It's impossible to crack without a whole lot of computing power, right?"

You rifle through your coat's numerous pockets. You've still got your phone, but that's it - you left everything else on the now-stolen plane.

"Looks that way," you reply. "No reception. Same for everyone else's phones, I take it?"

"Yes," says Joseph. "No satellite signal either. Our batteries all ran out a while ago, anyway."

A thought occurs to you. "I know a guy that might be able to help us out. But I'll need to get his attention." You open your phone, and call the one person you know won't answer - the commander. "Commander, it's Detective Xyzzy," you say, ignoring the confusion on Joseph's face. "I've made an important breakthrough on the case. Easter Island is in danger - someone's launching missiles as we speak. It's...uh...it's Venus. The top-secret spy agency." You shrug at Joseph.

Within half a minute, your phone starts talking to you again. "Xyzzy! Cosmo. You should tell me. About danger!"

"Hi, Cosmo. I'll help you out, but first I need your assistance. Can you hack a locked door in California from there?"

"Easy. Where?"

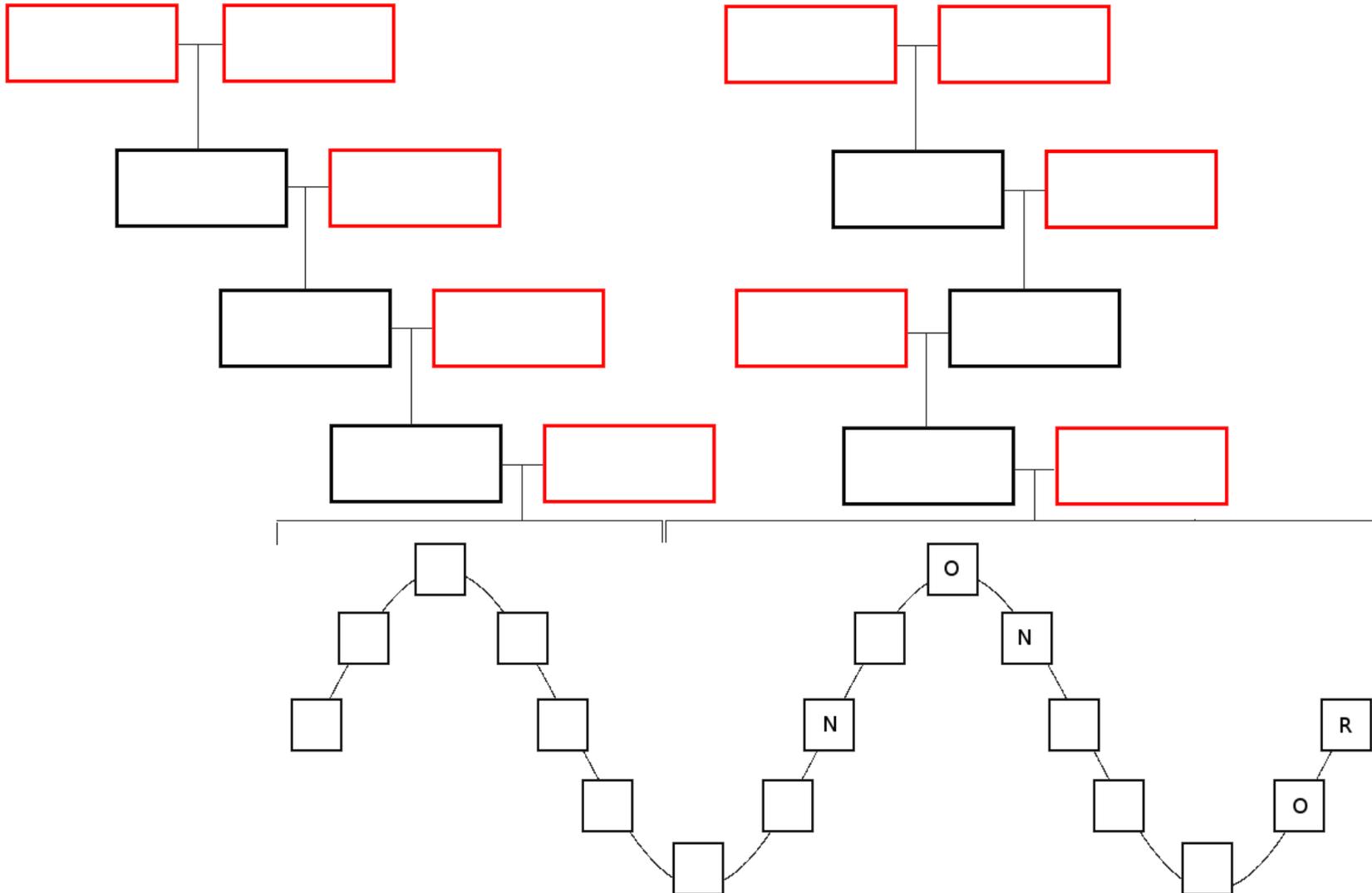
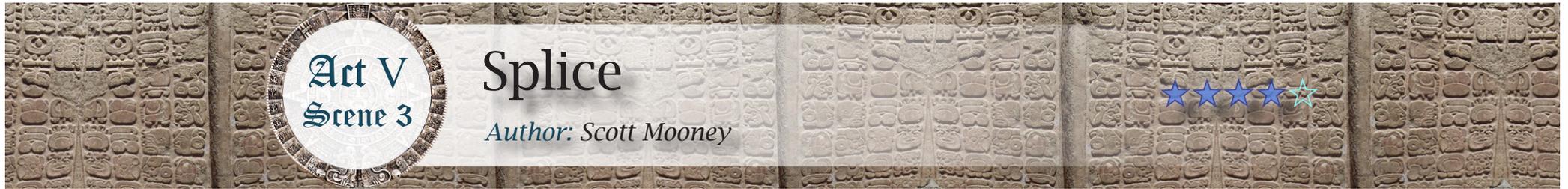
"The Winchester mansion. Look it up. All of the doors here probably have the same system, so pick one and give me the code."

Four seconds pass. "Got door. Will take a minute. Then you will tell me about Venus!"

You agree, and wait. After three minutes, you start to worry. "Everything OK, Cosmo?"

You hear frustrated noises. "Lockout system very sensitive. Hard to keep up attack on one part of program. You can help. Deal with part of program. Should appear on door readout."

The steel door has a digital readout like the one on the masked figure's outfit. An unusual display pops up, and there's no time to waste...



CLUES

- Monotonous and repetitive intonation (8)
- Tiny plant that is lucky in fours (6)
- Search for water via mystical means (5)
- Tough or surly; as in billy goats (5)
- Forcibly takes possession (6)
- Statues (collectively) (8)
- Unusual; weird (7)
- Inhalant used to subdue rioters (4,3)
- Two siblings sharing a birthday (5)
- Speak softly without pitch (7)