**DIARY OF AN AVATAR**

**A True Story about a Virtual World**

## Tuesday, March 6, 2012

There is often a chattery gathering on Book Island. We mostly talk out loud. I edited clothing while everyone bantered. I used pictures from my real life bookshelf. Izzy wanted my book Bermuda shorts.

Izzy sounds like a goofy character from the mock rockumentary *This Is Spinal Tap*, like the guitarist played by Lenny from *Laverne and Shirley* or Nigel when he speaks at the beginning of the Stonehenge song. When Izzy talks, you feel like it’s midnight and he’s reading a ghost story in the dark. You expect demons to moan, witches to cackle, accompanied by an eerie guitar riff in the background. But of course what Izzy is really saying isn’t about ghosts. It’s a silly joke just to see if you’re paying attention.

Sandor asked everyone to click on an item on the coffee table. When we did, we each received a graphic of a pyramid called ‘Good Arguments.’ At the peak was an example of how to reach mutual understanding. The entire pyramid was a serious graphic, probably from an academic paper. Except the bottom tier. The bottom layer depicted an example of the worst way to argue: name calling. It said, ‘You are an ass hat.’

So I typed, “You are an ass hat” in local chat, out of the blue, with no context.

I sent a message to a friend. “This the conclusion of our discussion: ‘Arton: Religion is not necessarily faith. Ruby: You are an ass hat.’ He immediately teleported over to find out what that was about. I kept my microphone off because I was laughing myself silly at this point.

“Who are you talking to, Ruby?” one of the guys asked. He must not have read Sandor’s graphic.

“Just quoting Sandor,” I said. “According to the picture he gave us, ‘You are an ass hat’ is the foundation of Good Arguments.”

## Saturday, March, 2012

### Lisa

The usual crowd was hanging out at Book Island talking by voice.

“Hello, Izzward,” I greeted Izzy in chat.

Sandor told us he lives in Dayton.

I dug the story up from some internet archives about the summer I lived in Dayton and gave it to them. Brokali read it aloud. It was about my paycheck getting stolen out of my mail while I lived in campus housing at the University of Dayton. The woman who stole the paycheck was a foreign student named Ruchika. She offered to pay me the amount of the check so she wouldn’t have to deal with the police.

“I’m biased about that story,” Brokali said.

“Why?” I asked, thinking that as a prison librarian, he had a particular sympathy or ire for criminals.

“Because I’m in love with Ruchika,” he said.

Oh, is that the reason.

“I like the way she tried to buy you off,” he explained.

I had to log out and go to a different computer. Twenty minutes later, I came on as my Griefer alt.

I sat on the arm of Izzy’s chair. Then I turned into a zebra and squashed him.

“Is Grief someone we know?” Uncle Sandor asked.

“Hello, Izzward,” I typed.

There was silence for a moment.

“Izzward?” Izzy typed back. “Ruby?”

“Good thing you spoke up or we might have banned you just because of the name,” Arton said.

“Ban Grief?” I said. “But she’s my polite alt.”

## Sunday, April, 2012

### Lisa

Brokali asked if I was interested in attending a poetry and prose reading.

“Of course!” I said. And waited for five minutes for a response. “Aren’t you going to teleport me?” Still no response.

Finally I got a message from Izzy saying he was at a poetry reading.

“Yeah. Brokali told me,” I responded. “But he won’t tell me where it is.”

“That’s Brokali,” Izzy said. “He always sends me random teleports without telling me what’s going on there.”

“That’s funny.”

“He does it to irritate me.”

“Then it’s even funnier,” I said.

Izzy teleported me to someone’s Victorian living room. When I got there, I offered him a teleport.

“Thanks for the teleport, Lisa, but I’m already here.”

“Just trying to irritate you,” I said.

A circle of dining chairs with oval backs and curved wooden legs invited us to take a seat. Embroidered peacock tails adorned the seat cushions and backs. A flowery area rug covered the hardwood floors. An elegant old carved wooden desk rested in the corner. Beveled etched glass windows let in a bit of light. Mauve florets blossomed across the wallpaper. Brokali wanted to have the wallpaper in his real life house.

My childhood home: http://www.zillow.com/homedetails/20319-Schaefer-Rd-Reedsville-WI-54230/40373714\_zpid/ (4th picture)

I brought in my alt Brad and sat on top of the chair that Izzy was sitting on. Brad was dressed exactly like me, with a big book skirt. The skirt enveloped Izzy’s face.

“Sit on my face and tell me that you love me,” Izzy sang.

Brokali read a short piece. “If you have any feedback, or if you want to say something nasty, send me an IM.”

Brad sent Brokali a nasty message. “I think you’re hot.”

“Thank you very much, Brad,” Brokali said in a very polite tone. As if that message required a polite response.

I sent Izzy a partnership request as Brad.

“Check your email,” Brad told Izzy.

Izzy checked his email.

“Nice, Brad,” Izzy said. “How does Brad take rejection?”

“Brad doesn’t care,” I answered Izzy.

Yet, Brad never received that rejection.

## Thursday, April, 2012

I created an alt named Izzette and gave her the nickname ‘Izzward’s Alt.’ She was born as a pink unicorn. I went to Book Island and found Izzy.

“Hi Izzward,” I said.

“Hey. I’m a victim of identity theft.”

He was DJing and the only other person there was Scooby. Izzy called her by her real name, so I figured they had been friends for awhile. They were both dancing and I was just standing there, so I asked where the dance ball was.

“The pink one,” Izzy pointed out. “Above the dragon.”

Well, nothing had rezzed yet, so I clicked on the first ball I saw.

My legs and arms got cut off at the elbow. Without joints, my limbs stuck out in the shape of a star, like a unicorn in Maggie Simpson’s winter coat. I had never seen this happen before.

“What am I doing?” I asked.

“Tiny dances,” Izzy said.

Tiny dances? I guess the dance I was doing was tiny. I rotated around the dance floor like a stiff wheel, turning cartwheels through Scooby, poking the floor with the helix sticking out of my head.

“Sorry, Scooby. Watch out for my horn, everyone,” I said.

I changed into a human, hoping the other half of my limbs would be returned. They weren’t. Now I was a human star rotating back and forth across the floor.

When everything rezzed, I saw the ball I had clicked above the dragon. ‘Tiny dances,’ was written on it. Like Izzy had said. Now it made sense. There were special dance animations for tiny animals.

Finally I saw the pink ball. Over a different dragon.

I clicked on it and I became normal again. Then I lost half my limbs again. Then I became normal and did the same dance as Scooby. Then I became a human star.

“My body is schizophrenic,” I said.

“I always knew you were mad,” Izzy said.

“How long have you and Scooby known each other?” I asked.

“Thirty years,” Izzy said.

“Come on.”

“We know each other in real life,” Scooby explained.

“Really! Tell me something embarrassing about Izzy,” I beckoned Scooby. If she had any good stories, she didn’t want to share at the moment. “What’s his name in real life?” I asked.

“You haven’t told her?” Scooby said.

“She never asked.”

“Fine, Izzy. What’s your real name?”

He paused a moment, as if he was either deciding whether he wanted to tell me, or trying to think of a good fake name.

“It’s Dracula.”

Now that’s something embarrassing.

“Are you making that up?” I asked.

“No, that’s his name,” Scooby confirmed.

“That’s a Halloween name.” Although it fit his voice perfectly. Spooky, vampire-like, with a Transylvania-like accent. “Are his parents goth?”

“His mum is a lovely woman,” Scooby said.

She said ‘mum.’ Now I want to hear her accent.

“Where do you live,” Scooby asked me.

“Washington, DC, suburb.”

“She’s posh,” said Izzy.

Posh? That term must be more common in Europe. I wasn’t sure if the connotation meant rich, or if the usage was more literal, like luxurious, as we’d use the term in the US.

“Like the Spice Girls?” I asked.

“No. Definitely not like Posh Spice,” Scooby said.

“Posh equals fancy,” I said. “I grew up on a farm. We were very poor. But then we moved to Phoenix and I went to college for a long time.”

A woman we didn’t know walked through. Her profile said she liked punishment, humiliation, getting peed on, and being beaten by her lesbian master. Probably a man who made a pixel voodoo doll avatar to represent his ex-girlfriend.

“She creeps me out,” I told Scooby.

After seeing that profile, it was definitely time to go to sleep.

“I’ll friend Scooby when I log on as Lisa tomorrow,” I said. “This Izzette alt doesn’t need friends.”

## Friday, April, 2012

I went to Club Gomorrah again while Izzy DJed. He wore a black pirate jacket with a white frilly blouse. He carried a sword in each hand. I recognized everyone there.

“It looks like Izzy brought Book Island to Club Gomorrah.” Everyone there was female, except Izzy.

“Is this a party of Izzy’s groupie girlfriends?” I asked.

“No, Izzy’s my dad,” Kat said. “When are you going to get a girlfriend so I can have an online mom?”

“My alt sent him a partner request, but he hasn’t responded yet,” I said.

Icons of surprise filled the chat.

“Wedding!” Kat said.

Izzy had to let them down. “Her alt is a man.”

“Gay wedding!” I said.

Izzy invited us all to join his DJ group called ‘DJ Izzy’s Legion of the Forsaken.’ When we did, the title ‘Monkey Toucher’ appeared above our heads.

Monkey toucher? Why did Izzy select that as our group role?

I looked into the group information to find out what other titles were available. We had also been given a second title, ‘I’ve been Izzy’d,’ which seemed much better.

Very funny. It was like a test, to see if we were smart enough to look for the second title.

Kat wanted to hear a song by Journey. “Come over to the DJ if you want to make a request,” Izzy said.

I went over to him as we continued dancing, his swords swaying with the music. “I came over to the DJ, but he kept slicing me with his sword.”

When I was about to leave, I told Izzy, “I think you have enough girlfriends to keep you company tonight.”

“But they’re all taken,” he said.