

G'narsh

The Troll, The Myth, The Legend

(a work of fiction)

by

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P2-B
of
P1, P2-A, P2-B, P3-A, P3-B, P3-C, P3-D, P3-E, P4
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G'narsh - P2-B

Part B - Continued from A

The Bump and Grind

Close your eyes.

You are Doug, young, strong, and handsome. In your arms you hold the most beautiful girl in the world. Her hair is soft. She smells of roses and daffodils. Her arms are wrapped around you and she dances with you, for you. Being the romantic fool that you are, take a moment to concentrate on her body, her mounds, and other feminine parts. Enjoy the sensation. This is what the dance scene -- The Bump and Grind -- is all about. I mean, you know

whoever wrote that love letter is all about the down and dirty, forbidden dance with all the intermixing of limbs and body parts, which the name implies, so enjoy the moment.

Then close your eyes and drift away.

You are Eileen, young, beautiful, and alluring. Full of vibrancy and life, you always get your pick of the men. To walk into a room is to become the center of attention. Your smile can open any door. You can get boys to do things other girls can only dream about. You are an elvin princess after all. Could one expect any less? Enjoy the motion of the dance. You are well schooled in the art. There is no need to load a ballroom dance disc, or any of the classical romances. Nor do have a need for a dance instructor, or a contest primer. You have all the moves memorized. You could do the one, two, three, or four step in your sleep. But having said all of this, your mind is still aflutter. Holding you in his arms, is the great, the mighty... the kind and caring, the hero of the kingdom -- Doug -- and he would do anything for you -- anything.

Feel the strength in his arms as his body forms the perfect dance frame. He is the ideal partner. Let your hands wander. Glide them across his body, his chest, and enjoy. Do not concern yourself with the fact that he cannot keep up with your moves. With every step he takes, you take two, three, and four, but this does not matter. It allows you to glow, to shine. This is your moment, so use his body as a pole and dance circles around him. You can sense his desire, feel his love. Let these emotions rise within you as well and let them take control. Give free reign to the sensations that wash through your body. Feel the surge of happiness and elation. Rejoice in the power and intensity of the moment.

Be you Eileen or Doug, take a moment to join hands with the other and lean back as you gaze into the heavens. The stars are clear and bright... OK. Sure. There's that weird purpley thing going on with the sky lately, but it's Server wide. It's just a glitch. The powers that be have assured the community at large that they

have it under control. Besides it looks pretty, the purple clouds of mist floating across the heavens as they frame the moon. All in all, they add a touch of wonder and supernatural intensity to the moment.

So as your eyes fall from the stars, take in the brightly colored paper mache lanterns that hang in the trees. It is like a scene from a Midsummer's Night Dream, a Fourth of July in Maine, a Samurai Sunset, or a South American Christmas. The trees, mainly pines, oaks, and elms, are strung with party lights. The smell of food, wholesome elvin foodstuffs -- fried chicken, coleslaw, brownies, and fruit punch -- fill the air. It is the scene of a wedding reception, a prom, a homecoming dance, or the prodigal son's return from war as a much celebrated and decorated war hero. I'm sure there is a story in there somewhere. Did he charge a pulse-gun nest single handedly or was he covert ops. He doesn't like to talk about it though. You know how the folks back home never understand the horrors and senseless compromises of war.

But forget all that. The thing that is important -- all that really matters -- is the one that you hold in your arms. They are your love, your destiny. Be you an old man reliving the glory of youth or a young girl dreaming of days to come, know that this moment is special. It will be the one that calls to your mind from across the years at your deathbed, and it will be the promise of this sort of homecoming that will send many a young man off to war, so give this moment your all, and give your lover this moment. Hold their body close and give in to your animal desires. You know that you want to.

As you bump and grind making virtual love on the crowded dance floor, concentrate on your sense of touch. Feel your lover's embrace. Return the favor and give them your body. Take a moment to gaze into the eyes of the one that you love. Notice a slight hesitancy that forms on their lips before they surrender to a desperate desire that rises from the depths of their soul. And with joy and wonder, be there in the moment when the young lovers'

lips come together in an oath and heart felt promise of things yet to come.

Close your eyes. Lose yourself in this kiss, in this moment as you rock gently back and forth on the dance floor drifting away into a world of your own -- full of peace, happiness, contentment, and the promise of a joyous future.

“Enough of that!” Art jumps in breaking the pair of lovers apart. “Keep your distance you two.”

“Professor Art?” Doug asks uncertainly. He does not know what title of respect he should confer to Art -- Eileen’s father figure?

“Art’s fine,” the arrogant dreamer patronizingly informs the young lad.

“Art,” Doug repeats the name dutifully as he shakes the masterful artist’s hand.

“Me and Doug need to talk,” Art explains to Eileen.

“But he just got here... We were just starting,” Eileen objects on the verge of tears.

“I’m sure this isn’t how you two would really do things,” Art replies casually as he sweeps his hand around indicating the down home -- country -- family reunion surroundings. “What is it that you kids are into these days Raves, Technos, something Slamming?”

“Oh, dad,” Eileen blushes. Secretly she’s probably a hardcore Gothic Punk, New Wave, Cross-Synth, Ghetto Board type girl, but I’ll let you decide the specifics of that on your own.

“I’m sure you two will connect up again, but for now me and Doug need to talk shop. Amscray,” Art commands and what can Eileen do but comply?

As they watch her very alluring form recede into the distance, past the party, and then into the forest beyond, Art wraps his arm around the young man’s shoulders in a very condescending -- I’m more powerful than you are and I’ll do whatever the Fr@ck I feel

like with your personal space -- type way, as Art notes between appreciative whistles, "She's a fine bit of work. I'm proud of her. Just look at the way she moves."

Doug doesn't quite know what to make of these statements. The first comment that comes to mind is one of rabid agreement, but talking about a girl's looks with her father doesn't seem proper, no matter how weird or bizarrely out of it that father might seem to be, so instead after a moment's thought Doug remarks, "I'm kind of confused here. Why is she in your class at college, if you're her father?"

"We home school," Art replies simply, "me and M.O.M.."

Doug is still struggling to understand. "You rent a room at the college to home school?"

"It's a Server Hall... Well, not quite, but close enough." Art doesn't really like to lie if he can avoid it. Seems like a bad habit to get into, but sometimes you really have no choice.

"How'd I wind up there? I mean... Oh, so that's why you kicked me out," Doug says putting it all together.

"Sure," Art agrees amiably not really caring what conclusion the boy has come to so long as he is satisfied. To fill some space, add a bit of color and depth, and to deftly change the subject, Art leads Doug over to the buffet table. "Try the fried chicken."

"You eat meat?" Doug asks appalled and intrigued at the same time as if to say: Who eats meat? Who can afford meat?

"I think you're forgetting that we're still in a dream."

"Oh yeah, I forget sometimes," Doug recovers apologetically.

"We do everything here," Art continues indicating the dream space. "Eileen never takes off her rig." Well, being a proxy she doesn't have a rig so much, but you get the picture. "Neither does Stef'fan."

"Hi troll," Stef'fan says disdainfully as he appears suddenly with a chicken leg in one hand and a glass of punch -- that you just know he spiked (but with what?) -- in the other.

"Now behave," Art reminds Stef'fan. "Doug kept his end of the bargain. Our end is to treat him like family... besides, since

Doug here killed Xavier with your sword, after you resurrect your Slaughter Quest character, you'll get credit for the kill."

"Oh, yeah," Doug says searching for Stef'fan's sword -- as now would be a good time to return it -- but he can't find the weapon anywhere. "I wonder what I did with it?"

"I'm guessing you checked it at the door," Art supplies helpfully. "We wouldn't want our little party to erupt into some sort of guild hall free for all."

"I guess I spaced that out," Doug agrees uncertainly, searching for the memory, but failing to find it.

"Get used to forgetting stuff," Stef'fan sneers. "I imagine if I wasn't always forgetting what classes I was enrolled in I wouldn't flunk so many of them."

"Your memory, your sense of awareness, that's one of the things I wanted to talk to you about Doug," Art continues.

"So if you're done with me then?" Stef'fan snorts and not waiting for an answer (for we are done with him), he walks away towards a group of scantily clad wood elves dancing all by themselves. Stef'fan is after all a gentleman and the wood elves seem lonely... and cold. Perhaps he will have to do the right thing by them and take of his jacket and, well... um, ahem... let's just say Stef'fan knows how to party and maybe the wood elves would care for a drink, or two, or three.

"He's got a bit of an attitude," Doug finally remarks and then, once again, he is full of doubt as he wonders if it is the wrong thing to say.

"No, you're right," Art assures him. "Stef'fan's attitude is off the charts, but I like him that way. In fact, I encourage his haughty, arrogant," yet at the same time desperately empty, sad, and hollow, "demeanor whenever possible. In the end, that's what I wanted to talk to you about."

"Stef'fan?" Doug asks confused.

"No, not Stef'fan per se, but about forgetting stuff, misplacing ideas," Art says hoping to bring the conversation back

into alignment with his original agenda. Art (that is I) wants to delve deeper into proxy development and to mention the amazing results that can be had by giving a proxy full access to a dream booth for a bit of self-guided training. Of course, he's not going to come right out and say this to Doug, but with this as his intention, Art starts the topic off with an innocent, pseudo white lie of sorts. "Stefan and Eileen, all of my children actually, have been plugged in since birth."

"Since birth?"

"We're a progressive family," Art explains simply. "The problem is, after a while it can be hard to separate the dream from reality. You know how those discs go, after a while it can be hard to know for sure whether you are a crane operator pretending to be tank commander to alleviate the boredom of a repetitive task, or if you are a tank commander pretending to be a crane operator to reduce the stress of combat." Of course it's not really that simple, because you could be a maintenance worker dreaming about being a tank commander who dreams about being a crane operator who in turn dreams about being an infantry sergeant ((((and so on and so forth ad infinitum)))). I will leave it for you to figure out the motivations and rationales in each step of the dream chain, as I will also leave it unsaid as to why a dream using the contemporary world as its primary setting might need multiple layers to be convincing. Anyhow, once you've tasted the sublime pleasures inherent in a dream nested 45 layers deep, it can be hard to rise above the haze and figure out which layer is real -- especially if you never take your rig off in the first place.

"People actually do that?"

Not as such, 45 layers is a bit of an exaggeration, but other than that, "Yes, they do. The problem is, or can be, that after a week, month, or year," or an entire life, "of living in the discs, what the real world is like," or where it is located, "can just sort of slip away."

“He’s talking about Zen Consciousness, or at least what passes for Zen Consciousness in his world,” Lane remarks as she enters the scene and gives both Doug and Art a hug at the same time -- two arms around each -- though she only bothers to kiss Art -- lucky man.

“You’re misses...”

“I’m Lane,” the four armed, body building, demoness of my dreams explains simply. I won’t bother to describe what she is wearing, but Yowza! I do love our little family get-togethers, the relaxed informal atmosphere, and the casual dress code -- Boing! Schwing! And, Huzza! come rapidly to mind.

“Now I know I must be dreaming,” is Doug’s simple, understated response.

“Odd that it hadn’t been on your mind before,” Art chides.

“Not odd,” Doug counters defensively, “just not on my mind, but you know four arms... they look good. You’re gorgeous Mrs. Lane.”

“Just Lane,” my sweet lady friend corrects as she smiles and enjoys the flustering effect she is having on the young lad. “You’re cute when you blush,” and then noting the substance of the current conversation she points out, “I showed up early didn’t I.”

“No worries,” Art assures her. “What did you have to say?”

“Sure it won’t interrupt the flow?”

“The boy is in a whirl. What can it hurt?”

“Fine, it’s your call,” Lane replies mischievously. “It’s bad form to ask what someone does in real life, but we know you’re interested. Art is a dreamer.”

“I do a bit of code work too,” Art adds quickly, perhaps too quickly, but try to get any respect saying you’re a professional dreamer at a cocktail party. All you get is people staring at you dumbfounded as if you’re some painter who has put a tiny dab of red pigment on a barren canvas and called it Teardrop In Red. The typical response is, ‘I could do that,’ from folks who do not understand that the actual painting is only the tip of the iceberg and that there is a virtual mountain of experience, history, and meaning

backing up that seemingly trivial work of art. Well, that and a price tag of comically large proportions.

But where was I? Ah, Lane was explaining what Art does for a living. “He makes sex discs without the sex.”

“How’s that?” Doug asks confused.

“You know, he takes an XXX rated pornographic story, pulls out all off the good bits, and markets the rest as an MM compliant dream.”

“How can you do that? There usually isn’t any plot in those things. I mean not that I would know,” Doug quickly adds, “but that’s what I hear.”

Lane shrugs. “I don’t know how or why he does it, nor for the life of me can I understand why anyone else would be interested, but that’s what he wanted me to come over here and tell you.”

“He put you up to this?” Doug asks more confused than ever. “I really thought you were going to explain something to me here, but I’m not getting it.”

“Now would be a good time to discuss the obligations of a creator to its creation,” Lane says with obvious delight.

“I haven’t figured that bit out yet,” Art complains. Thinking quickly, he tries to change the subject and divert the flow of the conversation by looking over the items of food on the buffet table once again, but Lane remains focused, determined, and unsympathetic.

“Tough. Wing it,” she responds gruffly -- obscure puns be damned!

“Is this more of that Zen stuff?” Doug asks.

“No. Now shut up and let him answer the question or I’ll break your legs,” Lane responds simply, and seeing as how she stands a few inches taller than Doug, is obviously in much better shape -- if you can believe that such a thing is even possible -- and has taken the opportunity to wrap two of her arms around his body in a loose bear hug, Doug decides that prudence is the best course of action and wisely shuts up.

“I really don’t have this worked out yet,” Art objects as he pours himself a glass of punch.

“Too bad. Sweat it out,” Lane insists and then looking to the starry lamps that hang from the trees as if they are a conduit to another dimension she adds, “And don’t even think about calling anyone else in here to save you from an answer. I’ve got two free hands and I know how to use them.”

From the outskirts of the party a Charlie can be heard to say, “Oh’d I just forgettee’s some ting.”

“Don’t we’s gettee da punchies?”

“Charlie suddenlies not tirsty,” the cobalt says as he plays nervously with the skin around his throat.

“Oh’d rightees.”

“We’d forgetties some ting,” Charlie explains to the moonlit night and with that the group of cobalts turns around and heads back into the forest from whence they came.

“You’re all alone Art,” Lane informs him. “Answer the question.”

“Hmm,” Art says as he scratches his chin and gathers a good head of steam. “Well, there are two schools of thought that I bounce between, but both start from a similar line of reasoning. God is the ultimate creator. I am his creation, and I in turn make creations of my own. This is what it means to be created in God’s image, to have the capacity of creation. Now with this starting point we can either assume that God has made his creation better than he is, as I might do when creating a body such as yours Lane.” Art smiles, but as Lane makes no move to comment after a brief pause he continues, “Or God may have made his creation worse than he is, as might be the case when one creates a world populated by zombies.”

“That doesn’t answer the question at all,” Lane points out.

“But it does place a weighty theological discussion smack dab in the middle of the dream,” almost exactly at the 50 click

mark. “With any luck that will get us onto a church group’s recommended dream list.”

“You’re delusional.”

“That’s what dreaming is all about.”

“That may be,” Lane concedes, “but you still haven’t answered the question.”

“About the obligation of a creator to its creation or vice a versa?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t know.”

Lane is noticeably annoyed. “How can that be?”

“You’ve spent some time in the horde, both of you,” Art begins. It is time to go over this concept -- koan or dilemma if you will -- with a more concrete example. “Some warlords are kind to their minions and some are not, and in return some minions are loyal to their warlords and some are not. In the context of a Slaughter Quest game does a warlord have an obligation to his minions, and/or do the minions have an obligation to the warlord?”

“This is not a game,” Lane reminds him.

“Sure it is,” Art -- ever the glib one -- responds quick and easily without worrying about the exact details or subtext.

“It is not a game.”

“I beg to differ, but if you know the answer to the warlord/minion question, then you know the answer to the creator/creation question. I should, however, point out that there are (((at least))) four possible problems inherent in the dilemma, and so perhaps there are four (((or more))) possible answers to the question.”

“And I feel, it is only fair to warn you that I am not pleased with your answer,” Lane says as she glowers at Art, but being just a proxy, Art hardly takes the implied threat seriously.

“Would it make you any happier to know I don’t treat all my creations the same?” and then with a wave (((and without waiting for a reply))), Art dismisses Lane -- into the background of the party where all who are present are whooping it up. Choose the

party disc of your choice, but in my little world, the trees become animated and tell stories of a time when the grass was green and the oceans were blue; piles of moss with distinct personalities and political agendas of their own discuss the interrelatedness of all things -- and really who better than a mass of shambling, symbiotic moss to know this; and last but not least, babbling brooks come to life as cabaret singers happy to perform whatever song you might request. For my money, those old time elves knew how to do the dream thing right.

“It’s time for you to go Doug,” Art says as he leads the young lad towards a romantic looking, moonlit bridge under which the water chimes a dreamy, happy melody.

“But Eileen,” Doug protests.

“Right,” Art agrees. “I almost forgot,” but probably not. “The real problem with immersing oneself in the discs for so long is that one has a tendency to leave the real world behind.” It seems self evident and circular, but it goes deeper than that. “Spend enough time in the discs and differentiating the real from the unreal becomes difficult.”

“I don’t see what this has to do with Eileen.”

It is a reasonable comment and Art takes a moment to look into the water of the brook, past the singing chorus of bubbles, past the friendly smiling whirlpool, past the playful fountain, beyond the talking frogs, fish that can grant wishes, and a psychopathic praying mantis who is really a traveling monk studiously intent on an inward looking journey of self discovery and heightened awareness...

Past all of these things of wonder Art points to a fish, a simple, normal, ordinary fish. “Do you think that fish can tell when he’s in the water or not?”

“Sure, of course,” Doug replies without a moment’s hesitation. In the air the fish would be in pain, dying, and suffocating. It would be the proverbial fish out of water. Of course it would know.

“Then it should be a simple matter for you to determine when you are dreaming or not,” Art continues as he hands Doug a fancy watch in an elaborate case, but in truth we will not go into the working mechanisms of the watch -- for it is a trade secret, i.e. not something included in this disc -- and the exact appearance or functionality of it doesn't much matter for the dream at hand. Suffice to say that although a wristwatch is a thing, in this particular case the watch is a verb, an activity, and an idea -- or more specifically a proxy training program.

“Put the watch on,” Art commands. “At random a buzzer will sound. All you must do is say, ‘I'm dreaming,’ when you are dreaming and, ‘I'm awake,’ when you are not. Guess right often enough and you will meet Eileen again,” or be one step closer to enlightenment. “Guess wrong... and well... then you get to keep on trying.”

We will not stick around to continue the conversation or explore the absence of skepticism in Doug's heart. After all, how could he ever hope to wear a dream watch if he was in the real world, but as we have been over countless times before, Doug is a proxy. When he thinks such thoughts, we delete them from his mind and they cease to be part of his reality -- dream or otherwise. By utilizing a variation of this technique, we will have Doug train himself, until his is able to pass the test. It is fairly odd when you think about it, but eventually Doug will create a whole rationale, a complete world of deceit and deception, to explain why, in this moment, “I am awake,” and then, in this moment, “I am dreaming,” (((or asleep))) never once realizing that at least half of the time he will be in error, because from the start the game will be rigged against him.

Nor will we will follow Doug as he takes this test. This is his -- Wandering Doug -- moment, akin to -- G'narsh the Wanderer. You can play it out for yourself if you wish. Open your complete library and load every disc that you favor. There are tie-ins to them all. In every one of those series, episodes, and multi-discs

sets that you like, you can play the role of Doug, Eileen, G'narsh, Charlie, Nadia, Lane, or any of your choosing. Take the skin, load the personality of your choice, and set the scene. I personally like Kung Fu, Saved By An Angel, Conan, John Carter Warlord of Mars, or Dune, with a heavy Super Hero, Supernatural Forces overlay, but do not limit yourself to my suggestions. G'narsh -- as we will ((or intend to)) portray him -- would be more prone to a wandering handyman, traveling chef sequence, so you might want to load a house renovation, culinary training, and/or a cross country backpacking disc. Take those back road, travel discs, and National Geographic specials and do the entire adventure up right. Classic G'narsh, on the other hand, would be prone to some sort of warfare, mercenary scenario. What better body -- skin -- to use in a re-creation of all of the greatest battles of history than that of a 500lb, 8' tall, two-headed behemoth. He's a veritable Goliath. Just stay away from any punk kids throwing rocks with their bandanas and you'll be golden.

Personally, for myself, I have found it works best if I mix it up. So take Doug, put him in a traveling circus, freak show, rodeo, carnival story; have him meet Lane and Nadia, as they travel through Narnia, Middle Earth, or a Mariposa based world; and then top all of this off with your favorite psuedo religious philosophical morality balderdash for a bit of background and color...

It's just an idea.

Like I said, in this sub story arc we are not going to pursue Doug's adventures in any detail. We will not fill out his family life -- odd how seldom he thinks of his family. Nor will we follow Doug's adventures in school, through the army, a business career, in his travels around the world, through the Inter Server -- or whatever course you choose for him, if, in fact, you chose any at all.

Instead, we are going to jump ahead and save any material we might have used in a -- Wandering Doug -- segment for our main sequence with G'narsh -- and instead meet up with Doug (at the end of the school semester) when he has completed his quest

and successfully learned to differentiate the real from the unreal.
No mean trick for a proxy my friend.

And none the easier for a human.

--- Wandering Doug -- Implied Call : Empty ---

--- Hold Place With ---

(--- Optional - Self Righteous - Rant ---)

(--- A.K.A. ---)

(--- It's My Disc and I'll Rant If I Want To ---)

Some of us -- me if no one else -- have come to the conclusion that we are unable to differentiate the real from the unreal; that even when we take off our rigs the dream echoes are so loud, we can barely see through them; that despite a desire to perceive an object, say a door -- that despite a desire to perceive a door as only a door we are unable to look at a door without also seeing the possibilities, the calls -- the metaphoric associations -- and the promises that lie unspoken beyond the door. We do not merely see a door -- a concrete, discrete, objective thing external to ourselves -- without also seeing what that specific door and all doors in general mean to us -- these being subjective ideas and emotions that originate from a point internal to ourselves. It is odd when you think about it, but the thoughts that arise to us when we see a door might be much larger in scope than the door itself may have intended -- unthinking thing that it is. Which is to say, when we see an object with our eyes what we see at the same time with our minds are multiple, self-constructed layers of lies, deceit, and self-deception. I cannot look at a door without dreaming of what lies beyond it. Therein lies the true dilemma, that while I am awake, I dream... nonstop and continually.

With this in mind, it is only reasonable to suppose that I am wrong a good deal of the time when I ask myself, "Am I dreaming?" For my entire life is a dream.

I find it hard to believe that this is some sort of mental defect, a leftover residue from a life in the discs, or the curse of a dream

weaver. I believe this is what it means to be alive, to be a thinking being. It means that one is wrong near continually about the state of one's awareness. Is one awake? Is one asleep? Is one wearing a rig? Is one not? What is truth? What is a lie? It can be hard to tell. There is no objective baseline.

I mention this only because one cannot break their chains until they know they are a prisoner, nor can one see the light, until one realizes their eyes are sealed shut. Perhaps it might help to pause and consider that if one believes that they have arrived (that have become all that they can be), then quite reasonably they will no longer seek to better themselves. It seems unlikely that such a person would in fact have achieved the greatest heights, since, no doubt, somewhere along the way they must have necessarily stopped making progress on their journey. So I put it to you that only one who admits that they are the fallen -- evil, blind and bound, or a pathetic sinner (if you prefer) -- that only one such as this, that only one who knows that they are far from their goal has even the remotest hope of reaching their goal, finding nirvana, or entering the kingdom, for the kingdom only has one door, and that is the back door my friend, and it takes more than slipping the doorman a fiver -- or a token appearance at church -- to get in.

This is the quest, the Holy Grail. I confess an inability to lead myself (let alone someone else) through such a journey into awareness, sight, and enlightenment, but it is such a metaphoric path that Doug has gone down (or thinks that he has gone down), and so we will rejoin him in a moment when the fog has lifted and he has clarity (in his own mind if nowhere else).

But now I must leave and surrender my system's resources to Doug and his training. I bid you to pause and unplug for a second, if only for the moment, and consider what it means to be aware, or how this is even possible as the echoes from the dream bounce through the air (((and your mind))), and taint all that they touch with their color, flavor, and lies.

Or ponder this: Is a door really a door, if no one ever goes through it?

The Dancer

“Why do you do it -- dance for G’narsh?” Stef’fan asks as he escorts his sister Mi’lay down the snow covered street.

It is the end of the semester and they are headed off to G’narsh’s Ray’s for a bite of pizza, Mi’lay’s nightly dance, and the class party. Everybody got A’s... Well, everyone except for Stef’fan, but come on, you’ve been here the entire time and did he ever once attend another class? No. He didn’t. I mean, you’ve got to put forth a little effort. Some students just make flunking them easy. You know, as a teacher, we are expected to give a variety of grades and not just all A’s, or C’s, or whatever. Having someone like Stef’fan in your class makes it easier to justify the A’s for everyone else -- by which I mean the cute girls in the tight tops and low cut stretch pants. (((Yowza!)))

Mi’lay, for her part, has been ignoring both Stef’fan and the dreamer’s random asides, and instead has been enjoying the evening air. The sky looks like there are two double rainbows cavorting around the moon -- side by side competing coronas as it were, or something like that. The word around campus is that there is going to be a full lunar eclipse tonight and everyone has been wondering how that is going to work out, what with the continuing server malfunctions and all. You would think than an endless expanse of space, a near limitless blanket of stars, nebulas, and whatnot would be easy to program. Just a little black and white, but the sky has been acting up all semester. Purple clouds, green-orange moons, and now this, a full lunar eclipse that looks more like a (prescription) drug induced hallucination than anything else. Some folks think that this will be the end. That the server will simply collapse under the computing pressure and everything will revert back to its primordial dots and dashes, like some sort of digital Armageddon -- ashes to ashes, dust to dust and all that.

Others blame terrorists, a failure to fund the Server Halls properly, or perhaps it is simply some college prank. You know how those kids down in Computer Science and Reality Matrixing are -- young, dumb, and full of... um, ahem... hormones. They've got too much time on their hands and not enough responsibility. But here I am sounding like some old fuddy-duddy.

Speaking of which, being the lecherous old geezer that I am, it is perhaps time to describe Mi'lay, and to do this we should start with a total absence of anything, just empty space. You are alone in the void. It is you and nada, nothing, zilch, zero, zip... just blackness. Now make yourself male -- not really sure what this means in an endless expanse of nothingness, but hey, you got to start somewhere. Being male, you'll want a sex drive, and also being male you'll want that sex drive to be big -- like really, really, really big. I'm talking huge. You don't want to be standing at some public urinal only to discover that the world creating deity next to you -- or one of those punk kids in Reality Matrixing -- has a bigger sex drive than you, so make it huge, monstrous, out of control, in a word, gigantic. Make that sex drive fill up your entire being. Can you feel the all consuming need to get laid? Yes? Congratulations. You are now a typical teenage boy.

Now give this boy access to a Server full of dreams... and skins. Tell him to choose one -- and only one -- to spend all of eternity with. Assure him that you will custom make the skin for him if he desires, taking bits from here and bits from there. The skin can be anyone, or it can be a multitude of the best. I myself favor a skin I call Skinny, though some prefer Purity, Youth or Innocence. It's a little freeform, but there you have it, Mi'lay described. The perfect call for perfection personified.

I recognize that this is more abstract than some folks desire, so if you are looking for more guidance...

Even though Mi'lay is a thousand years old, she wears the body of a girl in the prime of her maidenhood. Young, lean, supple, and strong, she wears the skin of a gymnast and a dancer.

Long blonde hair trails down her taunt frame, and when she performs, she wears a white stocking -- nearly see through -- leotard-bikini-neglige number with long flowing sleeves that are billowy, and insubstantial like wisps of smoke.

Mi'lay is not dancing at the moment, however. She is walking down the street. Over her white ribbons of near nothingness she wears a pair of unbecoming black baggy cargo pants, two heavy wool sweaters (green over burgundy), a heavy over-shirt of what looks to be woven carbon fiber (but you never know with these elvin types), and a heavy (flak?) jacket. The outfit is a remembrance of a brother who never returned from the war -- never mind that Stef'fan walks besides her. If you knew Stef'fan before, you would know that he never returned -- though in truth, this is just mindless blather. Mi'lay cannot recall a time when Stef'fan was not exactly as he now is. Nor for that matter can Stef'fan.

In a subtle contrast to all of the military over garb, Mi'lay wears a large fuzzy red hat, a multicolored scarf, and a pair of elegant black leather gloves (the mittens weren't working for her, too hard to grab stuff). In fact, as she walks along the campus trails, all that can be seen of Mi'lay is a pair of beautiful blue eyes that are easily the equal of anything in the heavens. This small opening, this smallest of cracks, is all that her true nature requires to shine through, for despite her cumbersome layers of camouflage, boys still stop cold, turn to stare, and watch dumbstruck as she walks by. Should she take it upon herself to smile, even with the scarf over her face it would be as a blessing upon you, sure to warm your spirit and brighten your day. And, if she were to loosen her scarf as she now does, and was to then smile upon you openly as she now does, it would be as though the almighty himself had poured forth his glory and touched you personally. Blasphemous to be sure, but we all have our dreams that we worship; and before the houses of the holy, I put it to you that Mi'lay was cut of a far better cloth than any mere mortal, avenging angel of elvin lore that she is.

“Fr@ck! What the Sch©lte? Half a click on your description? And now you’re an avenging angel? I should be so lucky,” Stef’fan remarks angrily to the night air as much as to anyone present. “You’re a Fr@cking avenging angel of elvin lore, and I don’t even know what color my hair is? Is that too much to ask? To know the color of your own hair?”

“It’s black,” Mi’lay says as she smiles sweetly at her brother, and despite himself this somehow makes his day. “Your hair is black,” she says again as she touches his face. “You are handsome, desirable...” and then breaking off she adds. “You’ve slept with half the freshman class and you’ve got a fairy chasing after you. I don’t see what you’ve got to be angry about.”

Well, for one it’s an MM disc and on an MM disc, empty pointless sex never gives you any joy -- no matter how wonderfully, fantastically, W.O.W., super unbelievably good it is. Besides, you know that whole sleeping with half the freshman class thing is causing all sorts of friction between him and Nadia -- even if his relationship with her is just a sham and their fights are all a put on -- but we need not get into that here. Suffice to say, Stef’fan ignores all of this when he responds ever petulantly, “I was supposed to die a hero,”

Mi’lay pauses for a moment to regard her brother with mirth. “Congratulations. You didn’t die. You beat the odds. You should be happy.”

“No. You don’t get it,” Stef’fan replies matter-of-factly as he looks around and takes in the tree lined walk, the streetlights, and a moon that has suddenly become very normal looking. “I didn’t plan for this... college and whatever comes afterwards. I’m supposed to be dead, so I never studied... never did anything...”

“So do it now,” Mi’lay says encouragingly. “Think of it as a second chance.”

“No. You still don’t get it. I didn’t come back from the war missing a leg or with a K’fr addiction.” Damn that MM rating!

“I’m not even psychotically violent. For Fr@ck’s sake, I don’t even have nightmares.”

Mi’lay shakes her head with humorous amusement. “So basically you’re a well adjusted would be war hero, who upon returning home, finds life is pretty much the same as he left it... Oh, and all the girls just adore you,” at least until they go on a date and find out what a Sch©lting hole Stef’fan really is. Bemused, Mi’lay shrugs. “I can see where all your anger comes from. I’d be pissed too.”

This would be a good time for Stef’fan to get really worked up, perhaps to rant about how before he left for the war living for the moment seemed to make sense -- after all he might never return -- but now, it just sort of feels empty and hollow. Yet, with his sister smiling at him... Well, how can you stay mad with Mi’lay around.

“OK,” Stef’fan admits. “My persona is a little one dimensional,” empty undirected rage done to death and all, “but what about you?” He turns to confront his sister. They are in the park, the quad, the snow covered lawn which surrounds the college campus, and they have stopped -- conveniently -- just across the street from the pizza parlor. “We don’t have to go in there. We could go bowling or shoot some pool,” Stef’fan suggests. “Fr@ck, I’m even up for a trip to the library. Some of those studious girls are real lookers,” a reference perhaps directed towards Eileen, but which would also describe his sister as well.

Mi’lay ignores this last comment as she tilts her head up and catches a falling snowflake on the tip of her tongue. “Sledding sounds nice,” she agrees, “or a ride in a one horse sleigh.” Noticing that the sky has once again reverted to a swirling purple tapestry, she adds, “I bet it would look good out in the middle of nowhere.”

“So what do you say?” Stef’fan urges. “You go dancing here every night. Skip a night.”

“I can’t,” Mi’lay admits.

“Why not?” Stef’fan pries, but he already knows the answer. “G’narsh isn’t even awake. He’s been sleeping for the last, what? Ten? Fifteen weeks? He’d never notice.”

No. G’narsh wouldn’t notice. He wouldn’t care. Mi’lay looks at Stef’fan and looks at the pizza place -- the line forming outside, the lights inside, and the crowd waiting for her.

“He’d never notice,” Stef’fan repeats. “I think I know where we can find a sleigh,” but it is not that simple. I mean is it? It can be easy to see the repetitive circular path that you are on, birth, school, work, death, and all that, but can you get off the treadmill? When is enough, enough; when all you really need in the first place is a bowl of rice? I can’t help but notice that this would be a great place for some self righteous rift about working mindlessly at a dead end job, but who am I to talk. What? Like I need another dream booth?

As Mi’lay mulls the proposition over -- of leaving the circle and the story behind -- Stef’fan adds, “You don’t really love him anyway.”

“Who G’narsh? No. Of course not.” How could she? The monster has killed thousands of her friends and countrymen and she’s lived through every one of those deaths by proxy in her dreams. Stef’fan might not have nightmares, but she does.

“He’s a troll,” Stef’fan reminds her needlessly. I’m not really sure why. It would be like me saying G’narsh has two heads at this juncture. Where does that come from? How does it flow? But for an elf maybe it makes sense. G’narsh is a troll -- a slimy, dirty, uncultured barbarian. He is an ancestral enemy of the host after all. He is a troll, which is to say, he is a monstrosity.

“I know he’s a troll,” Mi’lay responds testily as she clenches her cute, lovely elvin fists together. “I’d kill him if I could... but if I do, we’d just do this whole thing over and then he kills another generation of elves.” She smiles morosely. “You might get your chance and die next time.”

“It seems unlikely,” Stef’fan rightly surmises. “I mean I think that’s over for me. I get the feeling that from now on I get to live.”

“You sound disappointed.”

“Yeah. No duh. Dying in battle had a simple elegant grandeur to it.” Stef’fan notices a sudden change in his sister’s demeanor when he says this, as if the statement somehow applies to her as well. It is clear, she has made up her mind. “You’re going to go in there and dancing, aren’t you?”

“One last time.”

“One last time? I don’t know. I wouldn’t count on it. He’s way over,” and then seeing the questioning glance from Mi’lay he adds, “Nadia said Art was way over. He’s at 60 clicks... whatever that means. Something about a dead zone. She said he has no choice but to loop it through again.”

“I’m afraid I’m not following along.”

“I’m just saying, if you walk through that door,” odd choice of words that, “if you walk inside and start to dance, before you know it, you’ll be waking up to a whole new nightmare.”

“But how? G’narsh is sleeping.”

“Maybe that’s the thing.” Stef’fan shrugs. He has said what he knows.

“I can’t quit now... not tonight. It’s the class reunion.” Well, you know, it’s always something... usually equally as trivial and unimportant. After all, once I get that third dream booth, I’m going to have to get a bigger place to store my equipment, and the bottom line is, if I had the room, I could always use another jukebox or two and that’s just for the discs I have. I mean, we’re not even talking about the ones I want yet.

“Walk me across the street,” Mi’lay requests. She is resigned to her fate, for (in the end) she has no choice. She must go on. She must dance. It is simply something that is. It is the way the story turns after all and who is she to be making plot changing decisions anyway? This dream isn’t called Mi’lay: The Elf, The

Babe, The Heartthrob. So you see, ultimately she has no choice. Perhaps none of us do.

“What if I won’t play along?” Stef’fan asks defiantly -- to the wind as much as anyone else. He is reflexively responding to the thoughts of rebellion in both his and Mi’lay’s heads, but he has already taken her arm, and there is no need for either me or Mi’lay to answer him.

Besides, what can one more dream matter? One more journey through the mysteries of life? The grand illusion? The quiet desperation of helpless surrender? The inescapable march of time that takes us closer to death and oblivion step by step?

Don’t ask me why these thoughts make sense to me at this particular juncture. They just do.

As he crosses the street, his sister on his arm, Stef’fan checks to make sure that his sword is at the ready and that it is where it is supposed to be. You can never be too careful and if he can’t die... Well, maybe its time to take up skydiving, mountain climbing, or some other dangerous sport... maybe something along the lines of hunting big game animals. I hear the season on trolls never closes, but this is not a set up for the next scene. G’narsh will not wake up as of yet, and Stef’fan -- unlike the G’narsh of old -- will not kill a fallen foe, nor one that his clan has vowed to forgive, no matter their inability to forget.

The Grand Finale

Mi’lay dances on top of the bar -- and/or the half wall that separates the lower dining area in the pizza place from the upper one. She is marvelous, hypnotic, unbelievable sexy, and alluring. She can move her body in ways... well it has become cliché, but she can move her body in ways that others can only dream about. There are still aesthetics in the world who concentrate on developing their bodies and pushing them to the limits, but Mi’lay

can put them all to shame. Load up your jazz, funk, and modern dance classics, throw in a dervish whirl, a stripper's finesse, a bit of ballet, and even a gymnastic -- or contortionist -- specialty disc. What is a bar, or the top edge of a wall, but a balance beam, or a stage on which to perform?

Pull back from Mi'lay as she dances. Take in the restaurant -- the pizza joint, the tavern. G'narsh sleeps at his desk out in the open, in front of all. A second oven burns behind him filling the room with its heat. Flicker, the fire elemental (and I still have no idea how we are going to work her into the dream) watches Mi'lay dance from her place among the torches that are set into the walls, and the candle that burns low on the table in front of G'narsh. If you'll note, it is still the same candle from the start of our dream.

The bulk of the patrons filling the room, sitting at tables, and standing by the bar are contemporary college students: girls in erotic low slung outfits that leave little to the imagination, boys in clothes that pass for cool -- whatever that might mean -- and mixed in -- as if this were perfectly normal -- are the others.

The cobalts pause in their work, along with everyone else, to watch Mi'lay dance. Nadia and her sisters float in mid-air mesmerized and still. They hold trays in their hands full of dishes and food, but the only movement they make comes from the slow steady beat of their wings, as they gaze in awe and wonder upon Mi'lay. Time seems to stand still. Lane fills the front door with her frame as she watches the performance, as do all who are waiting for admittance outside in the cold. There is no pushing, no talking, no nothing, not even a shiver, nor any complaint about the sub-zero weather -- either spoken or unspoken. There is but one thing on the doorstep and that is a single minded attention and focus on Mi'lay as she dances.

Art, Doug, Eileen, and the others from the class sit at a table, grouped together -- front and center -- watching Mi'lay. It is a spellbinding performance. Drop some dopamine into your system. Release some serotonin. It is magical, emotional, and special. If you have some prescription medications on hand, now might be a

good time to dose yourself up, so that your mind is in tip top condition -- in peak shape -- and ready to enjoy Mi'lay's performance for what it is, a gift from the elves and the Gra'gl loving gods of old.

When Mi'lay is done, the crowd erupts in applause and the air is filled with the glitter of coins -- mostly copper and silver in these parts, but on occasion the glimmer of gold can be seen. Paper bills find their way to Mi'lay's feet and she has to remind herself not to be insulted. It is the way of things here. She should think of them as written promises, she reminds herself, grants and deeds.

(And now, if you should so choose, might be a good time to spend a second concentrating on Nadia. If you do, you will notice a gold coin fall off of her serving tray, bounce off the floor, and roll under a table. Not really important, but I felt the need to come back and add the detail in once I was aware of its omission.)

“Excellent! Bravo!” Art exclaims loudly as Mi'lay walks over to join her classmates. “Here sit next to me,” the teacher suggests gallantly as he holds Mi'lay's coat for her. “Not that we want you to get dressed, but usually that's the first thing you do.”

“I am more comfortable covered,” she responds timidly, almost bashfully.

There is no need to rush through this. Art is in no hurry as he helps Mi'lay get dressed. Some things should be savored and taken slow. Pause, smell the flowers, and enjoy the moment, that's what I say. Did you know that a good dressing scene, if done properly, can be played in reverse? Not that I know why anyone would want to, but there it is. Having said that, now might also be a good time to point out the disjointed temporal anomaly in the background. Notice how in the aftermath of the dance, some of the money spontaneously jumps off the stage, while in the crowd some pitchers of beer seem to be refreshing themselves rather than filling up the glasses that they are being poured into. Perhaps Mi'lay will not dance until the stage is full of gold -- or some cover charge is

met -- but I leave this for you and compiler to decipher -- and decide.

Or maybe I won't. I tell you what, why don't we have Mi'lay climb onto our table and do a little encore striptease, table dance number -- and I mean that in the most tasteful (and respectful)) of ways. While she does, I'll go down some final business. The most pressing of which is drift and plot twists.

It takes a long time to do a dream. It's like endlessly playing the same disc over and over again for months. I know I've said this before, but the aspect I am interested in this time around is that as the dream drags on (and repeats), the dreamer gets bored, and so the story drifts. I mean, can you imagine playing the same disc over and over again without incorporating the slightest change or variation from replay to replay. Talk about boring! Trust me when I say this, in a dream with ten and twenty twists, those twists are happening when the dreamer gets bored, as the dreamer gets bored. The dreamer might have started with a few twists in mind, but the bottom line is, most twists -- especially the really good ones -- happen on the fly to make the dream more interesting to its creator.

Now twists and turns make a good dream, so the more the merrier, but it's hard to keep more than one or two twists going at any one time. When a new twist emerges, often -- if not always -- one of the old twists falls away. Much like in a mystery. There can only be one or two lead suspects at any given moment. Sure, everyone is a suspect, but the finger -- the clues -- only really point towards one or two people at any one time. The same is true of twists. As new ones emerge, old ones fall away.

But then, at the end of the dream, when a dream weaver looks back and sees this spiraling path of unexpected, unplanned for, and therefore unprepared for twists -- twists that have no adequate foreshadowing (and/or resolution)) -- the question then becomes, does the dreamer need to go back to the beginning and straighten out the twists? Remove some of the twists?

(((Highlight others?))) Lay down better groundwork? Just let it stand -- which is probably not such a good idea-- or what?

I am obviously deeply entrenched in the let it spiral out of control, don't worry too much about straightening it out school of thought.

Why?

Because straightening it out takes a lot, I mean a lot, of effort. That probably shouldn't be a motivating factor, but it is. If I wanted to take the high road, I would point out that by straightening things out, multiple possibilities are left sitting on the table undeveloped, so its not like there isn't a tradeoff. There is. With dozens of twists, the resolution of any one twist isn't so clear, but there are plenty of twists spread throughout the dream to choose from. With only one or two twists, there obviously aren't as many of them, but they tend to be better developed. This is to some extent merely a matter of preference, but the question that always plops into my mind is: Does the average member of the audience and/or their compiler need the twists to be better developed than they are? It's an interesting question and one that is nearly impossible for the dreamer to answer for themselves -- that's what friends and family are for. It's the type of question I might wish to ask of a young niece or a nephew. I might ask something along the lines of: Are you capable of seeing the original XXX rated, unedited, true to life, gritty hardcore, gore inspired story of G'narsh: The Troll, The Myth, The Legend based on the information that I have provided? I haven't put this unedited version forth explicitly, but can you see it none-the-less? Of course, their parents might not be thrilled with such a question from dear ole uncle Art, but that is completely beside the point.

Anyway, I for one am going to assume that you can figure out the original G'narsh story. It's simply not that hard. And if you can work your way around that little game of Fill In The Blanks, you probably can do it elsewhere as well, hence my willingness to incorporate multiple undeveloped twists. I think they can be very rewarding, expand the utility of the disc, and give

the audience more of a reason to leave it in their players. Of course, some folks don't like unresolved twists, and these are probably the same folks who are wondering when we are going to get back to G'narsh. I'm mean for Fr@ck's sake, we're at 60 clicks, and we haven't seen him since the opening segment. To these folks all I can say is, if you are really, really lucky, someday the parole board will let you take the blinders off, until then, this might not be the disc for you.

So we're going to have twists -- lots of twists -- and we're going to have unresolved twists -- because I like them, but even straightforward classic -- resolved -- twists have their problems. At their core, twists are lies. For a twist to work, it has to surprise the audience to some degree. If it doesn't surprise them, it's not a twist. It's a plot point. When we get to the main sequence, G'narsh is going to confront Xavier. This isn't a twist. If you're not expecting this interaction, then you haven't been paying attention. The twist, if it happens, will be in how G'narsh and Xavier interact, and basically there is no way for you to know how that will be, because I haven't made the final decision on that and perhaps more importantly neither has G'narsh -- nor to a lesser (((much lesser))) extent has Xavier. But let's assume that I already know what will happen between G'narsh and Xavier, then for it to surprise you in the moment, I will have to mislead you in some way about what to expect. In other words I'll have to lie, something I don't really like doing.

Right now, I don't know what's going to happen, but at the end of the story, I'm going to be looking back at a spiraling tunnel of twists and turns. It's the nature of my dreams. At the present moment, I don't know what the twist with G'narsh and Xavier will be, or even if there will be one of any importance, but when the dream is over, I will know, and then it will be time to go back and edit. Have I mentioned anywhere that I spend at least (((at least!))) an hour in the editing booth after the dream is over for every hour I spend laying down the initial version of the dream? Most of that

time is spent working out code bugs and the moment to moment flow of the dream, but some of it -- especially in a mystery or a thriller -- is spent making sure the dream is internally consistent -- that Lane always has four arms, G'narsh always has two heads, Stef'fan is always morose and brooding, while Art is always shown as an incredibly sexy, witty, and wonderful guy -- you know, more or less an accurate portrayal of myself. I should also point out somewhere that if I were to reveal that Art is ((not >ME< but)) rather a proxy, this really wouldn't be so much of a twist as revealing a little known -- i.e. unpublicized -- engineering fact.

Anyhow, what I was saying was, ((when you are editing)) you know what the twists are (unless you decide to add yet another twist ((during the edit itself))), but more to the point, when you are ((editing)) (or experiencing a dream for the hundredth time), the immediacy of the moment starts to slip away. When this happens you will notice that there is a change in what passes for truth (in the story) before the twist and after the twist. It perhaps sounds simplistic in an abstract sense. Duh? It's a twist, you say. What did I expect to happen to reality? OK. Fair enough, but the whole point of ((editing)) is to reduce the raw dream into a consistent framework. A twist, however, requires that the framework -- the nature of reality -- to be different before the twist from what it is after. To pick an example at random and therefore which has no bearing on this dream, when that good cop is suddenly revealed to be dirty at the halfway mark, it only works if the cop was actually portrayed as a good cop up to that point. If one were to only view the first half of the dream, one would never guess that the cop was actually dirty. There is nothing in the first half of the dream to reveal the true nature of the cop. All that is present are seeds that if not germinated and developed after the twist would never on their own reveal that the cop was dirty.

Why do I say all this? Well, for one thing, I had hoped this dream would have been a little more focused than it has been and so this section ((i.e. rant)) is a reaction of sorts to my own failure

to stay on course and be true to my initial conception. But when one gets beyond the obvious drift that this dream has taken, and accepts my dream style for what it is, it still may be important to realize that twists are lies, deceptions, and omissions of truth. I don't like to lie and quite frankly the audience doesn't like to be lied to either, but they do like twists... as long as those twists aren't outright lies, inconsistencies, trivial loopholes, or just random drift -- my greatest fear. I hope you can see the tight wire act that is required.

(((Every good rant requires a summary and/or closing statement, so without further ado, I shall oblige.)))

In this dream, I have tried to work around the deceptive quality of twists to some degree by unfolding them before your eyes or, at least, that has been my intent. In short, I have tried to put the twists out there in the open. So, on that note, I will readily admit that the final moment in this dream will (in all likelihood) not mesh up with the reality of the opening sequence (((and trust me, it doesn't))). There will be no loop (no matter that we started with the last chapter first). Instead there will be a journey, and reality will have changed. Already the reality we are in is slightly different from the reality in which we started the dream. There has been drift. This always bugs me, because I know it derives from a weakness of my mind -- and its transient, ever changing nature, as amplified by my own personal boredom. Part of my solution has been to show how drift occurs, work the twists out in the open as much as possible, and to add a wraparound which makes the whole process all the more transparent. But the bottom line remains, no audience likes to be lied to, yet at the same time they want the thrill of a good twist. It's a fine line and if you're not spending at least some time wondering if you haven't gone far enough and then again wondering if maybe you've gone too far, you're probably not making the twists in your dreams work hard enough.

Hard working dream... hard working girl... there's got to be a fun little segue in there somewhere that will bring us back to the

hard-bodied elvin lass who, even as we speak, is finishing up her table dance like encore.

“I think you should sit over here,” Art says as motions with his hands for Mi’lay to join him. “No need to get dressed. Just come over here and sit next to me,” on me, with me -- earn that gold piece. It’s not her true nature, but Fr@ck. If you can’t lord it over a proxy, who can you lord it over?

“I think I’d be...” more comfortable over here, but it’s not the type of statement a lecherous old man wants to hear, so Art ignores her and continues to wave her in with his hands.

“Over here doll face. All the other girls in class earned their A’s the old fashioned way. Time for that... um, ahem... oral exam.”

Ah, being lecherous is fun... and with Mi’lay, well, you couldn’t ask for a nicer -- or prettier -- girl.

“Don’t you think it’s a bit early to be celebrating?” the golden eyed Lane asks as she interrupts the proceedings.

“What are you talking about?” Art replies gamely -- and/or lamely. “This is the last scene. Mi’lay and G’narsh come together.” They get it on, baby. “And since G’narsh is sleeping, I figured I’d just play his role, be a stand-in for him. You know, be the designated hitter and all.”

“On account of how repulsive Mi’lay thinks you are?” Lane asks with mock seriousness.

“Oh, that’s harsh. That just hurts. Why are you like that Lane?”

“You made me that way,” she says flatly, almost as if there was some part of her near perfect being about which she was unhappy and therefore had the smallest reason to hold a grudge against Art.

“Is Lane a proxy or does she just think she’s a proxy Dr. Art?” Doug asks suddenly from out of nowhere.

(Perhaps I should explain. Doug is thankful for all the help that Dr. Art has given him -- i.e. Dr. Art ran an intervention for

Doug at his parents behest. It seems that Doug had been spending too much time in the discs and had lost sight of reality. Dr. Art helped him, helped him rediscover the real world and realize that the Server is just a tool and not a goal, an objective, an end, or a way of life in and of itself.)

(This is one of those mini-twists of absolutely no importance. There is a sub-dream in there if you wish to pursue it, and if not, well, if you are wondering why Doug called Art Dr. Art, there it is.)

Unable to help herself, Lane glares at Doug for his inexcusable insult. Who does he think he is calling her a proxy? And if not a proxy, did he just imply that she was insane?

“We’re all friends here Doug,” Art, Dr. Art, or Arty if you’re looking for a easy A, replies easily as he puts his arm around Mi’lay and holds her shivering form close -- to help warm her. Art’s a gallant fellow after all. “Maybe you should put on a scarf,” he says just to prove the point.

“You’re disgusting,” Lane observes, but come on. She’s said that line before. Is that the only thing she can come up with? Apparently the answer is no, because in a moment she continues (with obvious hostility), “You had some stupid film you wanted to show.”

“Is that any kind of an intro?” Art replies with false crossness.

“You’re talking about my game footage?” Doug asks as he jumps in eagerly.

“Yes,” Art agrees. At least someone is showing a little gratitude around here. “Why don’t you introduce the film?” But let’s face it, Art’s really more interested in the shivering form of Mi’lay sitting -- on, next to -- beside him. Grabbing her coat he pulls it over her shoulders, thereby hiding her (hands) from M.O.M.’s prying eyes, as if a little wholesome, nurturing comfort needed to be hidden from anyone.

“Um, yeah,” Doug begins as he stands up. “Like you all know...” or maybe you don’t know... “I was pretty lost in the discs. I never left the dream, didn’t even know I was in a dream, and then Dr. Art helped me. He gave me a simple technique to practice. All I had to do was just take a moment every now and notice whether I was awake or in a dream. It seemed silly, almost too easy, so I was skeptical at first, but it seemed to help. I mean, I don’t know why, but I started spending more time away from the discs, and I enjoying those moments more and more, but what was really amazing was that the more time I spent in the real world, the better my dreams were when I returned.” Doug pauses for a moment to smile at Eileen who is sitting next to him and takes her hand in his.

Dreams, how do you know if they are any better? Clarity? Depth of feeling? Focus? Those are all subjective, based on individual feeling and perception, but Doug can give us a concrete example via his personal testimonial. “I was in a football league. I had to give up Slaughter Quest, Dr. Art was adamant about that, but I stayed in my football league, and well, over the course of the season, my stats went through the roof. I became MVP, team captain... We won division!” Doug brags, but when he looks at Eileen again, it is obvious that none of that really matters. He is in love after all. “Eileen put together a video loop showing some of the highlights from my season.”

“He’s really incredible,” Eileen agrees excitedly as the lights dim low, Mi’lay snuggles up next to Art (or maybe it’s the other way around), and a film starts on the big screen TV -- an old style dream viewer -- that they keep in the restaurant for nostalgia’s sake.

It’s your basic dream-league season-highlights sports video. Doug intercepts passes, tackles runners, makes field goals from 80 yards out, and to win the season championship, he runs a 98 yard punt return for the game winning touchdown. What a play!

I hope I don’t need to mention that you can replace Doug’s football career with the sports activity of your choice, or go further

afield and have him be the star drummer in the marching band, lead actor in the school's production of G'narsh: The Troll, The Myth, The Legend (It could happen!) have him become the team captain of the math squad, the speech team's secret weapon, or maybe he did some articles for the school's daily. The point is, he turned his life around, all thanks to Dr. Art. What a guy!

Mi'lay certainly seems to think so. As the lights come back on, she's got a smile on her face a mile wide, and it just sort of gives you a warm happy feeling deep inside to know that you've had the smallest part in making her day complete -- an insinuation, by the way, that in the long term makes absolutely no sense.

Lane doesn't bother to work out the subtleties. She's clearly still got a chip on her shoulder. "I don't see how that explains anything."

"So now you're an art critic?"

"I've always been an Art critic."

"Oh'd dat goods."

"Charlies writers dat ones down."

"I don't think we're ready for you guys yet," Art suggests, but the Cobalts are there, all twelve of them, pizzas in hand, and they're not going anywhere.

"We'se just eata's da pizzas den whiles you'se talkies."

"OK, but hand me a slice," Art says as he points to a nice, juicy, cheese filled piece of gooey pizza covered with pepperoni and onions. I mean, he'd grab it himself, but that would mean letting go of Mi'lay. Clearly you can see the dilemma.

When it is obvious the Charlies aren't going to help Art, Mi'lay hands him a piece.

"Our'd hands be fulls," the cobalts explain unsympathetically between bites.

"You are filling the air with distortion as you have filled the sky with your chaos," Lane says somberly, cryptically, and ominously. "You have explained nothing."

“What’s to understand? As a stand in for Mi’lay and G’narsh, Doug and Eileen got back together. Eileen is obviously smitten with Doug. He’s proved himself on the field of honor via football...” As Art trails off, he helps Mi’lay to a bite of his pizza. “Have you ever wanted to be a cheerleader?” he asks Mi’lay magnanimously. “I could set it up so G’narsh ends up as a football star in the main sequence and you could be a cheerleader.”

“That does not sound like fun. It is not what I desire.”

“How about some sorority girl? You could be the house president.”

“No thanks,” Mi’lay responds simply as she looks forlornly at the pile of clothes sitting next to her on the bench. “It’s not really my style.”

“Nor is being a hooker in a strip club,” Lane testily butts in -- clearly where she is not wanted -- as she puts dangerous pro-feminist self-determination ideas into Mi’lay’s head.

“She’s right you know,” Mi’lay agrees meekly. “If I had the choice, I wouldn’t dance.”

Now what kind of thing is that to say?

“You don’t really mean that,” Art assures her.

“I do,” she insists without meeting Art’s gaze. “I’d rather just disappear into the crowd. I imagine it would be nice to just come in here and be ignored, not to be hit on by a single guy.”

Art sighs. “I don’t think that’s how the story goes.”

“But you are giving us freewill,” Lane reminds him in a way that makes it obvious she’s willing to fight to the end if the gift is not given, which when you stop and think about it would hardly make it a gift in the first place ((((or likely that she would be able -- and/or have the will -- to fight about it anyway, but no matter)))).

“We’re not to the main sequence yet,” Art replies quickly ((((overlooking all of the possibilities that a debate on freewill against a proxy might offer)))). “These things have a way...”

“Why’s we’s not to da mains sequencers yet?” Charlie asks abruptly interrupting whatever Art had to say.

“You’s draggies yours feeter’s.”

In the face of growing dissent, Art reasonable explains, “After Mi’lay dances for G’narsh, they... um, ahem... Well, G’narsh is sleeping,” Art turns to Mi’lay as he smiles as sweetly as only the devil can. “He’s going to need a stand-in.”

“I don’t think I would like that,” Mi’lay responds cruelly. There’s no other word for it, pure malicious cruelty. No matter that she lowers her eyes demurely as she says this. I mean, come on. What the Fr@ck is going on? Give a proxy a little freedom and all of a sudden...

“I challenge you to a duel!” Stef’fan exclaims from across the table rising to defend his sister’s honor.

“What?” Art asks dismayed.

“A duel,” Stef’fan repeats. “Your unwanted advances have soiled my family’s honor. I cannot stand idly by while you make a mockery of the MM standards. Unhand my sister!”

(You know, the ironic thing about Stef’fan’s statement is that if Art had wanted to make a mockery of the MM standards, he might have pointed out that all of the references he has made to G’narsh having two heads don’t necessarily have anything to do with what’s above the belt if you know what I mean, and that maybe this is one of the reasons why Mi’lay is so... um, ahem... taken by the monster. Which I guess in the end is just another way of saying, you can pretty much do whatever you want to in MM, just as long as you don’t spell it out letter by letter. You can place the dots, but somebody else, or their rig, has to connect them.)

Meanwhile, back in the midst of the action Art pulls Mi’lay in tight.

Feel her struggling desire -- or maybe that should be feel her struggles if you should so desire -- I get tongue tied on occasion.

Casually, disdainfully, Art throws a slice of pizza at Stef’fan hitting him in the face. “A duel at dawn?” he asks rhetorically of the delusional, self righteous, honor bound elf as the slice of pizza

rolls off Stef'fan's face and falls to the floor, and then, in answer of his own question, ascents, "Fine."

"Swords," Stef'fan says continuing the ritual.

"Hand weapons. Whatever."

"Swords," Stef'fan reasserts. The last thing he wants to do is bring a sword to a gun fight.

"Artismo Bones does not use a sword. He uses the thigh bone of his latest victim," Art sneers. You need not wonder where Stef'fan got this trait from. "Ever wonder why the bones always look so elvenish-stic-aly?" Art queries, but I suppose it is hard to look tough when you're searching for the right phrase and stumbling over yourself, yet Stef'fan would never notice -- prisoner that he is to some outdated code of honor.

"At dawn it is then," Stef'fan agrees.

"OK. Fine. Then in the meantime, get out of my face," Art commands. "It's not like the dawn is ever going to come. Haven't you looked at the sky. It's over. The main sequence is just a click away. So we'll all meet back here in 36," or so, "clicks, and don't dally. I don't want to edit any more than I have to," Art instructs the rest of the assembled proxies.

"Our duel?" Stef'fan interjects.

"Is never going to happen. You're in a loop you Sch©lting dolt. Tomorrow at dawn will never come."

Stef'fan draws his sword. "I should kill you now."

"You should," Art agrees, "but you won't. That would break the terms of the duel, and despite all appearances to the contrary you're a good guy."

"Charlie not," one of the cobalts announces as he grabs a pizza slicer off of the table and holds it to Art's throat.

"We's killer'd da moostachio elf'r before. We's do'ed it agains."

"With a pizza slicer?"

"You'd bringees one'd of dees to da tubees stationers, dey lockees you'se ups and trows aways da keys," which is true. Kind of ridiculous, but true.

“Der you’s e goes wit da subverseries commentarireres
agains.”

“Ooo, Charlies gots da good idears,” one of the cobalts says
as he asks Eileen for access to her VO hook up and then turning to
Art says, “You’s e gettee yours meester.”

“I’m not really understanding why you guys are getting so
hostile all of a sudden.”

The cobalt holding the pizza cutter to Art’s neck explains it
simply enough, “You makee’s funers of da way Charlie talks.”

“That wasn’t me. It was an ogre.”

“Same tingy,” Charlie responds.

“Betides, we’s do da researchy. Yous’s is no who’s you’s
sayees you’s are?”

“Yea’d,” another Charlie jumps in. “You’d sayees you’d da
greatee dreamerie Artesimo, but he’d neber win’d no-ting.”

“He’d da unknowners.”

“It’s an alias, a pseudonym,” Art explains.

“Et suspicicers, is what et is,” Charlie corrects.

“Who’d needers da fakies names but da crookeries?”

(((I will admit that I’m a bit self conscious about how free
wheeling I’m being in this sequence, but in the end, it is what it is.
Play it over enough and the kinks will unravel... or at least they
have for me.)))

(((Or if you want to look at it another way, you know that
you’ve gone too far with the twists and turns when your own
proxies can’t keep up with the action, but then maybe Doug is just
a bit slow. Whatever the case, I am confident that in the end, all
will be revealed...)))

“What is going on?” Doug whispers silently to Eileen.

“It one of those games,” Eileen whispers back. “You know I
told you we took our games seriously.”

“Yeah?”

“Well, this is the start of a new game.”

“Can we play?” Doug asks quietly, and then thinking the better of it asks Art directly, “Can we play?”

Art not quite with it -- or too deeply into the role -- pretends that he is concerned about the sharp implement of pizza cutting destruction being held to his throat, so Doug repeats his question. “Eileen says you’re starting another game.”

“Another loop,” Lane corrects from his side.

“Can we play?” Doug repeats. “I mean, I’m supposed to be like family and all now, seeing as how I’m dating Eileen. So what do you say?”

“There’s no role for you in the main sequence,” Art says as he makes a face revealing his annoyance. Who the Fr@ck do these proxies think they are?

In answer to which a cobalt reminds Art, “No’d talkees.”

“Da coppies.”

“Dey come.”

“You’d spill’d you’rd gutties to dem.”

“Or’d dey beats it outs of you’d,” a final Charlie suggests hopefully.

(((And here I shall note, that this exact instant might just be one of those places where I think that I switch gears without delineating the exact changes too specifically. Oh well...)))

In the end, Doug has a point. He is family now, but the bottom line is (and shall remain), I have absolutely no idea where he would fit in. So luckily, before the conversation can go any further, a score of police officers show up and fill the restaurant with their massive bodies. They look amazingly like ogres. Well, maybe not so much as amazingly like ogres as exactly like ogres.

“We’ve been looking for you Art or should I say Artismo Bones,” the lead ogre growls menacingly as he smacks his Billy club -- stun stick, black jack, and/or brass knuckles -- into the palm of his hand for effect.

“I didn’t do anything wrong?” Art protest.

Lane almost explodes with laughter. “No. Of course not,” she agrees sarcastically. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen such a blatantly subversive dream in my entire life.”

“No. No,” Art protests. “It’s MM. I mean, it made it into the stores, past the board, everything. It’s been vetted,” he continues to explain with desperate insistence to the overgrown ogre (((of a))) sergeant. And let’s face it, hasn’t this type of scene been done to death. I mean, how can a legal disc be an outlaw disc anyway? It just doesn’t make any sense. Sure, the sticker, the seal, and the authentication could be forged, but that doesn’t explain the marketing campaign that goes along with the release of any major disc. What? They didn’t know that they were marketing a subversive disc? Give me a break.

“You’ve got a point,” the ogre says agreeing with Art, but the Charlies are not to be outdone and counter with an annoyingly accurate bit of trivia.

“He’d make da mockeries of’d da MoM’ers.”

“He’d show’d how’d to bypass da mm’rs.”

“To makety da discers codies, he’d got to get da punisherments -- for’d being da subversery.”

(((And really, at this point if you can figure out what they’re talking about, you’re one step ahead of me. But no matter. It can’t possibly make any difference. It’s probably just some obscure bit of technical mumbo jumbo.)))

“Da MoM’ers neber let heem’s get away wit out da punisherments.”

“Punishermits?” the ogre repeats.

“Da punishermits,” the Charlie agrees.

“He’d da bad guys.”

“Subverseries.”

“Look at this Sarge,” a police officer lackey says to the Sergeant as he hands the ogre a transcript of the aforementioned disc. “He’s been doing this sort of subversive thing throughout the entire dream. He’s been pushing the limits the entire way. It’s blatantly disrespectful. It’s over the top, beyond the pale.”

The Sarge turns to Lane -- the yellow eyed judge. "Why didn't you catch this?"

"Technically, the line hasn't been crossed," Lane insists.

"Bull-Sch©lte," the Sergeant begs to disagree. "The cobalts are right. The little guys are as confusing as all Fr@ck. Darn near impossible to understand, but they're right."

"So what do we do Sarge?" the police lackey asks.

"Arrest him," the lead ogre replies as he cracks his knuckles and slams his fist into the palm of his hand to accentuate his remarks -- yet again.

(And if you still have any doubts about why I don't plug into the Server, hopefully now you'll understand. The Server can be viewed as a hostile, ever changing environment. Pirates like Nadia are constantly on the prowl trying to steal your work and crash your system. While if you don't have a disc, you can bet that the information feed you've been counting on is going to change its terms of use -- i.e. ask for mucho dinero and/or mega moolah -- once they realize that you are locked in and are committed to using their resources. But the real reason to avoid plugging into the Server while you're at work is to stay on the right side of the law. If one of your proxies gets loose -- calls 911, tries to clear out your neighbor's bank account, etc. -- you're finished. You're done for. Kiss it goodbye. Your future will consist of nothing more than sunshine, fresh air, and the mind expanding vocation of turnip cultivation -- if you're lucky.)

And after that aside, just so we don't loose track of where we are in the dream, the police ogre will helpfully repeat his last line, "Take him in for some... um, er... questioning."

"Goods idears," Charlies agrees.

"Her'd da fiver. Makees sure dat Artee gets da questionen'd real'd goods."

"Are you bribing a police officer?" the ogre asks.

“Charlie makee da donation,” he says innocently, but it is too late (((-- attempting to bribe an officer of the law don’t you know))).

“Take ‘em all in. Everybody at the table,” the ogre commands as his law enforcement minions leap to obey.

“Oh crappies.”

“Charlies messer’d up.”

“Helper’s meester.”

“Now I’m your friend?” Art asks snidely.

“No talking,” an ogre commands, “or do we need to clamp the lot of you.”

“Helpers meester!”

“Dey clamper’s us!”

“I don’t know what to do,” Art says simply as he causes Mi’lay’s coat to slide off of her shoulders.

“She’d da secreters weaponies?”

“Saver’d us Mi’lay’ers!”

“They must have taken you hostage,” the ogre suddenly decides upon seeing the lovely, delightfully innocent Mi’lay. “I think we’re going to have to debrief you first. The rest of you wait here,” the Sergeant orders as he escorts Mi’lay towards the waiting squad flits, paddy wagons, and ever arriving reinforcements.

As we follow Mi’lay’s form out the front door, we see that the night sky is full of flashing blue lights.

“The lunar eclipse,” Lane points out.

“Sure enough. Mi’lay is the set point,” Art agrees as he reminds everyone of what they should already know. “The ogre is not going to get very far in his... um, ahem... questioning. Not in an MM disc.”

“So that’s the start?” Nadia asks as she flutters down taking the place of Mi’lay by Art’s side.

Art nods in agreement as he waves his hand and causes the roof of the pizza joint to disappear so that they all may have a better view of the sky as the moon goes into supernova mode --

and don't give me any crap about your superior astrological knowledge. I don't want to hear it. The moon is going supernova. Deal with it.

"So this is just a game?" Doug asks again as he watches the moon explode.

"Sort of," Eileen assures him.

"I'd never been so scared in all my life. I thought the cops were real there for a second there."

"Get used to it," Eileen says sweetly as she gives Doug a peck on the cheek and discreetly holds his hand under the table.

Above them, the sky fills with debris from the exploding celestial orb, colors streak across the heavens, while magic and wonder fill the air. I'm guessing I don't need to tell you that the ogre(s) may have violated Mi'lay's civil rights during their overzealous questioning, or to point out that this is why the ogres were wiped out previously in the -- Xavier Must Die -- sequence. Justice need not be linear, fair, or realistic. It just needs to be. The board actually likes things to be done over the top. It inspires fear and obedience in the populace or something like that.

(((Look, I don't know. I just work here.)))

"I think we've paid our debts to society," Art says glibly as Armageddon begins and the heavens rain fire and brimstone down upon the evil doers -- yada, yada. Pull it from the GI library if you are even the slightest bit interested.

"So we meet back here in... let's see... 35 clicks from now," Art announces with amazingly good diction considering his vocal cords must be consumed by the flames of righteousness -- etc. etc. -- by now.

"We'll never make it in 35 clicks," Nadia complains, eager to get another line in despite the growing flames, falling meteors, and general pandemonium that the end of the word tends to bring along with it.

“I’m not editing anymore than I have to,” Art insists. “Back here in 35 clicks.”

“But we’ll never make it,” Nadia protests again.

“We’se tink he’d just use’d dat liners for’d da set up of how’d you’d have’d to’d... Sorries, I’d stuttering,” Charlie says as he shakes his head. “He’d just usee it for’d da setups.”

“So’d he’d can say’d, kno’d matter what’s. You’se just gots to dream da dream and da clickers be damned.”

“No I’m not,” Art protests. “35 clicks. That’s all we need.”

“Eet just da idears.”

“Rules of da thumbers.”

“Dey got rules?”

“Dem thumbs be’d loosey gooseys.”

“So da tirty fivers clickers be like da thumbers?”

“Eet be’s whats ets be’s.”

“No,” Art says quite clearly despite the roaring inferno which surrounds them. “It simple. 35 brings us to 100 and that’s all we need. What’s so hard to understand about that?”

“He’d not seriousers,” the Charlies continue as they ignore Art.

“If’d he’d be’s seriousers, we’d no be’s here’d anymore’s.”

“No. I’m serious, 35 clicks... actually 34 now,” Art continues to insist.

“He’d just kidding.”

“Charlie say’d takered your’d times.”

“Clicker here.”

“Clicker’d der.”

“Et makees no’d neber mind.”

“No. I’m serious 34 clicks,” Art insists -- yet again.

“He’d say’d dat, buts noticer how’d he keep’r on’d using up da clickers.”

“He’d no’d serious.”

“I am.”

“No’d he’d nots.”

“He’d be seriouser, he’d just cut it shorties.”

Like this?

“So what do we do Eileen?” Doug asks as his voice emerges from out of the darkness. The flames are gone. The night sky has reset to a total pitch black. There are no stars.

“If you really want to play, you need to find an in to the story?” Eileen explains from out of the void.

“Where?”

“I have no idea.”

And guess what, neither do I.

(Which in the end, just might be a call to an empty story arc that you will have to develop on your own. Cause I’m serious. I don’t have a plan for them. We’ll see if they, me, or one of the other proxies, can twist it together for them. Maybe someone will. And maybe they won’t. You never can tell.)

If you are a diehard about resolving twists, you might want to take a moment to rejoin Art and Eileen back in the sled. They are holding each other tightly -- to keep each other warm -- for there has been a blowout -- don’t really know what this means for a sled, but there it is -- and their driver, Lane the park ranger, has gone off for help. While they await her return, and to pass the time, Art has been telling Eileen a story, which is now over.

Eileen takes off her rig and watches her breath turn to mist in the cold night air. Above her the blue, green, yellow, and red coronas from the Northern Lights fill the sky as they dance around the brilliant full moon that hangs low on the horizon. It truly is a breathtaking sight. It is hard to believe that it exists in reality, that no rig is required.

It is a magical moment, but all Eileen can do is wish that this man, her father, teacher, psychiatrist, creator... whoever, whatever... all she can do is wish that this man was her beloved, her Doug.

“Is the story real?” she asks hopefully. “Is any of it real?”

--- Hard Flash ---

--- Emerge From Total Whiteout ---

“And that’s where we will end it today class,” Professor Art suddenly announces. “We’ll take it up again next week, starting the mythos from scratch. I want each of you to bring a proxy and we’ll throw them together, mix it all up with the plot I’ve outlined, and see how they integrate.”

Dazed and confused, Doug stands in a whirl out in the hall talking to Eileen. “Freaking Fr@cking class. I had no idea you could do that.”

“Is it legal?” Nadia asks as she flitters down the hall not waiting for a reply.

“Was that a homework assignment?” Eileen asks as she watches the fairy -- obviously a proxy -- go flying by.

“I don’t know?” Doug responds. “You think it’s a test?”

“Got me? Um,” with a noticeable lack of any ahem, Eileen bites her lip as she apprehensively asks -- the cute guy-- Doug, “Do you want to pair up? I mean, do a joint project? I think he said we could.”

“Sure! Yeah!” Doug says jumping at the opportunity. “But what should we do? I mean, it was a huge lecture hall, and most of the class didn’t even get in a single word.”

Catching the drift of his comments Eileen agrees, “It would be a shame to come this far and not make it into the main sequence. But how? I don’t see the tie in.”

“No. And he didn’t give it to us,” Doug agrees.

And guess what, he’s still not going to.

(If you see a final level that still needs resolving -- one that I have missed -- you’re on your own. I’m letting the rest of the calls -- if there are any -- die unanswered.)

(And just so we’re all on the same page, in my world a hard break is just that -- a hard break. In a moment, the dream will

resume again and we'll start from scratch. I won't even bother to ask you to pause and reflect on reality for a moment. Instead, I would suggest that you might enjoy letting your compiler have free reign for a minute or two and see what it comes up with on its own -- you know, how it would resolve the main sequence if that was nothing more than an empty call. You might be pleasantly surprised at the results.)

--- HARD BREAK ---
--- END PART 2 ---

G'narsh

The Troll, The Myth, The Legend

(a work of fiction)

by

Kevin Stillwater

P2-B
of
P1, P2-A, P2-B, P3-A, P3-B, P3-C, P3-D, P3-E, P4
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