Friday, June 29. 2007

Red Pastures, Part 0002: Elias Station

[Probably not the final draft, but I'm posting it anyway because I know Daboo is anxiously awaiting it.]

Steam flowed from the stack as the train ground to a halt. With a gentle bump, the switchman engaged his lever. There was a sort of satisfaction in knowing that this simple mechanical motion would move thousands of tons of goods from one part of the country to the other. As the engine began to churn forward, the switchman stepped back, glancing casually at the figure lurking at the edge of his vision.

"Back again, old man?" he called good-naturedly. The rag-covered figure simply shifted his weight from one foot to the other, the long burden of solitude making him impatient with the niceties of human interaction.

"Well, come on -" the switchman beckoned. "Are you coming in for a cup, or what?"

Shuffling forward, Elias Dorian met the smaller man near the door to the switchhouse. He shied back when the switchman reached out to place a hand on his shoulder. Grinning and shaking his head, the switchman feigned surrender.

"Right, right...'no touching'. Well, come in." Turning away, the switchman climbed the short flight of stairs and began rummaging in the cupboard for a spare mug. Finding nothing more than an old canning jar, he turned to sink to rinse it out and started as he nearly collided with Elias.

"Good loard, you're a sneaky one!" he exclaimed. "Didn't even hear ya come in. Well, here ya go." He put the dirty jar on the table motioning Elias towards the sink, and reached for the coffee pot. Pouring some into his own mug he hesitated before, at an expectant nod of Elias, he grunted and poured the steaming liquid into the jar. As always, he was surprised at the incredible speed at which Elias' hands moved, emerging from the pile of rags to snatch the jar back, revealing only the briefest glimpse of chocolate-colored skin near the wrists and at the fingers.

"I asked the yardmaster 'bout you. He says you been here longer than anyone, longer maybe than some of the tugs."

"Ellyuz --" the deep croak came from somewhere in Elias' chest, his voice creaking like a rusty hinge. He worked his jaw as if trying to loosen muscles frozen from lack of use.

"What?"

"My name," he said more clearly. "My name is Elias, and I've lived here for 60 years come September."

The switchman snorted and grinned. "Pull the other one, old man...Elias Station was barely even here 60 years ago. You want me to believe this yard is named after you, you're going to have to age about another 60 years."

Elias nodded, then tipped the jar into his mouth, swallowing the scorching coffee in one long pull. "Right." Smacking his lips, he plunked the jar back on the table, again moving so quickly the switchman could barely follow his movements. "Thanks for the drink. It's been a long time since I had coffee --" His mouth rolled around the word, pronouncing with a distinctly European sound. " -- good night --" Elias murmured, turning his back and fading back into the darkness of the train yard.

Crazy old coot the switchman thought silently, shaking his head again. He drained his own cup -- burning his tongue a bit on the dregs -- rinsed the cup in the sink, and returned to work.

Posted by Ancient of Days in Birdwood, NE at 01:11

Thursday, June 28. 2007

10 Ways to Kill Your Star Programmer

From this blog post.

I thought there was a little something for everyone in this list, given that most of you are friends of, related to, or are programmers yourselves. It's also, for me, a great list of "Why I Love My Boss"...he's smart enough to have intuited this list, for the most part.

1. Make them project managers.
2. Make them managers.
3. Enroll them in all kinds of full-length time-consuming leadership classes.
4. Ask them to attend numerous stupid meetings and conference calls on behalf of the team.
5. Ask them to spend a lot of time sorting out various best practices and coding guidelines that will never be read or used by anyone else.
6. Bug them with licensing concerns with every code library they want to use.
7. Ask them to submit purchase request for software they want to use once a year. If they miss the time, they have to wait another year.
8. Lock them in the project important for your promotion and reject their requests to leave the project because they think it's boring.
9. Reject their requests to travel to tech conferences they are dying to attend so that you can balance your quarterly cost.
10. Tell them you love them so that you can keep their pay low without feeling guilty.

Posted by Ancient of Days in Gathering Darkness at 22:15

Tuesday, June 26. 2007

Do not read this!

Don't visit these sites if you value your time.

Zombie Invasion Simulator

Onslaught Turret Builder

Posted by The Mad Giggler in Gaming at 20:35

New Stuff Available on our "Google Apps"

Did you remember we have Google Apps for thehomestarmy.com? You can get there by clicking here. If you don't know your account info, ask MG
or myself...

They just released a bunch of new features; the descriptions below are snipped from the email Google sent me:

Shared address book

When composing a new email or sharing a document, you now have the option to search through all the users on your domain, even if they aren't in your personal contact list. Currently, you can access the shared address book from Gmail while composing a new message, or from Google Docs & Spreadsheets on the "Share" tab. Click the "choose from contacts"
link and a smaller window should appear.

Multi-person chat from within your start page

Now you can chat with colleagues and friends from right within your Google Apps start page. The new Google Talk gadget
also allows for multi-person chat, so you can schedule a meeting or get input from multiple people without switching back and forth between chat tabs.

Gmail slideshow viewer and increased attachment size

We've doubled the allowable attachment size to 20 MB to make your Gmail space even more useful. Now you can start sharing more of those large files and presentations as attachments. And when you get a Powerpoint file as an attachment,
now you can play it as a slideshow without having to download the file. Just click 'View as slideshow' next to the .ppt attachment you want to preview. Since you can also open .doc and .xls attachments with Google Docs and Spreadsheets,
there's no need to leave your web browser to view most email attachments.

Google Calendar gallery

Many organizations and individuals choose to share their calendars publicly through Google Calendar. Now Google Calendar
users can access these calendars through a easy-to-browse gallery. You can find all sorts of interesting public calendars that you can overlay on top of your calendar, so you can keep track of your favorite baseball team's schedule, know when your favorite TV show is a repeat, or follow your favorite band's concert tour. To see the gallery, click the 'Add' button at the top of your list of calendars and choose 'Add a public calendar'.

Search among thousands of new Start Page gadgets

The start page is a central place to preview and access your calendar and inbox, find company information, and search the web. Users can now easily search for gadgets by clicking the 'Add stuff' link on the top left corner of your

homepage. Search for the brand new Google Talk gadget that allows you to chat with colleagues and friends from within
your Google Apps start page!

Posted by Ancient of Days in Group Activities at 13:19

Monday, June 25. 2007

A Birthday Party

It was early evening, and the sky had shrugged off the violent blue of the day, assuming instead a bleached, purplish color which made the evening star seem too bright and too large. Down the middle of the street, in an erratic pattern, came a young girl. Anyone observing her would find her progress strange, as she walked in unpredictable, sideways jolts, and sometimes came to a complete stop before choosing a new path. At one point she stopped, sighed loudly, and
looked upward at the dimming sky, which held no sources of light except the bright star that blazed at her like a shrewd eye, and the dim remaining glow of the vanished sun. She then studied the ground for a moment, and purposefully stepped
forward in a diagonal direction. There she stopped, studied the ground again, and again stepped forward in a not-quite-straight direction. In this manner she wove her way slowly forward, and the pattern that emerged was that while she never left the middle of the road, she also never stepped on any crack in the worn and battered asphalt.

Finally, she came to a stop in the center of the street. Or, more accurately, the streets. She had come to a place where the road forked in a Y-shape, and come to a stop in the exact center of the three streets that yawned away into the growing dusk. There was no traffic here, no cars driven by men eager to get home to the picture-perfect dinners prepared by their housewives, no young women with baby strollers casually walking, and no children playing. The girl tossed her blunt-cut, shoulder length blond hair back from her face and removed her backpack. Her eyes flickered uneasily toward the grassy area directly in front of her, and then darted away. She didn't let herself look too long at the gravestones there; they always looked like teeth to her, almost glowing in the fading light.

From her backpack, she pulled a piece of white chalk. Bending down, she drew a quavering circle between herself and the
left-hand fork of the Y-intersection. She filled it with two dots and a wobbly line, and the result was an upside-down, squashed-looking face. It seemed to peer dimly down the road. Turning, the girl then drew exactly the same thing again, but this time facing the right-hand fork. And lastly, she turned completely around and drew a third face, this one facing down the long road she had come down.

Next, she carefully pulled three foot-long branches of coniferous leaves out of her pack. Each branch was speckled with bright red berries. She carefully set them down above her white faces, each branch looking like a hat.

And last, she pulled from her backpack a rustly plastic bag which said "Farnsworth's Food and Drug" on the side in pink letters. Inside, dripping with blood, was a freshly cut rump roast. This she set down in the center of the three faces, so that it was in the exact center of the three roads.

This done, she stood up and squared her scrawny shoulders. "At the meeting of the two worlds, this I offer, Trivia," she said into the still evening air, "Queen of Ghosts, with favor look upon me."

She stood for a moment, her mouth set in a grimly satisfied line, and then she turned back the way she had come. This time the light was much dimmer, and she had a difficult time getting over to the sidewalk, where she breathed a sigh of relief. Here, the cracks were much more manageable. She started forward at a jog, her eyes on the sidewalk, and when
she had gotten about 100 yards away from the crossroads she yelled, still running, "And HAPPY BIRTHDAY!"

She did not notice, because she never turned around, the long and lean black shape that followed her home.

Posted by Daboo in Birdwood, NE at 11:05

Porting Rails to Javascript

Steve Yegge, a Google employee, ported
the Ruby web framework known as "Rails" to Javascript when he couldn't get Google to add Ruby as a supported language.

A cool demo app called "NextAction" (a form of simple "project managment" based on the "Getting Things Done" methodology) is located here. That link should prompt you to save a
file. Once you've saved it to your disk, use your browser (it's known to work best in Firefox) to open the file on disk. Then you can make any changes you want to your own copy of that file and use it to manage your "next actions". Radar, you especially might find it useful.

Posted by Ancient of Days at 09:10

Saturday, June 23. 2007

Preface

OK. So, I've decided that I ought to try to finish the story that I originally called "The Nature of Things" (I've changed the name now. It's now called, "A Defense of My Life, by Jonathan Bicara). I'm picking it up again, but I'm not picking it up exactly where I left off. Instead, I've decided that things will make the most sense when the story's finished if I give you a little bit of a preface. So, without further ado, here is the preface.

The prisoner stood before me, tall and proud, ignoring the sounds that echoed through the cavern. Hundreds of people gathered under the floating globe lights, all of them, like me, looking at the prisoner. Some were mourning. Others looked angry. None looked emotionless.

We all knew who he was, but as a matter of procedure, the bailiff called out: "Prisoner, please state your name."

"I am Jonathan Bicara."

"Jonathan Bicara, you are hereby charged with treason. How do you plead?"

"I don't know."

The bailiff looked perplexed, and glanced up at me. "Jon, please," I said, "are you guilty or not?"

The prisoner took a deep breath, and spoke loudly. "Guilt is a feeling, not a state of being. Yes, I did commit the crime that you are accusing me of committing, but no, I do not feel any guilt for my actions."A murmur rushed through the crowd. Some of those present hissed through their teeth. One woman even rushed forward and tried to spit in Jonathan's face, but she was stopped by the guards.

"With your permission, your majesty," Jonathan bowed his head, and walked to his table. A small book, dog-eared and worn, sat on the table. He picked it up, and walked forward. Kneeling, he placed it in my hand. "This is my defense. I am now ready to face execution."

My voice shook as I said, "are you guilty?"

"I committed the crime. I will face the consequence."

Tears sprang to my eyes as I said, "Jonathan Bicara, I sentence you to death by sword. You will die tonight by the light of the full moon."

Some may say that our ways are barbaric, but I believe that the man who pronounces the sentence must also enforce it.

Glancing up into the star-studded sky, I blinked back tears. The moon looked down, impassive and cold. The man who knelt before me, bound hand and foot, with powerful spell blockers on either side, was my friend. I cared for him, almost as a son. He raised his face to look at me, and I saw tears streaming down his face. I raised my sword high over my head, and whispered, "Jonathan, I'm sorry it has to end this way."

It was several weeks before I could bring myself to open his book.

Posted by Johnny Elbows in A Defense of My Life, by Jonathan Bicara at 21:39

Write with us! Or else!

An Open Invitation:

You are all invited to take part in an open, collaborative writing effort. The idea behind this project is to have a group story in which each writer contributes a unique storyline, but also tries to build on the ideas of the others who have already written. No one "owns" this idea, and you should NOT feel shy about introducing your own ideas, heroes, conflicts, villians, etc. This story will belong to all writers. However, we do have a basic premise we would like to

start from; there are enough inhabitants of our basic world that you should have no trouble finding a faction, family, or character to start with. You can start your character connected to someone else's in some way (some collaboration on
this would, of course, be necessary) or you can start your own mini-storyline with characters who don't seem to be tied in to the other storylines, and can meet/interact with other people's characters later, if you choose. You have complete freedom, so long as you stay within the basic world parameters, which are as follows:

For most of the citizens of Birdwood, NE, life in their small town is normal--it's a railroad town that never really entered the information age, and which is, like many small towns, sleepily preoccupied with its local gossip and dimly existing from one day to the next. However, there is far more to Birdwood than most of the inhabitants know. Located at an extremely potent meeting of ley lines, this town is a haven for several different factions of witches. Operating without the knowledge of their own families, these witches present a smiling front to the town, but in secret they have their own triumphs, ambitions, and of course, problems. In addition, because of Birdwood's powerful energies and its fairly central location, some of its witches participate in a very old underground railroad program, moving and protecting witches whose secret has been discovered and who need to migrate to new locations. Thus there is quite a bit
of new blood in town at any given point, though whether they stay long or short varies from case to case.

In terms of magic, our desire is to let you be as creative as you would like, but we are going to hold to the Rule of Three for all our witch characters. This ancient rule basically states that, when using magic, whatever you do to someone else will come back upon you threefold, whether good or bad. This is a good reason to be nice to people, and also a good reason to limit your evil...however, dark witches use familiars, which are animals (any animal) whose soul has been linked to the witch's. One of the most important uses of a familiar is that when the Rule of Three comes for you, its evil can be reflected, to some extent, upon the hapless animal instead of the witch. Other real/traditional witchcraft rules such as the power of names, as well as a person's hair or belongings, to control people, can be used. If you can come up with a real aspect of witchcraft you'd like to use, you're welcome to incorporate it. We'd like to stick to "real" rules of witchcraft as much as possible, but there is some room for flexibility here.

The witchcraft has to stay low-key, but there are also the standard ways in which it is exposed to society-at-large: love potions; faith healings; hexes, curses and bindings; the rule of three, as well as a strong tendency towards addiction, keep most of the casual magic users in check.

And lastly, The ley line and the heavy use of magic has also drawn other magical creatures to the area, but friendly and not.

So there it is. Pick a faction, pick a character, pick a conflict, and jump in!

Posted by Daboo in Birdwood, NE at 10:28

Friday, June 22. 2007

Dynamic User-Defined Similarity Searching

This paper talks about methods
for letting the user tell a search engine what they consider important (called a "user-defined dynamic weight" in IR terms).

Posted by Ancient of Days at 14:44

Tandem Writing

Remember the book - "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus"? Well, here is a true life example from the University of
Phoenix. An English Professor assigned his students to a joint writing exercise that quickly degraded - check it out below the break...

"Today we will experiment with a new form called the tandem story. The process is simple. Each person will pair off with the person sitting to his or her immediate right. As homework tonight, one of you will write the first paragraph of a short
story. You will e-mail your partner that paragraph and send another copy to me. The partner will read the first paragraph and then add another paragraph to the story and send it back also sending another copy to me. The first person
will then add a third paragraph, and so on, back and forth. Remember to re-read wha t has been written each time in order to keep the
story coherent. There is to be absolutely NO talking outside of the e-mails and anything you wish to say must be written in the e-mail. The story is over when both agree a conclusion has been reached."

The following was actually turned in by two of my English students:

Rebecca (last name deleted), and Gary (last name deleted).
>----------

THE STORY:

(First paragraph by Rebecca)

At first, Laurie couldn't decide which kind of tea she wanted. The chamomile, which used to be her favorite for lazy evenings at home, now reminded her too much of Carl, who once said, in happier times, that he liked chamomile. But she
felt she must now, at all costs, keep her mind off Carl. His possessiveness was suffocating, and if she thought about him too much her asthma started acting up again. So chamomile was out of the question.

(second paragraph by Gary)

Meanwhile, Advance Sergeant Carl Harris, leader of the attack squadron now in orbit over Skylon 4, had more important things to think about than the neuroses of an air-headed asthmatic bimbo named Laurie with whom he had spent one sweaty
night over a year ago. "A.S. Harris to Geostation 17", he said into his transgalactic communicator. "Polar orbit established. No sign of resistance so far..." But before he could sign off, a bluish particle beam flashed out of nowhere and blasted a hole through his ship's cargo bay. The jolt from the direct hit sent him flying out of his seat and across the cockpit.

(Rebecca)

He bumped his head and died almost immediately, but not before he felt one last pang of regret for psychically brutalizing the one woman who had ever had feelings for him. Soon afterwards, Earth stopped its pointless hostilities towards the peaceful farmers of Skylon 4. "Congress Passes Law Permanently Abolishing War and Space Travel," Laurie read
in her newspaper one morning. The news simultaneously excited her and bored her. She stared out the window, dreaming of
her youth, when the days had passed unhurriedly and carefree, with no newspapers to read, no television to distract her from her sense of
innocent wonder at all the beautiful things around her. "Why must one lose one's innocence to become a woman?" she pondered wistfully.

(Gary)

Little did she know, but she had less than 10 seconds to live. Thousands of miles above the city, the Anu'udrian mothership launched the first of its lithium fusion missiles. The dimwitted wimpy peaceniks that pushed the Unilateral Aerospace Disarmament Treaty through the congress had left Earth a defenseless target for the hostile alien empires who
were
determined to destroy the human race. Within two hours after the passage of the treaty the Anu'udrian ships were on course for Earth, carrying enough firepower to pulverize the entire planet. With no one to stop them, they swiftly initiated their diabolical plan. The lithium fusion missile entered the atmosphere unimpeded. The President, in his top-secret mobile submarine headquarters on the ocean floor off the coast of Guam, felt the inconceivably massive explosion, which vaporized poor, stupid, Laurie and 85 million other Americans. The President slammed his fist on the conference table. "We can't allow this! I'm
going to veto that treaty! Let's blow 'em out of the sky!"

(Rebecca)

This is absurd. I refuse to continue this mockery of literature. My writing partner is a violent, chauvinistic semiliterate adolescent.

(Gary)

Yeah? Well, you're a self-centered tedious neurotic whose attempts at writing are the literary equivalent of Valium. "Oh shall I have chamomile tea? Or shall I have some other sort of F***ING TEA??? Oh no, I'm such an air headed bimbo who
reads too many Danielle Steele novels."

>----------
(Rebecca)

A**hole.

(Gary)

B****.

>----------
(Rebecca)

Get screwed.

(Gary)

Eat sh**.

(Rebecca)

SCREW YOU - YOU NEANDERTHAL!!!

(Gary)
GO DRINK SOME TEA - *****.

****
(TEACHER)

A+ - I really liked this one. Only group to get an A.

Posted by Sideshow in Oddities at 08:41

Thursday, June 21. 2007

Py3k

There's some really exciting stuff going on over in the land of Python 3000. Guido brings us the news.

I'm especially fond of the new "ABC's". I think they're going to have a big impact on the world of frameworks.

Posted by Ancient of Days at 12:32

Art dump - NSFW

Yeh this one really isn't safe for work because it has half naked boys. -cough-

Uhm so my friend wanted me to draw a 'pretty, girly boy with big brown eyes' so I did. And then I liked him so I drew him again only less girly. And then it was my friend Roma's birthday and she is in love with Vincent Valentine, so there you go.

hey can I have my own 'art dump' category now?
[Ed: Done and done! "Wren's Art Dumps (NSFW!)" is found immediately under "Personal Entry".]

Posted by Wren in Wren's Art Dumps (NSFW!) at 11:02

Monday, June 18. 2007

Querying Temporal Databases

As we evolve our concepts of data and meta-data, the issue of how to query temporal data ("when stuff happened") has lagged behind the more traditional relational data. To this point, we have had to rely on vendor extensions to SQL such as PgSQL's "interval" type. A 1995 paper proposes "a clean way of defining temporal databases based on logic...views temporal
databases as multi-sorted, finitely representable first-order structures. Query languages then became formulas in suitable logics over the vocabulary of such structures."

Starting on page 94 they go through a particular temporal transform called the "Magic Set Transformation". It gives a little bit of discussion on how temporal data can affect decision systems.

Posted by Ancient of Days at 11:09

Friday, June 15. 2007

Japanese have great gameshows

Like this.

Posted by Sideshow in Oddities at 13:56

Implementing Iterators in Lisp

I spent some time walking through this
code yesterday and found his point very enlightening.

Posted by Ancient of Days at 09:31

Thursday, June 14. 2007

My computer isn't too bright

I kid you not folks, my computer just popped up a box titled "System update needs to perform a system update" which reads:
"Please shut down System Update so that we can update the system."

Posted by Ancient of Days in Oddities at 16:59

Messaging Protocols, Part 1: AMQP

[Edited: Johnny E. pointed out that s9y was choking on the wikipedia link to Erlang. It's been fixed. Thanks, Johnny!]

Aiming to replace/obselete/prevent technologies such as JMS, MQ, and TIBCO, AMQP.
Think of it like SMTP, but for programs to exchange data rather than for people to exchange emails.

One of the leading implementations appears to be Apache's qpid (say it out loud) project. Another interesting one is RabbitMQ, an independent implementation
in Erlang, a language that's getting a lot of attention at the
higher levels of the software industry (sort of like Ruby did about 5 years ago, or Python 10 years ago...or Lisp, every year since 1958).

Posted by Ancient of Days at 04:17

Wednesday, June 13. 2007

P2P Search Engines

What could be better than Google or Bittorrent? How about a little of each?

Posted by Ancient of Days at 04:14

NYT: A Patent Lie

A great article in the Times about patent law:

Independent invention is not a defense to patent infringement, and large software companies now hold so many patents that it is almost impossible to create useful software without infringing some of them.

Posted by Ancient of Days in Gathering Darkness at 00:14

Tuesday, June 12. 2007

Kethel

This is a work in progress.

The inviting sounds of activity occurring outside in Camp Mojache slowly drifted into Rija's dreams, awakening her from the deep slumber only an adventurer on hiatus can know. She sat up and stretched, looking down at the straw pallet the old Tauren innkeeper had provided her.

"Another week of sleepin' on beds like dis and I'll be turnin' into a human girl, always asking for a fedder bed," she thought to herself with a small chuckle. The low ceiling had a pleasant woodsmoke smell that no doubt came from the fireplace in the kitchen below and though the inn was built in the time since the Battle of Mount Hyjal, her small room had a comforting sense of age that could most likely be attributed to the steady nature of its Tauren architects. "Dey build t'ings to last a long time," Rija mused.

She pulled her knees up to her chest and rested her chin on them as she gazed out the window dreamily and watched a small contingent of Orcs and Taurens run through some military drills. "Maybe I will go today and teach dem some more.
De orcs don' learn dat fast, but I be impressed by a couple of de Tauren warriors." As she contemplated this idea, she heard shouts from the stable area and remembered that she hadn't taken her raptor mount out for several days. "De ol' girl be gettin' fat and lazy if I don' be takin' her out soon. Zjolnir be none too happy wit' me if I haf to buy a new one, because dis one won't let me ride her no more."

Spurred at the thought of losing her raptor to sloth, Rija began gathering her belongings back into the magic packs scattered near her pallet. She enjoyed the slight, tingling sensation in her fingers as she slid an assortment of knick knacks and old trophies into the void that made it possible to carry so much in such small bags. Rija then tied them in place on her large back pack and secured the axe and bow she carried in their battle-ready scabbards. She made her way
down the log ramp to the common room and settled her account with the innkeeper, who seemed distracted by the noises
from the stables, but unwilling to leave and investigate while the matter of gold exchanging hands was still being arranged.

Perhaps seeing that his heavily-armed client was headed to the stables anyway, he led the way to the backdoor and opened
it to the unmistakable sounds of a scuffle. One of the inn's guards was beating a second with a large beam, while a small, blond elf sat in a pile of hay with a look of concentration on his face. "Dere be somet'in' about dis elf dat seems familiar," Rija thought as she considered intervening in the fray.

The elf let out a cry of delight and jumped up, just as the guard with the beam stopped dead in his tracks and began to look around in bewilderment. "Lady Rija! I had hoped to find you here! I've traveled a long ways to rescue you!"

Posted by The Mad Giggler at 17:39

AoD is teh defeated!

So, from time to time, I've been known to display a somewhat dazzling array of useless facts. However, a conversation with Daboo this morning that started with the pronounciation of "Reville" wandered into what I consider deep, dark, frightening woods...which some of you might find funny! Follow below...
Daboo: you've never heard that song?
AoD: I was rather guessing.
AoD: Nooo
Daboo: it's from Moulin Rouge
AoD: never saw it
Daboo: but got played on the radio quite a bit also
Daboo: hunh. So you picked up the phrase...elsewhere...interesting.

AoD: I picked it up from a British girl who spent some time in France.
AoD: Voulez-vous coucher avec moi (ce soir)? is a version of a French phrase that has become well-known in the English-speaking world through popular songs. It means "Do you want to sleep with me (tonight)?" and is perhaps best known from the song "Lady Marmalade," written by the songwriting team of Bob Crewe and Kenny Nolan and first popularized in 1975 by the group Labelle featuring Patti LaBelle, Nona Hendryx and Sarah Dash. The song was rerecorded
by Christina Aguilera, Lil' Kim, Mya, and Pink as a single for the Moulin Rouge! film soundtrack.
AoD: I'm pretty sure I've never listened to a station that played "Lil' Kim", "Mya" or "Pink"
Daboo: hehe
AoD: Christina Aquilera was on 7th heaven though
AoD: So I've heard her sing
Daboo: she scares me
AoD: No, never mind
AoD: That was Ashlee Simpson, sayeth the IMDB
AoD: So I don't know who Christina is either
Daboo: she's scary.
AoD: I mean, I have a pretty good idea who "Lil' Kim" is. She's been in movies.
Daboo: do you know Pink?
AoD: No
AoD: But that's a disturbing name
Daboo: I'll play you a song by her tonight, I like her
AoD: Nevermind, I don't know who Lil' Kim is either. I was thinking of "Missy 'Misdemeanor' Elliott" (sayeth the IMDB)
AoD: o.O
Daboo: lol you don't know anyone O.o
AoD: Come on. They look exactly the same.
AoD:
http://imdb.com/gallery/granitz/5670/Events/5670/12301966.jpg.html?path=pgallery&path_key=Jones,%20Kimberly%20%27Lil%27%20Kim%27
AoD:
http://imdb.com/gallery/granitz/3892/Events/3892/MissyEllio_Grani_6590472_400.jpg.html?path=pgallery&path_key=Elliott,%20Missy%20%27Misdemeanor%27
AoD: Perhaps it's a Superman/Clark Kent thing
Daboo: They don't look anything alike, darling.
AoD: They're both clones of http://www.starjones.com/
Daboo: I guess they both have faces, so that's a start...
AoD: (My Mother has a thing about Star Jones)
Daboo: Star Jones was on The View, right?
AoD: I have no idea who she is, but I know she got married in some big hoopla that had my mother in fits
Daboo: yeah, she was on The View. She was really controversial and fought with everyone.
AoD: I don' t know what The View is
AoD: I mean, I know what A view is
AoD: But not "The" View
Daboo: it's that talk show with Barbara Walters that all housewives cannot live without
Daboo: the one Rosie O'Donnell was just fired from
AoD: In database theory, a view is a virtual or logical table composed of the result set of a query. Unlike ordinary tables (base tables) in a relational database, a view is not part of the physical schema: it is a dynamic, virtual table computed or collated from data in the database. Changing the data in a table alters the data shown in the view.
Daboo: lol no, no that's not it.
AoD:
AoD: FINALLY!
AoD: I KNOW Rosie O'Donnell.
Daboo: LOL
AoD: She was Rizzo in "Grease"
AoD: I mean the broadway one, not the movie one.
AoD: BWAHAHA! I GOT ONE RIGHT!
AoD: Grease (1994) (as Betty Rizzo)
Daboo: lol you're weird
AoD: She's kind of an uggo, but she's got a more than decent voice
Daboo: well, Rosie got hired on to The View instead of Star Jones, which was a big huge controversy if you don't have anything better to do than care about daytime tv.

Posted by Ancient of Days in Oddities at 08:29

An...Interesting Idea

I'm more of a "middle man" myself, but if you're an "edger", you might want to pickup one of these.

Posted by Ancient of Days in Oddities at 04:34

Database Replication (via so-called "Epidemic Algorithms")

There's actually a more detailed paper than this one (which is from 2003), but you'd have to be an ACM member to read it.

Posted by Ancient of Days at 04:06

Monday, June 11. 2007

Workrave: Avoid RSI injuries!

Radar mentioned last week that he was starting to get sore from sitting in the same position using his keyboard and whatnot. That reminded me of this little doohickey, which will remind you
to take breaks at appropriate times during the day in order to avoid RSI.

Posted by Ancient of Days in Gathering Darkness at 12:29

Sunday, June 10. 2007

Red Pastures, Part 0001: "Seventeen"

[Note: This is my first entry in what hopefully will prove to be a collaborative fiction exercise among the authors of this blog. I have tenatively called the collective work "Birdwood, NE", because that was the name I picked for the town where the stories will take place...however, the idea ultimately belongs to Daboo, so she may do other things with it.

As my first attempt at writing "noir", this has been incredibly difficult for me so far -- setting the tone, etc. I'm encouraging feedback, especially if you're a fan of noir and can give me tips! Given my inexperience with the material, it will be very slow-going to write this story, so don't get too excited.]

Det. Rick Rutledge groaned as he dropped into a crouch next to the body, his right hand gripping the cigarette dangling from his lips. The feel of the cigarette comforted him. It was here with him, it was something he could trust, it was *real*...and what he was seeing, there on the ground in front of him, simply could not be real. His finger traced a pattern in the air, following the river of blood across the tile and onto the carpet.

The sound of his partner climbing in through the shattered remains of the front door danced around the edges of his attention, but the sound of her voice didn't even register until the third time she called his name.

"Rick? Are you listening to me?"

Rick grunted and pointed at the carpet. "What do you see there?"

Desi tossed her head and pulled her hair back, gathering it in into a pony tail. "I see blood, and lots of it...". Her voice faded as she followed the blood across the carpet. "Is - that's a HAND." Pulling on a glove she stooped to pick it up, then screamed and jumped back when it closed around her wrist. "WHAT THE --?!"

Rick chuckled at her as he pulled his own gloves on. "The muscles think they're still getting signals. But that's not exactly what I wanted you to look at."

Stooping, Rick set his flashlight on the floor, its beam growning long and throwing a dark red memory of blood across the far wall.

"Look...it isn't just resting on the floor. It's growing out of it." He poked hard at the still-twitching palm, and watched the skin and muscle pull against the granite floor.

Desi stood against the wall, her hand clutching her chest. "What do you mean 'growing out of it'? Hands don't grow on the floor, Rick."

Rick grunted again, kneeling on the floor to examine the stone where the hand met it. "What would you call it?" He stood, checking his pants for blood, and bent to pick up his flashlight. "I don't like this, Des...I don't like it one bit. Let's have a look in the basement...all this blood, there's got to be a bod-". The cigarette tumbled from his lips, landing on the cold stone, as Rick stared in horror at the wall behind Desi.

"Rick?" she asked, glancing at the wall. "Rick, what is? What do you see?" The blood drained from his face as he stood rooted to the floor. "Rick, you're starting to piss me off. What's going on with you? RICK!"

Rick started, and looked at Desi. "I don't know." he said, shifting his weight from one foot to the other. "I just get a bad feeling about this. Let's check the basement."

As he turned, the light moved across the blood pool, and the reflection Rick had been staring at moved across the wall creating, invisible to the untrained eye, the number '17' shone in wine-red light.

Posted by Ancient of Days in Birdwood, NE at 17:54

Friday, June 8. 2007

If You Can Perform a Factorial, I Can (Probably) Teach You Recursion

Factorials are a concept from your high school math class. Usually written as "n!", where "n" is some number, it is usually defined in terms like this:
"the factorial of a non-negative integer n is the product of all positive integers less than or equal to n"
(Wikipedia entry: "Factorial")

That's a $50 way of saying:
5! = 5 x 4 x 3 x 2 x 1 (= 120)
6! = 6 x 5 x 4 x 3 x 2 x 1 (= 720)
and so on; for any number "n", "n!" is "n (n - 1) ... (repeat until you reach (n - (n-1))". You have to be careful never to include "0" in that set, because -- of course -- anything 0 == 0.

As a recursive function, this is very easy to rewrite. I'll use Python syntax here, because I think it will be the easiest to understand. There are really only two things that you need to understand in recursion:
1) The function calls itself. Don't get hung up on this idea! I think this is where a lot of people have trouble with recursion, because they don't see how you can define something in terms of itself. There's really no magic here. A function can call any other function, including itself. Think of the Auryn:

2) Recursive functions MUST HAVE a stopping point. In our factorial function, it's when we see that "n - (whatever)" results in a "1". In fact, I generally recommend you write this part of the function FIRST, to make sure you don't forget it.

```
def factorial(n):
  if (n
```

Posted by Ancient of Days at 16:33

Thursday, June 7. 2007

Usability Testing for the Web

Here's [PDF] a great
paper talking about how to setup and make optimal use of controlled usability experiments on your website...because, as
we know, if you wait for your users to tell you what they want, you'll build the wrong thing at twice the cost it would have taken to build 3 or 4 prototypes.

Posted by Ancient of Days at 16:44

Oh, the Humanity

So I don't know if I've made this clear to all of you, but my overall view of the human race is that we suck. We pretty much ruin everything we touch. I mean, throw 50 people into a place where there is goodness and beauty, and if one person doesn't ruin it all another person will. Pretty much because of selfishness, nearsightedness, and pure stupidity.

But every once in a while, I realize that along with all that suckiness, we have the potential to be really good. And that realization usually comes as a result of seeing someone, somewhere, doing something that is purely good.

So yesterday, it was pouring rain as I was driving home from work. I was taking the back streets, and I saw this woman sitting in the road. (This was 9th East, so a very busy road.) She was by the corner of an intersection, but definitely IN the road. She had this fierce, protective look to her, and was not moving even though cars were coming really close to her. It was kind of an usual sight, so I watched her trying to figure out what was going on. I eventually realized she was sitting by an open storm drain which was flooding with water.

On the sidewalk near her were three big mechanic guys. They had clearly come over from the car repair shop on the corner. They were fussing over a cardboard box.

As I watched, one of the guys pointed over to the grass--where there was a duck. Not just a duck, but a panicking, quacking female duck.

I said to my car, "Are there DUCKLINGS in that box?"

And right as I said it, one of the guys reached into the box and lifted out a little yellow fuzzy duckling, which started peeping for all he was worth. He rushed to his mother, who was rushing toward him.

I have to say, seeing those people so concerned for those little ducklings made me remember how good we all can be. I wanted to write this as a salute to those people, and the kind of people who will stop what they are doing to protect baby ducks in the middle of a downpour. Good job.

Posted by Daboo in Personal Entry at 16:28

Wednesday, June 6. 2007

Matching Strings

[Note: "More Than You Ever Wanted To Know About..." is a new subset of the "Topic of the Day" posts that will feature in-depth posts of an even more technical nature...sorting algorithms, IEEE/ACM papers, etc. You might just want to set your feed readers to ignore these! :)]

Came across a great paper [PDF] today
about all the different ways to match pieces of strings. Worth glancing over and maybe even bookmarking, because an understanding of the underlying algorithms can help you use the right tool for the job. That is, it puts more tools in your toolbox, as well as helping you understand when to use a "hammer" and when to use a "saw".

Posted by Ancient of Days at 16:18

Once more with the musings

Editors Note: There is a hidden joke in this article, for those who know how to find it!

Well, here I go again; one more business vacation, and one more essay of random thoughts written before, during, and after the flight. This trip I am heading down to Southern California. I have a niece who wanted to get married in the San Diego Temple, even though she (and everyone else involved in the wedding lives in Northern California, some 7 hours
away). But apparently the San Diego Temple is "prettier" than the Oaklandor Sacramento temples. But I had to come down and support her. She is a middle child and was never really shown much in the way of quality time by
her parents. I always tried to make time for her so that she new someone out there really loved her for who she was. She is a good kid and I want to be here for her.As I walk down the aisle to find my seat, I come to the emergency exit row. I chose this seat as I wanted to have
plenty of leg room for the flight. But I am struck with something that until now, I had never before thought: If this door comes flying open during the flight, I'm dead! There is no way that I would survive being sucked out my seat and into the wide open expanse of clouds that surround our plane. Some might say: well won't the seatbelt hold you in? Those are the stupid people. The seatbelt would either give way, or cause my body to be ripped in half. So my only recourse is to gently float to the ground in one piece or two. I don't even get the dignity of choosing which way I go. Life can be so unfair sometimes. Another thing strikes me as odd right now, and forces me to question the flight attandant: "Miss, should the wing really be shaking like that?"

I think I would prefer to be sucked out whole. It's got to stink being ripped apart by wind-sheer and a federally approved seatbelt at 487 MPH (our current crusing speed).

Last time I wrote on a plane, I said that I wanted to change the way my life was spent. Somethings have changed, but I still have not yet met my goal. I still work ridiculous amounts of hours at work (so far for two days this week, I have put in 25.5 hours). I did manage to convince the bosses to hire some new help for me (2 new Project Managers to split the load). I also got them to refine and right out our company process. That way everyone would know what was to be expected and how everything should flow. We are still in the implementation phase, but already we are starting to see the fruits bear out.

Actually I change my mind. I just caught a glimpse of the ground below. Rip my body in half and let me die quickly. I don't want to wacth myself slowly float some 34,000 feet to what surely is to be a very hard and abrupt landing.

I am also excited about this trip as I will get to see my sister, Pam, for the first time since she was diagnosed. We all just thought she was stupid, turns out it was a brain tumor. What are you going to do?! She has been doing well. Her treatments have been succesful so far, so we can all joke about it. But the time will come when the tumor will kill her. It is the kind that keeps growing back despite treatments. Thankfully she gets checked often, so they will see the next one coming. And on the positive side, she has lost a lot of weight! That seems like a fair trade off - deadly disease; trim waste, thighs and buttocks! Trendy women are sure to start lining up as soon as this secret gets out.

Wait, no, I change my mind again. Just let me have a heart attack and pass out.

They say that weddings are a great place to meet girls. I find this very odd, and not at all comforting to me. The only weddings I attend are for family members. Should I really be looking around the room during the ceremony thinking:
Which one of these 2nd cousins can I ask out? I did ask a girl out the other day at church. She accepted, once I talked her into it. I
didn't realize until later that I didn't actually set a time or day for the date. I know what we are going to be doing, but not when. We are going to watch the first installment of the greatest film ever made: Lord of the Rings! She has never seen it before. We will pick up some sort of to-go meal, bring it back to her house, and watch the movie. She is cute, Czechoslovakian, and willing to watch a 3 hour movie. I'm keeping my fingers crossed for this one!

Oh, crap! This door better hold, I don't want to die!

Posted by Radar in Personal Entry at 12:17

Tuesday, June 5. 2007

A couple of videos

The first one is a blast from the past, man. It always amazes me what you can find on youtube.

The second is just a funny guy named Demetri Martin who makes me laugh.

Posted by Wren in Oddities at 18:28

Because Using Linux Makes You an Action Hero!!!

Posted by Ancient of Days in Oddities at 13:47

I haven't done this in a really long time.....

... but you really should check out this picture.
Especially you Radar.

Sadly she passed away last night.

Posted by Sideshow in Oddities at 09:17

Monday, June 4. 2007

Your Jealous Rage of the Day (sponsored by YouTube)

Join me...hate him.

Stupid jerks with the talent and whatnot...

Posted by Ancient of Days in Oddities at 14:44

Linus Torvalds at Google

Here's an
hour-long video presentation by Linus Torvalds at Google. It's mostly about SCM (aka "Revision Control"), and why he thinks a distributed model is the only acceptable model of development. I don't agree with everything he said (which makes me ugly and stupid), but he raises some interesting points and gives a good overview of how "distributed SCM" works.

David Wheeler has a good paper reviewing some of
the SCM systems out there which also briefly touches on the matter.

If I can get a couple of the really active PHP maintainers to use it, I'm going to setup a git tree which syncs cvs.php.net:/repository/php-src HEAD.

Posted by Ancient of Days at 14:33