

G'narsh

The Troll, The Myth, The Legend

(a work of fiction)

by

Kevin Stillwater

P3-C
of
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www.Paufler.net
Brett@Paufler.net

G'narsh - P3-C

Part C - Continued from B

The Windy City's Finest ###
a.k.a. The Cop Stops Here - But Not the Buck

(((Whenever I play this sequence, I always get hung up on the first few clicks. I'll grant you that it's a bumpy ride, and I've even thought about putting the entire thing through a filtering function, but if I did that, so much would be lost that I'd probably be better off just killing the opening scene in its entirety.)))

(((Of course, in defense of how it plays, I could always argue that the initial bumpiness offsets any chaos that the sudden

introduction of feeds might cause. With everything else so erratic, the jarring disconnect that this might otherwise cause totally disappears and melts away into the background.)))

(((And Even I know, starting a sequence with self-conscious apologies is probably not the best way go, but there it is. My personal recommendation: tag it as you go, and next time it will be as smooth as silk, or if that doesn't turn out to be the case, maybe you'll understand the problems I've been having.)))

(I've never been inside a real police station. I wonder if it will show?)

(And if you're going to wind up at a police substation anyway, you might as well go there in style. That's what I always say.)

“That was nice,” G'narsh observes as he looks over his nails. They are newly buffed, sealed, and waxed, or whatever it is that you do to nails if you're a manicurist and an giant eight foot tall troll with a nasty ole set of scaly claws comes to see you. Not that G'narsh hunted the manicurist down, mind you. She just happened to be in the limo along with the other girls -- the hairstylist, the makeup artist, the masseuse (for Nadia), and the bartender (for the Charlies. Anyone care for a fruit smoothie?)

(Among these faceless extras would be the same three girls that were previously known as the blonde, the brunette, and the redhead. Since the Charlies had to get jobs, I don't see any reason why they didn't have to work either.)

(I also should note that (as I make this notation) I'm halfway through (my initial lay down of) the party sequence and they (the girls) haven't made an appearance (... not yet), so like many young girls who've headed for the big city, things haven't turned out quite as they expected, but at least they're riding around in the back of limos. Who know? Maybe they buff more than nails.)

“That’s the star treatment,” Nadia remarks as she drunkenly exits the vehicle and flitters about before deciding that it would be best to sit on G’narsh’s shoulder for a moment. “That massage sure hit the spot.”

“You’d no forgettee da juicerries,” Charlie says as the cobalts exit the luxury flit while listing off their favorite part of the experience -- i.e. the different foods available during the trip.

“Da fruities.”

“Da nutties.”

“And da chipperies.”

“Dey treaties you’d rightees here’d.”

“Dis gooders place to be’s,” they all agree.

“But a police station’s not,” Nadia reminds them as she sobers up a little, gets her mind back on track, and focuses everyone’s attention on the building that they are standing in front of. “Let’s go find Stef’fan.”

“OK,” G’narsh agrees, but even he has to admit, being pampered sure is fun. It just sort of melts away the tension and dissolves the stress of the day -- till you forget it was ever even there. G’narsh knows (or thinks he knows) that this is all just some sort of elaborate setup, some sort of attempt by Bones to soften him up (and convince him to let bygones be bygones).

And G’narsh has to admit, it sure is a tempting idea as he rubs his newly buffed and perfectly smooth fingernails across the side of his face, enjoying the sensation and feeling of luxury. He’s going to have to keep his guard up. He knows the high-life can be beguiling. If he’s not careful, all of his good intentions might fade away and be long gone before he ever realizes that his principles had started to erode.

(You may have noticed a slight anti-bourgeois slant to the foregoing proceedings. Take it for what you will.)

Being the gentleman (and not having the slightest idea where he is going), G’narsh holds the door to the police station open for

both Nadia and the Charlies. Nadia jumps off of G'narsh's shoulder, swoops giddily inside, and is quickly followed by the troop of cobalts who dance merrily through the doorway. Then G'narsh turns to the crowded street, squints into the bright flood lights (and flashing bulbs), smiles, waves, and gives a giant thumbs up to the crowd (((the remnants of the dream parade))) before ducking down and entering the building.

(I suppose, if you want to be a hero, you have to act like a hero.)

(Or maybe I'm just stalling again.)

“What can I do for you missy,” Sergeant Ogre asks from behind the counter. Asks is probably not overly accurate, beams sounds better, says with obvious delight, gushes forth merrily, and/or offers with generosity, happiness, and uncharacteristic delight. That's probably more like it.

The Sergeant can't help but look at the cameras. The only way to get a good shot of him, is to put one camera in his face as a decoy so he stares into it and ignores the rest. It doesn't help that he hasn't turned off his feed or that his wife is babbling away into his ear. Can you see the Ogress herself? Mrs. Ogre at home sitting on the coach, eating bonbons, curlers in her hair, and weighing in at a hefty 350lb as she talks the ear off of dear hubby?

== They're there? They're really there? I can't believe it. My husband the dream star, == and so on and so forth as she rattles on incessantly. Blathering -- I believe is the correct call.

Breaking into all this, Nadia gets right down to business. “We're here to bail out Stef'fan.”

“Who?” the Sergeant asks as he stalls for time. His mind is a little unfocused at the moment.

== Hold on honey, I got to take care of this, == the ogre says to his wife over the feed.

== You're cutting me off? Now? What about for better or worse? Doesn't that mean anything to you? ==

It's a dilemma to be sure. The eternal choice: To live the moment, or to remember it, share it, and save it for the future and posterity. (This being a philosophical concept to dwell on, should you so choose.)

== Don't interrupt, == Sergeant Ogre commands -- deciding not to cut the link with his wife -- before returning his attention to Nadia, G'narsh, and the troop of cobalts. "Who?" he asks Nadia again.

"Stef'fan," Nadia repeats as she lands on the counter before the Sergeant and shows off her good side. (I'm thinking that would be the front and center (upper quadrant), but I'll happily let you decide the details.)

"Stephian?" the Sergeant slurs as he tries to say the odd name. "How do you spell that?" he inquires (perhaps even helpfully) as he scans over his logs and sends the routine search inquires down through the system. After his search has drawn a blank, he asks, "What was he arrested for?"

"He had a gun," Nadia responds.

"Stun guns aren't toys you know," the Sergeant responds as he starts into one of his favorite lectures (and you know it's bad enough that they arrest you, beat the crap out of you when you talk back -- i.e. point out your civil rights, or lack thereof -- and throw binders on you left and right, but then they somehow feel that it is appropriate to give you a lecture as well. Stun guns aren't toys? Now you tell me. If I'd only known that before.)

But Nadia doesn't let the ogre get started on his little rant. "It wasn't a stun gun, it was a plasma rifle, a deep recon sniper rifle," (((that he brought back from the war))).

The Sergeant looks at Nadia, G'narsh, the Charlies, and the camera crew as he wipes his face. "I don't know where you got your information from, but you don't get bailed out if you're toting a sniper rifle..." and then deciding that this is his big theatrical moment, he stares directly into the camera lens as he concludes, "You don't ever get out if that's your crime."

== Oh, that was good honey. Sent shivers down my spine,
== the Sergeant's wife enthusiastically assures him.

== You don't think it was too dramatic, too over the top? ==
== Oh, no. Reminded me of John Greetle in Cops and
Robbers... I think that's what it was called... Let me do a search.

==

== It doesn't matter. I don't have time. I got to go, the big
guy's line is coming up. ==

“What do you mean, he'll never get out?” G'narsh says slowly and deliberately lest he lose his cool and rip the head off of this moronic, pencil pushing, irritating fool of a garrison officer.

The big guy, the real big guy, the real-real-big two-headed guy -- i.e. G'narsh -- is leaning over Sergeant Ogre, as he says this.

The odd thing is, the bigger one is, the more they tend to use their size to intimidate others. I guess that's not really odd, the interesting aspect of this is, the more one tends to intimidate others with their own size, the more they tend to be intimidated themselves when they are (eventually and inevitably) confronted by someone who is larger than themselves. This concept has some astral, metaphysical, and/or spiritual ramifications, but then you'd have to believe in that Schöling crap for the idea to have any meaning. Live by the sword and die by the sword comes to mind as a relevant example. It's not just a physical -- real world -- concept. It tends to hold true everywhere (and not just because M.O.M. says so).

Anyhow, the point is, Sergeant Ogre (who is a large man even before you blue screen out his body and replace it with the skin of an ogre) is suitably cowed. “I... I... I'd like to help you, but I don't have any Stephen, Steven, Stephan, or whatever on the logs books, and even if he was there, he'd never get out. You don't get out of that one,” carrying a gun. “It's the same as murder.” (Why else would you carry a gun around anyhow unless you were planning on killing someone? And, you've got to admit, in Stef'fan's case the logic in this is spot on.)

== They seem dangerous honey. == the ogre's wife jumps in
== That big monster... ==

== Troll. ==

== Don't interrupt me. Fine troll. That troll seems angry.
He seems dangerous. Maybe you should call for back up? ==

== That's a good idea, == the Sergeant agrees as he calls for
support over his feed while tapping a button that is conveniently
placed under the counter just for this purpose.

(This is probably as good a place as any to go over feed
overlays. Obviously I haven't been doing very many in this dream.
I don't really intend to put (a great deal) more in at this point
either, but in keeping with the theme of a how to (make a dream)
disc, it seems appropriate to at least have some overlays. From a
technical aspect, the biggest difficulty with feeds is labeling them
all adequately. It can get downright tiresome at times. In a second
we're going to have twenty odd people in the room, and if we had
to differentiate between all of them at the same time, things could
bog down. The trick is to not treat them as twenty different
individuals. I've never differentiated one Charlie from the rest (if
they have split into identifiably separate characters, you have done
that on your end), and by the same token, I'm not going to split out
the different police officers either. One is as good (or bad, or
whatever) as the next.)

(And, as long as I'm on the subject, I should point out that
the (((typical))) number of participants in dream conversation (feed
driven or otherwise) has increased significantly over the years.
You don't see very many one on one conversations anymore. And
although I am a great fan of the two person conversation -- i.e. the
dialogue -- I find myself (more and more these days) shifting
towards three and four way conversations with a silent (or not so
silent) crowd of onlookers in the background. It's just something
to be aware of. The culture has moved away from dyadic

interactions. One is urged to spend a moment and consider why this might be so.)

“What is it Sarge?” a deputy asks as a brace of support personnel burst into the antechamber and set up a defensive line around the Charlies. No doubt, standard procedure would be to simply stun the room (and sort them out later), but this is a dream, and sleep -- or knock out -- gas isn't where we want to go. We don't want everyone waking up in cuffs (or a holding cell), so if for no other reason than to take some of the momentum out of the moment, the same deputy who spoke before will say, “Hey Sergeant. You're an ogre again.”

“You'll never make Lieutenant, if you keep this up,” another officer jabs. No matter that the lot of them have turned into ogres themselves, the fact that the Sergeant is an ogre is the only thing that seems to matter.

“Maybe it's time for that diet,” another suggests.

“Or cosmetic surgery,” another quips.

Granted, these aren't the best one liners in the world, but they're on the fly. It's not like your average police officer doubles as a night club comedian. (So what do you want?)

== Are they giving you a hard time honey? == Mrs. Ogre asks over the feed.

== Is that the misses? == a deputy asks. (Clearly they -- all of the officers -- have access to the same feed. It is a secured -- departmental -- line, after all.)

== Tell me, was it love at first sight? Could she see the heart of gold beneath the tough leathery skin, == an officer quips gamely.

== I'll talk to you later, == Sergeant Ogre remarks as he wisely decides to cut the connection with his wife. Of course, a red light starts to blink on his desk right away as she tries to reestablish the feed, but he ignores it and doesn't pick up.

== You're going to pay for that Sarge, == a trooper surmises.

== You'll be sleeping in the dog house for a week, ==
another suggests.

== Or the ogre house... ==
== Where do ogres live? I mean I've seen your place Sarge.
Not quite a hovel, not quite what you'd want to call a home... ==

(No doubt this bantering overlay will continue throughout the scene, but I will only point out the highlights (if you want to call what I've laid down thus far -- highlights).)

“There’s no reason to get excited,” G’narsh insists as he tries to remain calm and instill a feeling of ease and relaxation into his voice. In and out, it was supposed to be a simple mission, he thinks to himself. I mean, isn’t that always what’s going through the hero’s mind when things turn tricky?

“How do we go about seeing Stef’fan?” G’narsh continues as he focuses on the task at hand and tries to overlook the fact that he is now surrounded by a half dozen policemen who not only look like they are very willing to use violence, but that violence -- extreme or otherwise -- is their preferred method of dealing with any problem or situation -- all the way from jaywalking to spitting on the sidewalk.

== So what are we doing here Sarge? == asks an officer as the conversation on the overlay starts up again.

== We gonna waste the lot of them? == another cop suggests hopefully.

== Don't you see the cameras you idiot? == the Sergeant reminds him. Don’t these jokers realize, everything has to be by the book? The world is watching them. No doubt, even the feed is being recorded. That’s how they always do it on these cop and robbers dreams.

== You know, Sarge, ‘waste’ -- as in read them their rights -- it's police officer jargon == the deputy corrects himself (hoping to cover his tracks).

== You're an idiot Johnson. Anybody know about this Stephan character? == the Sergeant asks as he changes the subject and hopes no one remembers the comment (in a moment, or at the next departmental meeting).

== It's Stef' fan, == Nadia corrects as she breaks into the feed.

== How the Fr@ck did you get in here? == Sergeant Ogre demands. == This is a restricted feed ==

== We've got clearance. G'narsh -- the troll -- has full access, == keys to the kingdom, don't you know, == and he wants to find his old war buddy Stef' fan. Where is he? ==

“Sch©lte! Why didn't you say so in the first place?” Sergeant Ogre says as he drops the feed and goes back into voice mode.

“What war G'narsh?” several of the deputies ask as they clasp G'narsh on the back, surround him and call out the battles, wars, incursions, and/or the offenses that they were involved in.

“Tokyo, '84.”

“I was in Alaska and the Northern Reaches.”

“Did six months in Prudhoe Bay.”

“Manchester Underground for a year,” and so on.

G'narsh recognizes the ritual, but he doesn't know what to say. What war or battle was he ever in that would have any meaning to these guys?

But Nadia has his back. == Canadian Rockies from '92 to '96, == she says over the feed, == but he doesn't remember it. ==

== The Chaos Riders? ==

== I'm sure I don't know, == (and he couldn't/wouldn't tell you anyway), Nadia responds obliquely.

(Not that I mean to imply that the war in question ever occurred, or that everyone and anyone who was involved has had their mind subsequently wiped of the memory...)

(They are in the end just random dates -- references -- culled from the ethereal void. Take it to heart that there is some bond of honor -- brothers in arms -- or some such connection between the bulk of the police officers and G'narsh. I'm sure in one iteration of this dream or another -- somewhere along the way -- G'narsh has wound up fighting in every battle known to man. It is typically what he does in the wandering G'narsh section (after all), so I feel justified in assuming that not only is he a war hero, but that he is especially revered by any of the others who might have served (with him) -- and who so often flock to the police and public safety sectors for employment after their time in the military is over.)

(I should also note in here somewhere that this vague reference to G'narsh's previous military service (and/or Stef'fan's arrest for carrying a rifle) will be as close as we will ever come to explaining why G'narsh was pretending that a gold coin was a dial on a sniper rifle's sight in the opening scene... just in case you have been anxiously awaiting an explanation to that.)

(Because...)

Without apology or explanation, we are going to cut away from the police station. In a sudden shift, we are back in the park -- Grant Park in Chicago this time -- down by the fountain. It is a sudden transition (in my mind anyway), all the more so since we will not be returning to the police station... ever (not formally anyhow), for I have had a sudden change of heart about the resolution of this sequence. In time, I am sure that you will understand my reasoning, and (whether you agree with it or not) I am also sure that if it is your desire, you will be able to piece together the omitted scene and return to the station on your own. But (like I said) if you decide to do this, I will not be joining you. Instead, I will wait for you in the comfort, happiness, and solitude of the park.

A man, who I like to think of as somewhat of a cross between Stef'fan and Artismo, and who we will simply refer to as Artie, lies

in the grass in front of Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park. He has a dog with him, a little runt of pooch that we will continue to call Poopsie. On occasion, the man throws a ball into the water and the four legged spaz runs after the ball as if its very life depended upon getting to the ball before anyone else. Then, with ball in mouth, the crazed canine rodentia prances through the water and entertains itself for a bit by attacking the fountains of water before returning to the man and dropping the ball. This process will be repeated -- ad infinitum. Poopsie is a dog of refined taste and highly selective interests. It may not be art, but the pooch knows what he likes, and that my friends is to chase after rubber balls.

If we can move away from Poopsie for a moment, let's take in an overview. The sun is out and it is a nice day in the park -- a perfectly nice day. Pull it up from the GI library. It's a direct call. It's warm, beautiful, and many a girl is out sunbathing. Happily, somewhere along the way this locale has become clothing optional.

The man -- Artie, I suppose we have decided to call him -- splits his attention between the girls, the dog, and the players -- i.e. the rigs, which never seem to leave his person. Today he has five welfare rigs with him, even though he only has the one headset. He could switch the glasses from one rig to the next if he desired (or hook them all together in tandem), but that is not why he is using five compilers. He is working on story lines, or that is to say, his proxies are working on story lines, and he is waiting to see what they come up with. In one pair of compilers, Stef'fan and Mi'lay are knocking about -- back and forth -- sorting things out. You see, Stef'fan was shipped across the country (a day, a week, a month, or a hundred years ago) to a prison farm (I'm thinking somewhere in Minnesota, but don't quote me on that). And after Stef'fan was sent down the river for possession of a sniper rifle, Mi'lay went down for possession of an explosive device -- the doomsday bomb. From there, I don't really know... anything. Hopefully, before I get to that part of the dream (sometime after the party), the proxies will have figured something out.

In the meantime, G'narsh is at the police station learning what I just told you (and not much more) -- i.e. G'narsh will leave the station knowing the name and the location of the prison farm (where Stef'fan and Mi'lay were sent) and nothing more. After all, this is all I know at the moment, and therefore that is all there is to know. We will not go into how G'narsh learns this information --step-by-step -- suffice it to say that he has.

In the other pair of rigs I'm bouncing Eileen and Doug back and forth to little success. To some extent both pairs of proxies --Eileen and Doug versus Mi'lay and Stef'fan -- are fighting for the same role, but as of yet, neither duo has come up with an acceptable plotline. (If you'll remember, previously Eileen and Doug were stand-ins for G'narsh and Mi'lay, and it would appear that their best shot (for another appearance in this story) would be as stand-ins again (only this time for Stef'fan and Mi'lay instead of G'narsh and Mi'lay), but like I said, this has not yet been worked out.)

(You might be interested in the specifics of this technique. A welfare rig has six slots. Plugging two of them together gives me twelve. I am using one slot each for a fairly expansive proxy program of both Stef'fan and Mi'lay (or Eileen and Doug as the case may be), two more go to the GI library, one has the story to date, one is playing a Prison Farm simulator, another has a old time agricultural farm -- homestead simulator -- and from there I am inserting various discs containing my own (previous) work -- story outlines, rough notes, and other sources of inspiration. The odds on bet (at this point) is that I will cull the storyline from Howl at the Moon (a short unpublished/undistributed dream of mine) for the ending sequence, but I still don't know how I am getting from here to there.)

(After the proxies have bounced back and forth, tried out various strategies, and optimized their positions (using their own motivations and personalities as the driving force), the dream usually settles down. This means the proxies have decided on a

course of action given the situation (the discs in the rigs). Then you just plug in, look at the results, and see if its something you want to integrate. It's akin to taking a gaming skimmer and having a proxy play on your behalf. From there, it's a simple step to bump it up a notch and have two proxies duke it out as they play against each other, but that shouldn't be taken to mean that Stef'fan and Mi'lay (or Eileen and Doug) are at odds with each other, because they aren't.)

(Anyhow, once I get a story that I am happy with for the two individual pairs -- (Stef'fan and Mi'lay) and (Eileen and Doug) -- I'll see if we can't get some sort of dual-story overlap thing going. But like I said, right now everything is up in the air and still being worked out.)

(Of course, I can just arbitrarily decide the outcome, which is what I do often enough, but we're probably a week (or at least a half a week) away from the prison farm segment, so I still have time to play around.)

(Also, while I'm on this aside, I'll mention that I'd think twice before upgrading from the welfare rigs. They are cheap, rugged, dependable, and (most important of all) virtually theft proof. When's the last time you heard about someone (anyone) stealing a welfare rig?)

(Not that the rig itself is what I am concerned about. If I lose my rig(s), I lose the current copy of my dream. How many days (or even just hours) has it been since I've made a backup? That's all lost work, and believe it or not, it's amazingly difficult to make up and/or recreate.)

(Before I go on, I should address that last concept. The dream is not only catalogued on the disc, but in my mind as well; and as I lay it down, the version in my head changes dynamically -- from moment to moment. If I lose a work in progress (from theft, hardware malfunction, or my own stupidity and carelessness), not only do I have to load an old back-up version of the program, but I also have to call up an older version of the dream that is logged in my head and try to re-lay the same tracks

that I've previously laid down. It's an amazingly difficult task. It's like trying to mentally recreate a date book, items from an expense account, or notes from a business meeting item by item, note by note. You'll get some of the details right, but likely a lot of really important stuff is either going to slip through the cracks or be missing the color and contextual meaning it once had.)

(The bottom line is, second copies are hardly ever as good as the initial ones for me. Something just seems to be missing -- my interest or passion most likely -- but it really doesn't matter the label or name. Whatever it is, it simply isn't there.)

(I've encountered this problem enough to know that I often feel it is easier to start a new project than try to salvage an old one that has gone awry, but maybe that is simply because I am better at beginnings than endings.)

(Speaking of which: Do you think your strength lies at the end of dreams (((and/or the minutia of editing)))? If so, maybe we should team up?)

Anyhow, we are here in the park lazing by the fountain and working on our dream, because I changed my mind about the current (((police station))) sequence. I do not want to tour the police facility. If you are of the mind, feel free. The information is there on the Server, or you can put in a dedicated disc. My game plan was to introduce binders, clamps, and all the rest... but I can see the Charlies being given access to a binder application machine -- binder gun -- or whatever they are called these days and then using the Sch©lting thing on each other (as a gag, or for a bit of fun). In no time they'd have turned one or more of their numbers into a Frankenstein Charlie.

I don't want that to happen to my proxies. I don't want them to be in the same room as a binder gun... or in the same building... or the same disc (and as long as we are going down that road, I don't really want them in them in the same dream or the same universe), and since I have that kind of control, I will not allow it. The Charlies are not going to be anywhere near a binder gun. I

feel that it is akin to not allowing your six-year-old child alone with power equipment. The best thing that can happen in such a situation is that the six-year-old will leave the equipment alone, but the worst, well there is no limit to the worst -- severed arms, legs, permanent disfigurement, or even death. The bottom line is, a six-year-old might never see seven if you left them alone with a plasma drill or a laser saw, and I for one care about my proxies as if they were my children, so I opted not to do the scene.

There are other problems. Everywhere you look (college classes, Server columns, contest briefs) young would-be dreamers are advised to dream about what they know. Well, I don't know binders ((((not as well as I should to make them the basis of a dream sequence anyhow)))). And what's more, I have absolutely no interest in learning more ((((and/or anymore)))). Basically, binders give me the creeps (and although this is an understandable motivation for desiring to rant against them, in and of itself, it imparts little knowledge or insight).

So, I'm thinking the best way to approach the whole topic is to simply lay it on the line, and make it exceedingly clear exactly how ignorant I am about the technical aspects of binders and mental clamps. I am quite sure my understanding of them is naïve, simplistic, and outdated, so have a good chuckle.

When I think binder application, I imagine that a person sits (or is strapped down) in a dentist's chair, and then a gun (like a hypodermic gun, caulk gun, or nail gun) is used to shoot a needle into the victim's skull right at the temple. I am of the opinion that the needle need only be the size of a thumbtack at this point ((((in time)))), but for whatever reason they ((((the powers that be)))) still use those big golden discs. Don't ask me why. Perhaps it has something to do with aesthetics. I've heard folks argue that it has something to do with making them obvious (in a sort of Scarlet Letter type way), but this rationale doesn't hold any water for me. Plenty of rich folks get a similar thing done as a non-restrictive

implant, which one assumes they wouldn't do if there was some sort of (real) negative social taboo attached to the procedure.)

Anyhow, the "gold coin" consists mostly of pick up equipment -- i.e. an antenna. The rest of the insert is just a small group of transistors and diodes ((((i.e. a microchip)))) that organizes the host organisms own neurons. It's one of those bio-electronic hybrids, and it essentially hijacks the mind by controlling the output and function of key areas of the brain.

I won't go into further details, because (like I said) I don't know them, but guided by outside compilers, distant mainframes, and so on, the golden pickups receive broadcast messages that float around in the air, convert them from radio waves to a form that the brain can understand, and then by feeding this informational input into the mind (by utilizing the brain's own neural network), the binders end up being able to override, dominate, and control the rest of the brain.

Just so you don't think I'm being completely unfair ((((and at this point, I don't know why you would)))), I recognize that this (a permanently attached Server connection inter-phased directly into one's cortex) has its advantages. The most obvious of which is that one is always tapped into the Server. This means that emergency help can be sent automatically to the last known location (of the host) upon any breakage of the link, and the amount of support (back up discs, etc) that a person has access to is unbelievable, but there is a price -- constant surveillance and an inability to turn your rig off ever again. Some might argue this last part, but it is a moot point. There is no turning the pickups off. Think of them as voice activated controls. You can tell the control to turn off, but its still on (in some sense) waiting for you to say "on." The pick ups are the same way. You can tell them to turn off (and thus turn off the active content), but the passive changes (to the brain and its function) will always be there.

Anyhow, I know some folks are equipping their children voluntarily (not with binders, but with integrated Server pick ups -- a.k.a. voluntary UBI). These children do remarkable well in

school. Their skills training levels are off the charts, and there does not appear to be any negative social stigma involved. In fact, the actuality may be quite the opposite as only the rich can presently afford the voluntarily version of this procedure, (which in itself causes a whole new subset of problems, but we will not go there -- not at the moment, anyhow; maybe later).

Despite any positive side effects, I still don't want my proxies (nor would I want my children if I had any) anywhere near this stuff -- either a binder or an application room -- so I cut this part out of the police station tour out. There was no sense even laying it down. I don't want these concepts to muddy up the works and bang around in my own head, much less to touch or defile my proxies -- i.e. creations -- in any way. The safest course of action that presented itself was to kill the scene, so I did.

Should you (after all of this) still think that something is missing from this sequence, please feel free to back engineer the scene. You have working copies of the proxies, after all. And, you can do what you want. But me, I'm going to lay back here -- in the park-- enjoy the day -- perfectly nice -- and watch the naked and near naked girls slowly walk by as the appointed time of my sister's party slowly draws closer.

(As to housekeeping, I'm now working on a vacation schedule (which means at about half speed), so this is my second day working on this sequence (three days when I am done) for 4.2 (or 7.3 edited) clicks. No worries, though. There is no sense rushing through things. After all, I have no deadline -- not now.)

(I should also note (as a set up to the closing scene for this sequence) that I don't tend to broadcast my dreams (to the public and those around me), but rather tend to keep them to myself. It would have been easy, as you know, to show the last segment with Artie lying in the grass with all sorts of proxies dancing about him (as I believe we will do in the next sequence), but this is not how I go through life. It might be good advertising (for my dream craft), but it's simply not who I am.)

(To wit.)

“Is this how you relax?” Lane asks as she approaches Artie. He does not seem as a dark lord should. Perhaps it is his age. He appears younger (than he has, and/or as she expected), but no. It is more than that. It is his lack of bearing, the fact that those around him pay him no mind. A dark lord would never stand for such a slight as to be ignored (or to lie in the grass among the commoners). It would be unheard of.

Artie merely shrugs. “It’s a pleasant way to spend the day,” he acknowledges as Poopsie jumps in the air -- seemingly at nothing, right where Lane is standing -- and then runs off towards the fountain to chase a ball.

“I will be your escort to the party then?” Lane asks, as if a Lady of Chaos, a consort to the Lords of Chaos ever need ask such a question. Of course, she will play the role of my escort for the evening.

“Yep, that was the plan,” Artie agrees as he stands up, brushes himself off, and allows his feed to go live.

Those around him in the park who are interested in such things -- a date, a good time, or merely something new and interesting -- look him over along with Lane and the spastic dog. Not necessarily in that order. He is nothing special, just a step above a bum. He’d like to think of himself as a veteran (and wears an army jacket to that effect), but he’s never seen combat (or the inside of a recruiting center for that matter). Probably (quite rightly), he was convinced that he would die if he joined up, and so he never did. The concerns of the day never spoke to his heart strongly enough to justify sacrificing his life (not today -- not just yet -- not right now anyhow).

But here I am talking of the man -- the middle aged adolescent -- when no one in their right mind would be paying the slightest bit of attention to him. The girl on the other hand, the lady, the four armed goddess, dressed to the nines in a revealing

green silk evening gown with a body -- like something out of a dream -- she... she is something special.

== Where'd you get that skin? == onlookers from around the park ask.

== Did you do that? ==

== Do you do freelance work? ==

It's a dream after all. With so much about (so many dream overlays pressing in from every direction), it can hard to get noticed, and even if I had the Thing -- the latest and greatest -- all that hype and more -- loaded, up and running, and ready for all the world to see, the assumption would more than likely be that I had purchased it, and not created it, but...

== Can I get a copy of her? == The request is music to my ears, like sweet sugar -- a statement of desire for something, which I have created.

== I'll send you a link == is a good reply. I, after all, am happy to sell under the right circumstances.

"You wouldn't sell me?" Lane protests as she twirls about, waves her hands ((((all four of them)))) around enticingly (dare I say erotically) as she starts a slow swaying dance, and makes it abundantly clear why she has been escorting Chaos Lords to court functions (and wherever the night might lead) for endless eons.

"I'll never give away your base code," Artie assures her, "but a copy," a picture, an echo of an echo... "It would be unfair to keep you all to myself."

"Why do I love you?" she asks, but we've been over this. With a 0 here and a 1 there, anything is possible.

I couldn't tell you why I've added this scene. Perhaps when I cut the police station tour, I felt like I owed something else in its place, and this is the result.

I do know that I find it immensely interesting to go to the park, tube station, or wherever, and cut back and forth between 'reality,' the public feeds, and what everyone will share about

themselves via the dreams they are playing and broadcasting out to the world around them.

Not all the dogs in the park are real.

Nor are the children.

And, I hope beyond hope that it does not come as a surprise that the fake girls outnumber the real ones by a substantial margin. (A good way to tell the two different groups apart is by the amount of clothing being worn... or not worn, as the case may be.)

Of course, even beyond that, a subject of never ending personal interest to me is the extent to which folks regularly clothe themselves in fake skins and/or dream personas -- complete with background, color, and hidden meaning. I don't mean to sound judgmental when I say that. It is simply the way it is.

"We need to go, or we'll be late," Lane points out. We are done kissing, holding, saying hello, and showing off Lane's special talents. The sales pitch over, it is time to move on and leave the park behind.

== But a copy? == the plea flies out.

== You promised a copy, == the boys beg, while a cute girl insists, == I could use a new skin ==

== You do fantasy? == another voluptuous fair maiden asks sweetly and suggestively. == I'd love to bring my dreams to life ==

Wouldn't we all my friends. Wouldn't we all.

Need I mention, that the comments are virtual? And available to anyone interested in loading a DreamStar disk or similar fantasy?

(Of course I don't.)

Half the dating scene seems to be filled with folks looking for the other half of their fantasy. Be my knight in shining armor and I'll be your fair maiden. Be my cowboy and I'll be your Indian princess. Or whatever. Puzzle pieces looking for a fit. Locks looking for a key.

I guess in my personal case it's -- be my devoted fan and... I'll custom weave my dreams to your liking. Of course, that's easier said than done, as the numerous failed relationships dotting my past will attest.

(And with that (at 4.5/7.3 clicks), I think I've added enough to make up for the deletion of the binder expose. I can't tell you how troubling it would have been (to me) if the Charlies wound up "Binderling" themselves. And not just what it would do to them in this dream, it is something that (I believe) would flow all the way down to the code level and muck up the basis of who they are. Like a stank toxin that poisons all that it touches, it would forever alter the core their very being. It might just be unfounded paranoia, but then again, it might not be, and quite frankly, to me it's simply not worth taking the risk to find out. In short, I don't let my loved ones play with loaded weapons.)

(Understanding the last scene in this sequence (as Lane appears and we add the voice over commentary from the crowd) is crucial to understanding where I am coming from, and what I mean by Zen or Buddhism. Whether I am plugged in or not, running a dream or not (oddity that I am), I can still see, feel, and touch the overlays. I don't mean this in a physical sense, nor in a dream world sense, but more in a metaphysical/spiritual sense. The overlay is always there for me. Folks calling out from the crowd == Nice dream ==, == Nice pants ==, == What the Fr@ck are you looking at? == the comments come at me constantly and continually. To see a group of kids is to see a group of cobalts at play. To see a hot girl is to see an elf. I don't know how clear this is, but for me the overlay is real and is not an artificial or technical creation. Its constant presence in my life is one of the reasons I became a dreamer, and the analysis of it, perception of it, and understanding of this 'reality' is what I mean by Zen and/or Buddhism -- nothing more and nothing less. To see what is really there means to see the forest for the trees that they are, and to

realize that most of the traits I prescribe to these trees arise from within myself and not from the trees -- themselves.)

(This could easily be the last commentary track in the dream. One could rearrange things so that it was. If the dreamer's commentary (or talk of Zen and Buddhism) is the most important aspect of this dream to you, then perhaps you will want to bookmark the second half of this sequence and revisit it again at the end of it all. A boy -- or a man -- alone in the park, working on his dreams, wondering about them, sorting them out, and integrating them into some pleasing diversion for others. This is my end. This is my beginning. The fool on the hill -- and/or the artist in the park -- who is having a perfectly wonderful day all by himself -- no matter that the storm clouds are gathering and the thunder is sounding its warning call in the distance.)

(== Ohh, dat's good! == Charlie says as he breaks into my hallowed ground, the dreamer's commentary.)

(== Et soundie ominisoury, == another cobalt continues.)

(A little respect here guys, this is my space, the dreamer insists as he interrupts the cobalts discussion.)

(== A little respecters, == a cobalt snickers.)

(== Dat wat's we's givee youse. ==)

(== No mores. ==)

(== No lesses. ==)

(== Joost a littles. ==)

(Really guys, your moment will come in a second. I need you to respect the boundaries of my commentary track.)

(== Oh'd, dat gooders too. ==)

(== He'd sayee et joost likers he'd meaners eet. ==)

(== He'd gooders actors. ==)

(== But he'd know'd, we'd just following da scripters. ==)

(== Et sayee rightees here'd, Charlies breakee in. ==)

(== So we breakies in. ==)

(And it's true. I've been dying to work this routine into the dream ever since Artismo, Eileen, and the Charlies went on the wild flit ride so long ago.)

(== We'se knows meester. ==)

(== See'rd, we's helping. ==)

(== Oh'd! ==)

(== We'd got to goes meester! ==)

(== We almost too's da parties. ==)

(Save me a cookie when you get there.)

(== Dey going to hab'd da cookies? ==)

(== Et ebery Charlie for heemself. ==)

(Save me a cookie!)

(== Dat be da dileminer. ==)

(== Save'd da cookerries for you'd mean we'd no eaters. ==)

(== Et be da difficultery problemers. ==)

(Save me a cookie!)

(== You'd soundee like da broken recordees meester. ==)

(== Bye nows. ==)

(== We'd gotta goes. ==)

(== Oh'd lookies! ==)

(== Dey gotta day peanut butterries! ==)

(== Da chocolate chipperries! ==)

(== And da oatmeal raisin cookerries! ==)

(Save me a cookie!)

(== You'd hear'd someting Charlie. ==)

(== I no'd hear no ting. ==)

(== Ooo, des good cookerries. ==)

(== No body noticers we'd have seconds. ==)

(Um... I got to go. We'll talk later, but I hope you get the idea. I've got a constant overlay -- an open feed to the beyond (and the Charlies) -- going all the time.)

Melissa's Birthday Bash

(It's not really her birthday, I just didn't feel like saying she was throwing the Swami Yamma a party.)

(Also, now that I think about it, I probably should have been spending some of my time in the park preparing for this sequence... so if it gets squirrely, you know why.)

Melissa's apartment is a wreck, a total disaster area. Think college dorm, the day before a move, or that one day a month when a crazy person invariably forgets to take their pills and so they are (quite understandably) looking for the uplink to god that an angel has informed them was hidden somewhere in their apartment. Melissa is busy looking for that uplink (or something) and as such she is tearing through her closet throwing all of its contents into the middle of the floor into a great big pile.

"Um... You've got a party in a few minutes, right sis?" Artie asks innocently from the doorway as he returns from the park.

Melissa stands up abruptly and stares frantically at Artie as if she were crazed. "Poopsie! Have you seen Poopsie?" she asks desperately and then, sort of realizing the key error in her previous statement, rewords it as she asks more accurately and therefore in a much more accusatory tone, "What have you done with Poopsie?"

"Me?" Artie asks feigning innocence, but the wretched pup cannot keep quiet and its happy, "Yap-Yap-Yap," can be heard through the door out in the hallway.

"What have you done to her?" Melissa screams in hysterics as she pushes Artie out of the way. The moment the door is open a fraction of an inch, Poopsie squeezes through and jumps into Melissa's arms. "Poopsie! Poopsie! Poopsie!" she exclaims with delirious relief. (Guess what, it's just the thing she was looking for.)

"Yap! Yap! Yap!" Poopsie replies with equal joy and happiness. It's like a scene from Love Story or Heathcliff on the plain... or marsh, or wherever that Heathcliff scene takes place. I

guess on some Wuthering Heights, whatever that means. I suppose it has the same sort of logic that naming a monster a withering specter has.

Anyway, the reunion is quite sickening. It seems to go on like forever, with much licking and kissing... and basically you've got to wonder how a scene with such a blatant cross species sexual innuendo can be considered MM, but there it is. It's disgusting really. Doesn't she know, that dog will eat anything? I mean literally, it'll eat anything.

Anyhow, once this pornographic lick-fest is over, and their love satiated for the moment, Melissa turns on Artie as if he has done something wrong. "Where did you take her? What did you do to her?" and then turning back to the mutt she asks of the dog (no doubt because she believe the dog will give her a more honest answer), "What did he do to you? He wasn't mean to you was he? Because if he was, I'll kill him," she says once again while glaring at Artie.

And you just got to stop for a second and wonder if Artie is stupid enough to admit to being mean to her precious Poopsie after a threat like that, but no need to wonder about that for too long, because Artie is apparently just that stupid. Without even bothering to lie or come up with a decent excuse (probably because a good one doesn't come to mind), after a brief pause Artie sort of nonchalantly admits, "I took him to the park."

"You what?" Melissa shrieks, and if you'll remember this is something akin to nails on a chalkboard, so while Artie is still cringing, she adds, "She's an indoor dog."

"Yeah, well. I made some changes to him too."

"You what?"

"Changes. He likes going to the park and playing ball now. Here, I'll show you," Artie suggests as he ignores his sister's growing fury and throws a rubber ball against the wall. In response to which, Poopsie gives a mighty "YAP!" and goes scrambling after the bouncy ball as it ricochets off the wall, bounces down the corridor, and comes to rest on top of a pile of

clothes. The furball (of course) ignores the ball and dives into the clothes, but it's not really a glitch. Seconds later he pokes his head out, let's loose with a delirious "Yap!" and then dives back in (once again presumably looking for the ball). Now, if that isn't just the cutest thing you ever saw.

"Have you ever seen anything so adorable?" Artie asks --innocently and inquisitively -- as Poopsie finally finds the ball, rushes back to Melissa's feet where he drops the toy, and proceeds to "Yap!" and "Yap!" and "Yap!"

"Pick up the ball and throw it," Artie urges, but since Melissa just stands there dumbstruck, he takes it upon himself to reach down and whip the ball against the walls as hard as he can. It goes bouncing back and forth between the two walls in the narrow confines of the apartment and Poopsie chases after it the entire time (sort of going around in a circle as he changes direction rapidly to keep pace with the object of his obsession) until the ball comes to a stop under the coffee table where Poopsie is unable to reach it.

"Better get that out for him or he'll freak," Artie warns.

Poopsie agrees with Artie and to indicate his feelings in the matter, he emits a hearty, "YAP!" as he prepares to do battle with the offending piece of furniture, but Melissa is not on the bandwagon -- not all the way, not yet. She hesitantly squats down and searches for the ball as she whines, "I liked Poopsie the way she was."

"He," Artie corrects. "Poopsie is a guy now."

"WHAT?"

"Just relax," Artie assures her. "I made a back-up copy. If you don't like the changes, I'll change him back."

"Change him... her back now!"

"No," Artie refuses as he heads towards the kitchen (and the apartment's central control unit). "You got to at least give the new -- and improved -- Poopsie a trial run. Besides, you've got guests coming in a few minutes. You might want to straighten up a little." Have I mentioned it? The place is a mess -- a virtual pigsty. Like

someone was just going thru everything, looking for a lost disc or something like that. I suppose somewhere I should mention that I left a note on the refrigeration (Isn't that where you leave notes?) but Melissa obviously never saw it. Maybe I'll send her a message via feed next time (or more than likely, maybe I won't).

(In the end, Melissa should be glad I didn't turn the mutt into a vicious killer of a guard dog that would slowly but surely turn on her until she was afraid to walk into her own house lest she disturb the deranged thing.)

(Anyhow, once again, that is all padding and has nothing to do with the plot... as (neither coincidentally) does the rest of the sequence.)

“Are we here early?” G'narsh asks politely as he pokes his head in through the doorway.

“Who are you?” Melissa asks as she looks up from where she is busy shoveling her clothes back into the hall closet.

“G'narsh,” the oversized troll answers. “We met in the park...”

Not really up on the whole politeness -- gracious host -- thing, Melissa storms into the kitchen where Artie is busy fiddling with her Climate Control/Background Ambience System. And by fiddling, I perhaps should elaborate and explain that this means unscrewing the access panel, cutting a wire here, and resoldering a connection there. “You are not going to ruin my party!” Melissa declares. “Stay away from my control panel!”

“Sounds kind of kinky,” Artie responds out loud, which was probably not the best thing to do. Some remarks you should just keep to yourself, but Artie is a slow learner.

“You are so crude,” Melissa scornfully replies. Unfortunately, as Artie considers this and looks up to apologize, his attention wanes at a critical juncture in the extremely delicate operation, which he is attempting. Suffice it to say, the entire room suddenly turns black as a shower of sparks shoots out of the wall.

“What the Fr@ck are you doing?” Melissa screams. It’s really not so much a question as blind hysteria at this point, but Artie is a literal minded guy.

As he scratches his chin and tries to figure out the probable malfunction, he responds with obvious bewilderment, “Well I... You’re supposed to short these two wires, see... and then patch this through to here... or is it here? I guess I should have downloaded a copy of the instructions before I started,” Artie explains meekly. I mean, it sounded good. Patch your personal rig into anyone’s household Server and you can hi-jack the environmental ambiance of the room. Sounds simple... straightforward... but you know how these things go.

“You Sch©lting moron. You fool. You idiot.” Melissa could go on -- and she probably is going on -- but once you’ve heard her scream at you for an hour or so, you quickly realize that she repeats herself and after a bit, it simply gets... er, well... repetitive.

Artie, however, is all business. It’s crisis time, the moment of truth, time to put up or shut up, so... “Maybe I should just leave,” Artie suggests.

“Fix it first!” Melissa insists.

Artie grimaces. There isn’t much light in the room, just the blinking indicators from a small pile of welfare rigs, but it is enough.

“You really look like Bones in this light,” Nadia says from where she is. She meant it to be a private comment, but there it is, right out in the open. I should also mention that the Charlies are here now too, and that they’re in the mood to be good sports, polite, and all that. They know what needs to be done in order to get things ready for a party and they’re busy preparing food and making Melissa’s mess disappear as Artie continues to fiddle with the Server controls.

“What I really need is more power,” Artie suggests hopefully. “I think I blew a fuse or something... maybe a power supply line.” He looks G’narsh over. “You’re a big guy. You seeing my sister?”

“He is not my date,” Melissa insists. “He’s not my type.” Though he is perhaps Poopsie’s type. I only mention this because G’narsh has squatted down to say hello to the four legged wonder and as he is the only one in the room paying the least bit of attention to the mutt, he’s basically Poopsie’s best friend at the moment... the little slut.

“It doesn’t really matter,” Artie says. “Come here...”

“G’narsh,” the troll obligingly supplies (instinctually knowing what the pause in the conversation implied).

“Ga-Narsh?”

“Just G’narsh.”

“OK. Fine. Whatever. See that cord there, g’Narsh?” Artie inquires as G’narsh reaches into the wall and grabs hold of a thick, heavy duty power cord -- probably a much thicker line than is actually required to power a rinky-dink control panel -- but really, you shouldn’t be dwelling on that.

“OK. That’s good. That’s the one. Now grab hold and pull,” Artie urges. “A little harder. A little harder. A little harder,” and right on cue the unit comes ripping out of the wall along with a gigantic rat’s nest of multicolored (blue, red, and yellow) wires.

“You’re making a mess,” Melissa points out.

“Yeah, it does sort of look that way,” Artie agrees before he shrugs and instructs G’narsh, “Now take this cord,” the big black one that sort of looks like a garden hose, “and plug it in at the antenna, the spire, on the roof... Nadia will show you where,” Artie decides.

“Come on, I’ll show you,” Nadia agrees and then to assure G’narsh that he’s not going to be doing something evil (as if taking over the internal broadcast feed of a luxury condo for your own private -- and/or nefarious -- purposes could possibly be considered evil) adds, “It’s alright.”

For whatever reason G’narsh is game and he goes trudging off into the hallway after Nadia -- pulling a long strand of cable behind him that reels out of the hole in the wall in a surprisingly easy way. It’s almost as if the contractors who built this place

didn't really care about the cost and just sort of ditched an entire spool of unfathomably expensive cable wire in the wall rather than carry the excess back down the stairs (or selling it on the black market, for that matter).

Oh, that reminds me. "Use the stairs," Artie yells after Nadia before the pair get out of earshot. Things could really get tricky if they threaded that power cord through an elevator.

(The only real thing missing from this scene is Lane, but we'll have her arrive later. Showing up first thing with a four armed demon might have been more than my dear, sweet sister could take. But trashing her apartment, she should be sort of used to that by now.)

"What are you doing?" Melissa asks again as she watches -- in the near total darkness -- as the big black power cord goes slithering out the door. As mentioned previously, the only light comes from the rigs and the streaks of light that slip through the open door.

"It's a good thing I didn't blow the whole building's power supply," Artie notes as he ignores his sister's question. This is (of course) the perfect time for there to be a loud explosion. The location is indeterminate, but the odds on bet is that it is centered on the antenna's power feed. Sort of in confirmation of this, the lights in the hall flicker and then go out. We are now in total darkness. Obviously when G'narsh connected the cable to the antenna, the power to the building blew out.

"You're signing your own death warrant," Melissa states simply as she washes her hands of the entire fiasco, but Artie is too busy staring out the windows to care about what she is saying. It is quite mesmerizing really. Multi-colored sparks (kind of like fireworks or sparklers -- think a Midsummer's Dream at -- Elvin Home -- complete with dazzling bits of fairy dust mixed in for color) shimmer and fall down over the side of the building as Artie watches on in fascination. Basically, Artie's mind is a little

preoccupied at the moment, so he's not really paying much attention to the random words of advice coming from his sister's mouth, "You are so dead." Assuming, of course, that you want to label that sort of running commentary as -- advice.

"This isn't going well," Artie notes silently to himself. There is no light in the room at all at this point. The back-surge from the explosion has no doubt fried out the pile of rigs (as well as every other bit of electronic gadgetry in the entire building).

"Der no lighters out der eder?" a cobalt standing by the window observes.

"Et all darkies."

"You blew out the city as well," Melissa laughs. I'm glad she can find the humor in this. "I mean, I love you, but you are so dead."

Yeah. I guess that's pretty funny. Ha. Ha.

"Oh... der da flashering lighties," a Charlie comments.

"Dey givery you'd da tickets."

"Or da binderies," another cobalt guesses.

"There coming for you," Melissa notes with gleeful delight. "Oh god, I should feel bad. Why is this so funny to me?" but she can't help herself.

"Dey down der nows," Charlie notes as he continues with his running commentary -- and play by play -- of the squad car's progress.

"Dey stoppering here's," in front of the building.

"OK. Think Artie. Think," Artie says to himself as he looks at the pile of fried electronics in front of him. "You got what two, three minutes before they come? What time is it sis?"

"What?"

"What time? What time?" Artie repeats impatiently.

"7:58... 7:59," she says reading the time off from her private rig.

"That means I've got a minute to kill."

“Great. Enjoy it. Make it last,” she sarcastically replies before adding, “It’s going to take them more than a minute to climb those stairs.”

“Helicopteries,” Charlies observes from his post at the window as a squadron of the evil monstrosities appears on the horizon in attack formation.

“Still, it’s a minute,” Artie acknowledges. “Might as well make it last.” (These sequences have been getting way too long anyhow.) “What do you say we take a break here?”

“What are you talking about?” Melissa asks.

“We got a minute and then I push the ON button,” Artie replies simply (as if the whole thing was obvious). But as he’s never really been good at that whole impulse control thing, and well, you know, the tension is unbearable (or perhaps not... but whatever the case), Artie caves in under the pressure and decides to push the button prematurely.

“Happy birthday sis,” he announces as the lights come on... well, sort of. A lot of the lights are torches, braziers, candles, and that sort of thing now.

Melissa looks around. Dumbstruck. In awe. Speechless. I take it as a form of flattery, a true compliment. “It’s not my birthday,” she manages at last.

“Dat’s what makers et da surprise,” a Charlie suggests offhandedly, but his attention is not really on the conversation. He -- they, all of them, actually -- stand on top of a pyramid -- think Gaza Strip, King Tut, and all that. At the top of the pyramid there is a little lounge area. You could think of it as a temple if you wanted to, or you could be much more practical and immediately see the cocktail party potential of such a location. I mean, the view is -- unreal, unbelievable, and so on and so forth.

Anyway, we will leave them here for now. Melissa’s mouth agape, the Charlies staring out into space, and Artie putting the stone block back into place that covers the pyramid’s control panel. We’ll get to the view next sequence, but if you want a sneak peak, think the skies over the Chaos worlds coming to life for the

viewing pleasures of the Gra'gl fearing gods of old. That should be a pretty good start. And then, of course, down on the desert floor, and drifting down the Nile (in barges, luxury flits, and what not) are the commoners, the paparazzi, and all the (dream parade) fans that have been following G'narsh around all day long. We don't want to forget about them. Besides, what's the point of being an Egyptian Sun God (or Moon God, as the case may be) if you don't have a sea of adoring followers to worship the very ground -- i.e. sand -- that you walk on and make manifest in reality your every desire?

(This has probably absolutely nothing to do with the greater dream, but if you're going to throw a party, you should throw a party.)

(And now if you'll excuse me. I've waited forty years for this.)

Artie snaps his fingers, "Cookie me Charlie."

"Mmmm?" Charlie pretends not to understand Artie as he stuffs another cookie into his mouth.

"Handsies full meester."

(Yeah! Too busy stuffing delicious home baked cookies into their mouths!)

"Sorry meester."

(I'll bet.)

"Mmmm, dees good," is all the response a cobalt manages as the malignant beast crams another savory, delicious, mouth watering cookie into its mouth.

"I tink dey gone meester," a final backstabbing, cookie stealing, traitorous henchman of a proxy observes.

This is why folks turn to the dark side you know -- why they turn evil. It not the bandits (or the barbarian hordes) coming in the night (and killing your family), or the dragons burning your fields (and destroying everything that you've tried to build over a lifetime). It's the simple things.

“My kingdom for a cookie,” Artie screams to the night sky -- that swirls and billows with an awesome intensity of otherworldly colors. It’s very nice in a -- I wonder who coded that? -- type way, but it doesn’t really do much towards putting a tasty morsel of crunchy delectableness into your mouth.

“Don’t you think you’re being a bit melodramatic,” Melissa asks as she bites into a dark, rich chocolate chip filled confection... and talk about cruel, the cookie is still steaming, it’s so hot -- and freshly made. They must have just pulled another batch out of the processor.

“Are there any more of those left?” Artie asks desperately as saliva fills his mouth and hunger overcomes his being. He can almost taste the sweet, gooey, warm, freshly baked goodness. So close. So close.

“I think this was the last one,” Melissa smirks and then she is gone as she calls out over her shoulder, “Why don’t you just have one of those talking alligators get you one? They made like hundreds of them.”

“Sorries Meester, dey gone,” a Charlie insists... perhaps erroneously. Certainly the cookie in the wretched creature’s hand might lead one to believe that the self-serving reptile is not being entirely truthful. That is to say, it is not being entirely forthcoming with the facts -- or the cookies!

What is a man to do, but cry into the night with despair?
“Ahhhh!”

Obviously this is no job for a weak willed, struggling hack of a dreamer. No! This is a job for Bones -- Artismo Bones -- that is!

“ARGH!” Bones screams in self-righteous fury. (In a voice that causes small dogs to run and hide, I might add.)

“No more Meester Nice Guy,” that’s what I say. “Let this vile form, this putrid skin of Artie fall off me. I am Artismo Bones, warlord, necromancer, and dark sorcerer. And I will get that cookie!”

“Oh... Nadia,” Bones croons ever so sweetly -- his voice dripping with evil intent -- but (despite this warning) the fickle

fairy plops the rest of the chewy morsel into her mouth before she responds -- ever obediently, "Yeah? What's up?"

"Any more of those cookies?" Bones asks hopefully, eagerly, and (when you get right down to it) sort of pathetically.

"You should have said something before I finished it," Nadia shrugs.

It is like Hell my friends. Surrounded by a world of cookie eating fools. It is literally like being in Hell.

"You're being melodramatic again," Melissa notes as she returns to the scene. "Here, I brought you a cookie."

"It has a bite taken out of it," Bones notes morosely with a certain petulance and poutiness -- that you don't normally see in your dark, world conquering warlords -- but the tormentress, the vile cookie eating demoness that goes by the name of Melissa does not care about such niceties. She refuses to play games, which involve self indulgent pity, so she takes another Great - Big - Gigantic Bite out of My Cookie!

"What are you doing?" Bones rages -- rages and/or whines, it's always such a close call.

"Now it has two bites taken out of it," Melissa shrugs. "Do you want it or not?"

But we cannot let the masses see Bones fall to such a level (begging for a cookie and/or brought to his knees by nothing more than a sugar laden snack food), so before Bones caves in and accepts the crumbly remains of what by all rights should be a Full - Unblemished - Taste - Sensation, we shall cut away, to rejoin the party (slightly refreshed and renewed) at a later time (in a later sequence).

(The last might have worked better if Lane had taken on Melissa's role, but she's down in the lobby keeping the other guest occupied and/or entertained until everything is ready, so I guess it's not to be.)

(Till tomorrow then.)

(Oh, I almost forgot. Please don't think that the enclosed shows you how to override a factory lock (on Poopsie or any other companion animal) or to hack into an apartment's (or whatever's) ambience generator (and/or local feed). It doesn't. Consult the instruction manual, see the Server guide, etc., etc.. All things are possible (including frying out a building's main circuitry), so it might be safer to limit ones activities to the dream world where one's mistakes are typically not so catastrophic.)

(Um, and then like, you know, this is all in fun. I don't think the rest of the dream is going to be so... er, tangential, but I have been known to be a bit unfocused at times. Anyhow, I hoped you enjoyed the last 3.5 (4.0) clicks. If not, well, it is what it is. I'd hate to call it filler, 'cause I've already provided way more content than I set out to, so I guess I'm just going to call it having fun.)

(Anyhow, this is what I do. I don't really get paid much for it. Maybe you can see why. Or, maybe you like what you've seen, and you'd like me to work some magic on your behalf. If so, look me up.)

(I guess the bottom line is, to me this entire sequence felt a little squirrely, gratuitous, and off focus, but despite this feeling, the only thing I'm really planning on changing as we go into the next sequence is to bring more of the principals back into the show. One way or another, there it is: I tend to be hyper-self-conscious because my dreams always end up turning in strange directions.)

(But then you probably already know that, and that's probably why you're here, so on with the show.)

(I'm really going to need to get over this hang up (getting all squirrely and then obsessing over it). I figure once I do, I'll be a much better dreamer.)

(((Because here, deep in the umpteenth edit, I'm looking at this last sequence and saying to myself, "That was great. How did I do that? And more importantly, how can I do it again?"))))

(((Which, I suppose begs some sort of self-revelatory analysis. As such, my conclusion is: this far into the dream, I'd become so tired, overworked, anxious to be done, and desperate for content -- i.e. the next gag -- that I was happy to follow any string that presented itself, and (perhaps more importantly) my will to do otherwise was totally exhausted. If that doesn't suffice as an explanation, then lets just say I was on a manic swing, and when that happens I just go with the flow -- because that's what being manic is all about.)))

The Swami Yamma Himself - Live and in Person

(I am Bones. Hear me roar.)

(Let's just try to do it by the numbers today.)

The party is taking place on top of a pyramid. Want a description of that sucker? Well, we all want things in life. And, as I have been told many times before, it is good to want things.

Anyhow, just to let you know how serious I am about staying on the straight and narrow (this time), I will drown out Nadia's commentary as she tries to butt into my narrative to say, "You really like that line, 'It's good to want things.' Have you ever made a dream without integrating that line into the dialogue somewhere?"

But like I said, we are muting Nadia's commentary, so there is no need to respond to that particular question.

"You're not really doing a very good job of muting me," Nadia is quick to observe.

(So, maybe we should just start over.)

A pyramid. What does this mean?

How do you make a dream that is pleasing to all (or at least more so than it would be otherwise)? That is to say: How do you leave a dream open, but closed at the same time?

Take a pyramid...

== What? No take my pyramid please joke? == Nadia manages to interject (as she is apparently unable to keep her witty comments to herself).

(And, perhaps that in itself is an indication that I am going about this the wrong way.)

Bones is holding court as he sits in a big oversized, overstuffed, comfy chair lined with plush velvet. You would not believe how uncomfortable normal chairs are for him, or how vindictively cruel those folding (plastic, metal, or wooden) chairs can be. He doesn't have a lot of padding back there (on his tush). He's not even skin and bones, folks. It's just the bones and nothing else, so he likes a good fluffy, fully padded, billowing piece of furniture. Is that so much to ask for? A little comfort? Oh, and as long as we're giving him a custom built chair, we might as well give him one of those chairs that tilt back, massage your back, and have a place to set your drink. He likes those the best.

No smirking. Just because you're a dark warlord doesn't mean you can't enjoy life. Enjoying the moment, that's what it's all about. What drives a man to lay waste to countless worlds? Simple, the dream of one day sitting on top of a pyramid with a few of your closest friends (virtual or otherwise) and watching the world drift by as you sit in a comfortable chair.

Need I repeat myself? Have I made it abundantly clear? Bones is sitting in a chair, (and not just any chair, but an exceedingly comfortable chair -- like a chair so comfortably, he probably wouldn't get out of even to kill someone, no matter how much they deserved it). So at the risk of repeating myself, Bones is sitting in a chair.

Lane is next to him and lounges on one of the armrests in that special way sultry four-armed demonesses have, while Nadia has claimed the other armrest for herself. Lane is wearing what she had on at the start of our adventure -- jeans and a sexy fur coat, I believe -- while Nadia is in her Bone dancing, half pint pixie fairy form with a ripped purple skirt. She's sort of half engaged in the current conversation and half not -- flitting about, joining other conversations, and teasing whatever single men are available in the room. Like I said, she's an attention whore. She loves to flirt. (Maybe because I misspelled flit (or slurred the word) once when I was laying down code. You never know. Whatever the case, we need not dwell on it, so let's move on.)

G'narsh is sitting across from Bones on a couch next to my sister Melissa (maybe they are an item, and maybe they're not). And then there is Poopsie -- mesmerized by the ball Bones is bouncing up and down on the stone pavers. You've got to love a dog (or any proxy) that knows what it wants. Here we are, like fifty stories up, at the top of a pyramid, and Poopsie just wants me to haul off and throw the ball as hard as I can. So, what is a vile personification of evil to do?

With a final bounce, Bones grabs the ball and throws it as hard as he can over the side of the pyramid. (Remember he played minor league, so he's got like an incredible arm, and the ball really sails.) Without missing a beat, Poopsie -- the silly mutt -- goes barreling after it.

"Poopsie!" Melissa yells as the crazed, ball obsessed, pooch goes leaping over the side.

"Don't worry," Bones assures her. "We're still in your apartment."

"I have a balcony," she reminds him.

"Oh..."

Whoops. My bad. Good thing I have a backup.

(But really, not to worry. Poopsie will be fine. I'm just pointing out a danger -- a problem inherent in dictating ambience

and overriding a person's personal sense of awareness. Take it as a golden rule -- inviolate -- some things you simply don't want to override and others things you'll want totally removed from the environment (or to turn off completely by disengaging the power). Things like sharp knives (and/or garbage disposals) come immediately to mind. The bottom line is, things can get messy if you override too much.)

(This is pretty basic stuff actually. I mean, if you can override a balcony, then you don't really need me to tell you about the dangers inherent in such an operation, so I'll not belabor the point. Besides, we were in the middle of something.)

In a gesture of magnanimous heroism (and in an effort to rid the world of his continuing presence), Poopsie has hurled himself over the edge of the pyramid.

But a pyramid? What does that mean?

As you can see, I'm staying focused this time. We know I am staying focused, because this is the exact point I was driving at a mere half a click ago. That, my friends, is focus, dedication, and yada, yada. OK. I've run out of synonyms and/or tangents. It's time to explore that initial concept -- the pyramid.

Ready?

Are you sure?

I mean, I'm just checking? So, are you really, really sure?

Fine. OK. Relax. I'll get on with it. Geez.

Without further ado then, I give you the pyramid. (It's not just for scheming con-artists anymore.)

A pyramid is a geometric shape. (Relax. You've got to start somewhere. It will get more interesting in a second. Now where was I? A pyramid...)

Take a square, lay it on the ground, and then build up all four sides with triangles so they form a point at the top and you've got a pyramid... and we're all sitting on top of one having a cocktail party.

Of course, what I just laid down is just the start. You might wish to know whether the pyramid in question is inspired by -- The Egyptian Mythos. Or, is it perhaps more reminiscent of a pyramidal structure (or mound) as utilized by the blood cults of South America? It might not seem like much, but this is a big deal. The answer will effect how -- the pyramid -- looks and feels (i.e. how the audience will interact with it). (And yes, this is a dream background/ambiance creation lesson.)

Personally, I'm scared of heights, and here we've just converted Melissa's living room -- a smallish room about 15'x30' -- into the peak of a pyramid. It might sound like a largish sort of platform, but that's only until you've measured it, laid it out, and stood shivering -- scared with fright -- at the center of this tiny, little, insignificant, postage stamp of a lookout tower elevated a tenth of a mile (or more) into the night sky. I don't like to be anywhere near balconies -- not during the day, and not when there are any actual walls in sight. In fact, I usually find myself hugging the core of any large buildings that I happen to be in until I can return to the safety of the street and ground level. I don't know why (personal survival, not wanting the walls to crumble away and finding myself plummeting -- helplessly -- 30 long -- terrifying -- seconds to the street below), but for some reason, I feel much more comfortable up against the core supports.

For a dream construction lesson, this might seem a little unfocused. It probably is, but what I want out of a pyramid is defined by my fear of heights -- and/or my acrophobia. What I want is something with long sloping walls -- something more like a hill really than anything tall or steep -- that has well defined steps, which together form a safe, secure, and brightly illuminated staircase (complete with railings and a safety tether rope if you don't mind).

Other folks are going to want a very narrow pyramid, something more like a spire or an obelisk, that rises straight into the sky. These are the same folks who probably don't want a safety rail anywhere in sight, and who will, no doubt, spend the

party leaning out over the balcony. I tend to stay away from these people. They're dangerous -- demented and mentally unstable.

These aren't the only options, though. We are in a city -- Chicago -- and there is an architectural tradition here of glass, steel, and polymer walled building. We can have the entire outside shell of the pyramid made out of Plex-Steel ((((and/or Flex-Steel, no need to limit our advertising options)))), and then spend the bulk of the evening staring ((((voyeuristically)))) into the open-ceiling apartments below. Or, we can have the platform that we are standing on have a see through floor (or one of those wire bridge contraptions, because those feel so much safer) and have the entire structure hollow, translucent, and/or transparent all the way down to the ground ((((which, have I mentioned it, is far, far, far away)))). Or if that doesn't do it for you, if you'd like, you can make the exterior wall out of smooth stainless steel (sort of like a tobogganing ramp).

Now I know it looks like I am rambling again, but there is a purpose to my madness, and that is to make the call as open as possible. What does the pyramid look like? This isn't a directed question. This is an open call. And if it is to be answered, each member of the audience must fill in the details for themselves -- or perhaps select from any ((((and/or all)))) of the alternatives that I have listed. Word has it, audiences like choices.

(I admit, to some extent the subtext of the preceding is repetition of earlier sections, but then the problem -- of making an open call -- has not gone away. It's not a question that can be answered once and then let go. It is central to the nature of the dream world (and perhaps reality).)

(To take this (idea?) to the next level, spend a moment and flesh out the pyramid on your own. We did a similar thing for Stef'fan. (Remember Stef'fan and his skin?) What does the pyramid look like? (What does Stef'fan look like?) Are you using my guidance? Your own? Or a mixture of the two? What have you decided on? And then finally: Why?)

(That's the big question: Why? Why have you selected what you have? I couldn't begin to tell you. The fact that the structure in question is a pyramid is my fault -- i.e. my doing. But everything else (the platform, the furniture, its contents, whether it has a roof or not -- and is therefore open to the swirling, fractal, G'narsh Ray induced sky) is entirely up to you. You can focus on the ambiance (the unimportant details and specifics of both your surroundings and the moment), or you can turn the question inward (Zenward) and ask: Why have I chosen it (the dream/reality) to be as it is?)

(Why indeed?)

Me, I'm going for a smooth sloping rough-hewn stone stepped pyramid, that sits maybe 100-200' in the air (versus the 500-750' that would be needed to stay consistent with the elevation of my sister's apartment. I will make up the difference by situating the pyramid on top of a hill, which overlooks the city far below).

The light in my little world comes from torches and braziers -- floating wicked oil lamps -- and the like. The art is primarily painted stone with lots of gold and silver inlay -- standard Egyptian Pharaoh stuff, nothing edgy or modern. In the end, it is the rough stone (almost like sandstone) that captivates my mind and fills my senses. Everything is hard, dirty, dusty, and dry -- except for my cushy seat.

If you are going for one of those stainless steel hi-tech tower interpretations of a pyramid, it only makes sense that the interior matches (the exterior) with a sort of art deco, heavy chrome, white light ambiance. The idols may be prominent (or fade into the background as they do for me) and although this is a wholly incomplete description (and not even the merest glossing over of the possibilities), in my mind the mood is set.

And I don't even want to hear anything about how the ancient Egyptians weren't exactly known for their comfortable lounge chairs. You live in your world and I'll live in mine. Isn't that how the slogan goes?

(Oddly, this doesn't feel unfocused to me at all (((although it does seem sort of boring))). Either way, it does look like we're going exactly where I intended -- more or less at least, minus a few minor details.)

(Anyhow, it's probably pretty easy to see how changing the ambience, background, props, and decorations around can personalize a dream -- and thus why one might want to make an open feed... um, er... open. But, and here's where things get tricky, if you're going to open up the ambience, why not open up the entire plot, all the conversations, and everything else as well? Not that this hasn't been done before, but there is a fine line between creating a stand alone dream and simply putting out an enhancement disc. Still, to make a dream truly remarkable, a best seller, an epic to last the ages, you need to do just that. You need to create a world that is both concrete and abstract, that is both set in stone and personalized all at the same time. In other words, you need to provide an adventure that has a predetermined plot and preprogrammed encounters, but that avails itself of an open ended architecture that encourages a user to expand upon the material, which you have provided -- indefinitely.)

(You is probably the wrong label in the preceding. This is my goal, and something, which I wish to achieve. You can do as you like.)

(Anyhow, it's actually a lot harder than it sounds, because what you (((or, at least, I))) are trying to provide is a track ride that doesn't feel like a track ride -- even after the 50th replay.)

(But back to the action.)

When last we saw our heroes, Poopsie had launched himself over the edge (and/or down the side of the pyramid). He is now yapping merrily away as he leads a fairly tired and exhausted orange robed turban wearing fool -- ala Carnac the Magnificent --back up the steps.

“Oh-ha, oh-ha, oh-ha,” Swami Yamma says in greeting (and quite out of breath I might add) as he joins Bones’ entourage.

“Elevator out?” Bones asks mischievously.

“You didn’t?” Melissa protests, but she knows that he did.
“I’m sorry, Swami.”

“Oh-ha, oh-ha, oh-ha...” It’s not much, but probably better than anything else that could ever possibly come out of Yummy’s mouth.

It’s a basic set up. Obviously (or at least I hope its obvious), I have it in for the Swamy Yamma, or, as I like to refer to him, the Sch©lting fool. Though, in actuality, he’s not really stupid. He’s worth far for than I am, so maybe fool isn’t the right word, scum sucking liar who couldn’t tell his...

OK. Take a deep breath. Reframe. To each their own and all that Sch©lting crap.

I don’t like his eminence. Maybe you do... or maybe you’ve simply come to dislike me over the preceding 144 clicks in a sort of wrathful, vengeful, sure would like to see that Fr@cking narrator get his comeuppance, and/or I hate his Sch©lting guts type way.

Well, if so, now’s your chance. There’s no reason a guy as clever as the Swami can’t override my block on the elevators and get them to work instead of climbing the stairs. I mean, the blocks were easy enough to make in the first place. It must be a small matter to release the block. And -- much like magic -- it is amazingly easy once you know the secret.

Anyhow, not winded by the long climb up, you could have the Swami spout his New Age gibberish while Bones, Artie, and/or I just sort of sputter and stammer like the idjits that we are. I’m sure any old Swami Yamma And You meditation disc has the support required to enable such an interaction, and although I am happy to enable such an exchange in my dreams -- i.e. I’m happy being my own clown -- I’m probably not capable of explicitly laying it down so it gives His Eminence the Cretin a fair shake...

(But let's give it a go all the same, shall we?)

“Hi Artie... Sorry, I mean Bones,” Swami Yamma says to the lost wayward lad as he greets him openly -- eager to embrace whatever this new stranger brings.

“Fr@ck you!” Artie Bones replies. Unfortunately, this lad is trapped in a world of anger. Fortunately, we know that his prison is only a self imposed exile that he has created for himself until he is ready to join humanity, confront his soul, and the terrors of being truly alive and at one with himself.

“I’m sorry,” Melissa says as she offers her apology. “He’s always been like this.”

“It is alright. I understand. He is lost and confused,” offers the grand, benevolence, patriarchal, kind, caring, honest, forthright, upright, outstanding, upstanding Swami Yamma, who also just happens to be exceedingly humble in a ‘I understand that it’s hard for everyone else to be great as I am’ type way.

“Fr@ck you!”

“There is no need to be jealous,” Swami Yamma continues as he acknowledges the truth behind the wayward youth’s words -- that is, the boy, who would be, but is not quite yet, a man. Full of compassion, the Swami confronts his attacker, looks at him, examines him, gazes into the long dark shadows of the forlorn boy’s lost soul, and sees him as no other has seen him before. The young man, Artie he calls himself, feels naked and exposed before the Swami. Such eyes? How could he not? He has never been observed this way before, stripped of his defenses, and seen for what he really is.

“Fr@ck you?” the lad says, but his voice has lost the conviction that it once had. What was once solid and concrete is now insubstantial, fuzzy, and unclear.

“I was once like you,” Swami Yamma assures the lad (you know, a two-bit hack of a dreamer looking for my big break) and then I found salvation (a self-help disc that topped the charts -- you

would not believe how eager people are to hear what they already know... or believe that they know). “I understand how you feel,” the Swarmi continues as he holds the boy's eyes -- his very soul -- with his own.

(Eye to eye. Heart to heart. Soul to soul. Fr@ck! What comes next? Can't you just taste the... um, ahem... subtext?)

“Frightened, unsure, jealous... there is no need for these negative emotions,” the Swami Yamma assures the child before him.

The boy, the man -- it could be you or someone you know -- your brother, your sister, husband, or wife -- caught in the maelstrom of life -- confused, not knowing the way, uncertain, afraid of the next step, and terrified of the thought that life might be slipping by: Swami Yamma reaches out to the young man, grabs hold of him tight (in a masculine, non-sexually suggestive or threatening manner), and reassures him with every ounce of his being. (Every ounce baby! Yowza!)

“Let the anger go,” Swarmi commands. “Let the love enter your heart.”

The boy -- soon to be a man -- finds it is easy to obey. (Isn't that always the way?) It is a miracle. We are witness to a moment of grace. Oh! The beauty! The ecstasy! The exultation!

It is so much more than the lad had ever expected. It is so comforting to be loved -- for who one is -- despite it all. Is that too much to ask for?

Apparently it is. The lad starts to sob -- softly, at first. It is the first time he has cried in years, but once the tears start, he cannot hold them back. It is as a deluge. The dam holding the waters of life at bay has disappeared! Triumphant! The lad is reborn! The boy is a man!

“It's alright. Everything will be alright,” the Swami assures the infant human before him, as he comforts him, holds him close, and guides him through this precarious moment as he guides this newfound, wayward soul towards the light -- and the life beyond.

“So will that be cash, check, or charge?” the Swami inquires with hopeful expectation as the moment fades into the past. (God may work in mysterious ways, but as Gra’gl is my witness, he can’t seem to get enough of that green stuff.)

(See, I can lay it down showing the Swami in a good light.)
(And (as I’ve said countless times before) just like everything else in this dream, the Swami Yamma doesn’t exist external to this disc, and if you’d like to replace him with any other guru, leader, or institution (real or fake), feel free. They’re all pretty much the same (((spoke the heathenish, blasphemous, nonbeliever))).)

“You’re talented,” the Swami concedes of Artie and/or Bones depending on which layer you choose to see.

“Thanks,” Artie/Bones replies, but there is no sense spending any breath returning the compliment.

“I apologize for his behavior,” Melissa says once again. For whatever reason she continues to feel the need to show her support for the Swami.

“No, no need,” Swami assures her. “Those who cannot see clearly are often threatened by me.”

“I would have thought it was the other way around,” Artie interjects.

The Swami would be happy to continue the exchange. He is a talented speaker, after all, and his skill at debate is superceded only by his ability to ignore the truth. (The two being, to some extent, related.) But further commentary by the Swami is no longer required. Believe it or not, this section is not actually about the Swami Yamma, at all.

Bones (and he is all Bones now) turns towards G’narsh. They might as well be alone. The party and other conversations continue on around them, but the voices of the others are blurred, secondary, and insubstantial. They have faded into the distance -- into the background.

In short, we are at the moment of Truth.

Without delay, Bones turns towards G'narsh and asks flat out, and/or point blank, "Is the Swami Yamma evil?"

"I don't know," G'narsh replies evenly.

It is a good -- truthful -- answer, but Bones is not satisfied. "Is he good or bad -- helpful or unhelpful?"

"How would I know?" G'narsh replies once again as he skillfully parries the question with an excellent question of his own (Who knew G'narsh would be such a skilled diplomat himself?)

"Nadia," Bones calls out bringing the slutty pixie fairy back into the picture. "Give G'narsh some information so that he may make an informed decision."

"There's not much to go on," she points out.

Fair enough. There is not. The Swarmi's existence is very limited after all, but to do a search (on the Server) about a real live Swami Yamma (or whoever, or whatever) is easy enough. Everybody (and/or anybody) has a presence there. If a guru wishes to sell discs, seminars, weekend retreats, and/or spiritual guidance, you will find that he/she/it has a significant presence on the Server, so simply look at whatever they have put out there and then (to get an objective opinion) look at whatever his/her/its detractors have put out there as well. Qualify your search with the guru's name followed by labels and qualifiers such as -- Sch@lting sucks, Fr@cking con-artist, lawsuit, rip off, debunk, or hoax -- and you will pull up an opposing point of view.

Nadia takes the preceding as guidance and in mere moments puts together two columns of information, which hang in the air before G'narsh (as if he were Justice himself (or it is herself?) and the information on Swami Yamma was the case he must weigh -- the soul he must measure).

G'narsh takes a moment to mull the information over as the data becomes integrated into his knowledge base.

"Well," Bones asks impatiently, "is this joker evil or not?"

G'narsh might as well be a statesman running for political office. His answer is well thought out, while at the same time, it is completely evasive. It both answers the question and doesn't. "I like some of his ideas. I can see how they might be helpful... but I wouldn't want to get involved with him. Some of it seems like a waste of money."

I couldn't have said it better myself (as a generalize response to nearly any religious group or institution).

(We still need to bring Lulu (along with the blonde, the brunette, and the redhead, as well as the dream parade) into the party (and have G'narsh and Bones have a conversation about the UBI), but I think this is where we will call it a day. I don't know about you, but the sequence seemed more focused to me than yesterday.)

(I should also state that Swami is not a miss-call. I hate the Sch©lting bastard. No doubt this is based (in no small part) on my jealousy and envy at his success, but then if he wasn't successful he wouldn't be part of my consciousness, which really isn't much of an excuse, but if he's as all fired clever as he claims, he should have known that my awareness of him and my hatred of him would go hand in hand... so when you look at it that way, in the end it is sort of his fault.)

Who Killed Swami Yamma?

(Another way to handle up in the air -- open-ended -- sequences is to throw out a lot of vignettes and let the compiler resolve everything as it will. They do this sort of thing in those murder mystery party discs all the time. It can be a useful technique when the exact order of events isn't so important, just as long as everything gets in there somewhere -- eventually.)

(But good luck doing an entire stand alone disc that way. It gets too confusing. There's something to be said for continuity, after all.)

(((Which is to say, the following sequence jumps and starts like a... like a... like a mismatched metaphor that makes absolutely no sense. It's not total deng (i.e. Sch©lte), but it will probably flow a lot smoother if you pause and take a break -- and/or a breath -- at every switch point. Trust me on this. Just pause... because if you don't, your mind is going pull out -- start reeling -- and force you to slow down regardless.)))

(That all aside, I'm hoping to use this sequence to clear up my extraneous notes and unutilized ideas (((once again))). I had been thinking about creating a -- Bonus Material -- sequence of fake bloopers and unused cuts as a sort of retrograde, high concept bit of fun, but the material will probably work better here instead -- just as it is.)

Pretty much anything can happen between a sequence break-- I mean, anything. Proxies can drop out, plot lines can change, and the whole nature of reality has been known to shift.

Often this happens because there is a great deal of time between sequences for a dreamer -- usually a day -- but often up to a week or more if the dreamer has another job and only does this on a part time basis (or as a hobby).

For instance, in our case, in between sequences somebody has decided to up and kill the Swami Yamma. It's a bloody shame and I think I speak for everyone when I say that he will be sorely missed.

Perhaps we should spend a moment in silence to honor his passing.

“YOU KILLED SWAMI YAMMA!” Melissa shrieks.

(I guess that means that whole moment of silence thing isn't going to happen. Oh, well.)

“What?” Bones replies as he tries to look innocent.

Melissa points to the dead New Age do-gooder lying on the floor. He's face down in a pool of his own blood and a thigh bone is sort of jutting out of his back. Death by femur, it's no way to go. They leave splinters, you know; and if the initial stab wound

doesn't kill you, there's that whole bone-marrow incompatibility, organ rejection issue thing to contend with.

"I can't believe you killed Swami Yamma," Melissa says again.

It seems apparent that she will continue down this line of questioning until her unfounded accusations have been answered, so Bones lays her fears to rest by stating, "I didn't kill him."

As the resident physical embodiment of evil, you would think that Melissa would take Bones' word on the matter and let it drop, but you know how girls get when their guest of honor has been brutally stabbed in the back with a thighbone, so it should be no surprise that she won't let it go and stays focused on the issue at hand -- i.e. the murder of Swami.

"He's got a bone sticking out of his back," Melissa points out. (See what I mean? She's focusing on the negative, while what she should be doing is focusing on the positive -- the fact that Swami is now gone -- and as such, the real partying can begin.)

Anyhow, for whatever reason, Bones feels the need to continue to defend himself (and/or his honor). You know how these things get blown out of proportion if you don't nip them in the bud, so in response to Melissa latest observation he replies, "Lots of folks have bones." And then, since that's probably not the best explanation in the world and because the best defense is a good offense, Bones continues, "This is discrimination you know. Just because I'm a skeleton and he's been killed by a bone, everyone thinks that I did it. It's not fair." At which point Bones tries to look oppressed and put upon (an endeavor which is doomed to failure unless one is particularly gullible).

"You're covered in blood," Melissa observes as she starts to build her case against Bones. (It's all circumstantial evidence however, and it would never hold up in court -- not if the jurors wanted to live anyhow. But really, it would never go to trial, because there is no case. Bones is not actually covered in blood.)

“It’s catsup. I’ve been eating those avocados and catsup (((bacon-wrapped?))) munchies that you put out.” (They’re better than they sound.)

As he says this, Bones points to his ribs where a great big pile of catsup covered avocados can be seen spilling out of his rib cage, over his pelvic bones, and about him onto the chair. Bones takes another hors d’oeuvre off the plate, which Lane is holding for him, and demonstrates how the food falls through his chest cavity as he eats. “See? Besides, Lane has been sitting here the entire time. There’s no way I could get up, sneak behind the Swami, stab him in the back with a femur, and then sit back down without her noticing.”

“You were just hugging the Swami in the last sequence,” Melissa insists.

“No I wasn’t,” Bones begs to differ.

“Yes, you were.”

“Was not.”

“Were too!”

“Was not!”

“Were too!”

This could obviously go on forever. I don’t know about you, but the whole scene takes me back -- it’s a bit of nostalgia for me. Reminds me of those carefree days of childhood youth and the endless fights I used to have with my sister. (Ah, the good old days.)

Anyhow, rather than letting the scene go down this road any further, Lane decides it is time to step up and defend her man and/or skeletal warlord. “He was here the entire time. The last sequence was just an overlay. He never left the chair.” And I don’t know about you, but I’m not about to call Lane a liar. Have I ever mentioned how strong she is?

(This then would be the set-up for a rousing game of “Who Killed the Swami Yamma?” It’s one of those murder mystery, cocktail party games where you have to figure out who killed so

and such (in this case the Swami Yamma) from the limited clues available. Each person is given a role to play and a bit of information and then you go around and talk to all the other folks at the party as you have fun -- i.e. hit on girls -- and gather clues.)

(I'd love to do something like that here. Put together a puzzle, a bit of a brain teaser, and then let you try and figure it all out. Maybe I could put the answer in with the other -- Bonus Material -- or run a contest or something... Hey! Now that's a great idea! I could run a contest and then I wouldn't even have to solve the stupid thing (or have the clues make any sense, whatsoever). I'd just say that whoever sent in the best answer would win. No one would ever have to know that I never had any specific answer in mind.)

(But, no. Sadly, putting something like that together (i.e. something clever, witty, or brilliant) is not in my skill set. Besides, we all know Bones did it.)

“OK. Fine. I killed him,” Bones admits. He can't take the pressure of his sister's glaring stare any longer.

“Why are you always doing this to me? Why do you insist on destroying my parties?” Melissa wails, but she is drowned out by the calm reasonable voice of Lane. “There's no way Bones could have killed him. I was sitting here the entire time and like he said, the blood is really just catsup.”

“What are you saying?” Melissa asks -- unsure of where this is going.

“I killed the Swarmi,” Lane admits. “It was supposed to be a surprise for you, honey,” she says while caressing Bones' avocado and catsup smeared mandible -- i.e. his jawbone. She wipes off a dab of the delightful combination, and licks it off of her fingers suggestively before returning her attention to Melissa. “I know right where he keeps his,” (((spare thigh))), “bone.” I've got a certain familiarity with it, “And when the Swarmi was passing by, I just sort of reached out and stabbed him with it,” (twenty or thirty times when no one was looking). “Surprise!” she says to Bones as

she turns to kiss him. “Happy birthday,” or congrats on almost making it to the finals, or whatever.

“Oh, No!” Nadia jumps in. “You two where in that chair the entire time making with the kisses and sucking face. Besides, what’s your motivation? You don’t really have one, but me... I followed the Sch©lting bastard into the bathroom, and he stood me up! Said some Fr@cking Sch©lte about celibacy!” She stands tall and indignant as she reports this injustice, and when you keep in mind that she is hovering about and flying at the same time, this is no mean feat. “Nobody stands me up!” she repeats as she pauses to pose (and show off her body). “This is prime real estate. He snubbed me and he paid the price. Case closed.”

“Buts where’dy you’d getted da boney froms?” an enterprising cobalt asks.

Nadia snaps her fingers and as the fairy dust settles, it can be seen that a thighbone of impressive proportions has appeared in her hands. She lands on the back of the Swami, and puts her whole body into it as she stabs the celibate freak once more.

“Ouch!”

“You’s supposeers to be dead’rs meester,” a Charlie informs the Swarmi.

“We’d hadda da same problemers wit da moustouchio elf’ers,” another cobalt observes.

“That doesn’t really show anything,” an unnamed guest points out. It’s probably Melissa’s boss, but you never can tell. “We’re in an Egyptian crypt... a pyramid... whatever. This place is crawling with bones,” the unnamed man continues as he walks over to a niche in the wall where a mummy (a random decoration and bit of ambiance) is hanging out. Without preamble the man reaches through the gauze bandages and rips out the mummy’s femur.

“Ouch! Geez fella.”

“Sorry! I thought you were just for show,” the man says as he hands the bone back to the mummy.

“And this helps me how?” the mummy asks, but the district manager waives him off. “The place is crawling with bones. Besides Nadia couldn’t have possibly killed the Swarmi.”

“I could too,” Nadia insists.

“Here me out,” the mans says as he holds up his hand once again. “You were... um, ahem... freshening up in preparation for a little walk we were about to take out in the moonlight when I took it upon myself to defend your honor and killed that Sch©lting Swarmi.”

“My hero,” Nadia says dreamily as she flits over to the man and falls into his waiting arms. “Be still my beating heart.”

(And so we have our game. Let’s see what we can make of it.)

“I can’t believe you would do this to my guest,” Melissa accuses Artie/Bones.

“It’s just random. You saw the draw.”

“You rigged it.”

Bones shrugs as he reaches for the last cookie. Don’t even ask me why there is only one again. Apparently Melissa has the answer though. “If you’re going to be like that, you don’t get any more snacks,” she explains before grabbing the last cookie and walking away.

“I’m sorry about this,” Melissa says apologetically to the Swami as she kneels down beside him.

“It’s OK,” he assures her. “It’s just a game... and fair’s fair.”

“He rigged the draw.”

The Swami Yamma sits up. “He has a lot of anger... jealousy. It might be healthy to let him work it out.”

Melissa rolls her eyes, as if to say, whatever.

“Now don’t you have something to do?”

“What?” Melissa asks.

“The game,” Swami coaches her. “Why would you kill me?”

“Oh, that’s easy,” she says as she grabs one of the bones off of the coffee table and lifts the Swami off the ground with the blow as she swings it up, under his ribs, and into his guts. “Two Sch©lting years! Two Sch©lting years! And you never once made a pass at me, you bastard! Aren’t I pretty enough?”

“But I’m celibate,” he protests meekly.

“Yeah, I bet you say that to all the girls,” she grumbles in disgust as she leaves (in a huff) to let him die alone (and quite possibly in peace).

(And just in case you didn’t notice it, that was a sexually specific jab -- and/or reference.)

(Right about here is where I took a three day vacation from working on the dream, so if it seems to jump a little that’s why.)

((I probably should have put a section break here, but I didn’t. Just breathe deep, and remember to take it slow. Think of it as a carnival ride of sorts -- where part of the fun is how much the whole thing shakes and shimmies. And don’t worry, the focus does comes back again before too long.)))

“We should start with UBI,” Bones says as he sips on a glass of -- blood -- red wine. “Sure you don’t want some of this? Good stuff.”

“No thanks,” G’narsh assures him. “I don’t drink.”

“Not ever? Don’t you get thirsty?” (And that’s quality humor there, folks.)

G’narsh would like to leave. Certainly he would like to get off the couch and cross the room, look out over the far side of the pyramid, mingle with the guests, or just leave the party completely. This isn’t really his scene (his cup of tea), and he doesn’t know why he is here, but he can’t leave. Bones has cast a dweomer on him -- immobilizing his lower body -- and so G’narsh is stuck talking to the bore of the party as an endless string of fans parade

by. (Don't ask me. It doesn't really make a lot of sense, but then when you put it in the context of the rest of the dream, it does sort of make sense... which doesn't say much for the overall quality of the dream, but at least there's a consistency.)

"I really liked you in the Raid on Elvin Home sequence," a random fan gushes as he walks up, grabs a souvenir bone from out of the Swarmi's back (which just so happens to make a sickening sort of sucking sound as it comes out), and smiles as G'narsh signs his copy of the disc jacket to this very dream -- G'narsh: The Troll, The Myth, The Legend.

"What's going on?" G'narsh ask between fans.

"They look up to you. They adore you. They're your fans. It means everything to them just to spend a moment in your presence. Smearing your illegible scrawl of a signature onto something they own makes their whole life complete. They'd do anything you ask, you know?" Bones says trying to tempt G'narsh with the offer of unlimited power, but what do you want? He's a good guy and tosses it away without even seeing it for what it is -- without even seeing how much Good he could do with that much Evil -- and/or power.

"They shouldn't," is all he says, and quite frankly it's a little unclear to me what part of Artie/Bones' spiel G'narsh is responding to.

"But you're a hero," Bones continues (pressing forward and ever gloriously onward).

"You should be your own hero," G'narsh remarks simply.

"You're my hero," an eager young fan says as he unfurls a poster. "Could you make it out to Max?" a young boy -- who looks amazingly like Tommy Two Tone -- asks hopefully as G'narsh signs his name.

"Sure," G'narsh agrees.

"I got my thousandth kill last month," the boy continues eagerly. "You're my favorite skin... How many kills do you recon you have G'narsh?" ((((You know, all together, when you include everyone who ever has or ever will ride you as an avatar?))))

“Too many,” and then fading the young boy out along with the rest of the dream parade (for we will give G’narsh this ability if he so desires), G’narsh asks Bones, “Why are we doing this?”

“Fame, fortune, babes,” and then after looking down at the form of the Swarmi, Bones ads, “or boys.” I don’t want to seem... um, ahem... critical, or close minded.

But G’narsh doesn’t have time for this sort of nonsense in his life, and he doesn’t figure he ever will. “What do you want out of me?” he asks point blank hoping to be done with whatever it is quickly, so he can leave.

Bones has Lane toss G’narsh a thigh bone from the table as he indicates the Swarmi, “Add yours to the rest.”

“No.”

“You’re a stubborn one,” Bones notes with mock disappointment. Like the good guy ever succumbs so easily, but not to fear, it is not usually the trials, which one recognizes as trials (tribulations and/or temptations), that are the undoing of the average do-gooder.

Of course, rather than letting Bones indulge in another one of his (all too frequent) flights of fancy, G’narsh repeats his earlier inquiry and attempts to keep the conversation on track, “Why am I here?”

That’s a good question.

Why indeed...

Let’s start over. Like my binders rant, the wind has sort of gone out of my sails for UBI rant as well, but we will still hint at it. You can use the basis of what I’ll provide as an expansion point, or, if it is more to your liking, you can simply take it as confirmation that there is not much to the argument in the first place.

“You see those gold coins?” Bones asks of G’narsh. The dream parade is back and approximately one in four have gold coins on the side of their skulls -- i.e. embedded pick ups. (Of course, this raw number leaves out an important trend, only 1 in 5

parents have implants versus 1 in 3 for the next generation. And if you can't see where that trend is headed, I'm sure any sort of commentary would be lost on you as well; I do not feel the need to endlessly hammer the point home to an audience that isn't all there.)

Anyhow, back to the parade, of the 1 in 4 wearing permanent pickups, a full half of these are bindered in some way. Of course, even at 50%, this is a deceivingly low number. It is likely much higher, and I'm guessing that I'm in a mood for stats, because if you look at the raw numbers on crime rates, you'll find that there is a dramatic difference in the number and severity of crimes committed by those using traditional rigs from those who have implants (even after you adjust the numbers and take into account those who are bindered -- and all the other causative factors like socio-economic status, education, and environment). This is not a secret and is commonly put forth in a positive way. In fact, it is often touted as being one of the (many) beneficial side effects of getting an implant (for your children), but all it really shows is that implants curtail a person's freedom -- i.e. freewill -- one way or another.

"The gold coins," Bones continues (as he repeats himself), "are mind locks. They're like built in crystal balls. They are clairvoyant and/or clairaudient devices that can provide the wearer with all the knowledge known to man in a fraction of a second. The entire world of knowledge not merely at your fingers, but in your head -- forever on call, and at will."

"Sounds handy," G'narsh observes diplomatically as he shakes a stranger's hand and signs another autograph.

"They are, to be sure," Bones agrees, "but they have a dark side."

"That doesn't surprise me," G'narsh responds. "Is that your doing?"

Bones only smiles. "Believe what you will."

(You may wish to link this conversation with the next conversation that Bones and G'narsh will have, but I'm going to break it up a little.)

We can play with time, space, and causality after all and I had had -- past tense -- the need to tie the dream parade into this sequence once again. For the most part that has been done, so let's take a moment to wave to the revelers far below who even now cluster about at the base of the pyramid. Enjoy, if you will, the spectacle of the crowd gathering by bonfires to sing, dance, and to do whatever else it is that merrymakers did in -- Ancient Egypt. And then, silently watch on as barges full of bindered fools get shipped to the rock quarries -- happy smiles on their faces from task masters who beguile them with pretty pictures. It is so much kinder and gentler than a whip. Don't you think? And then just as quickly as the parade was brought to our mind, we will let it fade into the background, as it is time to move on.

(((Pause.)))

(((Not much else to say here except that a pause at this juncture enriches the flow. Who knows, perhaps it is a recognition of how weak of the forgoing section really is. But whatever the case, once we have paused, it will be time to move on.)))

So without ado...

I think that's the blonde, the brunette, and the redhead coming through the door right now. They heard the noise from the party, saw the feed, or simply followed some of the late arriving guests. I suppose they could also be neighbors... or maybe they are part of the crew.

"Stef'fan is soo cute," the blonde starts. Obviously they are of the intelligencia.

"Tell me about it," the brunette agrees in a post modern, nihilistic way that harkens to mind echoes of distant tribal and animalistic influences.

“What happened to him?” the redhead asks full of scientific curiosity, eager to solve this vexing dilemma, this pressing problem that faces all of humanity.

“I don’t know,” the blonde admits. There is only so much one can do with knowledge, after all.

“Did you see him on that Troll Hunter series?” the artistic brunette asks as she deftly maneuvers to keep the conversation on track.

“He is soo cute!” (I know!)

“Tell me about it.” (He is soo cute!)

We need not repeat the conversation any further. I think you can reconstruct it for yourself. Needless to say, Stef’fan is quite the hunk, and fortunately for this trio of girls, he goes for the smart ones.

(This then would be a great place to pause for a second and pull up an image of Stef’fan. Isn’t he dreamy? Or, if that isn’t clear, I had it in my notes to revisit Stef’fan’s skin, and now I don’t -- i.e. I am crossing that reminder off of my list.)

(Also, if this (all of this) should still feel a bit staccato (and/or jumpy), it’s because we are still doing mini-vignettes in honor of our Who Killed Swarmi? game (and/or to tie off loose ends).)

With that in mind, Lulu comes next in the line up. She arrives in a long flowing red sequined dress with a black tipped white ostrich plume boa, and a well stocked assortment of diamond necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and rings. To offset this, and to show she is a lady of refined tastes, she holds a jet black (mint flavored) replica of a cigarette holder in one (white gloved) hand.

“Fabulous party darling, fabulous,” she says be way of greeting as she allows Melissa to kiss her on the cheek. “So where is this man you wanted me to meet?”

(Please disregard any lack of continuity in this idea. For the moment Melissa and Lulu are as old friends... or maybe Lulu is one of those crazy relations that you’re always trying to pretend

that you don't really know, but who somehow always seem to know when you are having a party, and thus are unwilling to make a big scene (which is basically what it would take) to force them to leave.)

Whatever the case, Melissa indicates the Swami Yamma. He lies head down in a pool of his own blood (red wine?), and he has so many bones sticking out of his back, he looks like a porcupine.

"Oh," Lulu remarks as she raises her nose. "This is one of those parties." So pedestrian. So garishly predictable.

With exaggerated movements, the sexy... Hey! It's a matter of taste. The sexy old crone makes her way over to the prostrated form of Swami Yamma and kneels down beside him. "I was supposed to be your date," she whispers seductively into his ear as she takes another of the bones and adds it to the rest. "Pity you died. We hadn't even gotten married yet. He would have been the fifth," she remarks as she turns towards G'narsh, and then indicating her diamond necklace, "Irwin got me these. Sweet man. Pity about his heart." And with that, Lulu is finished, her scene complete.

Well, maybe not just yet.

As she stands, guided by magic or some arcane force of stupendous, unbelievable, serendipitous coincidence, the sharp -- dagger like -- points of Lulu's spiked stiletto heels find the Swami's hand.

"Ouch! Jesus! For the love of Gra'gl!" he swears as he squeezes his hand to slow the bleeding."

"Sorry darling," Lulu says ever so dismissively, "but if you're going to lie on the floor it's to be expected," and then Lulu departs looking for man meat and/or a patron who can afford to provide her with the lifestyle to which she has become accustomed (in the last 18 hours or so).

(My how money does change a person.)

It is apparent that the Charlies have been viewing the pyramid from a slightly different angle than I have, for they are taking turns sliding down the sloping glass and stainless steel façade of the building's exterior.

"Dat funners!" a cobalts remarks gleefully to his compatriot as they race back up the spine of the pyramid.

"Ohs, waiters up," the second one says as he suddenly notices Bones has turned his attention towards them. "Charlie supposer'd to sayer someting here's."

"What's?"

"Charlie forgettiees."

"Dat no goods," his friend remarks.

"Et da regenerative blooders tingy," another suggests as he runs by on his way back up the slippery side of the building.

"Yeah'd dat et."

"What et?"

"Dat he'd hab'rd da regenerativey bloody. Charlie tink der more but..." He shrugs.

"Dat probably be'rd eets," the other agrees before all of them quickly forget the entire exchange.

After all, they have more important matters on their mind. To wit, the moment the troop gets to the top they look around quickly, and then as a mass, they go barreling down the slippery slope.

"Whee!"

"Hot doggeries!"

"Geronemisimo!"

"Laster ones down be da rotteners egg," and so on and so forth.

I think the point they are getting at is: way back at the beginning, it was indicated that the nature of G'narsh's blood (Son of Gra'gl that he is) would be somewhat important to the structure of the dream and what this meant exactly would be explained in greater detail at some later point. Well, that's not going to happen. The dream has taken a different turn, and that little tidbit of information is no longer important. Suffice to say that if the

smallest part of G'narsh survives -- like just a fleck of skin that he shed two years ago -- then his whole body will regenerate and reform from this errant scrap of flesh (but not his mind, memories, or mental state). I don't think any of this will have the slightest effect on our dream, and so we will not delve into it any deeper, but it might be a crucial aspect of the mythos (as well as for those playing along with a skimmer), so I felt the need to include a little guidance somewhere on the disc, and this is the spot.

(So once again, case closed. End of thread.)
(On to bigger and better things.)

"Are you going to be able to help me with Stef'fan?" G'narsh asks Melissa when she comes around again with another plate of cookies.

"I'm sorry. What?"

"I think what G'narsh wants to know is, since you're a lawyer and all, are you going to be able to help him get Stef'fan out of jail -- out of the prison farm," Bones' explains as he takes the plate of cookies away from his sister and sets it on his lap.

"Those were for everyone," Melissa points out.

"I'll share," Bones assures her, but as he's a pretty messy eater, it is soon fairly obvious that no one in their right mind would want to share with him. (I'll recap. When Bones eats, food falls out of his chest, so in no time the plate in his lap is covered with crumbs, or if you want something more graphic, think colostomy bag spillover.)

Apparently going with the later descriptor, Melissa observes, "You're a pig."

"I'm a skeletal warlord," Bones corrects. "More importantly, you haven't answered G'narsh's question."

"What question was that?" Melissa asks as she grows ever more weary of this game.

"Can you help me with Stef'fan?" G'narsh explains patiently again without the slightest hint of annoyance.

“Who is Stephen?” asks Melissa who, on the other hand, is quite a bit annoyed at this point.

“He’s an elf who got arrested for carrying a plasma rifle into a tube station,” Bones explains as he recaps Stef’fan’s adventures for the past 30 odd clicks and brings Melissa up to speed. Bones would probably be happy to go into more detail (and in fact will likely do just that next sequence (or maybe not)), but the simple fact is, Melissa stopped listening after she heard the word ‘elf.’ (Poor misunderstood creatures of the wood that they are.)

“No,” is Melissa’s simple response as she disappears in a huff (once again). No doubt to get more of those yummy cookies.

And speaking of yummy...

“Can I have one of those cookies,” Swami asks from where he lies bleeding (or whatever it is that Swami’s do) on the floor.

“No,” Bones informs him as he holds the plate of cookies out of the Swami’s reach like a spoiled child.

“I thought you were going to share?” the Swami whines hungrily, which is kind of odd, because when you loose that much blood, you usually get thirsty, not hungry. I guess it just goes to show how different we all are -- each one of us a unique Child of God, and all that.

Anyhow, before we cut away, it’s only right and fitting that Bones explains why he isn’t going to share. “I lied,” he says simply, and since that pretty much settles that, we can move on.

Speaking of which, G’narsh has had enough, so he starts to rise. But before he can stand Bones raises his hand and renews his paralization spell instructing G’narsh to “Stop! Before you get up, I’ve got one final question for you.”

“Fine,” G’narsh accents as he acknowledges the futility of resisting.

“How do you tell Good from Evil?”

“It’s complicated.”

Bones shrugs. “So make it easy.” (Or hard. I’ve got time. No contest deadlines. No job. Nowhere to go. No real agenda in

life, so really the longer you take to explain this little mystery to me, the less time I have to kill (and/or fill up) with other meaningless crap once you're done. Of course, Bones doesn't really say all this. He's not quite as wordy as I tend to be.)

It is G'narsh's turn to shrug as he thinks the matter over "I guess in any moment, for any decision, there is always a choice. Do this, or do that. One choice is better than the other."

"Like hogging a plate of cookies for yourself?" Bones asks. "That's got to be better than sharing."

"That's one choice," one option, and, "you can make that decision," G'narsh agrees.

"So what you're saying is, basically I'm a good guy?"

"No," G'narsh corrects. "What I'm saying is, if you spend your life thinking about your decisions and, if at all times and, "in all matters strive to make better and better decisions," and, "if you are mindful, and that," (i.e. being good), "is your goal, you will head off towards an end point that," for lack of a better name, "we'll call good."

"Sounds time consuming," (not to mention complicated) Bones observes.

However, G'narsh has found that the binds which tie him to the sofa have disappeared and so he rises to go.

As he departs, Bones calls after him, "One thing you might want to keep in mind is that those gold coins prevent their wearers from deciding for themselves what the proper course of action in any situation is. Somebody else makes that choice for them."

(It is something to think about, and although) G'narsh hears, he does not respond ((((because, quite frankly, that's not his problem)))).

(Also, this might be a good point to interject that on the continuum from Absolute Good to Absolute Evil, (((I believe))) most folks fall somewhere around middling-to-neither. That is to say, if Evil was negative infinity and Good was positive infinity,

most folks are at zero. They are not Good. They are not Evil. And they are not trying overly hard to reach either end point.)

(What they are trying to do (for the most part) is to simply get more cookies for themselves, and to call Bones evil merely because he is particularly adept at this activity seems sort of short sighted (and a little like sour grapes).)

(Anyway, in these cocktail party mysteries (remember we're still in a -- Who Killed Swami Yamma? -- subsequence) along with giving everyone a role and a bit of privileged information that only they know, the host often scatters clues about the room so that everyone is forced to mingle and can't just sit in the most comfortable chair all night simple because they arrived first.)

(In all honesty, the following clues don't have much to do with the Swami. Rather, they are bits and pieces I wanted to put in the dream, but never found a better place for them.)

Crumpled up on the coffee table is a note which reads:
My Dreams Belong to Me.

On the wall next to the ambience control in the kitchen is another that says:

Artie is a Professional Dream Smuggler.
No dream is too small. No fee is too large.

On the door to Melissa's room a note says:

UBI will suck your brain until you have nothing left to call your own.

Under her pillow (and don't ask me how I expect anyone to find this one -- snicker, snicker) is a note which reads:

If you have UBI, it's possible there will be a bug in the mainframe and someday you'll wake up in a different body -- no doubt the body of an eighty year old with terminal cancer (or a bum in the park).

(((Really, I should just edit this one out. It belongs in another dream, but it does make a nice segue to the next comment.)))

(Hopefully it is clear that most of these notes are pure randomness and have little (to nothing) to do with our current dream, but I think I already said that.)

(Anyhow, carrying on...)

In the closet craftily hidden in a pair of high heeled shoes is a note which reads:

Man is a two faced, double headed creature. He lies to himself, and then he lies to the world.

In between the couch cushions there is a note that says:

Man is not good, nor is man evil. Man simply is.

On the kitchen table where the food buffet is, tucked in with the pretzels is a short little ditty of a note which reads:

The key to happiness is accepting evil, death, and desire for the blessings that they are.

In the basket of bones on the table, which are waiting to be plunged into the Swami Yamma's back, is a note that says:

Dead proxies tell no lies.

Out on the balcony, taped to the top of the safety railing is a delightfully crisp little note that reads:

The Midnight Society is more than is seems and less than it appears.

And lastly (or almost lastly) is a note that can be found taped over Melissa's doorbell on the outside of her apartment which reads:

If you ever found your way into Heaven, would you ever leave? Answer the door? Open the mail? Or even pick up the phone?

When you stop to think about it, maybe that God fella knows what he is doing after all.

“Oh’d dis anodder of does cluers,” Charlie says as he picks up a note that he has found lying crumpled up on the floor.

“What it say?”

“What et say?” the other cobalts ask as they all cluster around.

“G’narsh’e go’ing to leaver da parties on he’s owns,” the Charlie says as he reads from the note.

“Dat no good.”

“Wat you’d mean dat no good? Et Schultering suckers.”

“You’d can’t say schooltering?” another cobalt corrects him.

“Why’d not?” Charlie asks.

“Et somebody’d else’rs line.”

“We’d need our own’d liner den,” a wise cobalt surmises.

“Meester sayees how’d he’d always wantered anoder wordies for da heck...”

“Yeah’d!”

“How about hulkered?”

“Et needy one’d of does symbolerz tingies.”

“We’s users da money’d one.”

“Why’d?”

“Cause we’d greener’d.”

“So H\$lkered?”

“Eet too longey.”

“Howsy abouters H\$lk?”

“Not angry enough,” another one of the (wiser) cobalts suggests.

“How about H\$lrk!”

“Oh’d dat goods.”

“You scrunchy you’rd facey up goods when you’d sayee dat.”

“H\$rlk?”

Nodding another agrees. “H\$rlk!” it is.

“We go’d see dat H\$rlkering meester and geeve him a piecy of’d our’d minds.”

“But not too biggie of da piece,” another one of the wiser Charlies suggests.

“We’d sees.”

(When you get right down to it, there’s not as many clues as I’d thought there would be, but I think you get the idea. The important thing is, Swami Yamma is dead. Oh, and if I think of anything else that doesn’t fit into the dream elsewhere, at the end of it all I can just come back here and insert the concept into this section as a short blurb.)

(((I mean, it’s not like the section flows in the first place. What’s one more jarring disconnect jumbled in there with all the rest?)))

But now, without warning, we will jump ahead -- sideways.

The party is over. It was a rousing success, or at least Bones seemed to enjoy it and Melissa didn’t get fired. I think the party might have actually had something to do with a promotion she may have gotten, but whatever the case, I’m calling the party a success.

And now that it’s over, being a polite guest, Bones is helping with the clean up, and that means getting rid of the Swami Yamma.

“I thought you were going to have G’narsh kill the Swarmi?” Lane asks as she watches Bones heave the Swarmi’s corpse over the side of the pyramid. As the Swami falls to the ground -- in a delightful, slow motion end-over-end cartwheel complete with a sickening thump here and a ghastly thud there -- the pyramid fades away and is replaced by Melissa’s penthouse apartment in the sky.

Artie shrugs (in response to Lane’s question), and casually informs her, “G’narsh already left,”

“He did?”

“Yep.” Sure enough. Just like the note said, he left -- alone.

“Dat wat we’d wants to talkees to you about,” the Charlies say as they huddle around the Meester and press in close.

“Dis all be’s easier,” another continues, but before he gets very far he is cut off by yet another cobalt who reminds him with a nudge, “Pst, H\$rlk.”

“Oh’d yeah.”

“Dis be H\$rlking easier if’d we’d all’d stickies together,” a fourth cobalt says jumping in, but he also doesn’t get very far before yet another cobalt steps over his lines as well, “Why’d you’d sendies da G’narsh’e away?”

“I’m sure you’ll be able to catch up with him. How far ahead could he have gotten?” Bones replies reassuringly, but before the cobalts can think too hard on this and come up with an answer (((or realize that his comments aren’t actually very reassuring))), Bones commands the lot of them, “Lane, go with the Charlies, and help them find G’narsh.”

“You’d helpee Charlie finds da G’narsh’e?” a cobalt asks hopefully.

“Sure,” Lane agrees and after a final peck on the cheek for Bones and a, “Thanks for the hospitality,” to Melissa, the cobalts and Lane are gone.

(Notice how fast I’m wrapping this up? Nothing but logistics here.)

With that (almost final) bit of housekeeping done, it is now time for Nadia to leave us and rejoin G’narsh as well.

“The Charlies and Lane are going to be awhile,” Bones informs her. They are taking the long route and won’t catch up with G’narsh until he is at the pizza place once again. In the meantime, “I need you to help G’narsh get Stef’fan out of jail. Change reality any way that you see fit,” Bones instructs her

before encasing Nadia in a purple shower of sparks that magically whisk her away to G'narsh's side.

"You keep strange company," Melissa notes when they are finally alone... or almost alone.

"Which toothbrush is mine?" Lulu asks as she comes out of the bathroom. It is clear that she has already chosen the pink one.

"You're using my toothbrush?" Melissa asks with alarm -- disgust, and revulsion.

"Oh, right," Artie says as he jumps in. "You remember Auntie Lulu, don't you Melissa?" (And although this transition might not be very clear, just wait a moment, let the randomness fall away and it will all make perfect sense in a time shift, dream twist -- cohesion and continuity is unimportant and immaterial -- type way.)

But without missing a beat, Lulu immediately responds, "I don't want to be related to the likes of you." (Obviously, the desires of the dreamer can be H\$rlkled -- and I'll be honest I don't know how I feel about this latest word, but once again Lulu is on a roll and doesn't care.) "One night and then I'm on my way," she declares. "You kids can sleep out here. I get the bed."

"You're not sleeping in my bed," Melissa insists, but Lulu ignores her as she walks into the bedroom, tosses Poopsie out, and locks the door. (I mean, if Lulu is going to ignore me, ignoring Melissa as well only seems fair.)

Melissa moves to do something (kick Lulu out of her room perhaps), but before she takes two steps she turns to regard Artie and asks, "There's nothing I can do about that is there?"

"No," he informs her.

"But she'll be gone come morning?"

"I have no idea." (You would think Artie would know, but he doesn't. This is the end of the line for Lulu. We will let her resolve her own existence from here on out (without our help or assistance). Whether that means she is staying or going is completely up to Lulu.)

“How about you?” Melissa asks of Artie. “Will you be here in the morning?”

“You know how it goes,” Artie responds noncommittally. “Do you want the couch or the floor?”

“It’s my apartment. I get the couch.”

It doesn’t take either of them long to settle down for the night, but before the sequence is over and he disappears, Melissa has one final question for Artie, “Why do you always say that I don’t exist?”

“Because you once told me,” (threatened me with bodily violence actually), “that if I ever put you into one of my stupid dreams, you’d kill me.”

“Oh,” Melissa replies as if the forgoing has made some sort of sense.

And it is here that I think we will leave them -- as a brace of young handsome warrior/slaves appear over Melissa’s form and proceed to fan her body and attend to her every desire as she slips off into the world of dreams, while Artie (being a bit more perverted) has decided that becoming entombed (as per a mummy) is the proper course for the evening’s entertainment to take.

(Because you cannot truly live until you no longer fear death.)

With that bit of nonsense in his mind and directing his thoughts, Artie lies on the floor where Swami Yamma once was and personally relives the countless attacks -- of bone shards being thrust deep into his chest, back, and thighs. In the end, the assault probably applies to Artie (deserves to be directed at Artie) as much as anybody else.

Then when the party is over (Artie having just gone through it again from another angle), Artie is thrown over the side of the pyramid where he bounces merrily (or not so merrily depending upon your point of view) down the rough hewn stone blocks that

make up the structure, rung by rung, layer by layer (as if it was a giant staircase) until he comes to a stop all the way at the bottom.

(If he were able to fall any further, I am sure that he would.)

It is here that his body is collected by an assemblage of ancient priests masquerading as the gods old.

Good taste dictates that I leave out the intervening steps -- meticulously recreated -- in horrifyingly graphic detail -- and rejoin Artie when he is truly Bones once again. (Not an ounce of meat (or fat) remains. Do they use knives, ants, fire, or acid? I will let you decide, as it suits your own grim desires.)

There is only one more way station on our journey (into the land of the dead), and this would be a midnight cruise on Sharon's Barge. (Of course, I might have the spelling wrong on that.) But no matter the name, you can be sure that it is as promised and the vessel is crewed by a dozen odd -- I'm thinking fourteen -- vestigial virgins. Together they -- Artismo Bones and the girls -- sail down the Nile, and into the night. (Though to be sure no one is raising a sheet to catch the wind or so much as manning (or womaning?) the tiller, so sailing isn't so much the activity of choice, if you get my drift.)

It is here then, with these pleasant thoughts, that we shall end the sequence, but do not fear for Bones. (I mean, not that you would. I think I mentioned those fourteen girls after all.)

Of course (or unfortunately), eternity does not last as long as one might think, and it will be but a moment, just mere seconds, only the briefest blip in time before Bones will be forced to leave this dream paradise, and take on his role in the next sequence. Somebody has to play the commandant and/or warden at the prison farm, and I can't think of a better brain dead specter for the job.

(Once again, I think this is going to need some serious help during the edit, but maybe I'm just tired. I think I'll take a nap, maybe float down a river, and reflect on where this all leads -- the dream and/or life.)

(And then, after the edits, I am happy (pleased) with the sequence, so there you have it.)

(In the middle of this section (while I was working on this sequence), I laid down some Bonus Material work on -- Editing Layers. The intent of those examples is to show how I build up a scene layer by layer, and perhaps when you get to it, it will be clearer why so many of my comments tend to be disparaging toward my work. Perhaps in the early layers my work deserves to be viewed disparagingly and it is only later (after several edits and/or days) that it blossoms, comes into fruition, and becomes pleasing to the senses (if in the end it ever does).)

(And while we are on the topic of Bonus Material, I had previously added a section concerning the histories of the different proxies. Lulu isn't covered there, so I'll just add her history here as a short blurb. She started as a bag lady, and usually appears as a street person, but she also doubles as the personification of the Goddess Pe'le. I don't know where her newfound wealth will lead. We will leave that to the next dream and the moods of the moment to decide.)

((Also, as with all forward looking statements in this dream, I wouldn't expect much development on that Bones/Prison Warden idea.))

((--End P3-C--))

((--Cut in P3-D--))

G'narsh

The Troll, The Myth, The Legend

(a work of fiction)

by

Kevin Stillwater

P3-C

of

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

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G'narsh - P3-C