



# THE LOG THAT FILTERS

## #7


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### Art?!

Recently I found myself trying to explain roleplaying to non-gamers. Caught up in my topic, I repeated something that others have said before me: Roleplaying is Art. 

The funny thing is that until that moment I hadn't really considered all the ramifications of that statement. Sure, gaming is a form of art; most roleplayers would agree with that without much thought. But gaming as high Art, as meaningful and worthy of respect as sculpture, painting, or anything else found in a museum? I know *I'd* never thought of it that way.

But it is. Roleplaying is a new form of art with as much potential for human expression as any other art form—and with some unique properties. I suspect that the contributors to Interregnum already know this, at least on some level. After all most of us are adults, in our thirties if not older, and obviously of reasonable intelligence; no mere game or hobby could inspire such long-lasting loyalty (actually I know better, but stay with me ☺).

Of course most roleplaying is not really Art. The vast majority of games are just that, games; the point is not to express or expand consciousness, but to win. Hack 'n' slash

games have become such a stereotype of gaming that the term is almost meaningless, but such games are still prevalent. In such games roleplaying is at most the icing on the cake, and a thin icing at that. Yet from personal experience I can testify that the roleplaying experience has the potential to be much more, though that potential is all-too-rarely realized.

What are the unique qualities of roleplaying as Art? Three—no, four—leap to mind, though if any readers would like to suggest more I'd be very interested. Roleplaying is:

- 1) **Social**. It requires a group to exist. Other forms of art have social aspects, but none in which such a degree of freedom is accorded to all participants.



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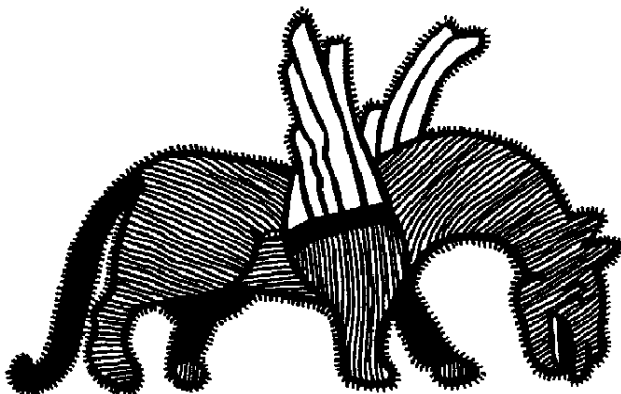
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2) Ongoing. Many of the best roleplaying experiences last for months or years, changing and growing over time. No other art form has this quality.

3) Unrecordable. Though in technical terms a roleplaying session could certainly be filmed and otherwise recorded, no record could reproduce the impact of the game in the primary stage: the minds of the participants. This is probably one reason why RPGs have not caught on with the larger population.

4) Finally, roleplaying is not a spectator event. It's difficult to imagine roleplaying being performed for an audience, but if it was it seems likely to produce boredom and confusion. This, too, is probably a major reason why RPGs are of limited appeal.

New permutations of gaming can circumvent these last two "problems"; live gaming probably has the potential to be a spectator sport (and are "American Gladiators" and pro wrestling that different from some LARPS?). However, it's arguable that LARPS of that sort aren't really roleplaying. Perhaps the key, unique quality of traditional roleplaying is that most of it takes place in the minds of the participants. If so, then it may be inherently impossible for gaming to appeal to the majority of the population—at least, not without a considerable change in general education and sensibilities. Or the development of mind-reading televisions. ☺



## The Gaming News

Thanks to **Richard Tucholka** of **Tri Tac Games** for his kind permission to reprint the following Net post. I hope to include a cartoon on the subject (drawn by a Tri Tac employee) in the next issue of Interregnum.

The text is reprinted in unaltered form.

rec.games.frp.advocacy #13716

From: tucholka@aol.com (Tucholka)

[1] FBI RAIDS SMALL MICHIGAN RPG COMPANY

Date: Wed Sep 07 13:07:48 EDT 1994

OK, there have been some wild rumors about the FBI raid on Tri Tac Games just after GENCON. Lets set them straight.

FBI RAIDS SMALL GAME COMPANY  
PRESS RELEASE

At 10am Tuesday morning, August 23rd, a special tactical team from the FBI gained swift and overwhelming entry into the corporate offices of Tri Tac Games in Pontiac Michigan to the great surprise of the entire staff who were still sipping coffee.

Richard Tucholka, owner and president of Tri Tac, was duly informed of his rights as the squad of federal agents neatly and politely searched the offices of Tri Tac claiming to be looking for 'phony FBI Identification Badges' and 'Illicit government operation manuals.'

It is to be noted that Tri Tac Games publishes an award-winning Role-Playing Game called Bureau 13, detailing the adventures of a secret division of the FBI which uses magic and Harrier Jump Jets to defend America from supernatural criminals and monsters.

After painstakingly searching everything from the yet-to-be released CD ROM computer game version of Bureau 13, through the paperback copies of the Cult -hit novels from Ace Books in New York, absolutely nothing incriminating or illegal was discovered-- an incident close to the precedent setting invasion of Steve Jackson Games a few years ago by the US secret service which resulted in a major lawsuit rightfully won by the innocent game company.

In preparation for another government visit, Mr. Tucholka has informed his lawyer, alerted the media, and set an extra pot of coffee to brew for the agents if they return.

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Yes, it happened. No kidding. Apparently some fool at GENCON thought a \$1 double sized Plastic ID badge on flaming orange and pink paper was a threat to national security. These badges were given to players of Bureau 13 as promotional material.

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The agents were professional and Tri Tac cooperated with them. Computers were not touched (It is a federal law that a writers 'Works in Progress' may not be taken.) They removed plastic Bureau 13/FBI ID badges from a display shelf and versions of a Department of Justice ID badge produced by Databank Press.

On Thursday the 25th Richard Tucholka was informed that the Federal Prosecutor would not be pressing charges for the badges because there was no malice or intent in their production. There would be a file established at the FBI with these badge examples for future reference. He was instructed to send in all production copies and masters as well as destroy the ID Badge Computer Graphics file in question. Richard Tucholka shook his head and said "Only an idiot could think these badges were real. Wonderful to see my tax dollars at work."

And that's the story.

8)



## A Wonder-full World?

There have been some odd developments on my recruitment drive for the Wonder campaign. I posted the flyers shown in Interregnum #6 in two local stores several weeks ago. To my surprise, there's been only one response since then—and that from someone who saw the flyer in Interregnum, not on the wall.

That doesn't make sense. In the past I've put up much cruder game announcements, and had ten or twenty replies. Why should the most polished announcement yet have such a terrible response?

I'd pretty much anticipated the reason, I think, and a caller confirmed it. The flyers are *too* polished; they look like advertisements for a product, not for a campaign. I'll have to post scraps of paper with a poorly-scrawled announcement in faded pencil to get a response. In the meantime, a notice posted in a few groups on the Internet has been considerably more effective.

I plan to print writeups of the Wonder campaign in future issues. However, I'm not sure what form these will take. While I often enjoy campaign writeups, they sometimes seem a little pretentious (at least mine do). Perhaps I'll simply write each adventure up as a scenario after it's played.



# Scenario:

## ~~There's Snow Place Like Home~~

## The Ice Ruins



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This generic scenario is designed for use with any fantasy roleplaying system. The impetus for action by the PCs is the Search Object. This can be an object tied in to the rest of the campaign; alternatively, the PCs could be hired to recover a lost or rumored object. Details for the latter are supplied.

If anyone does run this scenario, I'd very much like to hear how it goes. Please drop me a line with comments and suggestions!



### **I. Hired! (optional)**

The adventure begins in a northern city, roughly a month's travel or less from permanent ice fields. The party is contacted by a wealthy merchant who seeks capable salvors. He has a map which shows the location of an ancient religious artifact which is hidden in a castle in the far north, the Sacred Eye of Hec't; this is tremendously valuable to the right people. The merchant will bargain strongly, but

will agree to supply the necessary equipment for the PC expedition plus up to twenty percent of the profit from sale of the artifact. If necessary, he will provide enough up-front money to persuade the party to take the job. Oaths of loyalty may be required.

The map that the merchant supplies is obviously a copy. He admits that he has retained the original for safekeeping, but the copy is exact. He also reveals that a previous party was dispatched on the same errand, but never returned. His son Galen was included in that group; if the party returns with his son the merchant will reward them with a large bonus. Galen is carefully described: a young man of 18 years with long brown hair, a patchy dark beard, blue eyes and an audacious manner. He carries a sword with the family crest marked in sapphires on the hilt.

### **II. North!**

The party travels north. Supply encounters as desired.

### **III. Chilling Out**

The weather becomes bitterly cold. Soon the party enters ice-covered tundra. Exposure, snow-blindness and hypothermia become likely if

the party is careless, and as they travel north the cold and danger increase.

#### **IV. The Snow Cat**

On the third day of travel on the ice the party notices a white and graceful form shadowing their movements. It is a large snow cat, about the size of a cougar or large dog. It is clever, almost sapient, but it has no capability for speech. The beast is curious about these strange intruders into its territory, and will not attack unless forced.

The hide of the animal is fairly valuable if properly preserved. On the other hand, with a little effort and a few gifts of food the party may be able to befriend the creature. If so, it will still not approach them closely, but will not hide from their sight.

#### **V. Three Hunters**

The second week, a hunting party of three white-fur-clad Ice Barbarians is encountered. They call their tribe the Sevam. These are a peaceable people; they defend themselves if attacked, but even so try to avoid killing. If the snow cat travels with the party, the hunters will greet them with friendship; the beast is considered a totem of good luck by their people. Otherwise, the contact between the two groups must be determined through diplomacy and negotiation. Once peaceful contact is made, the hunters offer their hospitality to the party. If they accept, they are taken to a tribal ice-house. It is pleasantly warm there, and they are asked many questions about themselves and their travels. They are told that a party of Hotlanders (as they call Southerners) did pass through the area about eight months ago. After buying some smoked meat the party continued north, never returning.

The Sevam themselves do not travel that way, for there is no game there and hunters sometimes do not return.

The elders of the tribe also tell the story of the Great Freeze. According to legend, these lands were once much warmer; the Sevam lived in lands even further in the north then. But in the space of a few months the land became much colder, so much colder that they were forced to move south to their present domains.

The PCs are invited to stay the night, or several nights. They are given an entire longhouse to themselves; though dimly lit, and with a roof so low that they must stoop when they walk, it is warm and filled with odd and interesting curios. The walls are covered with

intricately carved tusks of forgotten animals, woven tapestries depicting scenes from unknown mythologies, hides of beasts never seen in southern lands, a large ivory egg inscribed in an obscure tongue foretelling strange prophecies, and anything else the GM desires. The floor of the house is entirely covered with



enormously thick and warm blankets; there are no beds as such.

In the morning the characters are fed, and may trade for goods. None of the Sevam will travel with the party, but they do wish them good luck. The remainder of the trip north is uneventful, the only item of interest being a smoking and steaming hot spring on the third day out. Among

the dangers the characters face are avalanches, snow-covered crevasses, and any arctic beasts the GM cares to supply.

**VI. The Castle**

The party now enters a region so cold that normal chances of exposure and frostbite are doubled. There are few geographical features here, making navigation difficult. With careful search the party finally discovers the castle.

Little more than ruins remain. The broken base of a tower points upward, covered with snow; this is the sign by which the castle can be located. The ground here is broken and uneven, with many pits and rocks. An incredibly fine and powdery snow covers everything, and the cold is so extreme that the snow behaves like a fine sand, or even a liquid. There are even snow dunes.

**VII. Slippery Slope**

A search of the area takes an hour resulting in the discovery of a large square hole—apparently the remains of a downward-leading stone stairway. The walls of the staircase are completely obscured by snow. The stair is 20 feet deep, but the bottom 10 feet are filled with powdery snow: from above, it appears that the stair ends ten feet down on a snowy floor. The stairs are also covered with ice, and very slippery; a Dexterity check is necessary to avoid falling. Anyone who slips on the stairs falls deep into the powder, and appear to have been swallowed up by the floor.

A character in the powder is likely to be extremely surprised. It is also possible that they may be injured in the fall, though the snow may cushion them from the full damage. Adding to the confusion is the fact that a frozen body is lying at the bottom of the staircase.

A Dexterity check must be made to begin climbing up the stairs. If climbed on hands and knees, the task will be much easier, though still difficult. Should the character remain buried in powder for more than a minute or two, they will begin to take damage from the cold.

The characters now face an interesting problem in physics. How will they get to the door? Simply plowing through the snow will be extremely difficult; the characters will have to pick a difficult and iced-up lock or break down a heavy door blind, completely submerged in snow. On the other hand, getting the snow out of the hole will also be difficult. It flows almost like a liquid, making shoveling a time-consuming task indeed. Melting it will result in a large pool of water which will soon become ice, blocking the door closed—and if the characters wade through the water before it freezes, their clothes are likely to become extremely wet. Wet clothes in deep cold can become a life-threatening hazard within moments.

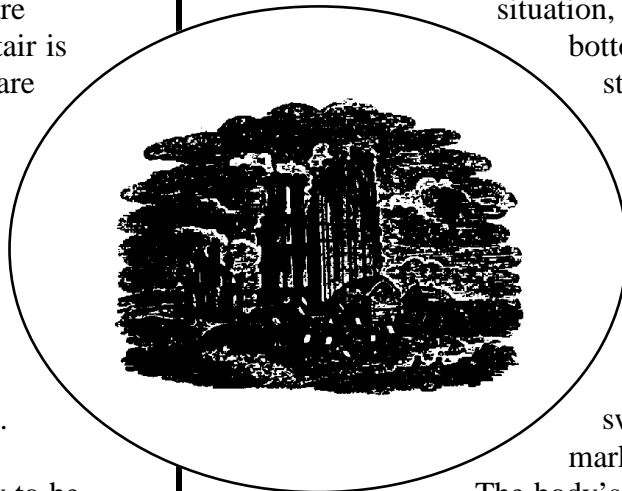


However the PCs resolve the situation, the body in the bottom of the staircase is the merchant's son.

It is well preserved by the cold, and matches the description of the merchant's son; it bears a sword with a crest marked in sapphires.

The body's left leg is badly

broken.



If the party has some means of communicating with the dead or otherwise obtaining the information, they may discover the following: the rest of the party was killed a few miles away when they fell through a thin patch of ice into a deep pit. With the castle in sight, Galen decided



to complete the mission; falling through the powder at the bottom of the stairs, he was unfortunate enough to break his leg and freeze to death.

### **VIII. Icy Surprise**

The stairwell ends at a heavy wooden door. It is locked with a heavy and complex lock, difficult to open. Once opened, it reveals a stone corridor ten feet wide, leading straight ahead (north). The corridor goes straight for 30 feet, slopes downward for another 30 feet, and then turns left. Waiting around this corner is a large Silver Blob, about the size of a small horse. It is absolutely silent; the characters are likely to be surprised. The blob registers on magic-detection spells. It lashes out at the party

with its six pseudopods, hitting six times per round. Each pod has a 50% chance of hitting, and each does as much damage as shortsword, ignoring metal armor. However, the damage takes effect the round *after* a successful hit, as the cold penetrates.

Two fighters can fight abreast here, or three at a penalty on all attack skills. The creature takes only minimal damage from ordinary weapons. Weapons under the effect of spells that enhance damage do only that extra damage which is produced by the magic. Magic weapons do full damage. Unenchanted metal weapons striking the creature have a 50% chance of shattering due to the extreme coldness of the blob's flesh.

The blob is completely vulnerable to heat damage, and even a fist attack is warm enough to do full damage (though the fist involved would take damage as if hit by a pseudopod). The creature has no armor and twice as many hit points as a healthy human being. In systems which use hit locations, the creature is treated as if it only has one location. The creature cannot be stunned or rendered unconscious. At temperatures below freezing it regenerates 1 hit point per round until dead (except for heat damage). Mind-affecting spells do not affect the blob, and cold-producing spells will actually heal it. It is normally affected by other magic.

### **IX. The Room**

Proceeding on, the party arrives at a large wooden door with a small shuttered opening at



eye level. The door is barred on the outside (where the PCs are). Behind the door is a skeleton waiting to poke the eye out of whoever opens the shutter. A successful perception roll will alert the players to danger: the faint sound of clacking bones.

This room is the only location of interest in the ruins. All other corridors are filled with snow and rubble, or lead to bare chambers.

The room is full of weirdly glowing skeletons, four for every adventurer. They move silently to the door as it opens. If two characters stand in the doorway, they will face only three skeletons at once. The skeletons are unarmed and unarmored, most attacking with clawed hands; two of the skeletons bear ancient, ornate axes, which they wield with average skill. Strangely, every skeleton “bleeds” a silvery liquid from its bones when broken. Though this liquid looks like that of the blob, it is inanimate. Apart from their glowing bones the skeletons are normal undead.

### X. And...

A search of the room will reveal the following objects: 3 moldy tapestries, a brass log-holder by the fireplace, two battered silver lamps of moderate value, a broken wooden chair and a wooden desk in reasonably good condition. Inside the drawers of the desk may be found a writing stone for sharpening pens, several quills in poor condition, some frozen and highly brittle blank parchment, a copper ring engraved with the name “*Mavia*”, and documents containing anything the GM feels like throwing in. However the Sacred Eye is nowhere to be found.

However, the desk itself is extremely valuable; it is a product of an ancient artisan of unparalleled ability, renowned for the beauty and simplicity of his designs. The PCs are unlikely to recognize this fact unless they are expert traders or wood-carvers. The desk

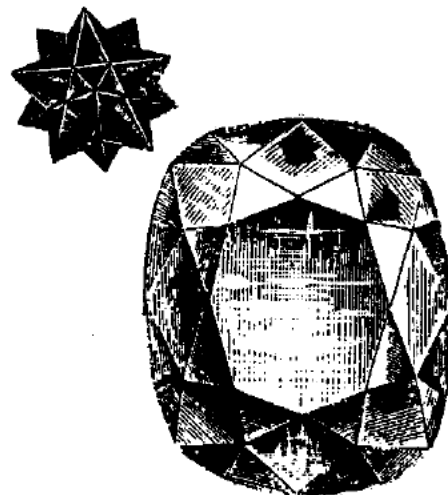
weighs roughly 400 pounds, and is extremely bulky.

An *intensive* search of the room reveals a hidden door. This door is opened by a secret mechanism: a nearly invisible catch set in seemingly loose mortar between two nearby stones. Opened, it reveals a small closet-sized space: a priest’s hole. Inside is a single inanimate skeleton. Clinging to the decaying bones are the tattered remnants of what was once a fine robe, picked out in cloth-of-gold. A search of the dust on the floor of the room produces a small leather book with pages eaten away by mold, several small pieces of religious-looking jewelry, and an embroidered strap with a flap attached—the last being made of cloth-of-gold, exquisitely decorated with jewels. It is an odd piece, but may be recognized as an eyepatch.

Inside the skull of the skeleton rests the Eye of Hec’t. It possesses no magical powers usable by nonbelievers, though it is detectable as magic.

### XI. Return

The return should be relatively uneventful. If special effort was made to retain its friendship, the snow cat might choose to stay with the party. The tribe of Sevam will appreciate hearing the story of the party’s adventures. The merchant will be most grieved to hear of the death of his son, but will keep his bargain. And the religious jewelry may be sold for a considerable sum.





**Topic #6:**  
**THE HORROR...**  
**THE HORROR...**

Ironically enough, I couldn't think of anything much to say about horror for this issue. Instead here's a new story which may be mildly horrifying.



**In The Box**

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*Where the hell am I?*

*Nothing. There's nothing. No light, no darkness. Jesus, what's happened to me?*

*All right, hold on. Shout.*

*"Hey!"*

*Nothing. I can't hear anything. Can't feel anything. Am I breathing? I*

*Hold it hold it HOLD IT. Think. I'm a science fiction guy—there's got to be an explanation.*

*First things first. I think, therefore I am. Heh. Never thought that lesson would be useful. What's the Latin for that? Res ipset loquitur. No, that's not it. Mrs. Hodes would be pretty disgusted...but then, I never knew as much Latin as she thought. I*

*Sensory deprivation? Like that movie with the ape-man? But how'd I get here? And*

*No light, no dark. Doesn't make sense—it's got to be one or the other. Could it be my optic nerve? If my nerve was burned out, would this happen? No...it would have to be brain damage, I think. But I don't feel damaged.*

*Would I know?*

*Suspended animation? Not in 1994. Hold it.*

*I went to sleep. The last thing I did was go to sleep. In my bed. And I never signed up for that cryogenic suspension insurance thing anyway. Besides, I don't believe a frozen brain can think no matter what Larry Niven says.*

*Maybe I had a heart attack and my folks had me frozen.*

*No. They'd never get to me in time. My brain would be spoiled meat.*

*Not spoiled. Not spoiled. I can think. I can think.*

**WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ME?**  
**WHAT'S—**

**LIGHT**

White room. Misty walls. Like 2001. This had better not be Heaven, or I'm going to feel pretty stupid. Hey, I have a body!

*"Yeah!"*

Ears work too! All right. I'm okay. All here and in working order! I hope.

*"Where the f\_ck am I?"*

*"Welcome."* I spin. White suit, white slouch hat—he looks like Patrick McGoohan in The Prisoner. He's seated in a big misty throne, smiling.

Pause. *"Okay."* Grin on one side. *"Okay. What's...what's going on? Where am I?"*

He smiles that crooked smile. *"You're in my home. And you're welcome."*

Um. Better be smart. “Thanks. What’s my status? What year is this?”

He chuckles. McGoohan never sounded like that. “Nothing to worry about—really. You’re fine. If there’s anything you want—and I mean anything—ask.”

“Is this the future?”

That smile again. “You could say that. Care to see it?”

God, I’m so tired! But I’ve got to. But it’s all too much. “Please. Could you tell me how I got here? Are we in Boston—I mean, Massachusetts? And why am I—”

“Hold it.” Soft, but sharp. “There’s no rush. Let’s have some suitable surroundings.”

My bedroom! What a mess. Is he—still there. I guess it’s not a dream. But I knew that.

He grins, waves his hand. Sh\_t! Everything’s flying into place! It’s never been this clean before...even that spot on the carpet—

“Bet you’ve wanted to be able to do that for a long time.” He’s smiling. Pleased with himself. I sit on the bed, lie down looking at him. Weird thought: I hope I’m not some sort of futuristic catamite. No—can’t be. That would be too ridiculous. I scootch back until I’m sitting with my back against the wall. He’s looking at me.

“So. Let me think for a minute. I mean...can I...”

One-sided grin as he spreads his hands. I close my eyes. I’d like to pull the blankets over my head...hold on.

Magic is still bullshit. This is the future. Technology. With that sort of special effect it

must be...probably...a computer simulation. Makes sense. Am I a hologram?

“Am I a hologram?”

Grin on both sides that time, and a nod. “Close enough. ‘Simulation’ would be a better word.”

Um. Simulation. Um. Ohhhh... “So I’m dead.”

One side, but he looks a little sympathetic. “Not really. You’re you. Peter Maranci. Is there any point in thinking about it any other way?”

Hmm. I guess not. God.

“Am I a second-class citizen? Or any sort of citizen? Do I have any rights?”

A temporizing look. “Well, no. But I do treat my guests humanely. You’ll be well treated. And, well, there’s no double whammy here—no tomato surprise. This isn’t the Twilight Zone, and you won’t find that you’re actually in Hell. You should be happy. I want you to be comfortable—you have nothing to worry about. Really.” A searching, sincere look. “You’re tired. Get some rest; we’ll talk in the morning. I’ll answer all your questions in the morning.”

I *am* tired. And he’s gone! Wait, a tired hologram? Programming. Dammit, I’m a puppet.

But I’m real. And so tired...

Wish he’d left a hologram woman for me...what kind of future is this...heh. Nah.

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WHOA. What a dream. The alarm’s not on! Is it a workday? Am I late?

Him again. (No!). Now he looks like Gandalf, but I can tell—it’s him. “There’s no more work for you. You won’t have to go back to the firm again.”

“Okay. I guess there had to be an upside to this.”

“More than that, you’ll see. So. Questions?”

“What year is it?”

“2064. A.D., of course. Anno Domini.”

“And I’m in a computer. Can I see what it’s like outside? Do we have FTLflight?”

“Faster than light? No. It may turn up some day, but no one’s very interested any more. After all, our world is effectively infinite in size.”

“So most people live like this? Hooked into computers?”

“Those who can afford it. Though most who do are careful to take care of themselves. Fitness is more...more a part of society than it was, even in your day. We’re not pod people.”

“So what’s happened? Are there space colonies? New inventions? New advances in physics—what’s the successor to Chaos Theory? Who’s in the White House—is there still a White House?”

He laughs...he’s enjoying this. “Okay, sit back. I’ll give you a show. With pictures.”

He does. It’s a hell of a show. Things didn’t turn out as badly as I feared, it seems. Though not as well as I could have hoped. Different, mostly. Funny, because that doesn’t surprise me at all. Always expect the unexpected—I figured *that* one out a long time ago.

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The show goes on. Day after day...every morning I wake up, and he’s there. Not pushing, but there. If I ask him to leave me

alone for a while, catch my breath, will he turn me off?

He really seems to like all this. I’d better be careful...I know how easy it is to erase a program. Can I escape? Is he telling me the truth?

The things he can do in this room—no, this *holospace*, are incredible. Any sensation, any setting...I can’t imagine how many programming-hours went into this. It’s all so *real*.

He’s gone again, and I’m tired. The room is different now, bigger, more comfortable. Silly not to take advantage of my condition, I guess. Just a few bytes changed and I’m in a space suite instead of Malden. Pretty amazing. And he seemed to enjoy doing it. He sure gets a kick out of this place...

Jeeze. All these changes. And...am I real? Oh, God, am I real?

I’m me. I remember. I remember spending the day home sick in my bathrobe when I was fourteen after I watched Mommie Dearest, screeching like Faye Dunaway and cleaning just for the fun of having something to scream about. “But is it *clean* Christina? Do *you* think it’s clean?” Heh.

I remember. The fall in the library when I was four. My baby blanket. That pink wax rabbit. That atomic mole nightmare when I was four. Yeah, I’m me. And if they programmed me to think that I know myself...they’ve done a damn good job. Screw it.

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Next day. He looks like Orson Welles in *The Third Man*. I’m getting reckless, but I don’t care. “Are *you* a hologram?”

He's amused. "No. It would be safe enough to say that I'm real. No offense intended, of course."

"And your appearance...just a sort of "suit", as it were?"

"Exactly. I'm not surprised that you're catching on so quickly, given your background in science fiction."

I nod. "You've told me a lot. Thank you." He nods and smiles.

"Just one more thing. Why am I here?"

Is that a smirk or a grimace? With Orson, is there a difference? I can't tell.

"It's...a hobby, if you will. A popular one for intelligent people. Talking to artificial personalities. You can bring back Beethoven from the dead, for example, and restore his hearing, play modern music for him, show him modern entertainment equipment. His reactions are wonderful."

I have to take this in. "You know, I think I can see the appeal. I remember I sometimes wondered what Beethoven would think of *They Might Be Giants*."

He nods. "Or of *Oingo Boingo*. You get the idea. Of course some programs are more popular than others. There's Elvis, for example. Or Marilyn Monroe—one of the hottest programs around. Something like six years on the *New York Times* best-seller list."

Ho ho. "I don't suppose she just answers questions."

He has the grace to look a little embarrassed. "No, of course not. She's usually pretty grateful to find out that she's not dead."

"Do you have many holopeople?"

"We call them Sims. Hmm. Yes, I have decent collection. A bit esoteric, some rare items...there probably aren't more than two hundred people in the world who have Paul Linebarger, for example."

Wow. Cordwainer Smith? Too much. "How do you...get them?"

"There are stores. People trade. Some are gifts. Oh, you mean how're they *made*? Some are programmed, designed—talking autobiographies, so to speak. Though the better ones have grafted emotional tracks."

"Am I going to meet these...Sims?"

"Maybe later—some of them, anyway."

Something in his voice... "Some of them are erased, aren't they?"

"Yes. But you won't be."

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'Night'. Strange that I should have insomnia when I don't even have a body. Strange that it should seem dark when I'm really nothing more than electrical impulses—light, really—in a machine. It's all so insane. And...say, why *me*? Elvis and Marilyn I can understand, but why *me*? I'm not famous, and I didn't die—at least, I don't remember dying.

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Next day. He looks strange, smooth but somehow old—the first body I don't recognize.

I don't want to ask him. We talk and talk. But finally there's nothing else to say.

"Who programmed me? What sort of biography did they use to make me up?"

He's giving me a strange look. "Sorry, I didn't tell you. Not all Sims are composites. If the original is available, they can make a personality print. It's more complicated than that, but that's the gist of it. You're a print."

Huh. What the hell was I thinking? "Look, why me? What did I do? I mean, why do you have *me*?"

"Why you?" He smiles strangely. "You tell me."

He's gone.

He's crazy. How the hell should I know why? Maybe I became famous. But how? There were no prospects in the near future. It doesn't make any sense—

Oh. Oh no—yes. It makes sense. The bodies he wears. The way he seems to know every obscure fact I mention. Even the way he speaks. All of it so familiar. All of it *just like me*.

My God. I'm the ultimate in personalized accessories. Yourself in a box?

How could he do this to me?

How did I get to be such a bastard?

*I want out.*

-end-



## Comments #6



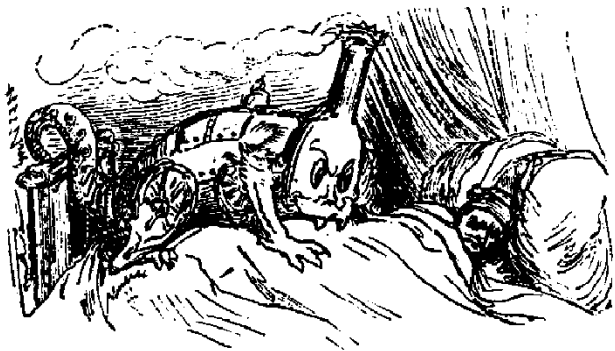
**Doug Jorenby:** Regarding the possibility of creating a truly alien perspective, I suspect that the question won't be resolved until we encounter a truly alien race. On the other hand, we have races right here that may help explore the issue. Take cats, for example. As a cat person, I'm firmly convinced that cats have a wide emotional spectrum, and that there's no emotion that a cat may feel that I couldn't understand. Does that mean that cats and human beings share a fundamental similarity, or am I just deluding myself that these small carnivores are like me? ☺

**Castle Falkenstein** sounds extremely interesting. With your strong recommendation in mind, I picked up the book in the local game store. It's been a while since I last bought a new game system; I was shocked to see that the price was over \$30! I found that I simply could not pull out \$30 from my wallet for a game. Especially one that I was unlikely to play, not because the game isn't good but because I'm not playing any new games. Weird, huh?

Re the question of which form of LARP fosters better world development, Interactive Literature or Live Combat: It depends on the game, I guess. The Interactive Lit. games I've seen have all been one-weekend deals, with a differing background for each new game; this makes it difficult to develop a continuing world. On the other hand, the "worlds" of Live Combat games are generally rather crude and simplistic. Tabletop roleplaying blows the doors off of both kinds of LARP in any case.


**George Phillis:** I believe that a superhero LARP could indeed be done, but it would work best in an Interactive Literature format. In any case, need a superhero game feature flying and other showy effects? A game with a more sedate power level might work very well, if handled right. The challenge would be to find a team of GMs up to the task.

The new novel looks great—I look forward to the next installment. For some reason I really enjoy fantasy genre works more than superhero stories; I'm not sure why. In any case, the beginning of No Tears for a Princess/The Warrior Unseen (is that the whole title, or are they two alternatives?) is deft and involving. I have to wonder what your secret is for handling dialog.



**Gil Pili:** I appreciate your concern over the possibility of a flamewar in IR; thus far we've managed to avoid that problem, and with any luck we'll continue to do so. Frankly, I don't think they make interesting reading. And we're all a little old to be squabbling in public (not that we have anything to be squabbling about).

Am I to conclude that you've actually stuck your finger in an electric socket? How shocking. Sorry. I apologize. Couldn't help myself. ☺

 I too am looking forward to the **Stargate** movie, and even more toward **Heinlein's The Puppet Masters**. Of course, they'll probably stink; it seems that the only good science fiction movies I ever see are those that I expect to be bad. On the other hand, it's nice to see that science fiction in the movies is clearly here to stay. Given the "name" stars in both features, we're clearly out of the B-movie ghetto for good.

"Clouds, Like Sentinels" was *very* interesting, Gil—very different. The conclusion was perhaps a bit depressing, but it worked. Though it might have been a trifle abrupt...I'll have to re-read this one a few more times and think about it. Definitely food for thought, which is good.

**Curtis Taylor:** First, my sympathies on the car accident, and congratulations that you yourself were unharmed. I've been in a number of accidents myself (though they were never my fault; the first time I was hit by a speeding car as I walked my bicycle across a road at the age of 12), and I know well how much they can take out of you. It's inevitable that we're all going to be involved in auto accidents; anything you can walk away from has to be considered okay. Frightening, but better your car than your life, right?

That reminds me of a horror story of my own: in fact, two of the accidents I was in where notably bizarre to say the least. Remind me to email you about 'em sometime.

The RQCon 2 information looked extremely enticing; it's a pity that I won't be able to make it, but it conflicts with Arisia, the one convention I've always gone to. Would you be interested in representing IR at RQCon 2?

Perhaps I should consider myself fortunate that I can't say anything meaningful about the card info. **Magic: The Gathering** is a cruel monkey to have on one's back...☺

**Dale Meier:** The Toon items were definitely amusing, Dale—they fit in well with the spirit of the best old cartoons. Speaking of which, I've noticed with shock that old Bugs Bunny cartoons are actually being *censored* in reruns! For example, there's one classic in which Daffy and Bugs are in a contest to entertain an audience. Daffy is technically better, but bombs every time while Bugs gets a huge response with no effort. Finally, Daffy performs a killer act: he swallows nitroglycerine, gunpowder, Uranium

238, shakes well, swallows a lighted match and...BOOM!

In a rerun on Nickelodeon a few days ago the “swallow a lighted match” line was obviously cut. I suppose that the network executives (read: morons) thought that some kid might swallow a lighted match in imitation (as if swallowing gunpowder and TNT are okay! ☺). If this keeps up, we’ll soon be watching nothing but **Barney**. This sort of thing must be stopped.

The reviews were excellent. Just the sort of substantive material that Interregnum needs. I was interested to see that Judge Dredd is still being published, since I read the original stuff many years ago.

As for what LARP system I’d recommend: in part that depends on what LARP organizations are in your area. I suspect that there may not be any? If so, your choices are limited. The IFGS rules are workable for combat and such. Interactive Literature rules can be easier to roleplay with. However, there are no IL rulebooks that I know of on the market. Perhaps the Nexus rules recently published by Chaosium would serve your needs, though I agree with a recent assessment of the authors in a past issue: one’s a nice guy, the other is a real jerk. For some reason, I have a problem purchasing the artistic work of jerks, no matter how good that work might be...

**Virgil Greene:** In your review of humorous games you neglected to mention TWERPS, The World’s Easiest Role Playing Game System; that seems odd, since you’ve been such a fan of that system for so long.

The comedy bits were very good. You may be interested to hear that a reader of the promotional issues singled them out for praise.

Interesting review of The World Builder. It seems that new roleplaying magazines come

into existence so frequently (and disappear just as quickly) that you may never run out of new publications to review. I’ve mailed a set of IRs to the editor of the Zine-Find for review, and will report on the result when it turns up.



**Collie Collier:** “You’re Playing What?!”

is an excellent article, scholarly (but very readable) and thorough. Nice work. However, there does seem to be a section missing; is that my fault? I have a nagging fear whenever I format a zine that the text will somehow be damaged.

A random thought: Is it necessary that the player characters in a campaign be a team? Could a game function *without* a team?

I couldn’t help but start to apply your archetypal team roles to other dramatic situations. How would you classify Iago, for example?

**David Dunham:** A “well-spoken” Storm Bull worshipper!? He’s obviously a Trickster in disguise! ☺

I enjoy your RuneQuest material very much—it’s wonderfully dense. I can’t recall if you published the mechanics of Pendragon Pass

in *The Wild Hunt*, but if not perhaps you could publish them here—if Chaosium doesn't mind.

I admired the use of the marriage ceremony in the campaign. That's a major (and terrifying) experience for anyone which is simply ignored by 99% of GMs. I remember a game in which my own character got married; it was a seminal point in his life, a major milestone. And a completely non-violent one.

**David Hoberman:** AD&D™ is “light” fantasy, David? *That's* a bit hard to believe! The game is almost always an focused on killing and death. “Light” fantasy to me would be, say, *The Wind In the Willows*. I suppose some fuzzy animal games might fit that pattern, but those I've heard of have followed the same pattern of violence as more traditional games, and even “dark” games—which seem to be distinguished from mainstream games more by attitude than by content.

Wonder may be a light fantasy game—or at least, lighter than most. There will be some combat, but probably very little. Can interest in a game be sustained without recourse to the quick fix of conflict? Well, yes. My Nereyon campaign has very little violence, though in many ways it's darker and more tragic (or bathetic) than games such as *Vampire*.

A very amusing campaign writeup. Will there be more, or was that a one-shot?

**Elizabeth McCoy:** Welcome to *IR*, Elizabeth! Glad to have you aboard, even if only for an occasional visit.

It's interesting that you should choose amnesia as a topic. I've written extensively about that topic in *The Wild Hunt*, and even practiced it on David with mixed results. I'm almost surprised he allowed you to try it after his experience with me...☺

Needless to say, I agree with you absolutely. A character with amnesia is a very good way to get a key role with lots of roleplaying potential in a game. And the better your GM, the more interesting and challenging your character will be.

## BE MY GUEST II

Directly following this page is the course syllabus for “Designing a Fantasy Role-Playing World” by **Rich Staats**. Some readers may remember his scenario “The Fastest Tentacle In the West” in *IR* #3. I was forced to format the article rather hastily; any errors are probably mine, not Rich's fault.

## NEXTISH

On time and larger, I hope.

—>Pete



### COLOPHON

*The Log That Flies #7* was gestated in a *P. Maranci 30.5 brain*. Much of the text was then written with *PC-Write 2.5*, an ancient but serviceable ~~villain~~ word processor.

The text was formatted for desktop publication using *Publish-It 4.0 for Windows*, a cranky but cheap DTP program.

The DTPed document was printed at a ruinous cost at a laser printing service, on a 300 dpi laser printer.

Most of the art in *TLTF* is taken from books of copyright-free clipart published by the **Dover Publishing Co.** of Mineola, NY. Reviews of various Dover books may be printed in future issues.

The art was copied on a **Kodak 2110** high-speed duplicator.

Is it just a coincidence that Quark the Ferrengi on *Deep Space 9* looks exactly like Ross Perot? ☺ —>Pete