

INKSTERS COMPETITIVE WRITER'S GROUP OF SECOND LIFE

INKsters 2007 April Anthology

Compiled by Sammie Pippen
Various Authors



Introduction

This is our first anthology ever for the INKsters Competitive Writers Group.

The contest offers a different theme (which is interpreted loosely) every day. Writers, who run the gamut from wannabes to professionals, submit a short piece on that theme. A small \$L prize is awarded to daily and weekly winners as chosen by the official INKsters judging panel. The proceedings are overseen by William Shakespeare, who may be found on the second floor library in Gourneck.

We hope you will take the time to drop an IM to the writers who made you smile or made you cry. It means a lot to us to get a little positive feedback from readers. And thank you to everyone who was brave enough to submit an entry.

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April 1, 2007 On Being Foolish

Write about foolishness, being fooled, fooling, and all the damn fools you know.

NO ENTRIES

April 2, 2007 International Children's Book Day

Write a 400 word children's story.

CHAMP

Once upon a time, there was a dog named Champ. Champ was an eight year old Jack Russell Terrier. She had large round eyes that shined like the brightness of the sun and a dense layer of white fur coat that wrapped around her small body. When she walked down the village road of Lily Brook, everyone recognized her immediately. "Hello Champ," they would say, while bending down to stroke her head. Champ took pride in capturing everyone's attention. She walked with her head held up high and her tail straight up. Her owner was Mr. Kinsley, a talented dog trainer. Each year, Mr. Kinsley would enter Champ in the city dog show, where she has won countless awards for her beauty and obedience. This year was going to be no different!

The big day arrived in the middle of spring. Champ was to be judged once again for her appearance, movement, health, and temperament. Before sunrise, Mr. Kinsley and Champ hopped onto the train and headed to the dog show event. Two hours later, they arrived in the bustling city. At the judging booth, each dog was called up to perform. Champ was called third, but something unexpected happened. Mr. Kinsley pulled at Champ's collar, but she did not move. He whistled and called her name, but she did not respond. Suddenly a hush of silence fell over the anxious crowd. "Jonathan Kinsley, you have one minute remaining," announced the judges. Fear suddenly raced through his heart. This has never happened before, he thought. One minute went by. Then a loud buzz sounded, indicating the end of Champ's performance. Defeated and disappointed, Mr. Kinsley picked Champ into his arms and carried her back to the train station, where they travelled back home. Word quickly spread all over town about what had happened. "I guess she's no longer the champ of this town," people began saying.

Mr. Kinsley had been concentrating so hard on winning that he did not realize Champ was pregnant. Two months later, he found her lying still in the corner of his barn. Next to her were five healthy puppies, but Champ had passed away. The puppies were a mixed breed, with brown fur and pointed ears. Mr. Kinsley was devastated, but one look at the twinkling eyes of the puppies, and his heart melted away. "My little champions," he said with tears in his eyes.

By: Sammie Pippen



Figure 1: Sammie Pippen's entry for International Children's Book Day

April 3, 2007 Alcohol Awareness Month

Booze. Good or bad? What say you?

Booze - Good in small quantities. Alcohol has been consumed by humans as far back as history records. It is mentioned in almost every religious and classical work and continues to affect our daily lives. 35

Historically it was necessary to consume alcohol as it was often safer than the water available. Drinking is no longer nearly as necessary but we continue to drink to excess. I do not suggest by any means that we give up our Bacchian heritage or even restrict it. What needs to happen is a voluntary reduction in quantity consumed. A good time can be had by all without consuming so much as to impair judgement. Studies show that a little red wine every day can even help you heart. 89

Assuming such moderation though It really is good stuff. There is a reason it has so long outlived necessity. It is a part of our lives and culture and we see it at parties because it does help us relax and enjoy ourselves. I vote to Booze.

By: Athena Maeterlinck

The park bench was situated in a little wooded glen, with flowering trees, a gentle breeze, and in the distance, the tinkling of wind chimes. In front of the bench, a large, stone fireplace provided ambiance and warmth.

Cuddling on the bench, my avatar, Lorelei, and her lover were making the most of their time, having imaginary sex. This relationship had been formed within SL beginning my first visit into the metaverse, and had progressed quickly into an almost nightly virtual sex event.

This night on the park bench was the most graphic sex yet, aided by my rare indulgence in several gin and tonics. How I kept up the typing I don't know. My lover told me later that I was extremely coherent, but I can't tell you exactly what was said on the park bench that night, except that it was steamy and erotic.

After the evening came to a close, my lover logged off and I was left to myself on the bench, staring drunkenly into the fire. I logged off and went to bed, joining my sleeping RL husband.

Now, I am not hiding anything from my husband. He knows SL is steeped in sex, and I have indicated to him that I don't consider virtual sex in SL to be adulterous, as long as it stays in world, and never enters into the reality of flesh and blood. However, he has not been aware of exactly what that involves. I had remained very quiet about the details of Second Life virtual sex and relationships.

Until the night of the park bench and the gin and tonics.

Next morning, when my husband headed to the computer to check the headlines before starting his day, he saw the SL screen, still open. There sat Lorelei on the park bench. Her operator had apparently been too wasted to realize the close button did not click. The window into my secret SL world was wide open the morning after. I snoozed in my bed, my day not yet begun, blissfully unaware of my foolish mistake, and unprepared for what was to happen in a few minutes.

My husband, not a fan of SL, had been in world, and knew enough about the interface to bring up the chat history. There, in lettered detail, was the graphic conversation between Lorelei and her SL lover. He read it from beginning to end. He then came to wake me up and share with me his new knowledge of my nocturnal activities. He was, as you no doubt can imagine, not a happy husband.

I was devastated that I had been found out. I had no intention of hurting my husband. Yet, the relationship and friendship that had been formed with my SL partner was very fulfilling, more for the stimulating conversation than the virtual sex. He was hurt, angry and threatened, and rightfully so. I spend a miserable day or two of having him quote to me the most embarrassing details of my erotic conversation. What bothered him the most was many of the things I said to my virtual lover, he hears in the bedroom himself.

He felt betrayed. I sympathized, and apologized, and woefully took my place in the proverbial doghouse for a few days, while he cooled off.

Having trained as an actor, and making a living as a writer, it is possible for me to clearly separate the virtual and actual realities that comprise my life now. Explaining that to my literal and exacting husband, has proven to be a challenge.

The bonus he gets from my escapades in the world of SL are a much more vigorous and exciting sex life. Yet, he and I both acknowledge I am playing around in dangerous waters. I don't try to hide what I do, but out of respect for him, I don't want him to ever again see the details of my second life sexual escapades.

To his credit, my husband is continuing to trust in my real life faithfulness to him, and is allowing me to continue my activities in SL, including maintaining the relationship with my virtual lover. I have learned, though, that alcohol and SL are a dangerous mix. Now, whenever I log off, I don't leave the computer desk until the display on my monitor has been totally wiped clean of Second Life. Only then, is my real life ready to begin again.

4-1-07

by

Lorelei Larsson

(real life identity to remain unknown)

So here's the deal...an hour ago I wrote what may have been some of the best paragraphs of my life. I found a quiet spot, Land of Buddhadrama. I ignored the newb with the free "Violator" avatar who

hovered over me like a puppy with a new toy. I found my peace while trying to share it through a piece. Then alas rl calls...knock...KNOCK! Ahhh, friends with drinks...on a tuesday. (Tuesday is the most non-party day ever. Monday? Manic monday blues drink...cool. Wednesday? hump day buzz...nice. Thursday? almost weekend...I get that. Friday and Saturday...of course. Sunday?...80's night at Billies Lounge...no question. But a tuesday?) Anyway I drink said drinks. We cheers to life, try not to talk about fate, and laugh strong. I'm glad I was there.

Then after I've said my good-byes and begun to think of tomorrow's chores I remember my beautiful piece for sl and this group the INKsters. Oh shit!!!! I timed out and lost my piece. This piece due on the 3rd...my lucky number .

This piece about drinking, something i hadn't done in a while...then life stopped playing fair or maybe I stopped playing tough. (Problem is the earth doesn't talk when she refferees. So who's to really know?) So i started a new peace.

I know living is about moderation. Finding that point of escape but having the map home memorized. If you're going to drink...*insert cliche*....no when to say when. Also, sometimes you need the balls to tell a friend when to say when. Cause some drunk people don't like to listen....so I've heard...or not heard till the next day.

I say, be a grown up. If you can handle it let's toast, if you can't I have a brita...don't touch the juice, thats for the baby.

Cheers to life, love and happiness. Real and Second.

By: Tacky Gleeson

April 4, 2007 Taiwanese Tomb Sweeping Day

Write about gravesites and dead people.

It was a Tuesday morning, we sat at the Kitchen table while Rosemary Clooney's voice fluttered thru the radio. Feeling the slick plastic of the table cloth I focused on the daisy I was tracing with my nail, trying to avoid your eyes.

"Mambo, Mambo Italiano! Hey! Mambo, Mambo Italiano..."

Sneaking a glance at you I couldn't help but to smile as your forehead creased in determination, watching you work was always my happiest past time. I remembered that first morning we spent together; waking next to you feeling myself flush with lust, love, and embarrassment. You scooped me into your arms and swung me around in that old fashioned way.

I was your Bride.

We sang together that morning, what song I can't remember, but we sang and we danced in that tiny kitchen we had. I can't help but to chuckle just thinking of it. Both of us trying to cook, me frying eggs, you, determined to squeeze juice out of an orange into a tiny glass, but it just sprayed all over the wall. Then that song came on-what song I can't remember. But there we were pressed together trying to tap our feet and swivel our hips to the beat, I knocked over the eggs, you threw the bacon on the floor so I wouldn't cry.

"All you calabraise-a do the mambo like a crazy with a..."

All these years later in this newer bigger kitchen I can't even remember why we stopped dancing. Hearing the door slam; you lifted your head looking right at me. You smiled, how many mornings have I muddled thru without one of those?

-'Wanna dance?' You asked with a glint in your eye

I froze.

"Hey Mamabo! Mambo Italiano- Kid you good a lookin' but you don't a-know whats a-cookin..."

You rose, reaching for my hand...

She came into view, then I remembered.

I no longer existed.

"Hey mambo! mambo Italiano! Hey mambo! mambo Italiano..."

It was a Tuesday morning, I sat at the Kitchen table while Rosemary Clooney's voice fluttered thru the radio and I watched you and your new wife dance to that song I can't remember.

"Ho, ho, ho, you mixed up Siciliano it's a so delish a ev'rybody come copisha How to mambo italianooooo!"

By: Emmy Benigni

April 5, 2007 International Guitar Month

C'mon, there's a story in you about trying to be a rock star, right?

NO ENTRIES

April 6, 2007 National Tartan Day

Everybody looks good in a kilt. What would you do while wearing one?

NO ENTRIES

April 7, 2007 World Health Day

Check out the World Health Organization's web site. Scary stuff. What's the future of disease on this planet and how do we keep it from infecting Second Life?

NO ENTRIES

April 8, 2007 Easter

Whatcha doin'?

"Yes, Azeri, there is a Second Life"

~~~~~

I'm curled up next to a roaring fire in real life, wearing a gold mini-skirt and a bunny tail in my new life.

I'm remembering when I was a little girl. One night before Easter, my mom pointed out the kitchen window and said she spotted the Easter Bunny. I jumped up to take a look and thought I saw something white in the bushes. "You just missed him!" she said. I was completely convinced I had actually seen the Easter Bunny.

When I was 6, I figured out there was no Santa Claus. I was sitting in the car with my dad, in the parking lot of a Sears at the mall. It was January and we'd recently returned from a trip to visit my grandparents in Minnesota. I caught my grandmother creeping around the tree at 2 am on Christmas Eve, and the next morning, I noticed all my gifts were cheap and off-brand. Dime store stuff. Not the type of gifts Santa usually brought us. Hmmm.

When I finally worked up the nerve to ask my Dad THE QUESTION about Santa ("He's not real, is he?") he told me the truth. It then dawned on me that the Easter Bunny was made up as well. That was a sad day, I must say.

When I was a bit older, my Dad got into the habit of taking me and my brother to the downtown library in Houston the day before Easter. This happened three years in row. We'd stay there all day. I remember walking around with stacks of fascinating books in my arms, looking out the window and watching the sunset beyond the skyline. Those are fond memories.

If I'd known that one day I'd be spending Easter sitting in front of a computer experiencing a whole new world "virtually" with thousands of other people from around the world, I wouldn't have believed it.

It's wonderful to know the unimaginable can come true.

By: Azeri Zenovka

“Find the pattern,” she said,  
“one is three, three is five,  
five is four, and four is magic.”  
I reached out to choke her instead.

She smiled and ducked, her  
lips surfaced at my ear: “twenty-  
two is nine, nine is four.  
Four is the magic number.”

I covered my ears; she held up fingers.  
I closed my eyes; she licked my nose.  
Feigning surprise, I kissed her back:  
“Not until you give it a go.”

“Fine,” I said, “I’ll play with you...  
You are three; I am one. We are two.”

By: Scout Anatine

## April 9, 2007 Mikael Agricola Day

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### *Founder of the Finnish language. Any experiences you have with made-up languages?*

#### My Experience with a Made-up Language

When I was very young I was terrified that a monster would rise up from under the bed and eat me. My mother gave me a recipe to calm my fears. She told me that it was a magic spell in the language of the ancient druids. Now that I am older, I realize that it was a nonsense rhyme made up of Latin-like gibberish. She said that once started, the spell had to be recited perfectly from beginning to end, or the bogeyman would indeed eat me all up. I think her idea was to make me work hard to acquire the power of the spell.

Well, her method worked. I studied for weeks before I was confident that I could say the entire spell with no errors. Finally, with a tremor in my voice, I recited it for the first time... and it worked! The monster, or rather my fear of the monster, didn't show up that night or on any other night for the three years I diligently cast the spell. Finally I grew too old for this mind game and I never recited the spell again.

Years later, I thanked my mother for coming up with such a clever solution to my childhood problem. She smiled, put her forefinger on my lips, and we never said another word about it.

In my dear mother's honor I am passing this "spell" along to you, so you too can give your children surcease from nighttime terrors. Don't forget to warn them that it must be recited perfectly and completely; I think this was an integral part of my mother's clever device. Here is the spell as she gave it to me. The pronunciation is as it would be if it were in Latin, i.e. no silent e's, v is pronounced "w," etc.

Sibile, sibile, si ergo,  
Fortibus es in ero.  
Nobile, nobile, themis trux,  
Sivat sinem, caus an... er, an...

<thump>

What was the last word again? I know it, "an-" something...

<thump> <thump>

Umm, give me a second, I'll remember it for sure... caus an...

<THUMP> <THUMP>

What's that noise? And what's that shadow behind me? It's... it's... It's biting my leg! OHHH  
NOOOOOOOOOOOooooooooo.....!

-- by Nebbisk Oh



Figure 2: Nebbisk Oh's entry for Mikael Agricola Day

## April 10, 2007 Salvation Army Founders Day

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### *Describe a trip to the thrift store.*

One mans trash is....still trash

I have been to a thrift store once in my life. I say that with no condescension. At that time in my life, that was all I could afford. It was between paychecks, I had a family with needs - we've all been there. There is no shame in it....but there should be.

This is America. We have a gross national product which is many times all other countries except the richest oil producers. We are the birthplace of most new technologies and the technologies we don't invent need our markets to survive. We've put men on the moon - last century. Basically, we are rich enough that we simply decide what we want to do, pass legislation, appropriate the money, AND DO IT. There is no shame in this....but there should be.

The fact that ANY of our citizens need to visit thrift stores for basic needs; The fact that ANY of our citizens cannot afford health care; The fact that ANY of our citizens do not have enough education to fend for themselves in an information society; The fact that ANY of our citizens is hungry or homeless - IS shameful.

The fact that we, as a people, allow our government to promote big business and the super rich as the engine of our society, while the hearts and minds and bellies of our people are aching for their scraps is a mistake. We must force them to follow OUR priorities.

When I went to the thrift store, it was as you might expect - a surprising number of passable used clothes and toys and household items and a very large preponderance of junk. One of the used toys I saw was a magic 8 ball. Is that what our government uses to meet our most basic needs? If our net income is not over 40,000 do they leave us to chance? Do they figure we'll make due at thrift stores and the like? For those that enjoy going to thrift stores, please accept my blessings and apology if I have offended. For those that need to go to thrift stores, remember , there is no shame in it - at least not for you.

By: Andro McMahon



Figure 3: Andro McMahon's entry for Salvation Army Founders Day

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I was ugly. And a bit smelly. I had that stale scent of old people's clothes and life passing by. Faded and grimy pink and white stripes, saggy cushions, lumpy seats. However, I still had the protective plastic corners on down the bottom, and I had a nice plunk-down. I was the couch chosen for someone's first house with an actual lounge room, and this is how I left the salvos on Victoria Street in Richmond. I was cheap.

A mother, when she met me for the first time, went a bit mental with a stapler gun, some purple fabric and creativity; she tried to hide my true identity. She also threw a throw over me. Which inevitably, every night while people on top of me watched tv, would slowly descent towards the floor, dragging the small scatter-pillows (also bought as a cover-up) down with it.

I did my job well for quite a few years, got familiar with Throwy, my throw, and the scatter-pillows; we'd share the chips fallen down the cracks, save up the coins lost out of people's pockets and spend them at the corner shop, when no-one was looking.

It ended when my people moved, they tried to keep me in their spare room for a while, still together with Throwy and the scats. But after a year, they decided to let me go. I was too old to go back to the Salvos. I knew the end was near, however, I wasn't worried. I never worried, because I was a couch. It was a sunny day when the Stanley knife ripped through my hideous fabric and a crowbar tore apart my wooden bones. I put up some resistance, surprising them with my endless amount of industrial staples, making the separation between skin and bones difficult. I made them sweat.

Today, I am de-stapled firewood stacked in the garden. I have a lovely view and spiders keep me company. As far as I know, Throwy and the scats have made it to a Salvos...perhaps you will read their stories one day. I hope they will speak of me favourably, we did have some good times.

By: Florence Falta

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### My experience with a Thrift Shop

My mother volunteers in the Community Hospital-sponsored Thrift Shop in Boca Raton, Florida. Every so often she sends me a package, and when I see the Thrift Shop address, my stomach lurches because I know I'll have to tell her that yet another one of her god-awful ugly wouldn't-be-caught-dead-in-it-so-called bargains is "nice."

Well, much to my surprise, the last package contained a handsome teal-colored golf shirt, and in the left front pocket was an old, battered golf tee! I couldn't imagine how the tee survived the Thrift Shop's

cleaning, but there it was. I turned it over in my hand, chuckling at the thought of some old geezer feebly whacking a ball around his retirement community's course, when a chill went up my spine. Printed on one side of the tee was the italicized phrase, "Ahhh, shit!"

My dad, an avid golfer who passed away some years ago, printed these tees as a joke, and he was the only one who ever used them! I couldn't imagine the twist of fate which caused one to pass into my hands, but to honor my dad I decided to don the teal shirt, truck out my dusty clubs and golf in the April cold at Marine Park in Brooklyn, where my dad taught me to play.

I drove the ball off the lucky tee, and sliced it all the way over to the 9th fairway. Funny thing is, I could have sworn that as the ball went on its madcap flight, the wind whooshed by it and whispered, "Ahhh, shit." On the next hole, I closed my grip and stance a bit, and took another whack. This time I duck-hooked and wound up behind a tree, and when I got to my ball, the wind whistled through the leaves above, and again whispered, "Ahhh, shit."

On the third hole, a long par 3, the ball shot off my dad's tee like a rocket, and headed right for the pin! And the wind whooshed by singing, "Goood boy." I tapped the ball in for the first birdie that I've gotten since... well, since I played with my dad. The tee broke on that shot, never to be used again. I keep it on a bookshelf, sitting nicely in a hole-in-one shot glass my dad won in his prime. Thanks dad, I'll never forget you... or to keep my eye on the ball.

- by Nebbisk Oh



Figure 4: Nebbisk Oh's entry for Salvation Army Founders Day

## **April 11, 2007 Keep America Beautiful**

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*What do you do to keep Second Life beautiful? Ugly?*

NO ENTRIES

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## April 12, 2007 Cosmonaut's Day

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*You gotta be able to write on this one! Go for it.*

Cosmonauts Day - April 12, 2007

Better known as Yuri's night in the US its been one hell of a world space party. There is still a huge event going on over at the Space CoLab sim. Its wonderful to see so much depth and devotion going into the cause of human space exploration. With such a huge turnout in here the lag drove me through the floor. I don't mind though because It shows that we are becoming ever more interested in going to the stars. In celebrating Yuris' night we are doing so much more than comemorating that first glorious event of successful human spaceflight. We are looking upward, outward. No longer stuck going merely forward the whole cosmos opens up. No longer can we be content to merely look at the stars. We must become part of them, know them as we know our own dear Earth. Such a glorious message and dream must be shared and on this day that is what we do. This is happening across the world tonight. From Spain to Brazil to India in Music, dance, Stellar observation, physics debates and lectures, and whatever way the creativity of space enthusiasts can bring. In some ways it brings us together in a way that no other holiday can. Its goes back only to 1961 when Gagarin first made that historic flight. There are no set traditions, Its not based on anybodys religious inclinations, Its all about the future, of what we as humans can accomplish. Its a holiday all can revel in regardless and most who know about it do. I've enjoyed it immensely. Its a great time to meet other dreamers. With luck and with the fervent passion that pervades this day It won't be a dream much longer.

By: Athena Maeterlinck

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### The Cosmonaut's Lesson

When Yuri Gagarin, Valentina Tereshkova, Alan Shepard, Gus Grissom and the other space pioneers ascended in mountains of flame and smoke, our collective imaginations rose with them. They were the embodiment of the spirit of human adventure. Their flights were a mix of art and science and were the ultimate expression of human curiosity, courage and creativity. They flew under the flags of the USSR and the USA, but, in truth, they flew for all of us. Neil Armstrong said as much when he called his step "one giant leap for mankind."

The movie and television space adventures of the time paled in comparison to the real adventure. Lost in Space and Star Trek used obvious models and the alien planets were clearly studio sets. The rubber masks of Dr Who's aliens inspired more laughter than wonder.

Our trips to the moon, however, also left us with a lessened sense of wonder. Earth's rocky shield showed us a bleak landscape filled with rocks – a harsh reality devoid of color and completely lifeless. "One small step" out the door proved to be lacking in much of interest. We retreated to a "mission to earth." Accountants, not dreams, figured more in the cosmonaut's mission. The journeys became routine and the cosmonaut became page three news except in times of disaster.

While the real adventure advanced in decades, the imaginary adventures in television and movies advanced by centuries. The smoke and flames of Soyuz and Apollo were dimmed by the light of exploding Death Stars. Star Trek's enterprise advanced a century to the "next generation" with

computer generated special effects and worlds. Video games allowed everyone to pilot a ship around distant stars and land on beautiful worlds with exotic aliens. The real cosmonaut became boring by comparison. The noble reality was diminished by the glamorous fiction.

Therein lies the lesson the cosmonaut teaches us in Second Life. Let not the glamorous fiction diminish the noble reality of our real life journeys. However bleak the landscape, the spirit must remain unconquered.

By: Oboe Riederer

## April 13, 2007 International Librarian's Day

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*It's actually library month. Write about your library experiences.*

April 13th entry. International Librarians Day-

Ahh the library. A gazillion books and only an hour to spend with my nose plastered to one. While information resources in the home and indeed at any location with a computer are becoming ever greater there is still something very attractive about paper based libraries. I guess its the whole atmosphere. There are the scents of various books from Garfield Comics to Asmiov's collected essays on physics. It is visually far more impressive than a mess of wires and a blinking box. Indeed most libraries have several such blinky boxes nowadays. They seem to create a pleasant background humming if your over in that section. The books have a variety of textures both of the cover and paper and of the text itself. I love to just go sit and with a good book immerse myself there. And it being Librarians day I suppose I ought to make a mention of them. They have typically been very helpful to me when I have sought it. I have always enjoyed the way they keep things ordered but do not disturb you while doing so. Must be some particular skill they develop. Wonderful people to chat with as well especially if you hit on one of their hobbies. I have heard talk of the end of physical libraries as their need diminishes due to the same information being more easily accessible elsewhere. It sounds like a dreadful idea. To lose an important point of education and peace would be a very bad idea.

By: Athena Maeterlinck

## **April 14, 2007 Listening Awareness Month**

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*What? This topic should divide into two groups. Girls and boys. Go ahead, be funny.*

NO ENTRIES

## April 15, 2007 Rubber Eraser Day

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*Yup, it's true. Go check out the website and then come back and tell us about pencils and mistakes in your literary life.*

INKsters Writing Competition, 4/15/2007

### Tax Day and Rubber Eraser Day

I used to date a woman who, when asked if she wanted “This” or “That,” would always answer, “Both!” Well, when I found the other guy in her bed, I stormed out hollering, “You want both, huh? Fuggedaboutit!” But that’s neither here nor there, my point is that I learned from her that you often CAN have “both” so this story is about both Tax Day in the U.S. and Rubber Eraser Day elsewhere.

While in High School in Brooklyn, I worked part-time in a “drug store,” which is what we called a pharmacy in those days. This helped fund my habits of Rold Gold thin Pretzel Sticks -- rip off the side flap, fold in and you get “Pricks,” what fun! -- and Wham-O Super Elastic Bubble Plastic -- aka “we don’t need no steenkin brain cells.”

The pharmacist was quite a kidder... he used to tell me all sorts of nonsense, for example he claimed that he used to take his dates for a “pine tree float” -- a toothpick in a glass of water, hardy har har. But I promised that this story would be about taxes and rubbers, so let me tell you his favorite story:

One day a customer came into the store and asked Lou (if that was indeed the pharmacist’s name, I think his real name was washed away in bubble plastic) for a pack of three Trojans (all condoms, aka rubbers, were “Trojans” in those days). After convincing him to get a dozen (“Three? You only want three? Maybe you’d better take some vitamins too”), Lou asked the fellow for -- remember now, this was in the 1960’s -- five dollars and eight cents. The customer said, “I thought the price was five dollars, what’s the eight cents for?” Lou told him, of course, that the eight cents was for tax -- and the customer replied, “OH! So THAT’S how you put them on!!”

- by Nebbisk Oh



Figure 5: Nebbisk Oh's entry for Rubber Eraser Day

## Rubber Eraser Day

This may seem an unusual story but I once had an eraser called 'Squelch'. Squelch travelled with me every day to school for six long years. I came from very lowly beginnings and my dad or mum found him either on the bus my dad drove or the school my mum cleaned, I can't remember.

Squelch was a faithful little servant and all my pals loved to borrow him. I drew a little face on his rear end.

He had started life at quite a substantial size for an eraser. He was pink, made from rubber, and began life about 3 inches (8cm) in length. He was originally a rectangular prism with wedge cut edges.

When I received him he was about 1 inch long and well rubbed away at one end. The other end looked as though he had been bitten by a dog or cat. I gave him a happy smile on his face and I used the compasses to indent his rear end to this effect.

As he wore away, mostly in the Maths class, my chums would renew his face. When an eraser was needed they would shout for 'Squelch'. He was a happy little chappie and cheered up my days throughout High school.

He became rather famous in the classes I attended but Maths was his forte. He was retired when I left school and I have to admit that I still have him somewhere in my home thirty seven years after leaving school. How sad is that!

By: Skye Soderstrom

## April 16, 2007 Boston Marathon

---

*Are you an athlete? Do tell.*

Have a Merry-thon

Don't look for me in any of the pictures of the Boston Marathon today. I won't be there. I've done movie marathons and every weekend at my house is a laundry marathon, but I'll pass on running a marathon. I did get involved in a marathon when I was in college. A friend of mine got me to volunteer to help with the event. We stood at a mile point yelling out times. That was quite enough for me, thank you!

In point of fact, I do have experience with runs that does not involve pantyhose. I have a two mile jogging route. I try to jog three days a week, which means in a good week I'll do it twice. The idea behind jogging is to stay healthy so I don't jog as much in the winter because of the ice. If I fall, then I'll get hurt and I won't be able to get out and run the next time. It only makes sense to wait until the ice is gone. In the spring it rains a lot. Running in the rain I might catch a cold so I wait until there's a day it's not raining. In the summer it can be too hot! There's no sense in getting heat exhaustion!

In spite of all these weather difficulties, I have managed to participate in many five kilometer "fun runs." In fact, it is safe to say that I have more 5K fun run T-shirts in real life than I have virtual t-shirts of any kind in second life! My goal in a 5K is simple – I strive not be last in my age group. I am pleased to say I have met that goal in all races save one (too few in my age group!).

My aversion to actually running a marathon probably goes back to fourth or fifth grade. Our reading books included a story about the first marathon runner. He ran from the battle of Marathon to the City of Athens, proclaimed the Greek victory, fell over, and died. That's not exactly something I would care to emulate.

I say good luck to everyone who does run today. I hope you all have a merry-thon and do a "personal best." Don't look for me, however. I'll stick to marathon shopping.

By: Oboe Riederer

## April 17, 2007 Mathematics Education Month

---

*Your favorite (most hated) math teacher stories please.*

Dear Miss D.,

Wherever you are, I want to say thank you. I can still see you standing before our sophomore geometry class with four differently colored pieces of chalk in your hand. I still see you shading different angles and sides different colors as explain some tricky point.

With your skills you probably could have been building bridges or guiding spaceships to Mars. Instead, you built our minds and guided our thoughts.

You never said we were wrong. When we filled your blackboard with errors, you would look at them and simply say "I don't agree." Then you would guide us through the steps until we reached the correct answer.

To this day, I remember the rules you gave us for finding congruent triangles. Triangles can be congruent if there are three aspects that are equal: side-angle-side (SAS), angle-side-angle (ASA), or angle-angle-side (AAS). You warned us never to use angle-side-side (ASS). "Don't make an ASS of yourself," you said. That's geometry advice that applies to every aspect of life.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Oboe Riederer

## April 18, 2007 National Anxiety Month

---

*Don't be nervous. You can complete today's writing assignment.*

The kids all gather onto the bus. Several are larger than me, huge looming ninth graders still in junior high school before ninth grade was moved into high school. They have hair on their faces and on their knees. I stand just over four feet and am as skinny as a sapling. Next to them I appear as a child, their youth already taken away from them by puberty. All of the other fifth graders sit in the front of the bus. The bus is like an army, regimented tightly with boundaries of status. As the aisle progresses from the driver to the exit door, the children grow in stature and size like the evolution of man poster hung in the science class on the second floor. I once sat directly behind the driver but now have advanced into the middle, close to the exit windows that can be pushed off if ever the bus flips several times in some freak accident, or tumbles into a lake in the dry county of Kentucky I live in. Dry as in prohibition dry. As I get on the bus I walk down the aisle with the determination of one heading for hell. Dead man walking. A long slow cross down the skinny aisle that stretches out before me with a bit of hitchcockian cinema magic like the winding staircase in Vertigo. Slowly and surely I step. The further I walk the further the last double wide seat seems. I don't why I continue, perhaps a young fascination for thrill. Perhaps a stubbornness to go where arbitrary rules forbid. In the last seat sits a 6 foot 2 skateboarder named Mullins. I know he is a skateboarder because I am as well. Or rather, I was until Mullins threw my skateboard into the lake in our neighborhood. Our sub-urban development is called the island because it borders a small lake. Connected to a sewage line. We live near the same stop. -What do you think you're doing? Mullins asks. -Sitting. -Why you sitting back here? -I wanna. -I will rip that ear-ring right out of your ear. I have a fake diamond stud in my ear. I got it for my twelfth birthday. All the cool redneck suburban kids have one. I also have a mullet. I start to shake. Still I sit. My body is shivering, as if in freezing weather, or perhaps extreme paranoia. I crave a poker face, to be tough like an action hero, like Bruce Willis in Die Hard. But I am shivering instead. Still I sit. Anxiety is a funny thing, the more I worry about appearing anxious, the more anxious I am, the more I shiver and concurrently appear anxious. It is an ever blossoming fractal of fear. The bus is now driving down rainy Kentucky streets. Mullins grabs my small jeans with the elastic waistband and hurls me across the bus. I go past two seats and land akimbo, head against plastic seating and Mary Beth's shoulder. A brief struggle as my legs are pushed down and like an escaped jack in the box I'm stuffed onto the corrugated floor, near the bits and pieces of lunch items that crumbed away during the morning drive. -Get off me! Get off! Tugging at my clothes and gracelessly disentangling myself from Mary Beth, I stand and return to Mullins. The bus driver says nothing (if he even sees). I sit again. -Get the hell out of here you nerd! I would look at Mullins in the face were my eyes not squinted shut with tears. He punches me in the shoulder, hard. Beneath my hypercolor T-shirt my shoulder throbs, the blood already flowing to it to color the bruise. -Move it. Again, a wrecking ball slams into my shoulder. -No. I hold my ground. Terror must be embraced. Like getting out of bed in the morning, even though I cry out against it I have to move to the shower to face the day, otherwise I'll waste away. Terror would give us bed sores if we didn't pass through it. It takes away our ability to travel, to progress. The back of the bus is the kingdom of kings, where the giants live and I want a piece of their proverbial pie. So I stay. Again I am thrown. Again I return. I shiver in terror but still walk shivering back to the seat closest to the emergency exit. Closest to Mullins. Closest to fear.

By: Docilemind Janus

INKsters writing competition, April 18, 2007

### Reminiscence on National Anxiety Day

“Merde,” I muttered to myself as the bell rang, happy to employ the one word in French that I knew best. As my 10th Grade teacher was fond of saying, “Vous parlez francais comme une vache espagnol” – you speak French like a Spanish cow – and now she is ruining my weekend by announcing a big test to be given on Monday. Monday! Why, I don’t even recover from Little League and roller hockey until Tuesday morning. She’s got a lot of nerve!

Well, somehow I got through the weekend, whiffing 0 for 4 in baseball and getting kicked out of the hockey game for removing my goalie’s gloves so I could bite my nails. Yes, I was THAT worried about the test. I worked myself into such a state that I couldn’t even study. Increasing my anxiety by lying to my parents (“Sure mom, c’est bon, I’ve got it all under control”), I closed my door and listened to Jean Shepherd on the crystal radio that I built instead of studying for a Social Studies exam.

So, my prayers for a school-closing snowstorm in June unanswered, I knew that I was in big, big trouble. What to do? The demon on my left shoulder said, “Cheat, you fool!” and the angel on my right entreated, “No, you’re a good boy, you’ve never cheated in your life!” I rummaged in my desk drawer for a suitable gyp sheet while Asmodeus’s pitchfork made short shrift of that pesky angel.

Having no prior criminal experience, I had no idea how gyp sheets are concealed. I carried it in to the classroom under a stack of books, thinking I would secrete it in the shelf under my schooldesk... but I lost heart and the best I could do was to put the books down on my seat, transfer them to the floor leaving the gyp sheet behind, and then sit on it.

The test was all Greek to me... and I knew even less of Greek than I did French! But what I did know was that much of the material was right there on the sheet I had prepared that morning... right there... under my soon-to-be-grass-if-I failed, ass. I spread my legs wide and tried to look down without bending my head, but I couldn’t see the sheet. Mrs. Polishuk, fired up by the whites of my downturned eyes, stalked around me and peered right over my shoulder... at the desk shelf, where any experienced cheater knows to put their gyp sheet! Inwardly shaking like a leaf, I kept my legs together in a fashion reminiscent of the old saw about an aspirin being the best form of birth control... when held firmly between the legs.

Mrs. Polishuk never did spot the damning evidence, and by now she’s probably gone to her reward still confused about the kid who rolled his eyes in class for no apparent reason. Me, I somehow survived that day, and have since graduated to more sophisticated forms of psychological self-flagellation. I never cheated again though, having learned that crime doesn’t pay... especially when you’re no good at it.

- by Nebbisk Oh



Figure 6: Nebbisk Oh's entry for National Anxiety Month

Brothers and Sisters, I too am a sinner in the land of Linden and I know your anxiety.

Amen!

I know the fear you all feel when you stare at your avatar for 2 minutes and wonder if its just lag or if you have crashed!

Amen

I know the anxiety you have over the next update because you have crashed every ten minutes since the last one.

Amen

I know that cold fear when you open a folder and find its contents gone! Oh yes, I know what it is to lose inventory.

Amen

I know the embarrassment of teleporting and finding your shoes, watches, rings, and even hair hanging from your posterior – and Sisters I can only imagine the pain that stilettos inflict when that happens!

Amen.

I know the dread you all feel when you read that personal information has gone missing. Your credit card numbers and paypal accounts are in there!

Amen.

Brothers and sisters, I have been “Ruthed” and felt the fear and loathing of myself and others.

Amen.

Most of all I know that you fear the coming of voice! You fear that the added load on your machine will cause more crashes and more lag! You fear that your accent will make your avatar less appealing! You fear you will lose your exotic dancer job because you are a baritone.

Amen.

But I am here to tell you that it is when we experience these fears that we must turn to the words of the holy blog and heed what the lord Linden tells us - BE NOT AFRAID!

Amen.

The Good Blog tells us Be Not Afraid for we are adding more servers and new updates to reduce lag!

The lord Linden says have faith in my updates for they have been tested on the Beta grid!

Amen.

The Good Blog tells us Be Not Afraid for my servants are assisting in recovering lost inventory and most will be restored if ye follow my advice and empty the cache.

Amen

The Good Blog tells us Be Not Afraid for we are working with our mighty partners to insure the security of all our customers' accounts!

The lord Linden says “Know ye not that Ruth is most favored among my avatars. She is most pleasing to me and all those who resemble her shall find special favor with me.”

Amen.

And the holy Blog tells Be Not Afraid of voice, for verily shall it improve communications among my people. “They shall hear every twang and nasality. They shall be wordy and say “like” and “Y’know” every other word. They shall avoid carpal tunnel syndrome in long conversations. And I will send thy children unto thee screaming ‘Mom, Joey won’t play fair’ or something similar. And thy smitten swain shall overhear it and reaching down past his loins press the off button. And soon thereafter, so shall thee. And thus shall the lag be reduced!”

Amen.

So, my brothers and sisters, let us put our faith in Linden, set aside our fears, and keep the Linden dollars flowing – and we all say:

Amen

By: Oboe Riederer

## April 19, 2007 National Garden Month

---

*Time to get serious about your garden in real life and here in Second Life.*

I really wish I had a garden.

I've always been a child of nature, and nothing re-charges my inner battery more than taking off my shoes and stepping into the grass, or even better a nice squishy cold patch of mud.

Sadly, I live in a place where land is at a premium, and having even a tiny garden is considered a luxury. The closest I can come is a few scraggly little house plants. It's a bit tough to take off my shoes and step into a plant-pot.

Plus it's probably not good for the plant either.

Someday maybe I will have enough money to buy a really nice big patch of land where I can run around barefoot and feel the grass and the mud. Maybe plant a few flowers or some vegetables.

For now I guess I have to be content looking at my little mini rosebush .... And hope my neighbor doesn't catch me walking around inside her plant pots.

~ Submitted by Deena Barbosa

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## April 20, 2007 NCTE National Poetry Day

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*Okay, give us ONLY poems today. Try not to make them TOO cumbersome.*

this is my second life...  
this is where i learn to love,  
to hope, to trust,  
to laugh with my heart,  
to cry without fear,  
to fly with wings of freedom,  
to be all that my soul can be,  
and to live again;

and if perchance  
you are my teacher  
in this arduous learning,  
i thank you  
from the bottom of my heart.

By: Geaven Gall



Figure 6: Geaven Gall's entry for National Poetry Day

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I'm sitting at work and I'm wracking my brain.  
Man, writing this poem is really a pain.

I'm trying to be witty,  
I'm trying to be cool,  
But I'm pretty sure I'll just sound like a fool.

You see, writing poems is not a strong suit,  
But if I can do it I might win some loot.

So i'll roll up my sleeves,  
Give my knuckles a crack,  
And try to come up with a tasty word snack.

Cuz, hey, after all, I've got nothing to lose,  
And after I'm done I can go drink some booze.

So I guess this is it,  
Now my poem is finished.  
I hope your opinion of me's not diminished.

I'll sit back and wait 'til you hand down a ruling.  
Writing this thing was incredibly grueling.

By: Deena Barbosa

---

## BEYOND THE PAIL

David H. Duckett  
Bought a new bucket  
And then he took it  
Home in his car.

The next day his daughter,  
Aged three and-a-quarter,  
Filled it with water,  
Without asking Pa.

David H. Duckett  
Fell over his bucket,  
Said loudly "Oh f\*\*k it"  
And hoped no one heard.

But if Daddy had taught 'er

That she really oughta  
 Not play games with water  
 It would not have occurred.

© Julie Apocalypse

---

INKsters writing competition, 4/20/2007  
 National Poetry Day

The Removal of Dark Fenixx  
 An Epic Poem (c) 2004 by Nebbish, Defender of Cragstone

'Tis often said, in Palisade, the portal gankers lurk  
 Their weapons honed, armed to the bone, face drawn up in a smirk  
 Their cry is "Vengeance," waving pendants, looking for the glow  
 Of some poor schmuck, down on his luck, who through the portal goes.

One day Dark Fenixx took this scenic route to Dereth's hell  
 He was no hood, "A babe in woods am I," he'd often /tell  
 "I'm here to craft!" But then a laugh precursed what he was facing:  
 An FI, 'Zerk, three other jerks, a Tact with turrets blazing.

"I mean no harm, belay your arms," he cried. His answer? Thunder  
 And blood and gore as Shads and Orders tore his limbs asunder  
 His armor gone, "I am undone!" he gasped, with failing breath  
 As vigor drained, small health remained, he hovered close to death.

His dying words, you may have heard, resound throughout the land  
 "Ye've ganked me and I thank ye, fear my rightful wrath at hand!  
 Ye think ye're tough? I've had enough of portal camping gankers  
 Well fair is fair, no more Care Bear am I, ye silly wankers!"

He hunted, levelled like a devil, changing templates often  
 Looking for one best in war, to make foes' armor soften  
 Raised up, did he, his MMD, got armor strong yet motley  
 Pushed lore so high that he could buy a weapon truly godly.

The fateful day arrived. "Hooray!" exclaimed our eager knight  
 "I'm all prepared, no longer scared to fight the ganker's fight."  
 In Palisade he staged his raid, he stood there, arms akimbo  
 "Pray, time go faster, 'til those bastards come through portal's limbo."

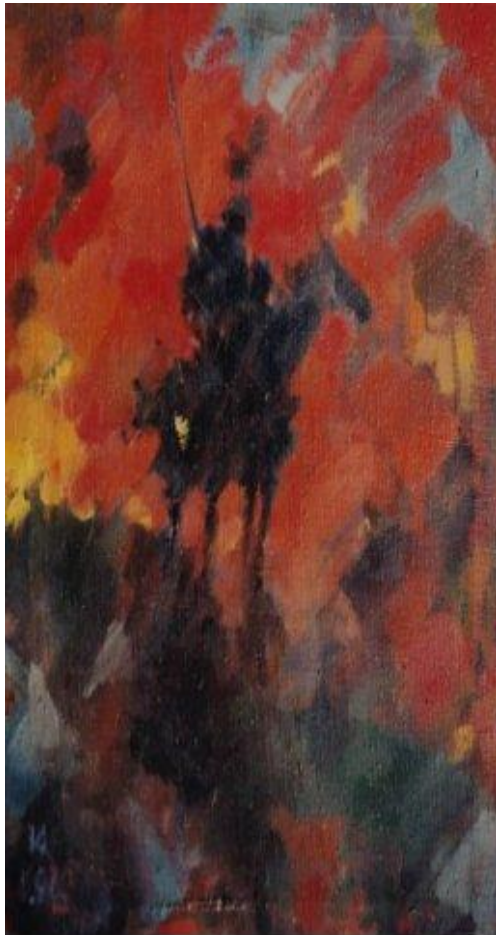
A flash of light, a glow so bright it numbs the very senses  
 Made him aware, his target there! Look, still it effervesces  
 "I press the key to target thee. Won't work! Ah yes, I see."  
 A voice: "Hark! I am monarch of the Hobo monarchy."

"Heed well, my son," the voice went on, "lest 'dure the royal spank,  
As the regent of our 'legiance I proclaim, Thou Must Not Gank!  
Pull no mobs to groups of slobs, let Lodrog's questers find their bones  
Kill no noobies mining rubies, leave the fetich incs alone."

Can'st imagine thee how agitated Fenixx soon became?  
Tried to argue but his arguments were taken all in vain  
He fought, got overwrought, exclaimed, "I will not be thy pawn."  
He and Empath reach an impasse. Then the latter said, "Begone!"

Well now, hearken, Fenixx darkens Hobo's ally hall no more  
Some will miss him, some would kiss him, some his actions did deplore  
But this we know, if a Hobo doth visit Palisade  
Remember well: Dark Fenixx has a bloody new bright blade.

- by Nebbisk Oh



Painting "Black Knight," 1996, Novosibirsk

Figure 7: Nebbisk Oh's entry for National Poetry Day

## **April 21, 2007 Creativity and Innovation Day**

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*We live in this virtual world where so much is possible. What do you do in Second Life to be creative and innovative?*

NO ENTRIES

## April 22, 2007 Earth Day

---

*Actually it's Second Life day for us. This is the only planet we know.*

Earth Day April 22, 2007

Earth it has a feeling  
of groundedness and death  
Second Life is calling  
to bring about rebirt

Second Life  
the only planet we know  
has brought imagination  
to the soul  
of one who travels on  
to try to make them whole

What can we find here?  
Reborn in love and feeling  
the craziness of being  
a wandering animation.

Alter egos flow are charmed  
by global meetings of lives unknown  
suspended declarations  
of new hope of new life.

The old home left behind now  
in dreams of pastures new  
hopes of recreation  
to live life to the full.

By: Skye Soderstrom



Figure 8: Sky Soderstrom's entry for Earth Day

## April 23, 2007 World Book and Copyright Day

---

*Stealing the work of others is a time honored tradition. If somebody stole one of your creative works, what would you want them to steal?*

INKsters writing competition, 4/23/2007

Creative Works that I'd Want Others to Steal

Steal a verse  
Hardly a theft  
But a round-trip journey  
By way of inspiration

Steal a painting  
So that I may entreat you  
With credible excuse  
To pose for another

Steal some time  
To spend with me  
Creating a world  
Where we can fly

Steal a kiss  
And my story  
About this being but fantasy  
To reassure

Steal my heart  
A creation of pixels  
Made up of whole cloth  
Wrapped around you

- Nebbisk Oh



Figure 9: Nebbisk Oh's entry for World Book and Copyright Day

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### Steal This Idea

Someone stole one of my ideas this Saturday and I was glad of it! I wish more would steal the idea.

I was shopping and saw a comic book store. I know a soldier currently serving in Iraq and thought he and his fellow soldiers might appreciate a little light reading.

The owner gave me advice about some good comics to send. As I went to pay a man in front of me said "Are you sending those to soldiers in Iraq." I told him yes and explained a little about my friend and how his unit was working with Iraqi soldiers. "Let me pay for those," he said. "We can't do enough for those guys." He reached back, took the books from my hand and paid for them.

As he paid I reached up and touched his shoulder and said, "Who should I say they're from." "Oh," he said, "Anonymous."

So officially they're from Anonymous. But I have a pretty good idea who he really is. You see, he had two boys with him. The oldest was probably 12 or 13. They gave his identity away. They called him "Dad."

I hope they enjoy their comics from Dad and I hope more people steal my idea.

By: Oboe Riederer

---

World Book & Copyright Day April 23, 2007

What!

You've read my poems  
this secret life of mine,  
romantic dreams and notions  
have been transformed to thine.

You know that I'm a dreamer,  
you know that I'm inclined,  
to write of love and promise,  
to leave mundane behind.

You shared them with your own thoughts,  
my gifts of love divine.  
I place them inside your head,  
to mend the scar in mine.

It gives me warmth and feeling,  
to know your life's been lightened  
with all my proclamations  
I'll share them all in time.

By: Skye Soderstrom



Figure 10: Skye Soderstrom's entry for World Book and Copyright Day

## April 24, 2007 National Welding Month

---

*It's possible you haven't considered how important welding is in your world. Write a thank you note to those who keep you together.*

Hot metal slaps against my arm, through the layers of my overall my skin begins to blister. Why don't women want to become welders? I look at the scars bubbling across my father's arms. Compare it to my fresh scar. Is it vanity? Cowardice in the face of the electric shocks and pain and afterburn?

No one likes pain, but boys are conditioned to accept it. "Don't be a wimp." "Big boys don't cry." As a girl I was always allowed to run to mom. Is it a disadvantage? Women complain that they have a lower level of income than men, but I wonder how much of the discrepancy has to do with the level of physical harm we will risk.

I set down the plate I have been holding steady for my father, he glances at me, but continues working. I go and run my arm under cold water, involuntary tears streaking my face. I will never be a welder. I respect my father for his strength, and his ability to endure any hardship for the good of his family and society as a whole. But if I have sons, I will let them feel pain.

By: Nanimao Novi

---

Blanche writes to all the welding men.  
(With all respect to the Golden Girls)

Dear Welding Men,

I am unable to imagine a more excitin' thing for a man to do than to be a welder! Everything you do is about the sacred act of joinin' two into one. Why it just takes my breath away to realize that it is your weldin' work that allows skyscrapers to rise higher and higher!

Watching Oxy-acetylene welders at work is a sight to behold. When you place your fiery tool against the seam and begin to run a bead I can feel sparks flyin' from me. And the size of your tanks is amazin'! I declare, you must surely be able to weld for hours.

The Arc welder's work is just as fascinatin'. When I think of the power that surges through your wand, I feel as if I'm meltin'. That electric hum sets me buzzin' all over!  
Gracious me!

I thank each and every one of you men for your hot and steamy work! You are responsible for erectin' the great structures of this nation and the world. Please keep it up!

Sincerely yours,

Blanche

By: Oboe Riederer

National Welding Day April 24, 2007

I'm held together beautifully  
by those who toil at dark  
to make my life more wonderful  
and keep me on my task.

They weave my world together,  
they save me from the storm,  
They cool me down and rest me,  
when I am feeling warm.

They hammers flash into the night,  
the rumbling of the workers,  
the welding torch spreads dreams and light,  
no time for any shirkers.

They keep me strong,  
my life robust,  
with icy sparkling steel,  
they give me tough foundations,  
so I can breathe and dream and feel,  
the same as every nation.

By: Skye Soderstrom



Figure 11: Skye Soderstrom's entry for National Welding Month

### An ode to ye welders

From times ancient till now you've worked  
sweat on brow  
Ancient times, the heat of the fire to temper  
the steel  
Modern times, equipment, lit with a spark  
to mold and weld  
Heat and fire,  
hands and eyes,  
Man and Machine  
working together to build the structures  
that support  
conform  
master artistry.  
Ye welders and your joints holding us together.

By: Talula Ophelia



Figure 12: Talula Ophelia's entry for National Welding Month

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## **April 25, 2007 Administrative Professional's Day (formerly Secretaries Day)**

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*Two options: Either write about being a secretary or having a secretary. OR, write about how politically correct titles always seem to be longer and less poetic than their non-politically correct predecessors.*

Top Ten things about being an SL Secretary

10. Typing skills make us the best chatters in SL.
9. Lack of typing skills means the bosses don't say much.
8. Travel arrangements? No problem – here's the SLurl.
7. Taking meeting minutes is easy – copy chat history.
6. You never get toner on your outfit.
5. Don't worry about cleaning the conference room after a meeting – it self cleans every 4 hours.
4. Sexual Harassment is not a problem when you offer boss' wife teleport and show her the chat history.
3. Office supplies and fresh coffee are always ready in your inventory.
2. Pantyhose never snag on desks or chairs and never get runs.

And the number one best thing about being an SL secretary:

1. Enforcing the "women must wear bras" policy after the boss gets "Ruthed."

By: Oboe Riederer

---

Administrative Professionals Day April 25, 2007

The Secretary

Working nine to five,  
the secretary toils  
writing all the letters,  
mending all the foils

Her tippy tippy tapping

is like a squirrel's nest  
Pecking nuts and raisins  
often putting her to test

The wife, she 'phoned the boss today,  
(He's out with his new gal).  
The secretary lies again,  
"He's off to see his pal."

The head office they've sent a man  
to work out new dimensions.  
The boss he's lost, where is that guy?  
He misses all the sessions!

The secretary does the books.  
The tax is due on Monday.  
The boss golfs nearly every day,  
she takes them home on Sunday.

The meetings planned,  
all are in place.  
No-one can see the boss's face.  
He's slipped out for some 'bacon'.

The wife calls round.  
She wants a word  
with Mr. Boss, the pain.  
She tells him that she's leaving now  
and walks out in the rain.

He's worried now.  
He asks for tea.  
The secretary obliges.  
She fills the kettle to the top.  
It's time to ask for rises!

Promotion, wow, its come at last!  
A raise in pay, a brand new station!  
The boss's party cheers the day,  
it pays his separation!

By: Skye Soderstrom

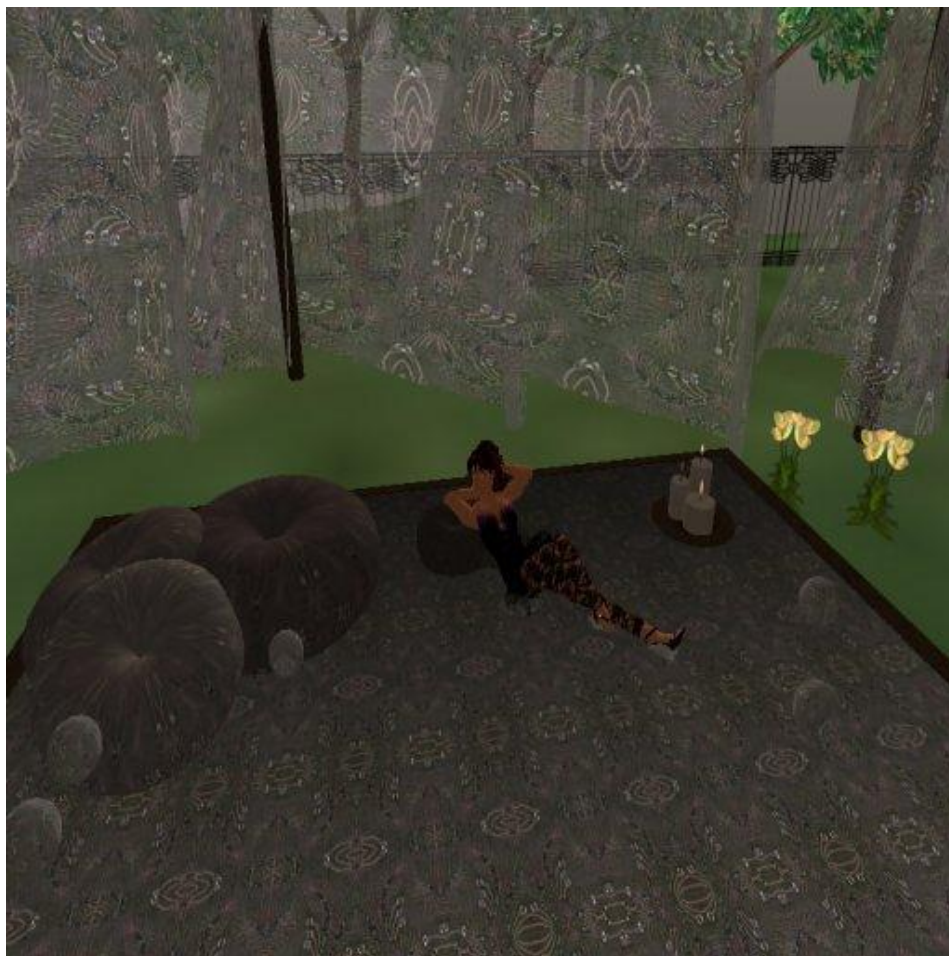


Figure 13: Skye Soderstrom's entry for Administrative Professional's Day

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## April 26, 2007 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month

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*Keep it light. Talk about your pet.*

April 26, 2007 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month

I became a regular at walking dogs for an animal shelter. In my singledom I had read that women have a tendency to gravitate towards animals both of the furry and not so furry kind. That was my initial greedy motive for walking the dog so to speak. The opposite sex and I engaged in some lengthy conversation during some of those walks. Even managed to get a few dates out of it. Walking the dog seemed to be my viable solution to meeting women.

One day some of what I classified as dogs of the chick magnet variety were in short supply. That is where George came in. He was an ugly ass looking dog of less than a year. George was a bear dog, a breed known to be very loyal to their owners. More importantly I was told they could keep a bear at bay and put the run on one or more if one happened to be in the area.

One of my passions is the outdoors where bruins tend to live. It was clear after walking him a few times that he was lacking in magnetic qualities so put him to the test in one of my favourite outdoor jaunts. George stuck by my side and was not prone to venturing too far. I felt secure knowing George the bear dog was with me in addition to the can of bear spray holstered to my waist. Too often in recent years I had happened upon bears during my escapades in the wild and for the most part they showed little or no fear. At times this prevented me from visiting some areas I rather enjoyed.

George proved his worth immediately by taking off in a flash and putting the run on a rather large bruin on the day of my test. The rest of the day I did not happen to see another bear which was very unusual for that particular area. The bond was made that day and I became the proud owner of an ugly ass bear dog pursuing alternate methods of female introduction.

By: Deeter Decosta

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Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month April 26, 2007

Don't Be Cruel to hearts that are true

I have two little dogs, you see  
they both are dear as dear to me.  
Their little heads flick to the side,  
Reading my feelings, I cannot hide.

If they were hurt or damaged so  
I would not know a place to go,  
to bring them back instant to me,

we live in perfect harmony.

I take them walks in sea and shore.  
I could not ever ask for more.  
They are my world, my every place.  
I love to watch their smiling face.

Both black and white and gold for me.  
Their price you'll never know the fee.  
They help me mend my broken parts.  
They give so much, their eyed like darts.

Their love it is for me, untold  
free flowing and always ever bold.  
My heart would die if they were beat,  
by rascals that walk any street.

By: Skye Soderstrom



Figure 14: Skye Soderstrom's entry for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month

## April 27, 2007 STD Awareness Month

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*Okay, where have you been that you shouldn't have been? Hmmmm?*

INKsters writing competition, 4/27/2007  
National STD Awareness Month

### The Skewing of Degas

The famous French artist and co-founder of Impressionism, Edgar Degas, is commonly thought to have developed eye problems while defending Paris during the Franco-Prussian War. Not so. These problems, which plagued him from onset until his lonely departure from this mortal coil while the Bolsheviks wreaked bloody vengeance on Tsar Nicholas II, have recently been determined by experts to have been caused by a rare Sexually Transmitted Disease. This startling conclusion owes thanks, in part, to the discovery of a heretofore unknown painting entitled, "Les Danseuses Elastiques." The work was found by famous Second Life art connoisseur LadyKat Merlin, who, despite the signature "Edger Dig-ass 1887" in yellow Cray-pa, and the use of acrylic paints on A5 paper rather than Degas's customary oil on canvas, assures us that this is no forgery but is indeed an original product of the master. She assembled an international team of art historians and private detectives (including Inspectors Holmes, Clouseau, and "Big" from Law and Order:CI) to unearth the true story, a capsule of which is presented below, having been extracted from the experts' 3,042 page tome.

Degas, it seems, had a classic foot fetish, which he pursued with the great passion one would expect from a master artisan. An early indication of this is his 1860 sculpture, "Oui! Oui! Oui! Tout le Route a la Maison" (Wee Wee Wee all the way home). He is also known to have coined the phrase, "La joie de victoire, l'agonie des Pieds" (The Joy of Victory, the Agony of the Feet) as part of his campaign to modernize the heretofore barbaric "Tour de France" foot race.

By the mid 1880's, Edgar gave full vent to his piedeliction (sic), hosting denizens of Paris's notorious Opera Ballet (see Wiki:Pose Ball) for nightly sessions of reflexology administered by his assistant and lover, Desire' LaFitte while Degas surreptitiously painted their lower extremities. It is believed that later, in Desire's succulent yet unwashed arms, Edgar succumbed to the virulent agent that would undo him, L'oeil du chouette, or idiomatically, "Athlete's eye."

A careful study of the newly discovered painting reveals Degas's fanatical attempt to avoid further exposure to this horrible disease; he insisted that many of his subjects wear latex footwear when posing to keep the dread virus at bay. We salute Degas's heroic and tragic early encounter with a Sexually Transmitted Disease by presenting this painting to you, kind reader. We give you "Les Danseurs Elastiques," "Dancers in Rubbers."

by Nebbisk Oh

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The image is of a real painting in acrylic by LadyKat Merlin. It is intended to be a parody of Degas's work. She kindly grants permission to use the image in conjunction with this story, but for no other purpose.



*Image courtesy of LadyKat Merlin, all rights reserved*

**Figure 15: Nebbisk Oh's entry for STD Awareness Month**

## April 28, 2007 Youth Sports Safety Month

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*You know you remember it so vividly it could have happened yesterday. Your very best wipe-out story as a child.*

I always wondered why they called it "physical education." We never learned much about the physicality of it, or about the physical. We learned rules to games--telling, in hindsight.

The game that day was volleyball. Get the ball over the net, preferably in such a way that the other team can't hit it back. Wait your turn to serve, hopefully hurting your wrist \*and\* getting the ball over the net, instead of just a mighty whap on the bones and a flopping, out-of-bounds ball. Spike, set, defeat, rejoice in your prowess and the losership of the opposing team. Great game, and in grade school, there aren't even any bikinis. Sheesh.

My turn at the net. I watch the ball nervously, waiting for it to come my way and praying it won't. It does. I'm under it...I'm bracing my hands for the net and \*schmack!\* it lands precisely atop the middle finger of my left hand. I am in agony. Through the blurred red haze of pain, I hear the horn-rimmed face of my teacher issue forth: "Butterfingers!"

I broke that finger in three places. Greenline fractures. That's right; my biggest wipe out as a kid was a busted digit. I've broken legs and other things since, but I can still recall with excruciating precision the pain of that finger breaking. Even more intently I re-experience my dismal failure in physical education. My poor, cracked finger didn't matter. My butterfingerness did. Go figure.

The upside was the splint I had to wear for six weeks after. It kept the middle finger of my left hand perfectly extended. I soon discovered that, if I carried my books crooked in my left arm just so, I could exhibit a full-on flip off at all times with impunity. What a joy, to point that blameful, expository digit at ol' horn rims, proclaiming silently my disdain for a system that teaches you how to play a game, but not how to play.

By: Imano Moody

## **April 29, 2007 National Landscape Architecture Month**

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*Ugliest place in Second Life? Most beautiful place in Second Life? Isn't "landscape architecture" a fancy name for "planting flowers?"*

NO ENTRIES

## April 30, 2007 National Sense of Smell Day

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### *What stinks in Second Life?*

So I'm walking around minding my own business in Second Life (not literally, since I'm a n00bie and I don't own anything besides myself), when in one of my random 'ports, I enter a stink.

That's right, you heard me, I enter a stink. Second Life doesn't so much as stink as it makes a visual-fart. Since everything's pretty much on the computer, smells in Second Life come as visual shocks, like when I was in some junkyard. Boy, was that a dump - everything was set up for a dystopic hoboland to evolve, which to me, was ironic, since weren't slums supposed to be places where society degenerated into, rather than defined as a place to begin humanity's dissolution?

It was no matter, the philosophy of the area. The place stank. I walked around the junkyard, kicking about tin cans, and squatted for a time at a really dodgy looking hobo lean-to shelter - one of many, I might add, which was set up specially for the occasion. After hearing one wannabe-hobo talk about "rounding out some n00bs for a bit of a jag", I got out of the stink in a hurry.

Other visual-farts occur when you least expect them, like yesterday when I was at a beach, and suddenly, someone drove a tank right through the beach, followed by some of his buddies shooting a bunch of rounds at the nude sunbathers. That one woke me up in bit, and the beach bums were twittering among themselves at the inappropriate behaviour - but this is SL, I thought, IS there such a thing?

By: Eilonwy Merlin