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Journal of Interactive Drama

**A Multi-Discipline Peer-Reviewed Journal of
Scenario-Based Theatre-Style Interactive Drama
Freeform Live Action Roleplaying Games**

**Volume Two, Issue One
January 2007**

Interactive Drama Archive



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**A Multi-Discipline Peer-Reviewed Journal of
Scenario-Based Theatre-Style Interactive Drama
Freeform Live Action Roleplaying Games**

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The Journal of Interactive Drama is an international journal dedicated to the publication of critical discussion and scenarios related to Scenario-Based Theatre-Style Interactive Drama Freeform Live Action Roleplaying Games and welcomes contributions in all areas of the study, design, and creation of stand-alone scenario-based LARPS as well as Scenario-Based Learning related to interactive dramas of this type. Review articles of books related to interactive drama and informal book announcements are also welcome. Critical pieces on scenarios or convention events are welcome. Stand-alone scenarios are encouraged for submission with designer notes and running commentary. Submissions

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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL POWER OF THE ROLEPLAYING EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Many mainstream critics dismiss the practice of participation in roleplaying games as “mere escapism” from the pressures of reality. Though players often find the RPG experience enjoyable, the process of assuming an alternate identity in a world parallel to the mundane can produce powerful psychological effects. RPGs are used widely in various applications, including theater, therapy, education, military training, and leisure and possess the capability to transform human interactions and enhance valuable skill sets. Engagement in roleplaying creates the potential for self-exploration in the form of identity alteration, problem-solving in the form of scenario building, and establishment of *communitas* as a modern-day ritual practice.

Many mainstream critics dismiss the practice of participation in roleplaying games as “mere escapism” from the pressures of reality. “Gamers” who play specifically for enjoyment purposes have traditionally been labelled as outcasts who have difficulties socially integrating without the crutch of character embodiment. William Shatner, made famous through his role in the original *Star Trek* series, implored his overzealous fans to “Get a life!” on an episode of *Saturday Night Live*, criticizing their hyper-involvement with the alternate worlds of the show and their propensity to dress like characters on the *Enterprise* at conventions. Even the documentary *Uber Goober* pokes fun at the

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subculture it attempts to sympathetically rehabilitate, as the very title suggests.

This lack of mainstream comprehension results partially from the often overwhelming and exclusionary process of learning roleplaying systems. Indeed, many gamers feel they hold membership to a secret society, with special language, codes, and ritual practices unique to the practice of roleplaying. Gamers may relay information between themselves about real-life interpersonal and tactical situations through the semantics of gaming or through the metaphors of imaginary characters. In this way, gaming functions as a *shared personal mythology*, in the words of my good friend and Storyteller, Walter Gammel. Roleplaying allows participants to inhabit a space somewhere between subjectivity and objectivity, experience and examination, resulting in a form of double consciousness.

This paper will explore the deeper psychological power of roleplaying, a departure from the usual explanations of escapism or entertainment. While gaming can indeed be a fun diversion from the pressures of the mundane world, I submit what many gamers, psychologists, educators, and drama therapists already know, that roleplaying also accesses the potent reaches of the unconscious and allows a creative relationship between fantasy and reality, between the self and the alterego, and between the individual and the group. The practice of roleplaying can educate, transform, and illuminate. It can provide valuable training for real-world social and tactical scenarios. Perhaps most importantly, the liminal space of the roleplaying game can enhance social cohesion through shared activity and experience, building potent bonds through the creation of *communitas*.

MANIFESTATIONS

THEATER

Roleplaying manifests in many forms in Western culture. The most common form may arguably be improvisational acting in traditional theatrical performance. Drama instructors across the world encourage

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their students to “think outside the script,” to move beyond the creative control of the author or director and access their own wells of creativity. Improv acting is often freeform, requiring only the barest suggestion of a framework; in this way, improvisation evolves in an organic way from the combination of the quick wittedness of individual players and the interpersonal dynamic of the other performers and the audience. In an important sense, though, *all* acting can certainly be considered a form of roleplay; the mere adoption of a persona, setting, and scenario outside the realm of the mundane involves the temporary suspension of the ego and a certain investment in the world of the play.

Furthermore, as Erving Goffman asserts, social interaction itself even in a mundane context is a form of performance, requiring the suppression of authentic expression in order to control public perception and suit societal expectations. The act of dressing for work, family engagements, or leisure activities involves donning a costume, working to enhance the illusory social role the individual seeks to inhabit. Performers behave differently depending on expectation; the actions, gestures, tone of voice, and costume of a wife may be different from that of a mother, a teacher, a daughter, or any number of other roles we must assume in daily life. These external manifestations of identity both reflect and inform the internal self, which remains conflicted and contradictory in its unconscious state.

DRAMA THERAPY/EDUCATION

Some directors take the improv process further and utilize roleplaying as a form of drama therapy, as do some psychologists and educators in an effort to help people develop interpersonal skills. Psychotherapist Raymond Corsini advocates the use of role-playing in clinical practice in order “to better understand the patient, to instruct him, or to give him new experiences in behaving” (Corsini 146). Corsini emphasizes that the procedure “is a natural method of interaction used by all children in their play,” but that it can be equally effective if utilized in adult therapy. Furthermore, psychologist John Ratey described how roleplaying scenarios in schools can:

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Help children learn how to be friends, how to recognize and talk about different feelings, how to handle anger or pain, and how to express what they like and dislike. Teachers will act out situations – such as one child picking on another in the playground – and ask the children how each part of the episode made them feel and how they think the teachers could have acted differently. In another exercise, they ask the children to act out an incident, such as meeting a new child on the bus. By making believe that they are actually saying hello and trying to become friends, the children are actually practicing the techniques they will use on the real bus later in the day. This learning is invaluable to good development of the social brain. (Ratey 299)

I recently took part in a multimedia, interactive performance entitled *There is Never a Reference Point*, directed by Thomas Riccio. The script evolved from the journal writings of Jamie Dakis, a woman with multiple personalities (also known as Dissociative Identity Disorder). The performers each embodied one of ten “alters,” and the audience was forced to occupy the stage as the cacophonous voices and bodies of the personalities surrounded them, approximating the experience of being in Dakis’ own mind. Dakis herself participated in each performance. Instead of feeling overwhelmed and alienated by her own internal struggle, she participated in the externalization of her personal reality. The actors, crew, and audience not only served the role of bearing witness and providing sympathy for her, but in an important sense, her private world became symbiotically shared by the larger unit of the group.

Individuals with DID often describe their mental state as a war between opposing factions, all vying for control of the body, and the ultimate goal for those who endeavor to face this conflict head on is the dream of integration, where each of the alters can coexist peacefully. Through regular therapy sessions and the interactive process of the play, Dakis felt far closer to integration; each alter was allowed the respect of equal representation. The most fascinating part of each performance for me was the ten minute interlude in the middle of the

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hour-long play in which the alters were allowed “free reign” of the stage, utilizing live action roleplaying to enact spontaneous scenarios with each other and with audience members. Alters who normally conflict with each other in Jamie’s consciousness would be allowed to interact through the bodies and minds of the actors, each bringing his or her own personal interpretation and energy to the encounter, visually forging bonds. Out-of-character, each of us interacted with Jamie in our own way, providing support through the sometimes painful and difficult process of facing and exposing her (and our own) demons. I will discuss ego alteration and DID more extensively in the section on identity formation.

MILITARY

The military utilizes roleplaying – particularly scenario simulations – in order to train soldiers and prepare for potentialities. These games tend to focus less on the assumption of alternate identities and more on building tactical skills. According to Marc Prensky, the U.S. military is the biggest spender in the world on training simulation games and holding conferences for conversation between armed forces trainers and game developers, film studios, theme park executives, and universities (Dovey and Kennedy 12). Prensky elaborates:

The military uses games to train soldiers, sailors, pilots, and tank drivers to master their expensive and sensitive equipment...it uses games to teach senior officers the art of strategy. It uses games for team work and team training of squads, fire teams, crews, and other units; games for simulating responses to weapons of mass destruction, terrorist incidents, and threats; games for mastering the complex process of military logistics and even games for teaching how not to fight when helping maintain peace. (quoted in Dovey and Kennedy 12)

The University of Texas at Dallas recently held a conference on “Virtual Worlds, Simulation, and Game Technologies,” presenting a joint

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project between the university's Art and Technology program and the U.S. Army. The *Far Future Conflict Game* is a MMOG (Multi-User Online Game) designed to allow millions of players the ability to play out potential scenarios with world wide consequences, the results of which will be tracked by the government for research purposes. Each character will have a certain set of skills, as he or she would in a normal MMORPG, somewhat akin to a "real world" *World of Warcraft*. General Thomas Metz also lectured at the conference, urging the academic and artistic community to help develop games for military training intended to help soldiers understand and adjust to certain culturally specific scenarios, such as interactions with devout Muslims in the Middle East. Metz expressed a strong need for roleplaying games that would teach proper etiquette and help the U.S. achieve their goals effectively and diplomatically. In this way, roleplaying games can potentially have a profound impact on global relations others; a successful training game may mean the difference between life and death for thousands of individuals. A more narrative-based, character driven roleplaying scenario may prove useful in this goal.

RPGs

Though improv acting may prove the most common form of roleplaying due to its institutional integration in theater classrooms, surely the most popular forms are commercially-produced RPGs. Multiplayer roleplaying rose to amazing popularity after the publication of *Dungeons and Dragons* in 1973, paving the way for other popular RPGs (Roleplaying Games) such as *GURPS*, *Shadowrun*, and *Vampire: the Masquerade*. RPGs were initially played "tabletop"; that is to say, players gather around a table or on the floor. In tabletop, each player creates his or her own character, invented based on the rules outlined in the books. This character is logged on a single page character sheet, which details all the physical, mental, social, and supernatural skills the character possesses. One player acts as the Storyteller (or Dungeon Master/Game Master), guiding the characters through the universe and setting up storylines for the players to follow. Though the Storyteller controls the world of the game, the players have quite a bit of influence

over the events of the “scene” based on how they verbally relay their character and his or her actions. The success of one’s actions is a result of the combination of the strengths of their character’s skills added with an element of luck: the rolling of several-sided dice. RPGs also can be played online with people all over the country on MOOs, MUDs, MUSHs, and MMORPGs (the most popular currently being *World of Warcraft*) and in person donning full dress, a practice called LARPing (Live Action Role Playing).

If the world is itself an elaborate game, and each of us struggle throughout our lives to learn the rules and find ways to succeed, roleplaying can be viewed as a microcosm of that process. By allowing individuals the freedom to embody whichever characters they desire and placing them in bizarre, often drastic situations, roleplaying becomes a form of interpersonal problem-solving.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES

The three primary psychosocial results of the roleplaying process are *identity alteration*, *scenario building*, and the establishment of *communitas*. While most recreational roleplayers claim they game solely “for fun,” the deeper psyche responds to the process in remarkable ways.

IDENTITY ALTERATION

In identity alteration, the individual sets aside the “main” ego and adopts another. This new identity generally possesses qualities the original lacks or feels uncomfortable expressing in daily life, such as mastery of a particular skill or talent, exceptional charisma, remarkable beauty, a strong, capable physique, etc. The alterego alternately may fail to display characteristics the actual character possesses. The alternate identity allows the player to explore possibilities otherwise unavailable to him/her in the mundane world, such as possessing the ability to wield magic or master weapons or the influence to exert control over large-scale events.

The alterego developed over the course of a RPG may also reflect

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repressed or desirable character attributes previously unexplored by the player. Some gamers enjoy playing villains or thieves, finding pleasure in the ability to break rules and trick people. Others enjoy playing powerful heroes or influential aristocrats who wield immense power over others. These personality aspects articulate themselves through archetypes that players channel and adapt to their particular purposes. According to Carl Jung, our minds contain a certain set of archetypal symbols embedded within our psyches from the inception of consciousness in the evolutionary process and that these symbolic systems possess fundamental, transcendental meanings. This collection of symbols arises from what he terms the *collective consciousness*. When individuals roleplay, they draw from this unconscious well of symbols in order to project a new, idealized self-image. This character may prove fundamentally flawed or imbalanced, but gamers will rarely choose to embody someone less remarkable than themselves.

The adoption of the alternate identity allows the player to fulfill several emotional needs. Characters who master a particular skill transfer the *feeling* of expertise to the player, regardless of that person's "real life" skill set. A warrior vanquishing a dragon confers upon the player the elation of an earned victory, even if that success was won by rolling dice or playing rock-paper-scissors. A socialite who wins the esteem of a high-ranking member of the alternate world experiences the triumph of increased social status. Gamers enjoy a strange symbiotic relationship with their characters, as they experience the game world both subjectively and objectively; in some sense, what occurs in-game transpires for the players as well, however detached they might try to remain.

Some gamers use the relatively safe world of roleplaying for personal investigation, allowing their alternate identities to truly take on a life of their own. These players may spend hours out-of-character pondering the psychological and spiritual development of their alteregos and discussing their findings with others. These players heavily invest themselves in their character's timelines, often creating elaborate back-stories or artistic images to accompany the experience of the actual game. The alternate identity becomes a conduit for untapped secrets of the player's psyche and some players remain hyperaware of this process and proactive in their own self-analysis.

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The study of DID (Dissociative Identity Disorder) might help illuminate the underlying motivation for producing alternate identities. Children often adopt new personas in play as a pleasurable exercise, but why? The impulse to conform in day-to-day life is considered a psychic imposition to the child, who wishes to break free from the constraints of the imposed reality, often to relieve tension and anxiety. Children who experience intense traumatic moments at a young age will *dissociate*, or discover a way to mentally disconnect from themselves, their environment, and the people around them. Those who experience trauma on a regular basis will often create a new space in their minds to inhabit, and over time, that space will start to develop its own personality characteristics. The “alter” will take control of the body and bear the brunt of the traumatic situation, quarantining the painful memories so the main consciousness need not experience them.

Often, the alter possesses characteristics the main identity envies. For instance, Jamie is not Ms. Dakis’ original name and the alter “Jamie” only developed in adulthood, named after a particularly strong and beautiful dancer Dakis admired. The “Jamie” identity was capable of harnessing the strength to mediate between the others in her mind and thus took the role of Integrator. Alters have their “own name, memories, style of dress, speech pattern, handwriting, even physical ailments like headaches and allergies” (Steinberg and Schnall 108). Some alters will possess skills the main identity has no memory of learning, like the ability to speak a different language (111).

What can DID tell us about role-playing? As Goffman suggests, we perform different roles every day in everyday life. Maxine Steinberg, an expert on DID, insists:

Whether or not we switch roles easily between our “work” personality and our “private” personality, most of us experience this mild form of identity alteration in the course of ordinary life. These transitions are usually made consciously and perceived as being under our control and are not normally associated with amnesia and dysfunction. (105)

Thus, not only is switching between social roles necessary for day-to-day life, but perhaps fundamental to our psyches. As we mature,

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we perfect the social games, though on some level, our identity remains fragmented, as evidenced by the unconscious land of dreams and creative work.

Roleplaying is a form of self-conscious ego alteration in which the performers no longer change identities subtly, as they must do in the mundane world. Gamers become hyperaware of their own personality manifestations, adopting alternate vocal patterns, attitudes, and histories for their characters. Roleplayers experience something akin to a “double consciousness”; in-game decisions are made by the character, but the player is cognizant during the whole process and realizes the discrepancies and similarities between the behavior of the two selves. Immersion into character becomes even more intense when players physically “act out” their characters actions and don costuming in Live Action roleplaying games and at conventions.

SCENARIO BUILDING

Roleplayers often cite “problem solving” as their primary motivation for gaming. Not only does the game world allow them to embody someone they could never be in “real life” and possess attributes, abilities, and status they would normally be denied, but roleplaying campaigns force the players to find solutions to extraordinary challenges. Problems in the social sphere are often best handled through effective ego alteration: adopting the personality traits necessary for success. However, many challenges in role-playing occur in the realm of tactics. The Storyteller informs the players of the circumstances, such as setting, limitations, potential threats; the gamers must find ways around these problems using the limited skills and talents allotted by the system.

During in-game situations like combat, the play becomes “turn-based.” Players must decide swiftly how they will attempt to eliminate the threat. Choices made in these crisis situations may affect the timeline of the entire game and the individual players. In a sense, gaming allows players to act out potentially dangerous scenarios in a safe setting, presenting them with the opportunity to positively influence the situation. Many dismiss these narratives as “escapist” due to their

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speculative content and yet speculation itself offers fascinating possibilities for modeling real-world solutions.

Business modellers and military tacticians often prepare for future trends or complications by a process known as *scenario building*, “which seeks to give dramatic life to strategic plans by extending previous observations into predictions about the future” according to Richard Buchanan (Buchanan). He insists that scenario building is an ancient process, theorized by Greek and Roman philosophers by delineating possibilities through three distinct iterations:

First, we talk about what has happened, using the literary form of history to describe and explain actual events. Second, we talk about what could have happened, using the literary form of drama to portray conflict, express character, and demonstrate the probabilities and necessities that shape human action. Third, we talk about what could never happen, using the literary form of fantasy to probe ideas and ideals as well as loves, desires, fears, hatreds, and perversions in impossible settings that nonetheless give insight into human reality. (Buchanan)

Humans use storytelling as a means to understand the past and present and prepare for the future. Roleplaying takes this process a step further, allowing individuals to interactively engage with the narrative in a process of *continuous co-creation*. This creative output becomes useful not just in the game world, but also in the “real world,” as Jerzy Kociatkiewicz suggests:

. . . we have no direct access to any objective reality "out there," and our ideas about it are determined and mediated by our language, communication, and contacts with other players in the grand game of reality. RPGs therefore come out as simply being much more explicit in their presentation of participants *co-operating in creation* than is the case in the "usual" constructions of reality... the ideas taking shape in the common imagination of the session participants need not be dismissed as distant and disconnected from our everyday experiences. (Kociatkiewicz, my emphasis).

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COMMUNITAS

If we consider roleplaying as a form of continuous co-creation, than the process can be viewed as ritual in nature. The first anthropologist to truly acknowledge the significance of ritual behavior was Arnold Van Gennep, who published *The Rites of Passage* in 1909. Van Gennep delineated a stage theory in an attempt to describe the psychological effects of enacting ritual. He describes these three major phases in the following way: the *pre-liminal* phase, in which the individual or group symbolically separates from the previous world, the *liminal* (or threshold) rites, in which the individual or group encounters a powerful transition, and the *post-liminal*, in which the individual or group enacts certain ceremonies of incorporation and reintegration (Van Gennep 21). This theory provided future researchers such a Victor Turner with a model for understanding all ritual activities, regardless of the particular cultural significance individuals might place on specific symbols or performances. For Van Gennep, ritual functions as a means to transform the individual and – by extension – the group from one stage of social life to another. This process emphasizes a certain shedding of previous skin in preparation, entering a threshold into a new world, and returning/reintegrating with newly-gained knowledge through the experience.

For Victor Turner, the crossing of the threshold inherent in the first stage is not just metaphoric; the group itself creates a liminal space in which the individual loses all sense of previous ties to the self and the social structure. Whatever place in the hierarchy the individual might previously have occupied is temporarily negated through a series of ordeals and symbolic representations, and the entire group not only bears witness to this transformation, but takes part in a form of it themselves. Thus, ritual as Turner understands it represents not only a sense of personal psychological passage, but the building of community inherent in the enactment of the ritual itself, also known as *communitas*.

Roleplaying, like many other social performances, takes on a ritual character. The donning of costuming, applying of makeup, and travel to the gaming space all enhance the process of separation from the

mundane and entrance into the liminal space.¹ In-game, a player whose real-life occupation may be a janitor can become King or Storyteller; status hierarchies are reformulated based on seniority, game knowledge, force of will, and actions in-character. At the end of the ritual, the original social roles resume, but the group has established a newfound experiential understanding of each other and themselves, of the game world and of the real. Lessons are learned, bonds are broken and reformed, and life is breathed into new creations.

CONCLUSION

This paper has provided a general overview of the scope of roleplaying environments in varying contexts, focusing specifically on commercially-produced RPGs intended for “leisure.” Though gaming can indeed be enjoyable, this ritual practice possesses the potential for far-reaching psychological effects and remains a powerful vehicle for expression. Individuals can explore deeper aspects of their own psyches through ego alteration, build scenarios for potential future crises through problem-solving, and establish a sense of communal cohesion through the liminal space of the game-world. Exposure to roleplaying games at any age can encourage collaborative creativity and enhance the experience of “real life” in its many facets.

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¹ Online games may not require the physical application of costuming, but the entrance into virtual reality certainly constitutes a liminal space.

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CORRESPONDENCE

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TRANCEPLAY

Experimental Approaches to Interactive Drama employing Experiential Trance

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ABSTRACT

As more multi-disciplinary cross-over occurs in using interactive drama in new contexts and as more work is being done in enhancing roleplay experience, rather, the experience of roleplay, using multi-media and multi-modal methods, equipment, and technique, the crossover into the actual experience of the scenario as if it were more realistic, not only at the level of gameplay, but at the level of experience becomes a new and interesting area of research. While it is unlikely we will see fully realized holodecks anytime soon, it is an interesting affective experience to utilize experiential trance and hyperempiric techniques to simulate and stimulate such experiences. The suspension of disbelief can be augmented within appropriate contexts so that the scenario is experienced as if it were real, appropriately real, following certain procedures to ensure a safe and pleasant roleplaying experience..

1. INTRODUCTION

Tranceplay is the combination of recreational guided storytelling, such as interactive drama roleplay, with experiential trance techniques to create an affective context wherein the participant feels as if the roleplayed experience is real, at the cognitive and feeling level. As

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interactive drama scenarios become more complex and as they compete with the growing sophistication of computer and table top based roleplaying games, this sort of experimental experiential trance based roleplay becomes more interesting. It is certainly not common nor is it particularly mainstream, but the experimental approaches to interactive drama are quite interesting in that they do reflect a growing aspect of the interactive drama experience.

Experimental approaches to making the interactive drama play experience more realistic at an affective level are not new, the Australian Short Sharp Scenario (SSS) freeforms of the 1980s certainly do reflect this experimental model (albeit at a more affectively limited level).

As more multi-disciplinary cross-over occurs in using interactive drama in new contexts and as more work is being done in enhancing roleplay experience, rather, the experience of roleplay, using multi-media and multi-modal methods, equipment, and technique, the crossover into the actual experience of the scenario as if it were more realistic, not only at the level of gameplay, but at the level of experience becomes a new and interesting area of research.

While it is unlikely we will see fully realized holodecks anytime soon, it is an interesting affective experience to utilize experiential trance and hyperempiric techniques to simulate and stimulate such experiences. The suspension of disbelief can be augmented within appropriate contexts so that the scenario is experienced as if it were real, appropriately real, following certain procedures to ensure a safe and pleasant roleplaying experience.

This paper has been a response to a number of queries about my work with experiential trance for recreational roleplay and has been compiled by request. It is predominately a discussion based upon my own work employing experiential focused trance (hypnotic and otherwise) toward enhancing the affective experience of guided experiences in recreational, therapeutic, entertainment, and introspective meditative contexts. The paper is a discussion of multi-disciplinary approaches to experiential trance while touching upon particular use in the context of interactive drama.

Much of this paper is based upon a series of essays I have written for the trance, hypnosis, and neurolinguistic programming

practitioner community on my work with experiential trance as I have developed and taught these techniques for a number of years within a variety of contexts. A number of these essays originally appeared in post form in the *Life of Brian* blog archived online at <http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian> blog in the Experiential Trance category. Much of the informal language and structure of the original discussion is preserved here. For this presentation, these essays have been topically arranged here rather than chronologically. The bibliography provides further references for those wishing to explore the subject further.

Note that some specific sources are mentioned but not fully cited in the text but are rather referenced in category collections in the bibliography. This citation format is used to preserve flow within the paper as well as original textual form.

2. TRANCEPLAY

One of the best metaphors for the tranceplay experience is as an imaginative holodeck such as the recreational computer simulations found in the *Star Trek* television programs in which the characters enter into a game world in which everything feels as if it is real – physically and affectively. With tranceplay, the experience of the holodeck is simulated using experiential focused trance or experiential hypnosis in which the mind perceives the story and events to be real and even experiences them at fully-realized sensory levels of taste, touch, hearing, sight, as well as emotionally and more but the experience is simulated and created mentally. Another literary similarity might be the recreational experiences of the characters in the film *Total Recall* or even the memory replacement and adjustments found in the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (albeit, less nefariously so). Of course, our goals when incorporating experiential trance with the interactive drama or other recreational guided story experience is to do so safely and within limits to enhance the experience of the roleplay or story but to do so without any interference or dangers (safeguards are easily put into place as the mistakes and problems of the film world are more cinematic than realistic – particularly when we take into account Hull’s “hidden observer” phenomenon as well as the recreational context of the

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experience, more akin to that of the stage hypnotist's entertainment than the therapist's couch, a context that allows the mind to adapt very healthily to the experience.

2.1 TRANCEPLAY: HYPNOTIC HOLONOVELS AND GAMES AND ART (TRANCE-BASED VIRTUAL REALITY)

Discussing a response to his book on using hyperempiria/hypnosis for consensual adult sexual imagery, Dr. Don Gibbons wrote in the Hypnosis Technique Exchange:

Voila, mes amis. We have all the mastery we need right now to knock the socks off of Hollywood! We can not only guide our participants through an experience of being Harry Potter jousting on his broom, or Indiana Jones in pursuit of hidden treasure, or Juliet on her balcony, or anything else the participant would care to experience, we can also tell them how it will feel, how it will be remembered, and how much they will enjoy (and want to repeat) this kind of experience. And, just as a little child needs to be cautioned, as I was at that age, "It's only a movie," so that they don't become too frightened or otherwise emotionally involved, we can caution our participants in the same way so that the experience does not affect their personality in the same way that a therapeutically-motivated one might.

Gibbons is the author of a number of books and papers on hyperempiria, to be discussed more fully later in this paper.

Take a look at the following discussions related to using hypnosis to intensify experience related to literature, games, and roleplay . . . an hypnotic holosuite a la *Star Trek*, if you will:

- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2004/07/vicarius_exper.html
- <http://www.briandavidphillips.com/scrypnosis/rpg.html>
- <http://www.briandavidphillips.com/scrypnosis/reality.html>

- <http://www.geocities.com/dibragerowtcom/realityr.htm>

Do keep in mind that while some of this may not jibe with one's own ideas about appropriate, the basic concepts are worth consideration.

I have used the "*vicarious memory machine*" technique on a number of times to increase a subject's experience of films, photographs, or prose fiction. For those familiar with my MP3s, the DTM Memory Machine piece at <http://www.briandavidphillips.com> is based in part on this process, albeit my personal experience has been more successful with face-to-face sessions to establish the trigger into the experience (although a few folks have reported good results with the audio recording alone . . . I would be interested in feedback from those who use it). The basic technique is to place a person into somnambulism (high imaginative involvement within a trance-based experience) and to create an affective link to the experience (for instance "the images you are watching are your own memories of an experience, or you are experiencing everything and feel everything the character is feeling" and the like), that link carries visual, auditory and sensory hallucinations including everything from kinesthetic hallucinations of feeling movement or touch and the like to taste and smell . . . full on hypersensory experience. While I do NOT recommend doing this with realistic war movies or the like, it has been done with a number of video games (for someone like me, our television is a home theatre setup with surround sound DTS and dolby and the works with a large projection screen so when you're playing a PS2 or X-Box game with an hypnotic hyperaffective link to the experience, it can be very very powerful . . . particularly when using First Person Shooter type games . . . ALWAYS have rider suggestions to remind the person THIS IS ONLY A GAME and that if at any time the experience becomes too intense they can dissociate from it easily and quickly . . . I also strongly suggest giving rider suggestions of SAFETY, COMFORT, AND PLEASANT ENJOYMENT of this UNUSUAL AND FASCINATING experience. You really don't want to repeat David Brager's initial mistake of telling someone he sees a Balrog with no safety suggestions or you might end up having to look for them under every bush in the neighborhood, not to mention the laundry bill from cleaning their shorts. Brager first wrote of his experiments with using experiential type hypnosis with

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roleplaying games with an example of a negative and poorly setup experiment in which he had hypnotized a trance partner to take on the persona of a warrior and then gave the fellow the suggestion that the tree in front of him was now a Balrog. Rather than an experiential imaginary heroic battle as Brager had expected, the “warrior” turned and fled in a blind panic. Brager did not even know what a Balrog “was” at the time and he had not installed positive rider experience suggestions or safety controls to allow the trance partner to know he could terminate or tone down the experience at any time he felt uncomfortable or that it was too intense. While most people will react appropriately to suggestions within a context that is comfortable for them (many studies have backed this up), there are a few who are so gifted with trance states that they allow themselves to uncritically accept suggestions they might normally prefer not to – in that they take on the suggestions before filtering them for comfort. So, it is important to phrase things and contextualize them appropriate to the context. By creating playful rider suggestions and the like, then negative abreactions or responses are less likely to occur. Of course, making sure the person guiding the experience is both an engaging storyteller and director as well as a competent hypnotist is also important.

ALWAYS USE SAFEWORDS AND AUTOMATIC SWITCHES TO A DETACHED EXPERIENCE OR SANCTUARY FEELING, regardless of whether or not YOU feel there would be anything untoward in the images, the participant needs to be able to stop it at any time just like *Star Trek* characters saying “*Computer, End Program.*” Engage safeties and give full control of the experience levels to the players, so to speak.

Seriously, rider safety and comfort suggestions are very important and NEVER push a person’s comfort levels. So, while it might be very interesting to you to have your significant other experience a lesbian threesome via this technique by watching the newest *Lesbian Leather Fetish Bad Girls in Bondage* video in state, if she has no bicurious interests she’s going to be pretty pissed at you for throwing the tape in. Likewise, if you’re uncomfortable with your spouse having virtual hypnotic sex with Ron Jeremy or some other porn stud then either suggest that the other performer in the video is you for the sake of the experience or DON’T use that sort of material and stick to interesting hypnotic affective experiences of the latest *National Geographic* or

IMAX nature vista film. Yes, for the adult material, one really DOES feel a physical sensation . . . for all aspects of the material, what the mind sees it then creates full sensory effects to coincide. This is also true for other types of material, of course.

However, once you've got the basics down, the method is quite easy and works very well with many people. Not everyone experiences full-on hypnotic hallucinations the first go, but most will experience heightened pleasure and imaginative involvement with the material that makes it worthwhile to them.

My process is usually to start with the Phillips-Elman hypnotic induction (an adaptation of the classic Elman rapid induction that I have developed and use in my own sessions as well as teach in trainings that I conduct), that's often my default start for most trancework and then to test for imaginative involvement and critical factor bypass through an eyes-open number amnesia suggestion. "When I count to three, your eyes open and you have forgotten the number six." When I've established that they have indeed lost the number six, pop 'em back down (really, just eyes closed as they're already hooked in and having the eyes open or closed does not change that level imaginative involvement, albeit since most folks expect to close their eyes, I let them). Then I run through a series of tests and demonstrations geared toward increasing imaginative involvement and hypnotic response to suggestions specifically to elicit sensory attachment and hallucinations of various types. Sight, sound, smell, taste, the whole shebang. The baby purple fairie dragon resting on the palm of your hand is a good one in that it is cute and unusual and you can attach different senses to the illusion and build response (yes, the old stage hypnosis "bird" gag is the inspiration . . . but I like purple and I like dragons . . . they lend a magickal quality to the experience I enjoy). Once I've done these setups and built sensory response, I will do my suggestions for the vicarious experiential memory machine which is really the visually-oriented deep trance identification experience . . . or, if you want a science fiction metaphor . . . a hypnotic holosuite . . . we don't have full-on holographic technology a la *Star Trek* yet but we can recreate the experience in our minds via trancework and that's pretty gosh-darned kool.

BTW, this isn't just appropriate to the folks looking for hyper/hypno-sex (which is what a whole bunch of folks reading my

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original treatment of this process were looking to get to along with the interactive drama or fully realized roleplay contexts) or to enhance their gaming or cinematic or literary experiences. It can have therapeutic or intuitive uses as well. It can be used as a form of Deep Trance Identification via visual stimulus. When working with a young man who is a competitive swimmer, I used a similar method where he brought in videos of worldclass swimmers performing the strokes he wished to work on. Using the hypnotic processes and triggers I taught him, he was able to enter state and watch the videos very intensely while experiencing muscle movements (although his body never moved) and imaginative involvement. We then did a collapse burst process whereby I counted backwards from twenty to one and with each number his imagination ran the entire series of videos in his head and he felt the entire series of muscle movements automatically with each number so it happened very quickly in his imagination but it was complete . . . when I reached the number one, his imagination took the suggestion that the entire set would burst or explode into his subconscious as a natural automatic system when actually swimming. Using the process, he was able to markedly improve his performance in competitive swimming events (albeit, he still had to practice). He now has a habit of entering state whenever he enters the pool and just enjoying the feeling of letting himself automatically complete every move and he now swims very naturally and in a far superior fashion to previous performance.

I do believe that the imaginative involvement is easier to achieve for this sort of eyes-open hypnotic experience with videos or films or video games than with photographs or prose but they are still useful. For interactive drama, costumes and rudimentary props are very helpful in creating setpoints or handles for the mind to play off of to then create fully realized experiential imaginative experiences. For the young man who wished to improve his Tai-Chi skill levels used, I initially used a book with a photoset of a master doing all the moves and ran the process with the subject so that as he looked at every photograph in turn he could feel the process and that each move would simply occur naturally as part of an automatic response system. He could really feel his muscles reacting to the suggestion. In his class the next week, his master remarked that he had progressed in a single week well past anyone he'd seen before. To the teacher, it was suddenly as if he were performing at a

level of someone who had been practicing for five years when just a couple weeks before he had been progressing at a very slow rate and was considered a rank beginner, and a slowly progressing one at that.

While this demonstrated to me that photographic sets can be used, and I've used similar approaches for other skills, when the young man moved to videos, his progress was even further. I do use a single photograph approach with this process with Tarot decks for folks wishing to explore them for intuitive imagery and the like but the endgame and goals are different so the process is more freeform and visionary (of interest to some of our readers, the Tarot Trance process I have developed is actually inspired by the fantasy novels of Piers Anthony).

For an initial experience with videogames and this sort of hypnotic conditioning, I'd suggest snowboarding or the like or say something like *Crimson Skies* on the X-Box without an opponent (then let the person experience virtual flying, assuming there are no phobic issues involved). I would not jump into a game of *Halo 2* in *Full-On Violence and Blood Bath Nightmare Extreme* difficulty mode in the first go (although once a trance partner has appropriately gained experiential trance practice and skill with appropriate controls in place that remind one that the experience is not to simulate horror or the reality of war or the like but rather to stimulate adrenalin in much the same way amusement park rides do so).

Of course, one can achieve a great deal of the same results without the difficulty of eyes-open hypnotic affective processes simply by using somnambulism and eyes-closed hypnosis with imagery . . . in much the same way many of the guided imagery scripts I've written and published in a number of forums are structured. However, I also like to play with new approaches and effects and find this to be one worth a go.

I would be VERY interested to learn how others approach this same sort of concept. I know there are a number of folks here with similar interests . . . so, it might make for an interesting discussion for all of us . . . even though our specific takes on the process or goals of the experience may be different.

I've pretty much explained the premise and spilled most of my secrets here so folks with the background should be able to find the basic concepts enough to get started on their own. If there's enough interest,

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perhaps I'll finally run that hypnotic roleplaying game seminar a few folks have been asking for – contact me if you're interested in further discussion or even the experience itself.

2.2 TRANCEPLAY WORKSHOPPING: IMPROVISATIONAL CREATIVE PLAYFULNESS AND HYPNOTIC INDUCTION AND IMAGERY

On 16 January 2005, the Taipei Experimental Hypnosis Workshop held a meeting with the topic of *TRANCEPLAY (Improviseational Creative Playfulness and Hypnotic Induction and Imagery)*.

The Taipei Experimental Hypnosis and Trancework Workshop is the largest English-language hypnosis practice group in Taiwan.

For this session, the workshop expanded upon some of the things we established previously with our discussion and practice in *improviseational creation of instant and rapid inductions* by delving into **Tranceplay: Improvisational Creative Playfulness and Hypnotic Induction and Imagery**.

As instructor, I reviewed the principles of instant and rapid hypnotic inductions and then we will PLAY by applying these principles in creative ways. Dave Elman once said that ANYTHING can become a hypnosis induction and we will PLAY with the truth behind that statement so we can and will create your own instant and rapid inductions and we will all share our own “creations” with the group! Once you grasp the principles, you will find it is very simple and a lot of fun! It should be very enjoyable for all of us.

In order to facilitate the idea of playfulness and creativity – the ability to improvise methods in any context – I introduced the group to a number of hypnosis training and practice games. The first two were Robert Anue's *Zebu* playing card set for learning and practicing Ericksonian hypnosis language patterns. The second was Trevor Silvester's *Wordweaving* game and concept which can be adapted to Ericksonian or direct approaches. Third, I taught the group a couple games of my own design for fostering improviseational and creative approaches to hypnosis. The games themselves are playful but the principles and experience can then be taken into any hypnotic context.

The relevant games were *Improvise Trancercise Hypnotize* (an induction game for creating instant and rapid inductions on the spot based upon a creative challenge system), *Trance Tag* (a fast-paced imagery creation experiential game), and *Trance-based RPG* (a roleplaying game using trance experience).

2.3 VIRTUAL REALITY PREPARES SOLDIERS FOR REAL WAR

Jose Antonio Vargas has written an excellent piece for *Washington Post* on how [Virtual Reality Prepares Soldiers for Real War](#). More and more, the military used video games - particularly first person shooters - to prepare soldiers for actual combat. More and more young men are attracted to the military because of combat video games. Many active duty soldiers compare their real life combat experiences to their gaming experiences and feel the real war work is an extension of the gaming or at the least the gaming prepared them to react immediately in their real life encounters. The comment by retired Marine Col. Gary W. Anderson, former chief of staff of the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, that today's soldiers, having grown up with first-person shooter games long before they joined the military, are the new Spartans is very insightful and seems to be exactly part of what these young men are experience . . . albeit, perhaps less intentionally as in Spartan culture.

The idea that simulations hone skills is an important one, particularly given what we now know about mirror neurons which imply that even observed skills enhance observer skill use but when someone has empathy or experiential emotional involvement in the activity or simulation it becomes even more powerful. This obviously relates to what I do with [experiential trance](#), albeit I've never worked with someone for soldiering skills or combat (actually, I would be very cautious about experiential trance methods for such training unless one follows the safety precautions I've discussed here before). Experiential trance added to gaming makes the experience seem very very real so combat games would be more realistic at not only the visual level (stereoscopic gaming helps that) but also at the emotionally experienced level.

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Vicarious experience can be very powerful and experiential trance based simulations more so. I am currently unaware of anyone using experiential trance in this context but would imagine it would be helpful as long as the safeguards are in place and the experience is monitored by an appropriately qualified individual. Rider suggestions would be very important. I would not recommend that sort of program at this time unless it were designed with those riders and safeguards in mind.

3. HYPEREMPIRIA

Hyperempiria, the term, was coined by Dr. Donald Gibbons to describe the state of trance and the modality he developed to reach it. Conceptually, many people consider hypnosis to be a relaxed state – this is erroneous but quite pervasive, even among hypnotists – but Gibbons developed a trance induction that relied upon active awareness rather than relaxation. Within this state of aware trance he found he was able to suggest physical and sensory sensations that were experienced as if they were real but within a very active context. Others consider this to be merely a form of hypnosis with a suggested awareness state. I consider hyperempiria to be a form of experiential hypnosis. However, Gibbons maintains it is substantially enough different from what is traditionally considered hypnosis to require or deserve a particular descriptive term, a conclusion I do not disagree with.

3.1 WHAT IS HYPEREMPIRIA?

On the Hypnosis Technique Exchange, the following is asked:

What the hell is hyperempiria? and what can it be used for?

While this is not a very endearing way to ask a question, here's a go at a simple and straightforward answer in my very own rambling and obtuse style.

In any case, there are a number of ways you can find some good solid high content little noise information about hyperempiria via the

technique exchange list and elsewhere. Do keep in mind, that the search functions of the group may not be the best but they do work well enough to get an idea if a subject has been discussed before, especially if it's been discussed very recently such as hyperempiria (albeit, we're always happy to talk about new aspects of a topic to add to our understanding and knowledge - not so much interested in rehashing the same old same old over and over though), and barring that, Google is still pretty easy to use for most folks.

For those who might be less familiar with it, hyperempiria is a focused trance modality similar in many respects to traditional hypnosis with hyperacuity or heightened sensory experience. Gibbons, the "hyperempiria guy" characterizes it as "hypnosis awakened" or "alert hypnosis" on his webpages and that's a pretty fair take on it.

There are some differences in how the induction is run (rather than using relaxation or inward focusing patten as done with many of the classic hypnosis inductions, the hyperempiric induction uses sensory extension and the like and rather than using simple relaxation to tie into trance it uses heightened awareness). Personally, I feel there are other ways to achieve the same outcome but this is one very interesting approach in and of itself. I also feel that it is a form of formal focused trance just as classical formal hypnosis is, but given a tendency by some to think of hypnosis as a relaxed state, it is useful to differentiate focused trance that utilized heightened awareness with a different term. If you eliminate the idea of relaxation from the equation and consider focused trance to be "guided intensified imaginative involvement to bypass the critical factor of the conscious mind and establish appropriate selective thinking via forms of influence and suggestion through formal and informal ritual induction procedures within variable contexts for entertainment, recreational, therapeutic and educational objectives" as I do then the imaginative involvement and critical factor bypass and selective thinking via suggestion are all that really matters . . . the rest become breeds of focused trance rather than species. However, when discussing one general approach compared to another, the differentiation based upon type becomes useful . . . just as the notion of depth is useful in some ways and less useful in others. It's all about using the models in a helpful way rather than proving the models as absolute.

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In any case, hyperempiria has become something rather in fashion of late and a number of the concepts are valuable to anyone doing trancework of whatever modality.

First, go to

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HypnosisTechniqueExchange/messages> and do a search for hyperempiria and you will find a number of posts in the archives that discusses the use of this process.

Second, go to

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HypnosisTechniqueExchange/files/> and download the book *Hyper-Sex* by Don Gibbons, PhD, which is a discussion of use of hyperempiria for consenting adult couples both for therapeutic and recreational sexuality enhancement. However, please do not download this book unless you're actually going to read it . . . and, if you read it, you MUST send feedback to Gibbons. He was kind enough to upload it here for folks to read but only in so far as they would provide feedback as he goes through the re-editing process for the new edition. You will want to also read the various posts by Gibbons in the group's archives related to hyperempiria (he kindly posted a couple advanced articles on this and other subjects as well). Be sure to let him know how useful or not you have found the material.

Third, as you are asking specifically about hyperempiria, then I would suggest going to the horse's mouth. Don Gibbons wrote about hyperempiria formally many moons ago and his books on the subject are still considered the classics on the subject. Go to the hyperempiria pages at <http://hometown.aol.com/gibbonsdon/> and read the FAQ. You might also want to get one or the other of the seminal works by Gibbons either "*Applied Hypnosis and Hyperempiria*" or "*Experience as an Art Form*" both of which are available from [Amazon](#) and other online booksellers (albeit, I would suggest the "*Experience as and Art Form*" book would be more appropriate to your needs as your description of your experience levels and your questions implies a more basic understanding of trancework. Actually, the *Hyper-Sex* book in the files section at the Hypnosis Technique Exchange is probably even closer to your understanding levels (while it is not a general book and is intended specifically for erotic recreational or therapeutic applications, the concepts are easily applied to more vanilla pursuits).

Fourth, there are a few posts that either mention or are about hyperempiria and similar subjects on the Life of Brian blog:

- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2005/01/t_r_a_n_c_e_p_l.html
- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2004/09/hyperacuity_and.html
- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2003/11/sex_trance_or_h.html
- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2004/07/hypnosis_for_in.html
- http://briandavidphillips.typepad.com/brian/2004/12/interested_in_e.html

Fifth, read a post by Wilma Keppel on Informal Hyperempiria 101 on a couple of the general trancework discussion lists and crossposted by the author to the Hypnosis Technique Exchange and READ IT.

That seems like a full enough response to your question . . . for now.

Also, I'm working on some scripts for myself (for studying, insomnia, etc), and I'm wondering how I can induce somnambulism in myself...

Personally, I am of the persuasion that unless someone is already an experienced hypnotist who knows how to guide others into somnambulism or a natural somnambule who goes happily into somnambulism at the drop of a hat, the best route for this is to find a real live hypnotist and have them guide you into real hypnosis - not just relaxation, but the real deal - and then have 'em give a posthypnotic suggestion that makes it easy to return to the state. Gerry Kein has a wonderful protocol for establishing somnambulistic self-hypnosis that I highly recommend. To get somnambulism reliably (the key word is "reliably"), one just be an experienced and competent hypnotist. Learn to do the work, get some real training and appropriate experience. Don't just read about it, do it . . . preferably in a guided setting with a good quality competent trainer. Once you've got that, then Kein's protocol or that of another high quality teacher will take you a loooonnnng ways to

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consistent and reliable high-quality results. However, be sure to learn to walk before you start trying to fly. In my opinion.

You could also go to my webpages at <http://www.briandavidphillips.com> and learn quite a bit about focused trance, hypnosis, guided imagery, and a whole lot more. Or, join my workshop group in Taipei (in English). If you would like to take part in a formal seminar or workshop on trancework, hypnosis, or hyperempira, contact me. The same goes for anyone interested in professional hypnosis, guided imagery, focused trance or entertainment hypnosis services (see my webpages for information).

3.2 HYPERACUITY AND HYPEREMPIRIA

Hyperacuity is the heightened sensitivity of the senses. This is often found in trance subjects and can be increased through the use of suggestion (a few folks have done some really interesting work with blindfolds and hearing or with sight and memory).

Hyperempira is a system based on suggestions of enhanced awareness, mind expansion, and increased alertness and sensitivity. It is often presented with a general hyperempiric induction followed by imagery of some sort.

The primary source for information on hyperempira is Don E. Gibbons who wrote the seminal works on the method.

The inductions by Gibbons are pretty straightforward. His take on “*imaginative involvement*” as a factor in hypnosis is very very much worth taking a look at.

Applied Hypnosis and Hyperempira . . . this is the most formal of his books. There are a number of example session models as well as numerous approaches for a wide range of issues.
Experience as an Art Form: Hypnosis, Hyperempira, and the Best Me Technique . . . this one is shorter than the former and repeats the basic material. The *Best Me* approach is a mnemonic by Gibbons for approaching issues. There are new example scripts and session models.

Hyper-Sex: The Sublime Art of Sexual Suggestion. . . Gibbons found out that his graduate students were taking the hyperempiria approach and applying it in a way he had not thought of . . . sex and sexual fantasy . . . it always amazes me the number of folks who are professional hypnotists who have no idea this stuff can be used in an erotic context among consenting adults (I was talking once with a friend who is an experienced hypnotist and certified trainer and mentioned a twist on an erotic induction I had seen that I liked and would give a go and he was at first shocked that anyone would or could use hypnosis that way . . . then he begged me to teach him how . . . any hypnotist should be able to wrap their head around this concept and figure it out but so many think there's some magic fairy dust to the whole process). So, digressions in porn aside . . . Gibbons was a bit inspired by his students and he looked into it and "experimented" . . . this book has erotic session script models and ideas. I haven't read the entire book, it's hard to find, but I have about sixty pages of material Gibbons posted from the book at various times. If you have either of the first books, you can figure it out. It is not rocket science but it certainly is fun science.

Other than what Gibbons has written, there isn't really a lot out there on hyperempiria (aka hyper-empiria). You will find he's written a few journal papers as well but the basic book is fine.

My take is that the technique isn't difficult at all and that there are easier more straightforward ways to get the effect, once you wrap your head around it and really get a feel what you're doing, so will your subjects . . . albeit, I did enjoy reading the Gibbons material and found it provided me with several touchstones as jumping off points for playing with some interesting ideas . . . and if something inspires you to play around a bit, then it's good stuff.

3.3 MULTIMODAL HYPEREMPIRIA

More on hyperempiria . . . a process that works well for a wide variety of trancework contexts . . . therapeutic imagery and changework, simple recreational relaxation and imaginary freedom, entertainment, and more.

In an essay posted to the [Hypnosis Technique Exchange](#), Dr. Don Gibbons wrote about some very interesting therapeutic and recreational adaptations or processes for *Multimodal Hyperempiria* which incorporates imagery of film as therapeutic jumpstart. If you are unfamiliar with hyperempiria and it's applications for therapy, changework, recreation, and plain ol' entertainment, take a look at the umpteen million posts I've made on this and related subjects, starting with this simple answer to the question of [What Is Hyperempiria?](#) and that will get you started with links to other discussions with some very powerful and incredibly unique applications (all of my posts to this blog related to the topic are here. If you're unfamiliar with Gibbons, he is the man who coined the term hyperempiria and began the first formal discussion of this type of induction. While I tend to use the term in reference to highly associated suggested sensory experiences, there may be some variations in our approaches.

In any case, as part of my response to the essay by Gibbons where he discussed using a suggested sensory association into a scene from the film *Black Beauty* for a therapeutic change, I suggested some further adaptation for both therapeutic and recreational trance work . . .

Gibbons, if you have access to an X-Box or a PS2 or some other console game or computer game, you might give a variation of the film piece you did a try. First setup a posthypnotic reinduction trigger that when they begin playing the game, they will become associated to the character in the game so that they experience everything the character experiences.

Now, be sure to setup positive rider suggestions so everything is appropriately experienced as a fun game and positive recreational activity, we don't want anyone REALLY experiencing exploding ships or zombie attacks.

I would suggest start with something simple but nonviolent to get a feel for how to handle the environment.

When playing X-Box Live, I put in my copy of *Crimson Skies* and did a session with someone to experience that game. Of course, as that game involves a LOT of flying and aerial combat I didn't want to associate anyone into real dogfights or the like that become hyper-real in hyperempirical or hyperacute hypnotic experiences, so we setup the game to dogfight mode and I ran one plane just to fly around and the subject was in the other plane and he experienced real flying and real maneuvers without the added initial stress of dodging bullets or missiles.

Obviously, never do this with someone who has a fear of flying or of heights (use hypnotherapy or the like and get rid of those issues first) albeit, it is a real eye opener as ratification of therapeutic success for those who used to have such fears to show them how successful they have been.

For the daring, once they've gone through initial experience training, you can switch to simple combat mode with suggestions that it's just a really intense and fun game just as a roller coaster is perfectly safe but very exciting.

It is very immersive and very experiential.

Of course, you could also do the visual association method with a film or video . . . with the appropriate person, have them watch the film and then associate the experiences and feelings of the subject to one character in the video . . . appropriately, of course . . . also with the positive rider suggestions. Those who wish to do modelling work could model via video in this way . . . I have used it with very good results for folks working on Tai-Chi, Aikido, swimming, dance, skiing, and running skills . . . for deep trance identification type work, it really is a wonderful tool (works with photo books as well, one young man who used a series of photos of martial arts moves felt as if his muscles had gone through intense workout after the experience) . . . for recreation, it can be a thrilling experience . . . depending upon film choice . . . let the person being hypnotized choose the film though . . . while you may like the "artistic" and highly entertaining "*Leather Bound Bisexual Babes in Prison*" . . . your straight and decidedly non-bicurious wife may not want to be "surprised" by such an experience. :-) Very bad idea for a

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relationship to slip in that sort of surprise. However, there are plenty of interesting experiences that can be shared and experimented with that would be very welcome for many folks.

As I have discussed this type of an approach to trancework and exactly how to achieve it in the past, folks are free to explore the archives for more . . . I am creating a category link specifically for hyperempiric type entries to make searches more convenient as I do seem to post on this a lot . . . see [Hyperempiria, Hyperacuity, and Suggested Amplified Sensory Association](#).

If anyone else does the videogame or film bit, please let me know. I include it in the SET (Society of Experiential Trance) curriculum and demonstrated it as part of a modelling technique in one of my recent workshops with a young man who studies Tai-Chi so at least the folks participating in that could see how it works (and interview him afterwards regarding what he felt in his body and how his muscles feel during the process - quite “worked out” as part of my process is to have him associate into the person in the video and then close his eyes and “as I count from twenty down to one, with each number I say, it feels as if you have done the entire form ten times, and at the last number, this knowledge and experience becomes a permanent part of yourself, twenty, etc.”). I haven’t taught this as a “recreational” activity . . . yet (sometimes I do regret not moving to LA as we have considered as the possibilities for certain types of workshops - even of a couples affirming nature as I present it - are limited here . . . honestly, while I LOVE a lot about living here, there is so much very kool very powerful stuff I would love to do live workshops on and share with real live persons that aren’t really possible in context here and now so I have to content myself with writing and sharing in other less immediately gratifying ways) . . . but I have done “personal” research and the results can be quite . . . um . . . interesting. I would be very interested in the experiences of others in this regard. I know a number of you are also gamers or enjoy a good film now and again, so if you could run an “experiment” with a willing cohort, your results would be of interest. Those who use the method as a DTI technique, I would also love to hear your results. It has worked very well with the folks I’ve worked with but I would like to know how it works for others.

Of course the “*Bisexual Leather-Bound Babes in Prison*” is not something you would want to spring on your wife . . . it’s not an experience anyone should “spring” on their wives as “springing” something like that inappropriately can lead to some very very bad juju in a relationship, not to mention potentially missing “members” the next time one falls asleep :-). . . but I am certain there are wives – and others – out there for whom a consensual experience of that type would be . . . interesting. However, such relationships are also of the non-”spring” on ‘em type.

In one of his later responses in the thread, Gibbons suggested that while the “*Bisexual Leather-Bound Babes in Prison*” experience may not be appropriate for most folks, he is certain that many men would find their wives would be a willing partner if they asked . . . as they are lying in bed together . . . whether or not their wives would like to go back and re-experience their wedding (wedding, not wedding night . . . that comes later).

While I agree with Gibbons that many wives would find this to be very worthwhile . . . it needs to be clear that one’s wife actually enjoyed the wedding before asking. Some folks may assume their wives had a wonderful wedding day but some women don’t. There are also a certain number of women who marry as part and parcel to their view that they are “settling” for this guy rather than marrying for love or other good feelings or reasons. In such a case, it might come as a shocker for the husband to discover that his wife doesn’t want to re-experience the wedding (whether or not she has now learned to love him despite her poor reasons for marriage). If you’re not absolutely certain that your wife had an incredibly wonderful experience when she married you (regardless of context or reasons for those feelings which may range from she just doesn’t like you to her mother objected to the color of the dresses).

So . . . as Gibbons says . . . ask.

If your wife is less than enthusiastic, then let her choose another event to relive or imagine or experience (real or imagined events are fine). DON’T PUSH IT as that’s a whole bad idea and a half. Sometimes feelings are private, so let them stay that way. If she wants to tell you why she likes this or that experience, she will.

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While I have great confidence that such an image would be fine with MY wife . . . :-)) . . . I've met some folks who have had godawful wedding experiences and even worse honeymoons. So, keep things context specific to your own relationship and experience.

For the appropriate persons . . . one could suggest reliving the wedding night but experiencing it in an even more positive, even more romantic, and much more passionate way. This can be done by future pacing to knowing the wonderful experiences in store for her or him that are now a shared past and knowing that by rekindling this passionate flame that even more wonderful experiences are in store for the future . . . and escalate those feelings, really make 'em "wow" feelings through building suggestions and even simple count ups "as I count from one to ten, with each number, feel this wonderful passion, romance, and dynamic positive feeling much more powerfully, really feel it double with each number as the love washes through you and around you within you and through you . . . one, etc." and when you get to the last number do a "ten, explode, feel your entire, body, mind, and spirit explode with joy, explode with love, explode with passion, EXPLODE, etc." or whatever. It's kind of like the recent announcements from James Cameron that he will no longer make 2D films but that all of his new movies will be produced in full stereoscopic 3D and from George Lucas that he is also producing 3D films and that beginning in 2007, he is going to re-release all of the *Star Wars* films in enhanced versions in full stereoscopic 3D . . . so too with consensual hypnotic enhancement of positive memories . . . why settle for simply reliving an old experience when you can really relive it in a full-on raging passionate WOW experience!

Gibbons suggests that when a couple explore this process in the context of re-living a wedding, one can then note that with the love and romance at the highest possible level, one can then easily move on to the wedding night experience and re-experience it too, prefaced with what he would suggest as all the aphrodisiac enhancement that a blissful wedding experience can bring to the heart of a woman.

See my statements above regarding context and individual response to the setting. Either be sure to enhance the experience to make certain it is a positive one you are amplifying or rewrite history as a romantic

imagery to emphasize the positive elements of the experience rather than the negative ones that may be in there.

Another thing you can do is a process I usually refer to as “open imagery” . . . I’ve talked about it here somewhere but can’t think of the specific reference off-hand with the description, surf the categories to find it . . . but, basically, do an open invitation to the subconscious to create a positive, romantic, passionate fantasy image that is experienced fully but which is undirected . . . the hypnotist partner simply suggests “in a moment, I will count from five to one and at the number one find yourself in a beautiful romantic passionate moment [note: you can add “with me” or leave it open, depending upon context] . . . real or imagined . . . fantasy or experienced . . . no need to think about it, your unconscious will provide a time, place, and context . . . and as you experience this moment, this special passionate loving moment or desire, passion, and raw sexual energy, allow yourself to experience it fully, feel what you feel in this fantasy, hear what you hear, smell, taste, experience everything within this special passionate moment **AS IF IT IS REAL AND HAPPENING RIGHT NOW** . . . as I count from five to one feel the passion and sexual energy building and building, stronger and stronger with each number, stronger than you have ever felt it before . . . five, etc.”

During the experience, the hypnotist can throw in deepening suggestions to increase the sensory depth and sensuality of the experience. However, at no time direct the experience. Don’t tell him or her what to experience, just deepen it. Then, as is often nice for many folks, after you’ve gone into it for awhile, throw in a “and as I count from one to five, with each number the sexual-romantic-passionate-whatever feelings increase [whatever is appropriate to the context - this is NOT a covert seduction technique, it is a consensual method for appropriate imagery within a context-specific relationship] and at the number five, explode” (there’s that word again) in whatever way is appropriate for the situation. Then do the count up, explode for the big climax, then “and as you . . . relax . . . let a gentle wave of love, romance, and gentle deep relaxing love wash over you and through you as it is now time to return to the here and now . . . as I count from one to five with each number coming back to the here and now

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remembering this wonderful positive experience and feeling comfortable, relaxed and deeply loved . . . etc”.

Then . . . shut up. IF she or he wants to talk about what exactly happened, then she or he will. If not, then shut up and let your partner have that private experience, you are reaping the benefits of the emotional experience and have provided your partner with a wonderful fantasy experience. Don't go pushing into the experience unless she or he is interested in sharing right then.

Certainly . . . never suggest other partners or the like or leave that possibility open for the imaginary experience if you're going to go all jealous on 'em later (sad but true . . . a fellow asked his wife to imagine making love with Brad Pitt and then he became rather jealous when she climaxed with Pitt in her imagination which caused him to feel that she had been cheating on him . . . it was his suggestion in the first place . . . but even if it hadn't been, treat these experiences as playful imaginary games and don't take them beyond the comfort level of both partners . . . this sort of thing should ONLY be used to strengthen your relationship not to create experiences that might weaken or destroy trust) . . . so, no “*Bisexual Leather-Bound Babes in Prison*” unless that is explicitly what both partners would be interested in and only if it's REALLY something both partners are absolutely comfortable with and be very very sure of that as there's no going back later. If you're not sure, it means “no” . . . if there's any doubt, then “no” . . . that means stick to vanilla monogamous fantasy . . . which can still be EXTREMELY rewarding. You can always try new things later when you're more secure in the method or with your relationship. In the meantime (or, forever, if that's your preference), enjoy the possibilities of just exploring one another's joy and happiness and passion with one another.

4. EXPERIENTIAL TRANCE AND VICARIOUS EXPERIENTIAL PROCESSES FOR FULLY REALIZED EXPERIENCE

Experiential trance is any form of focused trance or hypnosis in which the subject experiences suggestions as full-range sensory events. Suggested sights, sounds, smells, touches, tastes, and more are all

experienced as if they are real. I have found in my own work that if a trance partner can fully realize suggestions in this way they are more positive and long lasting in therapeutic terms and they are much more likely to engender positive recreational experiences. This is closely related to the phenomenon of focusing found in therapeutic cross-modality studies where it was found those who are more successful at FEELING their reactions to issues and ideas within their bodies are more likely to be successful in changework. However, for our purposes, experiential trance can be considered an effect of somnambulism, a “depth” of hypnotic trance in which suggestions are non-critically taken on board and accepted by the unconscious so that the experience is perceived as real. The suggestions given by a performance hypnotist are often of this nature (I have performed stage hypnosis shows of many types and normally consider such a depth the required minimum level of volunteer responsiveness).

4.1 EXPERIENTIAL HYPNOSIS

The “official” definition of *experiential* hypnosis as used by the Society of Experiential Trance (SET) is as follows:

Experiential Hypnosis . . . when the trance experience is so deep and so vivid and so powerful that a person experiences all of the suggestions as if they are happening right now! Experiential Hypnosis relies upon Instant and Rapid Hypnosis Induction techniques that take a person from full alert consciousness to complete deep trance in a matter of a few short minutes or instantly, right then, right there, right now. These powerful techniques can be used within any context . . . entertainment, recreation, therapy, changework . . . and more. Any context. Learn how to instantly create deep trance phenomena and how to deepen the experience as you guide others into very vivid and very powerful trance that can lead to wonderful recreational experiences or very powerful permanent positive change. Dr. Brian David Phillips is a recognized leading internationally known expert in Experiential Hypnosis based

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upon very powerful and very very fast instant and rapid deep hypnosis techniques that lead to powerfully realized and fully experienced trance states including fully experienced regression, parts therapy, and imagery so vivid it is experienced as if it is completely real . . . right now in the present moment . . . all of which can be utilized for recreation, entertainment, education, or therapeutic permanent positive change. This is the real deal. In addition to being a fully hands-on competence-based comprehensive instruction in Experiential Hypnosis, this course can lead to full certification with the Society of Experiential Trance for those who pass the final competence component. Join us. Seating is limited. First come, first served. Don't miss out on your opportunity to learn and experience full Experiential Hypnosis with an acknowledged master. Beginning and advanced hypnotists are all welcome.

4.2 VICARIOUS EXPERIENTIAL MEMORY MACHINE PROCESS

Vicarious Experiential Memory Machine . . . real experiences through Hypnotic Games and Films and Literature and Entertainment . . . and a whole lot more!

You want to play a game? How about if you could play a video game or watch a movie or look at a photo album or read a good story and really feel like you are really in the action . . . that what you are seeing on the screen or page is actually happening, right there, right here, right then, right now . . . to you? The ultimate virtual reality entertainment protocol may just be helped along with trancework.

Through hypnosis . . . real hypnosis, not just imagination . . . this is entirely possible. Been there, done that.

Once, on the Marknosis email list, the question of using hypnotic language within a game as well as using hypnosis as a frame for a game in order to increase the player's associated experience while playing the game came up and this happens to be something I am very interested in. I also have some modicum of experience experimenting with just this issue.

I love video games and I love games and I love hypnosis.

When I first started playing with the “*Vicarious Experiential Memory Machine*” games and hypnosis was one of the areas I was interested in, albeit in terms of using hypnosis to intensify the game playing experience rather than using games to induce hypnosis.

Basically, the idea behind my approach is similar to the old stage hypnosis bit with the *voodoo doll* where the subjects are hypnotized to feel and do everything they see the doll do. I then used it with television so that the subject would feel and experience everything on the screen as if it's her own memory (okay, some of the early experiments were with adult entertainment but that's pretty intense stuff and the research was a LOT of fun).

Anyhow, I've used it with videogames as well with some good effect. However, you MUST make certain to keep a certain degree of dissociation there so that the terror of playing Doom doesn't freak a person out. You want to put in a LOT of rider suggestions of “enjoying” the experience but knowing and realizing it's just a game at all times . . . like a ride at an amusement park . . . keeping a vicarious or dissociated level within the associative experience.

I also love 3D photography (I have around fifteen or so vintage and contemporary stereocameras) and love true stereoscopic 3D gaming as well . . . add some hypnosis into the mix and that's a full-on associated experience.

Here are some articles by David Brager which deal with similar ideas (including a bit on live RPGs - which I wrote my doctoral dissertation on):

- [Hypnosis with Virtual Reality - http://www.geocities.com/dibragerowtcom/realityr.htm](http://www.geocities.com/dibragerowtcom/realityr.htm)
- [Adventure Roleplaying Games \(Reality Replacement with Eyes Open\) - http://www.briandavidphillips.com/scrypnosis/rpg.html](http://www.briandavidphillips.com/scrypnosis/rpg.html)
- [Reality Rendering and Temporary Replacement for Fun - http://www.briandavidphillips.com/scrypnosis/reality.html](http://www.briandavidphillips.com/scrypnosis/reality.html)

If one is considering rather than hypnosis that makes for good narrative but narrative that makes for good hypnosis, then I would suggest taking a

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look at the critical response to [The Woman in White](#) (book and video - albeit the book is much more satisfying than the video). When it came out in the Nineteenth Century, many folks were shaken and addicted to the hypnotic elements in the prose. There's an excellent write up on it and some nice analysis of some of the excerpts in [Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain](#) by Alison Winter.

As to some of the specifics of how I run my Vicarious Experiential Memory Machine method, the process I use is outlined in brief in a short essay I wrote for Zali Segal's [Hypnotize This!](#) - an excellent comprehensive textbook on hypnosis - but the basic approach is pretty straightforward. You don't need the essay to understand the process as it's pretty easy for anyone with a modicum of experience at creating physical or experiential imaginative effects with hypnosis. When working with a client, I will use a standard induction set (usually Elman or something along those lines). I then establish and test for somnambulism (usually through a number-amnesia test, NOT the Elman test but something more dramatic along the lines of a stage show "forget the number seven" with eyes-open tests). I like this as it increases imaginative involvement and assures the client that something "real" is going on while training fully involved response. Then I pop 'em back into things and run the patter for the machine. Compound, test, compound. I would normally have some images to model or a video or game right then to run the process with as a deepening and training tool to increase involvement and reliable response to the process.

I have been asked if I do an induction prior to sitting a person down in front of the television or a computer. Yes, no, and maybe.

There are different routes to this. I have done an induction while the person was playing the video and I've done a setup with a post-hypnotic trigger that allows the person to go into state (imaginative involvement) on their own without the induction guiding (there are a couple MP3s for conditioning to do something to this effect on my [DRTRC](#) site at <http://www.briandavidphillips.com> which some folks use as a start-off point, not as good or as complete as real-life sessions with a qualified competent hypnotist but certainly a lot better than nothing). For certain individuals, I've also prepared videos of sports, dance, taichi, swimming and other activities the clients wished to work on (works with other recreational videos of the more adult kind for the right sort of folks) . . .

that would include an induction with trigger phrases for deepening before the clips, with audio mixed in during the clips, and in between the clips for deepening the experience.

As to doing something within the medium itself and ensuring a safe level of dissociation, I would start off as above . . . induction as part of the preset and then run the medium with reinforcement and compounding suggestions under the sound. I would suggest dropping the text-based game medium though and opt for something with live video and live audio as it's more involving. I've no doubts that a text-based adventure game would work (see some of the stuff I wrote on hypnotic hypnosis letters for some ideas of one approach, either here or on my group or in the chapter I wrote for Wendi Friesen's Hypnotize Your Lover book). Basically though, get state, train for responsiveness and follow-through to suggestions and then run with the suggestions while firing in reinforcement compounding.

Some folks doing this sort of work feel that one can increase dissociation safety for the scary material in a game or story by adding in a humorous tag at the end of a scene or via a catch-phrase from a character. If you're doing full-on experience, the scary stuff can be a bit much for some folks. Sometimes, what you might consider within tolerable range may not be for someone else and this is even more fully true when we're talking about full-on experiential trance stuff of this sort. When I took my family to see Spiderman 2, we went with a few friends. While my daughter was perfectly okay with the movie (she's ten), the son of a friend was really overwhelmed by it and his mother was partially freaked out. Imagine if she were experiencing all that stuff full-on. Some folks found the *Dementors* in Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (the third Harry Potter movie) to be more than they'd like to handle. Now, imagine playing a video game with those beasties coming right at ya. Kool, but needs a backdoor escape hatch. Heck, when I saw the twister scene in The Day After Tomorrow it snapped me back to my boyhood in Kansas . . . yes, Dorothy's Kansas . . . and seeing real twisters lift real houses. Imagine what someone watching the more intense scenes in Resident Evil or it's sequel Resident Evil: Apocalypse might go through . . . or, perhaps something without zombies but certainly very horrifying . . . Full Metal Jacket or any number of similar films or something like Caligula (I know, some readers are

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thinking to themselves, kool, but others will note the point). Humor at the end of a scene isn't going to be enough . . . as the scary stuff is going to be experienced quite viscerally before that so by the end the damage or thrill has already happened . . . make sure you have some sort of safe word or dissociation key so that folks can pull out of the in-your-face-full-on-virtual-reality-experiential-mode anytime they wish.

By the way, only partially on topic due to the current discussion but far enough off that it won't count as self-promotion . . . but folks interested in virtual reality and stereophotography may want to join the <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/3D-StereoviewXchange> as we share our stereo 3D photos there with members from all over the globe (while most of the stuff is pretty regular mundane stuff do be forewarned that some of the images are by folks who hang out on adult film sets and are inappropriate for some viewers). I shoot with a stereo attachment on my Digital Rebel and with an old Realist and take hundreds of photos.

I have a stereovideo attachment for my camcorder as well but the flicker on the television made me abandon it. I am hopeful that the new Sharp 3D computer will bring back full-on interest in 3D and we'll see some better LCD monitor and projector options for stereopresentation.

4.3 EXPERIENTIAL TRANCE

If you can imagine it, then you can experience it . . . anything you can imagine can be powerfully felt as if it is real and happening right now via *Experiential Hypnosis* or *Experiential Trance* . . . that's right, *anything* you can imagine . . . and I mean *anything*.

As it is something I do a LOT of and will be doing much more with in future with more essays and mp3s and books and teaching . . . not to mention it is both a valuable skillset and a lot of fun . . . presented appropriately contexts for recreation, entertainment, and therapy . . . I have added a new category to *Life of Brian* . . . [Experiential Trance](#) which covers the topic of *Experiential Hypnosis and Focused Trance*. There is some overlap with the hyperempiria, hyper-acuity, and associated sensory experience set but eventually you will see more and more on my take on experiential hypnosis which is one of my crusade areas, so to speak.

What is *Experiential Hypnosis* and what's it used for? Within Experiential Trance, anything you can imagine can be fully experienced as if it is real . . . powerfully real . . . *anything* you can imagine . . . and that means *anything*. Applications are primarily for therapy, recreation, and entertainment but the contexts it can be used for are pretty much limited only to one's imagination and ingenuity. When I teach Experiential Hypnosis I train students in both how to do it as well as how to apply it creatively with a number of examples but without locking into scripts or models but learning underlying processes behind the demonstrations or examples so they can apply it to anything they wish to . . . *anything*.

Experiential hypnosis or experiential trance is when the trance experience is so deep and so vivid and so powerful that a person experiences all of the suggestions as if they are happening right now! My take on Experiential Hypnosis relies upon Instant and Rapid Hypnosis Induction techniques that take a person from full alert consciousness to complete deep trance in a matter of a few short minutes or instantly, right then, right there, right now. These powerful techniques can be used within any context . . . entertainment, recreation, therapy, changework . . . and more. Any context. People can learn how to instantly create deep trance phenomena and how to deepen the experience as they guide others into very vivid and very powerful trance that can lead to wonderful recreational experiences or very powerful permanent positive change. I do a lot of work in this area and am well known within the hypnosis community for this particular approach or modality of experiential hypnosis and trance based upon very powerful and very very fast instant and rapid deep hypnosis techniques that lead to powerfully realized and fully experienced trance states including fully experienced regression, parts therapy, and imagery so vivid it is experienced as if it is completely real . . . right now in the present moment . . . all of which can be utilized for recreation, entertainment, education, or therapeutic permanent positive change.

Those interested in learning the techniques can read *Life of Brian* and take any of the trainings I offer, including certification with the Society of Experiential Trance (see the Brian David Phillips Waking Dreams webpages for more information).

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4.4 HYPEREMPIRIA AND EXPERIENTIAL HYPNOSIS (DIFFERENCES, SIMILARITIES, AND SAMENESS)

On a few of the email lists I belong to, there has been some discussion of the nature of hypnosis and whether or not trance or critical factor bypass are the same or different monkeys. One part of the thread has been regarding hyperempiria which gets discussed quite a bit here on the technique exchange. A disagreement has come up as to whether hyperempiria is indeed a different state than hypnosis, a specific form of experiential hypnosis but hypnosis nonetheless.

The following is an extension of my line of thought that incorporates and expands upon a few of my posts within the discussion thread.

If it makes it easier to digest . . . preface all of my responses below with “in my opinion based upon my experience and understanding” . . . those who wish to disagree are free to do so. This is my response to the topic based upon my understanding from direct experience and study. Take it or leave it.

I’m of the *hyperempiria* is a form of experiential hypnosis ilk . . . it’s merely directing the suggestions toward awareness rather than relaxation . . . at least that’s the original intention of the hyperempiric inductions. The model of doing hypnosis this way and of using a different term than hypnosis is useful to distinguish the effects from those achieved in the progressive relaxation set, but the utility and effect is not substantially different from straightforward somnambulism-based “experiential” hypnosis as has been discussed here.

One advantage of using a different vocabulary is to avoid the baggage associated with “hypnosis” in much the same way the term “hypnotism” was coined to be more descriptive of the state (albeit, Braid regretted the term later and belatedly wished to change it to monoideism which is certainly more descriptive as hypnosis had NOTHING whatsoever to do with genuine hypnos, sleep) and to avoid the negative baggage and sloppy thinking that had grown up around “animal magnetism” and “Mesmerism.” Certainly, in recent years, a great deal of negative baggage and sloppy thinking has become associated with hypnosis so hyperempiria becomes a term that both is descriptive of the desired outcome state as well as one that has no negative associations

attached to it. Some folks who might object to undergoing hypnosis will be perfectly happy to enjoy or undertake a hyperempiric experience. I will use “focused trance” with folks for much the same reasons (descriptive, associative, and legal - focused trance, like hyperempiria, is currently not regulated in most locales while hypnosis is).

When Dr. Don Gibbons started performing hyperempiric inductions (he’s the gentleman who coined the phrase and you can find his academic and practical books online . . . it never ceases to amaze me when I come across so many folks who bandy about the term hyperempiria who have never read or even given credit to the good doctor who is the originating pioneer of the techniques others are teaching . . . one woman I came across was claiming hyperempiria was some sort of access system to one’s higher self and a means for humans to communicate with spiritual beings having been given to humans via mediumship . . . uh, not really on the same page there). Go to the source and read these books: [Beyond Hypnosis: Explorations in Hyperempiria](#), [Applied Hypnosis and Hyperempiria](#), and [Experience As An Art Form: Hypnosis, Hyperempiria, and the Best Me Technique](#). You will also find that Gibbons has kindly put an electronic copy of the original edition of his book on *hyperempiria for sexuality* (therapeutic and consenting adult recreational purposes, which he is currently editing for a new, much more powerful, edition) in the files section of the [Hypnosis Technique Exchange](#) which is one of the email discussion lists I moderate . . . btw, for those unfamiliar with the term, it was Gibbons who first encouraged me to start an association for experiential hypnosis as he has followed my work as I have followed his . . . his positive opinion means a great deal to me), it was specifically to work with folks who found classic “relaxation” inductions unsettling. I respect Gibbons a great deal for what he has done and his innovation within a community that is resistant to the idea that hypnosis does not require relaxation (he was doing a great deal of his work within a community, academic and otherwise, where progressive relaxation was considered the standard and requirement for induction), but basically the effective processes are the same except that the hyperempiric induction focuses on alertness and awareness with full sensory association into the imagery. When one reads the classic inductions for hyperempiria, they read much the same as classic hypnosis inductions with the exception that they focus on

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alertness and sensory experience rather than relaxation and dilution of experience. They are two aspects of the same quality . . . engaged imagination, suggestion, and compliance . . . within intensified imaginative involvement to bypass the critical factor of the conscious mind in order to establish desirable selective thinking. They are both forms of focused trance and hypnosis. Of course, it is unfair to look at someone's work and point at flaws if that is an ongoing work . . . a life's work still in process . . . Gibbons is continually updating his ideas and theories so it is important not to take the older pieces out of context but to see them as part of a continuing chain of progress and improvement (I've seen some of his more recent essays and he continues to be innovative and contributes much to the field).

I have found that the same results that can be had through hyperempiria can be achieved through *experiential hypnosis* with the suggestions for full-on sensory association (which is how I get the same effects). The hyperempiric inductions or processes are not innovative as a new state but as an original route of achieving state to increase sensory affect. They are indeed very innovative, but they provide a new construct for achieving certain effects, not a new state in and of itself.

Obviously, if you consider hypnosis to rely upon relaxation with decreased physical sensation and the like - lethargy and dullness of thought or consciousness - then hyperempiria must be something other than hypnosis in that it relies upon alertness and focus as well increased sensation . . . full-on sensory experience . . . or, as Gibbons described my take on using hypnosis to accelerate and build intense sensory affect related to imagery and the like . . . experiential hypnosis.

Of course, some folks make the erroneous assumption that hyperempiria is the same as the various *higher-self* or *ultra-height* processes or that somehow these are co-dependant . . . they are not. Certainly, they can be used in conjunction with one another, but neither depends upon the other and can be used independently (and usually are as the originators of both streams had very different and specific intentions for the processes). Any effect you can achieve in one form of hypnosis can be achieved in others . . . eyes open, waking state, eyes closed, relaxation, hyperempiric, whatever . . . because those are induction contexts . . . the key is the engagement of the imagination to bypass the critical factor and then start running your compliance patterns

for suggestions, building and compounding within context to create an environment in which the desired results are achieved. It is still critical factor bypass, intensity of the imaginative involvement, and establishment of the appropriate selective thinking. It is a form of hypnosis, but different in a way that eyes-open hypnosis or waking hypnosis or relaxation hypnosis are different but they all share in the quality of being a form of trance-based critical factor bypass. Once you've got the compliance pattern, you can also pop a person back and forth through any of these so-called different forms as the critical factor bypass and engagement and intensification of the involvement of the imagination is maintained. So, I can use my modified Elman induction and guide a person into somnambulism, compound the compliance and affective responses, then go directly into the various hyperempiric suggestions and achieve the same results. The uniqueness of hyperempiria is not in the sense of being different from hypnosis in terms of critical factor bypass but in that it is hypnosis associated with sensory phenomena and the induction set, hyperempiria is a subset of hypnosis rather than being completely unique. In my opinion. Albeit, I do agree that some forms of trance may not be "hypnosis" . . . but . . . hyperempiria is not one of those forms. At least, in my opinion.

In response to my view, some have said that they believe hypnosis includes somnambulism in its definition and that as fellow Neo-Elmanian hypnotists (a label that fits a great deal of my own hypnobias), we are constantly testing for somnambulism rather than critical factor bypass. As some folks take the root parts of the word somnambulism to be literally walking while one sleeps, they miss the historical context for why the word has been misapplied and is now generally accepted to mean something the roots have nothing to do with. I have been asked if I also test for somnambulism when inducing hyperempiria and the answer is, yes. Somnambulism is hypnosis is engagement of and intensification of imaginative involvement, critical factor bypass, and establishment of desirable selective thinking to a degree that appropriate signs are present and one has automatic compliance to suggestion.

Somnambulism has nothing to do with sleep or wakefulness. It is merely critical factor bypass and desired suggestion compliance through imaginative involvement with appropriate signs.

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In my opinion, critical factor bypass is the key between trance and forms of hypnosis. In my opinion, that's it. Yes, when I induce hyperempiria, or rather, induce hyperempiric phenomena through a form of hypnosis . . . or, rather, when I do ANY form of hypnosis . . . I test for somnambulism . . . that's pretty much my standard "working state" for trancework . . . I may not do the same tests as in the Elman induction or elsewhere, but I test and make sure I have "state" . . . whatever that may mean.

Rather than believing, as some do, that somnambulism distinguishes hypnosis from hyperempiria, I believe somnambulism is the same for either as hyperempiria should display the same compliance set . . . albeit, the tests will be different (rather than lethargic catalepsy, one might test for the other bits) . . . the signs of hypnosis are all present in hyperempiria . . . or, at least, they should be if one is having full effect.

At least one person in the discussion characterized somnambulism as the state everyone naturally goes through between being awake and asleep and back and that as hypnotists we guide folks through and into that state. For these folks, hyperempiria must be different from hypnosis because of the lack of sleeplike state. When Gibbons first began working with hyperempiric inductions and when he coined the term, he also characterized hypnosis as a sleeplike state that included drowsiness and relaxation rather than alert or full sensory experience. This is a fallacy that has deep historical basis but is not based upon what's actually going on – albeit, there are practical reasons to hang on to a new term to describe the hyperempiric experience and differentiate it from other forms of hypnosis or experiential hypnosis.

In any case, regardless, somnambulism as the term is used to describe certain hypnotic stages (deep trance), has nothing to do with sleep or wakefulness. One does not have to be guided into wakefulness from sleep or sleep from wakefulness to get it. The state between sleep and wakefulness is the hypnoidal state which actually has very little or nothing to do with hypnosis. It is merely the twilight state. It is a time when folks can be roused into hypnosis because of some increased susceptibility to suggestion, but it is not hypnosis in and of itself.

At least that is MY UNDERSTANDING of and my BELIEF regarding hypnosis, experiential hypnosis, hyperempiria, and somnambulism.

4.5 VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE AND REAL EXPERIENCES (OF MIRROR NEURONS AND TRANCE PROCESSES)

In the *Hypnosis Technique Exchange* there was once a heads up post about recent work on Mirror Neurons and how their discovery helps explain why we do some of the things we do.

The poster reports on a recent Public Broadcasting Service segment about a recent discovery of a set of Neurons related to socialization and learning from others. A very interesting observation they found was that this set of neuron can not tell the difference between seeing the action being done and doing the action.

See the online article at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sciencenow/3204/01.html> and be sure to both read the background material as view the video which is quite interesting. I also enjoyed the followup material.

That is an interesting segment. Perhaps it explains why methods like ideokinesis or sense memory work for dancers, athletes, and actors or why a process like the vicarious experiential machine are effective for some folks and the mechanism for how they work (see here for related essays in the *Experiential Trance* category here at *Life of Brian*). In my own *vicarious experiential machine* (aka, *vicarious experiential memory machine*) process, one enters trance and then powerfully associates to images such as television or film or even a series of photographs and then experiences the actions or feelings of the subject as if one were performing or feeling the actions themselves.

The monkey's neurons firing when observing as if doing an action tells us the mechanism of seeing or imagining is as real as doing. When the host performed the actions he felt emotional state changes as well.

The followup study on dancers who were proficient in skill sets compared to untrained dancers watching videos of dance moves also tells us that skill levels can affect how the mechanism works . . . so, practice and imagination are important. Those who try to simply imagine themselves proficient aren't going to be as successful as those who actually do the practice and get the physical skills. Perhaps reminding those of us who do sports or performance hypnosis or trancework to be sure to include actual physical skills practice along with the guided

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imagery and experiential trance experiences. Of course, those doing recreational, entertainment, and even erotic experiential hypnosis (such as the course I will be teaching on this subject in February) are reminded that imagined experiences are processed neurologically the same as real experiences so it is important to keep sessions clean of inadvertent negative suggestions and the like or suggested imagery that might not be pleasant or helpful in the long term.

What we can imagine, we can realize and vicarious experience is neurologically similar to lived or real experience.

That autistics tend to have “broken mirror neurons” tells us something about their experience of the world and may lead to treatments - both medical and non-medical - that will help them become more in touch with experience and empathy which allows us to adapt and socially interact as well.

Knowing there is some basis for what we do imaginatively, can help us develop more effective trance processes to help folks . . . for therapy, for sports, for recreation, for entertainment, for education, for a wide variety of context-based applications of the concepts.

Eventually this material will have very practical application, in the meantime, it is food for thought and certainly interesting to know.

5. CONCLUSION

Interactive drama is not a static artform, nor is it contextually isolated from other disciplines. Just as there are intersections with experiences in other game forms as well as literary forms, the intersection with experimental approaches to gameplay and experiential forms will continue. While experiential trance approaches to story and interactive drama is certainly not likely to become a common form, it is still quite interesting and deserving of further work.

Those with interest, may wish to explore the resources listed within the paper proper as well as the bibliography. Feel free to contact me with queries. I am always happy to discuss this aspect of experiential trance. On occasion, I do offer trainings or host events on this and related subjects as well.

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CROSSING THE THRESHOLD Tensions of Participation in Community-Based Playback Theatre Performance

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ABSTRACT

Contained by a simple accessible ritual structure playback theatre offers a unique audience experience with the possibility of participation. The opportunity to participate introduces a challenge for some. This can be further compounded by the central place of personal storytelling. It is the repeated invitation to tell a story that drives the ritual momentum in the playback theatre performance. Audience members sit with the constant possibility of volunteering, while some are preoccupied with a persistent reluctance to tell. This 'tension of participation' could be considered the more potent tension underpinning audience members' experiences in the playback theatre event - perhaps more than the dramatic tensions emerging from the performative acts of storytelling and enacting.

INTRODUCTION

Playback theatre is a hybrid performance form blending non-traditional theatre and ritual. Significant to defining it as nontraditional are things like the placement in nontraditional theatre venues or locations, the participation of audience members, and the

emergent nature of the content¹. The method is designed as a collective experience and is mediated through a patterned, sequential, theatrical process. It is these key features that render it ritual in form². This article explores the phenomenon of the tension of participation for audience members of playback theatre. It proposes that this tension is contingent on audience members' initial response to the nontraditional nature of playback theatre as a theatre event and the ritual momentum that arises from the way in which it is framed. A strong ritual containment is an essential aspect of fostering and facilitating audience participation during playback theatre. It is this that compels storytelling. The momentum built through the ritualised method, the repeated invitation to tell and the evocation of a heightened theatrical environment can be challenging for audience members and cause them to resist participation. The discussion herein has emerged from my interactions with audience members during a three-year research project³ in Brisbane, Australia. Excerpts from audience members' stories are interwoven throughout to illustrate the ways in which the tension of participation builds during performance.

PUBLIC PERFORMANCE: THEATRE OR RITUAL

Interactive theatre processes like playback theatre demand the removal of the traditional notion of aesthetic distance and therefore promote an ongoing uncertainty as the fourth wall disintegrates into a blurred threshold for both performer and audience. This is the vitality of such a form. The intersection of personal story with this theatrical uncertainty generates further complexities for participants and introduces additional avenues for the tension of participation. The nontraditional nature of the playback theatre event can shift audience members into a sophisticated process of engagement that demands they undertake a meta-process alongside the fundamental spectating role they are familiar with. For the purposes of this discussion, I will call this process reflective distance. Reflective distance involves a metaphorical move into and out of the real-time aspects of the event as participants weigh up how what they

¹ Bennett (1990)

² Cabral (2001)

³ This project was the central project in my PhD research at Griffith University.

are encountering differs from what they had expected, for example. A similar shift can occur in ritual processes. After van Gennep, Turner⁴ proposes that the ritual event proceeds in three phases⁵: separation; transition; and incorporation or re-entry. The separation or pre-liminal phase involves participants leaving behind of the real-time and real-space dimensions of their daily lives. It enables them to shift to a more "sacred space and time from profane or secular space and time"⁶. This phase coincides to the pre-show period at playback theatre and can begin days or weeks before as the purpose and context of the performance are established and the gateway by which participants will enter is initiated. The shift to separation opens a performance arena that exists in-between rather than set-apart from ordinary life, a space on the "border, a margin, a site of negotiation"⁷. Within this, participants encounter the second phase, the liminal or *transition* phase⁸. The liminal phase induces the potential for anti-structure and ambiguities, a space where past and future can merge. Interestingly, Cabral constructs this in-between time and space as a bridge into "situations that would be tense in the real context"⁹. Crossing this bridge, the threshold into a social context that has the potential to disturb the social status quo, and contravene the protocols of political correctness, presents a challenge for many audience members. Such a shift is compelled by the potency of ritualised time and space. It is this shift between the separation and liminal stages that are a key site for the tension of participation and can trigger shifts into reflective distance. The third stage, *incorporation*, coincides with the post-show period of the playback theatre event¹⁰.

⁴ Turner (see 1969, 1986, 1990) has been a seminal thinker in bringing ritual theory to bear in contemporary western performance theory. While very much predicated on the notion of performance as a culturally conservative activity in tribal and agrarian societies it is useful when discussing public ritual.

⁵ These stages are derived from van Gennep. The van Gennep schema derives from the idea that performance occurs in the context of everyday life, in in-between spaces, rather than the idea implicit in the frameworks of Singer, Hymes, Bauman and Barba that performance is "set apart" (Carlson, 1996, p.20).

⁶ p.24, Turner (1982)

⁷ p. 20, Carlson (1996)

⁸ Van Gennep referred to this as 'margin' or 'limen' (meaning threshold in Latin).

⁹ p.56, Cabral (2001).

¹⁰ Here participants begin to integrate their experiences, making sense of what they have seen, heard, felt, and remembered. Reflective integration can continue well after the show as people resume their everyday social roles becoming aware of the new

SHOCKS AND SURPRISES – ARRIVING, READY OR NOT!

Initial perceptions of the playback theatre event can be surprising for audience members as they come to some realisation that separation is imminent. An audience member's expectations and initial perceptions of the playback theatre performance might need to be met or transformed in order for them to effect separation and be freed to enter into the spirit of the performance. When Darren arrives at a playback theatre event by himself he looks around in the hope of meeting a friend there. He is a performer himself and has been at a Company performance some years back. As he takes in the surrounds he is more than surprised by what he observes. This is how he describes it:

I was expecting a different venue. Some place more neutral. [When] I came in and realised that it was a community ... I felt really apart from that, and that worked against me feeling at home because a lot of people seemed to know each other and I didn't know anyone. I found myself doing some social-environmental (analysis), who are these people? I felt quite outside. And I was expecting to see [a friend] there, and she wasn't ... The thing that struck me was that, there were three women on stage, or four women on stage, and two of them were older women, and I was quite surprised by that (Darren¹¹, independent street performer).

Darren's experience reveals significant tension due to unexpected elements about the venue, the company and the audience composition. These perceptions of the place of the performance, the history of the Company, and his socially formed cultural values and personal ideas all converge and threaten to overwhelm him. At a certain level, the mounting tension he feels stimulates a shift to reflective distance. While this serves to dispel the tension of participation somewhat it impedes Darren's

perspectives they may have from the experience.

¹¹ Darren is a fictionalised name; while all interview participants have given permission for their testimony to be included, their names have been anonymised.

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separation and minimises his capacity to participate further until he finds a moment of re-entry.

Being surprised by elements of a theatre event is not uncommon. The participatory nature of playback theatre can up the ante with regard to how a participant manages such surprises. In stark contrast to Darren some find surprises stimulating and delightful and respond to the tension of participation by anticipating greater involvement. Far from overwhelming the participant, the quality of this tension is appealing and comes when an encounter with the unexpected engenders intrigue. Craig arrives at the same event Darren describes above. His first impressions follow:

There was a wonderful sense of community. There were people walking up, shaking hands, and introducing themselves. People felt very comfortable to do this. It wasn't contrived and it wasn't forced. ... There was individuals, groups, couples ... It reminded me of an old town public meeting, 'let's gather' let's we - the community - gather, and let's talk about what's on. ... There was a sense of event, but not in a traditional (theatre) sense. It even has its own rituals. It's not like we're going to see play [at] 'the theatre' [yet] there is a set of rituals that take place. ... [W]hen the performance began, there was immediate silence when the actors entered (Craig, High School Drama Teacher).

Craig appears ready for whatever comes next. His response is more in line with what Coppieters¹² predicts of audience members at the non-traditional theatre event, who suggests that they are likely to be interested and playful and take more of a risk. This risking takes the form of becoming "a tangible active creator of the theatrical event"¹³. They embrace their pivotal role in what happens next and trust that this role is guided by the way the ritualised framing of the process points to specific gaps in the action that invite genuine participation.

It is likely that most audience members have experienced a degree of separation by the time the players take the stage in a playback theatre event. There can be further jolts at this stage as the central place of

¹² Bennett (1990)

¹³ p.10, *ibid*

personal story is highlighted, and again, when this personal dimension is juxtaposed with the revelation that participant's are to join players on stage in a public performance as a storyteller. These transitions are likely sites for the tension of participation and can serve to further inhibit the full separation of audience members. Unlike Darren and Craig, Eloise draws little conclusion from initial perceptions of the venue and audience. She arrives at the performance with friends who are familiar with playback theatre and feel well hosted. It is in witnessing the actions of the first few storytellers that she begins to feel uneasy. She shares her experience:

I wasn't used to that kind of theatre. I found it quite confronting that this was on an emotional level ... I was watching, looking back to see whose story it was, seeing if they were reacting in the right way, the traditional way, and that was good. I was trying to understand what was going on. I got more involved, got more carried away, with some of the longer stories at the end (Eloise, young woman new to playback).

The tension she is feeling about the way in which the playback theatre moment contravenes her values shifts Eloise to reflective distance. She needs to gather information about the unfamiliar form and is able to observe the process and assess the consequences of participation on others. After stepping back, Eloise is able to surrender or renegotiate her expectations of the theatre event and her idea about what constitutes performance or public gatherings and move toward being more involved. Eloise uses her moment of retreat to reflective distance to integrate unexpected emotions she is experiencing. She states that at some point she is carried away signaling her growing ease with the experience, a growing recognition of the ritual pattern, and a move toward the liminal.

Earlier, Craig names what he sees as a "set of rituals" at play in the opening sequence of the playback theatre event. He appears very comfortable with the way in which this start might diverge from a traditional theatre event. Fox (1999) summarised the ritual dimension of playback theatre highlighting five specific elements: keeping to rules, ecstatic emotion, transpersonal dimension, goal of transformation, spellbinding language. It is the fundamental simplicity of the first element that could be responsible for creating the conditions for the other four. The

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repetitive nature of the form gradually reveals the rules of the frame. It is not that there are rules as such, but that the implicit rules are made known in some way. In observing the patterns in the form, Eloise has become freer to enter the ritualised frame. This does not automatically translate into a desire to participate more publicly, however.

LIMINAL MOMENTS – ENGAING WITH UNCERTAINTY

As the performance progresses, the personal stories that are told are animated on-the-spot. As the players improvise, the audience members are exposed to the possibilities of participation as they observe the actors giving full expression to the characters and explore the emotional texture of the tellers' experiences. There is time to watch the immediate impact on participants of telling and of watching the subsequent enactment, as Eloise does. As familiarity builds comfort with the form grows. Establishing a ritual frame serves to announce that a certain set of rules are at play and *releases* participants to act beyond their constrained domestic roles and engage in other ways with themselves, with each other, and with the social environment¹⁴. The potential of this released state equates to the liminal or transitional moment and frees participants to dare and to risk as they move toward an experience of flow¹⁵. However, the tendency for audience members to respond to the tension of participation by shifting to reflective distance continues.

In many ways, the move into and out of flow (and into and out of reflective distance) constitutes the occurrence of micro ritual-phase cycles: separation-transition-integration where the micro integration phase coincides with the next separation phase. The way in which Clare speaks about her first experience of playback theatre reveals a number of

¹⁴ Turner (1982) and Schechner (1985).

¹⁵ Flow provides another way in which to speak of the liminal experience. Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1992, 1997) writes of activities where we experience *flow*. He shows that the degree of difficulty of a sporting event must not exceed the level at which it becomes unachievable (too hard) for the individual. He proposes that we desire to feel stretched to the limit and yet simultaneously feel as though we are somehow "master of our own fate".

micro cycles as she prepares to enter more fully into the spirit of the event. She admits:

At first we didn't know what to expect. We watched and tried to catch on. I really started to get into the last part of it. The beginning was confusing. We didn't know what to expect or what to think. We had to wait and see. We started getting into it more toward the end ... After a while, when I realised that I wasn't going to have to speak, or be made to, and that I could watch other people's stories I was OK. But for quite a while I was worried I would be picked out (Clare, first-time playback theatre go-er).

Clare's comment suggests that she is feeling anxious about what is required of her and is not particularly confident that she is up to the challenge. Tension of participation is linked participant anxiety. Clare's concern is compounded by the realisation during one of her integrative moments, that her story includes her husband. The idea of revealing intimate details and possibly embarrassing her husband is a values-conflict for her. This provides another surge of anxiety and further tension around whether she will consent/choose to tell her story. Clare's admits to feeling resistant to participating due to her anxiety about exposing her husband. Self-regulation such as this occurs frequently during the playback theatre performance and impedes experiences of flow for individuals. Spectators are known to shift to reflective distance to release a growing tension of participation and engage in inner dialogues with themselves as they develop reasons not to tell, for example, that others are more interesting, or that others have a greater need. These shifts represent micro-integrative moments that move a participant to a place of re-separation and subsequently enable re-entry. Schechner¹⁶ states that "in all kinds of performances a certain definite threshold is crossed at which time participants attain a state of flow." Flow coincides with those times when participants feel some resolution with respect to values conflict or risk challenges arising during the performance. This is most often with respect to whether to participate as a storyteller yet could also

¹⁶ p.10, Schechner (1985)

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be connected to the experience that Clare alludes to of reaching a new level of understanding about the rules of engagement and the collective culture of the audience; information that emerges as the performance proceeds.

RESISTING THE LURE OF THE LIMINAL

Ritualising time and space brings with it an inherent counterpoint to the expected social structure of a public event. Even mild resistance to the ambiguities inherent in the "anti-structure" evoked by the ritual frame stimulates tension of participation. Despite this the ritual momentum builds and the lure of the liminal can feel like a loss of autonomy or an interruption of personal agency and can lead to an experience of terror for some. If the liminal pull accelerates in such a way that a participant becomes frightened or confused they will do more than shift to reflective distance, they will resist the desire to participate at all costs. Let us return to Darren who is still recovering from the disappointment he felt about the venue, the audience and the players on arrival. He has found a seat in the third row near the aisle. This positioning enables him to continue his observation of the audience as they arrive, and gives him an excellent view of the stage area. As the show gets underway he maintains his observational stance. He is determined to overcome his earlier disappointment and discomfort yet he is immediately besieged by a totally unexpected story:

I entered with the idea that I didn't have any experiences that related to the theme. Then had a whole lot of things go 'Bop! Bop! Bop!' (a sound representing each story). That really struck me about the night, we were telling stories like when a bunch of people sits around a table. It was a dynamic process. ... I had a bunch of things come up - personal stories - and I didn't really know there were issues there (Darren, independent street performer).

He is highly resistant to telling his personal story in this public place to this gathered public audience. Darren's resistance is more complex than

Clare's and in turn leads to a greater generation of the tension of participation as he battles the persistent story. As the performance proceeds he is constantly distracted by the inner tension he experiences yet continues to resist telling his story. He admits that he does not feel that he can relax and surrender to the ritual moment. He spends the performance vacillating between the persistent urge to participate and share his story, and his reflective reasoning that it is not the time or place for him to tell. This decision not to tell has demanded his full attention as he has been gripped by the tension of participation, teetering on the verge of the ritual threshold. Darren's reluctance to tell could be interpreted by considering a number of impediments to his capacity to release. Firstly, he admits that he does not feel he can succeed in participating in a way that does not contravene his values. He feels he will be over-exposed as he endeavours to construct a story that he feels is poorly formed and is breaking out in such an unexpected and discomfoting way. As he resists, his confusion grows and he feels further excluded. It is only after the event that Darren can appreciate how determined he was not to yield. He is left feeling disappointed and isolated until he is able to chat with other audience members during the after-show period and integrate the experience.

It is not clear what might have happened had Darren succumbed to the persistent story. One possibility is that he would have relaxed. When Helen attempts to resist the story that bubbles up about ten minutes into the performance, she too is continually distracted by it. She recounts her experience:

I thought 'oh it'll go away' [laugh] but then it was too insistent, I could feel it, I can't remember how, but I was connecting with other responses. I thought 'I *have* to say something.' ... I couldn't hold it anymore (Helen, regular playback theatre-goer).

Unlike Darren she eventually succumbs and shares her story in the public arena. She consents to the ritual momentum compelling her and the tension she is harboring dissipates. Helen is able to relax into another level of flow in the performance and enjoy the chance to listen to others. The shift in attention that occurs when a volunteer teller comes to the stage can

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dispel tension in participants who have chosen not to tell. Tension of participation appears to be a uniquely individual experience and is transformed when the individual shifts attention from him/herself to another and engages more intimately in the collective experience of the ritual event. It is during these experiences of flow, of unselfconscious engagement, and collective listening that the tension of participation can be released.

FLOW – THE MOMENTUM OF THE RITUAL

An experience of flow occurs when our "body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile"¹⁷. It equates to attaining a sense of mastery over something that presents a challenge. The reframing this "sense of mastery" to "a sense of participation" is perhaps more meaningful in the context of the playback theatre ritual. Within the magic of ritual anxiety can quickly move to arousal. Between flow and anxiety, arousal occurs where the participant's skills may not be immediately sufficient but there is scope for them to engage in the challenge. The following excerpt from Hillary's story demonstrates one teller's experience of moving beyond resistance and concern about what others think and surrendering to the growing momentum that delivers her to the stage. She says:

I was thinking 'how can you possibly reflect this story that I have so heartfelt, inside my belly that makes me feel the way I do, and express it, like that, in all these little stories.' [At that moment] I was thinking 'they can do this (the little stories), can they do that (my heartfelt-inside-my-belly-story)?' In a way, those first few stories were weaving the test of you. [As I watched] I thought, 'OK, they got part of it right, pretty well - and I had doubted you would get it right - [it was] close enough. You were touching everything. That was great. ... I thought, 'It's going well. Now, what's going to happen next?

¹⁷ p.3 Csikszentmihalyi, (1997)

You had that space for people to decide whether or not they wanted their story to be out there. I had heavy legs, and inside was about the burst, whether I was going to run away or run up to you [laughs]. It was a pretty shaky moment. But once I got up, I could feel the strength of others, and I thought, 'Go for it Hillary!' (Hillary, community worker).

When Hillary becomes aware of her desire to tell she is a little overwhelmed. Yet she launches herself across the threshold harnessing all the tension that is arising from the interaction of her urgent story with her reflective assessment of the likely risks. As she gathers herself she moves toward flow and becomes, in Csikszentmihalyi's (1992) words, "master" of her own "fate" (p.3). Hillary is besieged by her compelling need to tell. She makes a different choice to that of Darren. Her story as an example of those audience members who yield fully to the ritual pull taking great risks and delivering the performance more fully into the hands of the audience. This notion of personal (and collective) agency is embedded in the participatory opportunities in the ritual process where the involvement of the individual cannot be forced only invited or sought¹⁸. The way in which playback theatre draws on personal stories and theatrical form within a ritual performance process expands the potential for engagement in the public event and encourages individual and group agency and responsibility. This renders the tension of participation a potential desirable element for maximising the performance energy and the audience experience.

TENSION OF PARTICIPATION – MAKING IT WORK

The stories shared here suggest that through the ritualised structure of the playback theatre form, participants seem empowered or challenged, or stimulated to be involved. Unlike some traditional ritual performances, the liminal opportunity afforded through the ritualised structure of the playback theatre performance does not necessarily induce deep trance states for audience members. Audience experiences are predicated on the

¹⁸ p.246 Myerhoff (1990).

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way in which they negotiate the initial unfamiliarity of the form and the uncertainty of the separation and liminal phases of the ritual. This is helped or hindered by individuals' responses to the invitation to tell a personal story in the context of a public performance. Sitting with the constant possibility of volunteering to participate can be a preoccupation. Participants can become occupied by their repeated preparation to tell a story and for some, feel compelled to participate. Others experience a persistent reluctance to tell. The dynamic of reflective distance appears to enhance the engagement of the audience and provide an outlet for the tension of participation. The question remains as to whether the dissipation of the tension of participation through the move to reflective distance hinders the possibilities for the performance (and audience).

This article has explored the tension of participation confronting audience members as they contend with the ritual momentum of playback theatre. It has focused on storytelling as the primary avenue for participation. In performances where the tension of participation is the more potent tension underpinning audience members' experiences conductors and ensembles need to work with a greater sensibility to enable individuals to negotiate the shift to the liminal experience. To ensure that the liminal phase of the playback theatre performance is characterised by moments of unselfconsciousness, high spontaneity and experiences of flow certain elements in the form have to converge to enable participants to join in. This usually means that the challenge present in the task of participating is not too difficult for the individual. The improvised nature of the performance can represent too great a challenge for some audience members and lead to anxiety or confusion. Any factor that induces fear, uncertainty or anxiety acts to inhibit flow for the audience. Other barriers to participation arise from a lack of familiarity with the rules of engagement, concerns about exposing self or another, concerns about being judged, boredom, disappointment, and feelings of alienation. Similarly, concern about others' safety, dissatisfaction with the quality of the artistry, and discomfort arising from emotional responses could limit an individual's capacity to surrender. It is the responsibility of the conductor and the ensemble to work to maximise the conditions required for greatest participation by the greatest number over the course of the performance. Inability to overcome barriers to

participation could result in individuals excluding themselves from the activity altogether.

The conductor's role is subtle here as she works with the audience to maximise the agency of the participant to generate the "text," through the volunteering of and performance of the stories that are told and enacted. Maximising theatricality and working to create an environment in which adults are enticed to playfulness are primary factors if the performance is to ride the tension of participation wave. The process is dialectic and calls forth the agency of the participant as risk-taker and storyteller and the agency of the conductor as ritual shaman, theatre producer and host¹⁹.

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¹⁹ Fox (1994), Good (1986).

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CORRESPONDENCE

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TEMPUS FRANGIT

An Interactive Drama Scenario

Mike Young
Interactivities Ink

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2005, the Live Action Roleplayers Association ran its first Iron GM contest. Two teams were given three elements 24 hours before their games were to be run. They each had to write an entire two-hour live action roleplaying game for 5-10 players using those elements. They were judged on writing, timeliness, creativity, and runtime experience. Mike Young was the entirety of one of those teams. Using the elements of The Kaballa, the Illuminati, and Enhanced Humans, he wrote Tempus Frangit literally overnight. Tempus Frangit went on to win the competition. The version published here as been modified slightly to flesh out the background of one of the characters.

**WARNING: THIS GAME DEALS WITH ADULT THEMES
AND SITUATIONS AND MAY NOT BE APPROPRIATE
FOR CHILDREN.**

Tempus Frangit

*Well, we know where we're going
But we don't know where we've been.*

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*And we know what we're knowing.
But we can't say what we've seen.
And we're not little children.
And we know what we want.
And the future is certain.
Give us time to work it out.
-- Road to Nowhere, The Talking Heads*

Idea: The illuminati has been working on methods of creating the next generation of humans, in a secret research facility. Some of these experiments have escaped and have wandered into a cabin in the woods near Boulder. The people in the cabin have found a book on the Kabala and cast a spell. They think the escapees are the result of the spell.

The spell has fractured time. The escapees have flashbacks that explain who they are and what they are. Also, something is coming from n-time, a part of time that is orthogonal to our own. The players must figure out how to defeat the creature from n-time using the Kabala, the secret Illuminati knowledge, and the enhanced humans.

If they succeed, then time is realigned so that it all never happened. If they fail, then time is realigned such that they are stuck in a dystopia where the Illuminati rules all with an iron fist.

Characters:

Mordechi (Morrey) Saltzberg: The son of an Orthodox Jewish rabbi from Denver. He found the book in his father's collection and was curious. He was raised Orthodox, but was disowned when he took a non-jewish lover. He is Pagan curious, but has little experience outside of Judaism.

Felicity Chilton: Morrey's lover. She is a new-age mystic and is into the Kaballah, but hates the way Madonna is cheapening it for everyone. She discovered the Kaballah first. Likes Morrey because he's Jewish and that is soooo spiritual.

Raventooth: A creepy goth who is a dark Pagan. Owns the cabin in the woods, which is why the other hang around him. Always overly dramatic. In love with Candice. (Can be either gender). Randy Thurston.

Candice Brookward: She is a Pagan and has a good head on her shoulders. She is far more pragmatic than the others.

Saul Flockman: He is half Jewish and was raised without religion. He is a conspiracy theorist and has actually had brushes with the Illuminati. He is concerned about the “research facility” a few miles away from the cabin. He is also in love with Candice.

Notes: The enhanced do not know they have super powers at all. While they are literate and intelligent, they have no real memories before the middle of the experiment process. They wear jumpsuits with the Illuminati logo and the hebrew symbol.

Aleph א: Enhanced Male. Super Strength and Fortitude. Was a security guard in Denver named Albert Tussard. He has a wife and child and they needed money. He signed up to have the money to afford an operation for his wife.

Bet ב: Enhanced Female. Super Dexterity. She has been trained as a professional assassin and has codewords in her head that would cause her to kill without remorse. She was a drug addict, a prostitute who ran away from home when she was 16. Gayle Ermis. Been at facility for a year.

Gimmel ג: Enhanced Male. Super Speed. However, his metabolism is sped up and he must constantly eat food. He was a basketball player for University of Colorado at Boulder. Taken two months ago. Keith O'Brien.

Daled ד (Dead): Another child, a female.

He ה: Enhanced Child. Sensor. Can sense the emotions of others

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and dangers. (can be either gender). He was in a halfway house after his/her illegal immigrant parents were deported. However, he/she joined a gang and killed a rival gang member (still as a child, remember). The illuminati representative gave him/her the option to join or go to jail. Hernandez.

Vav 1: Enhanced Female: Failed experiment. Dying. She is Judy from Candice's character sheet. She has some telepathy and mind control. If she overexerts her powers, she gets headaches or even mini strokes.

Flashbacks

Well, the flashbacks aren't really flashbacks. They are fragments of time. Sometimes the players have free will and sometimes they are stuck to an improvised script. If you are given a script, you are free to improvise within the bounds of the script.

How flashbacks work. First, the players experience a bright flash. The next thing they know, they are elsewhere. Sometimes they have new character sheets. If not, they are themselves as they most recently remember them. After the flashbacks, the players involved are returned and they remember everything that happened if they played their same characters. Otherwise, they do not remember.

There are a lot of flashbacks. For some of the smaller ones, if you have a full cast, do two flashbacks at once. If a character is not in the game, do not put the flashbacks in for that character. If a flashback for another character requires a character not in game, substitute with a different character.

Do the flashbacks in order for the characters, that is do not do flashback A2 until you have done flashback A1. but you can do flashback B3 even if you haven't done A1, as long as you have done B1 and B2.

Note that flashbacks may be repeated if the players involved *just don't get it* from the first flashback.

Characters must leave any items they have behind when they go on flashbacks.

The rules of combat remain during flashbacks. All other relevant game rules are in effect during flashbacks.

Before the first flashback starts, have a quick flashback briefing and explain the flashback rules to the players.

Misc Notes

The book is gone, lost in time. It can be recovered in a flashback midway through the game. Then they get a puzzle to solve to stop the fractured time.

What happened: the group met Morrey and had lunch. Candice looked at the book and realized that it was a tome of great power. She got in an argument with Morrey about it. Raventooth was nasty and got in an argument with Felicity. They decided to prove that it was ok, by casting a spell. The spell they cast unlocked a gateway into n-space which has caused time to become fractured.

There are two cars in front of the cabins. Felicity and Mordechi's car and one for the other three. Both cars were severely damaged in the time fracture and neither one works.

If the players decide to leave the cabin, have them walk for a bit, put them through a flashback and end them back up at the cabin afterwards.

Setup: Start the normal humans in the game space (a room) and the enhanced humans just outside. Give them a few minutes to interact with each other, then tell the enhanced humans that they see the cabin and there are people inside and they can knock on the door if they wish.

Endgame. After the players get the book and have the flashback where they can – hopefully – rewrite the spell. They can cast the new spell.

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This will repair time, but will allow a cadre of Illuminati agents to surround the place. If the characters decide to fight it out, have the players playing students be the Illuminati agents. See their sheets below.

Casting

Level 1: These characters **must** be in the game:

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Mordechi Saltzberg | Male. Ideally, the player should know something about Judaism. |
| Felicity Chilton | Female. Ideally, the player should know something about Wicca. |
| Saul Flockman | Male. Ideally, the player should know about conspiracy theories and/or be able to quickly extemporize about them. |
| Aleph א | Male |
| Vav ו | Female. This character will die during the game. |

Level 2: these characters **should** be in the game:

Cast the character in the order below

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Candice Brookward | Female. Ideally, the player should be well versed in Paganism. |
| Raventooth | Either Gender. Ideally, the player should know something about Paganism, Emo, and the Goth scene. |
| He ה | Either gender. The character is a child. |
| Bet ב | Female |
| Gimmel ג | Male |

Illuminati Agents.

You are an agent for the Illuminati. You have been slightly enhanced to be able to fight better. Your job is to surround the cabin and capture or eliminate all the inhabitants. You all have submachine guns.

One of you will be chosen as a leader. You must obey that person's orders without question, even if they are downright stupid.

Abilities:

You are Excellent at Combat.

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FOR CHILDREN.**

This is a typical simulated combat adventure style LARP. Don't physically hit other players. Keep all abuse in-game. Yadda yadda yadda.

Most of the mechanics are GM adjudicated, but if you feel your character could do something or would know something, go ahead and do it. We trust you. If an ability *says* that you need a GM to use it, see a GM before trying to use it.

In general, abilities have five levels: Horrible, Below Average, Average, Above Average, and Excellent. You cannot win single combat against someone with a higher level, although if you are Average or higher and the other person is one level more than you, you can get your licks in. Ganging up may change things.

Combat. To attack someone, point at that person and say "combat." This will create a combat bubble. The GM will listen to what people want to do and then will explain what happens as a result. There is only one combat "round." After the GM explains what the results of combat are, act out the combat in slow motion, then once the combat is acted out, resume in real time. The bubble is over.

Contingency envelopes: You may be given contingency envelopes throughout the game. Do not open them until you are told to. Once you do open them, follow the instructions inside as if told to by a GM.

Thunder: If you hear the thunder special effect, stop what you are doing and freeze in place. Wait for further instructions. This will signal a flashback. If you play your main character in a flashback, you remember what happened when you return from the flashback; otherwise you do not.

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Mordechi “Morrey” Saltzberg (Age 17)

You never had the good life growing up. Sure your father, Herman Saltzberg, was one of the most respected Rabbis in the Denver Jewish community. And sure, your mother was as caring as she could be with eight children. But your father worked hard and had *responsibilities* and since you were the eldest, it quickly became your job to be the man of the house while your father was away.

It isn't easy keeping control of seven kids, especially when they see you as a sibling and not as an authority figure. Your parents worked hard to instill an Orthodox education in your head. You went to Shul every Shabbat and Sunday morning and you prayed every day. You said your blessings before meals, before you went to bed, and many other times during the day.

On Sundays, after service, you would volunteer in the Mizel Museum, Denver's museum of Jewish culture and history. It was there you discovered the book. It was an old book from Europe about the Kaballah, the secret Jewish mysticism. You had learned a few things about the Kaballah; it was supposedly mostly about numerology and a sort of self-affirming philosophy about how to be better connected to G-d.

But this book was different. It started with the philosophy of Ein Sof, that each and every thing in the universe *is* G-d, but it continued with an explanation that words, *true words* have value and power and if the true name of *G-d* could be found then true power would follow.

The book went on to explain about the Sepheroth, the Tree of Life, and the different parts of it. It explained that by manipulating the various Sepherot that comprise the Tree and by speaking the true words, you could manipulate various powers. But most interestingly of all, it claimed to have some of those words. With this book, you could learn the secrets of the Kaballah. You borrowed it from the museum. As far as you know, nobody knows that it is missing.

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But before you could delve into the book, things went horribly wrong with your family. You had already started to have a crisis of faith. You had just started going to the University of Colorado at Boulder and were planning to major in Philosophy. It was your first real experience outside of the Jewish community (something your father already frowned upon) and it was a real eye opener.

You never realized how conservative your family was. The people here in college are so open, so free. They didn't let centuries old traditions guide their path or way of thinking. And it started you pondering. Maybe these traditions were good back in the old country, but here they are outdated.

And you wanted to blend in, to make new friends. You stopped wearing your yarmulke (except when you went home). You didn't say the Sh'mah when you woke up or went to bed. You even tried a cheeseburger (although you couldn't bring yourself to try bacon or ham). And you started to associate, to flirt with non-Jewish girls.

You met Felicity Chilton in your Philosophy 101 class. She is so cute, and so unlike the Jewish girls your mother tries to set you up with. She is carefree, dresses in fancy wild dresses, her blond hair is tinted pink. She goes to raves. She always wears crystals of some sort, and she even experiments with alternative religions.

Felicity is a Wiccan. Wicca is an ancient pagan religion that Felicity claims is completely misunderstood. Apparently they even burned Wiccans at the stake in the 1600s in New England. Wiccans use magic, but they never use it to hurt people. They are bound by the threefold law which says that anything bad they do will be done back to them three times as bad. She says a lot more, but it is often jumbled and confused, and you are so mesmerized by her beauty.

And Felicity likes you too, a lot. She is especially interested in your Jewish background. She has a set of tarot cards which she used to tell your future. She pointed out that the cards have the Hebrew alphabet on them. It's true, but you couldn't see any sort of relationship to the

letters and the cards other than the straight one to one relationship of the letter and the number on the card. Then again, that might be part of the numerology part of the Kaballah, but you can't really see why, for example, The Star is number 17.

But you didn't care. You and Felicity were in love. But love blinded you, it caused you to make your critical mistake. You introduced Felicity to your parents. You knew they might not take it well, but you had expected them to be hospitable. But your mother broke down crying and your father yelled at you, "how dare you bring that *shicksa* into this house?" He threw the two of you out of the house and practically disowned you.

You were sick with guilt. How could you do that to them? But that quickly turned into anger! How could *they* do that to *you*? Felicity tried to calm you down, and back in your dorm room, one thing led to another and your anger turned to passion and there in your bed you lost yourself to her. It was incredible.

When you woke the next morning, Felicity was already up, wearing one of your t-shirts. She was leafing through the old book you had found in the museum. "What *is* this?" You explained where you had gotten the book, and then Felicity got very excited.

"I just have to show this to the rest of the coven!" You wouldn't let her take the book, but she made a few calls with her cell phone.

"It's all arranged," she said, "Raventoan can use his parents' cabin. You'll finally get a chance to meet the rest of my friends this weekend."

And that's how you found yourself in a cabin in the middle of nowhere. One of Felicity's friends, a woman named Candice, brought some wine and you were drinking and you brought the book and

SOMETHING WENT WRONG

You *know* that you had to have spent some time in the cabin. You

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remember drinking some wine and eating lunch. You know you've met these people (other than Felicity) some time today, but you aren't sure when. The whole day is hazy. Didn't you read the book and draw something on the floor? Did you have a fight with Felicity? Candice? You can't remember. Your watch has stopped. Is it broken? Was it raining? You remember a storm, a bright flash of light in any case.

And there is something... something in the woods.

Skills And Abilities

You are Average in Combat.

You are Very Smart, but you are Naive and could be talked into things easily.

You are very knowledgeable about Judaism.

You can read Hebrew.

Felicity Chilton (Age 18)

You are a Libra. Like, it explains sooo much about you.

You were born in Marin County, California to aging hippies who moved north from Haight Ashbury to the wine country. They are cool, but a little spacy. On the other hand, they let you get away with stuff most kids don't. Hey, how many other kids would say that the first joint they smoked was with their mom?

Your parents always encouraged exploration and creativity. They were very supportive in helping you find yourself. You're still looking; there's a lot of self possibilities right now. But there are a few things you are certain of. You know there is far more to the world than just your parents' lifestyle. They may not understand your penchant for techno music or why you would want to color your hair with pink highlights, but dad still drove you to raves and mom helped you with the coloring.

The other thing you are positive about is your spirituality. You are Wiccan. You feel a deep, personal connection to Gaia, Mother Earth. You revel in nature (you love to walk barefoot on the grass) and you feel very spiritual about it. Further, you know that in a past life, you were one of the witches that was burned at Salem. You have done a lot of reading about Wicca on the internet and you are certain it is your calling. And again, your parents were supportive. Your father is somewhat anti-religious, but even he agrees with your choice. You love your parents very much.

Your folks were even supportive when you decided to go to college half a continent away. You now go to the University of Colorado in Boulder. You love it here. Boulder is a little island of sanity inside the ultraconservative Midwest. You are majoring in Philosophy and you are learning sooo much.

You've even made a small group of likeminded friend, and have formed a cousin. The leader of your cousin is Raventooth. Raventooth is a

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bit creepy, sometimes more goth and sometimes more emo, but you all tolerate Raventooth because of the cabin. ‘Tooth’s parents own a cabin in the woods halfway up the Rockies. It’s far away from anything except a government facility a few miles away, so it’s pretty private. You all go up there most weekends to practice the craft and debate the finer points of paganism.

The other two members of the coven are Candice Brookward and Saul Flockman. They are both seniors, which is cool, because they can buy alcohol and always share it up at the cabin. Candice is smart and practical and knows more about the craft than anyone. Which is useful since she usually can mediate it when someone else gets in an argument with Raventooth.

Saul is just weird. He isn’t really into the religion; you think he might just have a crush on Candice. Saul is a history major and a conspiracy theorist. He is convinced that the major governments of the world are working to form a New World Order. You don’t understand half of what he says, but he brings the booze, so you haven’t said anything against him.

But the big news is your new boyfriend, Morrey Saltzberg. Morrey is a Jew. You’ve always been impressed with the Jewish people; they have such *energy* about them, you know? You met Morrey in your Philosophy 101 class and the two of you hit it off so well, like you were meant for each other. It’s weird, though, because you come from such different worlds. You learned that when you met his parents.

What a fiasco. You knew that Morrey’s parents were unlike yours, but you never even suspected that people this close minded could have existed in this day and age. When Morrey introduced you to his mother, she broke into tears. His father threw you out of the house. At first, Morrey was devastated, then he was just angry! You went back to his dorm room and tried to calm him down. And, well, one thing led to another, and you spent the night there. He was pretty good; you never did it with a Jewish boy before. (And, you aren’t certain, but you don’t think he had done it with anyone ever before).

You woke before Morrey did and, pulling on one of his t-shirts, decided to explore his dorm room. Your eyes alighted on an old, worn tome. You were amazed. You knew that Morrey was interested in your religion, but you didn't know he had an old grimoire. You were leafing through it when Morrey woke up. You couldn't tell a lot about it – it was mostly in Hebrew – but it looked like a spellbook from the Kaballah.

You were so excited. You needed to show the book to the rest of the coven. But Morrey wouldn't let you take the book with you then and there. A few cell phone calls later and it was all arranged. Morrey and the book would be joining the rest of the coven this weekend at Raventooth's cabin.

You all got there this morning. Candice brought wine. You showed off the book and

SOMETHING WENT WRONG

You *know* that you had to have spent some time in the cabin. You remember drinking some wine and eating lunch. You think you had a fight with Raventooth. The whole day is hazy. Didn't Morrey read the book and ask you to chant something? You think you had a circle of protection. Was it broken? You can't remember. Your watch has stopped. Was it raining? You remember a storm, a bright flash of light in any case.

And there is something... something in the woods.

Skills And Abilities

You are Below Average in Combat.

You are of average Intelligence, but are not very Knowledgeable.

While you have an Above Average Knowledge in New Age and Pagan

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religions, there are some things that you are completely wrong about.

You tend to keep your head, even in stressful or bizarre situations.

You can do magic. All spells must be resolved by the GM.

Raventooth (Age 20 or so)

Note: This character can be played as male or female. No gender is specified in the other character sheets.

Life is pain. You first heard that in a movie (*The Princess Bride*), and you later realized how true it was. As you grew older, you got involved with the local goth and emo scene. You dress in all black, to reflect the dark nature of your soul. You paint your fingernails black and wear your died-black hair in a frolet, covering your left eye. Sure you go to the raves and take the X, but you know that those aren't really your people. You reflect the sadness that is in people's souls.

You were born Randy Thurston; how you despise that name. Your parents are rich. They do not understand you. You do not pierce yourself to get their attention; you wish they would leave you alone. You are an adult now, on your own at the University of Colorado at Boulder and you have the right to make your own decisions.

You hate your parents. Not because they are cruel, objectively they aren't. Not because they have no taste in music, which they don't. Not because they don't understand you, although they certainly do not. No, you hate your parents for their banality. They are so plain, so vanilla, so white bread, so, so, boring. You cannot stand the legacy they are providing for you. You hate them.

Still, the wealth comes in handy at times.

For example, your 'rents own a secluded cabin in the woods halfway up the Rockies. They always keep the larder and fridge well stocked, although you bring your own wine. You and the few friends you have go up there most every weekend to hang out, drink, and practice your craft. You are a Pagan, although you follow your own solitary path. You have done research and work to learn what you know, and you are frankly disgusted by some of the neo-Pagans you know.

Take Felicity Chilton, for example. Not a brain in her head. She is

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convinced that she was burned in Salem in a prior life. You haven't had the heart to tell her that nobody was ever burned at the stake for witchcraft in America. She claims to be a Wiccan, but she doesn't know the details of her path. She walks barefoot through the grass and calls it spiritual.

True spirit, true belief calls for sacrifice, a sacrifice of will and energy. You must spend time honing your craft. You must learn the true nature of what you summon and you must know the true history of the words you speak. Otherwise, you are just a Beltane and Samhain poseur, a wannabe who is just in it for the scene.

The craft is a religion, and requires the duty and seriousness of any true calling. You cannot stand anyone who doesn't have the appropriate commitment to their path. And that is why you cannot stand Felicity. Although, truth be told, she is still better than the majority of people out there, the mundanes who mock and torture you. Life is pain.

You also do not care for Saul Flockman. He is relatively new to Paganism. He was brought up without much religious training and he considers himself an agnostic. You hate agnostics. Their surety that they are not sure rubs you exactly the wrong way. He claims that he is in the process of discovering his own path, but you think he really is in it for Candice.

Ah, Candice. She is so sure, so levelheaded. She is everything you are looking for in a life companion. She knows her stuff. She is dedicated to her path. She is beautiful. And you think she cares for you too. Unfortunately, Saul is also interested in Candice. You need to win her heart, although you will probably lose. Life is pain.

In any case, you received a phone call from Felicity earlier this week. Apparently her boy toy of the month has some sort of "ancient grimoire." Sure, like you can find powerful books of ancient magicks sitting around in a dorm room. In any case, she asked to bring her friend and his book with her this weekend. You agreed even though you doubt this will come to anything – most likely she found a

paperback copy of the fake Necronomicon they sell at science fiction conventions.

You all got there this morning. Candice brought wine. You were introduced to Morrey and

SOMETHING WENT WRONG

You *know* that you had to have spent some time in the cabin. You remember drinking some wine and eating lunch. You think you had a fight with someone. The whole day is hazy. You know you were drawing a symbol of some sort on the floor in chalk. You think you called some ancient power. Did it come? You can't remember. Your watch has stopped. Was it raining? You remember a storm, a bright flash of light in any case.

And there is something... something in the woods.

Skills And Abilities

You are Below Average in Combat.

You are of Above Average Intelligence.

You have an Above Average Knowledge in Pagan religions.

You have an Above Average Knowledge in the Goth and Emo scenes.

You know how to perform hermetic magic. No magick you have ever performed before today has had a direct noticeable physical effect. All spells must be resolved by the GM.

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Candice Brookward (age 21)

You are down to earth. Grounded. You are, perhaps, the most practical of your group of friends. Well, that's because sometimes your friends are a group of loons. Not that you blame them, they are the products of their environment. Also, they are *your* loons, and as loons go are pretty cool to hang around.

Except when they argue.

Which is nearly constantly.

You first discovered Paganism in high school. You were a sophomore and your best friend, Judy, was a senior. You met each other in theatre, performing on the school play. You remarked to her about the cool malachite pentacle she wore around her neck. She explained that for her it was a religious symbol, not one of evil, but one of the more ancient gods that were around before Christianity.

Judy taught you a lot about Paganism, its rituals and its beliefs. She taught you how to invoke the four elements, how to protect a room from evil, and how to focus your energy. She explained the main law of her path, "An it harm none, do as thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." It is taken from the words of Aleister Crowley one of the most prominent of the Edwardian occultists.

Judy explained that religion, especially Paganism, is a deeply personal choice, that two people may claim to follow the exact same path, but in their hearts it is wildly different. She explained that you have to be tolerant of all of those around you, celebrate with them, but do not let their idiosyncrasies drag you down. You do your best, but some of your friends can get to you.

Take Felicity Chilton. She is only 17, in many ways still a child. Her spirituality is like a game to her. She goes through the motions without really understanding what they mean. But the actions, the belief give her comfort. She is shallow, yes, but she is happy, and you cannot fault

her for that.

At the extreme other end is Raventooth. Religion holds great meaning for Raventooth, to the point that it is a source of arrogance. “I am so different, I am better than you, especially those of you who do not worship as fervently as me.” Raventooth wears depression and angst as a badge of honor, dressing in all black, half goth half emo. You know that it is an act, that there is a good, kind person down deep inside, but Raventooth does everything to hide it.

As you may expect, Raventooth and Felicity fight like cats and dogs.

The final person in your current circle of friends is Saul Flockman. You met Saul in college – you are currently a senior at the University of Colorado in Boulder, finishing up a major in comparative religions. Saul is great; he is funny, kind, and curious. He was raised without any sort of religious guidance and is interminably curious about your faith. You find his thirst for knowledge energizing. It really gets you to consider your religious beliefs, you know?

But Saul also has his obsessions. He is what is commonly known as a conspiracy theorist. He believes in secret societies and shadow governments. He will rant endlessly about it if given the chance. It’s a real turn off, really destroys the mood. You try hard to be accepting and tolerant, but he really tries your patience.

Ah well, back to Judy. You really miss her. She was your wisest friend. She’s dead now, been dead for nearly four years. You do a small ritual for her every Samhain. She was killed by a drunk driver as she was coming home from rehearsal. She hung on for nearly a week. You tried to visit her in the hospital, but her injuries were so bad that you weren’t allowed entry.

For nearly a month afterwards you were inconsolable. You could not believe that the Fates would allow such a thing to happen to such a good person. You loved her, you really did. She was your strength, your backbone. You gave up your faith. You vowed never to drink and to

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stop all around you from drinking. You were a tyrant and a rage and impossible to be around.

But then one day your mother asked you, “look at how you are behaving. Is that what Judy would have wanted?” It was a slap to the face. You woke up, then, as if out a trace. You realized that no. Judy would have wanted you to get on with your life, to mourn her and miss her surely, but not at the expense of your world. She would not want you to give up on your path. She would not want you to be so intolerant toward alcohol.

Chastened, you renewed your faith and ceased your crusade. And eventually, you even came to enjoy the odd glass of wine now and then. But you will never ever forgive those who drive drunk and you will never ever allow those you are with to do so either. The man responsible for Judy’s death had his license revoked, and went to prison for 3 years. You console yourself that even though he is out of jail, his sentence could have been much lighter.

In any case, you have continued on with your life, learning what you can, and helping who you can. You have never allowed anyone to get as close to you as Judy, not even Saul. Earlier this week you received a phone call from Felicity. You lead a sort of coven-like retreat into the woods most weekends at Raventooth’s parent’s cabin and Felicity wanted to bring her new boyfriend and a book she had found.

Intrigued, you naturally accepted. You try to welcome anyone who wishes to come to your retreats. You all got there this morning. You brought some wine since people would be sleeping over. You were introduced to Morrey and

SOMETHING WENT WRONG

You *know* that you had to have spent some time in the cabin. You remember drinking a glass of wine and eating lunch. You think you had a fight with someone about the book. The whole day is hazy. You know the others were doing a ritual while you watched. You can’t

remember exactly. Your watch has stopped. Was it raining? You remember a storm, a bright flash of light in any case.

And there is something... something in the woods.

Skills And Abilities

You are Below Average in Combat.

You are of Above Average Intelligence.

You have an Excellent Knowledge of most religions.

You tend to keep your head in times of crisis.

You know how to perform assorted magicks. All spells must be resolved by the GM.

You can puzzle out Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.

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Saul Flockman (Age 21)

You have two interests of equal fascination: religion and politics. The former you can blame on your parents. The latter, well... more on that in a bit.

You were born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. Your parents are fairly upper class folks, white collar professionals. Your father is a lapsed Jew who comes from a very Reformed family. Your mother comes from Episcopalian stock. You were raised without any religious guidance at all. Oh, you got Christmas presents from your Mom's family and Chanukah presents from Dad's, but the significance of those holidays was never really explained to you. You never even set foot in a house of worship until you turned 13 and one of your friends was bar-mitzvoted.

You find religion fascinating because you come from it from a completely objective position. You've seen how blind faith can warp a person causing them to hate for no apparent reason. But you have also seen the positive side of religion, how it can create communities and give people the strength to go on when they have nothing but faith to sustain them.

Yes, religion has been responsible for more bloodshed than any other reason known to man, but it also has been responsible for some of the greatest creations, some of the more touching works of art and literature in the world. It's a double sided coin with a razor's edge. And while you have no faith of your own, you find the subject completely absorbing.

You weren't even aware of the multitude of religions until you got to college (you are currently a senior at the University of Colorado in Denver). Before you arrived at college, you were aware of Christianity, Judaism, and of the Muslim faith in an abstract sense. But it wasn't until you started matriculating that you learned of Buddhism, Hinduism, and that there are people who still practice faiths you thought were long dead.

And that is how a good agnostic like you found yourself in a coven of Pagans. You are still trying to understand their faiths. Unlike the more structured religions, Pagans have a multitude of different paths; you have yet to find two who believe exactly the same thing, even if they claim that they do. You wonder if that is true of the organized religions, if the deeply held beliefs of the individual practitioners of the same congregation differ to the same degree of those of Pagans.

In any case, you like to pester your friends with questions about the faith. Your closest friend, Candice, enjoys your questions. She finds them challenging and a reaffirmation of her faith. You like Candice a lot; she is practical and trusting. However, she has never really welcomed your romantic advances. Pity.

Your other two friends, Felicity and Raventooth, do not like your questions quite so much. Felicity just isn't that deep; she doesn't question why she believes what she believes. She just believes because it feels right to her. And Raventooth is absolutely convinced that there is only one correct path and any questions about it are a direct challenge to Raventooth's right to exist. Still, it is fun to send a probing question once in a while to see which way Raventooth jumps.

Your other obsession is with unconventional politics, specifically conspiracy theories. You love reading about faked moon landings, rehashing of who shot JFK, and about the secret cabals of power around the globe. Sometimes, you think the theories are crazy, and then other times you have to wonder, say, why is the government *really* implanting RFID chips in elementary school students? Did the trilateral commission *really* disband? Why is there a blatant illuminati symbol – the eye in the pyramid – on the back of the one dollar bill? Who *really* rules America?

You like to regale your friends with your theories, some of which you believe, some you think are laughable, and some you are just testing to see how they'll react.

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The current theory is that the Amero-European cabals are ramping up their attempt to forge a new world order. They fear the globalization that is turning India into a major power, the Chinese and Russian mafias that are rising to international power since the fall of the Soviet Union, and the small but growing threat of South American street gangs.

That's the real reason why the US invaded Iraq. Not because of WMDs, not to oust Saddam for his crimes, not even because a cowboy president felt he had to finish what his father started. No, it was to gain a second foothold of power in the only small battleground left: the mideast. (Well, there is no strong secret society controlling most of Africa, but that is because Africa has no resources that the big boys care about).

The World Zionist Conspiracy has been in the pocket of the Bavarian Illuminati since the First World War when England signed the Balfort Declaration. The Illuminati all but controls Israel via the Elders of Zion, but the rest of the middle east was starting to become organized under a new Muslim conspiracy bringing in funding from oil rich countries like Saudi Arabia and countries like India which are bringing in great strides in technological prowess. The invasion of Iraq was a show of force by the Illuminati. If they can use their Halliburton operatives to control the area, they could be well on their way to a true foothold in complete world domination. They'll at least have enough power and resources to hold off the Triads, the Russian Mafia, and MS-13, should they all decide to gang up together.

But that isn't all. You are certain that the European cabals are working on other secret unethical projects: mind control, genetic engineering, computer hacking, germ warfare and worse. You aren't certain if anything can be done to stop them should they decide to show their hand instead of working from the shadows. The thought has caused you many sleepless nights. But as long as they remain in power behind the scenes, you'll just see the gradual decline of your civil liberties until they swoop in and take over.

Ahem. In any case, you find the whole topic fascinating and you cannot understand why your friends don't want to hear about your latest

find or supposition. That doesn't stop you from regaling them with theories, though.

That's why you were so surprised to get a phone call from Felicity earlier this week. Felicity wanted to bring her new boyfriend and a book she had found to the coven this weekend. Since you feel more like a guest than an actual member, you agreed. The coven gatherings are held at Raventooth's parents' cabin deep in the heart of the woods, about halfway up the Rockies. The closest buildings are a government complex a few miles away. Candice brought some wine and you all had lunch. You were introduced to Felicity's boyfriend and

SOMETHING WENT WRONG

You *know* that you had to have spent some time in the cabin. You remember drinking some wine and eating lunch. You think there were several yelling matches about the book. The whole day is hazy. You know the others were doing a ritual while you watched. You can't remember exactly. Your watch has stopped. Was it raining? You remember a storm, a bright flash of light in any case.

And there is something... something in the woods.

Skills And Abilities

You are Average in Combat.

You are of Above Average Intelligence.

You have an Excellent Knowledge of conspiracy theory.

You have Above Average Knowledge of how to operate a computer.

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N (Male, Mid 30s)

You remember nothing before you came to the institution. No, that isn't true. You can understand (and read and write) English. You know that you are in America, that it is the current year, and are up on current events, circa about a month ago. But you remember none of your personal life before you came to the facility.

Your earliest memories are of pain, of being awake inside a tank of some sort. You were undergoing injections, operations, tests. You know that, but you do not know why, or who was doing them on you. You feel ... different. No, you don't feel inhuman, just odd. You can't see your reflection, but you can see the other four and they look like normal people.

Well, even that you aren't sure about. Whoever did what they were doing in the facility might have altered your perceptions like they altered your memory. You aren't sure what is real and what isn't any more.

What you are fairly sure of, what your senses and memory tell you is that you were at the facility and aware for about a week. You may have been there longer, but you were only awake for the past week. You were being fed and given injections. You were, essentially, a prisoner. You weren't allowed news about the outside world, but then again, it never occurred to you to ask.

There were men there and women in lab coats, and you were – and are – dressed in jumpsuits, giving you the impression that you were in a hospital of sorts or a research lab, not a prison. There were armed guards, but you never saw them until the escape earlier today.

You had a regular regimen of meals, injections, exercise, and tests. There were a number of tests, mental, physical, and psychological, and some that you just didn't understand at all. At the time you didn't think anything odd about it; it was life, the way things should be. But then came the blackout and the fire.

About an hour ago, a huge storm tore over the mountains – the facility is about halfway up a large mountain, part of a chain. It knocked out power to the facility, although the backup generators came on less than a minute later. But then, with a crash, there was a huge lightning strike directly on one of the outside walls, which crumbled and started to burn.

The fire was spreading quickly, and something told you to use the opportunity to slip outside. After a bit of stumbling around, you met up with the others. There are five of you all told.

- 𐌒 is a slender female, also in seemingly perfect shape, although not overtly muscular. She seems to flow with the grace of a ballet dancer rather than simply move.
- 𐌗 is a tall man, even taller than you. But the majority of his height is his long, muscular legs.
- 𐌗 is a young child of perhaps 11 or 12 with big piercing brown eyes. 𐌗 doesn't say much.
- 𐌗 is a female in her mid 20s. She is rake thin, and moves with pain. She also does not talk much, but you get the feeling that she has other ways of communication.

The five of you haven't had much time to talk. Soon after you met up, a group of armed guards arrived and started shooting. You ran, but you got winged in the arm. The shots missed 𐌗 and 𐌒. You carried 𐌗 and the other two took turns carrying 𐌗 until you were out of harm's way.

After about an hour of stumbling around in the woods, you came across a cabin in the woods. There are two cars out front, but you can tell they are damaged beyond repair. You can hear voices inside. You'd like to go in – your arm stings to hell – but you are concerned about your safety. You should consult the others and make a decision.

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Skills And Abilities

You don't know how good you are in Combat. Have a GM adjudicate your combats.

You are of Average Intelligence.

You may have other abilities, of which you are unaware. The GM will be keeping an eye on you, but if you think you're going to attempt something that based on what you have figured out you would be especially good at, you may want to talk to a GM. In general, going to a GM asking "can I do this," is not recommended.

Your right arm is injured. You have been shot and are in some pain (not debilitating; it stings). You should get a medical professional to look at it.

2 (Female, Early 20s)

You remember nothing before you came to the institution. No, that isn't true. You can understand (and read and write) English. You know that you are in America, that it is the current year, and are up on current events, circa about a year ago. But you remember none of your personal life before you came to the facility.

Your earliest memories are of pain, of being attached to a machine with electrodes all over your body, burning your muscles. You were undergoing injections, operations, tests. You know that, but you do not know why, or who was doing them on you. You feel ... different. No, you don't feel inhuman, just odd. You can't see your reflection, but you can see the other four and they look like normal people.

Well, even that you aren't sure about. Whoever did what they were doing in the facility might have altered your perceptions like they altered your memory. You aren't sure what is real and what isn't any more.

What you are fairly sure of, what your senses and memory tell you is that you were at the facility and aware for nearly half a year. You may have been there longer, but you were only awake for the past six or so months. You were being fed and given injections. You were, essentially, a prisoner. You weren't allowed news about the outside world, but then again, it never occurred to you to ask.

There were men there and women in lab coats, and you were – and are – dressed in jumpsuits, giving you the impression that you were in a hospital of sorts or a research lab, not a prison. There were armed guards, but you never saw them until the escape earlier today.

You had a regular regimen of meals, injections, exercise, and tests. There were a number of tests, mental, physical, and psychological, and some that you just didn't understand at all. At the time you didn't think anything odd about it; it was life, the way things should be. But then came the blackout and the fire.

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About an hour ago, a huge storm tore over the mountains – the facility is about halfway up a large mountain, part of a chain. It knocked out power to the facility, although the backup generators came on less than a minute later. But then, with a crash, there was a huge lightning strike directly on one of the outside walls, which crumbled and started to burn.

The fire was spreading quickly, and something told you to use the opportunity to slip outside. After a bit of stumbling around, you met up with the others. There are five of you all told.

- ⌘ is a large man in his early 30s, perhaps six and a half feet tall, and not an ounce of fat on him. He has the physique of a bodybuilder.
- λ is a tall man, even taller than ⌘. But the majority of his height is his long, muscular legs.
- 7 is a young child of perhaps 11 or 12 with big piercing brown eyes. 7 doesn't say much.
- 1 is a female in her mid 20s. She is rake thin, and moves with pain. She also does not talk much, but you get the feeling that she has other ways of communication.

The five of you haven't had much time to talk. Soon after you met up, a group of armed guards arrived and started shooting. ⌘ got winged in the arm. You ran; it was funny, but you know how time seems to slow when you are under stress... You could almost swear that you were dodging the bullets, but that is crazy talk. ⌘ carried 1 and you and λ took turns carrying 7 until you were out of harm's way.

After about an hour of stumbling around in the woods, you came across a cabin in the woods. There are two cars out front, but you can tell they are damaged beyond repair. You can hear voices inside. You aren't sure. This could be an outpost of the facility. You know you are in America, but you aren't sure how long you've been the facility. It probably has only been a week or two, but it might have been years.

You should consult the others and make a decision.

Skills And Abilities

You don't know how good you are in Combat. Have a GM adjudicate your combats.

You are of Average Intelligence.

You may have other abilities, of which you are unaware. The GM will be keeping an eye on you, but if you think you're going to attempt something that based on what you have figured out you would be especially good at, you may want to talk to a GM. In general, going to a GM asking "can I do this," is not recommended.

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1 (Male, Early 20s)

You remember nothing before you came to the institution. No, that isn't true. You can understand (and read and write) English. You know that you are in America, that it is the current year, and are up on current events, circa about two months ago. But you remember none of your personal life before you came to the facility.

Your earliest memories are of running a treadmill. You ran that treadmill for what seemed to be hours at a time. You were undergoing injections, operations, tests. You know that, but you do not know why, or who was doing them on you. You feel ... different. No, you don't feel inhuman, just odd. You can't see your reflection, but you can see the other four and they look like normal people.

Well, even that you aren't sure about. Whoever did what they were doing in the facility might have altered your perceptions like they altered your memory. You aren't sure what is real and what isn't any more.

What you are fairly sure of, what your senses and memory tell you is that you were at the facility and aware for about a month. You may have been there longer, but you were only awake for the past month or so. You were being fed and given injections. You were, essentially, a prisoner. You weren't allowed news about the outside world, but then again, it never occurred to you to ask.

There were men there and women in lab coats, and you were – and are – dressed in jumpsuits, giving you the impression that you were in a hospital of sorts or a research lab, not a prison. There were armed guards, but you never saw them until the escape earlier today.

You had a regular regimen of meals, injections, exercise, and tests. There were a number of tests, mental, physical, and psychological, and some that you just didn't understand at all. At the time you didn't think anything odd about it; it was life, the way things should be. But then came the blackout and the fire.

About an hour ago, a huge storm tore over the mountains – the facility is about halfway up a large mountain, part of a chain. It knocked out power to the facility, although the backup generators came on less than a minute later. But then, with a crash, there was a huge lightning strike directly on one of the outside walls, which crumbled and started to burn.

The fire was spreading quickly, and something told you to use the opportunity to slip outside. After a bit of stumbling around, you met up with the others. There are five of you all told.

- ⚡ is a large man in his early 30s, perhaps six and a half feet tall, and not an ounce of fat on him. He has the physique of a bodybuilder.
- ♀ is a slender female, also in seemingly perfect shape, although not overtly muscular. She seems to flow with the grace of a ballet dancer rather than simply move.
- ♂ is a young child of perhaps 11 or 12 with big piercing brown eyes. ♂ doesn't say much.
- ♀ is a female in her mid 20s. She is rake thin, and moves with pain. She also does not talk much, but you get the feeling that she has other ways of communication.

The five of you haven't had much time to talk. Soon after you met up, a group of armed guards arrived and started shooting. ⚡ got winged in the arm. You ran; it was funny, but you were constantly outdistancing the others. ⚡ carried ♀ and you and ♀ took turns carrying ♂ until you were out of harm's way.

After about an hour of stumbling around in the woods, you came across a cabin in the woods. There are two cars out front, but you can tell they are damaged beyond repair. You can hear voices inside. You need to go inside. You are fatigued and very hungry. You should consult the others and make a decision, but you want in.

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Skills And Abilities

You don't know how good you are in Combat. Have a GM adjudicate your combats.

You are of Average Intelligence.

You may have other abilities, of which you are unaware. The GM will be keeping an eye on you, but if you think you're going to attempt something that based on what you have figured out you would be especially good at, you may want to talk to a GM. In general, going to a GM asking "can I do this," is not recommended.

You are tired and very hungry. If you do not eat something within the next hour, you will start to take damage. Note that the cabin is fully stocked with food.

1 (11 years old; can be played by either gender)

You remember nothing before you came to the institution. No, that isn't true. You can understand (but not read or write) English. You know that you are in America, that it is the current year, and are up on current events, circa about three months ago, inasmuch as an 11 year old might care about current events. But you remember none of your personal life before you came to the facility.

Your earliest memories are of floating around outside of your body. There were people talking about tests and control factors. They were claiming that the wipe had taken effect and that they were enhancing esper talents. You still aren't sure what an esper talent is. You eventually woken up and haven't had any floaty episodes since. You feel ... different. No, you don't feel inhuman, just odd. You can't see your reflection, but you can see the other four and they look like normal people.

What you are fairly sure of is that you were at the facility and aware for about a month. You may have been there longer, but you were only awake for the past month or so. You were being fed and given injections. You were, essentially, a prisoner. You weren't allowed news about the outside world, but then again, it never occurred to you to ask.

There were men there and women in lab coats, and you were – and are – dressed in jumpsuits, giving you the impression that you were in a hospital of sorts or a research lab, not a prison. There were armed guards, but you never saw them until the escape earlier today.

You had a regular regimen of meals, injections, exercise, and tests. There were a number of tests, mental, physical, and psychological, and some that you just didn't understand at all. At the time you didn't think anything odd about it; it was life, the way things should be. But then came the blackout and the fire.

About an hour ago, a huge storm tore over the mountains – the facility is

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about halfway up a large mountain, part of a chain. It knocked out power to the facility, although the backup generators came on less than a minute later. But then, with a crash, there was a huge lightning strike directly on one of the outside walls, which crumbled and started to burn.

The fire was spreading quickly, and you felt a presence in your mind. It was a woman named 1. 1 told you to use the opportunity to slip outside. You could sense that there were other people like you in the facility, so you reached out with your mind to relay 1's message. After a bit of stumbling around, you met up with as many of the others as could escape. There are five of you all told, although there are still dozens more locked up in the facility. You could feel them at the time.

- 8 is a large man in his early 30s, perhaps six and a half feet tall, and not an ounce of fat on him. He has the physique of a bodybuilder. He is very strong, and you can trust him.
- 2 is a slender female, also in seemingly perfect shape, although not overtly muscular. She seems to flow with the grace of a ballet dancer rather than simply move. She may be trustworthy, but she would not hesitate to kill if given the order.
- 3 is a tall man, even taller than 8. But the majority of his height is his long, muscular legs. He is fast, but is being eaten up by his insides.
- 1 is a female in her mid 20s. She is rake thin, and moves with pain. She communicates with you in your mind. She is dying and will be dead within a few hours.

The five of you haven't had much time to talk. Soon after you met up, a group of armed guards arrived and started shooting. 8 got winged in the arm. The rest of you ran, but you couldn't keep up with 8 2 and 3. 3 and 2 took turns carrying you until you were out of harm's way.

After about an hour of stumbling around in the woods, you came across

a cabin in the woods. There are two cars out front, but you can tell they are damaged beyond repair. There are five people inside, and you are far safer inside the cabin than without. You should go in.

Skills And Abilities

You don't know how good you are in Combat. Have a GM adjudicate your combats.

You are of Exceptional Intelligence.

You may have other abilities, of which you are unaware. The GM will be keeping an eye on you, but if you think you're going to attempt something that based on what you have figured out you would be especially good at, you may want to talk to a GM. In general, going to a GM asking "can I do this," is not recommended.

You may communicate telepathically with 1. You can simulate this by passing out of game notes or by using a set of radios.

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1 (Female, Mid 20s)

You remember nothing before you came to the institution. No, that isn't true. You can understand (and read and write) English. You know that you are in America, that it is the current year, and are up on current events, circa about four years ago. But you remember none of your personal life before you came to the facility.

Your earliest memories are of pain, of being awake inside a tank of some sort. You know that, but you do not know why, or who was doing them on you. You feel ... different. No, you don't feel inhuman, just odd. You can't see your reflection, but you can see the other four and they look like normal people.

Well, even that you aren't sure about. Whoever did what they were doing in the facility might have altered your perceptions like they altered your memory. You aren't sure what is real and what isn't any more.

You were only awake for, what, a week? Then you were put back to sleep again, and you slept for quite a while. You are in pain and can barely move. But then came the blackout and the fire.

About an hour ago, a huge storm tore over the mountains – the facility is about halfway up a large mountain, part of a chain. It knocked out power to the facility, although the backup generators came on less than a minute later. But then, with a crash, there was a huge lightning strike directly on one of the outside walls, which crumbled and started to burn.

Either the fire or the blackout knocked out power to whatever was keeping you asleep. There were some guards in your room and you looked at them and they fell unconscious although you had a splitting headache for a minute afterwards.

The fire was spreading quickly, and you used the opportunity to slip outside. You could ...feel... that there was someone in there who could hear your thoughts. You called out to that person, and you felt that person echo your call to many others within the facility. After a bit of

waiting, you met up with the others. There are five of you all told.

- ⚔ is a large man in his early 30s, perhaps six and a half feet tall, and not an ounce of fat on him. He has the physique of a bodybuilder.
- ♀ is a slender female, also in seemingly perfect shape, although not overtly muscular. She seems to flow with the grace of a ballet dancer rather than simply move.
- ⚡ is a tall man, even taller than ⚔. But the majority of his height are his long, muscular legs.
- ⚡ is a young child of perhaps 11 or 12 with big piercing brown eyes. ⚡ doesn't say much, but was the one who answered your call.

The five of you haven't had much time to talk. Soon after you met up, a group of armed guards arrived and started shooting. ⚔ got winged in the arm. You couldn't run. ⚔ carried you and ⚡ and ♀ took turns carrying ⚡ until you were all out of harm's way.

After about an hour of stumbling around in the woods, you came across a cabin in the woods. There are two cars out front. There are five confused people inside. You should probably go in, but you aren't sure if it is safe.

Skills And Abilities

You are Horrible at combat.

You are of Excellent Intelligence.

You may have other abilities, of which you are unaware. The GM will be keeping an eye on you, but if you think you're going to attempt something that based on what you have figured out you would be especially good at, you may want to talk to a GM. In general, going to

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a GM asking “can I do this,” is not recommended.

You may communicate telepathically with 7. You can simulate this by passing out of game notes or by using a set of radios.

You are in great pain. You need hospital quality medical treatment, although there is nothing overtly physically wrong with you.

Flashback A1

Scene: A doctor's office.

Doctor: You are playing a completely different character. You are a professional doctor. You have just received the results of a biopsy for Mrs. Veronica Tussard. Mrs. Tussard has advanced lung cancer. She needs an operation and chemotherapy. This is expensive, but if she does not get the operation, she will die within the month. You are meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Tussard to discuss the results of her biopsy. You are a good person and hate to have to break the bad news to them.

N: You are yourself, three months ago. You have no memories of the game-time events. You are married to a wonderful woman named Veronica. Lately, she has been having coughing fits and been feeling week. Even though you have no medical insurance (you work as a security guard), you took her to a clinic where a biopsy was ordered. You are now meeting with the doctor to discuss the results of the biopsy.

Veronica: You are playing a completely different character. You are Mrs. Veronica Tussard. You are here with your husband, Albert. Lately, you have been having coughing fits and been feeling week. Even though you have no medical insurance (Albert works as a security guard), he took you to a clinic where a biopsy was ordered. You are now meeting with the doctor to discuss the results of the biopsy.

Flashback A2

Scene: A small apartment.

N: You are yourself, three months ago. You have no memories of the game-time events. You are married to a wonderful woman named Veronica and have a five year old boy named Joeseeph. You work as a

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Security Guard, but do not bring in enough money. It is two days after the meeting with the Doctor. Your wife has to have the operation or she will die. You want to sign up for a medical test your company is offering, but it would mean leaving your wife and family, perhaps forever. However, your family would be well compensated and your wife would live. You are adamantly in favor of this and need to convince your wife. This must escalate into a shouting match.

Veronica: You are playing a completely different character. You are Mrs. Veronica Tussard. You live here with your husband, Albert and your five year old son Joseph. You found out two days ago that you have lung cancer and will die without an operation. Your husband wants to take part in a medical experiment his work is offering. But it would mean you might never see him again. You are adamantly against this, even if it means you will die. You will find the money somehow. This must escalate into a shouting match; afterwards, you will have a coughing fit and faint.

Joseph: You are playing a completely different character. You are a five year old boy. Mommy and daddy are arguing in the other room. You should stay out of the scene until they start shouting at each other, after which you should run in crying and sobbing for your mommy.

Flashback A3

Scene: A small, cramped room somewhere in the back of a restaurant in what used to be LoDo (a trendy area of Denver).

Candice: You are yourself, from some time in the future. You have no memories of the game-time events. You are the second in command of a paramilitary resistance cell working with your husband Saul and your best friend Randy. The Illuminati have taken over in a show of force. They already blatantly control the government as well as the governments of Canada, the European union, most of Central America, and the Middle East. They are involved in a war with the Triads of China and the Russian Mafia. However, you are part of the resistance that will see this dictatorship fall. You are at a secret meeting to discuss plans. Saul is just about to make an inspirational speech. At some point, if someone seems to recognize you from the modern day events, you immediately remember everything your character would remember so far.

Saul: You are yourself, from some time in the future. You have no memories of the game-time events. You are in command of a paramilitary resistance cell working with your wife Candice and your best friend Randy. The Illuminati have taken over in a show of force. They already blatantly control the government as well as the governments of Canada, the European union, most of Central America, and the Middle East. They are involved in a war with the Triads of China and the Russian Mafia. However, you are part of the resistance that will see this dictatorship fall. You are at a secret meeting to discuss plans. You are about to begin an inspirational speech (feel free to just reiterate everything you know about the Illuminati, including what is written here, but forcefully, in a “we will defeat this enemy” sort of way). At some point, if someone seems to recognize you from the modern day events, you immediately remember everything your character would remember so far.

Raventooth: You are yourself, from some time in the future. You have no memories of the game-time events. You have resumed using

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the name Randy. You are part of the command structure of a paramilitary resistance cell working with your friends Saul and Candice. The Illuminati have taken over in a show of force. They already blatantly control the government as well as the governments of Canada, the European union, most of Central America, and the Middle East. They are involved in a war with the Triads of China and the Russian Mafia. However, you are part of the resistance that will see this dictatorship fall. You are at a secret meeting to discuss plans. Saul is just about to make an inspirational speech. At some point, if someone seems to recognize you from the modern day events, you immediately remember everything your character would remember so far.

N: You are yourself, from some time in the future. You have no memories of the game-time events. You are Agent Aleph. You are the leader of a team of enhanced humans there to protect the New World Order from traitors and terrorists. You have gotten word that there is a terrorist cell meeting in a back room of a run down restaurant here. You are leading your elite team to arrest these terrorists. You have been authorized to use deadly force. You start outside the room and burst in on the GMs command. However, once you get within five feet of Candice, Saul, or Raventooth, you immediately remember everything your character would remember so far.

Resistance Fighter: You are playing a completely different character. You are part of a paramilitary resistance cell working with your friends Saul and Candice. The Illuminati have taken over in a show of force. They already blatantly control the government as well as the governments of Canada, the European union, most of Central America, and the Middle East. They are involved in a war with the Triads of China and the Russian Mafia. However, you are part of the resistance that will see this dictatorship fall. You are at a secret meeting to discuss plans. Saul is just about to make an inspirational speech.

Resistance Fighter: You are playing a completely different character.

You are part of a paramilitary resistance cell working with your friends Saul and Candice. The Illuminati have taken over in a show of force. They already blatantly control the government as well as the governments of Canada, the European union, most of Central America, and the Middle East. They are involved in a war with the Triads of China and the Russian Mafia. However, you are part of the resistance that will see this dictatorship fall. You are at a secret meeting to discuss plans. Saul is just about to make an inspirational speech.

Resistance Fighter: You are playing a completely different character. You are part of a paramilitary resistance cell working with your friends Saul and Candice. The Illuminati have taken over in a show of force. They already blatantly control the government as well as the governments of Canada, the European union, most of Central America, and the Middle East. They are involved in a war with the Triads of China and the Russian Mafia. However, you are part of the resistance that will see this dictatorship fall. You are at a secret meeting to discuss plans. Saul is just about to make an inspirational speech.

Elite Force: You are playing a completely different character. You are an enhanced human, part of an elite force there to protect the New World Order from traitors and terrorists. You have gotten word that there is a terrorist cell meeting in a back room of a run down restaurant here. You are leading your elite team to arrest these terrorists. You have been authorized to use deadly force. You start outside the room and burst in on the GMs command. Your leader is 8, a man with enhanced strength and durability. You will follow his orders blindly no matter what they may be.

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Flashback B1

Scene: a doublewide trailer in a trailer park outside of Colorado Springs. It is 1 AM.

Verna: You are playing a completely different character. You are a woman in your mid thirties with a 17 year old daughter you had when you were her age. Her father left you and you have had to shack up with a number of increasingly awful men just to make ends meet. You are scraping the bottom of the barrel. Luke is an abusive alcoholic, but he brings in money and keeps you and Gayle off the streets. Gayle is a handful; you have done all you can think of to keep her from turning out like you did, but she still runs off with boys. She is a constant reminder of how you have failed, and it makes you so ashamed. You don't mean to lash out at her, but you do. Gayle has just come home. Her clothes are in disarray; it is obvious she has been running wild with boys again. You don't want her to end up like you did. This should escalate into a screaming match. When Luke comes home drunk, he will start yelling at Gayle and you will try to protect her. He will argue with you and then backhand you with force and you will collapse, sobbing.

2: You are yourself from five years ago. You have no memories of the game-time events. You hate your mother. She thinks she knows best, but she made so many mistakes with her own life. And now she has shacked up with Luke who comes home drunk every night. You are afraid to come home, sometimes because you don't know if he will try to fuck you or beat the living shit out of you. Nobody at home loves you, but Petey does. Sure, he's only 17, but he owns a truck and has a job down at the Circle K. You have been out with Petey. You have been drinking a bit, too. He told you he loved you and you had sex. Someday you will run away with Petey to a better place. You hate your mom, that bitch. She will try to tell you what is best, but she is an idiot and you are in love (and a bit tipsy). This should escalate into a screaming match. At some point, you will be directed to leave the trailer never to return.

Luke: You are playing a completely different character. You are a

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man in his late 30s. You are shacking up in your double wide trailer with Verna and her frigid bitch of a 17 year old daughter, Gayle. Verna is a sweet gal; she does what you tell her and doesn't give you any shit the way your ex-wife did. But Gayle doesn't appreciate all you and Verna do for her. You work hard at the machine plant so you can buy some fucking bread on the table and that ungrateful bitch won't even kiss her new step daddy. You are stinking drunk; you were out drinking with the boys, one of the few highlights in this hellhole of your life. You arrive in the scene when Verna and Gayle are really going at it. That little bitch, talking back to her momma like that. You will start going in screaming drunk at Gayle. At some point, Verna will try to defend Gayle. How dare she talk back to you like that! You will start going at it verbally with Verna and then backhand her. She will collapse sobbing. You are to break character quickly to give Gayle the cue that she is to flee the trailer, then get back into character and turn your attention to her. The scene ends when Gayle exits the trailer.

Flashback B2

Scene: A command room in a bunker somewhere. A number of men sit around a table. There are two guards (one guard if we only have 5 players).

Arabic Man: You are playing a completely different character. You are sitting around a table arguing in Arabic about your plans to destroy a power station in Tirkut to throw off the infidel's attempt to gain control of that part of your territory. You should argue until 2 enters. When she does, yell and scream. She will kill you all, one by one. You can try to fight back, but she kills with superhuman ease.

Arabic Man: You are playing a completely different character. You are sitting around a table arguing in Arabic about your plans to destroy a power station in Tirkut to throw off the infidel's attempt to gain control of that part of your territory. You should argue until 2 enters. When she does, yell and scream. She will kill you all, one by one. You can try to fight back, but she kills with superhuman ease.

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Arabic Man: You are playing a completely different character. You are sitting around a table arguing in Arabic about your plans to destroy a power station in Tirkut to throw off the infidel's attempt to gain control of that part of your territory. You should argue until ۞ enters. When she does, yell and scream. She will kill you all, one by one. You can try to fight back, but she kills with superhuman ease.

Arabic Guard: You are playing a completely different character. You are here to guard your leaders as they plan the next holy attack against the infidel Americans. When ۞ enters, shoot at her, but she will dodge your bullets. She will kill you all, one by one. You can try to fight back, but she kills with superhuman ease.

Arabic Guard: You are playing a completely different character. You are here to guard your leaders as they plan the next holy attack against the infidel Americans. When ۞ enters, shoot at her, but she will dodge your bullets. She will kill you all, one by one. You can try to fight back, but she kills with superhuman ease.

۞: You are yourself, but you have no conscious thoughts. You are like a machine, programmed to kill. You are a super gymnast and an assassin. You are to kill everyone in the room, which you will do, one at a time with ease. They cannot run from you and their attacks are ineffectual. You can dodge their bullets. After you have killed them all without emotion, you should leave the room.

Flashback B3

Scene: A welfare motel room in the seedy part of downtown Denver.

Man: You are playing a completely different character. You have just finished having sex with 2; she is in her late teens. It was OK. You get dressed and get ready to leave \$50 in cash on the bed. It was supposed to be \$100. You have the other \$50, but the sex wasn't very good and you are feeling cheap. If things get rough, you have a gun, which will cower her enough that you can leave.

2: You are yourself last year. You have no memories of the game-time events. You have just finished having sex with this man. It was a typical transaction. He owes \$100. You need this money. After paying off José, you'll have just enough to get your next fix. You are seriously jonesing for some smack. You started taking it for the thrill once Petey left you, but now you're hooked. If he manages to leave without paying the full \$100, you will be despondent and angry. José will take it out of your hide, or by trade, and you won't get your smack.

Flashback B4

Scene: What seems to be a hospital room. 2 is lying on a bed. There are several (up to 4) medical personnel there.

Medical Personnel One: You are playing a completely different character. You have just been brought in to give this woman a complete physical. She is malnourished, filthy, and has track marks indicating intravenous drug use. However, she is still in general good health. You should explain this to the other personnel using as much

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technobabble as you can. If asked, she would be a good candidate for the program, assuming she could be weaned off the drugs.

Medical Personnel Two: You are playing a completely different character. You have the lab results for this woman. She has managed to avoid the hepatitis and aids bullets. She does have genital herpes, but that is basically irrelevant. She shows no signs of diabetes, or genetically transmitted diseases. If asked, she would be a good candidate for the program, assuming she could be weaned off the drugs.

Medical Personnel Three: You are playing a completely different character. You are here to hear the results of the examinations. After hearing the results, you should consult with any other people playing “Medical Personnel Three” and after a brief discussion decide that she is acceptable. You are to order the techs to “begin the wipe procedure.” This ends the flashback.

2: You are yourself, from some time in the past. You have no memories of the game-time events. You are not certain where you are; you think you are supposed to be unconscious. You are lying naked on a bed of some kind, with just a thin sheet over your body (not over your face). You cannot move or speak. You can only see in a haze, but you can see that the medical personnel are wearing lab coats emblazoned with the same symbol that is on your jumpsuit.

Flashback G1

Scene: A lounge in the rec center of the University of Colorado in Boulder. (A must be at this flashback).

Candice: You are yourself two months ago. You have no memories of the game-time events. You are listening to the TV in the student rec center on campus with a few classmates. After hearing the report, you should react to their conversation.

Classmate 1: You are playing a completely different character. You are listening to the TV in the student rec center on campus with a few classmates. After hearing the report, you should start a conversation with classmate 2 on drunk drivers. You feel that all drunk drivers should be locked up (and the key should be thrown away) after the first offense, even if they don't hurt anyone.

Classmate 2: You are playing a completely different character. You are listening to the TV in the student rec center on campus with a few classmates. After hearing the report, you should start a conversation with classmate 1 on drunk drivers. You feel that drunk drivers need to be rehabilitated. Your mother is an alcoholic. It is a disease, not a crime.

Classmate: You are playing a completely different character. You are listening to the TV in the student rec center on campus with a few classmates. After hearing the report, you should react to their conversation. You may join in, but try to keep the sides even or come up with a new perspective.

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Classmate: You are playing a completely different character. You are

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Classmate: You are playing a completely different character. You are listening to the TV in the student rec center on campus with a few classmates. After hearing the report, you should react to their conversation. You may join in, but try to keep the sides even or come up with a new perspective.

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TV Announcer (or GM): You are playing a completely different character. You are offscreen, but can be heard. Read the following: *Star collegiate basketball player, Keith O'Brien of the University of Colorado All-Stars died this morning after being struck by an allegedly drunk driver last night. His loss will be mourned by the entire university. O'Brien was well known as a jovial athlete, and the best player on the team. There will be a memorial service in the fieldhouse on Tuesday at 1 PM.*

Flashback G2

Scene: A basketball game with 1 minute left.

Announcer: You are playing a completely different character. You are there to announce the play of the game. Lead the action of what is happening, balls being passed, shots being tried and so forth. However, with 4 seconds left to go, newcomer Keith O'Brien will make a difficult shot and win the game. Be excited that he won.

λ: You are yourself a year ago. You have no memories of the game-time events. You are a sophomore in college and are on the basketball team. Although you warmed the bench most of last year, this year the coach is giving you a chance and it is your first game. The game is tied with one minute left. Listen to what the announcer calls and do what he says. After the game ends react appropriately.

Basketball player: You are playing a completely different character. You are a college basketball player on the same team as λ (the University of Colorado at Boulder). The game is tied with one minute left. Listen to what the announcer calls and do what he says. After the game ends react appropriately.

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Basketball player: You are playing a completely different character.

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You are a college basketball player on the same team as 1 (the University of Colorado at Boulder). The game is tied with one minute left. Listen to what the announcer calls and do what he says. After the game ends react appropriately.

Basketball player 2: You are playing a completely different character. You are a college basketball player on the opposing team of 1 (Montana State University). The game is tied with one minute left. Listen to what the announcer calls and do what he says. After the game ends react appropriately.

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Flashback G3

Scene: A bar in LoDo, a trendy part of Denver.

1: You are yourself a year ago. You have no memories of the game-time events. You are a sophomore in college and are on the basketball team. You are out drinking with your teammates celebrating your 21st birthday. You are already a bit drunk and as the scene goes on, you should get more and more drunk.

Basketball player: You are playing a completely different character. You are a college basketball player on the same team as 1 (the University of Colorado at Boulder), although you know him as Keith O'Brian. He turned 21 today and you are all taking him out to get drunk and to get him to hit on women. Bring him drinks and be obnoxious.

Basketball player: You are playing a completely different character. You are a college basketball player on the same team as 1 (the University of Colorado at Boulder), although you know him as Keith O'Brian. He turned 21 today and you are all taking him out to get drunk and to get him to hit on women. Bring him drinks and be obnoxious.

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Bar patron (female): You have come to the bar for a girl's night out with your female friends. The annoying and drunk basketball players should hit on you and your friends. React accordingly.

Bar patron (female): You have come to the bar for a girl's night out

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with your female friends. The annoying and drunk basketball players should hit on you and your friends. React accordingly.

Bar patron (female): You have come to the bar for a girl's night out with your female friends. The annoying and drunk basketball players should hit on you and your friends. React accordingly.

Flashback G4

Scene: The back of an unmarked van.

λ: You are so very drunk. You hit the bars in LoDo this evening to celebrate your 21st birthday. You start not remembering what is going on and think the others are your buddies on the team. As the scene continues, you remember all that has happened so far, and can kinda figure what is going on although you are still very drunk.

Tech: You are playing a completely different character. You are a medical tech. You have done a number of quick tests on this drunk teenager. He is a perfect specimen for your program. Let the Administrator know that.

Thug: You are playing a completely different character. You are a thug, working for the Administrator. You are there in case the subject gets violent. You can easily beat him in combat and knock him out.

Administrator: You are an Administrator for the project. These techs are here to inform you if the subject is suitable for the program. After they have given their report, nod sagely and say that he is suitable. Then say, "prepare the standard hit and run story." That ends the flashback.

Flashback H1

Scene: A halfway house in one of the worse areas of Denver.
Everyone here is speaking Spanish

Worker Drone: You are playing a completely different character. You are here to say the following speech to the kids who live here and then leave. *“Gentlemen. Ladies. This is Hernandez. He will be living with us for a few weeks as the courts figure out his status. Please treat him well; he’s seen some hard times lately. Remember dinner is at 6. Welcome Hernandez.”* Then leave.

1: You are yourself from about a year and a half ago; you are about 9. You have no memories of the game-time events. Two days ago, men from INS busted your father as he was waiting for the truck for work. They took him and your mother away and brought you here. You don’t know what happened to them. You are scared and alone. *(Note: Despite any protests you may have, and you should protest, you must eventually accept what is offered to you. The scene ends when you accept).*

Predatory Teen/Gang Member: You are playing a completely different character. You are a member of MS-13, a San Salvadorian Gang that runs drugs in the area. This new kid would make the perfect runner and watch. You need to bully and coerce Hernandez to join the gang. If the promise of being cool and safety in numbers don’t work, maybe threats will. You’re willing to back up those threats if necessary and make Hernandez’s life here a living hell. You should wait patiently for the Worker Drone to leave before trying to recruit Hernandez.

Predatory Teen/Gang Member: You are playing a completely different character. You are a member of MS-13, a San Salvadorian Gang that runs drugs in the area. This new kid would make the perfect runner and watch. You need to bully and coerce Hernandez to join the gang. If the promise of being cool and safety in numbers don’t work, maybe threats will. You’re willing to back up those threats if necessary and make Hernandez’s life here a living hell. You should wait patiently for

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Flashback H2

Scene: A street corner in a bad area of town. It is night.

1: You are yourself from about a year ago; you are about 10. You have no memories of the game-time events. Shit, where are they? You were supposed to deliver the goods a half hour ago. You are alone and nervous. You have confidence in your brothers in MS-13, but you are supposed to be selling he crack to some punk ass n****rs. Luckily, you are armed. You've never shot a gun, but you need it for protection and to show you are a man. Ah, here they come. Shit. They're drawing on you. *(Note; as part of this flashback, you should have a combat, and shoot at the other two characters; the other players know the result of the combat).*

Crazed Druggie 1: You are playing a completely different character. You two are supposed to buy some crack off a beaner, but you don't have the funds. Well, you need the junk. Time to cut and run. You've got a gun and it's just a kid. The kid'll probably shit when you draw. No problems. *You should allow yourself to be killed in the ensuing shootout. You miss the kid.*

Crazed Druggie 2: You are playing a completely different character. You two are supposed to buy some crack off a beaner, but you don't have the funds. Well, you need the junk. Time to cut and run. You've got a gun and it's just a kid. The kid'll probably shit when you draw. No problems. *You miss the kid in the ensuing shootout. He will kill the other Druggie. You should run away.*

Flashback H3

Scene: An interrogation room.

Official (may be a GM): You are playing a completely different

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character. You are here to offer this kid a chance. Say the following speech to the kid, “... *so Hernandez. The choice is yours. We have your fingerprints on the weapon. The ballistics match. We have Mof’s testimony that you pulled your gun first and shot in cold blood. We’re going to try you as an adult. You could end up in jail for the rest of your life, which could be a short eight years if we can get the death penalty. But you have a choice. I represent an organization that could save your life, protect you from retribution on the street, and make a new person out of you. What do you say Hernandez?*” After which, Hernandez will hopefully ask you all sorts of questions. You will feel compelled to answer them truthfully. If you don’t know the true answer, please ask the GM.

1: You are disoriented and confused. You don’t know where or when you are. When the Official has finished making his speech, you remember. This was just before you were put on trial for first degree murder. You eventually agreed to his program, and that’s when you were taken to the facility. But, you have your full memories now, or at least you remember everything that has happened so far. You have your abilities too. You can make the man trust you, make him answer your questions. This is your big chance to learn a great deal of what is going on.

Flashback Z1:

Scene: A car.

1: You are yourself from about five years ago. You have no memories of the game-time events. You are in high school and are driving home from theater rehearsal. The radio is playing a slow dreamy song. Suddenly there are headlights right in front of you. You hear a screech and a crash. Something big smashes through your windshield. Glass and metal fly everywhere. You are in pain, worse pain than you have ever felt. You are cut and bleeding and your bones are all broken. You cry in pain and for help, and then pass out. *When you return from this flashback, you will have a faint memory of Candice, but you cannot place her.*

Flashback Z2/CB2:

Scene: A hospital-like room.

Note to GM: If 1 is holding the clipboard at the end of the flashback, she gets to keep it. This flashback must happen after Z1, and CB1.

1: You are yourself from some time ago. You are lying on a bed, conscious, although you think you are supposed to be asleep. You cannot move or speak. You have full memories of everything you would have remembered so far. When the other people in the room leave, you may move, albeit with great pain.

Tech 1: You are playing a completely different character. You are a medical tech. You have done a number of procedures on this woman. They are detailed in the clipboard you are holding; make sure that the clipboard is seen as important. But the procedures aren't working. The woman's internal injuries are too great. You need to explain this to the administrator. You leave when he leaves. Leave the clipboard

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behind.

Tech 2: You are playing a completely different character. You are a medical tech, working for Tech 1. You have done a number of procedures on this woman. They are detailed in the clipboard Tech 1 is holding. But the procedures aren't working. The woman's internal injuries are too great. You need to explain this to the administrator. You leave when he leaves. Leave the clipboard behind.

Administrator: You are an Administrator for the project. These techs are here to fill you in on the progress of the subject in bed. After they have given their report, nod sagely and say that she should be put on indefinite S.A. until such time as she can be of use. Then leave the room with the techs. Leave the clipboard behind.

Flashback MS1

Scene: This very cabin. Earlier today. *GM announcement: For the purposes of this flashback, the book does not have a monster coming out of the cover.*

Mordechi: You have no memories of the game-time events. You have just had an argument with Candice. She said that the book was a tome of great and evil power, which you find hard to believe. This argument set Raventooth and Felicity against each other as well, but that was brief and they recovered. You were certain that a book of Jewish mysticism would be beneficial. Well, to prove it, you had Raventooth and Felicity help you with a spell from the book. You chose one at random. Candice had Felicity draw up protections just in case, while you had Raventooth draw the Sepheroth on the floor. You placed the offerings on the floor, some salt in Keter, a bowl of wine in Yesod, and your watch in Netsah, You are now ready to chant in Hebrew. (make something up).

Felicity: You have no memories of the game-time events. Morrey just had an argument with Candice. She said that the book was a tome of great and evil power, which Morrey scoffed at. This argument set Raventooth and you against each other as well, but that was brief and you recovered. To prove his point, Morrey had Raventooth and you help with a spell from the book. Candice had you draw up protections just in case, Raventooth drew the Sepheroth on the floor. Morrey placed the offerings on the floor, some salt, a bowl of wine, and his watch You are now ready for him to chant in Hebrew.

Raventooth: You have no memories of the game-time events. Morrey just had an argument with Candice. She said that the book was a tome of great and evil power, which Morrey scoffed at. This argument set Felicity and you against each other as well, but that was brief and you recovered. To prove his point, Morrey had you and Felicity help with a spell from the book. Candice had Felicity draw up protections just in case, You drew the Sepheroth on the floor. Morrey placed the offerings on the floor, some salt, a bowl of wine, and his

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watch. You are now ready for him to chant in Hebrew.

Candice: You have no memories of the game-time events. Morrey just had an argument with you. You said that the book was a tome of great and evil power, which Morrey scoffed at. This argument set Felicity and Raventooth against each other as well, but that was brief and they recovered. To prove his point, Morrey had Raventooth and Felicity help with a spell from the book. You had Felicity draw up protections just in case. You wanted nothing to do with this. Ravenwood drew the Sepheroth on the floor. Morrey placed the offerings on the floor, some salt, a bowl of wine, and his watch. He is about to begin to chant in Hebrew.

Saul: You have no memories of the game-time events. Morrey just had an argument with Candice. She said that the book was a tome of great and evil power, which Morrey scoffed at. You have trouble believing that yourself. This argument set Felicity and Raventooth against each other as well, but that was brief and they recovered. To prove his point, Morrey had Raventooth and Felicity help with a spell from the book. Candice had Felicity draw up protections just in case. Ravenwood drew the Sepheroth on the floor. Morrey placed the offerings on the floor, some salt, a bowl of wine, and his watch. He is about to begin to chant in Hebrew.

GM Note: As this chanting in Hebrew goes on, inform the players that the world seems to be swirling as if reality were caught in a tornado. However, they have free will and all of their memories. Make the book move in a circle inside the players circle. Hopefully, one of them will think to grab the book. The scene ends when that happens. They get to keep the book, but when they get back, the book has the monster in the cover.

This flashback should happen in the last third of the game.

Flashback MS2

Scene: The private study of a Talmudic Scholar, circa mid-1400s.

Mordechi: You are a Jew living in Spain in the 1400s. No, wait, you have full memories of where you have been and what has happened. You don't know exactly where you are now.

Saul: You are playing a completely different character. You are a learned man of the Talmud who is penning a book of the practical Kaballah. You have *the* book in front of you, but it is incomplete. Your best friend, Reb Mordechi, has come to see you. He has information. He has just come in and sat down, when you felt a moment of disorientation. Mordechi seems confused. *Note: After this flashback, you will remember everything that happened in this flashback. There should be a GM nearby to answer questions.*

Flashback FC1

Scene: A Jewish household in Denver about 30 odd years ago.

Saul Saltzberg: You are playing a completely different character. You are a ten year old boy, the only son of hard working Jewish immigrants. You come from a strictly religious, Orthodox family. They have taught you the old ways, that the Jews are G-d's chosen people and that other people hate and fear the Jews. And that Jews shouldn't even attempt to associate with non-Jews. That way leads to assimilation, the diluting of Jewish blood and Jewish heritage. Your heritage is all your parents have as their parents fled Eastern Europe with practically nothing. Your parents are away at a shiva house (paying their respects to a woman whose husband has died) and you have been left at home in the care of your older sister Rachel.

Felicity: You know who you are supposed to be, but you also have the complete memories of Felicity so far. You are Amy, the eldest child of

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the Saltzberg family. You are watching your younger brother, Saul. You come from a strictly religious, Orthodox family. They have taught you the old ways, that the Jews are G-d's chosen people and that other people hate and fear the Jews. And that Jews shouldn't even attempt to associate with non-Jews. That way leads to assimilation, the diluting of Jewish blood and Jewish heritage. Your heritage is all your parents have as their parents fled Eastern Europe with practically nothing. Your parents are away at a shiva house (paying their respects to a woman whose husband has died). But you also have all of Felicity's memories and knowledge. This is the perfect opportunity to change Saul's years of xenophobia. Maybe when this is all over, you can be accepted by Morrey's father.

Flashback CB1:

Scene: A teenage girl's room, circa five years ago.

J: You are playing a completely different character. You are Judy Sinclair. You are in your room with your best friend, Candice. You need to leave in a few minutes to go to rehearsal for the school play. Candice is not only your best friend, she is a fellow Pagan. You have taught her all you know. You have taught her to be tolerant and to hurt no one. *No matter what, you must end this scene by leaving for rehearsal.*

Candice: You are yourself. Judy is about to leave to go to rehearsal and will be hit by a drunk driver on the way home. You never had a chance to say goodbye, or to tell her how much you care for her. *Out of game note: you will be unable to keep her from leaving for rehearsal. You may try in-character, of course, but you must accept out of character that she will leave.*

Flashback R1

Scene: A public gathering, several decades in the future.

Ravetooth: You are yourself from some time in the future. You

have no memories of the game-time events. You are the supreme leader of the world, having joined the Illuminati and been granted great charisma and magical powers from their Enhanced Human program. You are here to make a speech to the adoring masses (adoring magically enhanced, of course). You should give the last paragraph or so of a charismatic and forceful speech. *When the flashback ends, you will know: This could be your fate, but you would need to sabotage the efforts of your friends to do so. The choice is yours.*

Onlooker: You are playing a completely different character. You are a citizen of the New World Order. Yu love your leader, Raventooth. After he gives his speech you should cheer loudly and chant, “Raventooth! Raventooth! Raventooth!”

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“Raventooth! Raventooth! Raventooth!”

Onlooker: You are playing a completely different character. You are a citizen of the New World Order. Yu love your leader, Raventooth. After he gives his speech you should cheer loudly and chant, “Raventooth! Raventooth! Raventooth!”

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All college students. Open when you meet the rest of the characters.

These are five people dressed in grey jumpsuits. The jumpsuits have a label on them which is represented by the tag in their badge.

- ⌘ is a large man in his early 30s, perhaps six and a half feet tall, and not an ounce of fat on him. He has the physique of a bodybuilder.
- λ is a tall man, even taller than ⌘. But the majority of his height is his long, muscular legs.
- Ϛ is a slender female, also in seemingly perfect shape, although not overtly muscular. She seems to flow with the grace of a ballet dancer rather than simply move.
- ⌚ is a young child of perhaps 11 or 12 with big piercing brown eyes. ⌚ doesn't say much.
- ϙ is a female in her mid 20s. She is rake thin, and moves with pain. She also does not talk much.

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- 𐀀 is a slender female, also in seemingly perfect shape, although not overtly muscular. She seems to flow with the grace of a ballet dancer rather than simply move.
- 𐀁 is a young child of perhaps 11 or 12 with big piercing brown eyes. 𐀁 doesn't say much.
- 𐀂 is a female in her mid 20s. She is rake thin, and moves with pain. She also does not talk much.

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These are five people dressed in grey jumpsuits. The jumpsuits have a label on them which is represented by the tag in their badge.

- 𐀃 is a large man in his early 30s, perhaps six and a half feet tall, and not an ounce of fat on him. He has the physique of a bodybuilder.
- 𐀄 is a tall man, even taller than 𐀃. But the majority of his height is his long, muscular legs.
- 𐀀 is a slender female, also in seemingly perfect shape, although not overtly muscular. She seems to flow with the grace of a ballet dancer rather than simply move.
- 𐀁 is a young child of perhaps 11 or 12 with big piercing brown eyes. 𐀁 doesn't say much.
- 𐀂 is a female in her mid 20s. She is rake thin, and moves with pain. She also does not talk much.

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- λ is a tall man, even taller than ⌘. But the majority of his height is his long, muscular legs.
- ϳ is a slender female, also in seemingly perfect shape, although not overtly muscular. She seems to flow with the grace of a ballet dancer rather than simply move.
- ȱ is a young child of perhaps 11 or 12 with big piercing brown eyes. ȱ doesn't say much.
- ȱ is a female in her mid 20s. She is rake thin, and moves with pain. She also does not talk much.

λ. Open halfway through the game.

You are getting hungry again. Time to eat. If you don't eat, you start to take damage.

ȱ. Open an hour into the game.

You have a huge attack of pain. It feels like your insides are tearing up. Anyone who touches you during this attack also feels the same thing. This lasts for a couple of minutes.

ȱ. Open two hours into the game.

You have a huge attack of pain. It feels like your insides are tearing up. Anyone who is within ten feet of you during this attack also feels the same thing. This lasts for a couple of minutes.

1. Open at the end of the game.

This is it. You can feel yourself dying. You have one last chance to say goodbye.

2. Open when you see the people inside the cabin.

This is your impression of the people in the cabin:

Mordechi (Morrey) Saltzberg: He had a recent personal tragedy, but he is a good person and would be generally helpful. He needs to retrieve the book.

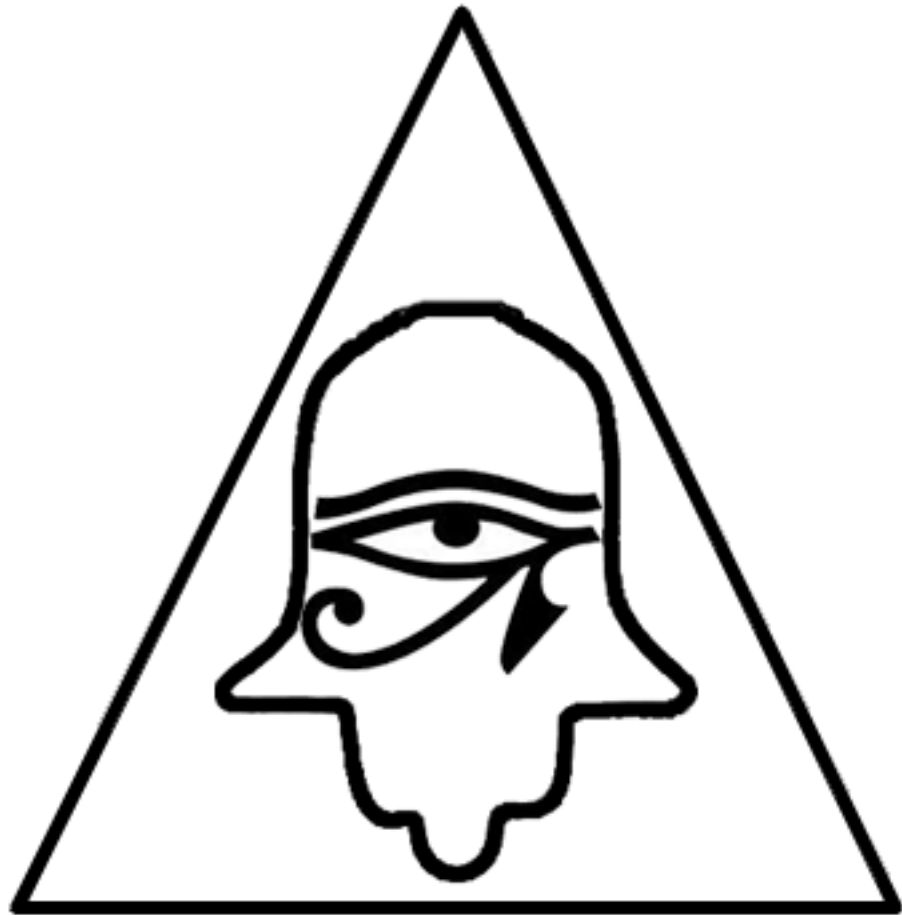
Felicity Chilton: Morrey's lover. She does not like to think, but has a good heart.

Ravetooth: Not evil, per se, but extremely self interested. Watch out for this one.

Candice Brookward: She is pragmatic and can keep her cool in a crisis. You are in a crisis.

Saul Flockman: He knows the truth, or at least he suspects. He could be a powerful ally or a powerful enemy.

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Case Study of Subject 1:
Judy Sinclair

Contingency Envelope 1:

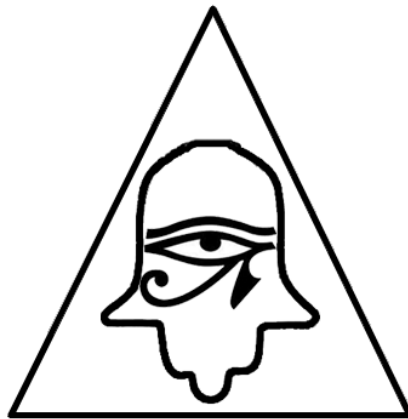
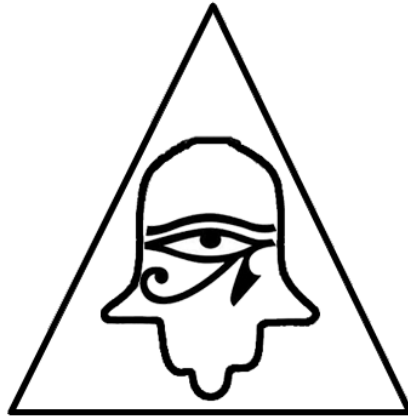
Keep this page if you are 1. You remember now, although your memory is still a bit splotchy. Your name is Judy Sinclair. You were a high school student. Your best friend was Candice. You were teaching her everything you knew about Paganism. You were driving home from rehearsal and were hit by a drunk driver.

The Illuminati faked your death and brought you to the facility to cure you and make you better. But now you can tell that it didn't work. You are dying and you will not live out the day.

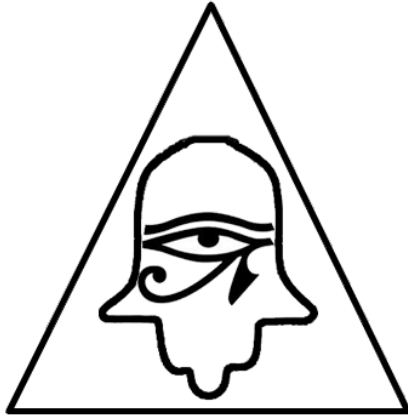
Your memory still fades in and out. You will remember more as Candice tells you things.

Mike Young

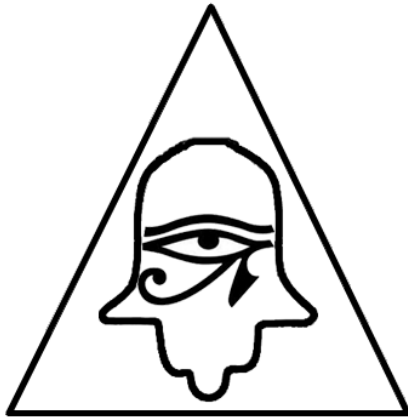
Assorted notes, written in technobabble....



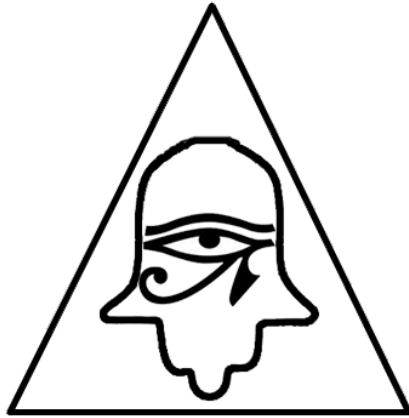
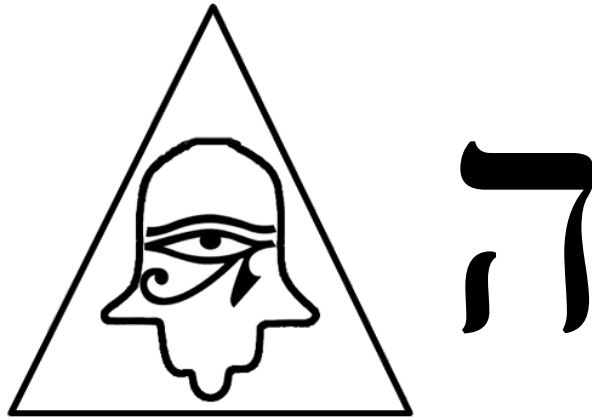
Mike Young



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Journal of Interactive Drama

**A Multi-Discipline Peer-Reviewed Journal of
Scenario-Based Theatre-Style Interactive Drama
Freeform Live Action Roleplaying Games**

Call for Papers

The *Journal of Interactive Drama* is an online peer-reviewed journal on scenario-based interactive drama freeform live action roleplaying games which provides a forum for serious discussion of live roleplaying game theory, design, and practice. The journal is published regularly. The journal provides a forum for the discussion of any of the various scenario-based theatre-style live action roleplaying games, freeforms, and interactive dramas and invites contributions in all areas of literature, theory, design, and practice for educational, entertainment, and recreational roleplay. Formal and informal essays, articles, papers, and critical reviews are also welcome.

This is a peer-reviewed journal that may include formal papers and informal essays for and by the roleplaying community from a wide variety of disciplines. The focus is general enough so that authors should feel comfortable submitting material of either a formal or informal nature, albeit all submissions are peer-reviewed and should be appropriate to a serious and thoughtful discussion of that type -- we encourage articles, essays, and formal papers on all manner of live roleplaying, freeform, and interactive drama-related topics. Discussions of related ludology, techniques, and good solid critical book and roleplay scenario or event reviews are quite welcome as well. As this is a multi-disciplinary journal, material related to a wide range of scenario-based learning, social psychology, critical theory, performance studies, popular culture, design, and

more as they intersect with the interactive drama are also welcome. Pure design pieces related to scenario construction and review are also encouraged. Each issue will showcase one to three longform or four to six shortform interactive drama freeform live action roleplaying scenarios; creative scenario submissions of this type are very sought after. Scenarios for submission should include a section of self-reflective critical thought and formal designer's notes that discuss issues related to the creation of the piece as well as a formal section which reviews the author's performance experiences with the scenario.

As an international journal, the language of publication is English. Submissions are accepted throughout the year.

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Notes for Contributors

The *Journal of Interactive Drama* is a peer-reviewed journal which publishes one volume per year in an ongoing rollout schedule based upon acceptable submissions. Both *Microsoft Word* (6.0 or above) and txt files are acceptable. Once received, manuscripts will be sent to reviewers immediately.

1. Manuscripts submitted to *Journal of Interactive Drama* should follow the style sheet of the current *MLA Handbook* as appropriate. Scenario submissions may use informal formatting conventions as long as they stay within the guidelines here.
2. If your submission has notes, please use footnotes, not endnotes.
3. The font used is *Times New Roman* (11pt) – creative pieces, such as scenarios, may use other font sizes but should stay within the same font type. If you use a special font that is non-system, you must include a copy of the font file with your submission. Please do not use columns in your piece.

*Call for Papers
Guidelines for Submission*

4. Use a separate sheet to include your name, title, affiliated institution, and contact information (email) as well as a brief author's biography of 150-250 words to be included in the contributor's notes.
5. Include a brief summary or abstract of the submission.
6. If you use illustrations or photographs, you must include all pertinent information as well as statements of permissions and copyrights to demonstrate you have the rights to include the images and that they may be published within the Journal of Interactive Drama under the same online and print rights as the accompanying paper. In the event of rights disputes, the author is responsible and liable for any material included in that author's submission.

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Submissions may be sent by regular mail to:

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Please include hardcopy and disk for regular mail submissions. You may also send submissions in electronic format to Brian David Phillips, Associate Editor, *Journal of Interactive Drama* at phillips@nccu.edu.tw via email.

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