



Dou shake the commander hard, and eventually his eyes open. “Com-
mander?” you ask tentatively. He looks half-insane.

“Xyzy! At last!” he rants. “Another nightmare. Being chased. It was the howler monkeys!” He squeezes his eyes shut tight and shudders. You feel sorry for him, but there’s no time for consolation - you have to figure out what’s going on.

“Commander, I’ve been following your case files, but I need you to tell me what I’m looking for. What’s happened to our city? What has it got to do with everything I’ve seen?”

He ignores you and clambers to his feet. The blanket falls away, revealing the same police uniform he’d been wearing at headquarters. “You have to leave, Xyzy. It’s not safe here. No one is safe here!”

That arouses your curiosity. “What’s the deal with this place? I haven’t come across any secret factories or time travel machines yet. It’s just...creepy.”

The commander is still shaking his head, and he starts pushing you towards the door. “Get out of the pod. It’s not safe. Not safe in the pods!”

You take his word for it, and bolt for the door. On the inside of the door is a pin-board with some pictures and notes. Looks like something the commander has been working on with all his time here...



R H A S W E O T D

E W N I T C H H I

50 3 5 2 3 2

C Y S A R N S T L

A I D T I E S M N

7525 1 5 10 10

P S U D L I E D T

5 2 1 2 3 3

S L O G R A N C H

TRANSCRIPT:

P1: I like how the first four letters imply "only down!" - and I'm feeling down, because I only got a four myself: BONE.

P2: I got a four too, since it's spelled out at the very end there: MICE.

P1: I wish we hadn't got that F at the end! I only found a five: FILMY.

P2: I got a six: If you ignore that M in the middle of the board, you get TRIFLE at the start!

P1: How lucky that the first four numbers on the left of the board are consecutive, increasing evens! I was three off: $(7+4+8)*6*8+2$

P2: It's a shame the penultimate number breaks the string of evens. I was three away too: $(8*6-2)*(7*4-8)$

P1: I wanted to use that middle V for extra points, but had to settle for a four: CULT is written backwards at the start.

P2: I thought that N at the end was a D so I figured the last four letters made SHED. Whoops.

P1: I'm sorry, I meant to write down HOAX, but I put the B in place of the H by accident.

P2: I think the first six letters makes a word already (as do the last three), but I'm playing it safe with a five: AGENT.

P1: I was only five off: $(50-2)*(10+4)+6+4$

P2: I was three away... and I used the numbers in the same order! $50*(6+10-2)-4*4$

P1: What are the chances of getting nine consecutive letters in order!? I didn't get anything though.

P2: It's not quite in order, since the Q is at the start. I got a five: MOURN.

P1: My solution is six off: $(50-3)*(2*(1+2)+1)$

P2: I was six off... There must be a way to use those two 2's at the end! $(50-1)*(3*2+1)-2$

P1: Is it HARMONIES? Oh sorry, that's AFORE at the end, not MORE.

P2: Oh dear, I can only see a word ending in -ER, but you mentioned before the Conundrum that a word of that form wouldn't be accepted.