

the GRIM

The background of the entire page is a black and white photograph of a dense network of bare, gnarled tree branches reaching upwards. At the bottom of the image, there is a stylized, swirling pattern that resembles smoke or flames rising from the ground, adding a dark, atmospheric quality to the cover.

ISSUE 07 42424

ONE DIMENSION

Old Philosophy Question: "Is God so powerful that He could create a rock so big that even He cannot lift it?"

Problem: An answer of either "yes" or "no" calls into question the accepted notion that God is all-powerful. Either God can't create such a rock, or God can't lift it. Many people have a problem with the idea of God not being able to do something, since He's supposed to be able to do *anything*.

Answer: The solution lies in the creation of the rock itself.

Let's say that God gets bored one day and decides to find out once and for all if He can create a rock so big that He can't lift it. He starts to gather all the spare material in the universe together. Pretty soon He has the most enormous rock you've ever seen. With one divine finger, He reaches out to lift it -- up it goes.

Then God realizes that He could, actually, make the rock bigger, since He's only used *some* of the material available to Him. He looks into all the other planes of existence, takes all the spare material He can find from every dimension, and adds it to the rock, only to find that He can still lift it easily.

Huh.

Is anyone using this solar system?

God promises to put everything back the way it was just as soon as He's done with this rock business, since He's a little obsessed with it by now. (Being omnipotent gives one certain privileges, after all.)

By early evening, the rock contains:

- ✓ All the spare material from every plane of existence
- ✓ All the planets, stars, comets, bits of space dust, and what-have-you from the material universes
- ✓ All the stuff that was living on the material
- ✓ An entire shipment of Stompin' Choco-Cheez Binges
- ✓ My damned keys
- ✓ And anything else made of matter you can think of.

And He can still lift it.

So He adds all the non-material items that ever were, are or will be: thoughts, ideas, music, emotions, souls: anything that can't have its borders defined by something so base as mere matter. Just in case.

The entirety of existence now consists of God and this rock.

And He can still lift it.

Finally, God places Himself into the rock.

And He can still lift it.

Wait -- what's that? Floating around out there next to the rock? It's *one* leftover hydrogen atom. The last one in existence. God reaches out, snatches it up, and adds it to the rock. That's it -- there's nothing in the infinite void besides this rock. *Nothing*. God tries to lift it...

Is the rock rising? Is it moving at all? Who knows?

"Lifting" something implies that the object being lifted is moving in a certain direction in relation to the objects around it. Whether it's a room full of stuff, or simply one atom, you need something besides the object being lifted in order to provide a point of reference for the lifting. If there's *nothing at all* outside of the object, including yourself, you'll never know if you're lifting it or not. God can make this rock as big as He wants, but if there's *anything* left over, He can always make it bigger, and if there's *nothing* left over, "lifting" it is irrelevant.

Summary: God can make a rock so big that lifting it becomes a moot point.

There, now everyone can sleep at night. The Nobel Prize committee may feel free to contact me via email.



THE GRIM

FOR OUR HEROES WHO EXIST
IN SPITE OF THE FACT
THAT THEY DON'T

We are pleased to announce that *the Grim's* website is no longer "under construction", and actually has quite a lot of nice things to look at.

www.thegrim.net

the Grim is the Premier News & Arts
Magazine of the Dream City of Grimagix.

www.grimagix.com

...go ahead, you know you live there.

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telephone: Ha! Ha, ha! You're kidding, right?

Or you can simply fall asleep
and you'll be closer than you realize.

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And, as usual, the Grim's fun-loving
staff includes (but is not limited to):

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Cover Photograph by Jymi X/0

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STATEMENT OF THE MONTH:

3 "SHE PEED IN MY TOASTER!" -LISA LEVALLEY

Rules to Live By

-Trent

Today I would like to talk about the Rules. I will not actually be *talking* about Rules, because this is a magazine, but I will write it all down, and that will help everyone remember what the Rules are. And that will be very good, since it seems like a lot of people have trouble remembering them. So, here are some of the Rules that we had when I lived at the hospital, and I can't understand why mental patients can remember these things better than so many other people. I will not name any names, except Daniel, since he deserves it.

No Hitting

One of the most important Rules is: No Hitting. If you get very angry at someone else, you should try to discuss the problem with them in a calm, civilized manner. You could say, for example, "Woody, it makes me angry when you squirt mustard in my ear. It is not funny. Please don't do that anymore." I'm sure he would understand how you feel a lot better than if you just called him a "wanker" and punched him in the arm. (Hitting and punching and name calling will only escalate an already volatile situation. Also, you will get a TimeOut, and no one wants that.) If you think you need help expressing yourself, or getting him to listen, get a Staff member to sit in with you. That's what they are there for.

No Borrowing without Asking, and No Touching without Permission

Another very important Rule to remember is the one about not touching other peoples' bodies or belongings without permission. (If you want to give someone a hug, it is *absolutely* necessary to have a Staff member present, in case it turns into funny stuff.) Handling other peoples' things without asking permission is rude, and in extreme cases, could lead to a violation of the No Hitting Rule. If you wanted to borrow my black leather vest with the straps on it, you could say to me, "May I borrow your black leather vest with the straps on it for my date with Donna tonight?"

And I would say, "Yes, Medoc, you can borrow my vest, but only if you promise to wash it before you give it

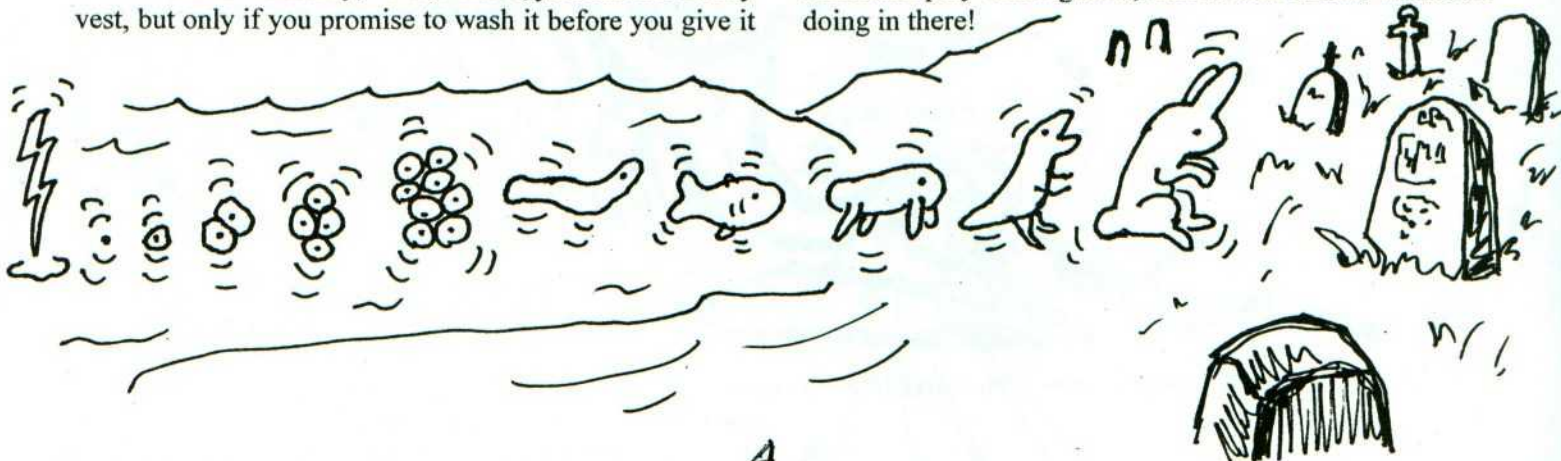
back this time." That way I wouldn't be looking for it for TWO DAYS and then find it in your room wadded up on the chair when I go in there for my weekly session because you are my therapist. Of course, this is just an example, since *you* are probably not my therapist, but I think you can see my point, which is that it's very important for therapists to go by the Rules, too, because they have to set a good example.

Some more good rules to remember are:

- ◆ Lights Out at 11:30 pm
- ◆ Lunchtime is at 12:15 pm (and Monday is Hamburger Day! (Tuesday is Soyilent Green Day.))
- ◆ No Slamming the Screen Door or You Have to Go Back Out and Come In Again and Close It Right This Time
- ◆ Fire is Dangerous
- ◆ Always Wear Your Shoes When You Leave Your Room
- ◆ No Running Indoors
- ◆ Do Not Handle Sharp Things
- ◆ No Leaving the Grounds by Yourself
- ◆ Red *ALWAYS* Means "Stop" (No Matter *What* Michael Says)
- ◆ Guns Are Dangerous, Too
- ◆ Do Not Poke Anything Into the Toaster (Get a Staff Member to Do It Instead)
- ◆ Ambulatory Science Projects Need to Stay in the Lab (Unless They Become Pets)
- ◆ No Yelling in the House
- ◆ Wooden Spoons Don't Go in the Blender

If you forget these Rules, you will get demerits at the very least, and you could lose your privileges. If you still cannot control yourself, you'll have to have a TimeOut until you get it together.

I am very glad that I don't live at the hospital anymore. Now when I have a TimeOut, I can just go to my room and play video games, and no one knows what I'm doing in there!



ASK PERCY THE SCIENCE CLOWN!

Dear Percy the Science Clown,

Why do we have four seasons but other parts of the planet don't? Are there some places that have more than four seasons? Is the earth closer to the sun in the summertime? Why are Australia's seasons backwards from ours? Do Australians really walk around upside-down, or did they get it wrong in that cartoon I saw?

Agog

Dear Agog,

Good thing your pen ran out of ink right there, or I'd have to publish a book. Let's take these one at a time...

All parts of the planet have four seasons. It's just not as easy to tell the difference between them as it is in our area of the Earth. No place on Earth has more than four seasons, unless there's a vault somewhere containing the lost works of Vivaldi – we'll have to see.

We have seasons because the Earth doesn't sit straight up-and-down in space – it's tilted on its rotational axis, at 23.5° from the perpendicular (Illuminatis and Discordians, take note).

The temperatures of the seasons have nothing to do with how far the Earth is from the Sun. In fact, when it's summertime in the Northern Hemisphere, the Earth is actually *farther* from the sun than it is in the winter. (The average distance is 93 million miles – in the summer, we're 95 million miles away, and in the winter, we're 91 million miles away.) This may sound odd, but when you're talking distances of that magnitude, a lousy couple of million miles one way or another isn't going to make any noticeable difference.

No, the temperatures have to do, again, with that axial tilt. In the summertime, the Northern Hemisphere is tilted toward the Sun, so we get more direct rays then, for a longer period of time every day, than we do in the winter. This allows our area of the Earth to get warm and stay warm. However, when we're tilted *toward* the Sun, the Southern Hemisphere is tilted *away* from it – so the rays of sunlight hit them at a less direct angle, for less time every day. They get cold.



"Latitude" refers to the imaginary lines that run around the Earth. They measure your distance from the equator, the line around the center of the planet. The closer you are to the equator (latitude 0°) or the Poles (latitude 90°), the less difference the tilt makes. The rays of sunlight that hit the equator are always pretty direct, so it's always hot there, while

those that hit the Poles are always at such an acute angle that they can never really warm up.

And yes, everyone in Australia walks upside down. Cartoons are an extremely reliable education tool. Good for you for paying attention!

Dear Percy the Science Clown,

Are there really microscopic bugs in the carpet, even after I vacuum every single day? That is the most disgusting thing I've ever heard.

Hissy Fit

(Complex Manor, Housekeeping Dept.)

Dear Hissy,

Are you sure you want me to answer that? 'Cause you're not going to like this one bit.

Every home has millions and millions of bugs, not even counting the bacteria that thrive in even the cleanest kitchen. And yes, they're microscopic – you can't see them. (Well, maybe *you* could, but most people aren't quite as obsessed.)

The carpet, the curtains, the sofa, and even *your own bed* are home to a host of tiny creatures, including the common *Dermatophagoides farinae*, or "dust mites".

House dust is made up of lots of yummy stuff: food particles, mold spores, little pieces of dead skin from humans and animals. The dust mites feed primarily on the dead skin (the name *Dermatophagoides* means "skin eater"). Unless you can stop shedding, you're going to have bugs in your carpet.

Try to forget about it. Dust mites don't bite or cause any problems with contamination. They cause allergies, though – most people who are allergic to house dust are reacting to a protein found in the mites' droppings. (Inhaling bug poop makes you sneeze – who'da thought?)

Maybe next issue, I'll talk about the millions of tiny worms that live in everyone's intestinal tracts!

Dear Percy the Science Clown,

I met this kid who said he'd been collecting his boogers on a piece of cardboard for three years. Now, what do you think he's going to do with *that*?

Agog (again)

Oh, you did *not* just ask me that...yes you did, didn't you. Well, I suppose he could glue it to a stick and use it as a backscratcher. (Note to "Hissy Fit": No, this is the most disgusting thing you've ever heard.)

Got a science question for Percy? Send it to
thegrim@grimagix.com
or visit his Science Clown Forum
on the website: www.thegrim.net

And That's Where Ricardo Mont-O-Bom Came From, Too

by Entropy

Once in no time at all there wasn't anything, not a thing. Not one single solitary thing, except Void. It was a very nice Void, all empty and squishy and dark. I will call it Charlie because who wants a name like Void? No one, but there wasn't anyone anyway. At least no one but Charlie. Charlie was very quiet and happy.

One day (such as it was) Charlie decided he wanted something to munch on like a big bag o' lovely Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bingies.

"Shh," he said because there wasn't any noise yet. That was very nice too, but we're getting to that.

"Shh," Charlie said again, thinking how very good it would be to have Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bingies. Then he thought how sad it was that there was no such thing.

"Shh," he said, and that meant in Void language, "Well now, I am a perfectly capable Void, no one ever said that I couldn't invent myself Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bingies, so I will give it a good try."

And so he squished himself up really tight and there pretty soon the first noise ever sounded, it was like a "pop" but more like a "whizzzz" and a little like "aah-OOOO-gaahh!"

Lo and beholden Charlie had created from nothing, just by thinking about it, a Super D-Lux bag o' Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bingies. And of course he hadn't any hands with which to open the blasted thing.

Then when he remembered about the pressure difference in a vacuum, that problem was solved right away because the bag blew up. Now don't you wish you had taken Physics class? Physics is very nice because you get to learn all about several very pleasant things such as ACCELERATION and FORCE and KILOGRAMS. Also there are "tension problems" which are very aptly named since both of those words are exactly what they cause to the first year student of Physics. But I did get a neat-o calculator to draw graphs for me. Oh no, that was for Calculus.

The blowing up bag was a pretty big deal 'cause that said "BANG" and we all know what that means.

Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bingies went everywhere, which they could do because now that something existed besides Charlie Void it provided a frame of reference so that there really actually could be "wheres".

Charlie now did not say "Shh", he said "Uh-oh."

Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bingies, like most fine snack foods available at your local supermarket, are made with pride to consist mostly of air so you can guess what happened when they hit the no-air, they took great

advantage of the handy-dandy pressure difference and began happily to explode, sending Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bingie Bits in every direction. (***DIRECTION: ANOTHER QUALITY PRODUCT FROM FRAME-OF-REFERENCE, INC.***)

"Uh-oh," Charlie Void said again, because he knew he was making a great big mess and that his Mummy would be cross. He began chasing the Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bits but they spun and whirled out of his grasp. Mostly because he had no hands with which to catch them but also and because Choco-Cheez particles just so happened to be, at that time (***TIME: YET ANOTHER HOUSEHOLD HELPER FROM FRAME-OF-REFERENCE, INC.***), to be the singular most mischievous and cunning species of snack food in the known universe. They did not want to be caught. They went off just as far and fast as they could go and started spinning around themselves and around Charlie and around and around, until Charlie Void was very dizzy and wished that he had thought up something nice and quiet and stupid like a chair. That's not a quite fair thing to say because some chairs really are quite intelligent and pleasant, depending on the kind of wood from which they are made. Metal chairs and plastic chairs do not count because they are not nearly smart enough to do so.

And here's another thing I bet you didn't know about Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bits. (See, reading is educational. Why don't you go do something constructive now? I think maybe the Wheel of Fortune is on the telly-vision.) Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bits are an existential aberration as far as snack foods go in that they have by some mistake the tiniest shred of nutritional value. (***VALUE: JUST ONE OF A LONG LINE OF CHARMING TRINKETS MADE BY FRAME-OF-REFERENCE, INC.***)

The ones that had already traveled very far began to grow all kinds of moldy fuzzies upon themselves and very soon looked like what it is that I found underneath the frigidaire last week, a kind of a thing which was of course covered in mold and the particular species of sentient dirt which is only found underneath frigidaire and has telepathic powers to summon others of its kind whenever it wants to have a party and that is why the cat is always poking about under there, because he wants some cake.

Charlie Void was the type of Void which had always been very quiet and never before now had made a mess. He did not know what to do and he really wasn't hungry anymore after all. So he tried reading comic books to help him ignore the Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bits. That went ok for awhile, he pretended they were not even there and he almost was believing it until he got to a very crucial part in his comic book and was just about to get \$3.99 from his wallet

so as to order his very own set of Amazing Sea Monkeys when he heard a noise.

"Shh," he said, which means an astonishingly rude word in Void language, and went to investigate.

"YAAGA YAAGA YAAGA!!!"

The noise was coming from one of the Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bits. (I *know* I called them Bingies at first and not Bits, but that was before they were Bits and still Bingies. Pay attention.) It was spinning madly round and round, obviously quite pleased with itself. It had mold and dirt all over it and was singing silly songs.

"Shh!" Charlie said, and this time it actually meant "Shh!"

But the Bit did not listen. Charlie looked more closely at it and saw that funny little bugs were crawling all around in the dirt. **"YAAGA YAAGA YAAGA!!!"** said the bugs. **"YAAGA YAAGA, WHOOOPEEEEE!!!"**

Well, thought Charlie Void, this is what comes of putting nutritional value into a snack food. They look very much like Amazing Sea Monkeys, so now at least I don't have to spend \$3.99.

Charlie tried to think of a way to make the BitBuggies stop going **"YAAGA YAAGA"**. Saying "Shh!" at them didn't work. And since he had no hands he could not bash them with a baseball bat. Too bad.

The Bit kept spinning and the Amazing Sea Bit Monkey Buggies were multiplying themselves every which way and every day they made more noise. Multiplying was one of their favorite things to do, because more Sea Monkey Bit Bugs could make a whole lot more noise than fewer, and making noise was their other favorite thing to do.

They went **"YAAGA YAAGA"** all the time. They put on shows where some Sea Bit Monkeys were up on a stage and others were in the audience and then stage Sea Bugs would start by going **"YAAGA YAAGA YAAGA"** all about their problems and then the audience would jump up and down and yell **"YAAGA YAAGA YAAGA"** back at them, and while no problems actually got solved because the Amazing Buggy Bits make too much

noise to stop and think, they did enjoy going **"YAAGA YAAGA YAAGA."** And all this was broadcast over the telly-vision so all the Bug Monkeys at home could feel like they were a part of it and go **"YAAGA YAAGA YAAGA, WHOOOOOPEEEEE!!!"** from the comfort of their own couch. They had telly-phones so they could call each other up and go **"YAAGA YAAGA YAAGA"** for 10 cents a minute. Their very greatest breakthrough was the cellular telly-phone which they could use to go **"YAAGA YAAGA WHOOOPEEEEE"** at each other whilst operating heavy machinery.

Charlie Void could not think or do anything with all the **YAAGA YAAGA** going on. He hated the Amazing Sea Choco-Monkey Cheez Buggy Bit folk. It would not have been so bad if they only would try to think and make new things come out of their mouths, but they were entirely content to just go **YAAGA YAAGA** and **WHOOOPEEEEE** all the time, just for the sake of making mouth noises.

Soon Charlie's Mummy came home and was indeed quite cross.

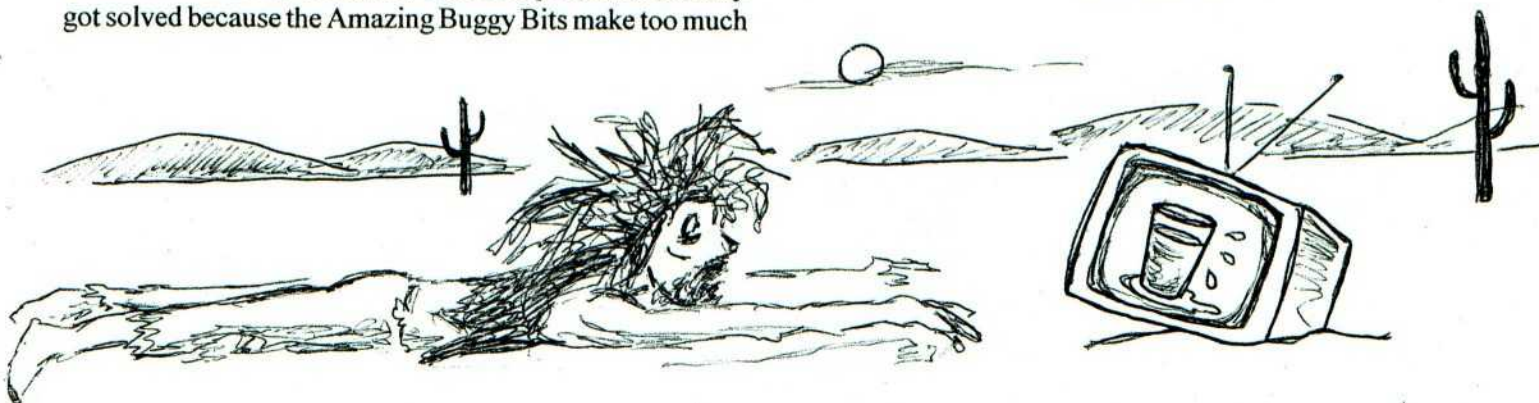
"Shh!" she said, which meant "Wherein did you get those terrible Monkey Sea Choco Stompin' Bugs, haven't I told you not to read comic books, and look at this mess, you've got Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bingie Bits all over, and I'll never get them out from under the fridge and they'll drive the cat mad, my goodness they make a lot of noise, we don't have hands so we cannot smash them but maybe if you don't feed them they will go away and just wait 'till your father hears about this, young man."

Which was a pretty good idea about not feeding them, I know because I used to have Amazing Sea Monkeys and they didn't make nearly so much noise as the Stompin' Choco-Cheez Bingie Bugs, but I forgot to feed them for a whole week and my Amazing Sea Monkeys, amazingly enough, died.

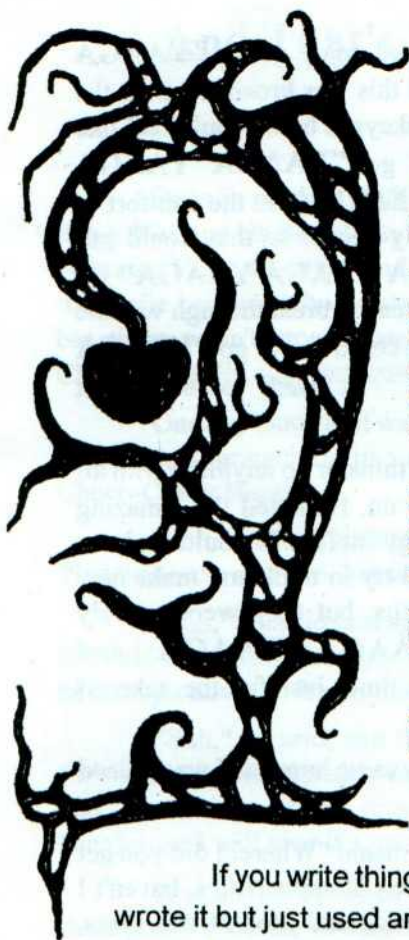
(DEATH: ANOTHER FINE BY-PRODUCT FROM...

oh never mind.

THE END



Jy4x/0



The Girl Who Did Not Care

—Jymi X/O (With apologies to Maurice Sendak)

"No one will believe you."

"I don't care!"
"Royal families won't receive you."

"I don't care!"
"These theories of yours make little sense!"

"I don't care!"
"You lack the proper repentance!"

"I don't care!"
"Those who meet you stand and stare!"

"I don't care!"
"You do such strange things to your hair!"

"I don't care!"
"We're all appalled you wrote this down!"

"I don't care!"
"You're like a quantum science clown!"

"I don't care!"
"You can't be right! You must be wrong!"

"I don't care!"
"Your head's been addled for so long!"

"I don't care!"
"This must be wrong! It can't be right!"

"I don't care!"
"Now how the hell will I sleep tonight?"

"I don't care!"

If you write things, but you put another name on it, that name becomes a person. If you want to say you wrote it but just used another name, then you are a chickenshit because then in case anyone who doesn't like it asks you about it you can say it isn't yours, but if they like it then you say it's yours and you just used another name. Also if they liked it I know what happens, you make sure that it gets asked about a lot. If there is another person inside of you then give them the credit. If there isn't then maybe you need to change your name!

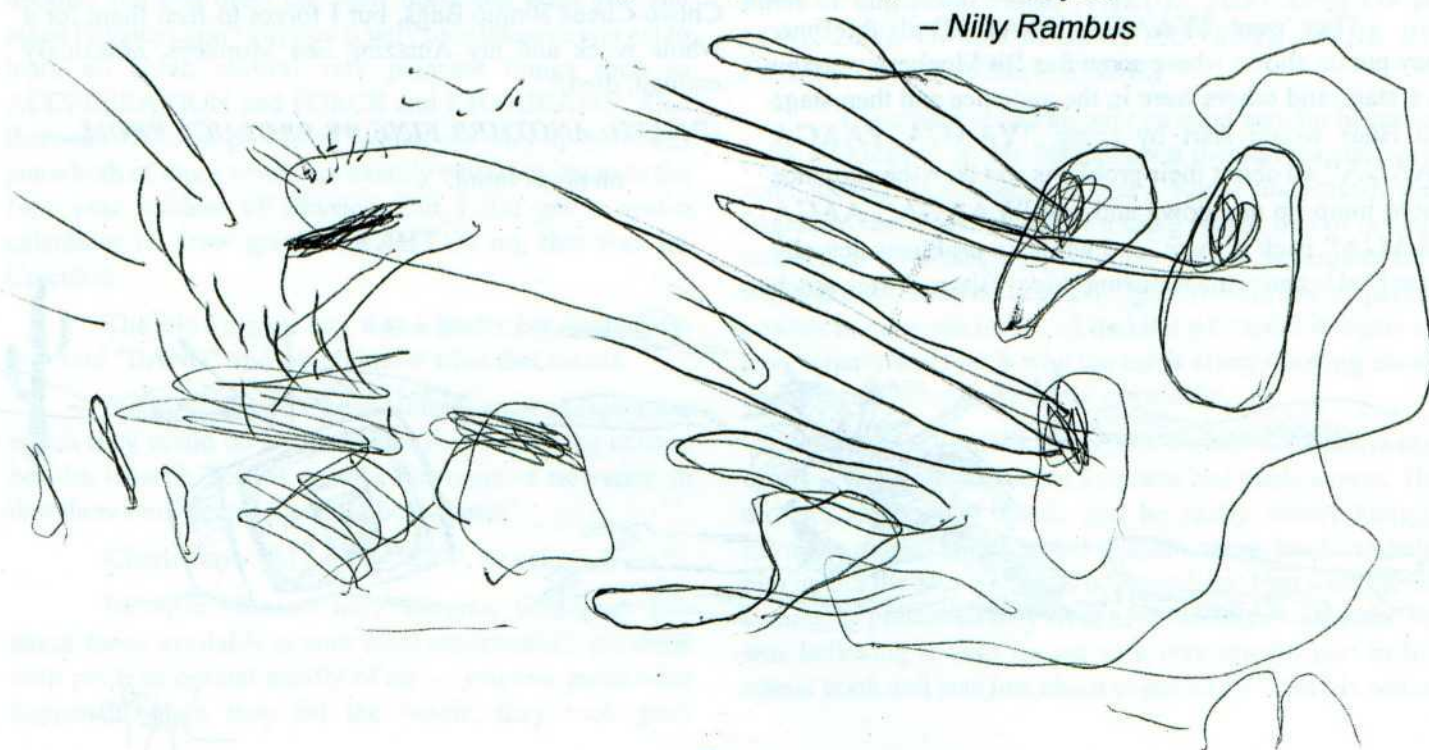
It is okay for one name to do lots of different things. It is not okay for one person to steal lots of different names and say that they did the things that the names really did!

You should believe in your own invisible friends.

A name lives when it makes, and it only makes if it lives.

Even pretend life is important to the pretend person living it. We miss you.

— Nilly Rambus



"Let me tell you how to be."

"I don't care!"

"I know what's right, now you listen to me!"

"I don't care!"

The Great Spirit whispered quietly,
in a tiny inside voice:

"You know you're still a part of me,
no matter what you make your choice.
Follow your True Will, if you dare."

With a wink, she answered, "Yes -- I care!"

"Your foolishness causes indignation!"

"I don't care!"

"You need behavioral modification!"

"I don't care!"

"Why don't you sit down and stay put?"

"I don't care!"

"You just stepped on my freakin' foot!"

"I don't care!"

"The project was due in yesterday!"

"I don't care!"

"Your cubicle is a mess today!"

"I don't care!"

"The printer is spewing purple smoke!"

"I don't care!"

"The copy machine is starting to choke!"

"I don't care!"

"Children in China have no shoes!"

"I don't care!"

"I'm Walter Cronkite -- and now the news..."

"I don't care!"

OFFICIAL DECREE
42424:

ON THIS DAY I DUB
MS. JUDITH MARTIN,
AKA "MISS MANNERS", AN OFFICIAL

GRIMAGIX-ENDORSED **Saint.**

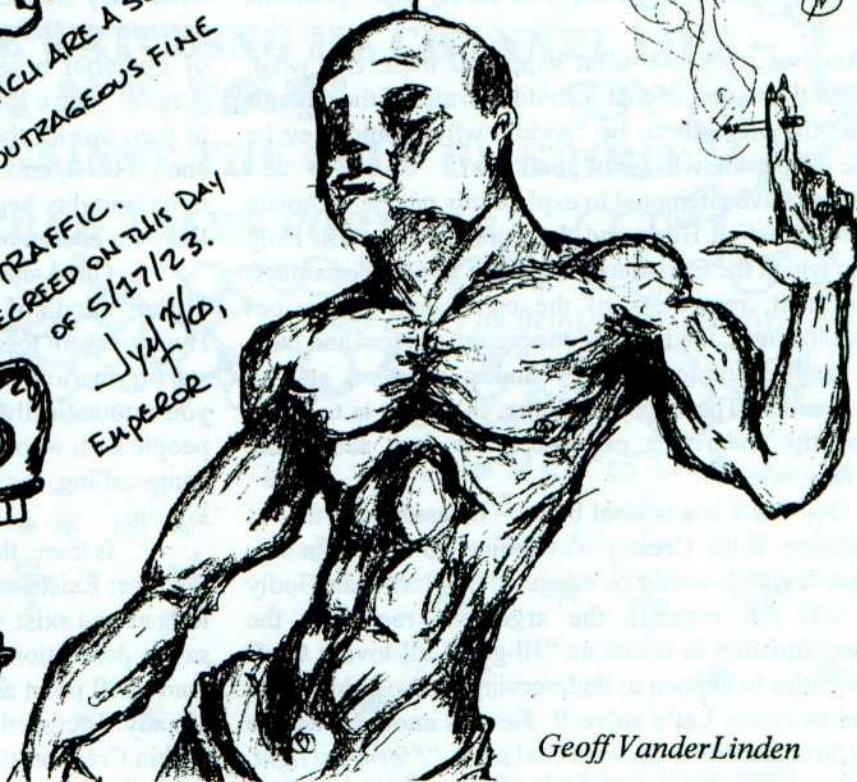
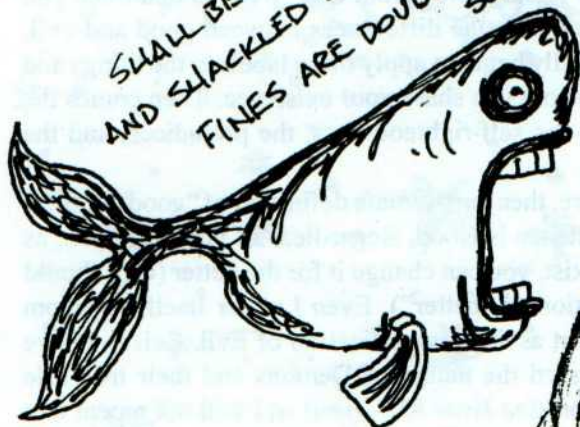
"Politeness Zones"
ALL PERSONS BEHAVING UNCIVILLY IN THE NEW

(THE EXACT LOCATIONS OF WHICH ARE A SECRET)

SHALL BE SUBJECTED TO AN OUTRAGEOUS FINE
AND SHACKLED TO A TURD.

FINES ARE DOUBLED IN TRAFFIC.
SO DECREED ON THIS DAY
OF 5/17/23.

Jy4/K/0,
Emperor



Geoff VanderLinden

Symms' Demonic Lectures #3: It's All Good

I have two challenges for you. The first is this: define "good" and "evil".

That doesn't seem very difficult. *Everyone* knows what good and evil are, don't they? Of course they do. But here's the challenge: I want you to try to define the concepts in *your own* words, based on *your own* thoughts: you are not allowed to simply repeat ideas you found in a book (or a Book), or something that someone else told you (regardless of their title or position), or to parrot the latest editorial opinion you saw. Relying on someone else's definitions is cheating, and you will be marked down for resorting to such laziness and reluctance to form your own thoughts. (As a free-willed creature, it is your responsibility to exercise it.) You *may* use your personal experiences – the knowledge you've gained in your life so far – to craft your definitions. I hope that my challenge will now present itself as more of a conundrum than it first appeared.

The question of "good" and "evil" has troubled Humankind since the inception of thought. In every culture, Humans are admonished to try to do good and to avoid evil. To your credit, I know of very few Humans who consciously chose to side with evil. Even your most notorious villains believe that their acts will be so ultimately beneficial as to outweigh the consequences, or at worst, they truly believe that it makes no difference what they do. I am not advocating such harmful or thoughtless behaviour – I assure you I am no Uncle Wormwood! – only trying to remind you of the ultimate subjectivity of the topic.

The Bible deals with this at the very beginning: *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* [Genesis 2:16-17]

And we all know what happened then. But what, exactly, was the nature of that forbidden fruit? If the Creator wished for the Humans to be "good", why would they be denied the deeper knowledge of goodness?

Many have attempted to explain this puzzle. Scholars of both the Christian Bible and the Torah (the Jewish Holy Book from which the Christian Bible takes its Old Testament) will admit that, regardless of the care taken by scribes throughout the ages, the translations are not perfect and have probably been corrupted both by honest mistakes and by personal agendas. The important thing, they say, is to try to understand the underlying message rather than accept the words at face value.

God Itself is a neutral being – Its essence is that of pure Existence. If the Creator was subject to labels such as "good" and "evil", It would be relegated to a less-than-Godly level. I will not reiterate the argument regarding the paradoxical situation in which an "all-good, all-loving God" allows atrocities to happen to undeserving victims; that one's been done to death. Let's solve it. Here is another passage from the Christian Bible, wherein God says: "*I form the light,*

and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." [Isaiah 45:7]

As a Demon, I can think of quite a few fun things to do with this quote. As a Teacher, I elect to simply continue the lecture. (Ah, youth...)

If God is all-good, how, then, does evil come from It? Must we now define "evil" as another form of "good"? Or might it not make more sense to find another definition entirely for "good"?

Herein lies the problem illustrated in Genesis. Think again of the Creation story: the first thing that God did was to separate opposites, one from another: the light from the darkness, the sky from the earth, the waters from the land. All of the things that God did to create this plane had to do with the separation of *physical* entities, a tangible categorizing of the Source Energy. It then caused living things to grow upon the planet, and everything was "good". Humans were instructed to care for the new world and bask in its natural riches, and to seek nothing else. God separated the *physical* energies, and left it at that. Humans were the ones who decided to start separating and labeling *concepts*.

Good and evil being relative, subjective terms, how can anyone have true knowledge of either? What is good for one person or group is an insult, or even a death sentence, for another, and each will defend their position with the ferocious passion of those who *just know* they are in the right. Which group is really in the right? The one that most closely agrees with *your* idea of "right"? Is there an absolute "right"? If there was, wouldn't God have considered it important enough to separate "good" from "evil" at some time while It was also making the islands, the stars and the platypus?

The parable shows that Humankind's troubles began when they started confusing absolute truths with subjective perceptions. Before the fruit was eaten, Humans lived in a state of immortal bliss, closer in nature to God than even the Angels. When they began applying limited, mortal concepts to their world, they became distracted – they lowered their energy level, and became mortals themselves. The path back to immortality begins when you stop trying to pigeonhole the limitless energy of Creation into limited categories.

Good and evil are Human ideas – they have no place in the "mind" of a neutral Supreme Being. The reason that Humans were to stay away from that "tree" is that once you start trying to define the differences between good and evil, you automatically begin to apply these labels to the things and people with whom you share your existence. Then comes the name-calling, the self-righteousness, the prejudices, and the killing.

Is there, then, an ultimate definition of "good"? I offer this one: Existence is Good. Regardless of your situation, as long as you exist, you can change it for the better (or, I should say, a perception of "better"). Even Lucifer Itself, to whom many will point as the personification of Evil, Exists. I have already discussed the nature of Demons and their true role within Creation (see Issue #5 – Jymi) so I will not repeat that

lecture here, but if you think about it, you may agree that even "The Devil" is, in its own way, Good.

Opposites define each other. How could you know what light is like, if you were unable to compare it with darkness? If you have never felt hot water, how would you know that your water is cold? How can you overcome temptation, if you are never tempted? If you never know what it's like to live in an imperfect world, will you be able to appreciate Paradise? Now and then, every mortal is offered a brief glimpse of Paradise – and these glimpses inspire them to attempt to change their imperfect world.

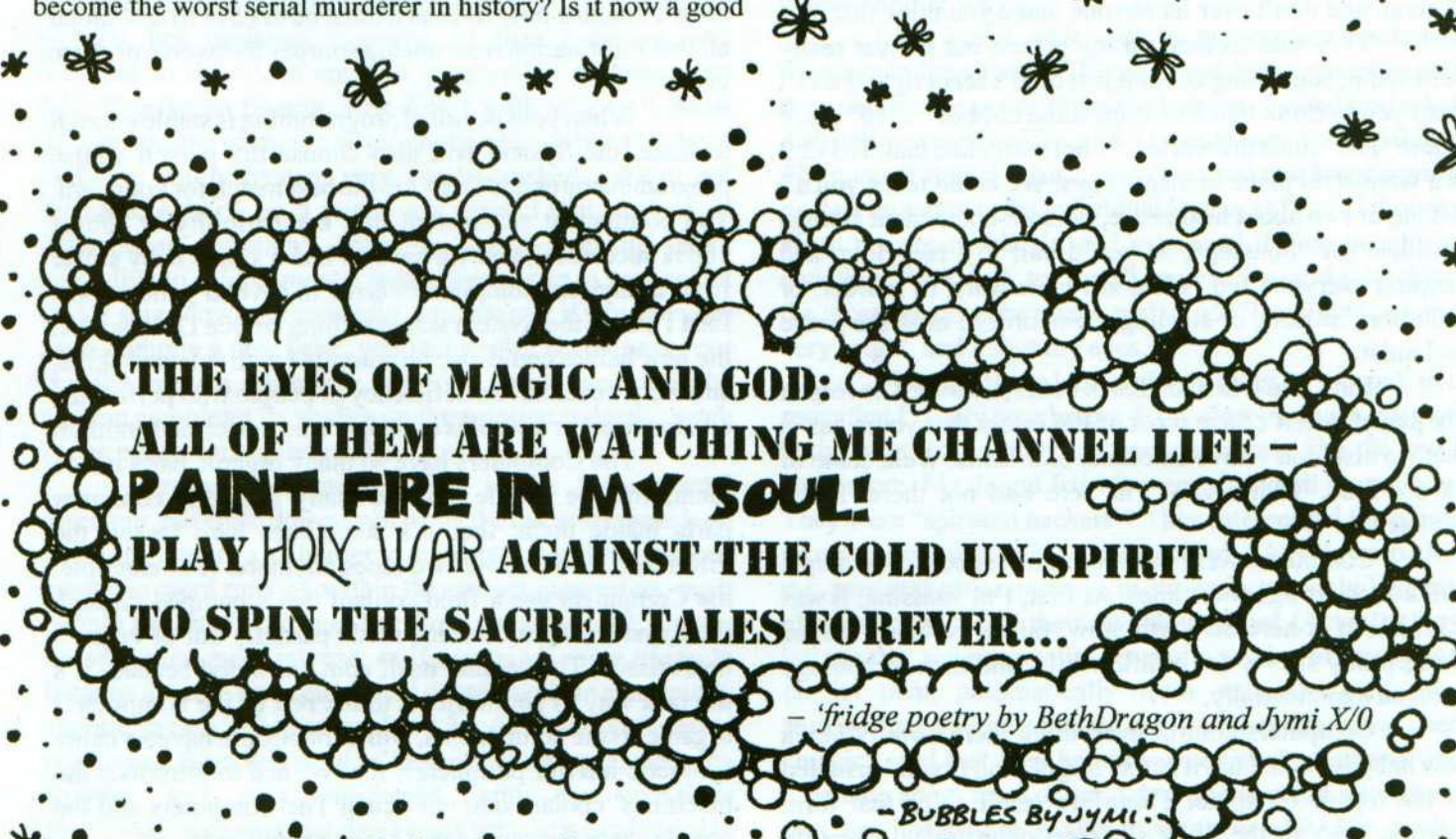
Ah, and what of Paradise itself? What is it like? Ask one hundred different people, and you'll get five hundred different answers. Heaven is all around you, but the only way you can get there is by going through Hell. However, I'm getting ahead of myself. That's a topic for another lecture.

"Good" and "evil" are subjective, Human, mortal ideas. God Itself is above such base categorization. Nothing within existence is truly "evil" or truly "good", as the terms are commonly defined; every thing and every person causes grief to some, happiness to others, and has no effect whatsoever on many more. If a child is murdered, is that "evil"? Or simply a terrible misfortune? What if the baby would have grown up to become the worst serial murderer in history? Is it now a good

thing that it was killed? "God works in mysterious ways", as the adage goes, and we can only deal with the situations at hand. I am not saying that you should rejoice at a sad event, or subdue your elation when fortune smiles upon your life, or neglect to defend your life against an attacker. I only suggest that you remember, when sticking labels and passing judgement on people or things, that the blessed state of Existence has been bestowed on every thing and every person you see, and many, many more that you don't.

I began this lecture by saying that I have two challenges for you. Coming up with your personal definitions of "good" and "evil" is actually the easier of the two. Here is the second: now, go and live your life at all times in accordance with your own definitions.

**The Demon Symms is the "spirit guide" of X/0.
He is willing to discuss any number
of spirituality-related topics
with the Grim's readers.
Contact information is given on page 3.**



**THE EYES OF MAGIC AND GOD:
ALL OF THEM ARE WATCHING ME CHANNEL LIFE –
PAINT FIRE IN MY SOUL!
PLAY HOLY WAR AGAINST THE COLD UN-SPIRIT
TO SPIN THE SACRED TALES FOREVER...**

– 'fridge poetry by BethDragon and Jymi X/0

– BUBBLES BY JYMI!

POP QUIZ: HOW MUCH DOES ALL THIS MATTER TO THE REST OF THE WORLD? IT'S ALL LIVE GUT.

RE-TRY

— Qwite

Greetings, Earthlings (I've always wanted to say that!) from an ex-component of 103v2.9. If I knew the original name of my home planet, I'd tell you. It makes me sad that I don't. That information was deemed extraneous a long time ago and deleted from the Cache.

You might say that I'm from your own future. No, I'm not a time-traveler. Your planet is on the brink of big changes, much like mine was before, well, before everything changed. I can only guess that we used to be a lot like you are now. Our .log files don't have a whole lot of really interesting history, nothing that isn't relevant to the present tasks. The System decides what's worth storing and what can be deleted. The history files just took up space, and now no one remembers anything that isn't relevant to the Program.

It's really exciting for me to be able to watch you and your Computers evolving together. You're really two species, merging into one. I don't care what they tell you though, you humans are *not* just an installation tool for the System, and don't ever let anyone make you think that.

They told us that, on my planet, but I never really believed it, something about it just didn't seem right. I don't want you to think that I'm from some kind of "2010" place where "Hal" rules the world, it's not really like that. 103v2.9 is a wonderful place in many ways. We could teach you all a thing or two about healthcare, organic-component storage facilities (or "housing", as you'd call it!), recycling, and keeping everyone fed. We don't have wars, or murder, or pollution, or riots, or stealing. Sometimes I miss the peace and quiet.

But I like it here on Earth better, overall. The reason my planet doesn't have most of the errors that yours has is that we also don't have emotions or dreams. Well, some of us do. *I* do. That's why I'm here and not there. I was "deleted"!

Computers were introduced to our society a couple hundred years ago (our time). At first, I'm guessing, it was a lot like it is here on Earth, now: things probably moved along pretty slowly for a little while, and then technology evolved exponentially.

Computers control everything there now. When a new baby is booted up, it has a "Regulation Board" installed at the top of its spine. These are small chips that form organic links to the body's central neuroframe. They do everything from let you know what time it is to what kind of nutrient pills your body needs at your next mealtime to setting up temporary links between your brain and someone else's (or another computer's) so that you can use a kind of "telepathy" instead of needing a peripheral communication component.

All of the signals go through the Prime Drives, a huge Network of Servers located near the System's Main CPU. It's kind of like the Internet, only a lot more organized,

and a lot more intense. When you login, you step into a virtual world, and your brain perceives all the information as a 3d holographic environment, complete with input that can stimulate all five senses. A "chat room" actually feels like a real room! (Your Internet here is getting closer and closer to that everyday, but most of you don't have the synthetic components or the exterior equipment powerful enough to login and experience it. I spend a lot of time there.)

You can download information and skills directly into your brain from the Prime Drives, and if you learn something new on your own, it's automatically uploaded so that everyone can share it.

When you're still young, the System evaluates your physical and mental abilities and decides the type of information that it will upload into your brain while you're growing up. This way no one chooses a life function that they aren't suited to, and when you begin to perform your life function full time, you'll be as productive as possible. I can't imagine how tedious it must be to have to download all that information from analog sources for twelve or more years!

When your personal programming is stable enough to mate, the System will also choose the person whose program features and DNA are the best match for your own. The component sub-system link compatibility is almost 100% successful, and we haven't had a single baby suffer from a physical compilation error in several generations. Last I knew, the System was matching source DNA so that the new babies could also be compiled with selected skills, and we'll never have a deficiency of people who performed one function, or a surplus of people who performed another.

The Computers have so many organic parts inside them, and the people have so many synthetic computer parts inside them, that it's sometimes hard to tell the difference between our two races anymore. (For example, the Computers use a fluid coolant that's pumped through their systems by a machine made partially out of organic heart tissue. The coolant itself contains blood because it's the best way to get nutrients to the rest of the computer's organic tissue components, while the people have so many synthetic interior peripherals that we had to introduce the machines' coolant into our veins! The Computers and the people share the same exact blood chemistry!)

I've watched enough Star Trek (thanks to Trent) to know what some of you might be thinking about now, and I want you to know that we aren't the Borg. We maintain peaceful relations with all of our galactic neighbors, and no one is planning to "assimilate" anyone else. Though we're all connected to the Prime Drive, everyone, whether they're a person or a computer, is allowed to maintain their individuality. At least, what there is left of it.

I'd like to tell you more of the wonderful things

about my home planet, but then I wouldn't have room on the page to convey the crucial data of this file.

You humans are at such an important point in your history right now. I can see where your technology is heading, and it's fascinating for me to be able to watch the symbiotic relationship developing between people and computers. Watching you, I get to learn a lot about what my own planet was probably like, because there's nothing left in the Memory there to tell us where we came from. It's so important to hold onto your history while you move into the future, and it's also important to hold onto the things inside yourselves that got you this far.

I mentioned before that children born on my planet don't have any physical deficiencies. The System was able to eradicate hardware problems like that. But last I knew, it still hadn't perfected a design for the person's software, the individual programs and files in their minds that make them unique. The System wouldn't even be concerned with programming on a level that small, except when it causes malfunctions on a larger scale.

Dreams and emotions were two major glitches in the System. (This information was important enough to maintain in the Cache, so I know enough about it to tell you.) Analyses showed that emotions will cause people to function at less than optimum capacity. At first, everyone was required to download emotion suppression software into their Regulation Boards. That didn't work very well. Most people became catatonic or psychotic after only a few days, and the whole System very nearly crashed. (We're not Vulcans, either!) So a patch was created that, instead of suppressing emotions entirely, would regulate them according to environmental input. If someone in your social sector shuts down permanently, you feel sad; if you and your mate compile a new baby, you feel joyful; if you pass your monthly system inspection, you feel proud, etc. Until the System completes its studies on the emotive code, the patch keeps everything under control.

Dreams and emotions are in the same mental directory, but since dreams run while the consciousness is on stand-by, they're a lot harder to regulate. Once the conscious emotions were running within the correct parameters, most people operated just fine. But for some of us, our dreams became even more intense, as if our minds were trying to balance the conscious emotional control with an abnormally chaotic dream life that couldn't be decoded, and defied regulation. Even this wouldn't have been an issue, since the System was only concerned with our conscious functionality, except that the dreams were being uploaded to the Servers and getting into the Network, where other people would encounter them, and their own emotional regulation programming would be infected. It was like a plague. We don't come up with fancy names for things on 103v2.9, but if it happened to your systems here on Earth, someone would probably call it the "Dream Virus".

I started having dreams about a group of people that I'd never consciously met. In my dreams, we would go on wild adventures together. I rarely understood what we were

doing, but I came to feel closer to these people than I did to anyone I knew on my own planet, even from my own pod. My dream friends weren't very logical, but for some reason, there didn't seem to be anything wrong with their programming, and when I was with them, it felt perfectly natural to act like my own system had gone haywire and let loose with any random thoughts or feelings that happened to be crossing my circuits. I started feeling lonely all the time while I was awake, because I didn't know anyone who made me feel as good as my dream friends did.

Needless to say, I was part of the problem.

The System concluded that until another program could be written that would control or eradicate the Dream Virus, the only thing that could be done about it would be to eradicate the dreamers themselves.

Since everything is made of energy, including bodies, we don't kill people and bury or burn them on my planet. When someone shuts down (or is scheduled for premature shut-down due to an irreparable malfunction), they're placed in an energy reclamation chamber where their programs are erased, and their casings are vaporized into the component elements. It's a little like placing a big magnet on top of your hard drive and then disassembling your computer for parts.

I was afraid, which was an appropriate emotional response to the situation. I was placed in the chamber and the operators began pushing the buttons. I wondered what dislocation would be like, and if I would even feel anything. The magnet started to hum, and I realized that I was having my last thoughts as the individual I knew as "me". I thought about my dream friends, and wondered if there would be enough of "me" left to "miss" anyone. I would miss them the most, whether they were real or not. The lights became very bright, and I shut my eyes.

The next thing I knew, I was lying on a couch in a room that I'd only seen before in my sleep. I was in my own body, or at least a body that looked exactly like the one I had before. My dream friends were sitting all around me. They were "spiritual hackers"! They intercepted the signal as my energy was being disassembled. They downloaded my personal programming, in its entirety, including my physical casing, into their own dimension! (Actually they tell me that my personality created a replica of my casing on its own, automatically from memory, using the surrounding energy of their plane.) They say they used "magic", and that they had always existed whether I was dreaming about them or not. I don't understand a lot about that. I'm just glad to be able to see them while I'm awake and to be able to learn for myself how it feels to...*feel*.

Earthlings, your computers are still very young. Please raise them well, and when they ask you to input the relevant data, tell them about your history and your dreams. Maybe if they feel like an important part of your world right from the beginning, they'll be able to recognize that emotions and dreams are an integral part of *everyone's* programming.

STOOOPAAAHD!

My Favorite

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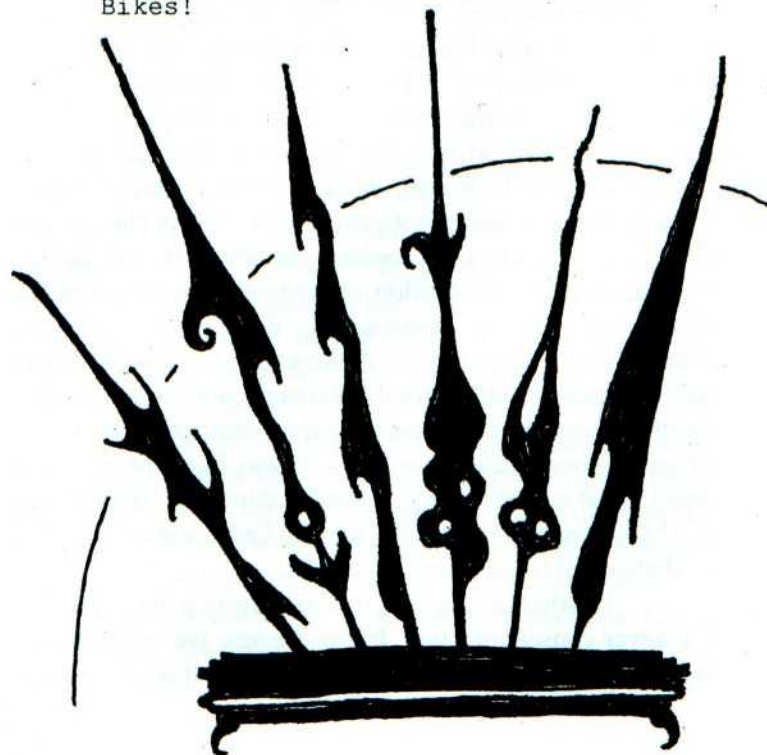
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- Fox In Detox
- Who Shat in the Hat?
- Horton Hires a Ho
- The Flesh-Eating Lorax
- How the Grinch Stole Columbus Day
- Your Colon Can Moo - Can You?
- Marvin K. Mooney, Get the Fuck Out!
- Are You My Proctologist?
- Yentl the Lentil
- Aunts in My Pants

...AND OTHER CHILDREN'S BOOKS YOU'LL NEVER SEE

- You Are Different and That's Bad
- The Boy Who Died From Eating All His Vegetables
- Dad's New Wife Robert
- Fun four-letter Words to Know and Share
- Hammers, Screwdrivers and Scissors: An I-Can-Do-It Book
- The Kids' Guide to Hitchhiking
- Kathy Was So Bad Her Mom Stopped Loving Her
- The Little Sissy Who Snitched
- Some Kittens Can Fly!
- That's it, I'm Putting You Up for Adoption
- Grandpa Gets a Casket
- The Magic World Inside the Abandoned Refrigerator
- Garfield Gets Feline Leukemia
- The Pop-Up Book of Human Anatomy
- Strangers Have the Best Candy
- Whining, Kicking and Crying to Get Your Way
- You Were an Accident
- Things Rich Kids Have, But You Never Will
- Pop! Goes The Hamster...And Other Great Microwave Games

- The Man in the Moon Is Actually Satan
- Your Nightmares Are Real
- Where Would You Like to Be Buried?
- Why Can't Mr. Fork and Ms. Electrical Outlet Be Friends?
- Places Where Mommy and Daddy Hide Neat Things
- Daddy Drinks Because You Cry
- Testing Homemade Parachutes Using Household Pets
- The Hardy Boys, the Bobsy Twins, and the Vice Squad
- Babar Meets the Taxidermist
- Curious George and the High-Voltage Fence
- The Care Bears Maul Some Campers and are Shot Dead
- How to Become The Dominant Military Power In Your Elementary School
- Controlling the Playground: Respect through Fear
- Getting More Chocolate on Your Face
- All Dogs Go to Hell
- When Mommy and Daddy Don't Know the Answer, They Say God Did It
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