

Friday, July 29. 2005

Tommy Xiang

Just as they did every morning, Tommy Xiang's eyes opened two minutes before his alarm clock was scheduled to ring. He flicked the alarm off before it had a chance to ring; there was no need to disturb the peace of the morning with its raucous call. He set his clothes on the counter in the bathroom, arranging them in the order that he would put them on when he got out of the shower. Briefs, socks, pants, shirt. The shoes went on the floor--no telling what was on them after walking around the hospital. He set the water to 99 degrees, waited a moment for the temperature to stabilize, and stepped into the shower. The triclosan-tinged scent of antibacterial soap filled his nostrils as he carefully washed the skin around his interface implant. The SudaSkin edges of the implant had bonded well with his own skin, but he saw no reason to risk infection.

He dried himself methodically, dressed himself carefully, and, before leaving the bathroom, pressed a small silicone cover over the implant. Unless someone looked very carefully, he would never notice the implant. He was pouring soy milk onto his shredded wheat when he noticed the alert on his screen. Fair_Weather_Friend had posted a new environment.

A few quick keystrokes started the scanning program. Night_Watcher had written it, but Tommy was quite sure that he never used it. No matter. Tommy usually caught any errors before the other two got into the environments. It was all part of the system.

He listened to the weather report while eating his breakfast. Rain. That meant that he would have to leave seven minutes early to make it to work on time. He adjusted the alarm on his watch, and checked his agenda. Tonight, he would need to write a check out for the power bill, and another for the mortgage. He checked to make sure that he had stamps, glanced at the clock, and then his watch, and went back to the computer. The scan had already finished. There was a major error quite close to the beginning of the file. Fair_Weather_Friend wasn't online, but Night_Watcher was.

A glance at his watch told him that there was no time for a long conversation with Night_Watcher. He tapped out a quick message:

Brain_Stem [7:12]: We've got to get a hold of Fair_Weather_Friend. There's a flaw in the latest environment render. It's a good thing I decided to check it before I loaded it; this one looks like it could be really painful.

The reply came back immediately.

Night_Watcher [7:12]: Hes not here. Im his roommate. He's plugged in and I dont know what to do he's htrashing around like hes having a seizure. What do I do

Tommy froze. This was not supposed to happen. He tried to think of something to say, but just as he started to type his reply, the alarm on his watch rang. If he didn't leave for work now, he would be late.

Posted by Johnny Elbows in Hacking Existence at 15:52

Keb Jones

If I had known that I was going to be living with this, I probably would have forked over the extra money and gotten my own room. It's not the mess. I can handle the mess. I mean, it's not my favorite thing, and I would prefer that he was clean, but I'm not going to lose my temper over some clutter on the floor and an unmade bed. It's this thing he does. When I came home tonight, he was sitting at his computer. Well, sitting's probably not the right word. His head was down on the desk, and he was fast asleep, drooling on his keyboard. He says that he only sleeps about 4 hours a night, but I'd be willing to bet that if you added up all of the times that he falls asleep in class, he sleeps almost as much as I do. Then, around three o' clock, I woke up, and he was sitting up.

He's got some kind of weird implant on the back of his head. He has kind of a mullet so that his hair covers it up, but when he's plugged in, it looks like he's in the Matrix. Right now, he's sitting in his chair, with this massive cable poking out of the back of his head. He twitches every now and then, and sometimes he starts thrashing around. It's driving me nuts. It's worse than living with a druggie. I'd even be happier if he was bringing a different girl home every night. It's just creepy to me. I'm not sure what to do about it. I've tried reporting him, but they just look at me like I'm crazy.

I wonder if he's even going to class. He looks like he hasn't left that chair in days. I swear he wore those clothes yesterday. And probably the day before, too. Maybe I can find a way to get him kicked out. If it looks like he's breaking the rules, even if he isn't, I could get rid of him. That would be nice.

Oh no, something's wrong! He looks like he's having a seizure. What do I do? Can I just unplug him? Or is there something I have to do? His computer's not responding. What's this? Someone's trying to send him a message. Some guy named Brain_Stem.

Brain_Stem [5:12]: We've got to get a hold of Fair_Weather_Friend. There's a flaw in the latest environment render. It's a good thing I decided to check it before I loaded it; this one looks like it could be really painful.

Night_Watcher [5:12]: Hes not here. Im his roommate. He's plugged in and I dont know what to do he's htrashing around like hes having a seizure. What do I do

Posted by Johnny Elbows in Hacking Existence at 13:39

Howell Clarke

Hi everybody. I'm kind of a newbie here, so let me just get a few things out into the open. You probably shouldn't depend on me posting regularly. Sometimes, I write a lot. Sometimes, I will go months without writing a thing. So, right now, I'm in one of my write-a-lot modes. Who knows how long it will last. Maybe it will be around for a while, maybe it will be gone tomorrow. Anyway, you get the idea.

This is a character sketch of a man named Howell Clarke. He goes by the name Night_Watcher in the online community.

You will probably all see more than a passing resemblance to a few real people, but let's be honest, all writing is based on real life somehow.

Blink. Ok, now, do it again. Ooh, that one was rough. I hate these contacts. Where did that drink go? I hope that caffeine kicks in soon. OK now, where was I? My roommate probably wants me to go to bed. Oh well. He'll live. He sleeps too much anyway. Why should I waste my life that way just because he does? What was I doing? Oh, yeah. Is he still on line?

Night_Watcher[2:37]: Sorry, I drifted off.

Fair_Weather_Friend[2:37]: You sleep?!

Night_Watcher[2:38]: Not on purpose.

Fair_Weather_Friend[2:38]: Well, you didn't miss much. I'm still waiting for it to finish rendering this environment. We're going to have to figure out some way to generate these things. The prefab environments are just getting too complex.

Night_Watcher[2:39]: We don't have the processing power to generate them on-the-fly. We're maxing out the system just on rendering the prefabs, and that's when nobody's online.

Fair_Weather_Friend[2:40]: Yeah, but if we can generate them on-the-fly as you say, then we don't have to render the entire environment. We just have to render the pieces that the user is requesting. And we don't even have to generate the whole thing in full detail. We can mimic nature, and only give him the stuff directly in front of his face in full

color. The stuff in his peripheral vision can be a half-rendered mishmash. The brain will know how to handle that.

Night_Watcher[2:41]: Are you sure that will work?

Fair_Weather_Friend[2:41]: No. But it's worth a try.

Worth a try!! Yeah, it's a great idea, but he's talking about re-writing the entire engine. And even then, we're not sure that it would work. He has no clue. Besides, we'd still have to have the entire environment rendered somewhere.

Night_Watcher[2:41]: That would be a lot of work!! Besides, we'd still have to have the entire environment rendered somewhere. Just because we don't display it all doesn't mean we don't have to render it.

Fair_Weather_Friend[2:42]: See, that's the cool thing. We could just render it as a wireframe model, and then associate rules with the different surface types, and then render the portions that the user's request in realtime. That would give us a lot more flexibility in our environments. We could use rules to create weather patterns, to shift shading as time passes, and stuff like that.

AARGH! I hate working with people who aren't coders. They think that making a program do what they want it to should be as easy as it was to think of the idea.

Night_Watcher[2:43]: Do you know what you're asking? You're talking about massive changes to the design of the program. We're not talking about some revisions to the engine--we're talking about a complete ground-up redesign and re-write. You know how long that would take?

Fair_Weather_Friend[2:43]: No idea

Night_Watcher[2:43]: A long time. Besides, we don't even know if it would work.

Fair_Weather_Friend[2:44]: Brain_Stem thinks it will. He even thinks it will lessen some of the rejection issues we've been having.

Night_Watcher[2:44]: How could this affect rejection?

Fair_Weather_Friend[2:44]: I didn't get his explanation. Something about "the more real it is, the less likely it is to be rejected."

Night_Watcher[2:45]: Weird, that's suggesting that the brain can somehow exert control over the immune system.

Fair_Weather_Friend[2:47]: Whatever. I'm always lost when you guys start talking about stuff like that. If you want to discuss surfaces meshes and shaders, let me know. Otherwise, just make sure the pretty pictures work.

Fair_Weather_Friend[2:48]: I'm going to bed. I just posted the new file. Let me know about problems in the morning.

Wow, something really got him in a snit. He just can't handle it when I don't give in to his every whim. LOADING, LOADING, LOADING. This must be a big environment. Holy . . .

Posted by Johnny Elbows in Hacking Existence at 12:16

mleeeeeaaauugh-for mostly daboo's benefit

I am addicted to World of Warcraft.

Also, I have a cold.

Also, I...nope, nevermind, I don't have any more excuses.

The point is that I haven't completed any more pages. At all. And it makes me sad, but I'm posting this in the hopes that you will get used to the idea by Monday and I will not have to suffer any art-related beatings.

Blog Export: Annals of the Homestarmy, <http://www.thehomestarmy.com/s9y/>

Posted by Wren at 11:08

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Urfengar's Travels

As we reached the outskirts of Brindenford, we came upon Nalathisor waiting by the side of the road. I hadn't yet met him at this time - only heard about him from. . .from the others. He looked rather haggard and ran up to Jackle demanding to know where Llan was.

Upon learning of Llan's death, Nalathisor's face went through a flurry of emotions, and he started up a shouting match with Jackle. He named his brother a coward, then reached into a pouch, pulled out a scroll, and began to chant. Jackle attempted to disrupt the spell by firing an arrow at his brother, but before any of the rest of us could react, the elven warrior was morphed into a rooster. Nalathisor rode off into the busy streets ahead as we stared, stunned at his actions. I finally regathered my wits and dispelled the crazy elf's magic, restoring his brother to a slightly less animalistic state.

We rode into town hoping to find the elven trickster, but the guards said they had no idea where Nalathisor had gone. I suspected the guards had been paid to keep their silence, since the rest of the party was recognized on sight by many of the townspeople. We were interrupted on our way to a local tavern by a messenger from the local baron asking us to meet with him at his palace. After some discussion, we agreed to follow the man and find out what the baron wanted.

To our surprise, the baron presented us to his liege, the Earl of Blackthorne. I prefer to stay away from human politics, but I was intrigued by the Earl's efforts to reward my new friends for their efforts to preserve peace in his land. He offered them a knighthood, in exchange for oaths of fealty. At this point, we noticed that Maxwell, the little halfling had disappeared. Wanting to reward Max and sensing hesitancy on the part of some in our party, Blackthorne granted the others some time to think about his offer and let us know that he had arranged lodgings for the duration of our stay. We gratefully accepted and retired to the Prancing Pegasus.

I decided to drown my sorrows in some of the worst slop I've had in some time. By the gods I wish I'd stayed home.

When the morning so rudely arrived, I learned that Kitya had decided to accept knighthood in return for the care of a grove in the vicinity. Rath and Jackle accepted the knighthood as it was offered - although, Rath was appointed an official Forester of the Kingdom. I made arrangements with the local priests to care for Thelonious' body and transport it back to Khazdor. I sent an epistle along to his parents, explaining what had happened and asking for their patience as I worked to bring his murderer to justice. Jackle made arrangements for the local priests of Heironeous to take care of Llan.

The halfling showed up some time in the afternoon, and I honestly thought I'd have to perform some healing as little Maxwell's eyes threatened to pop out of their sockets when he learned he'd been offered a knighthood. He, of course, agreed, but he also told us that he'd been visiting Nalathisor, who was apparently taking Llan's death no better than I could accept that of Thelonious.

After last night's binge on pig swill, I decided to lay off the drink and immerse myself in some honest work. I told the others that I'd like to set up shop and repair some equipment while we were in town. We could use the time to look for clues of our nemesis' whereabouts, and I agreed to craft some magic properties into a club Kitya had been carrying.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in D&D at 17:03

Walking To Moriah

We were five small figures moving among the shimmering waves of heat that rose from the desert floor. Dust kicked up by my old, shuffling feet, and by the donkey's hooves, covered our sweating faces. One of the young men, my son, looked over at me, a concerned look on his face, but I didn't respond. I walked with my head bowed, shoulders hunched. Every movement was pain, and my thoughts were far away, back in the land of my childhood.

I remembered my father's curses vividly, the curses that he had screamed at me the day that I left my father's house to find God. I had always known God. Not the gods my father knew, Elkanah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and the

various gods

of the Pharaoh, no I knew, or thought I knew, the true God, the living God, the God who didn't need golden images to show His majesty, for the Earth itself showed His power. I'm not sure how I came to know that God, but as I walked from my father's house that day, I knew that I could not follow the ways of my fathers. I would, I decided, go to the house of the King of Peace, the great high priest, and I would learn from him. And so, despite my father's curses, I walked from the house to seek God wherever I might find Him.

Long shadows followed us and the heavily-laden donkey when we stopped for the night. As night fell, the young men sat around the fire, eating, talking and laughing. Even though two of them are my servants, I have always treated them well, if not always as friends, at least as equals. They love my son, the son of my old age. He is their friend, and, they know, he always will be. Even those who don't like their young master have to admit that he is loving, and unbelievably loyal.

I didn't join them at the fire. I huddled against a boulder nearby. I refused food, and sat, brooding. Every now and then, I stared up into the low-hanging stars, and a careful observer might have noticed tears in my eyes. God was up there. I knew it, perhaps better than any man living. I had spoken with God many times; people called me the friend of God. "I might be God's friend," I thought, "but is He mine?" Despite my years, my sight was still clear. I looked up at the stars, and began reciting their names, the names that God had taught me. It was calming.

Again, my thoughts drifted back to earlier days. After years of study, searching, and striving, I found God. Maybe, more accurately, God found me. I returned to my father's house. I was surprised by the welcome that I received. Everything had seemed better. He hadn't screamed curses at me; he kept his religion to himself, and left my religion alone. One morning, though, I woke to find a priest of Elkanah, and four heavily armed guards standing in my chamber. Strong arms bound me with heavy cords. The priest cautioned the guards against being overly rough, though, saying, "Elkanah will not accept damaged goods." The memory of the priest's words jarred me back into the present. "Once," I muttered, "I thought that I could say that I knew what God would and would not accept. Now, I do not know. Once, I thought I knew God. Now, I can't say."

I glanced over my shoulder. The fire had burned low. My son, and the servants were asleep, careless as the stars wheeled overhead, confident in the care and protection of God. Would He protect them? I couldn't say. I can't be sure of anything now. Slowly, painfully, I got to my feet, and walked over to the fire. I laid there, near my son, tossing and turning, but the memories came back, and wouldn't let me sleep.

The guards dragged me through the pre-dawn darkness toward the hill called Potiphar's Hill. As they left my father's house, I saw my father, standing by the door. I called out, pleading for help, but my father just nodded to the priest, and turned away from me. We soon reached our destination: the Temple of Elkanah, at the head of the plain of Olishem. There, I was cast into prison to await, along with others, my turn to be sacrificed to Elkanah's insatiable thirst. There were many of us in those cells. Some were young children, sold by their parents to pay debts, or given to the gods in an attempt to gain their favor. Some were slaves who had offended their masters. All of us stood in awe, though, in the presence of the daughters of Onitah.

They were princesses, beautiful virgins who were to be sacrificed because they refused to bow down to gods of wood or stone. Somehow, amid the squalor of the prison, they remained clean. None of the fear that haunted the rest of us seemed to touch them. I will always remember the day that the priests came to take them away. I hid my face in my hands as they were bound to the altar. I heard them cry out to God in prayer; over the noise, I heard their screams as the knife of Elkanah pierced them. In my mind, I saw their beautiful faces distorted by the rictus of death. That image, will I see it on my son's face? Will I hear his voice begin to pray, and then listen as his words die under the knife?

I don't know when I fell asleep, but morning came long before I was ready for it. My limbs felt heavy. I pushed forward, as if against a heavy weight, moving ever nearer to Moriah. Why? Why God? What have I done? What has he done? Isn't there some other way? Night came without any answer. My questions drowned in the darkness, and once again, my memories came to haunt my attempts to sleep.

A few days after Elkanah drank the blood of the daughters of Onitah, my turn arrived. The priests dragged me from my cell. As the hot morning sun shone down, they bound me to the altar. Sweat ran off me, wetting the blood that clung to the altar, so that it felt sticky against my back. As the priest raised his knife, I called out to God, hoping that my

prayers would have greater effect than the prayers of the daughters of Onitah. I watched as the knife began to descend, and then, through the din of the ceremony, I heard His voice. He spoke to me, and opened my eyes to His visions, and His angel stood beside me. I felt the bands fall from my hands and feet. The priest dropped his knife with a clatter, shaking before the power of the true God. Moments later, he collapsed, never to rise again in this life. The gods that stood watch over the altar fell before Him, smashed into dust. The altar cracked, and fell into pieces. I walked as if in a dream. The crowd parted before me, wailing, and I left that land.

We left the servants at the bottom of the mountain with the donkey, and went on, just me, and my son. I carried the firepot and the knife. He carried the wood. Once, just as we began the climb, he asked, "Father, where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

My voice broke when I replied. "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt offering."

Atop Mount Moriah, I began building my altar. "God, is this what you saved me for? You let so many die, but you saved me. Did you save me just so that I could follow in the fouled footsteps of my father, and try to kill my own son? What about all of the promises? How am I to become the father of many nations if you tell me to kill my own heir?" The stones seemed to fit themselves together without my help, but the voice of God, that voice which had comforted me so many times in the past, remained silent, and my son watched in puzzlement as I began to weep.

I untied the bundle of wood, and stacked it upon the altar. Then, taking the cords that had bound the wood, I turned to my son. He could have run. I wouldn't have been able to catch him. He could have fought against me. I wouldn't have been able to overcome him. He just looked at me, tears in his eyes, and a question on his lips, "Father, is there no other way?"

I looked down at my son, lying bound on the altar. In his eyes, I saw my own memories of him, my joy at his birth, the incredible pride I felt when he first began to walk, and to talk, the pain that I felt as I watched him struggle. Once again, my thoughts went to God. He called me His son. How could he ask this of any father? Could he not hear my pleas?

Was He now as deaf and dumb as my father's idols? I listened for the voice that had guided me so many times in the past, but all I heard was a deafening silence. Looking down at my son, my only son, my heir, I raised the knife, and braced myself against his scream. It was then that I heard the voice, calling my name, "Abraham, Abraham."

"Yes, I am here."

"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." With that voice came comfort, and the knowledge that God would never take my son from me. Though He Himself would have to sacrifice His Only Begotten Son, that would not be required of me. God would provide himself a lamb for the offering.

Posted by Johnny Elbows in Personal Entry at 16:12

I'll see your "litigious" and raise you "moronic".

Okay to be fair, I've thought all along that the stink raised over the HotCoffeeMod was always a little idiotic, if only because the game should have been rated Adult's Only in the first place, and was pretty bad before the mini game was found.

Now comes the news that an 85 year old woman has sued Rockstar Games for damage caused to her because she claims that she was "damaged" when she discovered that the the rated M for Mature audiences game she purchased for her grandson had sexual minigames. At the time the game was purchased, the grandson was 14 years of age.

Nevermind the fact that on the case of the game it already stated "Strong Sexual Content" prior to the increase in

rating. What the heck was she doing buying a game rated for 17 year olds and higher, to her 14 year old grandson in the first place?

If everyone is so worried about the content in the games that kids are playing, maybe they should look less at the developers and more at the people who are buying or letting the kids play these games. As bad of a game as GTA:San Andreas is, in this case at least, it would seem to me that the problem is the Grandma herself.

Then again, since the Grandma is getting on in years she probably saw this as a quick way to make a couple bucks for an inheritance for the aforementioned grandson!

Posted by Sideshow in Gaming at 12:51

Perhaps some levity?

It seems that a university Philosophy professor made a great breakthrough and had agreed to do a series of talks at universities throughout the country detailing his discoveries. Because the professor disliked airplanes, he hired a chauffeur to drive him from one spot to the next. Spending so much time together, the professor and the chauffeur became friendly and in the course of time, the chauffeur confided that he thought the professor had about the easiest job in the world.

"How's that?" asked the professor.

"Well," said the driver. "You give the same talk night after night. You get asked the same questions night after night. There's just nothing to it. Really, I've heard it so many times now, even I could do it."

At this, the professor challenged the chauffeur and at their next stop, the chauffeur and the professor changed roles (and clothes). Good as his word, the chauffeur gave a very successful talk and, just as he had predicted, the same questions were asked. That is, until one person asked a new question, one the chauffeur-cum-professor didn't know. He thought about it for a while and finally said, "Young man, that is the single most stupid question I have EVER been asked. Why, I'm surprised that you don't know the answer to it. I would think anyone would. In fact, the question is so simple, I'm going to have my chauffeur answer it!"

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This same professor comes into a class on Philosophy on the last day of the term and tells the students that 100% of their grade for the class will be based on the paper he is about to ask them to write. He pulls up a chair, sits down, and declares: "You have 1 and a half hours to prove to me, using the things you've learned this term, that this chair does not exist."

All of the students save one begin frantically scribbling, tying Bhuddism to Fruedianism to Aristotle. The last student looks very carefully at the professor for about 30 seconds, then writes a few words on a piece of paper, hands it in, and leaves. When the grades are published, the entire class is mystified to see that only the one student passed. His paper is posted next to the grades, and says simply:

"What chair?"

Posted by Ancient of Days in Oddities at 11:31

Can you spell "litigious"?

"Two teenage girls decided one summer's evening to skip a dance where there might be cursing and drinking to stay home and bake cookies for their neighbors. Big mistake.

"The July 31 deliveries consisted of half a dozen chocolate-chip and sugar cookies accompanied by big hearts cut out of red or pink construction paper with the message: 'Have a great night.' The notes were signed, 'Love, The T and L Club,' code for Taylor Ostergaard, then 17, and Lindsey Jo Zellitti, 18.

"Inside one of the nine scattered rural homes south of Durango that got cookies that night, a 49-year-old woman became

so terrified by the knocks on her door around 10:30 p.m. that she called the sheriff's department. Deputies determined that no crime had been committed, but Wanita Renea Young ended up in the hospital emergency room the next day after suffering a severe anxiety attack she thought might be a heart attack.

"They were sued, successfully, for an unauthorized cookie drop on one porch. A Durango judge Thursday awarded Young almost \$900 to recoup her medical bills.

"She received nothing for pain and suffering... Taylor's mother, Jill Ostergaard, said her daughter 'cried and cried' after Judge Doug Walker handed down his decision in La Plata County Small Claims Court. 'She felt she was being punished for doing something nice,' Jill Ostergaard said... Court records contain half a dozen letters from neighbors who said that they enjoyed the unexpected treats."

Posted by Ancient of Days at 10:05

Wednesday, July 27, 2005

Harry Potter Errata

<http://www.arthuralevinebooks.com/faq.asp#errors>

Just thought you all might want to check those out. Since y'all are such buggers for correct spelling.

Also, here's an interview with J.K. with lots of stuff about book 6.

<http://www.mugglenet.com/jkrinterview.shtml>

Posted by The Mad Giggler at 14:58

Urfengar: Dwarven Revenge

My good friends' son is dead. A young man I helped rear is gone from this world, and I could do nothing as a madman destroyed him before my eyes. I lack the words to describe the horror, the outrage that shook me as I realized that Thelonious was beyond my help. Never have I been so close to a traveling companion and been unable to heal his wounds.

Alas, there was no time for mourning. Lieutenants of the madman were nearby and needed to be dealt with. My new companions helped me carry Thelonious the Blue's body back to town.

Upon nearing the center of the village, we could see a large crowd had gathered. It appeared that the entire town was in the main square beneath the tower where the foul evildoers lived. I suppose it stands to reason that the sorcerer who killed Thelonious would have warned his followers, but the craven absurdity to use the entire town as a shield was shocking. We did our best to approach the tower without harming the townsfolk (who very recently had been inhabitants of the local forest), but our efforts were in vain as a fireball came floating down from the top of the tower. Trained as we are in the arts of combat, my companions and I avoided the worst of the flames. The villagers were not so fortunate.

I attempted to assault the tower, calling on Moradin to grant me the ability to walk on air, but before I could reach striking distance, one of the knaves on the tower dispelled my god's magic. The battle raged on as I attempted to scale the building through more mundane means. Magicks were cast back and forth, and the tower was set ablaze as the caitiffs began to flee.

Of the three, one had fallen in battle, one took flight in the form of a vrock, and the third opened up a portal to avoid our wrath. Unwilling to see any information about our opponents be destroyed in the flames, I called on Moradin once again, asking him to flood the tower with water. As we searched the building, we found but one clue: a piece of paper with the madman's name written on it. Tyeladil Ilmueweke or somesuch. He'll rue the day.

The village was in shambles. It appeared that all the villagers had died in the battle. Pity that. I suppose the elves will be able to live in peace now. There was little reason nor inclination for us to remain in Ossington, so we decided to return to Brindenford and await the return of Nalathisor.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in D&D at 14:34

Dark Print: Concerning City of Glass

After much time spent in silent meditation I have conciously chosen to break my vow of silence.

For any of you who have not read Paul Auster's City of Glass, I would highly recommend both the novella and the graphic novel. What begins as a noir detective story set in New York City transforms itself into a many-layered commentary on the link between the nature of language and the nature of identity.

Blog Export: Annals of the Homestarmy, <http://www.thehomestarmy.com/s9y/>

Click here to read my short paper
about eggs, the tower of babel, and the arbitrariness of it all.

Note: I wrote this the night before it was due, so please excuse the errors you will most certainly discover. Or, even better, comment on them.

Posted by Kermit at 10:00

Tuesday, July 26. 2005

Sick of all the Nostalgic Crap

It was announced today that they are going to make a Voltron movie. This is of course on the heels of them announcing that there will also soon be a cgi Smurfs movie, and a cgi Ninja Turtles movie. Ninja Turtles is of course recently seen a resurgence in the video game markets with a crappy (right Giggler) game last year.

This after the following lineup of movies that came out this year: The Longest Yard, Star Wars III, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Batman Begins, Bad News Bears, Herbie: Fully Loaded, and Bewitched, with Dukes of Hazzard right around the corner. Sure some of these movies were good (Charlie, Longest Yard, Batman), of course some of them weren't so good (Bewitched, Star Wars).

Not to mention the countless covers of songs that seem to be on the airwaves now a days.

Is anyone else sick of the entertainment industries seeming refusal to come up with good original mainstream entertainment for us to enjoy, and instead decide that they must rape and pillage the memories of our youth by hiring someone like Michael Bay to direct a live-action Transformers movie, nice opening to "The Island" there buddy. I don't mind the occasional sequel, or remake, especially when done well (Charlie and the Chocolate Factory), as opposed to something just put out there to make money, quality be damned (Star Wars), but I also like to see new original works, or adaptations of things that hadn't been given proper treatment before like Lord of the Rings or Chronicles of Narnia. I think that all the Screenwriters, song writers, video game makers, etc. are locked into a room, strapped down to electric chair that sends immense voltage throughout their body, until they come up with something new, different, and/or Original.

The worse part of all this, is it seems that when something new and different is produced, studio's manage to screw it all up.

Posted by Sideshow in Oddities at 13:02

Monday, July 25, 2005

Urfengar: Dwarven Purgatory - Curtain Call

I've kind of rushed through the first two entries in this new journal, but the adventures weren't really mine to tell in the first place. However, we're approaching the part of the story where I started adventuring with this ragtag band.

You see, after Thelonious and Llan's companions saved Brindenford, they had started to earn a bit of a name for themselves. The baron gave them little brooches to signify their status in the city, but he also took Nalathisor aside and asked him if the party wouldn't be willing to help some of his fellow countrymen out in the land of Ossington. Being a good sort of fellow, the elf passed on the information to his friends who gladly agreed to check things out. Nalathisor then let the group know that he wouldn't be accompanying them but instead needed to ride on ahead because of that pressing business he'd been trying to tend to for some time.

Thelonious told him that he'd like to journey with him as far as Khazdor (where, of course, he found me.) As I previously recorded here, I told Thelonious' parents that I'd journey with and keep an eye on him. Moradin did not find me in his favor on that day, else he might have warned me to keep the young lad at home.

We quickly journeyed back to Ossington in search of his companions. On the way into town, we stopped at a shrine dedicated to all Neutral gods. There Thelonious told me that he felt premonitions of a great evil and decided to take a vow of silence at the altar of St. Cuthbert. Unfortunately, that vow did not lend us the great support Thelonious had hoped for.

We met up with his friends only to learn that Llan had been slain, and the village of Ossington was really in dire straits. The people were starving, and some ghostly rider was attacking anyone who tried to work their fields or leave town for supplies. Making matters worse, a group of wild elves was seemingly in league with the rider. The villagers told us that anytime someone tried to go out and negotiate with the elves, they were attacked on sight. Thelonious' friends also told us that as they'd been traveling through the forests, the trees had spoken (creepy!) to the druid and warned the party that they were not welcome.

We learned that Llan was slain by an earth elemental as the heroes tried to find answers at the grave of some great, local hero. There were many traps and marauding creatures in the burial mound, and the hero's ghost had little useful information to tell them. The party was understandably very dispirited.

We decided to take our chances and try to negotiate with the elves. We set out for the elven stronghold, but had only traveled a short time when the trees started attacking. Being more of an underground-dwelling type, I was quite shaken by this turn of events but did manage to keep my feet, unlike poor Thelonious. Who could blame him, though? It was pure bedlam. We were surrounded by elves and their treant friends, and we could hear an invisible attacker casting spells from somewhere nearby. I wasn't sure we would make it through the battle.

Moradin finally blessed me with the insight to dispel all magic in the area, which turned out to be something of a turning point in the melee. The invisible attacker turned out to be a pixie which was quickly pinned to a tree by one of the archers in our party. That freed up Azrael to start launching lightning attacks at the trees, while Jackle and Rath started showing the elves what real fighting is about. And surprise, surprise, the druid starts screaming at us for attacking the trees.

I thought about knocking her over the head with my warhammer, but I caught her yammering something about a "big misunderstanding." The biggest tree I've ever seen had appeared on the scene and was taking giant swipes at our front line. The half-elven wizardess managed to light it on fire, but I decided to give the druid a chance to talk things through. So I called on Moradin to drop some water on the big tree.

Gnarroot, as the tree's name turned out to be, was so surprised by this, that it stopped attacking. The druid starting doing her thing, and pretty soon she tells us she wants to translate for the trees. It turns out that some former adventurers were running things in the village - only they were reaping the benefits of some old druidic magic. Some very odd folk had set up wards around the village to turn animals into humans, supposedly to maintain the balance.

These adventurers had arrived and wiped out the original inhabitants of the village. They then set up an ambush for the

leaders of the wild elves. All of this explained all too well why the elves and trees were attacking us - they were afraid we'd come out to finish the job.

Gnarlroot went on to explain (through Kitya's translation) that the ghostly rider was a paladin seeking vengeance against these evildoers running Ossington. For him to find peace with his god, he needed a proper burial in sanctified ground. So we followed Gnarlroot to fetch the paladin's body. I set aside a plot of ground and made it holy with Moradin's blessing. The paladin was grateful and wished us luck in dealing with the fools back in the village. His spirit then departed this realm.

We decided to head back into the village, but along the way, the most horrible thing happened. Thelonious' sense of doom turned out to be all too prophetic. He stiffened up and started laughing at us in a very odd voice. He said that our puny efforts would avail us nothing and that regardless of whether we made it out of Ossington alive, our fate was sealed. He then suddenly collapsed. Dead. Moradin! Why didn't you warn me! Why didn't you take me instead!

Posted by The Mad Giggler in D&D at 16:09

Saturday, July 23. 2005

Urfengar: Dwarven Purgatory Part 2

Thelonious went on to recount his group's adventures saying that after the craven departure of the orcish hordes, the town of GladeKeep was overjoyed and celebrated their saviors with what few resources they had left (apparently some of the orcs managed to attack the town while Thelonious and company were stalking the hill giant.) As the business Nalathisor knew of was still pressing, the adventurers decided to head out of town the next morning. However, on their way out of the city gates, a young halfling came pelting up on a steed worthy of his stature. He seemed to know Kitya (the druid) and told her that she was needed in distant Brindenford. The young paladin informed the group that his god required his services there as well, so the party agreed to accompany the lass and her small companion.

Upon reaching Brindenford without incident, Thelonious went with Llan to the local shrine of Heironeous while the rest of the group attempted to find lodgings. Llan was assigned a paladin's quest by his god, so Thelonious offered his support, which the half-elf gladly accepted. At this point in the story, my young friend grew quiet. Seeing that he didn't want to be pressed on the particulars of this holy quest, I asked him what his friends had done while he was off with Llan.

He told me that upon completing Heironeous' task and returning to the city, the locals informed Llan and Thelonious that their friends were locked in combat on top of the local baron's keep. I've heard a bit of the story from those that were there, and it seems there had been all sorts of mad things going on. Wererats were running around in gangs infecting people, strange sorcerers were warping reality in some bookstore, and at some point, the local priests of Pelor were booted from their temple while a portal to one of the Nine Hells was opened up. Somehow, an Aasimar ranger, a human druid, a halfling rogue, an elven wizard-rogue, a half-elven wizardess, and an elven basher were able to put a stop to it. I know, it sounds like the beginning to some terrible halfling joke.

Anyway, Thelonious and Llan arrived on the scene with a bunch of local holy men just as the mind flayer that had been running things turned tail and fled the battle. The baron had been under its control and was unsurprisingly confused as to what all these people were doing on his balcony. After the priests of Pelor smoothed things over with him, the baron threw a big party for his rescuers. Thelonious commented at this point, that it seemed like the group was going to be making a habit of saving towns as they passed through them.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in D&D at 11:20

Friday, July 22. 2005

Rage: A Wolf's Eye View

Growl roaw bark bark sniff wag.

Awooooooh! Ruff sniff sniff grrr *pant*. Wag, wag paw-ground bark, barkbark-bark woof roaw.

Woof bark woof paw-ground roaw roaw wag woof snort woof bark woof roaw paw-ground snort. Woof woof roaw snort bark roaw
roaw woof bark bark roaw snort bark paw-ground wag, paw-ground bark paw-ground woof snort snort wag bark roaw
roaw bark
woof woof wag.

Woof, awooooooh!

Posted by Ancient of Days in D&D at 13:25

Thursday, July 21. 2005

Max's diary

Settle down, they said. Find yourself a nice barwench somewhere, they said. Raise a family of miniature Maxwells. they said. No, I said. The road is calling. Adventuring is the life for me. And I set off on my own, no worries or cares in the world. One of the biggest mistakes I've ever made.

So then I bumped into Kitya, mere days from my outset, and was sort of adopted into her traveling group. (Alright, alright. I'm sure they wanted me to leave, but I wouldn't.)

We've been traipsing around this gods-forsaken country side for weeks now. There isn't any decent cover. The locals refer to the brush lining the roads as 'forest', but real forests have trees and plant life so thick you can't see the sky from 'neath them. Of course, all this boring wandering is occuring after we destroyed a bone daemon, after Rath slept with that forest creature girl, after I got attacked by all sorts of nasties in that horrible barrow, and after we made some serious enemies. Me, I prefer the low life. Quiet life. Life where I don't have to worry every night if people in black armbands or certain druids I've pissed off in the last down are coming after me.

At first, I didn't know why Kit thought these guys were so great. I mean, the group is nice and all, but they've nothing on the Family. It's a wonder she doesn't get homesick. Maybe she does. Personally, I miss Bella the most. She was a great friend, although she never seemed to understand that I wasn't interested in sharing a bed with a female half-orc. I miss her anecdotes and wild accusations.

Now, however, I don't think I'd ever leave the group. Not for a million gold pieces. I'm sort of stuck with them anyhow. They'd all be lost without my help, the way they stomp around the forests, riding horses everywhere they go. It's almost like they want to draw attention to themselves. And that dwarf! I don't think you could get him to be quiet for all of Moradin's treasures. Then again, dwarves are definately not known for their lightfootedness. Of course, my prowess and obvious skill aren't the only things keeping me with them all. I'm not sure, but...I think I might be falling for one of them. Ah, it's terrible. I've never felt this way before in all my life. But, I have to admit to myself, magic-users have always drawn my attention. I just hope no one suspects.

Posted by Wren in D&D at 22:21

Urfengar: Dwarven Purgatory part 1

I wish I had thought to keep a journal before this, because I cannot remember how many days it has been since I saw Thelonious drop dead right before my eyes. I promised his parents I'd keep him safe. It was more than a little disconcerting to see him suddenly stiffen up, start pronouncing doom on the group in a very odd voice, then collapse on the ground dead. The fact that he was beyond my help before his knees even started to buckle has been no comfort whatsoever. Although I am young by my people's standards, I worked alongside little Blue's parents for a number of years and watched him grow into his skills bit by bit. Before the place burnt down, I'd talked with his instructors at the monastery, and they said he was very promising.

Thelonious told me he left the ruins of the monastery to go spread the word of St. Cuthbert. Some time later, he passed through town. Having grown tired of the never-ending bickering between the human leaders and the dwarven council that runs things in this corner of the land, I agreed to accompany Thelonious back to meet up with the party with which he'd been adventuring. As we made our way, he recounted his adventures, starting with the story of GladeKeep's stunning escape from sure destruction.

As Thelonious told it, he met up with a half-elven bard/paladin (a strange combination of skills indeed) named Llan; Llan's father and uncle, an Elven fighter and Elven wizard/rogue respectfully; and a half-elven Wizardess named Azrael. I told him I'd heard of groups comprised of stranger companions but generally preferred a little diversity myself. They all met up in some little village called NewKeep where an ettin had been causing enormous - erm - terrible problems. On their way to some business the wizard/rogue (name of Nalathisor) knew about, they encountered roves of wandering orcs bent on slaughtering any and all travelers.

As is common among their kind, the foul beasts hadn't planned on encountering folks that could defend themselves. After rescuing some rangers, the five raced the orcs to GladeKeep with the survivors. There they learned that an army of orcs was advancing on the city with a hill giant directing them. They also encountered a human druid named Kitya and a powerful sorcerer dressed in red that seems bent on messing with Llan and his family. Kitya joined the party, bringing along her fox companion, Vanya, much to Jackle's delight (Jackle being the name of Llan's father).

It turns out the sorcerer was in league with the hill giant, but Thelonious and his companions were unable to apprehend to villainous filth before he left the city. So they were left to defend the city with only the help of a handful of local militia. Heironeous (the paladin's god) took pity on them and showed them the way to disperse the advancing army was as easy as chopping of its head - the hill giant's head that is.

As they sought a way through the orcish hordes, Thelonious and company stumbled upon a strange, human-ish looking ranger. Rath, as his name turned out to be, led them through to the hill giant's tent. After a battle only made even through the intervention of the gods, the seven adventurers watched the orcs flee in disarray while Jackle help up the giant's head for all to see.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in D&D at 14:32

Ramblings (For Lack of Something Better)

It's been far too long since anyone posted anything longer than a few lines. I guess everyone is suffering Potter-itis. Today is really the first day I've been able to think about much else. Ok, that's not entirely true. But I started reading Dune this morning on the train, so my brain has moved on from the Chosen One to the Kwisatz Haderach, at least as far as reading material goes.

I'd write more about video games, but I'm still mostly playing NFL 2K5. I think everyone has heard enough about football for the time being. I mean, the NFL season doesn't start for another seven weeks (college football, of course, starts a bit earlier - go Utes!). The only other game I've played lately is Jade Empire and it's difficult to discuss Bioware RPG's in any depth without giving away the plot. Fortunately, my home has been blessed with high-speed internet today, so I can get my Counter-Strike groove going again.

In unrelated news, Radar and I were discussing posting all the latest happenings of Jackle, Nalathisor, Kitya, Maxwell, Azrael, Rath, and Urfengar to the homestarmy. Since Glim and Llan can no longer meet up to continue their "Conversations" series, I figure we need an easy way to recap what's happened lately. People could even post journal entries from their character's point of view.

P.S. Andy (Kermit) is almost done with The Half-Blood Prince, so everyone can start posting spoilers tomorrow.

P.P.S. Wren will love this billboard.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in Personal Entry at 13:29

Prosper and Wash

Well, it seems that I've become a cat farmer. I am the proud new owner of two boy kittens (named Prosper and Wash) as well as hundreds of new digital pictures of them.

Now, if we can keep Nokie from eating them to secure her powerbase, we can start branching out into lions, tigers, jaguars, leopards, and cheetahs.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in Personal Entry at 11:16

Wednesday, July 20, 2005

Apparating in Hogwarts

So quick question, and maybe it was mentioned in earlier books and I've forgotten, but If a spell has been put on Hogwarts to prevent Apparating or Disapparating while in the grounds, how can House Elves do it with no trouble?

Posted by Sideshow at 12:11

Tuesday, July 19. 2005

Well...

Maybe not the only thing

Posted by Sideshow in Ooops at 10:18

Yes

That would be correct, oh Ancient of Days.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in Personal Entry at 10:16

!@\$ you, J. K. Rowling!

So, I can't possibly be the only one who's noticed how terribly dull it's gotten around here ever since THBP came out...is that REALLY all you guys are thinking about these days?

Posted by Ancient of Days in Ooops at 09:42

Monday, July 18. 2005

MurrayHQ

Because the English I do not properly speak, I will be referring to that place in Murray where Daboo and I live as the MurrayHQ.

That is all.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in Group Activities at 11:08

Friday, July 15. 2005

Free books!

You may or may not know who Cory Doctrow is. If you're a regular reader of /., you've probably heard his name come up from time to time. If, like myself, you're heavily involved in the relatively small community of people who are actively trying to change the way the world looks at books, he's one of our most active leaders.

Most relevant to this article is the fact that he's an author who willingly provides all of his books on the Internet for free download. Others have joined him, now, but it's still a pretty new idea.

I really enjoyed his book *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom*, although there's a hint of a memory that says it may have had some mildly graphic material in it, so be warned.

You can find his latest book, *"Someone Comes To Town, Someone Leaves Town"*, here. Also, there's *Accelerando*, by Chuck Stross, who also write the acclaimed SciFi novel *"Singularity Sky"*. And, as previously pointed out, there's always *Autonomy*, one of the more original SciFi books I've read in the past 15 years.

I hope you all find something to enjoy in the above! Have a great weekend, and hope to see you all on Monday!

Posted by Ancient of Days at 15:53

Thursday, July 14. 2005

Plothole, plothole!

Okay, taking us back to the discussion we had on the fourth, who remembers me pointing out that Lupin was made prefect in the hopes of keeping James and Sirius in line? Right?

BUT! Didn't Hagrid tell Harry in PoA that James and Lily had been Head Boy and Head Girl in their time? And they were such a good match?

Assuming that Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot and Prongs were all from Gryffindor, then Remus was made prefect, which means that James **wasn't**, which means that there's no way he could have been made Head Boy.

Someone sort me out. I'm having projected character identity crisis.

Posted by Wren at 16:18

Ahhh, the Joys of True Love

Found this Story, and just had to share it with you.

Divorced Couple Argue Over Virtual Items

I guess it was just a matter time before we would start seeing this ... a couple filing for divorce in China is arguing over custody of their computer game characters and virtual items.

According to the Chongqing Business Post, Mr. Wang from Chongqing and Ms. Ye from Huibei met last September on Shanda's online game Legend of Mir 2. Wang saved Ye's character from being killed by another player and the two quickly fell in love. The couple married at the end of October but decided to get a divorce this last June.

During their marriage, the couple jointly played over ten Mir 2 accounts, attaining level 40 to 50 status for all of them, which I am told is quite high. All the characters and virtual items are estimated to be worth 40,000 to 50,000 Yuan, and Wang said that he wants to keep the accounts and virtual items and is willing to give their joint apartment to Ye. However, Ye wants to split the apartment and game items equally (how do you split an apartment?).

Remember, if you are going to share your virtual items with your significant other make sure to write your name on all your items!

Sometimes even true love isn't enough

Posted by Sideshow in Oddities at 12:33

Wednesday, July 13, 2005

so I finished the title page but now there seems to be a problem with me logging in to the gallery page so I can't put it up. But I promise it will be up soon.

Posted by Wren at 20:47

Tuesday, July 12, 2005

Something has gone horribly, horribly wrong

The Canadian publisher of the Harry Potter series has filed a court injunction barring anyone from leaking the plot of the latest book after a store accidentally sold copies ahead of the release date.

I cannot concieve of a legal foundation for this. You have 15 people who have paid for a book. Perhaps they got it before the time the publisher would have cared for them to have done so, but that's not ILLEGAL. In this case, I don't even think I can say it's immoral.

But now we're talking about seeking legal injunctions from people talking on the street? Am I alone here? Doesn't anyone else see how a court granting such an injunction is a gross violation? Admittedly, we're talking about Canada, not the USA, but this strikes me as a wildly inappropriate action for a court, and just as inappropriate for a book distributor to have sought in the first place. This really, really, REALLY bothers me.

But then, as Jared and I have been discussing this morning, I'm a conservatarian. Or maybe it's a libervative. How about you?

Posted by Ancient of Days at 10:39

Monday, July 11. 2005

Thank you, Popcorn Bandits

I've been watching "House, M.D." all season, and for some reason found myself inexplicably drawn to the character of Dr.

James Wilson, played by one "Robert Sean Leonard".

"What is it about this secondary character that I like so much?" I wondered.

It all came together this afternoon whilst I read Danny's review of Dead Poet's Society. IT'S NEIL PERRY!

You see, "Dead Poet's Society" was the first movie I ever watched where I realized there was more going on here than some moguls and actors trying to make a buck. People have stories they want to tell, and some of them choose to do so via the Silver Screen. In the character of Neil Perry, I finally looked deeper than the \$3.50 admission price and saw another human being's pain bleeding through the screen.

This movie completely changed my life, in both my attitude towards movies as previously discussed, and in my attitude towards poetry. Some of you may find this hard to believe given my history of posts thus far on the current incarnation of the Homestarmy blog, but until I saw DPS, I never cared for poetry. I thought it was a silly waste of time. After watching it, I even went so far as to start a Dead Poet's Society at Dixie Middle School. It never had more than 5 members, but it's how I got to know Susie Turner, and it's where I first learned to enjoy both reading and writing poetry.

I recommend Danny's review to any of you who enjoyed this movie. I've seen this movie enough that I completely wore through 2 VHS copies, and now own it on DVD (in fact, it was the first DVD I ever purchased), but I still enjoyed reading what he had to say.

Posted by Ancient of Days in Movies at 15:02

Potterphiles Unite!

Well, Friday you'll find Daboo, Wren, and me - along with a bunch of other Potter-geeks - partying hard at the Barnes & Noble in Bountiful. I've yet to find my ideal bumpersticker (Dumbledore for President), so I feel comfortable that for once, I won't be the geekiest person around. I finally decided to re-read The Order of the Phoenix, since I made credible progress on The Art of War (mostly due to riding TRAX to the office). I'm two chapters in, but Rowling makes for a much faster read.

It's funny how easy it is for some authors to suck me in. There's a certain something to their writing that makes me feel like I'm a part of the action. I think some might call it Quality. However, L.E. Modesitt has this power over me, so I'm not sure that Quality is really the reason. On the other hand, the large number of Potterphiles out there makes me think that saying Rowling's work is Quality makes sense. I find it very fascinating to see adults on the train surreptitiously reading something from the Potter collection.

I first heard about Harry right around the time the third book came out. I was working at a bookstore, and the store manager put up a poster promoting the first and second books (which at the time were only available in hardcover). I thought that was kind of interesting, and bought all three when The Prisoner of Azkaban came out. (At the time, I rarely took home much of a paycheck. I had a nasty habit of buying books without reading them.) I was enchanted.

When word of the fourth installment's release date (in the summer of 2000) arrived, I was planning a trip to Tijuana to visit some friends and would actually leave town that day. So I worked a couple hours early that morning. It was crazy to see all the kids lined up outside the store, waiting for The Goblet of Fire to hit store shelves (for the brief moment before it landed in their grubby little hands). On my way out, I picked up a copy of the book and the book on tape. I left the book at home for my roommates to read and listened to the book on tape during the twelve hour drive.

I'm sure there are some people in Southern California who still wonder what all the ruckus was about as I screamed and shook my fist at the air while driving 80mph down the freeway.

When the fifth book came out, it took me a whole day and a half to read it. I probably would have been able to accomplish the feat in about half that time, but sleep interfered as it so often does (right, TML?). If I ever meet J.K., I'll be sure to thank her for releasing this next book on a Saturday, so I can spend the whole weekend locked in a room gibbering about muggles, dementors, giants, and half-bloods. Well, in the meantime, I must get back to Hogwarts.

Posted by The Mad Giggler at 14:36

D&D Nights in the near future

This Monday night, Danny Lasko will probably be attending our campaign to see if he would be interested in taking over as full-time DM. Of course, it's also going to depend on the group dynamic (i.e., "What everyone else thinks"), but I'm not attached to being the DM in any fashion. I also think it's a good idea to have other people ready to step in and DM in case the current DM can't make it, and I see no reason we should have to sacrifice members of the party to have a DM.

Additionally, this weekend I will be picking my family up from So. Utah. As much as I enjoy D&D, I'll only have my family up here with me for 2 weeks, so I will not be playing on the 18th or the 25th. Sorry.

Posted by Ancient of Days in D&D at 05:50

Friday, July 8, 2005

From "Atlas Shrugged" . . .

"Do you know the hallmark of the second-rater? It's resentment of another man's achievement.

"Those touchy mediocrities who sit trembling lest someone's work prove greater than their own - they have no inkling of the loneliness that comes when you reach the top. The loneliness for an equal - for a mind to respect and an achievement

to admire. They bare their teeth at you from out of their rat holes, thinking that you take pleasure in letting your brilliance dim them - while you'd give a year of your life to see a flicker of talent anywhere among them.

"They envy achievement, and their dream of greatness is a world where all men have become their acknowledged inferiors.

They don't know that that dream is the infallible proof of mediocrity, because that sort of world is what the man of achievement would not be able to bear. They have no way of knowing what he feels when surrounded by inferiors - hatred?

no, not hatred, but boredom - the terrible, hopeless, draining, paralyzing boredom. Of what account are praise and adulation from men you don't respect?

"Have you ever felt the longing for someone you could admire? For something, not to look down at, but up to?"

-- Dr. Robert Stadler, to Dagny Taggart in Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged

Posted by Ancient of Days at 14:01

Thursday, July 7, 2005

Welcome to the Midnight Nation

If you haven't read it, do so.

Use your email address as the username and your birthdate as the password, formatted like: "20-OCT-1976" (for October 20, 1976), or "13-APR-1981" (for April 13, 1981).

Posted by Ancient of Days at 21:13

Getting Sports

I don't know if anybody here knows this, so I'm going to let you in on a secret. I like sports.

I like the camaraderie. I like the competition. I like the passion that goes with it. I like watching it. I like reading about it. I like listening to it. And despite what my physical appearance may suggest I like playing it. What I don't like, is the increasing evidence that the people who run sports, just don't get sports.

Now I know that sports has turned into a huge business, and I'm okay with it, but it still bothers me when the people who are running the sports leagues, etc. don't get the first thing about what sports is about. Take for example the NHL. Because the two sides were so busy squabbling about inconsequential things they all lost track of the sport and have now missed an entire season. To top it all off Jeremy Roenick, actually came out and told fans they could kiss his gluteus maximus if they had a problem with the league being on strike.

But more recently what's upset me happened during the Tour de France. Now a lot of sports have unwritten rules, or code of ethics. For example hockey has a code of honor that dictates when it's okay to start a fight and when it's not. In cycling there is an unwritten rule about not wearing the Yellow Jersey, which goes to the overall leader of a race, when it was obtained due to a crash. In one of the final turns of Tuesday's fourth stage, overall classification leader Dave Zabriskie became involved in a crash, which allowed Lance Armstrong to become the overall leader. Later that day during review of the Race, Team Discovery Channel, for which Lance is riding this year, noticed that had there not been a crash, it was actually too close to tell if he would have been able to make up the :02 deficit, to get the yellow jersey. So prior to the start of the fifth stage Lance made it known out of respect for Zabriskie and the situation surrounding the crash, he was not going to ride that stage wearing the Yellow Jersey. Once again people who run sports, but don't get sports, would not allow this homage to occur. They forced Lance to change his mind and wear the Yellow Jersey.

For all the sports can mean on the field, it's really too bad that people off the field don't get it. However, it is good to see that in this day of the spoiled, prima donna athlete (re: Jeremy Roenick, Terrell Owens, 95% of all NBA-ers), that some athletes still get it.

Posted by Sideshow at 09:58

Executive Order

I'm sorry, but I have to put a moratorium on the nickname Muffy. For those of us who are corrupt and have soiled minds, there are bad connotations. It has been proposed that Sgt. Muffin be turned in for Wren until a true nickname or nom de plume surfaces.

From wikipedia:

The true wrens are members of a New World passerine bird family Troglodytidae containing 55 species.

A troglodyte means a cave-dweller, and wrens get their scientific name from the tendency of some species to forage in dark crevices. They are mainly small and inconspicuous except for their loud songs. These birds have short wings and a

thin down-turned bill. Several species often hold their tails upright. All are insectivorous.

Only one wren, *Troglodytes troglodytes*, known as the Winter Wren in North America, also occurs in Europe, where it is commonly known simply as the Wren.

According to European folklore, the Wren is the King of the Birds. Long ago the birds held a contest to see who could fly the highest; at first it looked as though the Eagle would win easily, but just as the Eagle began to tire, the Wren crept out from under the Eagle's tail feathers and soared far above. The wren's majesty is recognized in such stories as the Grimm Brothers' *The Willow-Wren and the Bear*.

The small, stump-tailed Wren is almost as familiar as the Robin. It is small and mouse-like, easily lost sight of when it is hunting for food, but is found everywhere from the tops of the highest moors to the sea coast.

Its movements as it creeps or climbs are incessant rather than rapid; its short flights swift but not sustained, its tiny round wings whirring as it flies from bush to bush.

It is a bird of the uplands even in winter, vanishing into heather when snow lies thick above, a troglodyte indeed. It frequents gardens and farms, but it is quite as abundant in thick woods and in reed-beds.

When annoyed or excited its call runs into an emphatic churr, not unlike clockwork running down. Its song is a gushing burst of sweet music, loud and emphatic. It has an enormous voice for its size.

Individuals vary in volume as well as quality of song. The song begins with a few preliminary notes, then runs into a trill, slightly ascending, and ends in full clear notes or another trill. At all and any season the song may be heard, though most noticeable during spring.

At night, usually in winter, it often roosts, true to its name, in dark retreats, snug holes and even old nests. In hard weather it may do so in parties, either consisting of the family or of many individuate gathered together for warmth.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in Personal Entry at 09:24

Wednesday, July 6, 2005

Saturday Read-alongs

One of my "things worth doing" is to get other people to experience things that I've previously enjoyed; to share the experiences that have made my life better.

In this vein, I'm considering a once-monthly "Saturday Read-along". The idea is to pick subject matter that you could burn through in a day, then to meet somewhere and take turns reading it aloud.

Pete says he's in, if we can ever get him on a Saturday where he's not playing that "Devil Game". Anyone else?

Posted by Ancient of Days at 12:22

Art of War

As a rule, in a military operation you need to change tactics a hundred times at every pace, proceeding when you see you can, falling back when you know there is an impasse. To talk about government orders for all this is like going to announce to your superiors that you want to put out a fire--by the time you get back with an order, there is nothing left but ashes.

I'm three chapters in now, so I thought I'd type up my favorite passage so far.

Posted by The Mad Giggler at 09:36

Tuesday, July 5, 2005

Things Worth Doing, part I: Why?

(10:34:49) Curtis: you're really picky, aren't you?

Have you seen "Once More, With Feeling" (an episode of Buffy, somewhere in the 6th season)? Or maybe Peter Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings"? Or perhaps you've read J. Michael Straczynski's graphic novel "Midnight Nation"? Read Asimov's "The Gods Themselves", or Orson Scott Card's "Ender's Game", or Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"?

Each of the above, in some way, sits in my memory as a source of truth; an example of what I expect when I sit down to watch TV, or a movie; when I pick up a comic book, or a S/F novel; when I read a poem. Is that a bad thing?

Writing this article, I find myself thinking about a lot of things: the nature of time; my arch-nemesis, "sleep"; the creative process; my thoughts and feelings regarding elitism; the concept of "intellectual property"; the value of entertainment in society. I'm probably not going to be able to tie all of that into a coherent article in one shot, but here's some things to think about.

We have a limited number of hours allotted to us in which to do. . .well, EVERYTHING. OK, by this point, all of you should be familiar with my feelings on sleep. If you're not, well...PAY ATTENTION! Sleep is the enemy.

More accurately, time is the enemy. There are so very very many things in life worth doing, that I find myself unable to even enjoy sleeping because I lie in the state between waking and dreaming, filled with frustration at the prospect that I'm simply wasting time.

Curtis accused me of being "picky", and this is true. Given an infinite amount of time, I feel supremely confident that I would never actually grow "bored", because I want to know *everything*. I want to experience all that is worth experiencing, and there simply isn't time for it. Thus, anything that is of less-than-excellent quality that consumes my time is a source of bitterness and frustration to me, because those are minutes and hours I'll never "get back."

Therefore, in an effort to expand my little Cult of Personality, I will be using this blog as a forum to spread my disease. I'm going to share some "Things Worth Doing", and maybe you'll all start seeing things a little more...hurriedly.

Posted by Ancient of Days in Gathering Darkness at 16:54

New Gallery Section

There is now a gallery section for the Homestarmy website. It's available from the frontpage or by clicking here. There is a webcomic/manga in the works, and the first page should be up later this week.

Sgt. Muffin, I need an email address from you, so I can forward your username/password combo along. Oh, and don't get too attached to your current nickname.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in Gathering Darkness at 16:52

DUN DUN DUN dun da DUN dun da DUNNN

Spoilers, if you haven't seen Revenge of the Sith

Okay, so admittedly I'm the farthest thing from an expert, or even a true fan, that is possible in our current reality. I can't remember the first three (or middle three?) movies. I have a fuzzy memory of some Eewoks (is that even how you spell it?) moving about in a way eerily reminiscent of the Oompah Loompahs, and I seem to remember some blonde pretty-boy whining a lot. Some screaming of the word "NOOOOO!" was done. I remember some really awkward hairstyles. So when I tell you that I liked the Revenge of the Sith, keep in mind that my opinion can be valued at slightly more than gravel, but slightly less than nice smooth stones.

That said, I liked it. Sure, there were some boring moments. I was personally bored by many of the battles and interchanges, because I had some idea of how things were going to turn out, and my mind requires a slightly greater challenge in order to stay really focused. But somewhere between the killing of innocent children and the severing of three (3!) limbs in one blow, I got excited. I thought Darth Vader's transformation was done really well. Anniken was too pretty for me to really envision the change in my own imagination, so I was excited about that part.

On a side note, who the crap lets someone they love roast slowly to death with three severed limbs, falling slowly but inevitably toward a lake of fiery lava? I mean, sure, Obi-wan didn't want to kill Annikin. He loved him. But come on! Letting him die slowly and in unbelievable pain is somehow more soothing to his conscience? Sure. Whatever.

Anyway. I'm told that multiple viewings are necessary to make a final decision by those of you who are real fans, but I still liked it. Maybe even enough to watch those original three again someday.

Posted by Daboo in Movies at 16:04

Friday, July 1. 2005

Classic Moments in Gaming: Football

I know, another article about sports. Daboo and [nameless one] will resort to skimming at this point, no doubt. Anyway, since the NBA finally wrapped up its season (for all of 1 week), it's time to start getting ready for football (as Sideshow already noted). I've been playing some NFL 2K5 in the evenings to get my mind prepared for all the worn-out cliches about to hit the airwaves. Sega's entry in the video game football genre lacks the pizzazz of hearing John Madden proclaim "I love this game" two or three times a minute, but it makes up for it in other ways (see price tag). And I get to hear about the value of tearing a page out of War and Peace - it doesn't make much of a dent.

"Flag on the play."

To move more into the vein of Classic gaming, I have to say that Pat Summerall will go down in history for his work on the Madden football franchise. Sure, just mentioning the guy means I have to be careful not to sound too much like Bill Simmons (ESPN's Sports Guy - who's had some great jokes at Summerall's expense), but it's impossible to talk about video game football without mentioning all those classic lines delivered in the early (and not-so-early) Madden games. I think I can say with complete honesty that I've never heard a more exciting monotone.

"Uh-oh. There's a man down."

This is one of my favorite Summerall lines. There used to be an exploit in these games where you could move your guy around after the whistle was blown and tackle players on the opposing team. I remember all those times when the game was on the line, and my opponent's quarterback just couldn't be stopped; so I would go after the QB with a lineman. *Badly garbled crunching sound* and. . . wait for it. YES! I have successfully played the Cobra Kai card. This game is mine. All those real NFL players out there can be thankful I'm not the opposing coach.

"Boom!"

While cheating was good for a laugh (especially when playing against friends who would get surprisingly angry to see their star QB in the locker room for the rest of the game), it was far better to win the game as the clock is winding down. This may be why Adam Vinatieri is my favorite NFL placekicker. *cough* Taking home the Lombardi trophy on a last second field goal is great, but for trash-talking purposes, it doesn't seem to compare with that drive-killing interception in the red zone. Nothing takes the wind out of your sails like driving all the way down the field, knowing the win is in your grasp, only to see Ty Law pluck the ball out of the sky. Let me know if you want any more lemon juice in the paper cut, AoD.

Posted by The Mad Giggler in Gaming at 12:19