

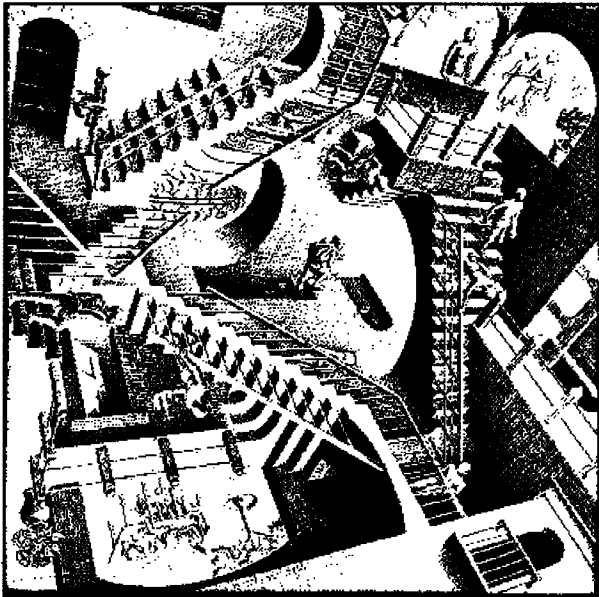
THE LOG THAT FEELS

#12

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Mechanical Chaos Rules!

There are times when I can't help but suspect that my life is scripted by a Writer; the things that happen to me are sometimes too ridiculous to be purely random occurrences. The past month has been like that. Within a three-week period, the following things broke:

My computer, car, VCR, CD player, computer, printer, and heart. Okay, one of those doesn't belong on the list. ☺

The computer was the worst of it, though. It was freezing up and giving strange memory error messages. Since time was running out on my warranty I decided to make the long trip to

the shop while I could still get it fixed for free. It was in the shop for days. Unable to find the problem, the techs replaced the motherboard, RAM, and power supply.

It ran fine for three days. On the fourth day, I was running Windows when it suddenly froze solid, and then the screen went blank. The reset button did nothing. Only after I turned it off and on twice did it work.

I'd hoped that it was a one-time thing, but of course that was simply wishful thinking. The next day it was dead, dead as could be.

Back to the shop (which meant two hours of driving, by the way). Once again, the techs couldn't figure out the problem: this time they replaced the motherboard (again), CPU, and the drive controller card. I brought it home, and so far it's been fine. But it's no longer on warranty, which means that it's only a matter of time.

Incidentally, when I brought it home the second time one of the first things I did was try to print out. And it was then that I discovered that my *printer* was dead! I won't tell you what I went through to get that fixed...I'll just say that it took weeks, and a lot of effort (though it too was on warranty).

All of which goes to explain that it's an extremely short zine from me this time. My apologies. I'll catch up on comments nextish.

F5 Fracas Continued

Those who like flames and conflict might be interested to hear that a reporter from San Francisco Weekly interviewed me recently for a piece he was writing about the problems of Factsheet 5. Several of my more-pithy comments were included in the article, though it seemed to change focus halfway through and started praising F5's editor for his support of the 1st Amendment. Nonetheless, I'm sure that the article must have been at least a little annoying to the F5 crew. And they're sure to have read it, since F5 is based in San Francisco.

On the Verge of

Wonder

It feels as if the Wonder campaign has been pending for a year (and maybe it has). It's finally starting to move. However, it's hasn't yet officially begun.

What does that mean? I have an "origin story" scenario (as detailed in "Bar Wars", IR #1) ready to get the PCs together as a group. However, after several months I have yet to be able to get all of the players together for a single session › and that first session will be important enough to the rest of the campaign that I want all the players to be there for it.

On the other hand, simply waiting for months on end without playing is hardly a way to maintain interest in the game. Faced with

that choice, I decided to make up a "before the beginning" scenario, and run the available players through it. We've actually played for four sessions so far, and I think they've worked well.

I've yet to get character writeups from the players for inclusion here. That is, I do have character writeups for the *game*; but I suspect that the players will want to re-write them for publication, to avoid revealing secrets and

surprises. I can certainly sympathize with that. With luck, though, I'll be able to write up the first sessions for IR #14.

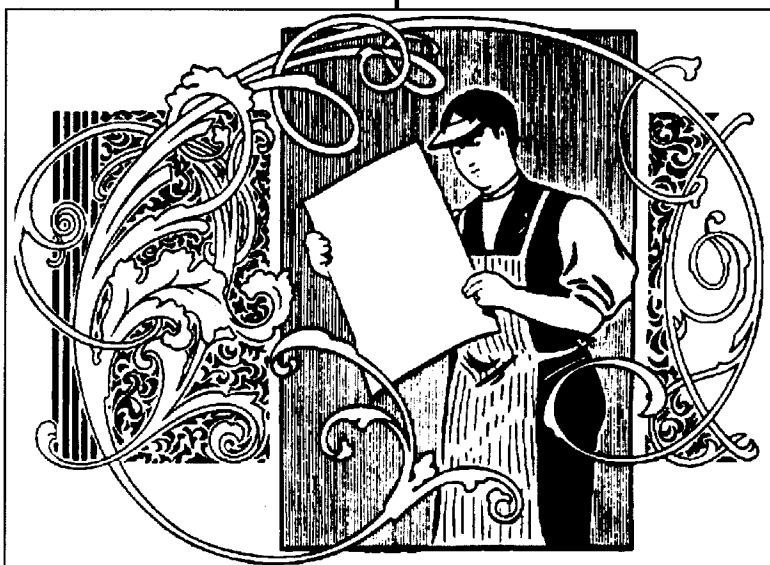
In the meantime, I've come to a strange realization.

It was in one of his last books that **Robert**

Heinlein wrote something like "once you get used to walking around naked all the time, any amount of clothing makes you feel as if you're wearing the full regalia of a rajah."

I wouldn't know about that. However, it seems that the same logic is applicable to roleplaying systems. I'd planned to work up a simplified system of mechanics for use with Wonder. In fact, I'd already worked up *two* systems, with various variants. But when the time came to begin playing, I found that I just couldn't bear to use them.

Over the years that I've been running the Nereyon campaign, the mechanics I've used went through a gradual metamorphosis. Originally it was RuneQuest, minus a few specialized aspects. However, the campaign was sheetless › I held all the character sheets, in order to help players think



of their characters as people rather than as a collection of statistics. That made it easy for me to change the system as I went along, since I didn't have to coordinate with the players.

You could call it laziness, but most changes were simply the elimination of chunks of the system. After all, we all knew what the characters' capabilities were; why slow down play with constant reference to a sheet? And why be restricted to someone else's system of rules when I *knew* what should and shouldn't happen anyway?



Eight years later, Nereyon is almost completely systemless. We roll percentile dice to determine the degree of success of failure of some actions, and I roll them to determine things I'm not sure of; if I don't know or care about the answer to a yes-no situation, for example, I might roll a die to determine the answer. I also find it convenient to roll percentile dice to determine some aspects of new situations or encounter (i.e., how friendly are they? Sane? Capable? Realistic vs. fairy-tale-like? Etc.). It may sound strange, but it works.

It works for Wonder, too, though I do sometimes refer back to a set of percentile skills for the characters until I get to know them well. But it really has struck home to me that know that I'm used to the freedom and convenience of "systemless" GMing, it's very hard to go back to using any RPG system at all. I wonder if anyone else out there has experienced the same effect?

NEXTISH

And there it is...my shortest zine ever. I'll have to take heed of my own nagging and make sure to write every day for #13 (plus double the comments). In the meantime, take care!



—>Pete

COLOPHON

The *Log That Flies* #12 was gestated in a *P. Maranci 31.0 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 on an Okidata OL400e 300 dpi laser printer.

How ironic...the biter bit. I am filled with shame!©

—>Pete