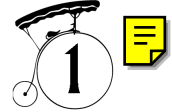


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ZINE WITHOUT A NAME



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So much has happened.

I'm writing this in a hurry, because the deadline is in three days and I want to get this done. So here's some of what's happened since my last zine:

UPDATES

- I'm engaged! Her name is Teri. The wedding will be on April 21, 2001.
- I've moved. With great sadness, it was necessary to give up the old Malden place. Now I live in Woonsocket, RI. It's a hell of a commute. But it's a lot cheaper.
- My job has moved to Quincy, and will move near Fenway in a few months. I'm anticipating a 4 - 5 HOUR daily commute (round-trip). This may not improve my mood. :-)
- I've left TIAC (at last!). They finally got too bad even for me, so now I'm the proud owner of my own domain. My new email address: peter@maranci.net
- My web site has moved—please change your bookmarks! My RQ site is now at <http://www.maranci.net/rq.htm>
- My old web site has changed. If you want a laugh, take a look at <http://www.tiac.net/users/maranci/tiacsux.htm> . The word on Usenet is that TIAC (now a proud member of the world-wide PSINet megacorporation) doesn't bother to delete expired web pages, so this tribute to one of the world's suckiest ISPs may stay up for years (or longer—if it goes down I'll put it up on my own site. Yes, I'm vengeful ☺).
- Surprise: I'm still gaming! I've been driving in to the old game rooms at MIT on

Saturdays. It's not very convenient to give up my Saturdays, but at this point the groups schedules are such that no other day is possible. I'm an hour and fifteen minutes drive from the city, assuming no traffic, and that's just too long a commute to let me game in town on weekdays. Particularly since I have to get up at 6AM to make it to work on time!

THE NEW MIT SESSIONS

The most recent game I ran (it just ended last week) was a scenario that I set in the Call of Cthulhu Dreamlands, although to tell the truth the adventure could easily have fit into any setting (I initially conceived it as a RuneQuest/Glorantha adventure). I think it went quite well, although next time I'll use RQ3 mechanics rather than CoC.

The Dreamlands setting has one HUGE advantage over other settings: every time things bog down in pettifogging detail, I can simply jump ahead to the next moment of interest. Why? As I said time and again during the run, BECAUSE IT'S A DREAM! Works like magic, and really keeps the game moving along.

I'm going to write up the adventure and publish it when I get the chance, hopefully soon. It involves an isolated village stalked by mysterious night-time horrors, and an ancient rivalry.

By the way, MIT hasn't changed too much. Some of the corridors have been re-done, and some of the food machines are missing, but for the most part things are as they were. There are some cool new robotic ice-cream machines, though.



NEAT STUFF

I've found some neat things you might enjoy.

Knights of the Dinner Table: does everyone know about this fantastic gamer comic? It first came out in the last year that I published IR, I think. Now there are dozens of full-size issues, and it's a monthly comic book. I've laughed my ass off any number of times while reading it. An instant gaming classic.

Your-Site.com: My new domain hosts. \$89 for a year of hosting, including set-up fee and free domain registration. It comes with 50MB of storage, 5 POP email boxes, and unlimited domain forwarding. I've set up every person in my family with their own forwarding addresses, for every possible variant of their names. It's fun! And my hits have gone up quite a bit since I moved. By the way, they're based in Massachusetts and incredibly responsive. I'm quite pleased.

The Lathe of Heaven! This classic made-for-TV PBS SF classic is FINALLY out on tape, and will be available on DVD within a few months. For twenty years I've been able to consider myself lucky because I had a bootleg of it, but now anyone can buy it. I can still consider myself elite, though; in the new tape the Beatles' version of "With A Little Help From My Friends" has been overdubbed with Joe Cocker's cover. Need I say that the Beatles version was infinitely better?

You know, I'm sure there's a lot of other neat stuff I've found in the last few years, but I can't remember any of it right now.

CON SURVIVAL 101

I started writing this after the last Arisia.

Cons 101: How To Survive A Science Fiction Convention

A good science fiction or roleplaying convention can be an incredible experience for a fan. You can pack more fun into three short days than in weeks of more mundane vacationing. If you're at all into science fiction, fantasy, or roleplaying and haven't been to a

con, what are you waiting for?

There are a few perils along the way, though. A little careful planning can make a merely good experience great.

First, pick your convention carefully. There are many different sorts, and not every con is right for every person. Some cons are very traditionalist, focussing (for example) on written science fiction only; others are multifaceted, including other types of media, costuming, dance, art, and more. Some cons are run for profit, charging all that the market will bear but offering access to big-name stars; others are run by fans for fans, with less flash but often more genuine fun.

If you're a science fiction, fantasy, or game fan, a genre convention can be a hell of a lot of fun. But there are a few perils along the way that can ruin a great experience. They're easy to forget once the excitement of the con is over, though, so here's a quick list of dangers and solutions.

Problem: Dry Air

Possibly the greatest physical stress of a con is dehydration. There's something about hotel air, particularly in northern climes in winter, that sucks every last bit of moisture from your skin. After a while, even chugging water doesn't help; it seems to pass straight through your system, leaving your lips, eyes, and throat painfully dry as you jiggle from foot to foot in the line to the bathroom.

Solution: Moisturizers

Bring a one-liter plastic screw-top bottle of water with you, and refill as necessary. Drink like a fish. Retain moisture with various topical products; lip balm (Blistex Herbal works well for me), non-medicated saline nasal spray, skin lotion, and if necessary even eye drops. Tip: plaster lip balm on your lips before you sleep and you'll feel a lot better the next day. It's also not a bad idea to give yourself a steam bath by closing yourself in the bathroom and running the shower on the hottest setting for a few minutes. Then open the door to moisturize your hotel room.



Problem: Infection

When a lot of people are packed into a restricted space, odds are good that some of them are sick—and in tight quarters, colds or the flu can spread quickly, particularly if your throat is dry and vulnerable.

Solution: Vitamins and Protection

Moisturizing will help you to resist infection. Boost your immune system with multivitamins. Suck on zinc and vitamin C lozenges throughout the day. Wash your hands frequently, and try not to touch your face. Bring a small bottle of sanitizer with you—yes, you’ll look like a geek, but at least you won’t get sick.

Problem: Body Aches

A con often involves a lot of standing, walking, and stair climbing—particularly if the elevators are packed, as they usually are. After a couple of days your feet and legs will probably start to resent you.

Solution: Sneakers & Tylenol

There’s not a lot that you can do about this, but a good pair of sneakers or comfortable shoes with some support can at least alleviate the pain a bit. Make sure to bring your favorite analgesic along. If you can get someone to massage afflicted areas, more power to you—it certainly can’t hurt.

Problem: Stench

It’s a sad fact that there are some people who don’t understand that it’s a good idea to keep fairly clean. For some reason, this attitude seems to be more common among fen. Being jammed in a crowded hallway or elevator with a bunch of sweaty fen can be a truly nauseating experience.

Solution: Um, not much

Avoid contributing to the problem: bring deodorants, and don’t skip showering! A possible defense would be to carry a perfume-soaked handkerchief, which would fit right in as part of a decadent 30-century aristocrat costume. Finally, Pepto-Bismol and antacids can be a final defense against a turned

stomach.

Other needs: crisp one-dollar bills for the food and soda machines change for when the dollar bill machines break vitamins zinc lozenges pepto-bismol antacid condoms comfortable shoes business cards ear plugs soda! heat cold pen & paper something to carry stuff in
HAVE FUN!

MISCELLANEOUS

I haven’t had a chance to do any comments—although given the reduced number of contributors, commenting shouldn’t be as arduous as it used to be.

A while ago I had a lot of fun playing a character named Timmy in Joe’s game. He was a lot of fun—I found myself really getting into him, one of those unfortunately rare situations where you surprise yourself with the level of your own roleplaying (I hope I’m not sounding too swelled in the head, Joe, Kiralee, and Cindy!).

The campaign was set in a near-future alternate Earth with magic as well as technology. Timmy had spent his entire life in a completely sealed research facility, speaking only to fellow experiments, technicians, and doctors. And then one day he found himself on his own, standing next to smoking ruins in the woods.

Through a chain of events he contacted the rest of the party, but he has curious gaps in his understanding of the world. He calls almost everyone “doctor”, for example. Almost everything in the world is a new experience for him, and therefore a source of endless fascination. He doesn’t know if animals are intelligent or not, although some of the animals in the video games he played as a child certainly seemed to be. He has no idea of what is or is not possible for him to do, and so anytime he sees anyone do anything interesting his first question is “Can I do that?”. And then he tries. Oddly enough, he sometime succeeds.

For example, he met a sinister and mysterious stranger who always pulls a black rose out of the air and gives them to women. “Can I do



that?” said Timmy, and before anyone could tell him he couldn’t, he had—except that his rose was chocolate. Magical research indicated some very weird stuff about Timmy, but since I’m not sure what Joe’s plans are for the setting and campaign, I’ll hold off writing about them.

I wish I could play Timmy again, but it’s just so hard to work out schedules!



BLAST FROM THE PAST

One bit of content I’ve started putting up on my RQ site are my old Rack & Rune zines in Acrobat format, with modern annotations. Unfortunately I’m missing a whole chunk of them. Disks and hard copies are probably in storage, so perhaps I’ll be able to dig them out in a month or so, when Teri and I move into a larger apartment on the first floor of our house.

