

СЕРИЯ ПИКС 39



A NOTE FROM OUR CLAWTHING

"The time has come!" The Clawthing said,
"to think of better things -
Of dice and cards and Dragonfire,
Of Cthulhu and kings!"

Another year, another Dragonfire, another Clawmarks.

Oh things have not changed these 20 years, and in the Great Name of Cthulhu, we hope they don't change for another 20 years to come!

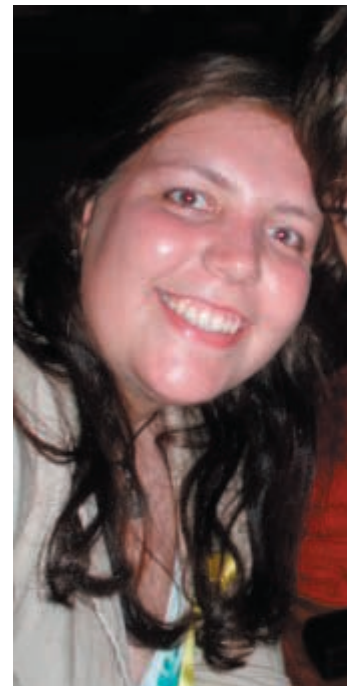
This year has been subject to a multitude of campaigns, ambitious LARP writing, mind-injuring modules and card games (of which my knowledge is severely limited). We have also been bombarded with bobs! Female bobs! More female bobs than male bobs! (yes, this is the cue for Roo to drop his drink again). They are a fantastic group and hope they will join the minions who never ever Ever really leave CLAWs (yes, you know who you are!).

As for me, absolutely loving and hating Ian for his campaign (still on-going; a year and a half later) and my last year on committee.

So adios!

Love and rainbows and My Little Pony (just for Michelle)

Claire
(AKA Clawthing)



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Finding CLAWs on the Interwebs!

Adrianna Pinska

At the dawn of all time, when dinosaurs ruled the earth. a bunch of old CLAWmembers set up a wiki for the people to use. And lo, the people saw it, and wrote about many things, and it was good. Then the wiki software was updated because the old one was getting stale, and lo, there was wailing and gnashing of teeth, for the new wiki software was crappy and overly complicated. And there was an exodus to LiveJournal and other third-party services. And so it came to pass that the wiki software was updated again, to something less crappy, and a forum established, but the faithful had scattered to the four corners of the internet, and coaxing them back was somewhat difficult. Thus have the online CLAWs resources lain and slumbered for generations, waiting for the glorious day of rebirth when a new dawn would rise and see them used for conversation once more.

Fortunately, our announcement mailing list -- the Cthulist -- is still in relatively good health, and it is highly recommended that you sign up to it if you haven't already. It will let you know about scheduled LARPs, new campaigns, and other things that are happening at CLAWs. It's quite low-volume, and won't eat your inbox.

The wiki has most recently been used to whip up quick and dirty Dragonfire websites, and it also hosts the beginnings of an online module and LARP library. An incredible volume of games has been produced by members of CLAWs, but it's difficult to find out about old modules and LARPs, especially now that we no longer have a viable paper library. If you have ever written an module or a LARP, and you have a playable copy, please put up an entry about it using the handy form and template.

Occasionally someone remembers that we have a forum, and there is a brief flurry of activity. Recent events include a couple of attempts to run a forum game.

We also have an IRC channel, which is currently very small and populated by a diehard group of alumni. Since the network we were using merged with Atrum.org, there is once again a working web interface, so you can pop in to say hi without having to configure an IRC client. If you register your nick and become a frequent visitor, we'll add you to the auto-op list.

Forums

<http://claws.za.net/forum/>

Wiki

<http://claws.za.net/>

Log in with your forum username and password to edit.

Online library: <http://claws.za.net/Library/Library>

Library instructions: <http://claws.za.net/TheTome/OnlineModuleLibrary>

IRC

#claws on atrum.org

Web interface: <http://www.atrum.org/chat/>

(type /join #claws to change to the right channel)

More instructions: <http://claws.uct.ac.za/TheTome/CLAWsOnIRC>

Mailing lists

<http://claws.uct.ac.za/TheTome/CLAWsMailingLists>

Subscribe to the Cthulist: mailcthulist-subscribe@yahoo.com

CLAWs on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2211694629>

CLAWs on Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/CLAWs/pool>

Google Calendar

<http://claws.za.net/TheTome/ClawsCalendar>



We set out with bold purpose and cheerful optimism on a wet Wednesday, as though Cape Town was giving us a final reminder of what it's like in Winter before we headed for the land of endless freeways. Unfortunately our journey to Joburg was by train, and our train experience can be summarized quite succinctly with the internet slang "epic fail". It set a new personal record for lateness: twenty seven hours.

I'm told there are places in the world where, if a train is late, the staff responsible commit ritual suicide. A very distinct lack of corpses suggested to me that South Africa is not such a place. The opening delay of 2 hours before we even saw the train should have tipped me off. In that time I should have seen the writing on the wall and decided to find a faster method of transport to Joburg (like on tortoise-back) but, alas, I didn't.

The experience of the train trip up was too emotionally scarring to spend more than one

paragraph on, so I'll summarize the important details as quickly as I can.

There were continual delays and random stops in the middle of nowhere that meant we eventually arrived about twenty seven hours late. Yes, you read correctly, twenty seven hours late. We had to spend a second night on that f@#king train, angry and hungry, and to top it all we never even received a formal apology for the 'delay'.

Finally, after getting off the train and marvelling at the feel of solid ground, we attempted to get our bearings. Getting bearings in Joburg is actually surprisingly difficult due to the ever-present of smog which limits visibility to about 20m on clear days. Nonetheless our navigators did a fine job of getting us where we needed to go, first time.

Arriving late for Icon meant that we missed the Friday morning module, which was annoying, but after getting to the venue and seeing familiar sights and sounds, we managed to get ourselves into con mode, did the obligatory back slapping and catching up with everyone there, had some swamp juice and waded into Icon, all guns blazing.

The Icon modules were a varied bunch this year, ranging from tropical island zombies to near-future US Rangers. I enjoyed all the modules I played in and based off what I heard from my fellow Icon-goers, they seemed to enjoy them too. The most prominent complaint was that there was only one choice for each of the competitive modules, which I did find rather limiting, but not overly so.

My biggest complaint about the modules was that my Saturday afternoon module DM passed out half an hour into the module. This was a first time for me (and apparently for everyone else at the table, it seems passing out DM's aren't that common),



Zacharia Crumley

To Icon and Back:

A Magical Journey Filled with Hope and Wonder

but I suspect that the take-home lesson from that experience was that half a bottle of sherry shouldn't be mixed with the noble art of DMing.

In terms of the Icon LARPing, there wasn't much Cape Town representation. Me and Mike were the only hardcore CLAWs representatives who LARPed on both Friday and Saturday evening. Bronwen gets full credit for playing on Friday though. It's always interesting to play in Joburg LARPs and experience the slightly different LARP styles they have. Personally I enjoyed both the LARPs I was involved in, especially the Saturday night epic, set in post-medieval London.

Icon also had the regular mix of goodies for sale, wargaming, anime, card games, etc. Being both a role playing purist and a poor student I didn't really partake in any of that rot, but it all added to the alternative texture of Icon so I can't really complain much, and my fellow con-goers (their eyes glinting in the light of their hoards of bought goodies) certainly seemed pleased about everything.

Everything finally came to a head on Sunday evening for the Icon prize giving. It was, as I expected, the regular mix of comedy, alcohol, rowdy people and prizes. Much tequila was drunk, much advice from the crowd was submitted (often unsolicited) and much fun was had by all. In particular, please give Mike and Garrick vigorous congratulatory slaps on the back next time you see them for representing Cape Town, and getting some of the prestigious Icon prizes.

Following the prize giving was the Icon dinner, a feast of food, good times and debauchery. This was another event that I wasn't there for, so I withhold comment on that part of the night, but I did catch the tail end of the evening and, based on the general loudness, merriment and high intoxication

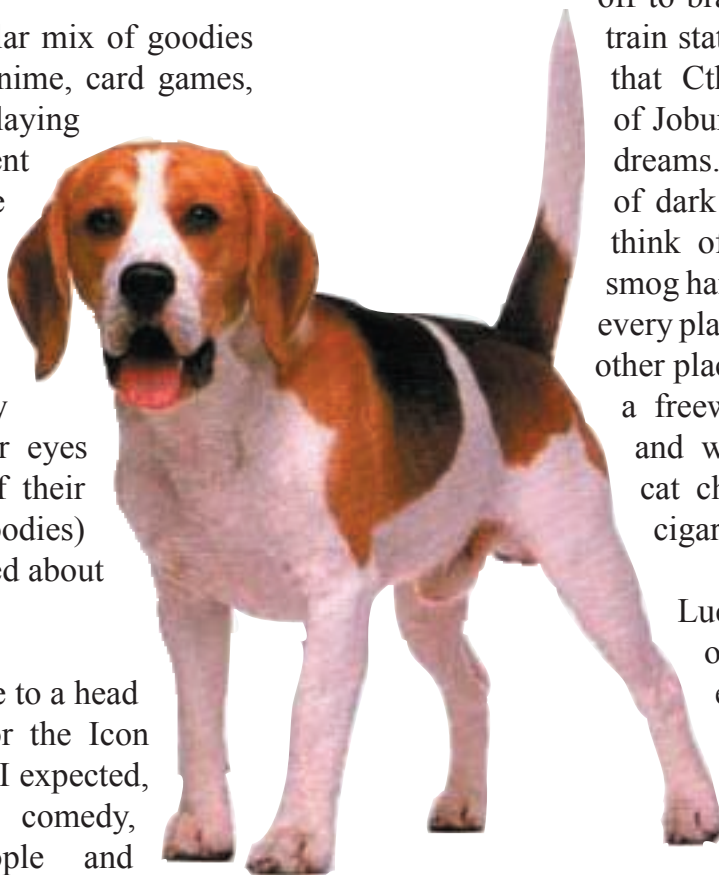
levels of those who did attend, a good time was had by all.

By this stage of Icon I was running severely behind on sleep. The thought of a long night's rest, now that Icon was over, hung in the air before me like a vision of pure nirvana. Unfortunately, the vision was viciously trampled on and thrown off a cliff when my fellow train patrons kicked me awake at the ungodly hour of 08h00 and told me if I wasn't packed and ready to go catch our train in 10 minutes, they'd feed me to Warren's dog.

Nine minutes and fifty nine seconds later we set off to brave the journey to Joburg train station. I'm inclined to think that Cthulhu himself conceived of Joburg in one of his more evil dreams. Only an inhuman mind of dark twisted corruption could think of a place where choking smog hangs heavy in the air, where every place looks exactly like every other place (ugly and polluted with a freeway in the middle of it) and where everyone and their cat chain smokes at a rate of cigarettes per second.

Luckily we all made our sanity checks and eventually arrived at that beacon of South African timeliness, helpfulness and customer caring: Joburg train station.

Now, at this stage of things we were cutting our timing a bit fine, but eventually we made it to our platform and waited for the train to arrive. I was rather hoping that our return trip would be quick, easy and devoid of the drama that infested our trip up, but apparently fate had it in for us, because we found ourselves waiting past the scheduled departure time of our train without it being in sight. Then we waited some more. And then a little more after that. Half an hour after the scheduled departure time, we got fed up with waiting and approached an official looking desk to find out why the hell we were standing around twiddling our thumbs, and got



told that the train was going to be late.

It was about now that visions worthy of the more violent Cannibal Corpse lyrics began playing across my mind. They mostly involved horrible things happening to the idiots responsible for the train being late, but for the gentle souls who will be reading this, I won't go into any detail. I will say this though: it did take several dots of willpower to stop me from going on a rampage of death and mayhem.

Much later, I was running very low on willpower and had just reached for my penknife to sharpen my improvised stake, in anticipation of an imminent violent killing spree, when our train arrived... Five hours late. I was slightly cheered up by it's arrival, but waiting forty five minutes for the train to actually leave, quickly removed any good humour or cheer.

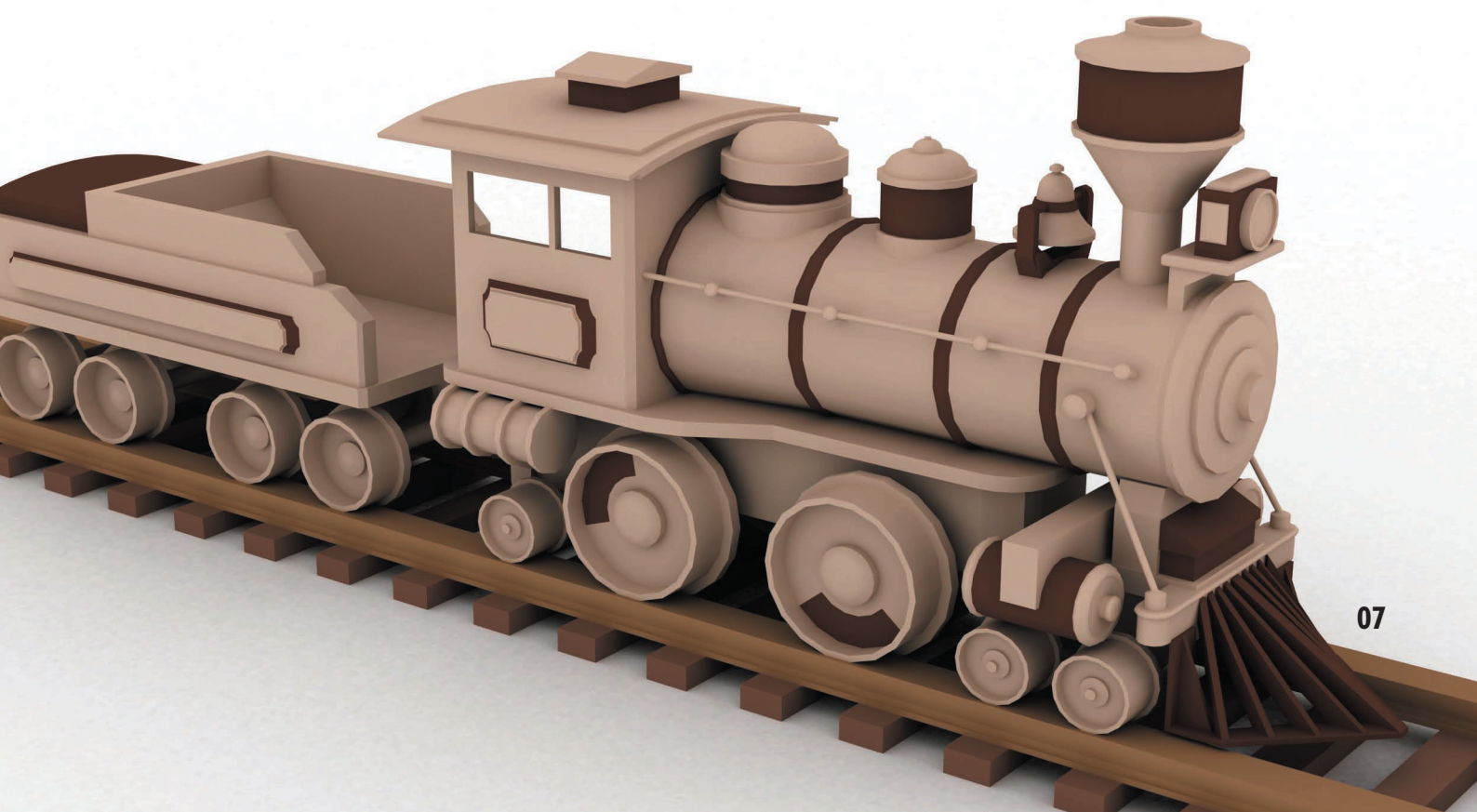
The journey back is only a montage of events in my mind, rather like in a movie, where they collapse the five months of torture the main character undergoes into a 2 minute sequence with some serious sounding music playing in the background. I suspect this inability to recall all the details of the trip back may be a psychological coping mechanism to protect myself from the sheer agony of being continually delayed further and

further while confined to a cramped area. I'll try to convey the general gist with these two facts. 1) We did manage to not kill anyone, despite arriving a good ten hours late. 2) Arriving in Cape Town filled me with such bliss and relief that I achieved enlightenment right there at the Cape Town station. For the curious out there, the meaning of life is this: Never live in Joburg and never take a train anywhere.

My revelations were interrupted though, by the train people apologizing for the inconvenience of f@#king up our trip by rudely hustling us to get the hell out of their station because it was late and they wanted to lock up.

A less than completely appropriate note to end an enjoyable Icon trip on, but I suppose that's life.

There are several people out there who need to be thanked for helping out with the trip. Firstly, an epic thank you of great justice to Chris for organizing the CLAWs official trip and doing an excellent job of it. Also a huge thanks to Warren for hosting all of us at his house and putting up with our bullshit. Thanks to Karl for DMing a D&D game on the train, which helped us keep sane under adverse conditions, thanks to the Icon organizers for putting together a great con and thanks to the Joburg role playing community for making Icon the experience that it is.



Role-playing in the Inaka

Michelle Haward

I received an email asking if I could please write an article on the role playing scene in Japan. I looked at the email and began to chuckle. Truth be told, I know NOTHING about “the role playing scene” in Japan, I only know my own personal experiences.

But wait? Isn't Japan the land of manga, anime and the computer games? Don't you walk down the street and into such wonderful edifices of general geekdom as maid cafes and stores upon stores devoted to figurines and the like? Surely roleplaying is alive and well in Japan? I am certain that it is, but I also know that I am in completely the wrong place to find it or any of these marvels associated with Japan. Perhaps if I were in Akihabara, or any major city. But no – I am in the inaka.

Inaka is probably a term you have never encountered before. It is the word that the Japanese use for any town with 100, 000 people or less. Inaka are characterized by a lack of convenient access to public transport, limited shopping opportunities and aging populations. The true indication of how far in the boonies I am is that I am the only South African in Japan, that I know of, who does not live in a city with a foreign food store. In fact, my city only has a population of less than 50, 000 with barely over 400 foreigners (most of whom are Chinese and Thai). I live in the kind of city that is immensely proud of its mirage (which nobody I have spoken to has seen in person) which, according to legend, is caused by the gas exhaled by a giant 1000 year old clam in the bay. My city is not exactly the best place to look for role playing opportunities.

So what do you do if you are in less than ideal conditions and want to role play? There are three key tips that I can give you.

- #1. Keep your ears open.
- #2. Be prepared to travel.
- #3. Be prepared to adapt – you are probably not going to get what you are used to.

Let's have a look at those a little more closely. Role playing may be a bit of a niche hobby, but it is more widespread than people realize and some people are interested, but have never had the opportunity. For

me, keeping my ears open meant that I knew that there were other South African role players from Durban living reasonably close to me (even if they were not in the same province) and it meant noticing on our prefectural forums when somebody mentioned role playing and contacting them to let them know that I was interested. If I had not been paying attention, I may not have known (well, I would have known about the Durbanites, since I found out about how to come to Japan through them, but I would have never found my local group if I was not paying attention).

If you are somewhere isolated, the sad fact of life is that you are going to have to travel to do anything. I would travel to Ishikawa prefecture once a month (a 1 and a half hour journey by express train) to meet with the Durbanites (until the game went on hiatus). For my local group, I would travel to the nearest big city. Getting a group together in less than ideal conditions means that you are probably living quite a while apart – travelling is just part of the give and take to find a central point.

Finally, you have to be prepared to adapt to conditions that you are not used to. This is possibly the most complex point and potentially the most difficult. Most of the adaptations I have had to make have been for my “local” group. I HATE DMing in public places. It feels restrictive and you and the players can't get as into character as you would otherwise. Since my players and I have all traveled from other cities to a central point, we have to play in coffee shops and restaurants. I don't like it, I never feel like I have put as much into as I could have because the public setting makes me hold back much more than normal – but I have learned to deal with it.

I have had to adapt to my players' style of play and them to mine. Whenever I have met any role players from overseas, I have always had a sneaking suspicion that South Africans role play somewhat differently. When it comes to Americans, my suspicions have been confirmed. My players came from Texas, New Jersey and Wisconsin – a decent spread of states. The first shock came to them in that I was not insisting that characters have a combat focus. In fact, I was

encouraging them to create a character and THEN look at the skills. The second shock came after the first session, where a stunned player pointed out that there had not been any combat, to which I pointed out that we were just beginning to set up the story and that there had been no need for combat yet, although I was certain that there would be soon. Apparently the story based approach was something quite new and different for them (having played a large number of hack and slashes from what I can tell) and I am very glad to say that they enjoyed it. I had to learn that even though they are experienced role players, they do NOT pick up on all the cues and hints that players who are used to story based play do, so I have to tread a fine line between treating them like beginners in some ways while remembering that they are experienced, just in a different style (and to throw in some bits that are more akin to what they are used to).

One of my biggest stylistic adaptations, was learning how to trim down a storyline when I had less time than I expected to have. My local group started out with three players. I discovered in May that one of players was leaving and that another was about to lose the time he normally used for role playing due to a previous commitment. We had just started a new storyline. In 4 sessions, I had to jump storylines to the final one and finish the game satisfactorily. It was...interesting, and it certainly wasn't my normal style of campaign DMing. When the group reformed, it was only two players and myself. Again, I thought I had about 12 sessions with them. Unfortunately, we were all involved in the Charity Show and as practice became more intense, we couldn't meet. My 12 session storyline suddenly had to fit into 5 sessions! It was certainly a lesson in trimming a story down to its bare basics.

As you can tell from the tale of my "local" group above, my group has been very small. This was probably the single biggest adaptation I had to make. I am used to DMing between 4 and 7 players. That is my comfort zone. And larger groups function very differently to smaller groups. The smaller the group, the less brainstorming a group can perform. If you have a puzzle that the group has to think through, smaller groups get stuck more quickly and more frequently and the difficulty that they face increases incredibly quickly. A three person group gets stuck often enough for me to be concerned that DM hints to move them along will look like railroading (meanwhile, it is more to help them realize that if their characters have been digging a hole for 12 hours and nothing has happened, nothing is likely to happen if they carry on doing it). A two person group has even more trouble when it comes to getting stuck and they have more trouble

getting "unstuck" because they have more difficulty coming up with new ways to handle a situation. I had to get over my fear of them thinking that they were being railroaded in this case and just give them more clues and hints than I would normally. To completely turn pacing on its head, smaller groups are also far quicker to make decisions as there are fewer opinions to consider. With 2 players decision making is about as close to instantaneous as it gets. This results in pacing being completely different to larger groups and it is a huge adaptation to make.

All in all, this has been less about the role playing scene in Japan (which I am sure exists as one colleague tells me about a student who tries to fit his "How role playing changed my life" story into every essay topic they get given, there is just too large an age and language gap for me to infiltrate it) and more about how to start your own tiny scene when there isn't one.

All my players have now left for their home countries, so I have to restart this process again in September. But this time I plan to aim a little bigger. I already have one player, thanks to word of mouth from my last group. Now, I wonder if I can find a LARP that one person could DM?





Gentlemen, hold on to your pants!

"You have done well, my young apprentice."



Dice bunny says, "Luck is just a roll of the dice".

"Well, Why didn't anyone TELL me my cookies tasted funny??"



"You ate the cookie, damn"



Cousin It over for a visit.

"Bow, minions, before the mighty- Hey, wait a minute!"

"Did you eat the last cookie in the cookie jar?"



"By this time, the driving instructor was screaming..."



"No! He ate the last cookie in the cookie jar!"

"You said **what** about my **where**??"



last
mit!"

TRINITY REPORT

Dominic Nunes

This is a follow up to a report on Ian's ongoing "Trinity" game that currently involves six players.

The last "Trinity Report" (CLAWMARKS 38) had the party split, as per usual (apparently that breaks a roleplaying rule), in Denmark. Gregor and Eloisa had been arrested for the "reformatting" (i.e. demolition) of a building by Bruce and Taylor and were en route to an unknown destination. Taylor and Bruce, armed to the teeth, were skulking in the sewers with hostages they'd acquired before demolition. The last two characters had been hospitalized for impersonating a French couple. They learned that this was an offence punishable with lethal force. Miranda was paralyzed due to bullet in the back and Simon was convalescing after annihilating a Danish Rent-a-SWAT team sent to "punish" their trespass.

It turns out the Rent-a-Swat (aka "The Tide") wanted to use us. The Danish government hadn't been paying them. They wanted us to pay them on the government's behalf with the government's money. We agreed in return for our freedom and "commissions" from the Danish Government. The simple plan to teleport Eloisa into the room behind an ATM to hack the central bank was delayed when she ended up in rural Austria but finally came together. After a little more coercion and

dealing Eloisa, Gregor and Simon were free to return to Scotland.

Meanwhile Bruce and Taylor eventually made contact with French resistance fighters in Denmark. Wing also introduced herself and after some initial questioning was allowed to join (her admittance was not told to Aeon our "Benefactors"). Taylor then proceeded to make a mockery of the Tides online protections and pillage their databases. Plans were also hatched to move the "Free-French" to Beijing. They too snuck back to Scotland after completing their dealings.

Upon our return Aeon reminded us that our actual mission was to track down an individual named Tsen Tsu instead of investigating a string of clandestine experiments across the globe. Despite this we were able to reason that since our target had also shown an interest in these experiments that we'd find clues at the next one in Cape Town at UCT, which had grown into a city spanning institution.

Upon arrival in Cape Town we decided to try and scope out potential top-secret experiment sites. Wing decided to test the security of the local police department. Eloisa kindly decided to try and chaperone the itinerant youth and agreed to be present at the court date. Our

CAST

ZACK (BRUCE WORTHINGTON): A former black-ops fighter pilot whose face looks like it fought a meat grinder. He's the party's Vitakinetic responsible for healing and hurting.

BETH (WING): A confusing, teenage, clairsentient, Chinese, former street urchin sent initially to spy on us who is now the resident Stealth and Infiltration monkey.

WARREN (TAYLOR KENDRICKS): Is currently turning into the party's amnesiac, paranoid tech wizard with fingers in as many pies as possible.

KARL (DR SIMON BLACK): A liquid tongued, Masters studying astronomer and shape shifting Biokinetic. A mostly calm family man with a "hulking" temper.

CLAIRE (ELOISA TO THE PARTY): The former combat medic Electrokinetic who despite a superhuman mastery of electronics still misses cameras. She's also in a new body and pregnant with a strange fixation on shooting authority.

DOMINIC (GREGOR BRACKMAN) a Teleporter who can drive like a demon and should travel with an atlas to identify the places he, and the party, despite his best efforts unintentionally end up in (For the record my dice HATE me.). He also drinks enough to make up for the teetotaling party when stressed.

Two other players made memorable appearances, **BRONWEN (ANNA LUCIA)** a wealthy killingly beautiful South American drug baroness and **MICHELLE (MIRANDA)** a sweet long suffering Clairsentient who, due to geography, is waiting in the wings with a character that is currently an NPC.

reconnaissance revealed two things. A nondescript structure and a “perfectly” timed rally by the Psion worshipping, experiment derailing “Light”. The Psionic members of the party (i.e. Not Taylor) attempted to infiltrate the rally. Three people were “raised” with the “Light’s” instant Psion serum. We assumed they were off to the shack to try and disrupt the experiment. Kendricks tried to warn the security of the danger and was arrested for his troubles. The remainder of the party arrived later that night fulfilled Kendrick’s prophecy by “forcing” our way in. Bruce lost a finger and began considering what to replace it with.

The insta-psions had infiltrated. We kicked in the door (except for Gregor who ended up sliding down an angled lift chute after trying to port into a tunnel and the arrested Kendricks)... The rest of the party, Simon, Eloisa, Bruce and Wing were instead confronted by a Biokenetic who was literally covering the whole room... He was removed after the party failed a trivia question. Wing then managed to break the lift controls with a well aimed rock and begun plummeting into the Earth.

Meanwhile Gregor had acquired a lab coat and Kendricks had been “volunteered” to be part of the team to investigate what was on the other end of a “Stargate” sized time portal.

Despite crashing a lift at the bottom of the shaft the rest of the party was able to enter the portal chamber as it was activated after examining a convenient armoury. The Insta-Psions chose the moment of activation to try and destroy it. The resulting chaos of the fire fight that followed gave the party a chance to enter the portal after Kendricks and the commandos. Only for Eloisa to be waved at by a Wing that appeared in the room with the party, after she had entered the portal. Eloisa screamed as she was carried through. Confusion abounded but was soon superseded by events.

We ended up on the rapidly disintegrating remains of the “Esperanza” space station as it plummeted towards what would become the crater formerly known as France. We met a man on this doomed piece of metal. A time traveller named Max Mercer. After hurried introductions he agreed to save us. The portal turned out to be one way.

We ended up in the 1920’s. After some violent introductions to Mercers self appointed bodyguard we were able to meet the founding members of the “Aeon” society that would become our benefactors. The mansion was huge and accommodating. Kendricks reaffirmed his inability to hold alcohol but didn’t become his own ancestor and planted the seeds of the organization that would become “Baphomet”. After licking our wounds Mercer informed us that there was a point in time after

which he couldn’t travel. At this point most of humanity would develop psi powers. A paranoid manipulative race of pure psi aliens called the Doyen who had been pulling strings for decades would then assault Earth out of fear. We had a chance to fundamentally alter events for better or worse.

With a strengthened resolve Mercer sent us back to just before we entered the portal. We saw ourselves leave then attempted to prevent a repeat of the explosiveness of the Beijing experiment. Despite a well executed plan involving shoving most of the gates mass into a dimension connecting all points in the universe to all other points there was the signature white flash of oblivion... of a sort.

At this point Bronwens character, Anna Lucia, was introduced. This rich women awoke as a peasant. Her whole world had disappeared, literally. Reality itself had been altered. Everyone’s lives had been rewritten. Well almost everyone. Kendricks awoke to this world unchanged. The only familiar aspect between the worlds was that he had absolutely no memory of existing in them. The rest of the party had fared better though. Gregor was a champion hovercar racer, Simon was happily married with a daughter (instead of a... “Permanently sedated” spouse.), Bruce had a face, Eloisa’s mother hadn’t committed suicide and Wing was now the daughter of a wealthy family.

Anna had a rare gift though. By toughing people she could resurrect their memories of the “old world”. By determined action and a chance meeting she returned Gregors memories. The combined actions of Anna’s physical and telepathic charms, Gregors money and fame and Taylor’s information caused the party to be reunited at an international conference on drug busting. It transpired that Bruce, Eloisa and Taylor were to be part of a hit on a drug kingpin in South America. Allowing time for the mission it was agreed to regroup at Gregors Rio villa... If only it had gone as smoothly as planned.

Gregor couldn’t in good conscience sit back and be party to murder, even of a drug kingpin, and hatched a plan to prevent bloodshed and gain powerful leverage. By informing the target of the hit he would owe Gregor a dept. Meanwhile the informants in the targets organization and the, presumably, efficient intelligence arm of the black-ops units supporting the hit would realize the game was up and call off the hit. No one gets hurt and favour is gained. Taylor, Bruce and Eloisa had already left and couldn’t be informed of this plan. Intelligence never informed them either. Their recon of the house revealed a wealthy individual entering the building (Gregor). They attempted to violently waylay this informant but only found a single body of a passenger in the bullet ridden chasse. Suspicions were

raised but they stubbornly went ahead with their hit. The following day just after they'd been surprised by thugs defending the house it exploded in explosions of light chillingly reminiscent of what Gregor, Taylor, Eloisa, Simon and Miranda had experienced at the hands of the Kroatoan "Armadillo Rats" and their bipedal genocidal cousins. The Doyens were doing a far more efficient job of infiltrating this newer peaceful world.

The injured Gregor who'd escaped the midnight waylay by porting away and shunting parts of himself into sub-space during the duck shoot on his rallying car. Returned in a hovercar to exfiltrate the would be assassins.

The recriminations that flowed between both characters and players could fill a legal tome and still have not been layed to rest in game. They're ignored for now.

After moving people and items we wished to return to the original reality to Beijing the party returned to Cape Town. The invulnerability bubble surrounding Beijing had prevented it from being altered when Reality was overwritten. A Doyen offer of transport turned into a betrayal, which further endeared them to the party.

The party eventually ended up backing Cape Town and was able to find a way into the underground research lab used in the experiment. The whole complex was caught in a repeating few minute time loop of the period before the gate detonation. Attempts at entering our repeating "echoes" were successful and we were able to alter our actions of that time if desired. After some experiments of which some were more bowel looseningly gruesome than others. A plan was hatched. Drain the gate of its energy before it could explode.

Our attempts were successful and the world changed from its false utopian self to its original post-apocalyptic self. Aeon was not impressed with our involvement in the destruction of another multi-million Yuan top-secret experiment and our failure to find Tsen Tsu. We'd agreed to not tell anyone of our time travelling escapades. Aeon resented this and resorted to severe interrogations of Gregor, Simon and Eloisa, who'd returned to report. In the group interrogation they held up well. Gregor didn't give away anything Aeon didn't already know and Simon actually made progress towards polishing our blackened image with the Proxy of his Biokinetic Del Fuego...

Eloisa in her "infinite pregnant maternal wisdom" decided to laser the head of the Telepath order heading Proxies personal communications person after she was threatened. This event nearly broke our long suffering DM Ian... It was like standing outside the Whitehouse with a WMD and daring Bush to declare war on you.

She was hunted down and killed. Her death was

confirmed by three members of the party; four if you include Eloisa (remember that number). This event sealed our "resignation" from Aeon (but not Del Fuego who liked our baseball bat to flies approach that consistently produced a myriad variety of results). We retreated to South America but were soon needed to aid in the defence of Beijing from the Chinese army and Telepath order (remember them?). Gregor provided the spark to the keg but details aren't necessary (I repeat: My dice LOATHE me).

The inability of weapons to work in the bubble along with some Stirling work by the defenders allowed us to hold out long enough for none other than Tsen Tsu and a large group of psychomorphs (natural psions instead of psions activated in a Prometheus chamber) who turned the tide. Tsen Tsu then declared Beijing independent. Tensions remain tense but a semblance of peace now pervades the city.

A certain individual was among Tsen Tzu's cohorts. A nondescript woman who'd led a rather unremarkable life emerged from the Transportal that brought them to Beijing. She wasn't what she appeared. By some mind boggling twist of fate (read DM's lovingly vindictive whim) Eloisa and this women were merged and sharing the same body. Eloisa's soldier fiancé reacted excessively to this news and shot the messenger who'd told him of her death. Gregor took his second point of aggravated damage that day.

After recoveries and introductions it was agreed between the party and Tsen Tzu the party would attempt to locate the third top-secret experiment due to our "familiarity" with them. It turned out that the organization, "Baphomet", that Kendricks had helped create had become an Illuminati like society secretly attempting to manipulate world events as well as funding ALL these experiments. It had recently also come under attack by unknown enemies and was severely under strength.

This experiment was somewhere on or below the surface an opulent, artificial "city in sea" in the Gulf of Mexico. Investigations revealed a warehouse in the Undercity that warranted further investigation. Kendricks and Simon had procured passes into the facility and the party began investigating. The purpose of the facility was to create a new body capable of surviving in a certain environment. Wing had been getting visions of bubbles. This facility had produced a body capable of surviving in both the sea and on land. All that was needed was to transport your "psi print" from your old body to the new vessel that would then morph to your features. The big test for the facility that we'd come to investigate was to be a mass roll out of their product to test production capabilities.

We were offered the choice of undergoing the procedure. Wing volunteered. During the procedure those outside a sealed procedure room noticed a fount of Electrokinetic energy that was used to make and control the transfer. This turned out to be an immensely powerful Electrokinetic who was being used as a battery against his will. Every procedure caused him excruciating pain. The party resolved to free him. During our attempt to free him from his hidden room the room was napalmed in an attempt to “cleanse” it. Once the injuries had been dealt with we realized we’d been sealed in the facility below the sea floor. We were in deep trouble. Fortunately it turned out that Kendricks had discovered an Uncle in the city who was none other than the Mayor. He called in his nephew, Kendricks brother, an elite tide black-ops colonel to get us out.

Once we’d escaped back to Beijing, via Denmark (It’s my DICE!), we called a number that Anna had found floating in the front of his mind. It was a direct number to the Proxy of the Electrokinetic order. We were able to discern from this that call and his memories that in fact one of the most powerful men on the planet had most probably been possessed by a Doyen. This brought the list to two after we added the Telepath Proxy to the list.

A spot of downtime was then planned whereby the party could get some rest, recuperate and spend XP. Events delayed this. Taylor’s zealous pursuit of information led him to one of the few remaining Baphomet archives on the planet. It was being watched by the group that had been hunting Baphomet and he was brutally detained. Meanwhile a stealthy visit by Gregor to his apartment to try and retrieve listening bugs was foiled (By my Damn DICE!) and he was detained by the same people.

In an attempt to discern just how deep Doyen infiltration of the Proxies had become Eloisa, Wing and Bruce travelled to Bern in Switzerland to a conference being given by the Proxy of the Vitakinetics to try and sense if he was possessed. Simon had gone to meet his Proxy, Del Fuego, on a similar mission and to relay information to him for Baphomet. During these events the Doyen made their move on the Proxies. Del Fuego beat it off but despite Wing, Bruce and Eloisa best efforts The Vita Proxy was taken. Wing and Bruce escaped but Eloisa was captured. (Note how the party is split again)

Gregor awoke in a cell with a badly beaten Taylor. Curiosity and a need for Taylor to surpass his “psi sink” prevented an immediate escape attempt. They’d been taken to a Doyen sky base somewhere and were to be interrogated for information about Baphomet. After having psi draining bracelets attached to their wrists they were taken for interrogation. Kendricks was able to bargain Gregor off the ship in exchange for information;

after using his “fate” powers to break Gregor’s band. He never specified were. The Doyen acquiesced and ported Gregor, who’d been captured in Rio, into Antarctic tundra. They then proceeded to torture Kendricks. In an ironic turn of events Gregor attempts to escape the freezing tundra by drawing energy from the bracelet caused it burn and meld with the flesh of his wrist and his psi print.

Simon, Wing and Bruce meanwhile had realised that Kendricks and Gregor had fallen off the RADAR. Given Gregor’s teleporting history and that they knew were Kendricks was headed they chose to try and find him. Upon reaching his Austrian hotel room they discovered his stash of “black crystal”. These were formerly powerful “red crystal” that Kendricks had pushed part of his “psi sink” into. Wing noticed a faint “string” leading from them into the distance (hopefully to Kendricks). On the flight back to Beijing Simon was able to plot the most likely area where Kendricks was being held. Upon their return they discovered a drunken Gregor who’d been experimenting with ways to numb the pain the bracelet caused him when he used his powers. Simon then secreted some “insta-sober” serum from his fingers to sober up Gregor. He soon happened on another idea...

Meanwhile Eloisa had also been moved to the sky base but had been placed in a lower security area. It is assumed this is because they didn’t recognize her new body. She was able to find the “cell” where Kendricks was being held and helped him escape the mental prison the telepathic children running around the base had used to hold and torture him.

By “tugging” Kendrick’s string (of “chain”) Simon hoped to contact Kendricks. It worked. While swinging the crystals around his head he was able to make limited contact with Kendricks. The plan became that Gregor would use the string to get a fix to port to too retrieve Kendricks and Eloisa. The first attempt caused Gregor’s mind to be “ported” into the vast void that is Kendricks’ mind (I have Dice of Spite). He was quickly expelled and tried again despite Kendrick’s protests. This time it worked and the party was finally reunited. But not before the three of them witnessed the previously paraplegic Miranda walk down a corridor leading a group of Doyen heavies... With eyes that returned to their natural green from Doyen blue as Eloisa, Gregor and Taylor ported away.

At time of writing the party had decided to lay low for a little while to rest and prepare for the next stage of events. Allies must be found, deals cut, abilities learned, reports compiled and plans and schemes hatched. Ian alone has any idea where this could possibly end...

FRIDGE QUOTES

Zac (as Bruce):
"I need
'xenorelations' to
deal with the rest of
this group!"

Alex to Chris:
"What do I have to do
to make you remember
me???"

Adeeb: "Why God, why?
What have I done to
deserve this?"

Brendan: "Oh gee, I
don't know. Maybe
because you take it
up the shitter."

Garrick: "I can only
imagine what's going
on in the kitchen..."
Verolin"... and it's
all wrong..."

Nick: Melissa, did
you slip alcohol into
my bird?

Sharon: I think I am
losing my faith in
God.

Nick: Don't do that
- God can burn things.

Sharon: Can we steal
the man in your body?

Sharon: The
three of us can
go to Wellington
Presbyterian tomorrow

to intercept your
body. Most of the
police force are in
the church, it'll be
fine.

Sharon: But surely
even angels have
friends and Jesus, he
is their friend and
I love Jesus, so we
are your friends.

Nick: That
wasn't logic you just
used.

Sharon: Thomas,
I see a pack of
sinners! We should
go investigate.

Nick: I see what you
put in your rum.

Sharon: Jesus drank
wine, he's fine with
alcohol. It helps me
get closer to him.

Nick: Let's not get
into a fist fight in
front of the church.

Sharon: It's OK.
They're not really
believers.

And from a different
game.

Nick: I'm gonna try
to put a sentence
together... ah...

damn it! I can't
even put the sentence
together in my head
in English!

Nick: Once we get
back to England we
can just take a
plane to the Norse
Underworld.

Nick: Do we get our
passports?"

Michelle: You get
your emergency
passports, yes.

Nick: Yay! It's a
weapon!

Derek: I think
onions, chili peppers
and pepper would be a
good idea to make the
dragon cry.

Brett: Do you have
Epic Cooking?

Brett: Nick's known
languages - Old World
Squirrel.

Derek: We should
make a fire to make
him cry.

Nick: Using what?

Derek: Well, we're
in a tree.

Brett: Yeah, let's
burn down the World
Tree. The Norse gods
will LOVE that.

Brett: And you have to assume that the media is run by the Aztecs.

Derek: Like Fox News.

Nick: Run by Aztecs.

Nick: Are there any chickens around?

Michelle: Yes.

Brett: Why?

Nick: I can do awesome things with chickens.

Nick: We could try to tell what she did by judging her demeanor.

Derek: She could poison the salad.

Brett: I could ask her.

Derek: To poison the salad?

Over radio

"I'm the only one here sir, I'm all alone..."

"DON'T DIE!"

Warren:

"Two guys make a guy... happy"

Zac (as Bruce):

"Telepaths are a lot more susceptible to guns"

Zac (as Bruce):

"I didn't specify how long I'd wait before I did something rash, did I?"

Michelle (as

Miranda):

"I'm not supposed to do the things I do with you, and I can only do it with the 5 of you."

Warren:

Just the memory of Karl makes Ian go red and blush."

Ian:

So if she wasn't using the 'Lady', then she'd be a doctor."

By the time he gets a catscan, he won't be surprized if the catscan meows at him. (ref to Kendricks - Warren)

"Seventeen year olds can do a hell of a lot."

"... so how old's Simon again?"

"You're tading future chickens?"

Bronwen (as Anna-Lucia)

"What am I doing with you fuckers?"

Gregor (Dom): "Medic! MEDIC!!!"

Bruce (Zac) : "no"

Kendricks (Warren): "Probably with his wife."

Bruce (Zac): "He has a wife?"

Warren: "Oh yes, haven't you met Lee-Anne?"

Dom:

"Everything is smaller than mine"

"I don't fall over like an idiot."

"And I'm rubbery"

"That's what he's been waiting for..."

"What? Ian wanted to yell 'Daddy!!' to Karl?"

Tweed Madness:

Mareli to Zac:

"May I touch your hair? It's fabulous!"

Zac: "I'm not associated with these people. They've just kidnapped me."

Matthew Slade: "Cause I just want to spend all day touching females."

Lee-Anne: "You too!"

Marita: "Dom, stop feeling up other peoples girlfriends."

Dominic: "It's the only action I get!"

ICON

Dominic: "Wait what's happening... The lights are green and the cars are going!"

I hate the train because...

...they run on electricity
Eskom provides that electricity
But only when no one steals their cables...

...there are children
The children are noisy
We cant shut them up with alcohol because the train stopped selling alcohol
And we cant throw them out the windows coz the windows don't open!
I hate the train...

It takes us to Joburg and this place called Nelspoort
And then brings us back...eventually...

My phone died and can't be recharged.
Not like I had any signal anyways
But the shaver plug charges my phone!!
Occasionally...

...Garrick snores

...they won't sell us booze after 4pm.
We need booze because we've been on the train for 9 hours too long...and Garrick is easier
to deal with when drunk.

...the Shadowcasters weren't on the train for the 9 hours we were delayed
and they didn't lose the day of their lives that we did!!

...we can't go to the toilet when we stop...
for four hours...
for 12 hours...
for 18 HOURS!!! But people went anyway and forgot to flush.

...Garrick sprays beer all over me when he laughs!

...despite playing almost 48 hours worth of DnD 4th Ed we only levelled once! And then
died...

...the free meals we received don't constitute a vegetarian option but when they do its like
100 times better!!!
But seriously anything is better than a hamburger patty on 2 pieces of crumbly bread
or processed cheddar and tomato on 'toasted' bread

...we got freaking padlocked in the dinner cart!!
and I hit my head on the overhead bed...many...many times
and it broke my contact lens...

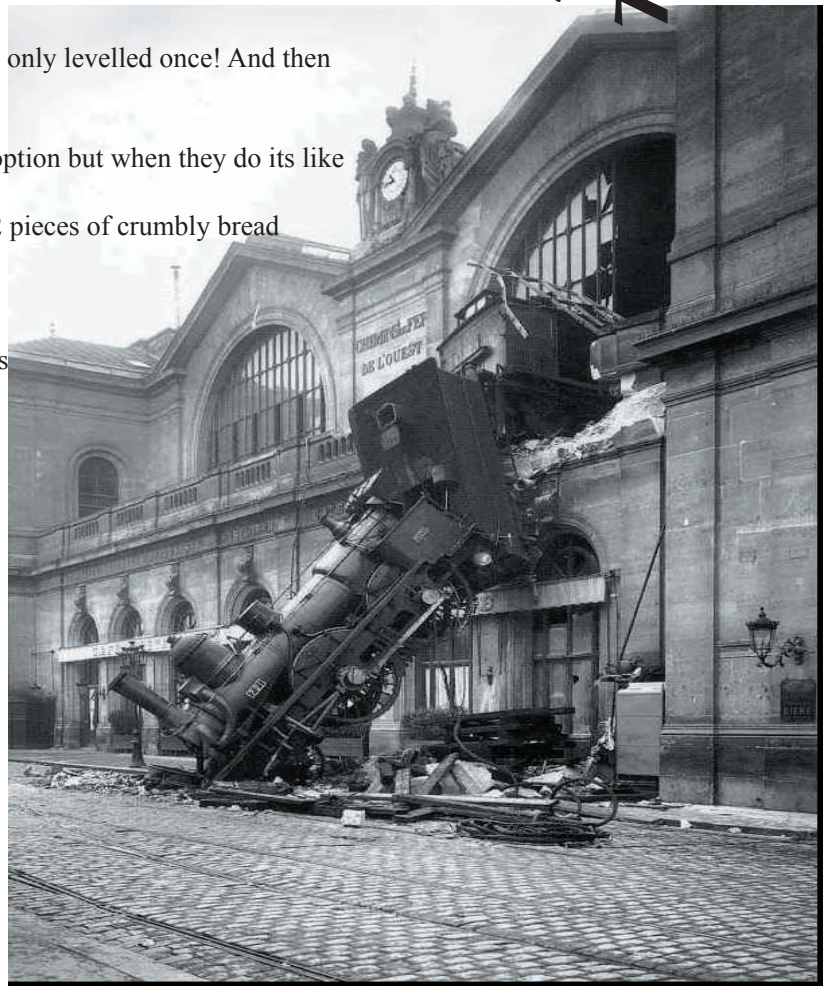
...it created Ebola Zombies
And its not a magical train...
And its not filled with hope and wonder...
And its not a leoplurodon
And it wont show us the way to Candy Mountain

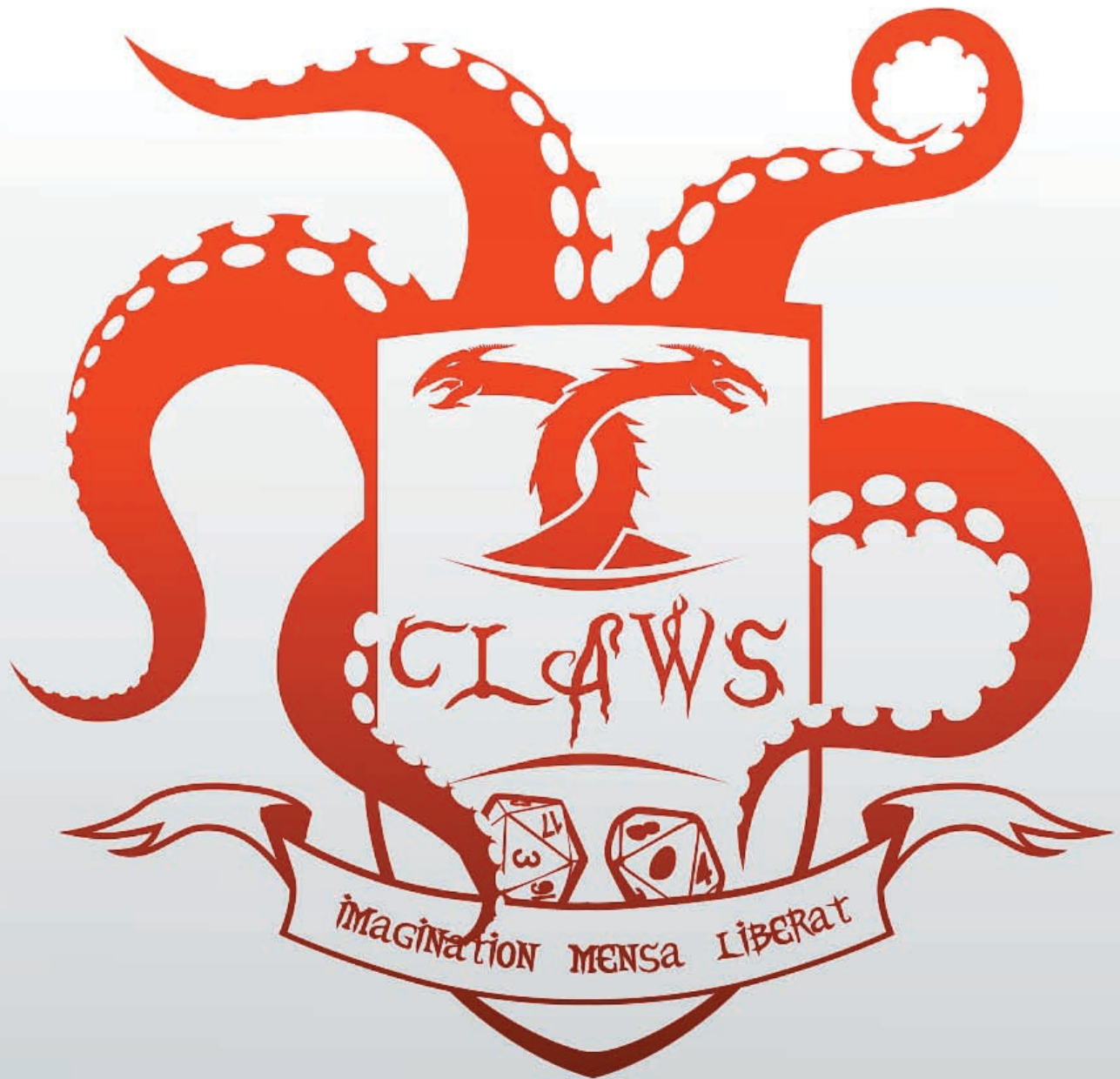
...I had to drink Gin straight
Coz they wouldn't sell us alcohol
To shut the kids up
And we were asked to 'put the bottle asked my friend'
Stupid Shosholoza Fail

I hate the train!

The Archbigot

Chris Ceclmini





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