

AN ELECTRONIC NOVEL™

# MINDWHEEL

BY MICHAEL J. VANCE  
STEVE MARIN, PROGRAMMER; STEPHEN MATAKA, PROGRAMMER

EDITION

VERSION 3.0

A SYNAPSE & BRODERBUND PRODUCTION

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# MIND

# WHEEL

**An Electronic Novel™**

**By** Robert Pinsky  
*Author*

Steve Hales  
*Programmer*

William Mataga  
*Programmer*

*Printed Material by Richard Sanford*

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# MINDWHEEL

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# Critic's Corner

by Ralph Zinger

## InfoTic

MINDWHEEL is an Electronic Novel™ co-authored by one of America's most acclaimed young poets and two distinguished computer experts.

Unlike conventional fiction, MINDWHEEL produces a different work of art each time it is read. The reader, by typing on a computer keyboard, can move from place to place, speak with various characters, look at people and objects, in an order following the unique choices made during each session.

The incredible complexity and responsiveness of MINDWHEEL's fictional world will astonish readers. Characters respond to a wide range of questions, statements, and requests. The world of the novel has an excitingly vivid, crowded quality—sometimes dreamlike, sometimes nightmarish.

As a result, MINDWHEEL is a



gripping, surprising, even alarming work of fiction, far beyond childish narrative games ("pick up knife," "light lantern," "kill dwarf"). Because of its ingenious program and elaborate composition, MINDWHEEL has dimensions that make it more than a game, just as a motion picture is more than a slide show.

THE BEGINNINGS  
OF  
**MINDWHEEL**

## THE ARCH-SENATOR

THE FEDERAL ARCH-SENATOR for science, Hay-Seuss Pederson, nudged the French door with his index finger. He had intended to inch cautiously onto the balcony. But now that he had come this far, the roar of the crowd made caution strangely inappropriate. He pushed the door open, and as he advanced two steps to the front of the balcony, the howl of the mob rose like billowing heat, a thunderous blast striking him full in the face.

It reminded him of the sea, but a furious sea. The bodies were indistinguishable at first in the chaotic, frenzied mass that rolled toward the building in waves. It overflowed the sidewalk and tested the fence in front of the Palace of Post-Technological Studies, the screams and chants blending into a single throbbing voice. Inside the walk, a thin line of police clubbed climbers off the fence. TV cameramen jockeyed for position behind the frantic cops. Over the collective voice, one high-pitched wail reached the balcony, a woman's scream that made him search the crowd for the source.

Out of the teeming rabble, he tried to distinguish individuals. Half a dozen protesters in white robes and peaked hoods linked arms in the front and center of the mob. To their right, a bald,

bare-chested savage shook both fists overhead, arms sweaty and gleaming in the sun. A blond executive type, jacket gone and sleeves rolled, cheeks striped with warpaint, was shouting curses. On the left side close to the fence, with a blanket stretched taut as a fireman's net, a team of leather-clad skinheads tossed a body high into the air. The victim, nude but for a pair of bikini briefs, was smeared with paint, fire-engine red, patches of gold glitter shimmering on his arms and legs. Behind the skinheads, farther up the hill, a chanting crew in white turbans and loincloths waved a red banner scrawled with indecipherable black glyphs. Jack-booted, disciplined followers of the dead Generalissimo — "Fascist Revivalists" — spread through the mob in small, efficient squads, evenly-spaced patches of black.

"Death to the Governors" and "Give Us Peace, Give Us Jobs" throbbed from corners of the crowd. A crack like a gunshot sounded from the distant fringes. In a swarming quadrant, arms of protesters thrashing about her like whipping tentacles, stood the source of the scream. Mouth stretched wide, tirelessly emitting an otherworldly shriek, she held a baby at arm's length overhead, the small screams of the child lost in the tumult.

The Arch-Senator for Science thought of old horror films like *Frankenstein*. The villagers came like that, their comedic stomping up the winding path to the castle. Now it was anything but funny, the phalanx of protesters that churned steadily through the middle of the crowd toward the front, toward the Federal Science buildings. Above their heads they carried torches, crude emblems of terror. In the distance, far behind their backs but in the direction from which they had come, separate columns of smoke ascended from the business district.

When he saw the trucks, the Arch-Senator knew that it was a matter of time. How much time depended upon several factors, the actual size of the crowd, for example. The terrain was another, the degree to which it might enhance or inhibit strategic deployment. Were there twenty thousand of them, fifty? A strange time

for such calculations, terrible, in fact. His life was in danger. The quick trip of his own heart and the tightening in his stomach told him that. Still, it was hard not to estimate, with salvation so near in the form of the trucks.

They rolled in from the far edge of the park, stepping easily over the curb from the street, closed at both ends to civilian traffic. They tilted up the slopes, gained the little summits of the hills. Now they were beginning their descent into the flanks of the mob, raising long white arms of tear gas. The Arch-Senator felt a twinge of pity for them, the first victims of the gas who tried to fall back from the choking fog, only to find no place to go, their retreat blocked by the mob that surged and collapsed to a momentum of bodies beyond individual control or supplication.

Still, the olive green trucks were order, the underpinning of whatever remained of reason, a token of what the Arch-Senator's office in government, his place in Science, his destined role meant. It was a matter of time now. Until when? Until next time? When it struck, the sound was like an explosion in the Arch-Senator's own skull.

It had smashed against the stone, one of the wide blocks of granite which, viewed from the walk or the distant street, gave the building the illusion of invincibility. It could have been a water glass but more probably a beer bottle. The only trace it left on the wall was a slightly damp spot not five feet to the left of his head. The object could as easily have been a Molotov or a basement grenade. He backed through the French door and closed and latched it with trembling hands.

He turned and paced mechanically to the center of the office, comforted by the slight cushion of the carpeting. The crowd behind him was muffled but still present, still menacing, like voices in a nightmare he was surfacing from only slowly. He concentrated on regulating his breathing. He was staring blankly at his office door when it opened.

"Excuse me, sir. Your phone." The young man was in a hurry. The Arch-Senator could not recall the last time his aide had entered without knocking.

"What? What about it?"

"I've been trying to put your call through, sir. It's the White House."

He stood for a moment, failing to make connections. From the balcony he had heard nothing inside. The one sound was the blend of the ravenous roar and the insane chanting and the smash that still buzzed together in his ears like the ocean in a dry shell. His aide was glancing nervously at the desk. The red light blinking on the phone was like fingers snapping him out of it. He switched off the conference intercom and snatched the receiver in one motion.

"This is Arch-Senator Pederson. Yes. I concur. Yes, right away. I'm leaving now."

Outside his office, in the corridor, his mind cleared. He decided on the stairs for speed.

On the first floor, he opened the steel door and struck out across the lobby. It was heavily guarded. Inside the glass doors, National Guard troops with automatic rifles had assembled. Through the glass, the Arch-Senator could see the helmeted, masked riot police who had been summoned to block the entrance to the building. Clouds of gas tumbled lazily in the distance.

One young guard in the lobby demanded the Arch-Senator's ID. Where had the kid been for the last three years? He couldn't recognize his own country's Cabinet-Congressional Administrator of Science and Technology. It was another sign of the general breakdown.

"The refusal to negotiate the deployment of interstellar weapons by the Middle Eastern Bloc led to the final abandonment today of the Federated Nations charter." In their coverage of lawless chaos, the Arch-Senator thought, the media seemed

perfectly astute. Above the counter in the little lobby newsstand, a reporter on a suspended TV was speaking in front of the Washington Monument. The rioting throng was visible a very safe distance in the background.

"Of the members remaining in the international body, thirty-six, including the Federated States, voted in favor of dissolution. There were three abstentions.

"News of the F.N. action was met by rioting and demonstrations in Ellay, Nuevo Paris, Warsaw, Feingrad, Cairo, and Lennon City-Tokyo. Here in Capitol City, a crowd estimated by police at seventy thousand have gathered . . ."

The Arch-Senator wanted to turn away, to leave the sordid reportage of events beyond his control. But before he could extricate himself, the morning headlines caught his eye, continuing the assault: LEAK FOUND IN NERVE GAS STOCKPILE in the *Times*; 36% PRIME SPELLS END OF TRADE WITH WEST in the *Post*; TOURIST TORN APART BY WILD DOGS IN TIMES SQUARE in the *Night Echo*.

Even, professional strides carried the official toward the red door marked "Restricted." Immediately upon inserting his badge and descending the short stairs into the underground corridor, the omnipresent, thundering tumult faded. He took a deep breath, crossed toward the polished marble platform, and hailed a transit car.

The Arch-Senator thought that the driver resembled an aging screen star, perhaps Cliff Drivelle. He placed his life in Cliff's hands, closed his eyes, and let the cool air in the tunnel whip past him. The slight, constant whine of the engine was soothing.

He may have been daydreaming or just beginning to dream. He had not yet risen to public office; he was working alone again in the lab on campus, the cool, aseptic smell. The car stopping jerked him awake. A Secret Service agent in an orange smock and sun-sensor glasses led the Arch-Senator through the capacious garage, past a crew of transit car mechanics on strike,

Local #317. The short elevator ride opened on a wide corridor. The agent led him past a field-tripping clot of third-graders and scurrying congressional pages to the big door.

"I'm not saying nuke the moon, for Chrissake. I'm only saying let's set the timer. If we don't, do you want the consequences on your tail end?" Over-Secretary of Peacekeeping Forces Lowell Cowie, chest carpeted with colored ribbons, leaned over the arm of his wing chair, fuzzy gray sideburns, jaw like a muskellunge, glaring down the occupant of the chair beside him, Interior Secretary Joshuason.

"A crash program of deinstitutionalization could serve just as well," Human Services Henchperson Ed Adler interjected, crossing quickly behind them, blinking nervously. "With all the misdemeanor criminals and ambulatory schizophrenics wandering around, getting interviewed on the tube ... well, think of the diversion!"

In the corner of the oval office, a TV with no audio showed a mass of hooded, black-robed bodies stamping clouds of dust. Behind them could be seen the pillaged, smoking remnants of a pastel mosque.

"Hello, Hay-Seuss."

"Ms. President." Seated behind the big desk, President Helen Honda raised one hand, motioning for the Arch-Senator to join the Chiefs of Staff. He crossed to a spot beside State Henchperson Spielburgen.

"I'm telling you, Miz President, we can't pussyfoot now." Cowie sat back, bit the end of his cigar, and ignited a wooden match with his thumbnail.

"I don't intend to, Lowell," the president replied, rotating a saucer-sized desktop fan in Cowie's direction and turning on the juice. Cigar smoke rippled back over the wing chair. Honda pushed her chair out from the desk, a tight semi-smile gripping one side of her mouth. Her blue eyes and black eyeliner narrowed.

"As we can all agree, the situation has become . . . problematic. The chances of . . ." The sudden throbbing of a helicopter drowned her words. The Marine Corps chopper swooped past the office window and banked away above the White House lawn. President Honda's intelligent brow furrowed slightly then relaxed. She continued.

"The chances of total planetary devastation by interstellar holocaust, chemical degradation of the biosphere, or photon-emission sterility have reached crisis proportions. It's not this administration's fault—it could have happened to anyone. Nevertheless, none of the responses implemented thus far have proven the least bit effective. Therefore, I've been giving serious thought to your option, Hay."

All eyes in the room turned to the Arch-Senator. He cleared his throat.

"Do you mean the Virgil device, Ms. President?" Cowie raised his eyebrows. Adler was chewing his nails. The president nodded.

"Virgil may be our only hope. Use my phone." She pushed the black telephone toward the Arch-Senator. The president grimaced with the fatalism of immense power. "If this doesn't work," she said, "the next step may be for the Cabinet to report to Human Recycling for voluntary pulping of our collective brain tissue."

The Arch-Senator shuddered. As he dialed the number, he planned what he would say. He waited for the familiar voice of Doctor Virgil. In his ear, the muted rings blended with a distant siren, a wailing which had continued for a long time but which he only noticed now, a sound like a long, plaintive, electronic cry for help.

## II

### DOCTOR VIRGIL

THE FIRST RINGS could have been hollow chimes from a haunted spire. Artifacts of ivory and chrysolite, swarming markets of the Zanzibar slave trade, the tintinnabulation of bells the size of painted toenails on unveiled dancing girls, tambours and soukh-noises recombined like facets of a kaleidoscope in Doctor Virgil's mind.

In the next moment, in a process like crossing the widening corridor from daydream to attention, he recognized the telephone. As he did, he glimpsed for an instant a fleeting vision that the corridor to the real world was actually a narrowing, after all.

The phone was not at hand. To reach it, he would be forced to cross the room. He balanced his yellow pad on the wide, flowered arm of the old stuffed chair and centered his pen on the pad.

Virgil stood up, with a familiar feeling of regret. He never liked leaving the faded chair with its broad, cradling arms and collapsing cushions, its sagging contours like the aging features of an old friend. The chair faced the window, angled away from the

desk and the telephone on its separate table by the wall. The view out the window across the campus changed little except for the permutations of the seasons: the gently depressed syncline, the student footpaths, the maples with their wide leaves, perfect definers of each spectrum gradient from red to green.

The chair was the starting point. It worked in consort with the window. Virgil's thoughts, the sifting interplay of images and sounds, began in the chair. They danced outward, constantly recombining, through the glass and over the expanse of campus and the traffic of students. Sometimes they would fuse inextricably and vanish, vaporize. Often they would backtrack, split off, braid together again and mutate in the vast waters of silence, the subtle currents of syntax.

At times Virgil had reprimanded himself for the chair, but never in earnest, observing that the battered relic had no place in the office of a scientist, recipient of countless medals, accolades, and the sweet, unspoken esteem of colleagues. The chair occupied a sacred space in the old chamber on the second floor that Virgil called his "upper room," the sanctum removed by a long hall and a flight of stairs from the laboratory. Only in the upper room could Virgil envision truly the image of self-completion he cherished.

Substantial volumes, arcane-looking, many leatherbound, crowded the cherrywood bookcases. A time-polished oriental rug, once part of Eva Fein's study in Vienna, lay on the scarred teak floor. One tall lamp with a green shade stood beside Virgil's desk, but he worked mostly by the natural light from the window, the starting place for his poems. The phone was the only annoyance in the room and thus, he thought, perhaps essential. Virgil stood and watched it. If he waited, it might stop.

He glanced again at the yellow pad, started to read a line. Was he finished? Was the poem only half-complete? It was impossible to tell. He couldn't hear a thing above the stubborn ringing. He crossed the room toward the telephone.

The sound of Hay Pederson's voice jogged Virgil's memory to undergraduate days. They had been a brilliant twosome, the most promising matrix physics majors in the class. They had gone their separate ways, to separate recognitions, but Virgil always sensed that they would remain somehow linked. They had shared not only the past but also the dream that neuro-electronic matrix travel would someday be recognized and accepted. Now, as the Arch-Senator spoke, Virgil was hearing the confirmation of their hopes.

By the end of the call, Doctor Virgil was experiencing waves of elation, fear, and wonder. The crisis had arrived. The destructive, mindless debacle of politics had reached endgame. So much depended now on the device: not merely the justification of neuro-electronic matrix research, or even the vindication of science, but the survival of the very concepts of patient method and humane inquiry — the survival, perhaps, of humanity itself.

So much depended also upon the subject. Previous experiments had resulted in some unfortunate disorientations. Who would the adventurer be? Arch-Senator Pederson would bring the project specifications that afternoon. The subject would arrive the next morning. Pederson would observe the entire event through the one-way panel in the laboratory.

Virgil realized he had no time to lose. If he began diagnostic runs immediately, he could cycle to fully operational by morning. He started toward the door but crossed one last time to the old stuffed chair. He stood behind it and, bending over, peering as he might into a pool slowly clearing to his own reflection, reread the lines he had composed that afternoon:

## THE FIGURED WHEEL

*. . . Toys and messages, jokes and zodiacs, tragedies  
conceived  
From among the dreams of the unemployed and the  
pampered,  
The listless and the tortured. It is hung with devices  
By dead masters who have survived by reducing  
themselves magically*

*To tiny organisms, to wisps of matter, crumbs of soil,  
Bits of dry skin, microscopic flakes, which is why  
they are called "great,"  
In their humility that goes on celebrating the turning  
Of the wheel as it rolls unrelentingly over*

*A cow plodding through car-traffic on a street in Iasi,  
And over the haunts of Virgil's mother and father  
And wife and children and his sweet self  
Which he hereby unwillingly and inexpertly gives up,  
because it is*

*There, figured and pre-figured in the nothing-  
transfiguring wheel.\**

\* From *History of My Heart* by Robert Pinsky. The Ecco Press, New York, 1984.

A long moment passed, and then it was time to close one world and open another. Virgil's thoughts were on the neuro-electronic propulsion device as he crossed the old oriental in the upper room. He stepped into the corridor that led to the laboratory and closed the door.

### III

## THE MIND ADVENTURER

MY STEPS RESOUND in the empty corridor. Am I twenty paces from the door? Thirty at most? There is still time to turn back. Outside the hall window, a sweet, clear spring morning is unfolding, jays chattering in the maples. They may be the last birds I'll hear for a long time.

Stealing a few seconds at the window, I survey the campus: ivy-clad brick, rolling hills, dappled footpaths among the trees. A trace of mist lingers in the dark, still branches. Somewhere beyond the campus, morning traffic moves on the roads, the steady hum of the city. Is the sound more ominous today? Or is it quite the same as always, the only change in me?

I am here today for a real and urgent reason, for better or worse. Yet it feels anything but real. Where in the elegant campus yard, among the paths or the dark trees or in the moist, sunny air is the confirmation? It may be that beyond these buildings, the common, doomed world still turns on its daily pivot. Where is the sign? Nowhere in this cloistered academy. Nothing special in the dumb rotation of business on the outside. I need acknowledgment, a clear token. Analog. For what? For dreams, the dreams I've had since accepting this mission: the howling,

obscene crowds, marching children with the heads of animals, churning whirlwinds, scales and blood, things beyond imagining. I need a sign.

But the door down the corridor is my only sign now, in this academic sanctuary, or within the disintegrating, oblivious world outside. The door is the crux, my cruel reminder that peaceful appearances deceive. I move again down the quiet corridor. The distance closes slowly to a few steps. Nearly at the door, I feel an alarming dizziness. My vision darkens. The door is being transformed.

An hallucination of a door pulses within the solid rectilinear form. The hallucination wavers, dissolves, and a round redness replaces it, an image like a shield, rotating heavily. On its circumference an outline blazes like a red corona. The circular shield is divided into quadrants and each one holds an image.

In the first quadrant, a faceless multitude gangs the front of a massive stage, where in the cold oval of a white spotlight a broken body twitches. The second quadrant holds a rotating violet swastika, behind it a cobblestone street and the gray walls of some monumental structure, wet and shiny, filmed with red-lit water or with blood. A tilted moon hangs in the third sector among a constellation of books, open and tumbling, the pages fluttering, blue-veined and throbbing like trapped live things. The final, and most haunting of the quadrants contains a gridwork of red and black squares, as of an ancient gaming board, where bizarre, attenuated figures move. Surrounding the gameboard is a profusion of clotted foliage, trained in fantastic shapes. At the end of the board, a stone wall is visible and in the wall, an open door. Beyond the door is some indistinct image, more sense than image, of a natural tumult, like tumbling clouds or ocean, about a single peaceful center, an unmoving hub.

As abruptly as it came, the dizziness subsides. Heartbeat racing in my ears, I begin to regain my senses and my sense of my own perspiring body. A wary step forward and another. Soon I stand

before the laboratory door. A moment's hesitation. I turn the knob and step inside.

"Welcome, you are precisely on time." Doctor Virgil glances at his watch and crosses the room, smiling expectantly. I wait for him, recovering my breath. Although middle-aged, he is well-preserved and reasonably good-looking. Slight spaces between his teeth give him a trustworthy air. Behind him, all about the room, are arranged his tools, the technology to shape my fate: computer monitors glowing phosphorescent green and luminous amber; tape drives as tall as a man, the wide discs executing precise fractional rotations; arrays of electronic dials. What appears to be a master control panel adjoins a hospital bed in the center of the room.

"Please, make yourself comfortable." Doctor Virgil takes my arms and leads me toward the bed. The white sheets are folded and tucked with a military crispness, the head slightly raised. I part a curtain of colored wires hanging like tendrils from the back and sides of a computer suspended above the bed. At the end of each wire, a tiny disc-shaped electrode is attached. I sit on the end of the bed and then recline.

"The sooner we start, the sooner we get home," the doctor grins. He has reason to be pleased. My little experiment may be a victory for him, a promise of great future appropriations. He rolls my sleeve and attaches the first electrode to my wrist. Across the room, in the pink strip above the gray, a mirror panel runs the length of the wall below the ceiling. The doctor applies a cool electrode to my temple. Who could be watching behind the one-way glass?

"Now, by law, I must read to you the authorized description of your situation. I know I have it here somewhere—I saw it a minute ago." Why must he talk like that? At this point, he could concentrate a little more on inspiring my confidence. Virgil rummages through papers on his control panel and returns, uncrumpling an official-looking sheet. He clears his throat and



begins.

"The society of your planet is on the brink of self-destruction. You have been chosen to voyage telepathically back through the past to civilization's germinating moment. Your mission: to bring back THE WHEEL OF WISDOM, a small, mysterious object that contains the secret of your planet's best values.

"Your journey back to the roots of intelligent life must take you through a labyrinth of four linked minds of unusual power. Though these individuals are dead, their thought-patterns have left mighty impressions upon the neuro-electronic matrix into which you will be propelled.

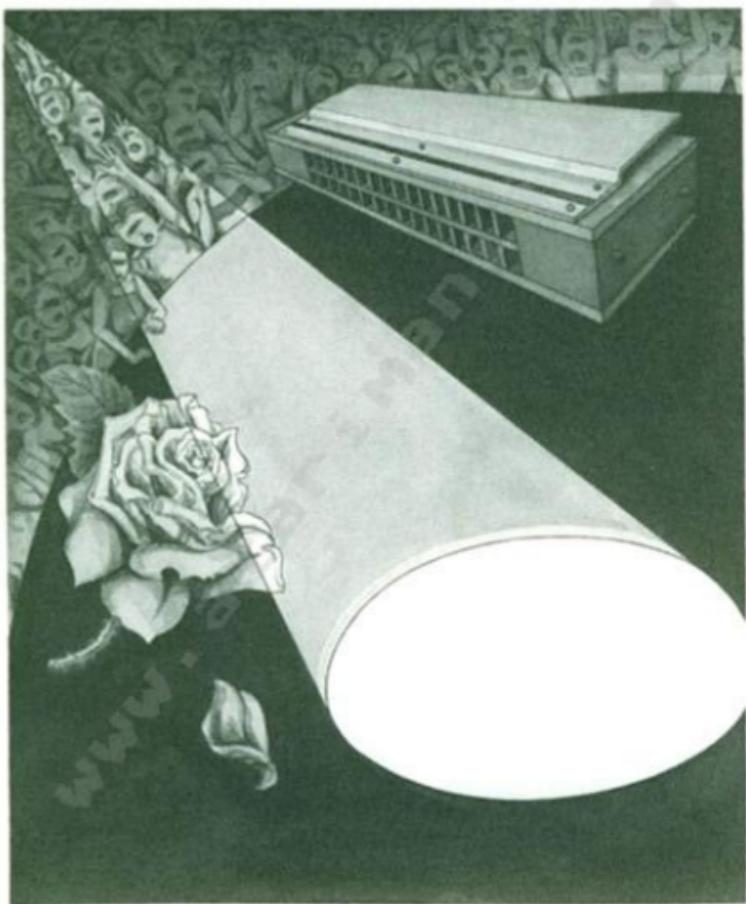
"At the end of your journey, you will confront THE CAVE MASTER, the mysterious prehistoric, apelike being who apparently invented the lever, the flint blade, cave paintings, and the rhythmical group chant. Recently authenticated inscriptions tell of the object—THE WHEEL OF WISDOM—from which THE CAVE MASTER drew his inspiration. This is the object of your quest.

"Only by mastering the journey through each of these minds, and back, can you retrieve the small, mysterious object upon which everything depends. In each mind you will meet helpful guides and challenging adversaries. These encounters will enable you to collect talismans, objects that will be of vital help in your quest. Chance, and your own decisions, will affect your success or failure. If you fail, your society will probably end in horrible destruction. And even if your planet somehow survives, you may be doomed, unable to return to your comatose body.

"Well, that certainly was a mouthful!" Virgil returns to his control panel, folds the paper, and slips it absentmindedly into the pocket of his white smock. Already his other hand is creeping toward a red switch on the panel.

"That's right, a few deep breaths now. Okay, you are ready to begin?"

**As you close your eyes, bizarre, haunting images flutter and recede into the darkness: a winged woman in bronze armor, a bald female motorcycle gang, a mournful soldier dropping a small object into a fire. They are only shadows of the images to come. You are about to begin your quest where image and shadow, dream and waking are one. Even now the MINDWHEEL is turning, turning . . .**



## THE MINDS

**B**obby Clemon, assassinated rock star, once called "half John Lennon and half Janis Joplin." This charismatic, scandalous musician made the anthems of freedom and pleasure for a generation. He was shot by an unknown attacker during an immense protest rally.

Aside from his efforts for peace, Clemon demonstrated an awesome, sometimes capricious political power. For example, before his death he brought about a successful boycott of the Los Angeles Dodgers. The astonishing success of Clemon's "Bring the Bums Back to Brooklyn" campaign was crowned by the exact historical reconstruction of Ebbets Field on its ancient Flatbush site, now part of Central Nuevo York.



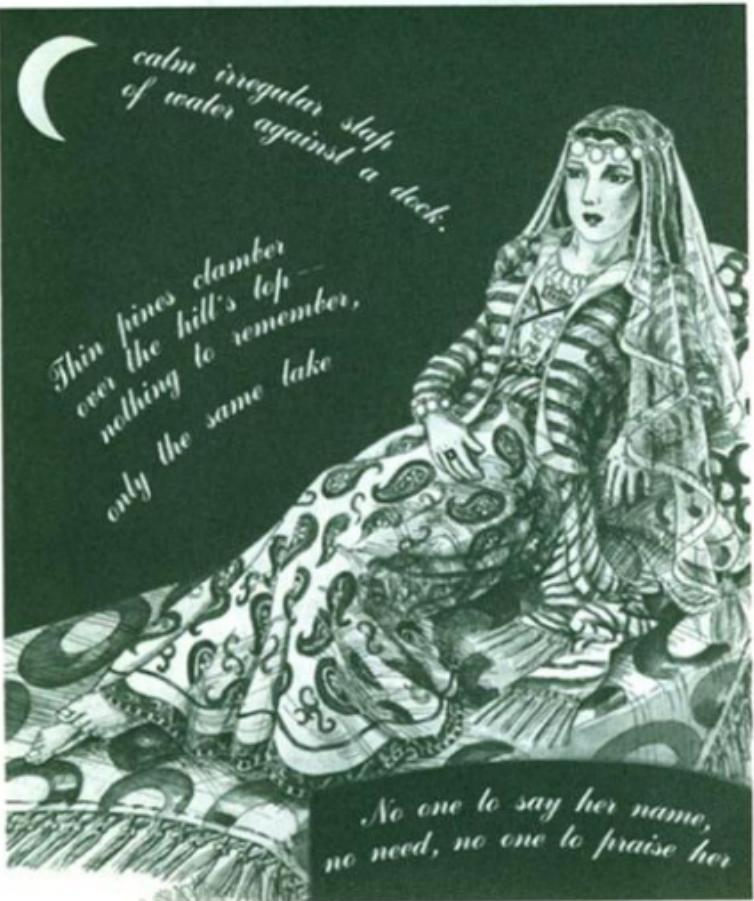
**T**HE GENERALISSIMO, dictator and war criminal. He was executed for crimes so horrible that it seemed for a time that such hatred and violence had vanished from the world. But incredibly, this monstrous genius now has a considerable posthumous following.

Historians have unearthed and authenticated poems written in his youth by this brutal butcher of millions. Crudely composed and grossly sentimental, these love lyrics, the pathetic croaks of a monster, are addressed to a "Liebchen" said by some to be the General's early schoolmate Eva Fein.



*calm irregular slaps  
of water against a dock.*

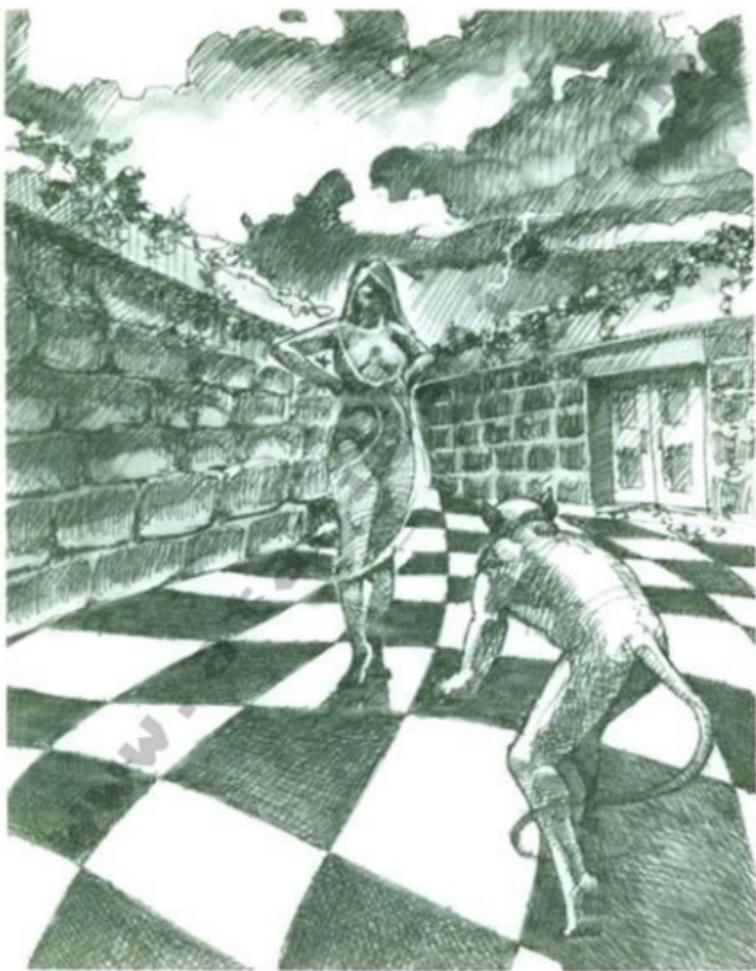
*Thin pines clamber  
over the hill's top —  
nothing to remember,  
only the same lake*



*No one to say her name,  
no need, no one to praise her*

**T**HE POET, passionate, many-minded genius of the Learning and Art Era. He wrote the great "War Trilogy" of poetic dramas, which centuries after his death remain the glory of your planet's literature.

He wrote the plays in hopes of making enough money to marry the young princess he was hired to tutor. Her father, discovering the romance, had The Poet tortured and put to death in the catacombs.



**D**R. EVA FEIN, "the female Einstein" of the Late Technological Age, honored for earthshaking work on the nature of matter and energy. A schoolmate of The Generalissimo, she fled his regime, then developed the horrible weapons that defeated him—weapons that now threaten the obliteration of all life. Her deathbed message to the world supplied Bobby Clemon with the words of a peace song.

This great scientist and humanist was also a distinguished musician, an extraordinarily gifted and sensitive violinist of professional caliber.

*From SCOTT'S NEW LAYMAN'S  
GUIDE TO ADVANCED RESEARCH  
(14th edition)*

**MATRIX IMMORTALITY.** A much discussed but little understood phenomenon on the triple border of microelectronics, aleatory cosmology, and brain studies. The term "immortality" is a popular misnomer.

Few scientific discoveries have produced as much mumbo-jumbo as so-called "matrix immortality." Yet few discoveries hold more promise for humankind.

Early research, prematurely announced, led to a false conception based partly on the inventions of imaginative fiction ("time travel," etc.) and partly on the traditional religious concept of an afterlife.

In fact, the phenomenon (also described as "synaptic echo") is both more mundane, and more consequential for actual human life, than either of these earlier ideas.

The first discovery of infinitesimal yet coherent brainwave patterns, confirming the idea of an alternately expanding and contracting (or so-called "breathing") universe led to much distorted anticipation. An infinitely divisible yet finite universe, made of energy, would theoretically contain an "echo," or integral survival, of any pattern or matrix of impulses. As the universe expands or "exhales," the corresponding contraction "inhales" the complex "echoing" (actually, surviving) pattern.

When these patterns were first detected by hypercomputer-assisted receivers, journalists speculated about such amusing absurdities as talking by telephone with Shakespeare or Darwin, or with one's great-great-grandmother! Leaving such fancies aside, even serious researchers were led to dream of discovering the previously unknown thoughts of departed geniuses. These early mistaken theories had some basis. It was soon known, for example, that the more powerful the mind, the more

retrievable would be the neuro-electronic emanations.

It was also determined that minds did not consist of discourse, nor even of "thoughts" (in the sense of, say, the prose sentence or the mathematical proposition). Nor, it turned out, was a mind merely a catalogue of "images."

Rather, the data gathered by Fentler and Wolesenko indicates that a mind is something more like a terrain. To talk with the dead, or even to listen to them, belongs to the realm of imagination or to the imponderables of religion. It is now possible, however, to visit deceased minds, and use them, as we use their buildings, works of art, scientific discoveries, political institutions. In the somewhat fanciful, yet highly descriptive terms of Doctor Virgil: "We cannot speak with the great dead, but we are permitted to visit their dreams!"

Though we cannot gather the wisdom of past geniuses, we can wander in what survives of them: their daydreams, nightmares, and fantasies. (see entries for "COSMOLOGY"; "MIND"; "MIND TRAVEL"; "VIRGIL, DOCTOR"; and "WOLOSENKO, IHOR") Article by S. Greenblatt.

## **INTERVIEW**

### BRAINSCAPE TALKS TO DR. VIRGIL

**B:** How did you first conceive of the idea of neuro-electronic matrix travel?

**V:** I first had an inkling of the matrix phenomenon when I was thirteen years old.

**B:** Amazing.

**V:** One summer night I dreamed that I was being pursued by a flock of jack-o'-lanterns behind a bowling alley in my hometown of Leesburg, Virginia. A simplistic analysis might have dismissed the dream as a phenomenon linked to the onset of puberty. Even

*Excerpt from interview with Doctor Virgil in Brainscape Magazine, Vol. 25, No. 3.*

then, however, I intuited a larger significance. Puzzled by the dream, I related it the following evening to my companion, Martha Maydorf, in the back seat of a Plymouth automobile, at the Star Drive-In Theater. She inadvertently struck my superior maxillary with a tightly packed roll of quarters. At that moment, I saw displayed before me, in intricate overlay, sets of dual images: a jack-o'-lantern in Martha's head, a bowling lane in a roll of quarters, a film director of the long-ago twentieth century staring dreamily into a mirror. I knew then that immortality was not what it seemed.

**B:** Fascinating. But isn't it true that matrix voyages into the daydreams of deceased individuals can be treacherous?

**V:** Indeed, we have had a few unfortunate incidents. Three subjects have reported a lasting sensation of immersion in a substance like scrambled eggs. One experienced socially-crippling insomnia following weeks of convulsive hiccuping. Tuning problems. And some still worse, of course.

**B:** Sir, can you sleep at night, knowing that because of you the atmospheres of mighty brains have mutilated your volunteers, turning some of them into human avocados?

**V:** Only humanity's need to understand itself before it destroys itself justifies such sacrifices.

**B:** Doctor, is it true that some of your volunteers have experienced unbelievably lurid and strenuous sexual adventures in these "great minds"?

**V:** Yes, I'm afraid that is true.

## \*\*\*\*\* CAUTION \*\*\*\*\*

*The following is an eyewitness account by a writer, Richard Sanford, who volunteered to take a short, relatively safe trip into the brain of Henry Ford.*

"Angels in gauzy outfits were gliding about on wheels, interchanging parts (here's my arm, I catch your eye, everybody gave her a hand), in a kind of break-dancing, Chaplinesque gavotte. They put wheels on my knees and elbows and I soared up a ramp, over a boardwalk, through seas of corn relish, black paint, and blueprints of Edsels. I wandered whimpering, lost, through the engraved whorls and hachures of a dollar bill the size of Dearborn, then stumbled, harrassed by kites, onto the eye on the pyramid's vertex. I fell through the iris and awoke, exhausted and shaken, in Virgil's lab, speaking in tongues, uttering like a refrain the one word 'garage' in languages unknown to me, in accents unheard by anyone in the Western Hemisphere since the time of Gutenberg. Intense!"

# A FRAGMENT FROM DOCTOR VIRGIL'S NOTEBOOKS

Forbidden Minds ✓

Off limits to research,  
absolutely forbidden:

Edward Teller, William Burroughs,  
Harold Bloom, Ty Cobb,  
Henry Youngman

No one has lived more than  
a few seconds in minds  
of Cobb or Teller —

Young man's mind leads to  
horrible delayed - fever case - liners,  
fatal within few days of return:

"Mind traveler, you are a sick man!"  
"Yes, but I was a second  
opinion - O boy, I'm really too!  
He he he..."

Mind of Lewis Carroll also  
forbidden - This mind, the only  
one individual traveler went  
and NEVER CAME BACK!

## OCCASIONAL VERSE BY THE POET

### THE FEAR SONNET

In [blank 1], when color to black is [blank 2],  
Distinction lost and gone with light,  
The eye, as inward watchman placed,  
Unseeing, but with power of sight,

Gives vain alarm to inward [blank 3]  
Where fear, with witty [blank 4],  
Circles Mind, and in self-offence  
Forges Impossibility,

Such as, in [blank 5] darknesses,  
Proper reflections of Error be:  
And [blank 6] of self-confusednesses,  
Which hurt imaginations see,

And from this nothing seen, make devils —  
Outer expressions of inward evils.

## THE LOVE SONNET

Afternoon sun on her back,  
calm irregular slap  
of water against a dock.

Thin pines clamber  
over the hill's top —  
nothing to remember,

only the same lake  
that keeps making the same  
sounds under her cheek

and flashing the same color.  
No one to say her name,  
no need, no one to praise her —

only her own [space 1] to tell her,  
her own [space 2] to please her.

© 1983 by Robert Pinsky.



*The Greville monastery, scene of the inspiration*

## A NOTE ON THE MAKING OF MINDWHEEL

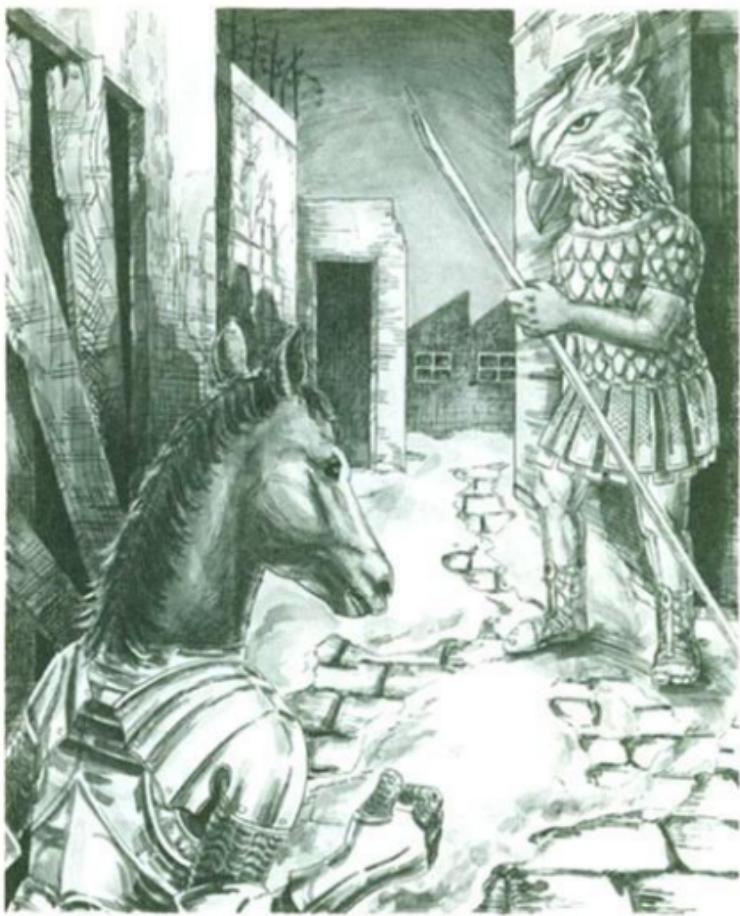
*THE STORY OF MINDWHEEL WAS WRITTEN WHILE THE AUTHOR was living in a monastery in eastern Montana, under a strict vow of silence which he had maintained for four years.*

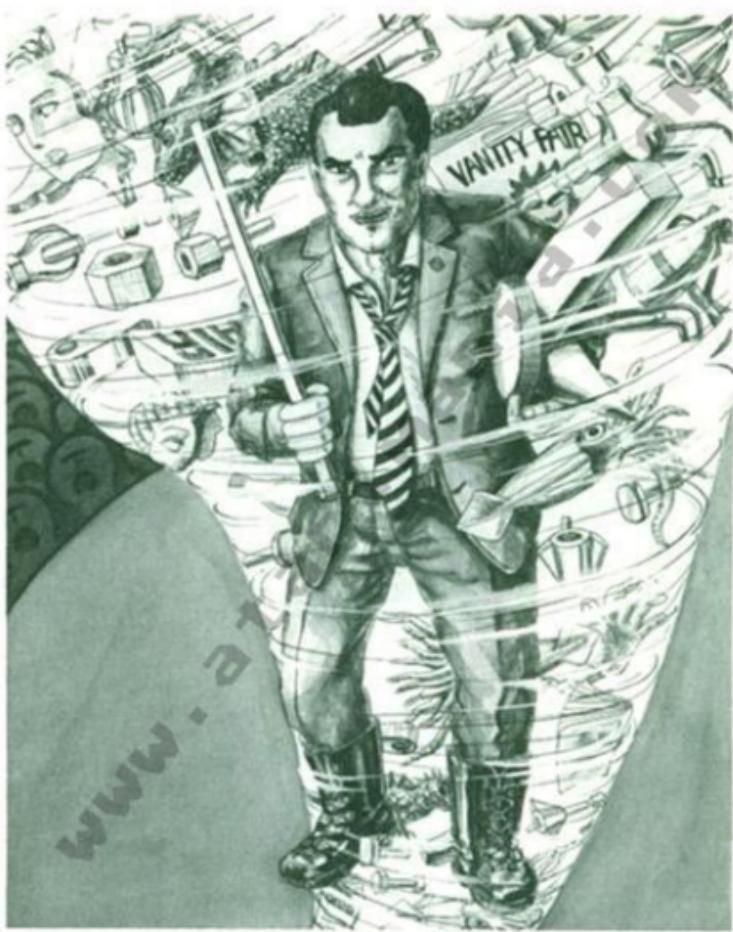
*During a period of fasting and intense meditation, the author one night beheld the "story"—or, since it has infinite sequences rather than one, the "world"—of his work in a vision. He began writing in a frenzy, and within hours had covered the pages of his journal. He continued writing on the walls and floor of his cell, and three days later, just as the sun rose, he finished the final passages, with the words THE END crammed into the last available corner of the ceiling.*

*It took several years for the author to discover computer experts able to implement, through years of innovative work, the grand scheme of those three days and nights of convulsive inspiration.*

*The orginal text of MINDWHEEL was reproduced and edited from large-format AccuLens photographs taken by Elk Bailey at the Greville Meditative Order headquarters in Greville, Montana. The negatives were processed and printed by Cruz Associates of Vincente, California.*







## **ADVENTURER'S DIARY**

**T**HE UNIVERSE IN an Electronic Novel is constantly changing. Sometimes things happen too fast for the human mind. You may need some time to consider and some space to take notes, make maps, and otherwise plan your strategy. You may use these pages for that purpose.

## **How to Talk to MINDWHEEL**

**Y**OU ENTER THE WORLD OF MINDWHEEL by typing on your computer keyboard. You can type whenever text appears on the screen and you are ready to respond. Your decisions and your dialogue with characters will determine how the novel unfolds.

MINDWHEEL responds to a wide variety of commands. Some common ones are explained below, but you'll discover others as you begin play. In fact, Electronic Novels™ recognize a vocabulary of over 1200 words. Many synonyms of commands are possible. For example, "get" works as well as "take," and "rub" is a synonym for "touch." For ease of typing, some commands can be abbreviated. You can also type commands in either upper or lower case. When you are finished typing a command, press the RETURN key.

You can also take a greater part in the action by talking to characters and evaluating their responses. A note on how to use dialogue follows the discussion of commands. The universe of MINDWHEEL is constantly transforming itself. Even if you do nothing, characters will chase one another, purplish clouds will drift by, the demented crowd will still howl for more.

Occasionally, the text being displayed will be longer than your screen. Instead of "scrolling" information out of sight faster than you can read it, MINDWHEEL will pause and instruct you to **Press any key to continue**. When you press a key, the rest of the text will display on your screen.

## COMMANDS

**AGAIN** Repeats your last command, just as though you had typed it again. After this command, you must still press RETURN.

**BOOKMARK** Retains your progress in the novel by making a copy of your current position on a formatted diskette. Later you can resume the novel from that point with the **RESUME NOVEL** command. See the Special Features section of the computer reference card packaged with your novel diskette for details.

**CLOSE** (object) Tries to close the object you specify.

**DROP** (object) Frees you of an object you're tired of carrying.

**EXAMINE** or **EX** (object) Checks the characteristics of an object — works like **LOOK**.

**FOLLOW** or **FOL** (person) Allows you to follow a character who is going his own way.

**GET** (object) Tries to pick up the object you specify. Produces the same effect as **TAKE**.

**GIVE** (object) **TO** (person) Giving objects to characters can be risky, innocuous, or crucial. You can also use this form: **GIVE** (person) (object).

**HEALTH** Checks your physical condition. Are you injured? just stunned?

**HIT** (object or person) **WITH** (object) This and commands like it exercise your aggressive tendencies.

**INVENTORY** or **INV** Tells you which objects you've collected and are currently carrying.

**LOOK** or **L** Shows you a snapshot of your current surroundings.

**LOOK** (direction) Describes what lies in a particular direction from your position.

**LOOK AT** (object) Describes the features of an object — works like **EXAMINE**.

**NORTH** and others Allows you to move in the direction you specify. You can also abbreviate directions (**N, S, E, W, NE, etc.**). **GO TO** (object) and **WALK** (direction) produce the same result.

**OPEN** (object) Tries to open the object you specify.

**PAUSE NOVEL** Halts the changing world of the novel as long as you wish. You can resume the action by pressing any key. To stop the novel in a faster way, see the Special Features section of the computer reference card packaged with your diskette.

**PLAY** (object) Lets you indulge yourself with songs and musical instruments.

**PRINTER OFF** Stops the printing of MINDWHEEL begun with the **PRINTER ON** command. See the computer reference card packaged with your diskette for details.

**PRINTER ON** Creates a printed record of your progress through MINDWHEEL. See the reference card packaged with your novel diskette for further information.

**PROGRESS** or **PR** Reports on achievements of importance in your quest for the Wheel of Wisdom.

**PUT** (object)**IN** (object) Tries to merge objects. The results may be important or pointless.

**QUIT NOVEL** Ends your session of MINDWHEEL without saving your current position.

**READ**(object) Obtains written information, such as priceless clues, from the object you specify.

**RESTART NOVEL** Begins MINDWHEEL again from the start.

**RESUME NOVEL** Reopens the novel from the point at which you typed the **BOOKMARK** command. For specific instructions, see the reference card packaged with your diskette.

**SAY** Speaks your utterance aloud. Particularly useful for answering riddles. Example: SAY "BLACKJACK".

**SHOW** (object) **TO** (person) Displays an object to a character.

**SING** Ventilates your vocal chords.

**TAKE** or **T**(object) Allows you to collect objects which seem interesting or useful. You can take one thing or several at a time.

**TIME FASTER** Speeds up the changing world of the Electronic Novel™. This command does not change the speed at which your commands are responded to by the novel. It increases the rate at which characters and elements of the novel's physical world enter the scene, pop up, or fly by. Typing this command repeatedly will speed up the universe a little each time. To slow down the changing world, type **TIME SLOWER**.

**TIME SLOWER** The opposite of **TIME FASTER**. Typing **TIME SLOWER** repeatedly will slow down the changing universe of the Electronic Novel™ by degrees.

**WRITE**(word) **IN**(blank or space) Records your words on a piece of paper at a crucial point in MINDWHEEL.

MINDWHEEL will respond to many other commands; feel free to experiment. Some interesting examples might be:

---

get and examine the rose

get the rose and the candy bar and eat it

look at everyone except the thug

offer the pizza to the thug

touch the keyboard with my hand

give my bodyguard everything from the room

look at myself

## DIALOGUE

Electronic Novels™ allow you to talk to characters and creatures, real and imagined. You can ask them questions, order them to do your bidding, or tell them to do things with objects or to other characters. They will respond in their own unique ways. The FORM you use for this kind of dialogue is important. Here are two examples:

thug, "who's pederson?"

toad, "get the disk from the thug and give it to my bodyguard"

Notice that it is not necessary to capitalize or to use periods at the ends of sentences. When you are finished typing a line of dialogue, be sure to press RETURN.

To relieve you of some typing, dialogue also has a shorter form. You may omit the comma following the name of the character you're addressing. The second quotation mark may be omitted also. Example:

Instead of  
bodyguard, "come here"

you may type  
**bodyguard** "come here"

Some other examples of MINDWHEEL dialogue might be:

**old man** "where's the wheel of wisdom?"

**number 14** "what's the thug carrying?"

**doctor** "yes, i am ready"

**woman** "the rose isn't a talisman"

**toad** "what is west from here?"

**singer** "what should i do now?"

## TIME AND SPACE

Many of the characters in MINDWHEEL move around of their own volition. When you talk to a character in your area, he will answer you in his own special way. If he happens to move to the next room, he won't brush you off; he will still answer. However, if the character moves far away from your position, he'll no longer be able to hear you. Examples:

(thug in your area)  
**thug** "what is the wheel?"

"I don't have to talk to you about the Wheel of Wisdom!" responds the thug.

(thug in the next room)  
**thug** "who are you?"

"I don't have to tell you any personal details," snarls the insolent thug.

(thug far away)  
thug "you are a jerk!"

Your words don't reach that far.

Engaging characters in conversation allows you to enter the world of MINDWHEEL completely. But remember, when you talk to an Electronic Novel™, anything can happen.

## **PERIOD**

By typing several periods (...) and pressing RETURN, you can watch the universe unfold over several time intervals. This is an advanced strategic tactic you may find useful.

## **RETURN KEY**

Press RETURN whenever you are finished typing a command. If you press RETURN without typing any command, the world of the novel will still continue to change all around you. When you press only RETURN, time will pass and the universe will turn, together with whatever else may be happening at the time: characters entering the vicinity, conversations beginning, etc. As in life, the universe of the Electronic Novel™ is constantly unfolding.

## About the Authors

### ROBERT PINSKY

ROBERT PINSKY'S most recent book of poems is *History of My Heart* (The Ecco Press). His awards for poetry include prizes from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the National Endowment for the Arts. He is Poetry Editor of *The New Republic*, and teaches courses in writing and literature at the University of California, Berkeley.

### STEVE HALES

SYNAPSE PROGRAMMER of classic *FORT APOCALYPSE* and others, Siamese twin of world-renown sky-diver "Lightshoot" Harry Hales. Steve is currently hard at work implementing more Electronic Novels™ on the horizon of microcomputer technology.

### WILLIAM MATAGA

PROGRAMMER OF SYNAPSE hit *SHAMUS*. William is presently involved in writing BTZ language routines to make all Electronic Novels™ playable on wristwatch TV sets.

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## ESSEX

INTERGALACTIC SEARCH AND rescue aboard the colossal Starship Essex. Lead a mission to save Professor Klein, a million-to-one shot. Combat insidious Vollchons in deep space. At stake — the survival of the cosmos!

## BRIMSTONE

PLUNGE INTO THE underworld of Ulro with Sir Gawain, Knight of the Round Table. Pursue Under-demon Fum through the labyrinth of white apes, the treacherous Slough of Despond, and the Maze of the Furies. Confront the Green Knight, awesome figure of Destiny.

## BREAKERS

COMB THE VOLCANIC rifts of the planet Borg. Deep within, smugglers traffic in charmed, defenseless beings. Shatter the slavery ring. Liberate the powerless. But who are you really? Why is Nate Grey shadowing you? The Gaks are everywhere!

## RONIN

THE DAIMYO'S DAUGHTER is kidnapped! You, the Ronin, masterless samurai, must return her or purge your dishonor with ritual suicide. Navigate the feudal castle, befriend the Zen master, penetrate the ninja stronghold. When your task seems done, you are far from done. What is and what only seems to be?

# MINDWHEEL

The Federated Nations have collapsed. Lennon City-Tokyo, Feingrad, Nuevo Paris thunder with strife and violence. In Capitol City, seventy thousand crazed rioters storm the Washington Monument. As the weapons of oblivion assemble on the horizon, the long-feared apocalypse seems inevitable.

The howling, demented crowd shrieks for action. Only Doctor Virgil understands the narrow, mysterious path to your civilization's survival. But Virgil desperately seeks a Mind Adventurer! Do you dare?

(see inside front cover)

## What is . . . AN ELECTRONIC NOVEL™?

An Electronic Novel™ picks up where the printed word leaves off.

At Synapse, by combining the novel on the printed page with the dynamic technology of the computer, we have discovered a remarkable new entertainment experience: a fictional universe constantly changing, with you in the center of the action.

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(see bottom of back flap)

