**DIARY OF AN AVATAR**

**Socializing in a Virtual World**

Lisa Schaefer’s adventures in Second Life

By Lisa Schaefer, Ph.D.

http://RoleModelEnterprises.com

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**Table of Contents**

R

## [**Error! Bookmark not defined.**](#_Toc194803779)

## New business

I had written a book and produced a web series about my experiences working as a female engineer, being paid through your taxpayer dollars. I wanted to use the story as some kind of a theme around which to build online community.

A business consultant recommended trying Second Life. I really had no idea what it was, so one week during a snowstorm, I decided to play around with it while I was trapped indoors. It didn’t turn out to be at all what I had expected.

Since it’s a virtual world, all sorts of funny things go on. You can walk around with a hat made of fire, fly around as a zebra, or give someone a beer that makes them keep falling on the floor. You can give out unlimited presents to your friends. Or go to a book reading where people can contribute to the conversation in a chat room. You can get an online girlfriend, boyfriend, or even a Second Life spouse.

What in the virtual world is an online spouse? When I first heard that, I wondered why grown adults – no matter whether they were single or married in real life – would want a spouse, or partner, on a computer. What does it even mean to have a Second Life partner? So while I built my Second Life movie posters and recruited members to my *BudgetJustified.com* group, I set out to find out what a virtual partner was. And to find out if I wanted one for myself.

What is meeting people online, what/how is dating, what is neighborhood friendship, what is steady dating, what is being a man, what else is there/what do I want,

I wanted to build online community for my movie about how women (people) are treated in the workplace. When I got to Second Life, I found an atmosphere that was extremely hostile toward women. I’m hoping to find a community that can work toward changing the way women are treated in society. But when I got there, I found porn. And lots of it. How was I going to build a community for empowering women when I was in a porn shop? Looks like technology is bringing women’s choices for societal roles backward. If this is what society is becoming online, I have a lot of work to do.

So after finding a porn shop in my new playground, I set out to find if there are men out there who are decent enough choose to treat women like intellectuals in an online environment where objectifying women is the culture. And if any of those men do exist, would I be able to develop an intellectual friendship with them, or would they choose to remain distant. Or can only another man develop intellectual friendships?

New business

What is this new world?

My new friend, Northern

Followed around for sex, Desperate/RoseBed

Can I get away with being a man?

Intellectual friend, Worldly,

Worldly gets a girlfriend. How do I fit into the picture?

Can men find female friends?

?Neighborhood friends?

?Platonic friend who searches for sex with random women, Psych

Friend who takes me out to explore, Adventurer

Friend who turns out to be a liar, Crock

I don’t care anymore

An FAA employee masturbated in front of me and I got fired the next day. No, this wasn’t in the 1960’s *Mad Men* era, it was 2007, the YouTube era. Since I had been a subcontractor, not an official employee, none of the lawyers I talked to wanted to take my case. So instead of going back to another abusive employer, I produced a fifty-episode web series and movie about what it was like working in FAA offices, called *Budget Justified*.

A local university has a small business center where small businesses can go for advice. While I was finishing up the movie, I went to the center and mentioned that I wanted to build an online community of people who wanted a change in the way society treats women.

“Try Second Life,” the business consultant said. “It’s a perfect place to build online communities.”

“What is Second Life about?” I asked.

“Just like it’s called,” she said. “It’s your Second Life. You get an avatar, you can get a house, you make friends. Some people get virtual jobs. If you sign up at their web site, you can explore what it is.”

I signed up, but the web site didn’t really explain the experience. I didn’t bother downloading and installing the software it required. Seemed like a big investment of time.

A few weeks later, there was a snowstorm. My husband was gone overnight for twelve hours a day for three weeks helping clear the snow. After the first few nights of being trapped indoors alone, I decided to try Second Life out again. This time I sat through the download and installation so I could find someone else out in the world.

## What is this new online world?

I was born a naked man in a desolate forest. All I saw in my view was my naked, penisless manbody amongst foliage. It was late at night in real life – perhaps that’s why it was dark in this forest. At the bottom of my screen was a button that said ‘map.’ I clicked on it and a map with an aerial view of trees opened. As I pressed arrow keys to walk through foliage, I could see a yellow dot move along the map. I guess that was me.

There were two green dots nearby. Assuming they were other people, I clicked ‘fly’ and navigated toward them. I heard a whip crack and a woman moan. As I got closer, I saw a naked man and woman in the window of a house. The man held a whip, which cracked again, followed by the female moan.

“There’s a naked guy on the roof,” Naked Man said in the chat box on my screen.

“Go away,” Naked Woman said.

I flew toward another green dot on my map and landed near another house. The door was open, so I walked in.

“Get out of my house!” a woman shouted.

“I’m trying to figure out how to play Second Life,” I typed.

“Get off of my land!” the woman shouted.

“How?” I asked.

No need to explain. She ejected me from her land. The people in Second Life don’t seem very friendly.

I landed on a street in Korea. There were no cars anywhere, so people loitered in the street. On one side of the street, tall office buildings stood eerily vacant. On the other side, all sorts of odd characters – a spider, a pig, an alien, a few hookers, tattooed men, and a guy with a short woman’s body and a bald man’s face chatted by voice as they sat on park benches, lampposts, and the wall along the carless street.

Baldy came up and asked me, “Why don’t you have clothes?”

Hey, I just arrived in this world. I had no idea why I had arms, legs, or a head, much less clothes. “Why do you *have* clothes?” I asked. It’s a computer place. Why would anyone need clothes? The other people I met weren’t wearing any clothes.

“How do I get clothes?” I asked.

“There’s some in the library in your inventory,” the alien told me.

I looked around on the screen and found a box called ‘inventory.’ When I clicked on it, a list of folders appeared. I searched the list until I found one called ‘library,’ clicked on a gray t-shirt and a pair of jeans and selected ‘wear.’

“You look like a noob,” the spider told me.

“What makes me look like a noob?” I asked.

“Bad clothing,” the hooker said.

Bad? I thought their clothes looked horrible with spikes sticking out and half their ass or boobs showing.

I logged out and logged back in and realized why I had been born a naked man. Instead of logging in as Ruby, as I had signed up as on the Second Life web site, I had signed in as my husband. He had downloaded Second Life three years earlier and set the viewer software to save his password. He didn’t find anyone else around, thought it was boring, and never logged on again. Whatever clothing or other inventory items that may have come with an avatar back then had been deleted from the library database.

A boy invited me to fly around with him. We talked by voice. He probably thought I sounded strange for a man. He sounded awfully young to be hanging around hookers and thugs.

“How old are you?” I asked.

“Twelve.”

This seemed like such a strange place for a twelve year old to be. There wasn’t anyone else his age to play with. I imagine if he had asked Baldy or the spider to fly around with him, they would have told him to get lost in a way that no twelve year old should hear.

A random person offered me, but not the boy, a teleport. I think it was because of my noob clothes. I accepted and landed in a strip club. Red carpeting, red flocked wallpaper, barstools with red seats pimped out the club. Chrome sparkled across the top edge of the bar. Lights spun around the ceiling and accented a few spindly female avatars slinking around poles on top of the bar. Men lurked below on the bar stools while the pole dancers said a few lame things in chat, such as, “Pookie slides her hands along her breasts and squeezes her nipples,” which Pookie was clearly not doing because her hands were around a pole.

Pookie and the other pole dancers asked for tips to be placed in their tip jars. I didn’t have any virtual money to put in their tip jars. But even if I had, this was certainly not the place where I would have spent it. The woman who had teleported me probably thought she could get the newbie hooked on visiting this place. Um, I don’t consider watching naked cartoon characters to be very erotic.

I have no idea why a business consultant recommended Second Life to me. Especially a game where you get invited to a strip club.

## Week 2

When I logged back on, I was in the park in Korea again. It somehow got listed as my ‘home’ location. Not the kind of place I had hoped to call home. Eerie thugs, prostitutes, and other beasts milled among the trees, under a ramada, and on the street that seemed as though cars had been there at one time, but had dematerialized during an alien invasion or perhaps the apocalypse.

A woman stood alone on the sidewalk, carrying a baby.

“Where did that baby come from?” I asked her.

“You can get some sperm and a gray box will drop down and tell you if you’re pregnant.”

Get sperm and wait for a gray box? She asked if I wanted some.

“Uh, no thanks,” I answered.

I asked her how to change into a woman instead. She gave me some female clothes, hair, and skin, which I clicked to wear. Unreal breasts grew out of my torso. My legs lost half their diameter, my lips turned bright purple, and so did my hair. Great. Now I’m a hooker.

“The guys really like this skin,” she said.

Who cares if guys like skin. What would they like about the skin anyway, the color of my arms? Maybe she was joking. As if anyone would care about avatar skin. Or care about what guys like.

The woman told me how to edit my appearance so I could look more like a person and less like a Barbie doll. The first thing to work on was a breast reduction. I shrunk them until they were about my real bra size, about a quarter the size of any other breast around there. I made my avatar as tall as possible and gave my legs some muscle tone, widened my hips and buffed up my shoulders to the same proportions my body is in real life. Then I selected a brown ponytail from all the hair she had given me. It was lighter than my actual ponytail, but much better than bright purple.

I moved forward and walked head first into a guy who was talking out loud. I couldn’t pull my head out of his chest. The other guys standing around were teasing the guy. I got on my mic and said a few words. They seemed relieved that I really was female, not just some newbie guy asking how to change into a woman.

A woman in a formal gown wandered amongst the dregs. “Would anyone like to visit the House of Prayer with me?” she asked.

Anyplace where the women wear formal dresses seemed like a good place to go, so I volunteered to come along. She teleported me to the House of Prayer’s fellowship hall with a friendly man named Northern. He was also new to Second Life.

## My new friend, Northern

Staffers greeted the new people and offered us coffee. They showed us to gingham-covered buffet tables covered with a plentiful spread of cookies, brownies, pie, and ice cream. I clicked on a cookie and an item called ‘Cookie (wear)’ appeared in my inventory. I realize I’m a sloppy eater, but I don’t need to purposely wear a cookie. I clicked to ‘wear’ it anyway and a cookie appeared in my hand. My avatar moved it toward my open mouth and I chomped down on it and moved my hand away. I kept doing this in some kind of infinite loop because even though I kept biting the cookie as I continued to wear it on my hand, it never got smaller. Sort of the opposite of Cookie Monster.

On the opposite end of the room, guests watched a Christian video on a giant movie screen while lounging on plaid couches the colors of my Catholic high school uniform. Northern discovered a baby crawling in the corner and asked me to come look at it.

“Whose baby is this?” I asked.

“Nobody’s,” the lady in the formal dress replied. “It just appeared here on its own and crawls around in the corner.”

Was it supposed to be a super-virgin-birth baby? Not only was it conceived from no father, it was born from no mother.

“I haven’t seen one of these in Second Life before,” Northern said.

“I just saw one!” I replied. “A woman was carrying it. I don’t understand where they come from. Something about a gray box.”

“I can show you. I’ll teleport you there.” He disappeared and about a minute later, he teleported me to a new location. When I arrived, Northern was in an indoor hot tub smoking a cigarette and carrying a bottle of Jack Daniels.

“This place belongs to my friend Jack.” Except, he didn’t mean Daniels. “He said I could use it.”

We got on voice chat and I told him my real name was Lisa. He put a huge penis on his avatar and asked if I could see it.

“Yes. That’s ridiculous.”

The hot tub had several pink and blue orbs. Northern told me to click on a pink ball and select ‘Sit here.’ My avatar popped into the tub fully clothed. All I could see was the wall. As I panned around, my viewer crashed. I logged in again and appeared by the tub.

“Are you mad?” he asked.

“No, why do you ask?”

“I thought maybe you were insulted by the hot tub. You logged off.”

“That wasn’t on purpose,” I explained.

“Good. Let’s check out the rest of this house,” he suggested.

He teleported me to a dungeon with a satiny red canopy bed and more pink and blue orbs.

“Sit on the pink ball,” Northern urged me. I did so and instead of sitting, I laid on my back with my legs in the air. Then he ‘sat’ on the blue orb. He landed on top of me.

These orbs are called pose balls. When you click on them, your avatar sits on them and does an animation like dancing. In this case, when I put my avatar on one of the pose balls, she did whatever sex animations I selected. It was quite comic. Someone had made animations that looked like sex, as a silly joke. Because they could. Like a parody of the dance animations in Second Life. If you can make avatars dance, you can make them do other animations, like put their fingers in their nose or spread their legs and wiggle. I wondered how Northern had even stumbled across these joke pose balls.

Northern and I laughed. “What am I supposed to be doing here?” he said. “Is my leg in your crotch?”

In the background I saw a medieval character hanging upside-down on a cross. I didn’t think I had seen it there earlier, but figured that it didn’t matter. After we had enough comedy on these pose balls, Northern moved our avatars underneath the cross. “What’s this face above mine?” I asked.

“Face?” Northern paused to pan his view. “Oh, that’s my friend Jack.”

“That’s your FRIEND?” I shouted. “Oh. Hi Jack.” I hadn’t realized that was an avatar. I thought he was part of the décor.

The next evening, Northern was online again when I logged on. He immediately sent me a message and asked if I was sore.

“Sore?” I asked.

“From having my leg in your crotch.”

We sat around at the House of Prayer playing with their movie clip viewer. I wanted to play clips from *Budget Justified* on it, but no such luck. I chatted out loud with another guy there who was also snowed in in Northern Virginia. I told him that my husband was out helping people stranded in the snow.

Northern was very quiet during this conversation. I think he was surprised to find out that I was married.

Northern’s friends invited him to play Greedy, a gambling game. He invited me to come along. I didn’t have any money to play, so one of the guys lent some to me, provided that the winner pay him back.

The unit of currency in Second Life, is called Linden dollars. One hundred Linden dollars is worth about forty American cents. You can easily get by without money because many items, such as clothing, hair, furniture, cars, and houses are free. You can also make your own clothing, house, etc. although you can get by very well without most of these items, especially cars, since the main modes of transportation are either flying like superman or teleporting.

“You have to be topless if you want to play,” the owner of the Greedy table said. The graphics of all the avatars hadn’t loaded yet, instead my viewer displayed gray figures on my screen. I couldn’t tell if anyone else was wearing any clothing, so I took off my shirt.

“I was just kidding,” the table owner said.

“Makes no difference to me what my avatar wears,” I said.

We didn’t look at our avatars anyway. We all zoomed in on the greedy playing board. The board was an octagon, one side for each player. When you sat in a chair, your avatar name appeared on the board and you were signed up to play the game. Across the middle of the board were six dots with the words ‘roll’ and ‘stop’ underneath. We all chatted by voice and they taught me how to play. When it was my turn, I clicked to either roll the dice or stop my turn.

Northern won. I figured he would. He seems intelligent. So he had to pay money back to the guy who had lent some to me, as agreed upon before the game.

There was one other woman at the greedy table with us. She told me that the reason my clothing made me look like a noob was that it was the standard clothing new avatars are given when they are created. She gave me a landmark for a store that had thousands of items of free clothing and for a help facility for newbies.

I teleported to the help facility and chatted with a guy who creates and sells virtual objects, such as furniture. Since my avatar had absolutely no money, he gave me L$100 so I could create my own group called BudgetJustified.com – my online community for the book and web series I created about being a female engineer.

Just outside the help facility, a bunch of guys were chatting and a slutty looking girl named Honi lurked in the background. I teleported Northern in to hang out with me. I don’t know what Northern had done, but the guys standing around started throwing toilet paper at him, shouting, “Great Northern!”

Northern got tired of them, so we teleported out of there to a pretty island. When I arrived, Honi was standing next to Northern.

Apparently he had been chatting with her through a private instant message. So I wandered off, looking for someone who might appreciate my company more.

“Come back,” Northern beckoned. “She’s just an empty head.” I wondered if she were actually a guy.

I lurked far in the background. Honi removed her clothes and they got on pink and blue pose balls that made their avatars kiss.

“Come over here and look at this,” Northern said.

I walked over there and saw Honi on her belly with her hands and feet tied together behind her back.

“I hogtied her,” he said.

Hogtied? Northern released her ropes and she gave him an animation object that allows you to offer a hug or a kiss. Northern offered her a kiss and she kissed him, embracing him with her arms, holding her face against his, and bending her knee to raise her foot in the air. Honi gave me a copy of the animation object too. I offered her a kiss and she gave me a big long smooch too, foot in the air.

A rock concert played nearby. Northern went over to listen, so we followed him. He and Honi danced close, gazing into each other’s eyes. I wanted to gag, but instead just teleported to Korea.

I needed to hang out with someone besides Northern, but didn’t know where to meet good people. I came across singles ads for avatars, but there weren’t many people to choose from. I teleported to an elegant ballroom affiliated with the singles ads.

I descended a golden staircase to a hall filled with avatars all dressed in huge formal gowns or tuxedos. I was wearing a ponytail, jeans and no shoes, so I changed into the only skirt I owned. It was a dowdy pink polka-dot skirt with matching blouse. I didn’t look like I belonged at a formal dance. I looked as though I belonged on Gilligan’s Island.

A gentleman played the piano and a bartender greeted me as I walked along a red carpet into the soiree. Several people perched on barstools along the curved bar as couples twirled on a sparkly dance floor. Beyond the dance floor, the club had parked a long, white yacht. In the distance, a large rectangular object floated down from the sky.

“Is someone wearing a house?” the dance club’s host asked.

“It’s the new fashion,” I replied.

I met a nice gentleman and we danced.

“This computer doesn’t have a microphone,” he said. “Will you be online tomorrow evening? We could chat tomorrow night.”

The next evening we found each other and went to a pretty island full of palm trees and flowers. We had a nice conversation about the places we lived. The next morning, he deleted me from his friend list and didn’t respond to a message I sent him. I was pretty sure I hadn’t offended him. Perhaps that was the problem. He may have wanted to chat with someone a little more offensive.

I went back to the ballroom dance club and another guy asked me if I’d go with him somewhere. Sure. I was eager to see new places.

He teleported me to the porch of a log cabin that sheltered a two-seated swing made of smaller logs. We went inside the unfinished wooden front door and found a pool table at the bottom of a staircase made of logs sawed in half lengthwise. Instead of pool balls, pink and blue pose balls hovered just above the green felt. I sat on the pink one to see if it would make me play pool. Instead, it made me do the same kind of ridiculous sex animations like the ones Northern showed me.

The guy got on the blue pose ball. “Take off your clothes,” he said.

Since when do I take orders from him? “Why are there so many of these ridiculous pose balls around here?” I said. “It was funny the first time I saw this, but now it’s getting old.”

“You’re supposed to get excited watching your avatar fuck and then you both jerk off in front of the computer,” he said.

“Are you kidding?” I asked. “This isn’t exciting. It’s a joke.”

The guy got mad and left. I guess he wasn’t kidding.

I figured the guy was just weird. Jerking off in front of a computer while you and some stranger watch avatars wiggling around is sad. As I found out later, there are an awful lot of weird people wiggling around online, jerking off in front of computers. Creeps me out.

## Week 3

Northern had mentioned a nude beach while talking to Jack. I was curious about why anyone would care about a beach with naked cartoon characters, so I searched for ‘nude beach’ and went to one of the many beaches that appeared in search.

Along the shoreline, bikini-clad avatars laid on beach chairs shaded by large umbrellas. Many other avatars in various stages of undress stood around on the sand. A woman with breasts as large as she was tall bounced from man to man. A man wearing nothing but a cobra slithered amongst the women.

One man’s penis told everyone within range who had touched his penis and in what way. Variations on “Jenny touched Joe’s penis with slow, deep strokes,” or “George massaged Joe’s penis with his wet, ravenous tongue,” appeared several times in chat. But of course, Jenny and George had done no such thing. Everyone who had the guy in their view clicked on the guys penis to see what offensive phrases it would come up with.

A nude bot avatar with giant breasts, spaghetti legs, and buttocks about the same width posed in a fountain. Palm-covered huts offered sexy skins and obscene penises for sale. Sprinkled amongst the scenery in plain sight, several kinds of pose balls teased visitors eager to find a cohort to use them. Labeled cuddling, kissing, or sex, pose balls awaited twosomes, threesomes, and for those not content with only two or three partners, tensomes.

There wasn’t much chat going on among the beach inhabitants. Presumably everyone was exchanging private messages. Fully clothed, I read the *Washington Post* out loud. A female voice on a nude beach! Guys with erect penises, some sticking straight out through their jeans, ran over to hear what was going on. Most of them left when they realized I wasn’t reading porn.

I set BudgetJustified.com as my ‘active’ group, which put the URL in a label above my head. I also uploaded graphics from the web series so I could put them on t-shirts and hand them out. Northern sent me a message asking me what I was up to. “Clothing the naked,” I replied.

I got harassed by a guy from Brazil, who kept telling me to take my shirt off. I teleported my friend Chandler, whom I know in real life. The Brazilian got all angry and let us know it by entering obscenities in chat and bumping into Chandler, backing up, then bumping into him repeatedly. “I’m punching you in the face,” he said.

I teleported Northern. He arrived just as the Brazilian disappeared. Northern thought Chandler was the one who had been harassing me, so Northern offered him a kiss. Chandler refused.

“Northern, meet Chandler, a friend of mine in real life,” I said.

“You know this guy?” Northern gasped. “Now he thinks I’m a freak.” Northern walked off.

Chandler took me to a clothing store and introduced me to a long-time online friend of his. She was the first overweight female avatar I had seen. Not just a few extra pounds, but really fat. She gave me some of her clothes, which, to my surprise, fit my thin avatar quite well. In fact, all clothing fits all avatars. The clothing data files have a design, but no shape. Clothes don’t take a size or shape until they’re attached to an avatar.

Chandler took me to his land to show me his house. “Why do you need a virtual house?” I asked. “It’s not like you get rained on here. And all your stuff is stored in an inventory.”

“People like to get creative and decorate their place,” Chandler explained. “Less expensive than decorating a house in real life. Plus it’s a venue where you can bring friends and hang out.”

I’m not sure why people would select a house as the thing they’d want to decorate. If you’re going to make something in a virtual world, make something you can’t have in real life, not the same thing everyone else has.

A sturdy maple tree with a tire swing guarded Chandler’s front lawn. Rocks lined a streambed that led to a trickling waterfall. We traipsed over a small wooden bridge and visited on his front porch.

New wicker chairs, which in a virtual world will never fade nor warp, invited us to relax while we took a sip from a pitcher of lemonade set out for us on a wicker table. When I say ‘invited,’ I mean with words. ‘ChairInviter says: LisaSchaefer Ruby, please have a seat and drink some lemonade,’ appeared in local chat. Gives new meaning to the concept of ‘inviting spaces.’

The home reminded me of a plush cabin in the woods, with cedar siding and shake shingles on a steeply-sloped split roof. Chandler entered a security code and the door opened.

Inside, a homey powder blue couch with white lace pillows bordered two sides of the single-roomed first story. I suppose there was no kitchen because there was no need to make food. Several large pieces of framed ‘artwork’ covered the walls – drawings of nude women.

“Why do you have these on the wall?” I asked.

“A neighbor of mine sells his drawings in a gallery nearby, so I bought a few.”

“So you could offend your female visitors?” I asked.

“They don’t mind,” he said.

What kind of women does he invite over?

Having seen the entire first floor, I walked up his stairs, only to fall off the side.

“You need handrails,” I said.

I attempted the stairs again. Upstairs, a circular area rug covered hardwood floors. Near the staircase, an end table covered with books sat next to chaise lounge. A few more ‘art pieces’ hung on the wall.

In the middle of the room, a tall, puffy king-sized purple bed topped with a variety of satin pillows loomed. I stood on his bed and jumped up and down on it. I don’t sleep online, so I saw no need to decorate a room with a pretty bed. Nor any need for nude drawings as decorations.

“Do you come here to stare at nude drawings?” I asked.

“Try out the chaise lounge,” Chandler changed the subject. I clicked to sit on the lounge and landed on my stomach, feet in the air crossed at the ankles, resting my chin in my hands. A book materialized in front of me, which I appeared to be reading.

“You know me well,” I said. “You invite me over to read books.” Just like when we were in college, hanging out in each other’s dorm rooms doing homework.

After Chandler logged off, I went to console, and laugh at, Northern.

## Noobieville

“I found free apartments,” Northern said.

“Free apartments?” I asked. “What does that mean?”

He teleported me to a land called Noobieville. Fifty narrow buildings bordered four courtyards with shallow hills and streams, occupying an entire island. Each building had four stories with one apartment on each floor. Each apartment had two small rooms. Neighbors filled in quickly as word spread.

Northern clicked on a box outside the doorway of a top floor apartment, paid zero Linden dollars to the object, and moved in. I did the same with the apartment on the first floor. Cool! Now I have a place to ‘decorate.’

The first thing I set out was a school of fish swimming in a circle. I expanded the circle so the fish would swim around the perimeter of the apartment, going in and out of the walls at the corners of the building. I placed a flowering bush in the center of the back room and a large burning torch in the middle of the room that led out to my front porch. Outside, I placed a rug over one wall of my brick siding and a giant blue suede shoe on the porch. I sat on my shoe and watched as new neighbors moved in across the courtyard.

I teleported to a twelve-story freebie mall to shop for things to strew around my new apartment and to get some clothing that wouldn’t make me look like a noob. I purchased a pink Jeep on the first floor, then went to the men’s department and bought a soccer shirt for L$0, or zero Linden dollars. Since you don’t have to get naked to try on clothing, I decided to try it on amongst the clothing displays. When I selected ‘Wear,’ a box with a picture of a soccer shirt attached itself to my arm. That’s not useful. I wanted to wear the shirt, not the box. Turns out that I had to go somewhere else to open the box to access the clothes.

Luckily I was able to correctly wear the next item of clothing I purchased, a skirt that looked like it belonged on a bride. Now I needed a groom. I chased a newbie guy around the store in my Jeep, driving over all of the clothing displays. “Will you marry meeeeee?” He teleported out of there.

I went back to Noobieville to look for another potential groom. I went to the sandbox area where I found two women and an eggplant building a few small objects. “Eggplant, will you marry meeeee?”

“Eeeek!” Eggplant typed. “I’m an eggplant!”

Eggplant changed into a man in a suit. “Eggplant, you’re even dressed for a wedding!”

“No, I’m dressed for business, like I often am in real life.” So Eggplant *is* a man?

## Week 4

Noobieville management changed its mind and decided to charge $25L per week for apartment rent. Still very cheap compared to most places – about ten cents in American money. Cheap, that is, if you have a source of Linden dollars.

“What if you’re a genuine newbie and have no money?” I asked. Because I was a genuine newbie with no money.

Neighbors Chachi and an Asian woman sent me money (which I paid back later). Very generous of them.

The next day, the Asian woman sent me an invitation to join her at a Cum As You Are party. I should’ve looked at that title a little more closely before I invited Northern to join us. When I got there, Asian and several other women were pole dancing. I sent Northern an instant message. “Please disregard teleport invitation.”

Too late, he was already on his way. When he saw what was going on, he took off his clothes and walked around all the girls on the poles doing pelvic thrusts. Sorta funny, sorta awful. I chose to laugh about it.

One of the girls told Northern, “What you’re doing is bordering on harassment.”

Poledance club management gave him clothes and ejected him. If that had been a real club and he had touched bodies, yeah. I would have agreed that was harassment. However, they invited us there without telling us what we were going to see when we got there. And they were skanky avatars dancing around on poles, so how was what Northern was doing any worse? Perhaps they were insulted because it was like he was making fun of pole dance bars. Which deserve to be made fun of.

I wished they would eject me too and sent Northern a message. “Please teleport me to wherever you are.” I landed on an island where lots of newbies stopped by. I gave them shirts and invited them to my BudgetJustified.com group.

A vampire friended me there. He got back to me a few times over the next several days and invited me to tour his vampire land.

## Vampires

Hidden in a deep valley beneath a forest of majestic spruce, the vampires dwelled in an enormous black castle with tall spires flying vampire flags. A moat crept around its perimeter. The vampire had invited three other women for the tour. We crossed the drawbridge as two more women, with flowing hair, wearing circular metal shields over their breasts and metal underpants, departed the castle on galloping stallions.

I wasn’t sure why anyone would join a clan of vampires or why the group existed at all. “What’s the mission statement of the vampires,” I asked, but didn’t get a clear answer.

“We protect each other from harm in this world,” Vampire said. What was that supposed to mean? Protect each other from the pole dancers who eject you from strip clubs?

“Why do people join vampires?” I asked.

“To meet friends. Become part of a society.”

“Like a frat?” I imagined the vampires as boozed up avatar guys, kicked out of strip clubs, trolling the castle for drunk half naked chicks on horses. Was this tour for recruiting more potential metal-clad horse-riders?

The first floor of the castle was a ballroom lit by an enormous chandelier. The black and white checkerboard marble floor was set up with giant chess pieces arranged as a game in progress. Burgundy blood oozed down red Victorian wallpaper.

While Vampire and the other women ascended the curved staircase on the left side of the ballroom, I ascended the staircase on the right – with two perfectly good staircases, we don’t all need to crowd onto the same one. A railing of candles prevented me from tumbling to the floor, as I had done when I walked up the stairs in the house of my real life friend, Chandler.

The indoor balcony housed a game room with several game tables – Greedy, Vampire Meltdown, SimBall, and several other games I had never heard of and didn’t know how to play.

“Can I come back and play these later?” I asked.

“You’ll automatically get ejected from this land if you come back after the end of the tour,” Vampire said. “The games are available only to members of the Clan.”

So that’s the reason to join vampires. Access to the game room.

We went up another floor and found a store to purchase vampire attire, skins, accessories, furniture, and animations. We followed Vampire through the store and exited through stained glass French doors to a golden veranda dripping with ivy. Vampire flew off the veranda and the rest of us trailed behind him to a village of mansions in the distance.

We landed on the clay tile roof of a mansion where a female vampire was giving a tour to several newbie men.

“This is my house,” Vampire said.

“Someone else is taking over your house,” I said.

“That’s my wife.”

According to the female vampire’s profile, she was partnered. But not to Vampire.

“Wife in real life?” I asked. “She’s partnered to someone else.”

“No, my real life wife isn’t in Second Life,” Vampire explained. “Vampira’s partner is my alt. I use this alt to find new recruits.”

Oh, I get it. Go around unpartnered, flirt, have some pixel sex, then the woman has to join vampire land in order to continue to have him around.

“What is the purpose of marriage in Second Life?” I asked.

Vampire ignored my question. “Let’s take a look around the place.”

We jumped off the roof onto the deck in the back yard. The house didn’t look very vampire-like. With stucco siding, palm trees, swimming pool, and lounge chairs shaded by umbrellas, it looked more like a Hollywood mansion.

We entered sliding glass doors to a bright yellow kitchen with stainless steel appliances and speckled granite countertop. A bowl of fruit gleamed on top of the kitchen island containing a wine rack underneath.

The wife and her male groupies entered the kitchen.

“What does it mean to have a vampire wife?” I asked.

“Feel free to grab a snack from the refrigerator,” Vampire said. Ignored again.

I clicked on the refrigerator. The door opened and a blue menu popped up asking me to select from a list of snacks. I took caviar and the refrigerator closed.

“Thanks for the snack,” I said.

A few of the other tourists also clicked on the refrigerator, causing the door to open and close several times. But nobody said anything, which was strange because people are usually fairly generous with please and thank you pleasantries in Second Life. In fact, except for a few acknowledgements that they didn’t have any questions, Vampire and I were the only ones chatting during the whole tour. I would have thought that their avatars had been abandoned, had they not been following us the whole time. Perhaps they weren’t smart enough to have anything to ask or say. Or they were busy with private messages.

I suppose this was the part of the tour where the potential new men and women meet each other and get excited about the possibilities of meeting new women or men. However since I was the only chattery one, that opportunity was lost.

The group walked across the midnight blue marble tile into the living room. Blue velvet curtains framed the view of a mountain valley out of the floor-to-ceiling windows. But nobody sat on the lemon yellow couches with floral embroidered pillows. We didn’t play any videos on the television or listen to music on the speakers of the mahogany entertainment center.

One of the tourists stepped onto the first rung of the carved ivory staircase. “We’re not going up there,” Vampire said.

Oh? What’s up there, I wondered. In a virtual world of course, you don’t have to send your avatar up the stairs to see what’s up there. I panned my viewer up to see a giant heart-shaped bed with pose balls. A bear-skin rug with pose balls. A reclining chair with pose balls. And a cross with pose balls.

I zoomed out to see what else we were missing. A four-car garage. With a Porsche, Lamborghini, Limousine, and Hummer. Each with pose balls in the back seat. Someone with a very expensive fantasy had obviously spent a lot of time decorating this mansion.

“Do all vampires get mansions like this?” I asked.

“No, Vampira and I pay extra to get this land.”

I still wasn’t understanding what this whole vampire husband and wife thing was for.

“If you want to get a mansion, do you have to have a partner?” No, that wasn’t the case either.

“So, it’s not like you’re raising vampire kids, or trying to get the government to grant you tax breaks. What do you have a vampire spouse for?”

“We’re near the end of the tour, so let’s go to our amusement park,” Vampire said. OK. Whatever his reason for having an online wife is, he doesn’t want to talk about it. Nor does he want to talk about why he doesn’t want to talk about it. Maybe people get married online because that’s what other people do here, sort of like why people get married and have babies in real life. If you don't, people keep asking you why not; although I keep asking why. Or perhaps he’s not clever enough to articulate his reasons.

We went out the front door and flew toward a Ferris wheel and merry-go-round. We landed near a roof decorated with crazy vampire characters dripping blood from their teeth. A lonely bumper car sat on the rink underneath. When Vampire sat in the car, another bumper car appeared.

“Hop in,” Vampire beckoned us.

I jumped in the other car and another bumper car appeared. As each person got in a car, another appeared until Vampire deleted the extra one. Then we were able to start driving with our arrow keys. I zoomed around and around the rink as the other cars blundered into each other, trapping themselves in a corner.

When time was up, scores appeared in local chat. Mine was the highest. Yea! I won at bumper cars!

I no longer heard from Vampire afterward. I think he was afraid of me because I asked too many questions.

In the Noobieville chat, a neighbor announced that she was at a sex toy store. What would a sex toy store for a virtual world be? Perhaps it’s a room with a bunch of phallus-shaped objects. What would be the purpose of having a virtual sex toy? I suppose you could put it in the middle of your apartment floor and carry it around to dance clubs. I wanted to find out what could possibly be there.

“Teleport me,” I asked her.

Someone named Phil sent me a teleport. I accepted, thinking he was at the store with the neighbor. But instead I arrived in the bedroom of a Noobieville apartment where a short, fat, naked, penisless avatar wearing a flat mask made from a photo of Dr. Phil stood on top of a red bed.

I turned and walked out the door onto the balcony so I could fly away from that desperate scene. A sign that said, ‘Phil’s Boom Boom Room’ hung from the railing. Although all Noobieville apartment buildings were identical, the view of the landscape from his balcony looked too familiar.

I jumped off the balcony and landed in front of a giant blue suede shoe. My apartment. The Dr. Phil disguise was in my building? I would have noticed if there had been a Boom Boom Room sign there before. I floated up to see where he was. He wasn’t on the second floor. Nor the third. The Boom Boom Room was on the fourth floor.

Fourth floor? Northern’s apartment was on the fourth floor. I peered into Dr. Phil’s open door as I hovered just off his balcony. “Where’s Northern?” I asked.

I sent a private message to Northern. “Northern!!!!! A naked Dr. Phil just teleported me to your apartment and there’s a red bed in the middle of his Boom Boom Room!”

Northern teleported in from his WWII games, wearing his military combat fatigues, boondocker boots, and haversack, carrying an automatic rifle and hand grenades.

“What are you doing here?” Northern asked him.

Panicked, Phil repeated, “I didn’t do anything, I swear it wasn’t me!” several times.

“This is my apartment!”

“LandLady told me to move into this apartment,” Phil said. “What’s going on? Why did they send the military in?”

Northern walked in and out of the rooms, onto the balcony, and flew around the building, searching for any of his items that may have been left behind.

“OK. This wasn’t your fault,” Northern said. “You can stay here and I’ll find a solution.”

After Northern had a talk with LandLady and moved into an apartment on the other side of Noobieville, I invited him to come country dancing at a saloon.

A battered double hinged pub door swung open and shut as I entered the barroom. Tumbleweeds blew across the gouged wooden dance floor. Three rows of couples, and a few singles, danced a synchronized line routine to a country song. Behind the bar, broken beer bottles were lined up along a shelf, along with liquor bottles with torn labels.

What was going on in the saloon’s chat was not conversation. Instead, it was a bunch of special characters that made pretty patterns. I didn’t know how these people were putting all these special characters into the chat, but they certainly weren’t typing the hearts, clovers, and diamonds that were arranged into twenty-line billboards that took on the shape of music notes, cowboy boots, or the naked woman silhouette you see on truck mudflaps. These wild text spams were accompanied by lots of unusual sounds, such as “Hoooo!” or a strange chipmunk voice saying, “I love this tuuuuune!” When someone did type in an actual sentence, you missed it because all these curly characters and exploding patterns kept scrolling up the entire chat screen.

Several whirligigs spun around on the ceiling. A few ceiling fans rotated in unison. In the middle was an orb covered with a red, white, and black logo that said, ‘Lagweiser, King of Jeers’ in curly script. Text above the orb said, ‘Saloon Sploder. Current pot is L$50.’ A Sploder is a raffle device. If you click on it and select ‘Pay,’ it takes some of your Linden dollars and enters you in a raffle.

Off to the side of the ceiling was a spinning pink and blue heart that said ‘Click me to dance.’ So I clicked on it and a blue menu popped up asking if I was male, female, or a couple. I clicked ‘male.’ If it needs me to tell it what gender I am, it doesn’t need me to be truthful.

While the other women did high kicks and crawled around on the floor doing splits, I joined the men in the line dance with my hands on my hips, jumping back and forth, occasionally marching in a small circle. I’m not sure which group looked more ridiculous.

When Northern arrived, he stretched his arm toward the ceiling, looking for the whirligig spinning heart that initiates dance moves. The text and logos probably hadn’t rezzed on his screen yet, so what he clicked on first was not the item that contained dance animations. ‘Rez,’ short for ‘resolve,’ is the Second Life term for graphics loading onto your screen. Northern jumped off my screen, although I knew he was still nearby because he was in my radar. I spun my view around the room to look for him, but no luck.

Then I saw his head fly by my view. Where was his head going? His head flew by a second and a third time. I panned up and saw him spinning around on a whirligig. Did he get caught in a ceiling fan? No, he was sitting on the Sploder! As the Sploder spun on a tilted axis, Northern dove face-first toward the floor, then hid on the back side of the orb, then zoomed toward the ceiling, then faced toward me again and nosedived toward the floor.

“Northern is on the Sploder!” the DJ shouted.

“He’s trying to break in and get the money out,” someone said.

“It’s full of beer. If he breaks it, we’ll all get drenched.”

I hopped onto the Sploder and joined Northern. My view of the whole room spun wildly – Ceiling. Wall. Floor. Dancers. Ceiling.

“Jane! Stop this crazy thing!” I shouted.

“Maybe if we all sit on it, it will get too heavy and fall off the ceiling,” the saloon owner said.

Then Northern started doing pelvic thrust animations, which stuck him out of the Sploder, hands behind his head, knees slightly bent, moving his rear forward and back like a bad ‘80’s dance. I was laughing so hard it hurt.

“He’s starting a new dance craze,” the DJ said.

Northern handed out his pelvic thrust animation and several people scooted across the wooden floor with their hands behind their heads, jerking their hips. A few other people sat on the ceiling fans and dance heart, spinning around the ceiling.

And just when I thought things couldn’t get any funnier, someone sent us a picture of me attached to the side of the Sploder with Northern floating next to me, hands behind his head, pelvis forward. I gave a copy of it to everyone.

The dance saloon was holding a voting contest. A large black electronic board hung on the back wall. Northern clicked on it and his name was added to the list of people to vote for. We all voted for best dancer, and of course Northern won. The prize was a couple hundred Linden dollars, about eighty American cents.

The saloon owner was missing a pant leg, exposing her thigh and most of her butt cheek. The rest of her jeans had flesh showing through several large slits cut into them. Unfortunately, Northern ruined the hilarity by shouting to her.

“I really like your jeans!”

I wondered if he had been sending private chats about lack of clothing to the rest of the women there.

## Classes

Some of our more experienced neighbors offered to give a building class in the Noobieville sandbox. The landscapes and environments in Second Life weren’t created by a central corporation. Users – the general public roaming around – created the houses, trees, Sploders, clothing and other objects found all over this world.

Building is one of the most common reasons for spending time in Second Life. Artists come here to display work and develop three-dimensional environments for people to visit and explore. Programmers spend a lot of time writing scripts to create objects that are more than something to look at – they create objects that *do* something. They create vendors that give out freebies, mechanisms that invite people to join groups, crawling babies, or dance balls.

I thought it would be useful to know how to create my own items related to *Budget Justified*, besides the T-shirts I’d already made, so I could have a set of web-series-themed objects to hand out to people. So I went to the building class in the Noobieville sandbox, not only for a learning experience, but also to get to know the neighbors.

Three female instructors showed up. They put out some wooden boxes, elongated them, and arranged them into rows. The students started sitting on the rows of elongated boxes and the instructors sat on a long box in the front of the sandbox. It was like an outdoor classroom with students on benches and teachers in the front of the ‘room.’ Instead of walls and a blackboard, we had a white picket fence and a chat box open on our screens.

The first thing we learned was how to make our own wooden box. That’s the default building object. The students each scattered boxes anywhere in the sandbox where there was room. We learned how to change the size and color of the box, then put different pictures on it.

I uploaded a jpg of my *Budget Justified* DVD cover and put it on my box. Then I made my box large and flat, like a stiff poster. After class, I took it to my apartment and hung it like a flag from the roof of my porch. Kind of like an identifier, ‘Ruby lives here,’ instead of a house number, that people can see when they’re trolling the neighborhood looking for me.

## Noobieville Neighborhood Dances

Noobieville also put on a dance for everyone to hang out together. As the dance commenced, I looked at the map of the land I was on to figure out where the dance was being held. I found a spot where several avatars were gathered and teleported there. However I landed inside a giant aquarium and couldn’t fly out because there was a lid.

In Noobieville chat I said, “Hey, I just teleported into the aquarium at the dance.”

“Teleport me,” several of the people who hadn’t arrived yet requested. I teleported them, and one person turned into a dolphin avatar and swam around. We were three avatars trapped in an aquarium, peering out at our neighbors watching us like a dolphin exhibit at the zoo.

After a few laughs, our neighbors teleported us out of the aquarium and onto the dance floor. I danced with a few guys. After they left, I invited Northern to come. As I danced with him, I tried to chat about the building class he missed, but he didn’t respond to our conversation.

“Northern’s avatar is here, but nobody’s home,” I said to everyone at the dance.

So I stopped dancing and left his avatar standing there next to the pink dance pose ball I vacated. Seeing my dilemma, BeachHouse asked me to dance. Landlady got on the pink ball next to Northern and he came alive again.

“I’ll just put my hand down Northern’s pants while he’s away,” Landlady said.

“Oh, I’m not away,” Northern said. “But you can keep your hands there anyway.”

He responds about groping for everyone to read, but he doesn’t acknowledge messages about neighborhood classes. Was I not obscene enough to dance with?

After BeachHouse left, I was dancing alone. I approached Eggplant. “Eggplant, will you dance with me?”

He became a burning book and with pages fluttering, flew away from me. As he floated in the rafters, I flew over to him and danced in the air on top of him.

A neighbor complimented my dance moves. He gave me a dance animation and we played with the different commands. A neighbor dressed like Santa joined us. For one of the moves, we bounced back and forth like a slinky, alternately landing on our feet and our heads.

“I thought that was supposed to be a dance animation, not a Jack-in-the-Box animation,” onlooker Sweets said.

I tried another dance move called ‘clean.’ I selected that one, imagining a dance a friend in real life made up that she called ‘Mopping the Floor’ where we pretended to grab a mop handle and rotated around the floor moving our arms in a churning motion. Instead, Santa and I started licking our own crotches. Next move, please.

“I thought that move was supposed to be CLEAN,” I said. “It looked pretty dirty to me.”

“Sorry about that,” my neighbor said. “Some of the dance moves are a bit distasteful.” Yeah, like everything else in this virtual world.

## Partners

Northern’s friend Jack was sitting by a campfire in the Noobieville sandbox with several other neighbors, dressed as a hobo – rumpled hat, torn pants, a jacket with mismatched patches, gloves that had unraveled. He held a stick with a bandana tied to the end and looked like he needed a shave. Behind him, he had parked a hobo trailer. Next to Jack was a hobo woman dressed in the same outfit he had on. I hadn’t heard of her before, but according to their profiles, she and Jack were now ‘partners,’ or online spouses.

Not everyone attributes the same meaning to partners. It’s mostly like playing that you’re virtual characters are married, but since you can’t always expect your partner to be online with you, a lot of people don’t feel obligated to loyalty.

“Jack, congratulations on your new partnership,” I said. “So what does that mean? Are you married now?”

“Well, it was a spur of the moment thing,” Jack said. “Seemed like a good idea at the time.”

“I committed to renege on him,” Jack’s hobo wife said. “I’ll stay with him forever, until I’m tired of Second Life.”

Well, that was clear. Seems like they’re not even sure what being partnered means to themselves.

For everyone in the sandbox to hear, Jack said, “You and Northern should get partnered. You got along well when he had his leg stuck in your crotch.”

I think Jack was trying to establish Northern and me as a couple to the Noobieville neighbors. Probably because I’m nicer to Jack than Northern’s other female friends.

I sent Northern a message. “What are you up to today?”

“I’m in an Ivory Tower. Want to come?”

He teleported me and I landed on the top floor of a tall, tapered cylinder made out of huge, ivory blocks. Objects were arranged around the perimeter of the room with labels that explained what the scripts inside of them did. A whirring fan said, ‘Rotating Script.’ A coffee maker said, ‘Object Giver Script.’ And a huge heart that spewed tiny hearts said, ‘Particle Poofer Script.’

Northern mostly ignored me. “I’m examining the objects to learn how to write scripts,” he said.

He wandered from object to object, carrying a huge, puffy white gun. He approached a large screenless window, aimed the gun out of it, then shot several snowmen out if the gun onto unsuspecting avatars below. Every time a snowman hit the ground, the tower shook like we were in an earthquake. I got thrown into a different area of the floor and a few avatars crashed into me.

Several people asked Northern to please stop shooting. “Would you get rid of that gun before I shoot you?”

Northern flew out the window without saying goodbye, so he could chat with someone outside. I left.

## What do poseballs do?

As my avatar teleported into a rose garden, a male elf in a green suit with pointy shoes teleported in also. He landed on my big wavy brunette hair, arms and legs flailing.

“Would you like a piggy back ride?” I asked.

“You already gave me one,” he said.

“Then let’s try a spin in my pink jeep.” I took him back to Noobieville and got in the driver’s seat. He hopped in the passenger’s seat and I took off. The terrain was hilly and the jeep tended to roll downhill too easily. Using my arrow keys to steer against the hills, I hit every rock, tree, and apartment building in sight.

I got on voice and laughed through the entire drive. After running over all the park benches and bushes, I drove straight into the lake and couldn’t find my way out. The guy teleported away and I flew around looking for the jeep, but couldn’t locate it.

So I announced a new contest in the Noobieville neighborhood chat.

“Whoever finds a pink jeep at the bottom of the lake wins a free pink jeep.”

The guy sent me a message, “How about we take a casual stroll instead. See what we stumble upon.”

He teleported me to an opening in a row of tall flowering bushes. I followed him into the garden and we navigated the maze of sidewalks while we chatted. Well, it was more like Walk. Chat. Walk. Chat. In order to walk, you had to use arrow keys, which was impossible while typing to each other in a chat window. They really needed moving sidewalks here.

We came upon a rose-covered bed out in the open. Aha. This is the real reason he wanted to go for a ‘casual stroll.’ He knew exactly what we’d ‘stumble upon.’ Several sex poseballs were scattered in the bushes, in the grass, on a wicker chair, on a picnic blanket, and under a see-through tent. One blue poseball and two pink poseballs hovered above the flower-covered bed. Had he been planning to meet someone else here and brought me along to complete the threesome?

I browsed RoseBed’s profile. In his picture, he was not an elf, but a surfer blond with sunglasses, riding a wave on his boogie board. In his real life information, he had entered the European country he lived in and an age that was older than mine. In his Second Life information, after a profound saying that didn’t make sense, he had entered, ‘No Sex.’

I asked him, “Why the note in the profile if you’re taking me to sex poseballs?”

“I’m tired of so many women asking me for sex. I want to be the one to choose,” he said.

Right. All those tiresome women asking for threesomes. If these supposed requests existed, they probably came from men posing as female avatars.

“And why choose me?” I asked.

“I like that you put glasses on your avatar. You have a fun personality.”

And, because I’m here.

I didn’t know how these pose balls worked, so I got on one to see what happened if you stayed on them for awhile. RoseBed hopped on the blue pose ball and typed, “Wheeeeee!” in chat.

Wheeee? OK, whatever. “Whee,” I typed back.

Our avatars wiggled back and forth with RoseBed on top of me, between my legs.

“Ooh baby. Yeah, baby!” he said.

“Baby. Baby,” I typed.

“Ohhhhh, baby baby!” he typed.

“Baby baby. Get up on this,” I typed.

He typed more nonsense to me and I copied and pasted lyrics from an ‘80’s song into chat as I hummed the song to myself.

RoseBed changed the animations so that I was on top and my head was held high in the air. My eyes and mouth were wide open, as if frozen in terror. RoseBed unwore his green suit and pointy shoes and they disappeared into his inventory. I took off the tank top I had made out of a graphic of bricks, but a white strip still covered my breasts like a tube top.

“Take off your undershirt,” RoseBed said.

“I’m not wearing one,” I replied.

“Oh, some of the noob skin comes like that,” he said. “No worries.”

So there our avatars were, his clothing-free, mine with a white bra and a pair of shorts I had created from a graphic of highway asphalt. Occasionally other men would walk past. Some stood around, as if waiting for someone else to drop by or for us to finish. Or perhaps lurking for the show. One guy took off his clothing, stood next to my brunette head, put on a penis, then enlarged it until it poked me in the nose. He wandered off naked. Another guy got on a nearby poseball, got off, then tried each of the female poseballs within sight, alone.

“OK, I’ve had enough of this freak show,” I said.

“But we’re not done yet,” RoseBed whined.

Done? Maybe these poseballs do something to tell you when you’re done. “How do you know when your avatar is done? Does a gray box pop up?”

“What are you talking about, a gray box?” he asked.

“I don’t know. I was hoping you could tell me.”

I walked away from the computer to get a snack from my kitchen in real life. After some more oohing, aahing, and babying on his end, he said he was done. But nothing happened. No gray box. No chat from the pose balls confirming it was over. No hearts spewing from the bed. That was it?

“How will I find out if I’m pregnant?” I asked RoseBed.

“Don’t worry. You aren’t,” he said, and logged off naked. Creep.

I was curious about how easy it would be to find guys to take me to poseballs. I put my brick shirt back on and wandered around the garden. It took about three minutes before a guy offered me friendship in a foreign language. I accepted, but he disappeared without saying anything. Another minute later, a French guy with black hair sticking up straight in the air approached me.

“Would you like to dance?” he asked.

A piano nearby played classical music. Several couples danced around the piano on a raised wooden platform. The women wore the typical miniskirts, low-cut blouses, and stiletto heels found in Second Life. The men wore torn jeans and black t-shirts or leather jackets.

After we danced, we laid down on some beach chairs near a pool. I took off my shirt so I was in my white tube top again. I figured that the French were used to women sunbathing topless.

“I’ll get really turned on in you take off your shoes,” the guy said.

Turned on by removing shoes? Is he being funny? I took off my shoes.

“Ooh, follow me,” he said.

We got up and walked back over to the bed of roses out in the open. As if I hadn’t seen this bed before. He took off his jeans and t-shirt and got on the blue poseball. I got on a pink one. We wiggled around on the poseballs for a few moments before another guy approached me.

“Are you using your fingers or a vibrator?”

Had he been waiting there to ask weird questions of the first female who came by and hopped on a poseball?

“What are you talking about?” I asked him.

“In real life,” he said.

Does this guy go up to couples in real life and ask such questions? I don’t know if he was trying to bug me or lure me away from the French guy. Bugging someone having sex in the open would be appropriate, but I suspect it was the latter. I wondered if such a line had ever worked for anyone before.

“I’m not using anything,” I said. “I’m using fingers to type.”

“Then let me know when you’re done and I’ll show you some tricks.”

I told the French guy I was done and walked off. The fingers vs. vibrator guy followed me.

“Come with me,” he said. He took off his jeans, then a penis appeared on him.

“A penis?” I said? “Is that for laughs? I don’t think any of the other guys I was with tonight had any penises.”

Of course, it didn’t bother him that ‘guys’ was plural. He went into the tent and got on a poseball. I got on the other one and could no longer see his penis.

“See. You don’t even notice the penis when we’re both on poseballs,” I said.

“Giant Penis says: Growing harder as excitement builds,” appeared in chat.

“Is your penis talking?” I asked.

More weird text appeared. “Giant Penis says: Rubbing her inside as juices flow.”

“That’s what you need a penis for,” the guy said.

“Giant Penis says: Throbbing faster as I move in and out, in and out.”

“You need a penis for spam? Why would anyone want a chatting penis?” I asked.

“Giant Penis says: Feeling the tension build as I move faster and deeper.”

“To get you excited.”

“Giant Penis says: Holding back to keep the tension rising.”

“To get me annoyed,” I said, and logged off.

## Followed around for sex, Desperate/RoseBed

I’m not sure what I learned from my experiment to see if I could get guys to take me to poseballs. None of the guys were good company. All they wanted was to watch cartoons having sex.

I was at a country dance saloon when RoseBed sent me a message. I didn’t think I’d hear from him since we hadn’t friended each other.

“Teleport me,” he said. I didn’t know anyone at the saloon, so I teleported him in.

He didn’t participate in any of the saloon chat, which was just as well since it was mostly hundreds of lines of spam with unusual characters arranged into pictures. Instead, RoseBed kept chatting with me about orgies.

“A few months ago, there was an awesome orgy at the place I met you. Ten avatars all got on by voice. It was a pile of writhing, moaning bodies.”

Why did he think I cared? “Where do you work?” I asked. It was three o’clock PM his time and I wondered why he was spending that time chatting with me about orgies.

“I’m a highway engineer for the government,” he said, but insisted on sticking with his original topic. “If you want to go to an orgy, I know where I can find a few people to join us.”

“And you go to orgies on your computer at work?”

“No, I telecommute once or twice a week,” he said. It’s still ‘at work’ to me. I know about engineers who work for the government, telecommute, and look for sex on the job. That’s what my *Budget Justified* web series is all about.

“Your avatar looks hot today,” he said.

I didn’t need any avatar compliments. I didn’t make it. It isn’t me. I don’t maintain it. I haven’t changed it since the last time I saw him. I was wearing a green tank top with my *Budget Justified* logo across the front and coral-pink pants. The other women were wearing ventilated see-through pants, super-high cut-offs, bikini tops, and western boots. There was nothing especially hot about my avatar.

“I’ll teleport you to a great place where we can have sex in all sorts of wild positions,” he said.

“No thanks,” I said. “I already had sex in real life today,” and teleported out of there.

The French guy invited me to see his house. It wasn’t a house worth bothering to inviting anyone over to. Unlike the apartments in Noobieville, you couldn’t have friends come hang out because there was no front porch to gather around. The only furniture he had was a bed in the middle of the room. He could have at least had some couches for guests to sit on. Who wants to come over to stand around a bed.

I zoomed out to inspect the place. I wasn’t really even a house – only one room. A poster on one of the walls announced an art display in France by some guy named Jacques Ambroise. I thought perhaps he put it there to show people what he’s working on in real life, like I put my *Budget Justified* poster on my Noobieville porch.

“Are you Jacques Ambroise?” I asked.

“Yes, how do you know?” he asked.

“Your name is on your poster.”

I told him about *Budget Justified*, what it was about, why I had produced it.

“An American movie. How impressive. I’ll go to your website and buy it,” he said.

“Tell me about your art show,” I asked.

He hemmed and hawed. “I don’t really want to talk about real life,” he said. He got on a pose ball. “Please, join me on the bed.”

I just stood there. He took off his jeans and black t-shirt, the same thing he was wearing last night, and his avatar got into a sex position.

“I didn’t come here to watch your naked avatar,” I said.

Apparently he thought I came over to listen then, because he turned on his microphone and grunted.

“Ooo. Ooo. Ooo.”

Idiot. Did he think monkey noises turned women on? What motivates people to do these odd things.

‘Jacques’ kept his word about purchasing a download of *Budget Justified*. A guy from France did indeed buy it from my web site. But the name on the credit card was Michel F., not Jacques Ambroise.

The guy who friended me at the bed in the rose garden without saying a word sent me a teleport request, so I left.

When I arrived at the teleport location, I was in some hotel set up for orgies. Out of the frying pan and into the fire. I should have teleported RoseBed and Michel in so they could get it on with this guy.

I landed on a red velvet bed with multiple poseballs on it. The room was spinning. I hadn’t seen that before and wondered how they made that happen. As it rotated, other beds in various shades of burgundy and red went by with black lace pillows and multiple poseballs. A black L-shaped couch with multiple poseballs. A giant cross with multiple poseballs. A cage with multiple poseballs. Large framed scenes of several female avatars crawling over each other on beds, floors, and staircases went by. One of the pictures showed a man holding a whip, standing over a group of women attached in various positions to a cross.

I jumped off the bed and the room stopped spinning, but the bed was rotating around on a platform, with the guy who teleported me still on it.

“Vir a mim, meu amor,” he said.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I responded.

“Eu trago para a minha cama de docura,” he said.

Oh great. The guy doesn’t speak English. So I went back to the saloon.

A few minutes later, he teleported me again. I went to see if he had a different plan this time. He sort of did.

As I arrived, several other women were landing on the bed also.

“What’s this about?” one of them asked.

A few of the women jumped off the spinning bed and walked around to explore the place then sauntered out the door. Others left immediately.

Since I had been teleported from country dancing, my avatar was still dancing like a maniac. I clicked on the button to fly and floated above the guy, dancing on his head. He followed the women out the door and I chased him, doing my wild dance steps. In the parking lot, he teleported a few more women and got on the poseballs in the back seat of one of the cars. I jumped onto the car and danced on the hood.

“Va embora e parar de me incomodar,” he said.

The guy ran off. I teleported Northern. He chased the guy in circles. The guy got into the front seat of a pink convertible Cadillac and drove away. I hopped onto the poseballs in the back seat and rode with him, doing sex motions by myself while he drove. Northern ran after us doing his pelvic thrusts.

“Eu nao tenho relacoes sexuais com homens.”

The guy teleported away with the car still in motion. I stood up and the car drove down a hill, out from underneath me. Then the guy unfriended me.

Finally the chaos was over and the guy and all his confused random women were gone. Northern and I were alone. We went for a walk to the hotel’s clear blue swimming pool.

“Nice dance moves,” Northern said.

We put on our swimsuits and fell into the pool. I boarded a raft and splashed as I kicked the water. Northern dove off the diving board several times, using a different technique each time. I took the position in the life guard chair and blew the whistle.

An employee of a nearby store came out of her shop. “Orgies are not allowed here,” she said. Where was she five minutes ago?

I wanted to say, ‘Then why all the cars with poseballs.’ Instead I said, “Thank goodness.” This must not have been the first time the guy teleported woman after woman here.

Satisfied that nothing unsavory was going on anymore, the woman went back into her store.

“Would you like to go to the military ball with me tomorrow night?” Northern asked.

A big fancy dance? “I’d love to go,” I said.

My first Second Life date! Sounded like a much better opportunity than orgies, monkey grunts, or random teleports. Why don’t men invite women to something they might actually want to go to?

I wondered if the people I met would have treated me like an idiot if I were a man. I often asked Northern what he was up to so I could get a deeper look into how his experience in online as a man compares to mine as a woman. He is quite articulate in his writing and I wondered if he’d be willing to collaborate on a journal of our shared experiences.

But I realized I wouldn’t necessarily get a thorough or honest answer from Northern. Heck, I don’t need Northern’s view. I can get that view on my own. Thus I prepared to give birth to Bruce.

## Can I get away with pretending to be a man?

I didn’t want to act any differently. Conversationwise, I believe that men and women aren’t that different. The words themselves won’t give away whether I’m male or female. There’s no such thing as a male sentence or female sentence.

Unless I slipped up and said something about ‘my husband’ or accidentally turned on my mic. It wasn’t as though I would accidentally walk Bruce into the women’s restroom, but I figured there was something I didn’t know about yet that might pose a problem for me.

I gave my man an obviously male name because I wanted to be clear that I was playing a man no matter what I was wearing.

Apparently it’s not uncommon for people to have avatars of the opposite sex.

In Noobieville chats, Eggplant often mentioned being gender-neutral. Right. Eggplants don’t have a gender.

### Bruce

I was born yesterday. I’ve never been a man before, so I wasn’t quite sure how to go about being one. In general, I don’t pretend to be something else, so I wasn’t sure I could pull it off.

I landed at Help Island and created a shirt made of asphalt. Then went straight to Noobieville to sign up for an apartment. I was thirty-third on the waiting list.

I decided to be in the same neighborhood as my LisaSchaefer Ruby avatar so we’d have similar social circles. I wanted to compare how Ruby was treated in the neighborhood compared to Bruce.

Shortly after I got on the long waiting list, Landlady sent out notices to Noobieville.

“I’m tearing down all the apartments and instead assigning plots of land. Everyone will design and build their own homes.”

As soon as the notice went out, there was a lot of confusion in Noobieville chat.

“We just got here. Can’t we settle in before everything changes again?”

“I’m still a noobie. I don’t know how to design or build a home.”

“Can we keep our apartment and put that on our land?”

“How much time do we have to go home and pick up our stuff?”

Landlady didn’t waste any time tearing down the apartments. By the end of the day, all two hundred apartments were gone. Some people probably haven’t even logged on to see the notice yet. They’ll show up tomorrow and think they’re in the wrong place.

## ‘Building’ Community

### Ruby

Noobieville residents settled in to our new plots. Northern got a plot next door to mine and set a green fire in his front yard. He couldn’t put it out.

“Luckily it won’t spread and burn down the neighborhood,” I said. “All the apartments have already been destroyed and nothing new has been rebuilt yet.”

BeachHouse, his neighbor on the other side, showed him how to delete stray particles. BeachHouse was being quite a helpful neighbor to everyone around us. Most of us didn’t know how to make a house, so he gave several of us a freebie beach house to put on our land.

I wasn’t sure if we were required to put houses, but figured it would look better than putting a giant blue suede shoe and a torch on my land, though a bit boring. The neighborhood near my plot looked a tract home development with a group of ten identical homes next to each other.

The houses had weathered gray wood siding and clay tile roofs. I had oceanfront property, so I arranged my beach house to have the giant plate glass window facing the ocean. I put a whitewashed chair swing on my front porch and entered through the front entrance. I call it an ‘entrance’ because the house had no doors. Made it easier to go in and out.

Inside, the walls were a drab brown. I set a ‘rug’ on my floor that I made from the DVD cover of *Budget Justified*. I walked up a ramp to a railingless loft and set out my giant blue suede shoe.

## My first online date

I still had a few minutes before my date with Northern. I put on hair done up in a chignon and dressed up in my best fluffy blue formal dress. I made some long gloves to match.

Northern came over to my house dressed in a white shirt dark tie underneath a formal olive brown army uniform with brass buttons down the front and metal discs adorned with a symbol of an airplane on the tips of his collar. He wore a big round hat with a black brim and a brass eagle on the front.

“I’ll teleport to the dance, then teleport you there,” Northern said.

Five minutes later, I hadn’t heard from him.

I sent him a message. “Are you at the dance yet?”

“When I got there, I realized I needed a different hat,” he said. “I’m looking for one now.”

I waited another twenty minutes.

“Haven’t you found a hat yet?”

He offered me a teleport. Thank goodness. But when I arrived, I wasn’t at the dance. I was at a hat store.

“Does the hat really matter?” I asked. “Just wear the hat you already have.”

He wandered through the store for another twenty minutes. It made me wonder if what was really going on was that there a woman at the dance whom he didn’t want me to see, and he didn’t want her to see me either. I wished I knew where the dance was so I could go there myself and check out what was going on.

Finally, we arrived at the dance forty-five minutes after our date was supposed to start.

A five man band of fake avatars wearing tuxedos played *In The Mood* on a chrome stage armed with drums, trombone, saxophone, clarinet, and piano. A 1948 candy apple red Cadillac convertible with tail fins and white wall tires was parked near the stage. At least fifteen couples danced across the black and white checkerboard floor in military uniforms, tuxedos, beaded gowns, tailored dresses, hats with feathers and veils.

We had a lot of technical issues in that sim – the Second Life term for an island of land. After all that waiting, Northern and I still had to log in and out about four times before we could both see the dance pose balls and have a private voice chat.

I complained in the public chat. “This place is so slow and laggy, I’ve been here for half an hour and still haven’t been able to get a dance poseball.”

Someone sent me a private message. “The creator of the sim is here. Be quiet. We don’t want to offend her. She donated her time to make this dance scene for us.”

I noticed Northern didn’t chat at all in the public chat. Unusual, because he always contributes to Noobieville chat. Perhaps he doesn’t feel as comfortable contributing to conversation amongst the people in that group. Or he didn’t want to be conspicuous while having a date there.

Once we got talking and dancing, it was a very pleasant event. I was dancing in a fancy dress with a handsome man!

Northern spent most of the dance changing in and out of his clothes and hat. Army suit. White suit. White hat. Gray hat. Black suit. Tuxedo. Why did he spend close to an hour selecting an outfit before the dance if he wasn’t going to wear his selection?

One of the men’s hands covered the breasts of his dance partner. I thought perhaps it was a mistake caused by the relative size of their avatars. Perhaps his hands were supposed to be on her waist, and he was too tall, resulting in his hands being too high. But then I noticed that same thing happened with several of the couples. I’m not sure if the hand placement of the dance animation was on purpose. But it sure was a surprise to everyone who selected that dance.

“Oh, pardon me, ma’am. My hands slipped,” one man said.

“I wasn’t going to say anything about my husband’s impropriety until I saw Jeff had his hands on Tara’s breasts too,” one woman said.

“I swear, I’m not doing this on purpose,” another guy said.

Northern must have been having a good time also. We were one of the last couples to leave. We went back to his house and I hopped into the bed in his loft to fall asleep. Well, actually to log off.

### Bruce

After Ruby logged off, I flew around the neighborhood, looking at what creations people were putting on their land. Northern had a woman in his place decorating his house. I stopped by and Northern showed me the loft of his beach house. The walls were no longer drab brown. They were dark red flocked with velvet flowers. Nudie paintings hung on the walls. The bed Ruby had logged out in now had a black bedspread. A mirror was glued to the ceiling.

“Jasmyne is turning my bedroom into a love nest,” Northern said to me. He turned to Jasmyne and said, “You can spend the night whenever you want, darling.”

“Uh, I’ll leave you two love birds alone,” I said, and flew away.

### Ruby

I logged back on just as an earthquake shook me out Northern’s love-nest-in-the-making and into his back yard. Jasmyne was still in the house, but I landed next to Northern.

“Who is Jasmyne?” I asked him.

“Just a friend I’ve known for only a few days.”

“What was that earthquake about?”

“She’s helping me redecorate. She accidentally moved the whole house instead of just the ceiling.”

Hm. Awfully nice of this friend that he just met to help out so much with redecorating.

She was doing a pretty nice job. So she was too busy to chat. However she did accept my friend request and gave me a gift certificate to a virtual store.

Now Northern probably suspects that Bruce is me.

I had thought that the military ball was a date. But seeing that Northern was with another woman immediately after I left, I guess it wasn’t much of a date. Northern is the type who likes to hang out with easy women, so I don’t expect our friendship to last. I need to meet people I can form more healthy friendships with – if that’s possible online.

## Saturday, March 6, 2010

### Bruce

LandLady teleported to me and hovered above me. “Your land is ready if you’d like to claim it.”

Already? A lot of people must have bailed from the waiting list after all the apartments had disappeared. I followed LandLady to a vacant plot and purchased it from her for zero dollars.

The brick house next door stood on a granite foundation. I recognized the pattern and made pants out of the identical standard graphics file in my inventory. With my brick shirt and granite pants, I’m now something of a brick house.

Santa was my neighbor on the other side of my land. He helped me go shopping for a free prefab house. After I made my selection, I returned to my land and put my new house on it.

The house had yellow wooden siding, huge glass windows, and a big open space where the front door was supposed to be. I could have purchased a front door, but the lack thereof made it much easier to walk in and out.

As it was, I couldn’t really get to the second floor of my house. There were no stairs, you had to fly from the first floor, over the balcony. I flew up, but hit my head on the ceiling. So I moved back and forth a bit to get into the space between the front windows and the balcony railing. First I hit one wall, then another. I landed and tried to stand directly under the open space in my ceiling, then flew up. And hit my head again. My flying controls weren’t fine enough to go upstairs. Damn useless house.

Besides shoes, torches, a school of fish, and other similar miscellaneous items, I didn’t have any furniture to put in the house. A female vampire stopped by, so I left my house sit empty on my land and went outside. She must have looked at my profile.

“Oh, how cute. A newbie,” she said. “Want to go dancing?”

She teleported me to a dance club, but danced with all her other boyfriends there, so I logged out.

## Gender discrimination?

### Ruby

I went to a television store to find a potential movie screen so I could throw parties at my house and show clips of *Budget Justified*.

While I wandered up and down rows of television viewers, neighbors chatted in Noobieville neighborhood chat. TeeVee flirted with a woman named Disaster. “If you come over to my place, you can hang out and watch love scenes with me on my new television.”

New television? I went back to Noobieville, and found TeeVee in his house, standing in front of simple tan bachelor couches, watching a YouTube video in his house.

“Where did you get your YouTube viewer?” I asked him.

He didn’t respond. So I sent him a private message asking the same question. He still didn’t respond. Why log onto Second Life if you’re just going to stand alone in your house watching television.

### Bruce

I stopped by TeeVee’s house and peeked in his window. He was still alone in his living room, watching videos.

“Hi TeeVee. What are you watching?”

I expected him to ignore me, but he invited me in. “Do you like Michael Jackson?” he asked and turned to the video for *Billy Jean*. We chatted a bit, then he asked what other music I liked.

“Scorpions,” I said. So he turned on a video of *Still Loving You*.

“Are these all on YouTube?” I asked. They were. Cool. My *Budget Justified* clips are on YouTube, so I should be able to watch those on one of these television screens.

“Can I have a copy of your television?” I asked.

“It’s not copyable. I got it from a friend. I’m not sure where she got it.”

Strangely, all his clothes disappeared for a moment. Not sure what that means. Maybe a gay gesture? Perhaps that’s why he ignored Ruby. But he was flirting with Disaster, so I doubt he’s gay. Maybe it was a technical glitch.

TeeVee was kind of boring, so I went back to my own land to work on furnishing it with items that Ruby had given me. Looking through my inventory, I found a pig, an apple, and a chess board. I figured I could make a box-like coffee table to put my chess board on, as a conversation piece to set out in my living room.

However when I took the chess board out, it took up the entire floor, extending out beyond the house. Wow. Some chess board. Where was anyone supposed to put that? It would take a giant mansion with a huge room dedicated solely to the chess board to house such a game.

But on second thought, if I have a giant chess board to put out on my land, why would I need a house to cover it up?

I don’t want to live in a house. I’m an avatar. I want to live in a game. So I deleted the house and kept the chess board on my land.

I didn’t have anything else that really looked right alongside a giant chess board. I put a few plants near the corners of my plot, but with all the giant chess pieces arranged on the board, the pig and the apple just looked cluttery next to it. So I left the chess board as it was and went country dancing to win some spending money.

I arrived on the beat-up wooden dance floor in the middle of a voting contest. I got on a pose ball to join the line dance. The woman dancing next to me didn’t have a dance partner.

“Would you like to share votes with me?” I asked her.

“I already promised to swap votes with another woman,” she said. “But we could do a three-way vote exchange.”

I like it. This woman is friendly and a problem solver. So she voted for me, I voted for her friend, and her friend voted for her. We all won money.

“There’s a voting contest going on right now at another club,” the woman said to me. “Would you like to come with us there?”

She and her friend disappeared then teleported me. The venue I landed in definitely wasn’t country dancing. It was more like a goth club. Spider webs hung from the chandelier. In the corner of the room, the keys of a church organ pressed themselves, as though an invisible ghost were playing music, while the pipes above it opened and closed. The walls were black, the floor was black, the people were all wearing black. Probably because the contest was called ‘Best in Black.’

The DJ flew around the club and on top of the organ. “All you goths out there have to be wearing black if you’re going to join the contest,” he announced. Probably because three people just arrived wearing cowboy boots. a red bikini, cut-off jeans, and granite pants.

The contest board started to appear at the back of a stage set up with drums, keyboard, microphone, and turntable. I put my name on the board and changed the graphic on my pants to slate. I modified the color of my brick shirt so the bricks were a maroon-black.

“The board is about to close for voting! Get your name on there now!” the DJ warned us.

“Bruce, your name isn’t on the board,” my new female friend alerted me.

“I put my name on the board already.” I took a look at the board and saw my name at the bottom. “I see it’s there.”

My friend walked onto the stage to get a better look and stood under another board that was starting to rez on my screen. “You have to put your name on the board over here,” she said, as a blue outline appeared on the board around six male names. “You’re on the female board.”

How appropriate. It wasn’t force of habit that I entered the contest on the female board. It was because my computer monitor hadn’t displayed the male board right away. After the Join Contest button on the male board appeared on my screen, I put Bruce’s name on the male board also.

While I was out dancing, Landlady sent a message to Noobieville. “We have a problem with glowing houses. I’m going to delete them all by sundown if you don’t get to them first.”

Glowing houses? I had never seen a house glowing anywhere in all of Second Life. My neighbor Santa was living in some type of cheery green elf workshop, but I’d hardly call that glowing.

“Is anything on my land glowing?” I asked.

“Making jewelry by the light of the chessboard…” Eggplant said.

“I’m not coming over to pick up my chess board right now. I’m dancing for money.” Which was true.

“If you’re at a strip club, teleport me,” Northern said. I didn’t teleport him.

LandLady said my chess board was fine, so I turned off Noobieville chat and stayed where I was. And wondered how much of Noobieville would be blasted away by LandLady before I returned.

In the goth club’s local chat, I made jokes about my pants being made of black slate. “My pants are hard and stiff,” I said.

“You’re a brick house,” one of the women said.

“I’m solid as a rock,” I replied.

Unfortunately, the rock jokes didn’t get me any votes. Not even from the two women who brought me there.

## Northern dates behind my back

### Ruby

As soon as I logged on, Northern came straight to find me.

“Come lie in my bed with me while we chat.”

So we went to his place and he laid down on this bed. I joined him and tried to initiate conversation.

“So. How was your day?”

A few minutes later, I received his response. “Not too bad.”

I tried a little more chit chat with about the same lack of response. I was pretty sure he was sending messages to other women. So I logged off.

### Bruce

And I logged on. In Noobieville chat, Northern was making comments to several of his favorite women – Landlady, Sleepless, and Jasmyn,

“You ladies can come over to my house and manhandle me if you’re looking to misbehave.”

“You couldn’t handle all three of us,” LandLady said.

I stayed out of that discussion.

I couldn’t help but wonder why he expected a general invitation to a manhandling would result in women eagerly flocking to his love nest to be the lucky woman who gets to be harassed by him. Why would any woman want a guy who is out on the prowl for whichever woman he is not with?

### Ruby

I logged on and appeared on Northern’s couch. Jasmyn, was sitting next to me.

“I’m having technical problems with my attachment,” Northern said.

I panned around and found him upstairs. Then he logged off. He must have seen me appear in his radar.

“Uh, hi,” Jasmyn said.

I replied with, “Hi,” and she disappeared.

Then Northern came back online, but not in his house. He had our friend permissions set so I could find him on a map at any time. So I teleported to his location, thinking that he was probably with Jasmyn.

I landed on a WWII port next to a sinking ship riddled with cannon holes. Nobody else was around except Northern.

“What do you think you’re doing following me around? You scared her offline!” he shouted. “Now she’s gone and I’m going to have to convince her I had nothing to do with this!”

Scared her offline? If she was scared of me logging on, they must have mental issues.

“I logged on in your house, where you had invited me, where I had been when I logged off. If you happen to have other chicks over when I log back on again, that is not my problem.”

“Oh, sorry, you’re right,” he said. “Well, she’s gone now. I’ll have to talk to her tomorrow. I’m going to log off.”

Sounds like a case of guilty conscience to me. When you sneak around with multiple women and two innocently show up at the same time, of course you’re going to suspect that they’re following you around.

He may have logged off, but I wouldn’t be surprised if he logged back on again ten minutes later. I didn’t care and didn’t want to be involved in it. So I logged off and went to lie in my bed to fall asleep in real life.

## Noobieville implodes

### Bruce

Yesterday one of my neighbors lived in a giant aquarium. Today her land was empty.

“Why did your aquarium disappear?” I asked her. “Was it glowing?”

“It didn’t go with the theme of Good and Bad,” she said.

I hadn’t heard anything about a theme. “I don’t know what that means,” I said.

“I don’t know either,” she responded.

I went back to my land and found that Landlady had taken away half my chess set also. I asked in Noobieville neighborhood chat, “Has anyone seen where my chessboard has gone?”

“I deleted it,” LandLady replied.

“I thought you said it wasn’t glowing.”

“It didn’t go with the theme,” LandLady said.

What the hell is she talking about. “What theme?” I asked.

“Read the notice,” she said.

Well, the only notices in the past few days were about houses that were emanating too much light, a picture of a printer mouse (I don’t know what that means either), and a picture of Chachi and Joni, Chachi’s online wife, having avatar sex while dressed as space aliens. The notice referred to the alien sex as a ‘group activity.’ No wonder nobody reads the notices.

“The last two notices were about seeing houses from space and the group activity,” I replied. Several neighbors confirmed my observation.

“Good,” I said. “I thought I was losing my mind.”

“You are,” LandLady said, “but not because of this.”

“Why did part of the chess set go with the theme but not the rest?” I asked.

Landlady came over to my land. “Oh, I must have missed a few pieces,” she said. She took away the pieces she had previously left behind and left without another word. A notice finally came out a few moments later.

“The north half of the island is about Evolution and the south half is Evilution – the good and the bad,” the notice said. “Santa and the vampires have to go because they don’t fit the theme.”

Santa isn’t good enough? Vampires aren’t evil enough? If they don’t fit the theme, then nobody ever could. Why do we get a theme demanded of us after everyone had already set their homes up?

“I know where there’s free land in another neighborhood,” Joni said in Noobieville chat.

Free land somewhere else. I wondered if it would be a case of jumping from the frying pan into the fire. Several people said they were interested.

“Send me an IM if you’d like a plot.”

I sent her a message. “I want in.”

She teleported me and several other neighbors to a land called Learn Avatar.

“This is a community reserved for people who commit to taking builders courses,” Joni explained to us.

“What’s the commitment for taking these courses?” I asked.

“I’m not sure yet,” Joni said. “We’re still working that out.”

I figured it didn’t matter. If I didn’t like the classes or whatever else I was committing to, I could always abandon my plot. Joni set several parcels so we could each purchase a parcel for zero Linden dollars. We each took a plot of empty, flat brown land.

### Ruby

I logged on to get some land in Learn Avatar from Joni and made it look a little less bleakly brown by setting my beach house on it. Northern logged on just in time to get the parcel right next to me. But he kept logging out. And back in. And back out.

“Are you logging off because you’re still angry about me ‘scaring’ Jasmyn?” I asked.

“I’m not angry at all,” he said. “My viewer keeps crashing.”

If so, why did the crashing problems start as soon as Ruby and Jasmyn crashed into each other? Or is this Northern’s way of hiding something from Jasmyn and Ruby?

## Monday, March 8, 2010

### Bruce

When I logged on in Noobieville this morning, everything was gone. It was a steeply sloped, hilly pasture of green grass. I flew around until I found Landlady sitting on top of the tallest hill. “I’m sorry to see Noobieville has ended,” I said. “It was fun while it lasted. I hope you got something useful out of the project.”

Without responding to me, Landlady ejected me from the land and sent me to Korea with all the street dregs. I wondered if Landlady would have ejected me from her island had she known I was a woman.

A young woman that Ruby had friended in Korea a few weeks ago was chatting to the people sitting under the ramada with her.

“Some Turkish guy keeps teleporting me to sex places,” she said to those of us standing near her.

I wanted to say, ‘That happened to me too!’ Except it didn’t. It happened to Ruby. And it wouldn’t have made sense to say a guy was doing that to a man.

But I wanted to hear more about her experience, so I kept chatting, referring to the instance as something that happened to ‘my friend.’ Yeah, my friend. Ruby. I have to be careful not to mention things such as ‘a guy was trying to get me to go to an orgy.’

The Noobieville chat was eerily quiet today. No confusion about why this or that was deleted, what we were and weren’t supposed to build on our land, or any mentions of a ‘group activity.’ And nobody inviting women over for a manhandling. Hopefully with different leadership, the tone of the chat will tend more toward building community and less toward harassment.

## Tuesday, March 9, 2010

### Bruce

I hung out on my chessboard looking through my inventory for other interesting things to put on my land. I thought about making a pencil holder to put in the middle, like on the chess set I have on my coffee table in real life.

Just when I thought the Noobieville chat would remain quiet, Landlady copied chat from someone who had asked that his items be returned.

“When I logged on today, everything I’d been working on was missing,” he said. “Is there any way to get it back?”

“You should have picked up your stuff before I deleted it,” Landlady had said.

“But I didn’t know you were going to delete it.”

“I sent out a notice,” LandLady responded.

“Yeah, two minutes before you deleted everything.”

“You stupid ungrateful mooch,” Landlady had responded to the guy.

I had no idea why she would post such a thing to the whole neighborhood. By sending his message to the entire group, she made herself look incredibly petty. In spite of whatever sympathy I had before for all her troubles putting the community together, I completely lost all respect for her after that stunt.

“Stop the gossip,” I said.

I received a private message from a group member who was reading the chat. “At first I thought it was generous of Landlady to let us all live in Noobieville. But I soon realized that it wasn’t out of the goodness of her heart. It was so she could be in charge of something.”

It was a great idea, but LandLady doesn’t have the necessary leadership skills to pull it off.

Jack spoke up in Noobieville chat. “When I logged on today, I was surprised that I wasn’t the only homeless guy in Noobieville anymore.”

“I’m ejecting you from the group, Jack,” LandLady said.

“For what?” he asked.

“You won’t be able to comment in Noobieville chat anymore, Jack,” she said.

So of course, he didn’t. Thus I invited Jack to my giant chess board. He appeared in the middle of the board as a human-sized rat. Hm. A rat would be an interesting addition to my land. “You’re my hero for getting kicked out of the group,” I said.

“LandLady needs anger management counseling,” Jack said. “I’m glad I’m not in her little group anymore.”

### Ruby

I sent Jack a message to let him know I had been paying attention to the Noobieville chat. I invited him to my almost-empty beach house as Northern logged on.

“Jack’s over here visiting,” I told him. “He’s a rat.”

“What do you mean?” asked Northern.

“Long tail. Pointy nose. Pink feet.”

“Oh, I thought you meant figuratively.”

“No,” I explained. “It’s Jack.”

Northern asked me to come up to his bed for a moment.

“Come over to Northern’s house in a few moments if you want to see a show,” I told Jack.

No, Northern didn’t want to do sex animations with me, he was rearranging the pose balls and needed me there so he could see how to adjust them.

Does he think I don’t know what this sex bed is for? Maybe he thinks I’m hoping he got the bed for us. I’m not that stupid. Or weird. I feel a little used for being his mannequin for fixing up his bed to be just right for all the whores he invites over. But I don’t really care. This isn’t a trusting friendship, it’s an amusing drama. I’m here to watch.

Jack appeared downstairs and stood silently next to Northern’s bright blue couch. He sat on it and his rat avatar sprawled across it with his front paw stroking the air near his face. He sent me a private message. “Don’t tell Northern I’m here. Wait until he notices.”

Northern and I laid still on the bed fully clothed. Then he made us do an obscene motion for a moment.

“Watch us,” I said to Jack.

Northern stood up and went downstairs. He had seen Jack on his radar.

They both came upstairs and Jack changed into about five different aliens while I laid there. “Click on the blue ball,” I told him. By doing so, he’d lay next to me as a creature with twenty tentacles.

“How do I look?” he asked

“Weird,” I said.

“I mean below the waist,” he replied.

I panned to get a better look at him. He had a little penis sticking out of his alien crotch.

“Small,” I said.

“LMAO,” Northern interjected.

“Well it is,” I told him.

Then Jack put on a penis the size of his arm. “That size doesn’t even make sense,” I said. “Are you going to put that through my leg?”

Jack became a rat again and Northern chased him around outside with his arms behind his head and thrusting his pelvis.

“Weirdo!” Jack shouted.

“I’m going to sleep, boys,” I said. And logged off in Northern’s bed.

## Learn Avatar neighborhood

### Ruby

When I logged on, Northern’s house was half inside mine. How intimate. Was this because all I had inside it was a rug and a shoe? Sure, there’s nothing inside, so let’s put another house in it. The extra gray siding bisecting my bottom floor made it difficult to try on clothes and pan around without hitting a wall.

Jack had parked a hobo trailer in my loft. I wanted to leave stuff all over Jack’s trailer, and return it. But the stuff stayed floating above my floor after the trailer was gone.

I was trying on new free underwear when Northern stopped by. We chatted briefly as I stood there in my underwear. Why not. Everyone else in Second Life wanders around in less than underwear. Northern seemed too busy rearranging his house to care. I appreciated that he didn’t make crude remarks about it.

I put regular clothes back on and went to a Learn Avatar class for asking questions about Second Life.

The classroom area was an empty outdoor sandbox surrounded by an unfinished wooden ranch fence. The sandbox was surrounded by neighbors plots. Most of the adjacent plots had plain wooden house frames under construction. A few trees shaded the fence line. Barn animals roamed on one of the plots near a pile of hay. The instructors sat on the fence while the students stood in the sand.

“What’s the mission of Learn Avatar?” I asked. Nobody knew.

The name of our sim was Free for Charities, so I asked, “Does the Owner run a charity?” They didn’t know the answer to that either. What kind of teachers are they?

A few of my neighbors also asked questions, but nothing big-picture. More along the lines of how to rez a box or how to turn the box into a sphere.

I tried one more question before the ‘class’ ended. “Are there limits for how many avatars can be on an island at the same time?”

That one they could answer. “Up to forty. And when you have that many, everything slows down. That’s called lag.”

Scripts can run only so fast over the internet, depending upon the bandwidth of your internet connection. If there are forty avatars at a time running scripts, there’s not enough bandwidth to show video on each person’s computer screen.

“If you try to teleport to a sim that has more than forty avatars on it,” one of the instructors explained, “the teleport gets cancelled.”

Darn. There’s technical limitations to showing videos to a crowd. I guess I won’t be having a clown car house party.

### Bruce

After the question-asking class was over, the Owner of Learn Avatar opened a chat with the neighborhood and asked if the group had any questions.

“What’s the mission statement of Learn Avatar?” I asked. And do you run a charity?” Hopefully nobody who attended the class with Ruby wondered why Bruce, who wasn’t at the class, was asking the exact same questions.

Another Learn Avatar building class was held in the sandbox today.

“I want to learn how to make a game,” I told the instructors.

“What kind of game?” Chachi asked.

“I don’t know. I haven’t made up the game yet.”

I figured if they showed me how to make a game that had already been invented, I could figure out how to come up with my own game. Someone made a few skinny cylinders and put them into a group. They looked sort of like bowling pins.

“How about I make a bowling game,” I said.

Well, I’ll be damned, they got off the ranch fence enclosing the sandbox and showed me how to make a bowling game. Chachi showed me how to make three shapes for the pin sections, put a striped graphic, on the neck, then group them together. I put a bunch of pins in the sand and tried walking into them, but ended up walking over them. Not very effective for bowling pins.

“Set them to ‘Physical’,” Chachi said.

I did so and they all toppled over on their own. Seems I made my bowling pins a little lopsided. Unfortunately, I didn’t know how to pick them back up.

I made a ball then set the check box to Physical. That check box allows forces, like gravity, or an avatar bumping into it, to move the ball. I wasn’t able to pick it up and roll it, but I could walk into it. Sort of like kickball bowling.

Chachi told me to sit on one of the fallen pins. I did so and rolled face first into the sand. Like an ostrich. Then he told me to set the z-coordinate of the pin to 100. It plunged me into the ground and spit me back out with a vengeance.

Chachi put a huge green translucent cube around me. As I walked around, it barged into things other students were building next to me. Now there’s real interesting game potential in that.

BigStripper was the only woman at the class. It seemed that more people were paying attention to me than to her. I felt bad that people were ignoring BigStripper. But she wasn’t asking questions or otherwise engaging herself in the activity.

## Northern’s women collide again

### Ruby

“I have a smoke animation that makes rings of smoke float all over the room,” appeared in my local chat. I checked my radar and barely within chatting distance, I saw a woman standing next to Northern in his house.

I walked over to his place to see what was happening with smoke. Nobody was on his first floor, so I floated up to look in his loft. Northern and the woman were in his bedroom playing with animations. I said hi and introduced myself as his neighbor.

“She’s much more than just a neighbor,” Northern said.

Oh? I am?

We all went downstairs to sit on his couch and chat.

“Where did you two meet?” I asked.

“In the ivory towers. He was shooting snowmen out of guns. He hit me and I fell out of the tower.”

Ah yes. I know about the snowman guns. I was there. So Northern was literally hitting on women while hanging out with me.

“I didn’t realize that shooting women was a good way to meet them. Does that usually work well for you, Northern.” He didn’t respond. “Northern?”

“I think he walked away from his computer for a moment,” the woman said. We continued the conversation without him. “I was interested in the gun for a game I’m building,” she said.

“I’d like to explore the games in Second Life,” I said. She gave me a landmark for a go-cart place. “What other groups do you hang out with online?” I asked.

“I spend most of my time in the gay community,” she said.

Doesn’t sound like Northern’s kind of thing. I wondered if he knew she was interested in that. I wished he had been paying attention so I could have read his reaction.

We chatted for a few more minutes before I decided to leave. “Thank you for the landmark,” I said. “I’ll go check this out right now. It was nice meeting you.”

I went to see the go-carts, but the place was deserted. A few minutes later, Northern sent me a message.

“Why did you leave me here without saying anything?”

I didn’t realize I was supposed to ask his permission before leaving.

“Take a look at your chat logs, Northern. I said goodbye before I left. You weren’t paying attention.”

I gave him a moment to scroll through his logs. “You’re right,” he said. “Sorry for getting on your case. I don’t want our friendship to be fucked up.”

Probably too late for that.

I had thought everything seemed fine during my conversation with his gay friend. Apparently something was going on that I was supposed to be angry about.

I went back to my land, but he wasn’t at his house. “Whatcha doing?” I asked.

“Riding a cow,” he responded, with no elaboration on what that meant or who he was riding cows with.

And I knew why. I could see where he was in my radar. He was with Jasmyn on her land.

## Friday, March 12, 2010

### Ruby

I checked an aerial map to see where Northern was. I found him in a land where ‘Free Sex’ was printed on the roof of a building in the middle of the sim. Great. What’s this all about.

I teleported there and could tell from my radar that he was with Jasmyn. I walked toward them, but couldn’t see them. All I could tell was that they were alone inside the Free Sex building.

As I entered the building, I heard a woman moaning. Out loud in public chat? For godsake. It’s bad enough to watch these stupid avatars out in public. I seriously don’t want to hear the real person. I didn’t want to be a part of that scene, but I did want Northern to know he wasn’t fooling me by hiding with Jasmyn outside of our neighborhood. I don’t care if he and Jasmyn are an item. But I am quite irritated that he thinks he needs to keep it a secret from me, as though I’m too stupid to figure it out. Or stupid enough to want to be the one he’s with.

Nobody was in the dark dance club on the first floor, so I went up the stairs. A bunch of beds and crosses with pose balls were arranged on the dark red carpet along black walls underneath pictures of penises, vaginas, and people having sex. Nobody was on the second floor either. But the moaning had gotten louder, so I knew I was getting closer.

I went up the stairs to the third floor and found rows of seats, each successive row higher than the other, like an auditorium. Northern was having avatar sex with Jasmyn in the back row.

“Oh, yes, Northern,” Jasmyn typed in public chat. “Yes, Northern, you’re so sexy.”

I decided to refuse to leave. It seemed like it would be cowardly to crawl away, as though I should feel bad that he was with her instead of me. Instead, I walked into the seats and stood on top of them. My leg went right through Jasmyn’s head.

“Why is this bitch here?” Jasmyn said. Nobody responded to her. But they stayed in their seats, having avatar sex. The moaning continued.

“Hi, Northern,” I said in public chat. He didn’t acknowledge me. So I sent him a private message. “Hi, Northern. What are you up to?”

A few moments later I received a response. “Not much. Just working on the textures for my house.”

Obviously he wasn’t looking at public chat and didn’t have his viewer panned to see me standing in his lap. This is not what I’d call working on textures. Riding a cow, yes. Textures, no.

“With Jasmyn?” I asked.

“No. By myself today.”

“Then why is your avatar sitting in a theater having sex with Jasmyn?”

I gave him a moment to pan his viewer.

“What do you think you’re doing? You’re spying on me! Quit stalking me!”

Then quit lying, hiding from me, then gaslighting me. I’m allowed to go to any public place I want. He can’t expect to be alone with Jasmyn in a public place. If he doesn’t want me to find him, he needs to tell me he wants to be with her, not tell me he’s ‘working on textures’ all by himself. It’s not my fault he has a guilty conscience. If he had ever dropped in on me at any time, I wouldn’t have minded at all. Now I see the feeling is not mutual.

“What do I think *I’m* doing? What are you two moaning out loud for everyone within fifty meters to hear?” I asked. “Can’t you at least keep that in private voice message?”

“You’re ugly and pathetic,” Jasmyn said, then stood up and left.

She’s having avatar sex in a public theater – which one of us is pathetic? And I don’t really care if she thinks my avatar is ugly. At least I’m not stupid and desperate.

Jasmyn was gone, but sent me a private message. “Northern told me he thinks you’re psycho.” I didn’t respond to her. I thought she was psycho. I wasn’t sure if I believed he told her that because I know he doesn’t think that. But I could imagine him telling her anything that might get her to come back for more avatar sex.

“We’re not moaning out loud,” Northern said. “That’s the movie.”

“What movie?” I turned around and saw a close-up of a penis going in and out of some chick’s mouth.

Oh for godsake. A porn theater. Why bother watching avatars having sex when you can see the real thing together. I wondered how they found this place. Did Northern invite Jasmyn here or did she invite him?

### Bruce

I stopped by TeeVee’s place. He was watching television again. No surprise. At least it wasn’t porn.

“Why are you watching television here all by yourself?” I asked.

“All my other friends are out on online dates,” he said.

Dates? What is a date in a virtual world? Having avatar sex in a porn theater?

An elf with a long brown pony tail flew by us riding a smoking pig. It sent huge rings of pink smoke floating all around me. Seemed like something Northern would do. Had Northern been building the pig in his bedroom with the gay woman when they were discussing smoke?

The smoke eventually dissipated. Pig Woman’s mic was on as she circled TeeVee and me, making squealy hissing and typing noises. I sent her a friend request. Not because I thought of flying around blasting smoke was a friendly gesture on her part, but because I wanted to see how often she came online. She accepted my friend request, gave me a copy of the pig, then logged off.

Pig Woman’s date of creation was in 2009, so she wasn’t something Northern made up today. But Northern had logged off right before Pig Woman appeared. The typing/squealing sounded the same as when Northern has his mic on. And Northern had been chatting about smoke a lot recently.

kkkk

## Women flirt with me

### Bruce

As I was at a freebie store shopping for better hair, a man wearing highwater pants, a frilly blouse, and hightop sneakers asked in the public chat, “Are you want sex?”

I responded, “Who me? Sure. But not with you.”

“I was talking to Isabella,” he said.

I checked my radar and saw a woman named Isabella nearby. Through a translation software, she told him, “Your outfit is bad.” Laughably bad.”

I said, “And so are his manners.”

A few minutes later she chatted with me through her translator. She gave me some hair and a landmark to a translator store. I would’ve friended her, but in my experience, chat through a translator just isn’t worth it.

I went to the sandbox to experiment with making unusually shaped objects, like bowling pins. Northern came over to build his house. He dropped a huge slab of wood underneath me. It didn’t really bother me, so I didn’t say a word. And when I asked a question, he gave me a helpful answer.

Urich asked if I had something more casual to wear, so I put on my brick shirt and granite pants. Then he gave me more clothes. He wandered off for a little while and I put the brick and granite clothes back on. When Urich returned, he said my boat had floated. Joni said I blended into the scenery. Then whenever I chatted something, they said, “Is that the wall talking?”

The reason I wanted to make clothes with building material textures is that nobody else wears clothes like that. But then when I stand next to rocks or bricks, I blend in with the scenery.

Joni gave me a graphic to put on my bowling pins. She said she had created it in Tokoroken. I asked if it was like Autocad. She said it was. “I haven’t used CAD for over ten years,” I said.

I couldn’t get the graphic to work. So instead, I put another graphic on. It was the picture of Chachi and Joni having fully-clothed avatar sex that had been refered to as a ‘group activity’ in one of the Noobieville notices.

“I put a picture of Chachi and Joni on my bowling pin,” I told everyone.

Urich checked it out, “It really is a picture of Chachi and Joni. Love how her eyes are rolled back into her head.”

Joni told us to keep everything rated PG. Chachi and Joni looked at it and had a good laugh over the memory.

Chachi and Joni have been in Second Life since around the time it started. They’ve known each other in Second Life for over six years, although they’ve never met in real life. They only recently became Second Life partners, or spouses.

Their relationship is much more along the lines of what I think of as a ‘normal’ Second Life spouse relationship. They were friends for a long time before they got married.

I don’t think they have much of a romantic relationship in Second Life. They act like they’re good friends – none of this weird dirty talk in public that you observe among many Second Life partners. I think they just hung out and built stuff together and that the ‘group activity’ picture was a joke that happened when a bunch of people were hanging around together.

Chachi said that Sweets had her eye on me. I’m not sure where that came from. Sweets seems very nice

“she’s a sweetheart.”

“But I’m bad for teeth,” she said.

Later on I came back to the sandbox. Northern was working on his house. He stood next to a picture of himself. His tag said he was away from the keyboard. So I put the smoking pig in front of him. The pig pushed him outside the wall, so I removed it.

According to my friend list, Northern wasn’t online. Which meant that he was hiding his online status from me. So I checked the box next to his name in my friend list so that my online status was hidden from him.

I logged in later, still standing in the sandbox. Northern had left. I scrolled through the Learn Avatar group and noticed that Pig Person was online even though he/she didn’t show up as being online in my friend list. Which means that Pig Person had also checked the box to hide his/her online status.

Northern was online too. I checked the box to unhide my online status from him. Which means Northern would get a notice saying that Bruce was online. Then Bruce got a notice saying Northern was online. Which means that Northern just unhid his status.

Did you follow that? In summary, we’re playing head games. Damn. Northern is suspicious that Bruce and Ruby are the same person.

Northern immediately entered the sandbox. How did he even know that Bruce was there? Yikes. What is he going to do? I thought about leaving. But what was I afraid of? I expected that he’d confront me or insult me, but he acted quite normal. Not even flirty with the other women.

### Bruce

Next time I logged in, Northern was in the sandbox. Alone. As if he were waiting for me. I asked him about the picture of himself, but he just stood there. He must have been away from his keyboard.

I was about to leave, but then Northern caught my attention.

“The picture is for a scale, not because I’m vain,” he joked.

Northern was being incredibly pleasant; he talked about his day. He really wanted to talk to Bruce. But he didn’t let on that he knew who Bruce was.

Northern chatted about real life blueprints. The sandbox is blocked off into meters and he wanted to make sure he built the house the right size for his avatar, instead of measuring by eyeball.

What does a meter mean in Second Life?

### Ruby

Northern wasn’t quite as friendly to Ruby. But he did come right over to his house next door and said hi as soon as I logged on. I think he wanted me to feel like I needed to beg for his forgiveness for walking in on him and Jasmyn. But I don’t feel Ruby needs to apologize. Ruby wasn’t the one lying and hiding.

He had said he had a sore throat and was going to log off and get some sleep.

Then Jasmyn appeared. I asked him if he invited her to stop by; he said no. I said hi to her, but she didn’t say anything to me. I didn’t think she would. I told Northern in a private message that I wasn’t going to leave, but that I assumed he preferred her company. He said he doesn’t compare us because we’re totally different people. “Totally Different,” I responded.

After he left, I had a nice chat with Industrial. We tried making a movie screen for my drive-in movie theater. Or teleport-in theater. I had decided to make a theater for showing my webisode clips, rather than a party house. Unfortunately, we ran into too many technical problems and couldn’t get it to work.

I can’t help wondering if even though he said he was going to log off, was Northern really planning to go to a porn place with Jasmyn? I’m pretty sure he was still online, but just hid his online status from me after he left the sandbox, making up the story about a sore throat.

I already know the nature of his relationship with Jasmyn, why doesn’t he just tell me that he’s going someplace to spend time with her? Maybe because he knows I’m disappointed in him for what he does when they’re together. The sad thing is, Jasmyn seems to think that because she has avatar sex with him, he’s loyal to her. But he’ll probably have avatar sex with someone else in a few weeks when he gets bored of her.

## Monday, March 15, 2010

### Bruce

Someone named North was standing near my land. He didn’t speak anything at all. I greeted him, but after a few moments, he vanished. I’m not sure if it was someone’s alt spying on me.

Ships and his partner moved in next to me. Because they have a lot of building experience, they have a huge plot of land. They build extravagant boats that they sell in the Xstreet Marketplace store. It’s a spectacular view from my land.

Ships and Mississippi Queen are both on their third avatars. Supposedly one of Mississippi Queen’s alts was a vampire queen and she kept getting too many messages from her subjects. Each of the couple’s avatars is partnered to one of their mate’s alts. But they aren’t married in real life.

The House of Prayer chat is always full of random testimonials about how they were save by God in real life. Ships entered his own testimonial. “When I first came to Second Life, I got all caught up in the cocaine scene here and became addicted. But then God sent me Mississippi Queen and I hang out in the House of Prayer instead of the House of Crack.”

An avatar on cocaine! How silly. Several people followed with mock congratulations.

I should go to the House of Prayer more often. Good comedy potential. One time someone came there to ask where they could get slaves.

The churchgoers worked up such a tizzy over that. “You can Not get slaves here! Do not ask us about slaves!”

## Wednesday, March 17, 2010

### Ruby

I visited briefly with Mississippi Queen and Ships. They told me about bondage roll playing that they used to participate in. Sounds creepy to me. Sometimes I’m scared of what I’ll see while exploring, that I’ll lose faith in humanity after seeing the kind of creepy things people do.

Northern asked how I was and why I hadn’t talked to him for a few days. “I thought you wanted a break from me,” I said. He claimed that he didn’t.

He said his Gay Woman friend had found someone else and didn’t want to date him anymore. He didn’t even know they were dating. “If I wanted a date, I’d go on one in real life,” he said.

## Meeting neighbors - Grouchy

Grouchy, a former Noobieville neighbor and current Learn Avatar teacher, stopped by while I was hanging around with Northern as he built his house. Grouchy was in the form of an alien with a jet pack. He gave me the script for the smoke on his jet pack, so put it inside a few objects to make them emit glowing smoke.

Northern didn’t join the conversation.

Grouchy asked about the rape picture hanging on my house. “Rape picture?” I asked. He was referring to the *Budget Justified* poster.

I had chosen a screen shot of an episode where the sexual harasser attacked me. I thought shock value would get people talking about it. Instead, people didn’t want to talk about it.

A box appeared in front of Grouchy with floating text. ‘Click for free item.’ Grouchy clicked on it and it sent him 4000 meters into the air. “Seems like a Northern thing,” I said.

Grouchy sent me a private message. “That guy blasted me with smoke yesterday.” Apparently they had gotten into an argument.

I asked Grouchy if he had stolen Northern’s woman. “I don’t believe in dating in Second Life. Pixel sex is ridiculous. And people who get married in Second Life are losers.”

I told Grouchy I had gotten into a few fights with Northern myself. “I don’t know how Northern treats other men, but he doesn’t know how to treat women.”

Grouchy said he knows how to treat women, but doesn’t talk to many of them in Second Life or real life. He gave me landmarks to his two houses. I stopped by the one in Learn Avatar later, but I didn’t want to disturb him. He was giving a building lesson to a woman in the building area next door.

### Ruby

A newbie guy wandered through my house while I was changing clothes. He brought a woman along. He told me that she was his online mentor. So many random people had been coming through lately.

“How did you find this place?” I asked. They weren’t sure.

They also asked about the rape picture. Interesting that they also used the term ‘rape.’ I hated that picture so much that I later deleted the scene from the movie. The DVD and book cover is now a picture of the boss yelling at people in the office.

I showed them my *Budget Justified* television screen and invited them to join the BudgetJustified.com group.

I teleported to a store to find some professional-looking clothing, to make me look like I belonged in an office scene in *Budget Justified*. The store was deserted, so I looked on the map to see where other people on the land were. I teleported to a group of four people and landed inside a cabin with pose balls. Nobody was inside, but a guy stood on the porch. He followed me into the cabin.

Then another guy in a tuxedo came in and got on a pose ball. He took his clothes off and sent me a private message telling me to take my clothes off.

“Where did you come from?” I asked, wondering why guys in tuxedos kept appearing. I got no response. “Why are you here?” He didn’t answer. Then he left.

The other guy took off his clothes. He got on a pose ball then started talking on his microphone. “I want to fuck,” he said in some foreign accent. “Take off your clothes.” Why do some guys think that this is a good way to get a woman in the mood? I teleported out of there.

I sent a private message to Eggplant the Eggplant asking if he has a female avatar and if the male and female avatars are treated differently.

“Very very very very differently,” he said. “Men don’t talk to my male avatar and fall over themselves for the female avatar.”

Interesting. I don’t have this problem unless I’m standing near pose balls. I think they’re after the pose balls, not my avatar.

I asked if he had ever kept a journal about how his avatars were treated differently when they were male than when they were female. He said he hadn’t, but he has had other writings published about parenting and gardening.

I think that it’s very likely that Eggplant is a woman in real life. He seems very opposed to female attention. But I’m not sure, because he did say that the male business suit he was wearing was like what he wears most days in real life. Perhaps Eggplant is a woman who wears suits and ties.

### Bruce

I modified Joni’s bed. A little. I took the bags of trash off and turned it into asphalt with centerline stripes. I tried modifying the name of the menu buttons, but that didn’t happen. I was thinking about making it a game bed.

Then I tried taking all the scripts and pose balls out of the mattress object and put them on a wooden wedge. A game bed and a sex wedge. But I couldn’t get the menu to pop up to select animations.

While I was working on my bowling pins and bed, a guy came along. I asked him how to select a group of objects so I could raise my entire chess board in the air and float it above my land. He said he’d tell me if I gave him a Linden dollar. He wanted to use it to purchase some nearby land.

“I think there’s a waiting list to get land here,” I told him.

He still wanted the Linden dollar anyway. It seemed really strange, but I gave it to him.

I should make it into a bed where women take men who won’t stop bugging them. When the harassing men get on the pose ball, instead of having sex, it punches them in the eye, sends them 4000 meters in the air, sets them on fire, hangs them upside down, teleports them naked to the House of Prayer, or any other of these great things you can do in Second Life.

I went to a class about sculpted prims, or creating objects that aren’t regular geometric shapes. Unfortunately, I had already learned everything we went over in the hour-long class in about three minutes at Mississippi Queen’s house yesterday.

I had to tell Joni that we couldn’t use the sculpted textures she had given us because the permissions weren’t set correctly. One of the textures was the bowling pin she had made for Bruce. It looked like a bottle, so one of the students spun it around.

“She’s playing Spin the Bottle,” I said.

At the end of class, someone sent a message to the group, “Help! Someone has purchased my land and has banned me from it!” Oops. I think I know who gave him the money to buy the land. Chachi sent out a message, warning us not to set our land as ‘For Sale.’

### Ruby

Northern had left a message saying that he had seen me log on yesterday, but that I had logged off before he could say hi. When he saw me today, he gave me a hug. Although he was facing the wrong way. But it was a nice gesture.

“What did you do yesterday?” I asked.

“It was a regular birthday.”

Oh no. I had forgotten about that it was his birthday. Perhaps he had been hoping I’d say Happy Birthday to him, and didn’t contact me because he didn’t want to beg for birthday wishes.

“Happy belated birthday,” I said and made him a cake with candles putting the jetpack script from Grouchy in each of the candles. It looked about like the cakes I make in real life – blue, crooked, on fire.

“Wow, you made that quickly,” he said.

“The candles are a little too big,” I said.

“They’re perfect. Thanks for caring.”

I tried to get him to talk about whether he had been avoiding me or if he was trying to hide from me. “You had called me a stalker. I’ve been trying not to bother you.” Northern ignored the topic and changed the subject.

I ran across the profile for an avatar named Norther, who has the same avatar last name as Northern, that was created four days after I appeared on his couch and freaked out Jasmyn. Northern hasn’t been logged in much for the past several days. I wonder if he has created an alternate avatar to hide all his women from each other. Such elaborate lengths he goes to for the sake of deception that isn’t necessary. I imagine he tells Jasmyn it’s because I’m stalking him. But he’s probably hiding her existence from other women.

Perhaps Northern is ashamed of what he does in Second Life and doesn’t want me to know about it. So…he chooses to spend time with a person whose opinion he doesn’t care about. He doesn’t respect her. What does that say about how much respect he has for himself?

All this drama online makes me glad I’m married in real life.

### Ruby

BigStripper invited some of us to the dance club where she works as a pole dancer. Which I think is an interesting fantasy, since claims to be very large in real life. Disaster showed up with TeeVee, but he wouldn’t dance. I tried to encourage him to dance with her, but he left.

Disaster sent me a private message. “Do people around Learn Avatar think that TeeVee and I are a couple?”

“I encouraged TeeVee to dance with you because I recognized both of you from the neighborhood,” I said, evading an answer.

She said that she already had an online boyfriend.

“I had bad luck with men in Second Life,” I said.

“Would you be interested in TeeVee? He wants a girlfriend and he’s a really nice guy,” she said.

“I think he’s a little young for me. Not that it matters in Second Life.”

Although it does. You can tell if someone is less mature by the conversation they hold.

I’m not sure I like TeeVee’s company enough to have him spend time with Ruby. TeeVee likes to hang out with Bruce. I don’t want both of my avatars to hang out with the same person too often. He’d wonder why the three of us couldn’t hang out. Although it could be very interesting to see how that would unfold.

BeachHouse invited me to his place and showed me his bed. I’m not sure if he expected me to take off my clothes, I hope not since we’re not that close. We danced at a party once, but that’s it. He said I’m welcome to come visit him again. I’m not sure what to expect from such a visit. Or what I even want from such a visit.

He said he’s using Second Life as a way to get used to the idea of dating again after losing his wife of forty years.

BeachHouse invited me over twice. The first time, he became nonresponsive at some point. He may have been working on something else, or maybe he was sending chats to other women. I don’t really care which. So I left. He seemed to feel bad that I was leaving. I said I’d visit soon and logged off.

In the evening, he invited me over again, so I came over and we danced. But after a few minutes, he had to leave to go comfort someone else. Whatever.

A neighbor stopped by and gave me a script so that when someone clicks on my *Budget Justified* posters, they can go to the web site. Unfortunately, he had the permissions set so that I couldn’t copy the code to the rest of the posters, nor could I read the code.

I asked him if he could modify the permissions and send me a version that I could play with. “Just give me your picture and I’ll do it for you,” he said.

“No, I want to be able to do it myself,” I responded. Then he up and left without a word. Would he have done that to Bruce?

A guy from Noobieville invited me to the strip club where he works. He told me that he retired from the Army and lives in Montana. Interesting. BeachHouse was also retired from the Army and lives in Montana. I asked if he knew BeachHouse. It turns out that he *is* BeachHouse. Which is funny because I had danced with both of them at Noobieville dance.

I showed Chachi the house and penis someone left on the land next to me yesterday. Chachi returned the house, then the guy came back immediately and left a hundred go karts on the land without saying a word.

After chatting with Chachi, I teleported to the strange random cabin I had found several days ago. Two avatars were having sex and three more were standing outside. I went outside and told them to come in and watch. The four of us went in and the two having sex left.

I was left in the cabin with a Dark-skinned woman and two men who didn’t speak English. Dark Woman kept saying I was cute. I’m not sure if that was for humor, if she was gay, or if she was a man. I’m betting on the latter.

So of course, one of the guys got on a pose ball. I got on the pose ball underneath, then Dark Woman and the other guy left. Wait! I’m about to turn into a guy! The guy didn’t even notice at first, but then asked me to put my hair back on. I suppose since we were both fully clothed and he was on top, he didn’t notice that my body changed into a male figure.

### Bruce

TeeVee took me to a movie. We tried to watch Terminator, but I crashed several times in the theater and gave up.

TeeVee was flirting with Disaster again. When I arrived at Joni’s class, he was carrying her in his arms. I told him they looked cute together. He said they were just friends. “Surrrrrre,” I responded.

TeeVee retorted, “Grrrrrrr.” I’m glad he has someone he enjoys being with.

The class was below my level, so I started playing with the bowling pin Joni had given me on Saturday. She said the large box around it was the space that the object took up and that we see the bowling pin because of the way the light bends.

It’s just pixels, so I’m not exactly sure about the light bending. “Hmm…I read an article about ray tracing of Jello about ten years ago,” I said. “It was the most humorous technical article I had ever read.” Joni said that it worked along the same principals as ray tracing.

After class I asked Joni what her college degree was in. She started out in chemistry, but university life didn’t suit her. Her dad was an excellent programmer and pushed computers on her when she was a kid.

“I haven’t seen any of the computer code scripts for Second Life objects yet,” I told her.

She said she had made a sex bed. “But I haven’t had avatar sex myself. No interest in it. Second Life is more like a TV show to participate in. Not a way to meet a boyfriend.”

“Even though some people may think avatar sex is hot, I think it’s creepy,” I said. “Either that or it’s a lame joke.”

Joni had to arrange the pose balls when she was programming the bed she was by herself and had to try them out alone. Which I’m sure would have been amusing to watch.

I wondered what the code would look like for animating avatars, so she gave me a copy of the bed to look at. “Is it OK if I rez it here?” I just wanted to make sure I wasn’t about to do anything obscene. She said it was, so I took it out of my inventory and put a copy on the ground to inspect it. Instead of pillows, it had trash bags surrounded by circling flies. Romantic.

I have a suspicion that this bed will be a fun toy. But not for the reasons you’re thinking.

It’s funny to think about trying to be a man having a meaningful conversation with a woman. Do I want it to become more personal? I could easily have a personal conversation with another woman in real life.

But when does it cross the line of flirting? When talking about sex beds? The sad thing is that flirting borders on cruel, fooling someone into thinking I’m interested.

## Wednesday, March 24, 2010

### Bruce

I went to Joni’s flexible prims class today. A flexible prim is an object in that can bend. Unlike the rigid objects we make our houses or chess boards out of.

When I arrived, BigStripper spoke to me in Spanish. I understood enough words to get an idea of what she said. Something about a kiss. Then she said she was hungry. I looked through my inventory because I thought I had a hamburger and fries, but couldn’t find them.

I created an object, then I selected the option to make it flexible and started playing with the softness values. The object flopped over. “See how everybody’s object is stiff?” Joni asked. “Except Bruce’s.”

“Everyone else has stiffies,” I said.

Joni said that hair was made out of flexible prims. So I pulled a hairstyle out of my inventory and put it on the ground. Then I expanded it so I could see it better. “Cousin It,” I said.

BigStripper backed up to get a better look at her flexible prim, walking through Cousin It in the process. “I’ll get rid of Cousin It,” I told her.

I asked about the units of softness. “Like length is in pixels. Is softness bending per pixel?” The next value we could change for our objects was gravity. I asked what units that was in. “Earth is 32 feet per second squared.”

“Keep Newton out of it,” Joni retorted.

“F=ma,” I responded.

“Bruce is approved for advanced scripting classes,” Chachi said.

Another value to experiment with was wind. “Why did they put wind in Second Life?” I asked.

“Because they can,” Joni said. Chachi said it was so we could fly flags.

I made a wooden flag that sort of blew in the wind. I asked what flexible prims were used for. Skirts, hair, trees. I said I was going to make a wooden skirt for myself. Jasmyne said she’d model it. “It will be a big hit in all of Second Life.”

Then I made my flag longer and wore it. I walked around the sandbox modeling it. “How does it look?” I asked as it fluttered behind me.

“Like you’re being chased,” Jasmyne answered.

So I flew around to watch it flap in the wind. But I got stuck in a tree. Maybe I’ll make a wooden cape.

After class, I went to BigStripper’s place of business to show her my wooden clothing item. She was dressed modestly as she danced around a pole. She didn’t seem amused by what I had made in class, so I left.

## Thursday, March 25, 2010

### Ruby

I stopped by the club where BeachHouse works. He was still pole dancing. He told me that a woman was going to come back to pay him for avatar sex. So I left.

We continued chatting in IM. He said he wouldn’t do that in real life. Of course not. It’s all fake online. I asked him if the woman was a man in real life. “I’m not sure. I’ll have to ask,” he said.

“How do you know I’m not a man?” I asked.

He paused for a moment. “Are you?”

“I think it's funny that neither of us know each other well enough to know if we are even male or female,” I said. “What do you think I am?”

“I think you’re a woman who’s messing with my head. And doing a good job of it.”

BeachHouse told me that he still keeps in touch with Northern. I really hope he isn’t in on something with Northern, trying to spy on what I do when I hang out with other guys. I don’t thinking he is; BeachHouse seems very genuine. Although it’s harder to tell when you don’t use voice.

I asked BeachHouse why he chose to invite me to his place. He said because I seemed nice. And he trusts that I wouldn’t bring other people over while he was gone. I’ve heard that some people invite others to friends’ houses for avatar sex. No need to worry about that with me.

A newbie stopped by and I thought they’d get along because they both seemed young and liked to run around and play with gadgets. But the newbie was on a slow computer and got frustrated. Spazkid didn’t want to hang out with him anymore because the guy cussed. I was surprised that he was offended by one cuss word.

Spazkid wanted to come with me when I left to visit BeachHouse at his house. “No, this is a private residence. He’s shy. He only invites close friends.” At that point, I realized that hanging out with BeachHouse is sort of boring. I don’t want to hang out with guys who just sit around their house doing nothing productive.

### Bruce

While I experimented with the scripts in the sex bed today, neighbor SlowBrain stopped by. I told SlowBrain that I was making a joke bed, trying to replace the doggy animation with a slap animation, but that the bed didn’t seem to have saved the slap animation. “Maybe you should try to get the bed to trap people inside it,” SlowBrain suggested. Not a bad idea.

I got on one of the pose balls and selected the doggy option. The bed sucked me underneath the mattress. Maybe Joni had already thought of trapping people in the bed when she arranged the pose balls. I asked SlowBrain if he wanted to try the pose balls out with me, but he passed.

I wonder how SlowBrain would have reacted if I had asked him if he would get on the pose balls if he knew that I am female in real life.

## Saturday, March 27, 2010

### Ruby

When I logged on, something was wrong with the server where my land was located, so I get sent to a safehub, along with many other avatars. I chatted with a pleasant male vampire. Until a chick wearing half a bikini showed up and he went over to her. She said a few words to him, then walked away.

“I see I’m not your type,” I said.

“What type is that?” he asked.

“The type that wears clothes.”

A familiar name appeared in the local chat. “Ruby?” he typed. I turned around to see a guy with a box on his head.

I walked right up close to him and read his t-shirt. “Second Lag,” with Second Life’s eye-shaped logo having an extended middle eyelash, sort of like a finger. “Appropriate for right now,” I said, since we had all been sent into a slow purgatory while we waited for our homes to be rebooted.

I told BoxFace about the guy who went over to the naked chick. “That’s OK,” I said. “I’d rather talk to guys with funny t-shirts wearing boxes on their heads.”

Another guy told a female that he liked her shape. She made all sorts of canned giggles and squiggly lines in public chat. She said she was American. He was from Cologne. “Where is that?” she asked. He made some kind of comment about Americans not knowing that other countries exist.

“Smart Americans know where Cologne is,” I said.

I tried to teleport home, but got stuck in the floor of the safehub. People were speaking foreign languages out loud, so I got on the microphone and asked BoxFace if he could see me.

BoxFace had never seen my avatar before today. He had only seen my avatar name in Learn Avatar chat. (So far I’ve only been using an avatar named Highway1.) “Ruby?” BoxFace asked. “I thought you were a guy.” Apparently I hadn’t rezzed yet and was still showing as a cloud on BoxFace’s screen.

“Why? Did I say something that sounded male?” I asked.

“No, it’s just that most women pick a name that sounds nice or familiar.” English isn’t BoxFace’s native language, so I think he had trouble articulating what a woman’s name is ‘supposed to’ look like.

“Highway is too silly for a female?” I asked.

“Not silly. Just unusual.”

Sweets also appeared at the safehub. I said hi to her, but BoxFace didn’t seem to notice she was there.

### Lisa

Since, as I mentioned I was born a man, the name ‘Highway’ was selected by my husband when he signed up for Second Life. As was the case with myself, he didn’t understand that selecting a name meant you were naming your avatar and that everyone would address you by that name. We thought we were just selecting a login name.

I think it's interesting that society places huge importance on whether a person is male or female. Gender is a very big part of social identity. Probably because mating has a big impact on lifestyle.

But in business, mating is not supposed to be part of the equation. However, if you see my movie *Budget Justified*, you'll notice how gender and mating is used for political purposes. Even though business norms say you aren't supposed to use mating as part of a business interaction, people do it anyway.

### Bruce

As soon as I logged on, Joni said she was going to reboot Learn Avatar’s land server. I teleported to a bird nest and asked Sweets if she was hanging around anywhere interesting. She said she stayed on her land with no problem, and was chatting with someone, so she wasn’t interested in going to the bird nest.

BoxFace asked if he would be sent back to purgatory if he tried to teleport back to his land. Sweets told him, “You just want to go back there so you can flirt.” She was referring to him talking to Ruby.

BoxFace was able to get back to his place, so I asked him to teleport me. BoxFace lives in the kind of place that a guy with a box on his head would live. He called it a playground. There was a curvy slide, a moon-shaped swing, and a cylinder to go inside of. Literally. When you enter the huge cylinder, the only thing inside it is a tiny toilet.

I hopped onto the moon swing. “You take the virginity out of the moon,” BoxFace said. Was that comment a result of language translation error, or was that just a BoxFace kind of thing to say?

Apparently BoxFace hadn’t been able to sit on the moon before. He received the ‘No room to sit here’ notice when he tried. We figured out that the reason I was able to sit there was that I clicked to sit on the rope suspending the moon, not the moon itself.

I announced to the Learn Avatar community that BoxFace had an awesome place that everyone should check out. “The moon ROCKS!”

Northern responded, “The moon is made of rocks.”

“Just like my granite pants,” I said.

Joni asked if I had tried the toilet and said she was cleaning up the neighborhood.

“My place is a mess,” I told her. “Not toiletwise, but I have bowling pins lying all over the place and someone moved my chess pieces off my floating board onto the ground.”

TeeVee insinuated that it was SecretAdmirer who put them there and said that he was going to spread SecretAdmirer’s secret if she didn’t admit to it. Then TeeVee sent me a private message telling me that SecretAdmirer wanted me to ask her out, and that if I didn’t ask her out, he’d do it for me.

“No, no, no. Don’t do that.” I didn’t want him inviting women to dates with me. So I invited her to swing with me and BoxFace on the moon. I offered her a teleport to my location, and since my location was swinging in the air, as soon as she arrived, she fell about thirty meters to the ground. Oops.

The first thing SecretAdmirer saw was the box on BoxFace’s head. “Bad hair day?” she asked.

Meanwhile, TeeVee was out on a date with Sweets. No wonder she didn’t want to go to the bird nest.

But TeeVee was still worried about me. “Did you ask her out yet?” Geez, I had only met her once previously. I couldn’t even think of anything I said during that encounter that would give her a reason to have any interest in me.

“No, she left,” I told him.

“She’s funny like that,” TeeVee said.

“TeeVee, are you sure you aren’t the one who is funny like that?”

Apparently TeeVee told SecretAdmirer to come back to the moon swing because I promptly received a message from her. “TeeVee has been trying to set me up with everyone. Sorry you got involved.”

I don’t even know how online dating works yet. I feel like I’m in high school all over again.

## ?Meeting people in gardens

### Ruby

I logged on next to Northern’s new outhouse on his deck. I wonder if it was inspired by the popularity of the toilet conversation Bruce had in Learn Avatar chat yesterday.

I went to an island with a Truthball. A Truthball asks Truth or Dare type questions in local chat, then people respond. Seems like a great way to meet and get to know people. I sat next to a guy whose profile said he was an engineer.

“Thanks for sitting by me. You made my day,” he said. Apparently he had just been rejected by another woman.

Then he asked me to dance. We landed on the couch. I didn’t mind, so we continued to dance there

He asked what kind of engineer I was.

“Um…an overeducated one.” I asked where he had earned his degrees and when. He wouldn’t tell me what years because he thinks he’s too old.

“I sometimes hang out with an older widower,” I said.

We went to my place and worked on my screen script. I showed him the BudgetJustified.com web site.

“You’re brave for making such a movie,” he said.

Northern stopped by on his way to a military role playing event. He thought OldEngineer was really nice. Northern probably meets a lot of people that aren’t so nice.

“You’re welcome to use the outhouse if you need it,” he said.

“One good thing about avatars is that they don’t need to use the bathroom,” I said.

“Not yet,” Northern responded. Very funny. Is he planning on evolving avatars to excrete waste products?

Then OldEngineer took me to his very beautiful house – waterfall, campfire, flowering trees. I bopped all around to each of the pose balls in his yard – sitting by the campfire, swinging on a tree swing. He said people can visit the yard whenever they want. Like BeachHouse, OldEngineer had many dance animations and couches with snuggle poses inside the house. I panned up to see that he had a bed with pose balls. Luckily he was a gentleman on our first meeting and did not bring me up to see those.

Later on, as I danced with another widower I had met by the Truthball, OldEngineer sent me a message with a suggestion for the computer scripts for my movie screen.

My dance partner didn’t stay long. “I have to go to help a friend,” he said.

What’s with all the people who ‘have to go help a friend?’ What do all these ‘friends’ need help with?

So I teleported to the couches next to the Truthball. The widower was on the couch making out with another woman. So much for Truth.

## My intellectual friend, Worldly

I left and went to another island. I met Worldly, who is very new to Second Life, yet still able to show me some fascinating locations on beautiful islands. Most of them had many pose balls. Makes me wonder how he’s been spending most of his time.

Some poseballs caused moves that were very sweet and sensual, others just comically obscene. We got on voice chat and talked about politics and education while our avatars hopped around on various poseballs. Fifteen minutes later Worldly said, “Here we are, talking about bombings in Israel, and on the screen in front of us, we’ve got cartoon characters doing it doggy style.”

## Monday, March 29, 2010

### Ruby

When I logged on, Worldly hid his Online status. At first I thought he had just logged off, but I checked the people in my BudgetJustified.com group and he was listed as Online. Great. The hiding game Northern likes to play.

I wanted to send OldEngineer a message about the programming scripts for my movie screen. But he was no longer in my list of friends. OldEngineer seemed so educated and normal. What could have happened? Was he upset that I was dancing with someone else? That seems silly for a mature man.

I asked Northern if he had said anything to OldEngineer. No, but OldEngineer had been standing outside my house for a long time last night after I left. So I sent a message to OldEngineer asking what happened. He said he’d tell me later. I don’t have high hopes for that. Northern and I speculated that he might have gotten scared off by the content of the movie. Like most engineers do.

Worldly got back to me. I told him I was standing on the island where I had met him and he came right over. By this point I was having private chats with BeachHouse, Northern, BoxFace, a guy I just met, and Worldly, all at the same time. Maybe I still am popular with my male friends.

Luckily I was able to easily wind down all the other conversations and focus on Worldly. He took me to a secluded island where we danced.

I told Worldly that I’ve been married for fifteen years. He asked if we were still crazy in love. “It’s a very sane love,” I told him.

Sweets invited the neighborhood to a party at a country dance bar where we had the opportunity to win money. “Come sit on the toilet in this bar,” she said.

“Can I have a tp?” I asked, short for teleport. “And I’m not referring to toilet paper.”

I took Worldly with me. The décor consisted of two toilets. “Did BoxFace decorate this place? Maybe I should’ve brought toilet paper.”

Worldly and I both won money and stayed chatting by voice after everyone had left. Sweets stuck around for awhile to take pictures of herself with the cardboard cutouts around the room. I wondered if she was being nosy, spying on Worldly and me, but I can’t imagine what information she’d be able to gather while I was on private chat.

## Tuesday, March 30, 2010

### Ruby

Jazzmini the orgyhunter sent me a message immediately after I logged in. But he didn’t accept my teleport invitation. He said he wanted to get to know me better. “You are the only one. Believe me.”

“I don’t believe you, but I want to chat anywat.” I offered to chat with him by voice and he declined. Now not only do I not believe I’m the only one, but I don’t believe that he wants to get to know me better.

Jazzmini invited me to dance. I never have much to say to him. I don’t feel that he’s always honest with me. He often hides his online status. He says I’m the only friend he carried over from when he changed avatars, but I’m not sure I believe that. He rarely has anything of substance to say.

He told me he could say anything to me, that he’d tell me anything I asked him. I asked him to tell me about his life in England. “Do you really need to know about my real life?” he asked. Well, if he doesn’t tell me about his real life, what could he ever have to tell me about?

I had told Worldly that I’d hang out with him at 7:00 pm Eastern time. As soon as I logged on, Jazzmini offered to teleport me to his location. I checked Worldly’s profile to see if he was online. He was, but he was hiding his online status from my friends list, so I wasn’t sure if he was going to ditch me.

But soon Worldly sent me a private message. I told him I was with the orgyhunter who always sends me messages, but never invites me to visit. However, since I had promised Worldly 7:00, I would come to visit him.

Jazzmini didn’t want me to go. He said he had something he really wanted to tell me. I asked him to tell me in a private message after I left, but supposedly he wanted to be with me when he said it.

By strange coincidence, Worldly teleported me to a different location on the same island that I was already on with Jazzmini. We talked a lot about the members of the opposite sex that we meet. I was glad that Worldly didn’t feel he needed to hide that information from me.

While chatting by voice with Worldly, I told Jazzmini by text that I’d meet with him at 7:00am the next morning.

## Wednesday, March 31, 2010

### Ruby

Jazzmini was already online at 6:50 this morning. But Worldly sent me a private message first. Perhaps because he knew I’d be online?

Jazzmini didn’t seem to have any burning information to tell me, so I think he was trying to manipulate me into coming back to him last night. He said he wanted to hear my voice, so I got on the microphone. He wouldn’t get on voice, saying he didn’t have a mic, but he must have had it on because I could hear his keyboard and my voice echoing over his speakers.

After Jazzmini logged off, I chatted with Worldly. He said he was going offline, but a few moments after he logged off, he logged back on.

## Meeting women

### Bruce

I decided it was time to venture out and meet women. I’ve spent almost all my time in Learn Avatar since my birth.

TeeVee teleported me to his location to meet someone. But when I got there, she was gone. Oh, TeeVee. He gave me her name. She was new. Very new. Created-today new. I hope we didn’t scare her off.

I went to a jazz lounge. Many women wandered around. I saw Professor40 wearing stylish glasses with a tag over her head that said “Intelligence is Hot.” That’s the woman I want to meet.

Professor40 teaches at a university and is in her forties. As I chatted with her, the area was about to reboot. I invited Professor40 to see my land, but as I teleported there, I crashed! I couldn’t even log back on.

Luckily when I logged back on later, Professor40 was still at the jazz lounge. She said that a friend of hers teaches classes in Second Life.

“What classes does he/she teach?” I asked.

She was wary at first, making it clear that she didn’t know me, so she wasn’t going to give out that information. But she warmed up more as we continued to chat.

Professor40 is looking for a boyfriend in Second Life. “Maybe you’ll meet someone in Second Life that you’d like to be with in real life,” she told me. Ha ha. Yeah, right. Is that what she thinks she’s looking for?

The more I think about Professor40, the stranger she seems. I can see someone in their twenties getting excited about Second Life boyfriends, but by the time you’re in your forties, you should be concentrating on long term relationships in real life, not in games. Especially if you’re very educated. Fine if you come across someone nice, but don’t make it a goal.

If she wants to find someone to have a relationship with, she shouldn’t be so cagy about simple generic personal facts, such as what time zone she lives in or what classes her friends teach in Second Life. She’s not going to get to know someone if she isn’t willing to share.

I also wondered if she was somewhat snooty, having a Ph.D. and all. You know how those Ph.D.s are better than everyone else. She kept emphasizing that she didn’t know me, and she asked my profession (which is something I’m always interested in too). Did she mean that she didn’t know if I was educated enough for her to talk to me? she warmed up after I told her I had at least two college degrees. I didn’t mention my own Ph.D.

### Ruby

I took Worldly to my neighborhood to look around. Joey showed us his fire truck. He was still building his garage. As we toured some of the other buildings, Joey invited us to come back because there was a fire he had to put out. Turned out that Joey had set his house on fire so he could have a fire to put out. I called it job security. Worldly called it a childhood dream come true.

## Meeting people at dances

### Ruby

I was getting ready to check out a ballroom dance lounge when a more wild dance club sent out an invitation blast. So I went to the wild club. At first only women were there, but then Texas showed up wearing only a thong.

Now, normally I don’t bother with guys wearing nothing. But I wanted to be playful for once, so I sent him a private message. It was obvious that he was paying attention to me because there were no pauses in the flow of the chat. In local chat, other people in the club commented on how close we were standing without dancing with each other. “Are Ruby and Texas having a showdown?” But neither of us noticed their comments until after we left to go look at my land.

He asked if I was going to write about him. Holy cow, that came out of nowhere. How did he know I was keeping this journal? Oh, I had something in my profile about it.

“Maybe,” I said.

He took a phone call in real life. When he got back, I told him I was writing about him while he was gone. “Really?” he asked.

“No.” Then I typed a few words in my blog. “But I am now.” He said he’d better be on his best behavior.

Northern sent me a message that just said hi. I responded with a friendly, “Hi Northern!” but he was offline. Huh? Why did he send me a message then log off?

### Bruce

Today I attended Chachi’s particle blasting class. We didn’t go over the code of the script itself, but he did give us code to play with and pick apart.

We had to load our own texture onto the particle blaster. I chose bricks. But they were too big. I don’t want to blast entire walls at anyone, just individual bricks. I tried asphalt, but that just made gray walls.

At the end of the class, Chachi used a particle blaster to blast money to each of the students. Woo hoo! I received $80L! I only had $119L, which can’t even get you a pair of shoes, so it was great to have a little more spending money.

I asked if we could make a device that gave money to ourselves, instead of a device that gave money to other people. “The money has to come from somewhere,” Chachi said.

“I thought the government just printed it,” I said.

Chachi was being a little bit of a know-it-all every once in awhile. “When I was a kid, I programmed graphics for ((((( [something important sounding],” Chachi said.

I responded, “When I was a kid, I programmed Loops.” Which is completely true. My dad had a TRS80 in the late 1970’s.

Sabina was the only woman in the class. She kept making Giggles sounds as she put the word ‘Giggles’ in the local chat surrounded by squiggly characters, much like the text and sounds made by many of the people at dance clubs.

Sabina asked a question about pose balls and put one on the floor. So I hopped onto it. It put me halfway into the floor. When I stood up, I landed completely under the building. “Help. Where am I?” I asked the class.

I asked about how to attach pose balls to furniture. “I can tell you’re planning to make the naughtiest couch in Second Life,” Yeah. But not that kind of naughty.

## (gardens)

### Ruby

I went to the island where I met Worldly. I danced with Psychology who had good writing skills and seemed pretty smart. I told him I had just returned from volunteering with the youth group at my church.

I received a message from Worldly, asking where I was. “Take a guess,” I told him.

I asked Worldly why he was sitting near a piano by himself the night I met him. “Right behind where you are dancing?” I checked my radar to find out if he was nearby. He had been there for over eight minutes. I never even saw him.

I felt conflicted. Do I leave a potential new friend to hang out with a good friend, missing out on the chance to hang around a nice guy? Or do I tell the old friend that I was with the other guy first, and leave him to go find someone else to hang out with.

I figured that since the friendship with Worldly was still new, I shouldn't put all my eggs in his basket yet. So I stayed with Psychology. We had a good conversation, but I think he could tell I was still chatting in private message with Worldly.

Psychology asked if I had ever been naked in Second Life. “That’s sort of a strange question. But sort of a normal question for Second Life.” I said I had been. After all, I was born a naked man.

When I was about to log off, I asked Worldly to teleport me to the museum where he was hanging out. But he had already been invited to dance by another woman.

## Friday, April 2, 2010

### Ruby

I gave my undivided attention to Worldly since I left him on his own last night.

“The woman I danced with last night was horrible,” he said. “I should’ve teleported you. It was just bad timing.”

Worldly had a group name above his head, even though he had made a point of deleting all groups, including BudgetJustified.com, from his profile. So I browsed the group to find out what it was. It was a strip club.

Worldly was at a dance party. I asked him to teleport me, but when I arrived, it was a lonely island.

“Why didn’t you take me to the party?” I asked.

“I’d rather be alone with you.”

I don’t mind being alone with him, but I wanted to check out the parties he goes to. I’ve invited him to hang out with my neighborhood friends, why wouldn’t he want me to meet his party friends.

We went back to the party, but he stood in the background. “Come over and with everyone else,” I offered.

He got angry with me for asking why he wouldn’t take me to the party or dance with everyone. I asked what was wrong, but he said everything was OK.

I popped online again later in the evening. He was online, but wouldn’t answer my messages. Great. The same games Northern plays.

## Meeting people in builders groups

### Bruce

I joined the Builders Brewery today. There isn’t any beer there. Good thing. There’s already enough beer and wine passed around at all the dance clubs. Instead, there are building materials and classes on how to script and build.

I arrived during an Easter egg hunt. The eggs contained prizes, like scripts, animations, and objects you could carry around, such as baskets. Or leave somewhere. I think I left mine behind after I put it on the ground to see what it was.

I thought there was a class today, but it was cancelled. So I wandered around to meet people. I met a guy floating in the air with his face against the wall of a barn. I asked him if he was working on building something, or just stuck. “Someone just painted this barn and I wanted a close up view to watch it dry,” he said.

He made a good rolling joke of it. “My wife put me in Time Out.” I like his sense of humor. Too bad for Ruby’s sake, he already has a Second Life wife.

I tried to friend him, but he told me that offering friendship is rude, that I should offer a calling card instead. Which is strange, because I’ve only been offered friendships, never a calling card.

I wonder how that guy would have reacted if Ruby had tried to friend him, rather than Bruce.

Then I went to Bookstacks, a venue for live poetry readings. A few people there friended me.

They were having a costume contest. Since I was wearing my brick shirt and granite pants, I entered as a brick wall with granite foundation. I didn’t win.

After the contest, a woman came in wearing a beautiful dress and jewelry. I told her she looked like she deserved to have someone take her to a fancy party. “I am a little overdressed,” she said.

“You’re perfect,” I told her.

Northern kept popping on and off while Bruce was online. Probably trying to hide from someone. I noticed that Learn Avatar promoted him to Builder, which means he’ll get a larger plot and won’t be next door to me for long.

I was considering dropping him from Ruby’s friend list – no point in being friends if his online status is always hidden. But he’d notice and I don’t want to raise flags.

As it turned out, dropping him from my friend list became unnecessary. This was the last day that either Ruby or Bruce ever saw Northern.

## Northern explained

Sent bipolar rant

### Ruby

Worldly came online to say hi. He couldn’t stay long because he had a meeting in real life. We agreed to meet in the afternoon. When he left, he appeared to log off, but instead he hid his online status from my friend list and when I browsed his profile, I saw that he was still online.

Worldly finally unhid his offline status at about 9:00 pm my time, which would have been 4:00 am his time! I don’t understand the hours he keeps. I was just about to log off.

We stayed online chatting for another half hour, just the two of us, while we took the hot air balloon tour and slow danced in Africa. I told him he was my favorite person to spend time with online. He said he doesn’t rank people, everyone has different high points, but that our chats are the best.

Which probably means he really likes getting avatar sex from the other women.

So, he was probably hanging out with one of his other women earlier. I didn’t probe. There would be no point. I like hanging around with him, but can’t expect loyalty. Especially from someone I met only a week ago. On the internet.

## Monday, April 5, 2010

### Ruby

I was supposed to meet Worldly at 7:00 pm my time, but by 7:20 even though he was online, his online status was hidden. So I sent him a message saying that if he wanted to chat with me by voice, he’d have to stop hiding his status from my friend list so I could readily see that he was online. Otherwise I have to go digging through other information to find out whether he’s actually online or not.

He unhid his online status right away. He had been chatting with some other woman.

We talked by voice. He said his chemistry with me was better than with other women because I was the only one who talked with him by voice. He said he had asked other women if they wanted to chat by voice, but they had declined. I suppose they have something to hide.

He proposed something really interesting. I keep asking about his experiences online; they are so different than mine. He meets women so easily. They take him shopping or dancing. I rarely get invited anywhere. So he suggested go to same place and meet people at a club and try to meet members of the opposite sex. What should I say to them? I want your hot avatar body?

I told him about my journal but didn’t mention Bruce, of course. He thought it was an intriguing idea. I read some excerpts to him.

He will continue to have his multiple women. “I’ll have to figure out if that’s what I want in the long term.”

A friend of Worldly’s who likes to shop came online and he went to visit her. Then he said he was going to sleep, and hid his online status, but was still online. Perhaps he went to have avatar sex with her.

Worldly is very intelligent, articulate, and a great conversationalist. I believe that he likes hanging around with me. But there are red flags – he’s online way too much, he sleeps at weird hours, he hides his online status, he’s too interested in avatar sex.

I was hoping that ‘dating’ in Second Life would be like dating in high school – going to dances, passing notes in class, hanging out in groups of friends. That happens in Second Life, but that’s not dating. Dating is avatar sex. And lots of it. Because there’s not real life responsibilities in Second Life.

## Men take me shopping

### Ruby

As I browsed my neighborhood, I found Disaster with Dude. They have been friends for three years. She asked about my ‘stripper friend,’ Texas.

“I think he has an online girlfriend,” I said. “I’m hanging around with Worldly now.”

“How do you find male friends that like to keep hanging around, even when you aren’t interested in having avatar sex with them?” I asked.

She didn’t know.

I went to look around at some rocks in space. I ran into one of the creators of the rock area. Seemed like a nice guy. I told him I thought it was the most unique place I had seen in Second Life.

I asked one of the guys there what he does in Second Life. “Wild unbridled sex,” he said. I didn’t say anything in response. “What do you think of that?” he asked.

“I don’t know what to think of that.” I wasn’t sure if he was being funny, hoping I’d invite him to some pose balls, or trying to scare me away.

I clicked on something that made me unable to stop dancing. I danced right off the edge of the rocks and fell through space. One guy teleported me back to the rock on which he danced.

His daughter in real life blogs about fashion in virtual worlds. He took me to a clothing store. Yea! People had been taking Worldly to stores to show him around and buy him things. Finally someone offered to take me. Then he complained about my skin, eyes, hair, clothes, the way I stood. I was no longer so thrilled to be invited to the store. It would have been one thing if he had suggested some skin or eyes that he liked. Instead he sent me a link to his daughter’s blog and told me I should try to look like those women. “They look twenty years younger than me,” I said.

“Most people try not to look like themselves in real life,” he said. Well I’m not most people. And looking like a nineteen year old Barbie doll when you’re thirty-nine is not a good thing.

While at the store, I had continued chatting with another guy from the space rocks. I told him that I was irritated by this guy insulting my style. “Do you like how you look?” Of course. “That’s what’s important,” he said.

Worldly came online and Disaster sent a message to the Learn Avatar neighborhood that she was at a dance. So I asked for a teleport and told her I’d bring Worldly with me.

In the Learn Avatar chat, Disaster told me that Worldly looked yummy. “I don’t judge by the avatar,” I said. A few people commented that it was probably good not to. “Instead I like him for his party gestures,” I responded. Gestures are the annoying squiggly characters people put in chat at dance clubs.

I told Worldly that we were talking about him in my neighborhood’s chat.

TeeVee showed up and stood in the corner. This time, instead of encouraging him to dance, which scared him away a few weeks ago, I asked Disaster what was wrong. “He has a premonition that something bad is going to happen.”

“I hope you’re joking, because that’s funny,” I said.

“I’m not,” she said. Okaaay. That’s just weird.

TeeVee left anyway, and I told Worldly about the premonition. “He sounds homicidal. If he comes back, I’ll get him with my sawed off shotgun.”

A minute later, TeeVee returned. “He’s Baaaack!” I told Worldly. Fortunately no violence ensued.

Disaster had the words “Dude’s groupie” above her. At the end of the dance, we had the opportunity to put other words above her. So I entered “Ruby’s groupie.”

Several former dance partners from other dances I’d attended sent me private messages while I danced with Worldly. I was glad they all had thought of saying hi to me.

One of them invited me to dance right after the voting had ended. I thought about leaving Worldly since I had already danced with him for awhile, but I thought it would be rude to say I was done with him, and that I was going off to be with someone else. So I told the guy that I was still with friends and hoped to dance another time.

Psychology also sent me a message, but was dancing with someone else. Perhaps she was boring.

After the dance, Worldly and I time traveled to early 1900’s Paris. We rode in an old car around the streets and I fell out. “I didn’t realize we were going that fast,” Worldly said.

As we wobbled down the street, a shirtless newbie hopped into the car. I gave him a BudgetJustified.com shirt. “Nice tits,” he said. Huh?

“That was an educated greeting,” Worldly said.

“I think he was talking to you,” I said.

### Lisa

It’s interesting to see how dating in Second Life evolves – getting invited to dance by different guys who have interesting things to say. If I ever found someone that was more interesting than anyone else, I suppose I’d stop going to the dances to find random partners. But I’d have probably have to know the person for quite awhile before I decided that.

Perhaps that’s what I would call a Second Life boyfriend. But if we were good friends who had hung out for awhile, we probably wouldn’t care about titles at that point.

Some of my dance partners say that cartoon sex is like cheating, especially if you’re married. If you’re doing it to prank someone and become a monkey in the middle of the activity, I wouldn’t call it cheating. If you were doing it to make an erotic connection with a particular person – participating and communicating – it could be. Avatar sex is more personal than watching or reading porn. Porn is not an activity you necessarily share with someone else. Although I have ethical problems with porn for different reasons. And one could make the argument that porn is cheating.

I have a problem with people indiscriminately having avatar sex. At least with avatar sex, it’s not a matter of health or safety, as it is with real sex. It’s a matter of how you choose to spend your time and the kind of relationships you choose to build and how you treat other people.

## Wednesday, April 7, 2010

### Bruce

A guy named Penus appeared near my land. I asked him about the name. “It means ‘fly like the wind’ in Cherokee,” he said.

“I’m surprised Linden Labs lets you use that name.” Although I’ve seen much worse things in Second Life. “It still sounds too much like penis,” I said.

“No, it sounds like PENUS,” he replied. Okaaay.

He told me that his grandfather moved to England because the American government persecuted the Cherokee.

“Didn’t the persecution start long before there was an American government? Perhaps when the British ruled America?” For some reason this offended him and he went on a rant. I ignored him and he went away.

I flew around my neighborhood and heard some people talking out loud. So I landed, panned and zoomed around, and saw people having fully-clothed sex. They weren’t speaking in English, so I’m not sure exactly what was going on, but there was no heavy breathing, so I think they were just goofing around.

I sent a message to the owner of the land to ask if she knew them. She did, and went to her house to check on them. It didn’t seem like they were mad at each other. They were laughing.

### Ruby

Worldly was still online at 3:00 am his time. I sent him a message, but he didn’t respond right away. Worldly While he wandered through a music store looking for objects that looked similar to the instruments he plays in real life, we chatted by voice. Voice is better than text – information flow is quicker. And I can tell he’s not chatting with anyone else when he’s engaged in an audio conversation.

He said he was having a nice chat with a music teacher and that he had also been talking to Disaster. I like the idea of him being friends with my friends.

While chatting with Worldly, banter was going on in the Learn Avatar neighborhood chat. Jasmyn mentioned an article in the Onion that said all old people are addicted to drugs. I said, “My husband is addicted to the Onion.” After that, Jasmyn left the conversation.

BigStripper said, “He must have stinky breath.” Followed shortly thereafter by, “He isn’t on Second Life.” I wasn’t sure if she was referring to my husband or someone else.

“How do you know?” I asked.

She also said, “He still wants me.” Was she trying to be funny by saying that my husband wanted her? I sent her a private message asking who she was referring to. Turns out she had mentioned her ex-husband somewhere and I missed it. It was funnier when I thought she meant my husband.

## Neighborhood rules

### Bruce

In my Learn Avatar neighborhood’s chat The Owner of the Learn Avatar land said we need to be taking a class every other day now, instead of once a week. He did say that a brief one-on-one course would be OK, even if it only lasted for five minutes. I think he just wants to make sure that everyone is doing something with the land, since he is letting us use it for free.

The Owner also put some burden on the builders who have been promoted. He asked the builders to ask their neighbors if they needed any help. A Michael Jackson look-alike, came by while I was building on my land and gave me ten thousand textures.

“MICHAEL JACKSON IS HELPING ME!” I entered in the neighborhood chat. “Did I get my brownie points?”

I was surprised that Chachi said hi to me. He mentioned something about my outfit being rocky

How would he know? “Where are you?” I asked.

“On the roof,” he said.

I looked around and found him on top of the building I stood next to. No wonder he said hi. I went up to watch him put together some materials for the classes he’s going to teach and picked up several useful scripts. I’d better get brownie points for this.

Who even grants brownie points? I think Chachi does. Good thing I’m on his good side. I haven’t seen Joni around for awhile, so now Chachi seems to be in charge of classes.

“Why do we have this land?

“I don’t know what the business model is

“It’s $300 per month to rent a sim, and you can rent out the land for $500 per month.

“I would think that LL would just rent it out themselves. If it were that easy to find customers, I'd just pay $300 a month and rent a sim out

### Ruby

Worldly and I went dancing with Disaster again. She wore a skanky outfit and rolled around all over the floor. She brought Dude with her. He had the words “I want SecretAdmirer” above his head. I had heard something in the neighborhood chat a few days earlier about SecretAdmirer and Dude possibly getting together as a couple.

Worldly chatted with Disaster asked her something about her long term friendship with Dude. Apparently she said, “As of an hour ago, we’re not just friends.” What had happened in one hour to change a long term friendship?

My real life friend Chandler came online while I was with Worldly, talking by voice. I teleported him to me so they could meet each other.

I asked Chandler if he had ever had a Second Life girlfriend. “Why? Did you want to be mine?” he asked.

“No you’re never online when I am,” I said.

“Whine, whine, whine,” he replied.

He hasn’t heard whining yet. “And you always leave the toilet seat up.”

I said I didn’t really want him as my online boyfriend. I know him in real life. “Oh, you want it to be anonymous,” he said.

Anonymous? What? No. I don’t want anonymous, I want the opposite. I want to know my friends. I wasn’t asking for sex, I was asking about relationships. If I’m going to have a Second Life boyfriend, it’s going to be a relationship, where I know about his life, we feel comfortable talking by voice, and we build stuff or throw parties together when we’re both online. Anonymous avatar sex is not what you have with a boyfriend. It’s what you have with porn.

Having Chandler be my Second Life boyfriend seems a little pointless. I already have a real life relationship with him. Why bother with the avatar? Seems like such a step down, Second Life seems like it would be irrelevant to us having a sex life.

Chandler took me to his house. Meanwhile I was still talking to Worldly by voice. “How do you feel about me leaving for a moment to go to a real life friend’s house?” I asked.

I think Worldly felt a little bad, but joked about it. “Excuses excuses,” he said. “Just because you know him in real life, that makes it different?”

I thought it did. But either way, I didn’t want to give Worldly the message that it would be OK to leave me to hang out with another woman. Unless, of course, he knew her in real life.

“Can I teleport Worldly here?” I asked Chandler.

I knew it wouldn’t, since Chandler didn’t know Worldly and I’d heard of people going to other people’s houses for sex while the owner wasn’t around.

## Worldly shops for other women

### Ruby

I chatted by voice with Worldly about his female friends Skitzo and Shopper while he shopped for houses with Shopper. Shopper is in her early twenties, but Skitzo is in her mid-thirties. Seems odd that a thirty-something year old woman is best friends with someone more than ten years younger.

After shopping, Worldly went alone with Skitzo to her house. Although Worldly assured me that we’re still Second Life best friends, I know something is going on between him and Skitzo. Shopper has a real life boyfriend, but Skitzo said that she doesn’t.

Worldly told me that a woman who had invited him to her house for avatar sex has since banned him from entering her property. I think that’s common. I’m sure she has several other guys coming through her house for sex and doesn’t want them to run into each other. Supposedly she also has a housemate. Probably male.

I think that other people have a different idea of what a ‘relationship’ is within Second Life. I wanted to find a nice boyfriend who wanted to hang out with Ruby. Someone who would take her to dances or parties, like in high school. But I think I just need to do what I have to do with my movie theater, have a few nice conversations, and take a break from looking for someone who I really like to hang out with. If I run across someone while I’m doing my goal activities, that’s just a bonus.

I thought I’d be able to find guys who would really want to take Ruby out on dates, someone who didn’t feel he needed to constantly scam around looking for other women to dance with. Someone who doesn’t think creepy poseball sex is great. The men who are trying to get sex from Ruby stick around, but few people are interested in hanging out to learn building and scripting.

Sex is way too prevalent around Second Life. Second Life culture is trying to make me feel prudish about refusing to ever go on sex pose balls. As though their actually trying to justify their own actions.

That is probably why I’m a married person in the first place. Because I want a deep connection with someone who really knows me instead of fooling people. And I want to continue to deepen that relationship rather than dilute it by spending time with unfulfilling acquaintances.

Just as in real life, I don’t want to use sex to get attention. Because then you attract the kind of attention you don’t want.

## Saturday, April 10, 2010

### Bruce

I went to a Learn Avatar class to learn how to make a door. Now, that sounds very simple. I thought we were just going to make a door that swung. But instead, we talked about functions in the computer code that makes the door work.

The instructor told us about universally unique identifiers. He said every avatar has one. “Are they for Second Life to know which database record corresponds to each avatar?” I asked.

“Without the UUID,” the instructor said, “An avatar would belong to everyone.”

“It would be fun to make an avatar that belonged to everyone,” I said. “We could play a Where’s Waldo game with it.”

### Ruby

When I logged on today, BoxFace invited everyone in the neighborhood to helicopter class. We made spinning propellers. I talked with Worldly by voice and teleported him to BoxFace’s class.

Disaster was still wearing the device that lets people put words above her head. I had thought it was something that the dance club was doing, but we were able to put words on her during class too. I put “I love Ruby” above her head.

I sent Worldly a message asking if he was asleep. He was at Skitzo’s place again. She was taking pictures of him for his profile, but he talked to me by voice.

Worldly is still going to hang out with other female friends and I don’t want to nag him about it. I can’t be there for him all the time, so he needs to have some freedom. He doesn’t share all the details about what he does online.

A guy I met earlier who earns money by playing concerts in Second Life sent out a notice that he was about to start a concert. I teleported Worldly. We chatted by voice about underground religious movements in his country, the students he tutors, the loss of his parents at an early age. In the background, I could hear church bells toll outside the open window of his high rise apartment.

The concert singer greeted me out loud between songs, thanking me for coming to several of his concerts and inviting the audience to join his group for upcoming concert announcements. Worldly and I chuckled about the fact that I bring a different dance partner to each of his live concerts. “Maybe I’ll be the one you invite back a second time,” Worldly said.

## Monday, April 12, 2010

### Bruce

The Builders Brewery sent me a new shattering window, so I opened it to see how it worked. I happened to be in Joni’s classroom when I logged on, so I put the window on the classroom floor and touched it. It shattered and left shards all over the floor. I tried picking them up one by one, but after I deleted a few, the rest disappeared on their own.

As long as I was in Joni’s class, I stuck around for the remainder of the class session. Joni made a pyramid and thanked Mr. Isoceles for triangles with two equal sides.

“I think Euclid invented the theorem for isosceles triangles,” I said.

We chatted about the Pythagorean theorem for calculating a hypotenuse. But this was a building class. “I’ll teach a math class another time,” Joni said.

“I could teach statistics,” I volunteered.

“I’d like to take that class, Bruce,” Joni replied. Yikes. I taught statistics by drawing pictures on a chalk board and talking about them out loud. I’m not sure how I’d teach it in Second Life. Maybe I’d draw a good regression joke about the mathematician, physicist, economist, and psychologist. Or something about anecdotal evidence regarding how Bruce and Ruby are treated in Second Life being insufficient to prove statistical trends.

After class, Zteampunk invited us to the grand opening of her café hangout. I walked out of what I thought was the exit to the classroom, but I actually walked right through a window, leaving shards of glass all over the ground.

“Look at the mess I made.” I couldn’t even clean it up. But a few seconds later, the shards disappeared. At least it wasn’t just me who was cursed by shattering glass. Zteampunk walked through the window too.

Was that window there before? I don’t think it was a coincidence that Joni had a shattering window in the space that looked like the classroom exit. But it was funny that I walked through it before anyone else in the class did.

Zteampunk’s café had free pizza and cookies. Obviously not a money-making kind of business. Kitty also came along to see Zteampunk’s place. I heard a Meow and thought it was my cat in real life wanting to come in the house, but then I saw that Kitty had one kitten on each shoulder.

Kitty took a picture of Zteampunk laughing and sent it to us. The odd thing about it was that Zteampunk didn’t appear to be laughing to me nor to Zteampunk. “I wish I smiled more,” I said. “I look like a grouch.”

Zteampunk and Kitty sent me some smiles, but they didn’t look quite natural on me. “Maybe the problem is my eyes.” So Kitty gave me several types of eyes. Those were much better.

Kitty took me to her fractal art gallery way up in the sky. We had to sit on boxes, then set the z coordinate to 3000 to get there. Like a magic elevator.

Kitty gave me several pieces of her artwork, along with skins and body shapes. One of the shapes made my shoulders so big they were ridiculous. I don’t even know what my skin currently looks like. “I haven’t seen myself naked yet,” I told Kitty. She was surprised.

“A lot of newbies run around naked,” she said. “To be free.” I’m not sure why that would make anyone feel free.

Kitty warned me, “You can’t go to the nude beaches with newbie skin.” Nude beaches. Haven’t tried going to any of those as Bruce yet.

### Ruby

In the Builders Brewery chat, someone said, “The hottest female avatar in Second Life is actually a man.”

“That’s not true. I’m not a man,” Sapphi replied.

“Do you realize how many lesbians there are in Second Life?” someone asked.

“No. How many?” I asked.

“The real tragedy is that all the ugly avatars are actually supermodels in real life,” one of the guys said.

Someone else said that all the supermodels were lesbians. “I don’t mind if the supermodels are Lebanese,” another retorted.

“I’m an American supermodel,” I said. Then I got a private message from someone I had never heard of before. I looked at her profile. There was a picture of two women cuddling. Hey, I didn’t say I was a lesbian.

## I shop for men

### Ruby

Worldly was hanging around with Skitzo’s friend Shopper and one of Shopper’s male friends when I logged on. Apparently I wasn’t welcome to hang out with them, so I went to one of the nude beaches from the landmarks that Kitty gave to Bruce. However nobody was nude. Except one dork walking around with his penis. I avoided him.

I wore a bikini and got a lot of attention. The place was more crowded than anywhere else I had been so far. Three men sent me instant messages during the short time I was there.

I approached a guy named Professor. Because his name was Professor. He was fun and had a smart sense of humor.

As I danced with Professor, a young man sent me a message. “Who that bitch you stand with? He’s gay.”

The young guys are always saying silly things. I asked him how old he was. “You’d better not be the age of my grandma,” he said.

“I am your grandma,” I said. “Didn’t you know?”

“Grandma, what are you doing on this beach?”

Professor took me back to his gigantic house. I’m not sure why he had such a large house. Raises a flag about his priorities here. There were several dance floors. As I panned and zoomed I saw a bed, but Professor didn’t mention sex at all. At least he seems to be a gentleman about inviting women over for the first time.

Professor has been renting his place for a couple of weeks. We talked a little about my movie theater. He’s not a techie and asked for building advice. Unfortunately, he doesn’t have the rights to delete objects that other people leave there. A previous dance partner of his had left a glass of wine behind.

“How many women have you had over?” I asked.

“Ten thousand,” he said. Very funny. “Actually about three or four.”

Worldly got bored of hanging around with Shopper and her friend and told them that he was going to go spend time with another friend. That friend being me.

I gave Professor a landmark to my movie theater and invited him to go check it out any time, even though it’s currently under construction. He asked if he could get popcorn there. “Yes! I found a popcorn machine a few days ago.” Too bad I didn’t find an ‘Under Construction’ sign.

I went to another one of the beaches with ‘Nude’ in the title where, again, nobody was nude. As I waited for Worldly, two other guys asked me to dance. One had already been dancing with another woman at the time. “I’m hotter in real life,” I told him.

“Then I’ll dance with this woman in Second Life and with you in real life.”

Worldly took me on a really cool space tour. We even got space suits. I only put on the helmet. I was still wearing the bikini. “Don’t worry about the atmosphere in space,” Worldly joked. “It’s more important to look good.”

I asked Worldly if he wanted to have Skitzo as his Second Life girlfriend and me as his Second Life best friend. He said that was a fairly accurate assessment. Sounds like he wants to eat the cake too.

I’m disappointed that Worldly wants Skitzo to be his girlfriend. That means she’s his priority now. I can see why. She has a group of close friends to hang out with, has been in Second Life longer, and can show him more things.

It’s possible that being online best friends is more of a compliment than wanting to be my online boyfriend. A best friend on a computer platform has more potential to be long term. Whereas a boyfriend in such a setting is a frivolous. It’s well known that most Second Life ‘partnerships’ last around three weeks.

It doesn’t seem like Worldly is completely invested in Skitzo. They’ve only talked by voice for fifteen minutes. He doesn’t like her thick southern accent. Recently while he was at Skitzo’s place, he was talking to me by voice. And he still goes out to meet women.

I have to admit I respect for Worldly for acknowledging my real life marriage. Although I have to worry about his real life a little if he takes Second Life romantic relationships seriously enough to feel that they compete with real life relationships. Perhaps he allows them to compete with his real life relationships.

It’s funny how his attitude has changed over the past three weeks. At first he was trying to convince me to let go and imagine myself in the avatar’s body, enjoying herself. But now that he’s gotten to know Lisa as the person more than Ruby the avatar, he’s concerned about my real life relationships.

There are a lot of committed married, or partnered, couples in Second Life. Yet maybe many of those couples are not happy together. Maybe they aren’t as committed as they pretend to be. Or that they know each other. Or even that they are of the opposite sex in real life.

### Ruby

Worldly took me to an amusement park and we rode a train. An amusement park. How adorable.

“Do you prefer Skitzo because she has a group of close friends?” I asked.

“Not really,” Worldly said. “We don’t all hang out at the same time anyway.”

Worldly met a married woman last night who was clearly looking for a romantic relationship online. But he didn’t want to get involved with her because she was married. She dropped him as a friend, saying that she didn’t want to waste his time.

I guess that woman was only interested in men for sex, and since Worldly didn’t want to go there, she didn’t even want to bother with a friendship. Why bother telling him she was married if she was just trolling for sex?

It’s kind of funny, sitting on the metro, seeing people who I have more information about – approximate age, city they live in, physical condition – than the people I see when I’m online. I could go up to these people and talk to them, like I do online, but I don’t.

### Ruby

DirtBike is in his forties. He said he had met a twenty year old lover on Second Life and traveled to the United States to meet her a few times. Creepy.

My land was about to reboot, so I went to a beach. As soon as I arrived, Second, a guy I had never met, invited me to his house. Well, I know what guys I’ve never met want when they invite me to their house. But I went anyway.

Second was worried because he didn’t know how to guarantee that someone would ever want to stay with him. “I’ve seen so many breakups.”

“If you’re honest, people will want to stay,” I told him. “If it's a truly good person, it can be very rewarding. The trouble with Second Life relationships is that they're shallow. They happen too fast. People don't take the time to get to know each other.”

“I’m unlucky,” Second said, and logged off.

So I teleported Worldly to Second’s house. Then Second logged back in. Oh crap. I thought that he had given up on me, but he must have just crashed. Worldly left.

“Who was that guy in here?” Second asked.

“A friend who just logged on,” I said. “He’s teleporting me somewhere else.”

“You can come here anytime,” Second said as I left.

While Worldly took me flying in a helicopter, Chachi sent a notice to the Learn Avatar neighborhood to let us know that there were several available land plots. I asked Worldly if he wanted one. “Sure.”

Chachi assigned him a lot right next to mine. Awesome. Now we’re neighbors and can hang out in our neighborhood and build stuff. Perhaps now I can see Skitzo and her friends around more often and learn more about what they like to do in Second Life.

Worldly got the plot where some people were having fully clothed avatar sex in someone’s house as Bruce flew by a few nights ago. I wonder if Bruce’s announcement about it in Learn Avatar chat got the owner booted off the land.

## Worldly gets a girlfriend –how do I play in

### Ruby

I hadn’t been online for a few days, so I asked Worldly what had gone on while I was gone.

“Skitzo and I are officially exclusive,” Worldly told me.

Excuse me? I was away for two days. And when I come back, he already has a girlfriend. That he’s known for less than ten days.

“That was fast,” I said. What was I supposed to say? Congratulations on landing a control freak?

“You’re still my Second Life best friend,” he said.

Yeah. Best friend when Skitzo and her friends aren’t online.

Skitzo is a disc jockey at a few dance clubs. She kicked me out of her DJ group, so I asked why.

“It’s only for people I invites to my house,” she said.

That doesn’t explain why she waited until now to kick me out, or what the house has to do with DJing. Or why I don’t get invited to her house.

She friended me instead. Perhaps so she can see when I’m online.

I had been considering telling Worldly about Bruce, but this is a step backward in our friendship, so I don’t think he deserves to know yet, if at all.

I should make Worldly less of a priority than he has been. If Chandler invites me to his house, I should go. If someone invites me to dance, I should go.

I don’t know how this will affect our friendship. It’s not so much the fact that he chose her to be his priority and not me. The problem is that he chose someone I can’t have respect for. Which makes me lose respect for him. She doesn’t want me around and she uses passive aggressive tactics to try to upset me. Of course, I don’t care if I’m in her DJ group. But I bet she was hoping I’d throw a hissy and look petty. Probably because that’s what she would have done.

### Ruby

I asked my real life friend Chandler what online boyfriends were about. “What do you think of a guy who tells one woman she’s his best friend, tells another she’s his girlfriend, yet goes around meeting many other one night stands?”

“Sounds like a load of bull,” he said. But then he admitted that, since I am married after all, that he could understand why he’d want to be friends yet have someone else as a girlfriend.

“Is his other friend married too?” Chandler asked.

“No, she doesn’t even have a boyfriend,” I told him.

Well, that was one difference that made Skitzo more appealing to Worldly as someone to hang out with.

“What kind of groups Worldly belonged to, what did he post about his real life and Second Life, if he had any favorite picks, and what other things had Worldly posted in his profile that might seem appealing to many women.

So I looked at Worldly’s profile. And then a whole different set of questions became relevant.

“Holy crap! I can’t believe what I’m seeing!” I said to Chandler.

“What’s your prob?” Chandler asked.

I sent him Worldly’s calling card so he could look at it too.

Worldly and Skitzo were partnered.

“How could he have gotten married without even telling me?”

Nobody gets married, even online, after knowing someone for less than two weeks. They didn’t even have an engagement. Now I really know he is not my best friend. You marry your best friend. You don’t get married then call someone else your best friend.

“Seems like this guy isn’t the one for you,” Chandler said.

Obviously not.

When Worldly came online, he offered to give me a hug.

I didn’t acknowledge the offer. “Do you have something to tell me?” I asked. He didn’t seem to know what I was talking about. “About the name on the right side of your profile?”

Ah, yes. The ‘partner’ box. Worldly swore that partnered doesn’t mean married. “It just means that I’m off the romantic market.”

He also said that he loves her. “I don’t want to stomp all over your happiness over this,” I said, “but as someone who has been married for over fifteen years, it sounds lame to think you’re in love with someone you met ten days ago.”

I asked Disaster if being partnered is generally considered married. She thought it was, although not everyone takes it as seriously as others.

Online marriage is like movie marriage. After two hours of watching someone, you can buy into going through the stages of just meeting someone to marrying them. It’s not like you’re letting these strangers walk through your home, spend your money, or stick body parts in your orifices. Enjoy the interactive movie, then live your life when you turn off the screen. It continues as a television series when you turn the screen back on later.

Other people seem to pick up partners like they pick up their laundry. I, on the other hand, can’t even find a good conversation.

## Tuesday, April 20, 2010

### Ruby

While chatting with one guy at a ballroom dance place, another guy asked me to dance. I had my hair up and glasses on. I told him it was my Sarah Palin look.

He went on a rant about the Republicans and how Bush caused him to lose Millions of dollars. “How was Bush responsible for that?”

He had gotten laid off. “How does getting laid off cause someone to lose Millions?”

Because he went through all the money he had. “Millions? How did you go through Millions in only a few years? I don’t spend Millions in a few years and I live in one of the richest suburbs in the country.”

“Yeah, but you didn’t make a six figure salary.”

As if that were an excuse. Or even true.

I don’t talk about salary or finances, but this guy needed to be put in his place. “I have a Ph.D. in engineering. I made a plenty of money.” Probably more than he did.

“Pfffffsht,” he responded. I promptly left the dance floor.

He continued chatting. “You’re one of the republicans and you’re just as bad as they are.”

“No,” I told him, “The problem is that you’re sexist because you don’t believe that I made a lot of money and have a Ph.D. in engineering.” Obviously he didn’t deserve to continue making a six figure salary.

Too bad I didn’t dance with the first guy I had been chatting with.

I didn’t bother to mention that my huge engineer salary had been supported by taxpayers and that I was fired when one of the government employees masturbated in front of me during the Bush years. I also didn’t mention that unlike him I didn’t squander my huge salary.

I asked what he was doing. “Reading Crime and Punishment.” Reading in Second Life? Is that supposed to be impressive? It’s just strange, considering that there’s no need to be online if you’re just going to read a book.

Why do I get so many liars that follow me around? I don’t think it’s that I attract liars. I think Second Life attracts liars. When all you do is type at people, it’s easier to pretend you’re something else than when you talk by voice.

Which is why I created Bruce. I don’t mind people experimenting with different roles, but I don’t appreciate people lying to try to get avatar sex.

I created another female avatar, for the purpose of experimenting with role play. I put her out there a few times, but I didn’t really feel like playing a role. I wanted to be me. The ironic thing is that I seemed to meet more people when I was playing a role.

Worldly invited me to hang out on his new porch on his new plot of land. Disaster stopped by. She said she “Wanted to make sure we hadn’t killed each other yet.” A few more neighbors wandered over. Worldly teleported another friend MarriedFlirt and we all got on local voice chat.

MarriedFlirt teleported a few guys to join us. A few days after I invite Worldly to live by me, he’s already having the biggest neighborhood party I’ve been to. Why am I not as popular? And even though MarriedFlirt is married in real life, she has guys flocking to her. Maybe she’s not as picky as I am?

MarriedFlirt said Africa was a good place to meet interesting people. So I went, but nobody I found there spoke good English.

I told Worldly that I had someone over at my theater. Worldly encouraged me to talk him into getting land at Learn Avatar. “The last time I got a guy to buy land here, he went and got Second Life married the next day.”

I don’t like the guy enough to want to spend much time with him. He talked dirty and kept asking me to take off my clothes.

After he left, I went to a class taught by a guy who had a huge eye instead of a head. One of the women there was wearing pajamas exactly like a pair I had. So I put mine on and stood next to her. Twinsies. Since Grouchy was talking by voice and Chachi was typing in the chat, I didn’t want to interrupt them. So I just stood there, like a creepy twin shadow. My twin probably got a little weirded out, because she then she changed her clothes. But Joni gave me piggy slippers!

### Ruby

I talked with Worldly while he sat on his patio with Shopper. Then a guy I met a few days ago teleported me to his place. I went because the conversation with Shopper was shallow and I didn’t need to sit around with Worldly when I could be out meeting people who won’t partner someone else right away.

The chat with this guy was horrible. I asked him if English was his second language. “Thick fingers,” he said. Well, no matter what size your fingers, you should be able to type sentences longer than two words. I asked if he went to college. “Fuck,” he said. What kind of college was that? Then he got in a huff. No wonder he has problems finding a girlfriend.

I contacted MarriedFlirt to ask about meeting people in Second Life. She met me in Africa where we stood around with several people having a boring chat, some of it in French.

Worldly had a very intense flirt with MarriedFlirt’s friend GoldDigger in a private message that he showed me later. I was appalled. I rarely get flirts like that and I’m not even partnered in Second Life. It reminded me of the chat I had with the guy who kept asking me to take my clothes off. Very inappropriate. Worldly thought it was no big deal.

((((( insert rude chat here

“No, I’d never cheat with someone who is partnered.”

Well, yes it’s just typing on a computer, but I still found it to be slutty, and terrible behavior on both of their behalves. I’d never talk to someone like that in real or Second life, and just because it’s on a computer and nobody else can hear doesn’t make it benign. If people accept that talk over a computer, soon they’ll be so used to it they’ll treat each other like that in real life. I’ve read about studies that confirmed that people’s online behavior does in fact leak into their real life. Like training.

GoldDigger is exactly why women get treated like sluts in the real world. Because when someone sees that kind of stuff online all the time, they get used to it and start treating people like that on a regular basis because it becomes normal behavior in their minds.

## Thursday, April 22, 2010

### Ruby

I tried to fix my movie screen and chatted with Grouchy about it. He tried the screen on his land and it worked for him. Then I read the instructions. That usually helps. I had to deed my land to my BudgetJustified.com group to get it to work.

But that didn’t help. So I sent a message to the person who created the television screen. He said that YouTube isn’t working in Second Life. Well then, why are they selling YouTube viewers?

Worldly had wanted to hang out with me, but I was busy. I don’t want to be available at his beck and call. It was a very big statement when he chose Skitzo to not only be his sex friend to hang around with, but to “partner” with her.

So I didn’t contact Worldly as soon as I logged on. And he didn’t contact me. Since I wasn’t able to meet anyone interesting in Africa, I went to a beach. The male pole dancer there chatted with me. He asked if the picture in my profile was me in real life. “Sexy,” he said. He probably wanted a tip.

One of the guys told me that he hasn’t had any female friends in Second Life yet. I didn’t believe that at all. He’s been in Second Life for eight months. And he was outgoing enough to approach me. “Your voice is worm and sex,” he said. Um, thanks. I think he meant warm and sexy.

I also met a guy who wouldn’t accept my friend request until he got to know me. Except, how is he supposed to get to know me if he doesn’t know when I’m online?

Even though I found several nice guys to chat with, it wasn’t very fulfilling. I don’t know how many of them I’ll ever see again. I don’t expect any of the chats to develop into friendships. I don’t look forward to chatting with any of them again.

I teleported Psychology. Then the guy got on the pose balls on the bed and did sex animations by himself.

“Might as well get two computers, log on to one as a man, the other as a woman, and let them have sex,” Psychology said.

Psychology teleported me to a jazz dance place. The guy on the pose balls kept inviting me to teleport back to him. I don’t know why he thought I’d want to come back. Then he tried to teleport Psychology back to the bed. I don’t think Psychology had ever witnessed this type of behavior before.

The jazz dance hall had a view of New York City out the window. Psychology changed into a suit. I like this guy.

## Meeting people in building contests

### Bruce

I got a teleport from Learn Avatar to go to a building contest to build a house.

Well, I’ve never built a house before. But I went anyway. I made this thing with igloos and a teepee on top. It also had sort of a water fountain. The bottom floor was paved with asphalt, complete with centerline stripes. One wall was made of granite, to match my pants, and the other walls were made of wood. I put panes in two of the windows, but got tired of arranging the panes, so I didn’t bother filling all the windows.

I went to my land to put the new house-like object I created out for display. But the house was twenty by twenty meters and the land is thirty two by sixteen meters. So I had to make it narrower to fit on the land. Which meant deleting the teepee and two of the igloos. And the floor wouldn’t resize correctly. So the “house” I built is now just a shell of its former self. That’s OK. I don’t really want to keep a house there anyway. It’s not like I need a place to take a shower, change clothes, or sleep.

A newbie was standing near my land. She said she was lost, although it seemed that she had already spent a lot of effort on her avatar. She said she wanted a house. I showed her a place that had free houses and gave her the ‘house’ I had built yesterday.

“Where are you going to put the house?” I asked her. She didn’t know where she could put it, so I told her about the free land in our neighborhood, as long as she took classes. She was interested, so I referred her to Chachi and Grouchy, who helped her select a plot.

She teleported me to her land and I showed her how to make shapes. She picked it up quickly and created a few slabs for her foundation. So I took her to a space rock to show her one of the interesting places to go in Second Life.

There was a threesome going on. Two guys and a woman named Shaquila. Several people stood around watching. Two guys asked if I wanted to go somewhere else with them. I didn’t respond.

In public chat the threesome kept saying that they were cumming on this, cumming in there. “Shaquila is a man in real life,” I said.

“So what?” one of the guys said.

“Second Life is so full of gay porn,” I responded.

I also chatted with a woman named Hopeless. She told me that her Second Life boyfriend broke up with her today. “He was the one,” she said. He had created other avatars, “But he felt bad about it later.”

I said I wasn’t sure what a boyfriend in Second Life really meant. I asked how long they had been dating. “Not very long.”

I told her that I thought it was a good idea to really get to know someone well before committing to a boyfriend. She said, “Next time I’ll wait for a week before being his girlfriend.”

A week? “I think you might want to wait a little longer than that.”

### Ruby

I wandered around my neighborhood and found some guys chatting about scripting, that someone’s code was taking up too many resources on the server. They ignored me. I probably should have bugged them more and taken it as an opportunity for them to teach me about scripting.

I don’t think it was because I’m a woman, I think it was because they were busy. Or at least, I don’t think it was because they thought women are not competent enough to understand scripting. It’s more likely that they’re nervous around women and don’t know what to say.

Which is also a big problem in real life jobs. In fact, I think it is a more prevalent reason than opinions on female competence for why women are ignored on projects and overlooked for promotions in the workplace. Because many of the women are more competent than the men, and the men know it.

I was certainly never accused of being incompetent. I was regarded as highly competent. But I often got ignored, partly because men may have been afraid of being seen as lecherous if they gave me attention. Although almost all the men were very professional, there were a few men who gave me lecherous attention.

## Is Worldly’s partner spying on us?

A newbie named Spy, created within the last few hours according to the date on her profile, flew straight toward me from across the neighborhood and asked me how to get land. I showed her how to make some walls and a floor. She picked it up quickly. As though she had done it before. As though she were someone’s alt.

Another newbie was there too, but wasn’t as sharp. Shopper, Skitzo’s best friend, and Spazkid also came by. I hadn’t seen Spazkid in awhile. He and Shopper chased each other around. They’re both young. I thought it was cute that they got along.

Shopper gave me animations that make me stand different ways. “I think I’m too old for these,” I said. “They make me look like I’m trying to be a twenty year old airhead.” I hope it didn’t sound like I was pegging Shopper as a twenty year old airhead.

Worldly said that Spy was charming the pants off of him. “Your pants are still on,” I said. He said a whole lot of inappropriate things to her, like he had with GoldDigger, that would have made me incredibly embarrassed to be around them if this were being said out loud in real life. But since it was online, instead of being embarrassed, it disgusted me, made me cringe.

Worldly told Spy that he and I were best friends, but that Worldly had partnered with Skitzo.

“I’m not happy about it, but he still has qualities that make me appreciate his friendship,” I said. “Such as educated chat. Hard to find that in Second Life.”

Spy asked if I loved Worldly. Odd question.

“I’ve only known him for a month,” I said. Over a computer. Would someone who had just entered Second Life today even think of falling in love with someone you type to on a computer? I’ve been in Second Life for almost three months and I still don’t really know what the point is of having a Second Life boyfriend.

### Ruby

MarriedFlirt said the pose I was sitting in made me look like I was tied up on a cross. I blamed it on Shopper’s animation. So I removed the animation and tried sitting again. As I stood, MarriedFlirt tried out the chair. So when I sat down again I ended up sitting on top of MarriedFlirt.

In the local chat, Worldly said that he was in love with Skitzo. This sounded so ridiculous to me.

“You’ve only known each other for only three weeks,” I said. As someone who has experienced real, long term love, I just couldn’t sit by and allow these people to believe that this was anything close to love. I had even alluded earlier that I didn’t think you could fall in love with someone in a month. Over a computer.

“You must be upset about someone,” MarriedFlirt said.

“Someone,” I said, not mentioning names, “said I was his Second Life best friend then had not only become someone’s boyfriend, but actually partnered her. Without telling me they were even dating.”

“Do you regret not becoming his girlfriend before he partnered someone else?” MarriedFlirt asked.

“It would have been even more silly for me to become his girlfriend so quickly,” I said.

Shopper asked Worldly, “Where’s your wifey?”

I sent him a private message. “Notice that even Shopper considers you and Skitzo to be married.” Even though he had tried to tell me that ‘partnered’ means girlfriend.

He got angry with me. “You’re just jealous.”

“Worldly, I’m just stating facts. I’m not accusing anyone of anything, I’m just repeating what you said, what I said, and what Shopper said. And they don’t match up.”

He got irritated with me for not being happy for him and Skitzo. “(((((“

Honestly, I can’t be happy for anyone who says they’re in love with someone whom they typed stuff to for the past three weeks. That is not love. If it were real, I’d be very happy for him. If anything, I’m worried for his emotional wellbeing.

I think he knows that Skitzo considers them as being married, but he doesn’t want me to think so. I’d feel better if he’d just admit it instead of trying to fool me.

I’m disappointed in his “blame the victim” attitude toward my statement that you cannot know if you are in love with someone only three weeks after meeting them. Perhaps it’s easier for him to try to convince me that I’m a jealous fool instead of facing whatever is lacking in his life.

Apparently this is the closest thing he has to a relationship. I assume he’s had difficulty finding a real life relationship, or he wouldn’t be putting so much stock into his relationship with Skitzo.

There have been a few flags with Worldly that reflect on his judgment abilities and his character, although so far they haven’t been reasons to dampen the friendship. For one, Worldly is online way too much. I was online way too much today, but he was online most of the time, plus well into the evening after I got home from church. Which brings me to my second point. He is online at very weird hours of the day. He is six hours ahead, and usually still online when I go to sleep, which is four or five o’clock in the morning his time. He also hangs around with Skitzo’s friends, who are almost twenty years younger than him.

I was also disgusted by the demeaning flirting remarks Worldly kept making to Spy. As if upon meeting women, you are supposed to treat them like playthings. It reminded me a lot of how Northern treated women. But what was even stranger was that Spy encouraged it. It’s like the only way women can get attention is by making sexual innuendos, so they ask for it because they want to be noticed. Which perpetuates the cycle of men escalating their demeaning treatment of women.

## Perverts visit my land

### Ruby

I asked about standing and walking animations in the Learn Avatar neighborhood chat. “Does anyone have a free male animation? I’m disappointed with the airhead animations for women.” One of the women teleported me and gave me a bunch of male and female animations. I put one animation on, and I crouched with my butt in the air.

Joni came up behind me and made ridiculous motions, as if bumping my butt. I was on voice, laughing really hard. “I’m deleting that one,” I said.

“Yeah,” Grouchy said, “but it was worth it for the laugh.”

A weird guy who lived in India in real life showed up on my land. He asked if I was married, had kids. He asked why I didn’t have kids. “Any problem?”

“We know how to use birth control,” I said.

“Don’t you like sex?”

“I like sex every day,” I said.

“Oh really. which type?” What does that mean? What types of sex are there?

“It's called a condom. Do you have condoms in India?” I asked.

“We also have flavors of condoms.”

“Why flavors? I don't eat condoms.”

“Smell, odor,” he said.

“I don't smell condoms either.”

“Why don’t you smell condom? You will suck it,” he said.

“Gross.” I gave him landmarks for interesting places to go in Second Life. Hoping he’d go to them. Then he asked for places where he could get money.

“Do you have sex with men other than your husband?” he asked. “In India, they say that in the United States, everyone has freedom to fuck any one and they will fuck any one they like if other accepts.”

I said, “That is not even close to true.”

Since he was bugging me, I teleported Psychology. Psychology started to ask him some very good, pointed questions. (((insert q’s here)

“While we were on vacation in India, men hit on my wife because they see in American movies that the women have sex,” Psychology told me.

“I’m shocked about how women are treated by the Americans in Second Life,” I said. Psychology suggested becoming a robot avatar if I didn’t like the attention.

Interesting idea, but I shouldn’t have to become nonhuman to get treated with dignity. It goes against my MO; to behave in Second Life like a woman who deserves respect. Unlike many of the women-shaped avatars in Second Life, many of whom are men in real life. Men who wish to control women, so they control women avatars.

Psychology told me about a time when a woman brought him to where her real life husband was in Second Life. He was on a computer in another room, and had brought a random woman with him. With the four of them there, the husband was chatting all sorts of stuff to get his wife turned on. Weird. Why did they need to bring other people into it?

After Psychology left, the Indian guy came back to my land, saying more rude things, so I went to the Learning Center in my neighborhood to practice some scripting. I sent Bruce to my land and saw that the guy had brought a naked woman.

The robot animation, or even a robot avatar, is an interesting idea, but I don’t want to be totally genderless in Second Life. Funny thing is, I think men, like Grouchy, can get away with being a faceless goofy character and still be attractive to women who like funny guys. Women still need to have a pretty face to get attention.

“Some guy teleported a naked chick to my land!” I said in the Learn Avatar neighborhood chat. I went back to my land and the chick disappeared. This time instead of ejecting the Indian guy, I banned him from my land.

A neighbor I hadn’t met asked me to teleport him to my land. Some pervert who wanted to see a naked chick? I thought about teasing him about it in the neighborhood chat, but was glad I didn’t. He turned out to be the owner of many sims, including my neighborhood. Land ownership in Second Life was his legitimate real life career.

Since I could only ban the rude Indian from my small parcel, Indian returned to the land next door to mine. The Owner had a few words with him, then banned him from all 200 + of his sims.

I went to a beach that had pole dancers. Pole dancers typically type all kinds of dumb things in the public chat that are supposed to sound sexy, but are ridiculous in my opinion. So I modified the chat from one of the dancers and entered it in public chat.

“Ruby runs a slow finger up and over her breasts, then further up towards her warm tongue, slipping a gentle finger inside her moist lips, before bringing that wet finger up, sliding it into her nose to dig for treasures.” Makes you want to think twice before entering ‘sexy’ talk in public chat.

I went back to the beach and received several private greetings. While chatting with a humorous guy, another guy walked up and sent me a private message, “Hi sexy.” He kept walking into Humorous, as if trying to pick a fight.

“This guy is bugging me,” Humorous said. Good. Because he was bugging me too.

A naked guy sent me a message. He said he was naked in real life too. “I’m a lifestyle nudist,” he said. “Do you go naked in DC?”

I told Humorous what the naked guy had said. “Yeah,” Humorous said. “DC is the streakers’ capital. Obama’s running around naked right now.”

Someone sent me a private message in Spanish. Translated, it meant, “My heart come to me.” Not sure what he wanted me to do about it. My profile is written in English, so I doubt that he expected me to have much of a chat with him.

Meanwhile, I chatted with Pat. Pat was the nicest person I had met on the island today.

A guy from Canada – who used grammar like a twenty year old from India – kept asking for sex. He kept sending teleport requests after I left the island. The Canadian said I was ‘mean’ for leaving Tempura Island with someone else. Well, he was an ass for asking for sex.

While we danced, Humorous disappeared. I didn’t know what had happened to him, so I teleported Pat to dance with me. Imagine my shock when Pat appeared and she was a woman. We had a good laugh over it. No wonder Pat was the nicest person I had met.

I went to visit Worldly and talk about yesterday’s conversation. “It was inappropriate of me to make a point in public chat – for all your friends to hear – that you and Skitzo had only known each other for a few weeks. Next time I’ll keep it in private chat.”

He is disappointed that I never ask about Skitzo. Well, last time he talked about her, he told me she has a BDSM collar, which enables the male owner of the collar to see where she is at all times and who she’s with. After hearing about what kind of avatar sex she’s into and that she likes men to order her around, I’m not sure what kind of things I want to ask about. I’d rather just let him tell me what he wants to tell me.

Worldly wants me to validate his relationship, make him feel good about it. But I can’t. I think it’s foolish. And when I don’t tell him what he wants to hear, he gets upset, accuses me of being in the wrong, of being jealous. I’m concerned that this may be an indication of control issues. Which is probably why he likes this BDSM collar thing.

## Monday, April 26, 2010

### Ruby

I went to the beach again later. Professor was online, so I sent him a message. “What are you doing today?”

“Observing the wildlife at a beach.” I was on the same beach where we had met, and as I wandered toward the dance area, I found him.

I asked him to take me back to his house to dance again. He’s a great conversationalist and asked me about my day. He chatted about Second Life time being compressed and told me that a few women had asked him to be their boyfriend after knowing him for only a day. Let’s hope he isn’t partnered tomorrow.

He asked me what imao meant. The question came out of the blue. I’m guessing he was exchanging private messages with other friends. I thought it looked like a cross between In My Humble Opinion and Laugh My Ass Off. “In My Ass Off?” I replied. Maybe it meant In My Ass Opinion.

## Will Worldly care that Skitzo is a liar?

Worldly stopped by and wanted to talk. “How is Skitzo today?” I asked, since he had expressed disappointment in my not asking him last time we chatted.

“She and her husband are having a fight, so she logged off to deal with that,” he said.

“Husband?” I asked.

“She’s going through a divorce.”

“When did she tell you that she had been married?”

“A few days ago.”

Holy cow. They’ve been partnered for weeks and she just now gets around to telling him she’s married?

“Why is her ex-husband at her house?” I asked.

“Well, she’s still living with him.”

This is why I don’t ask about Skitzo.

I tried my best to sound concerned, not critical. “So, is one of them moving out of the house soon?”

“It had been her grandfather’s land, so she doesn’t want to move out, but she’s a waitress, so she can’t afford the house payments, so she needs him to pay the bills.”

It didn’t make sense to me that there were house payments if the land was given to them, but I suppose they could have taken out a mortgage to build a house. I figured Worldly wouldn’t know the financial details, so I didn’t press him on that. I suppose she could have let him keep the house and pay her for the land, but I can understand there may be sentimental value to the location or the surrounding land may all be owned by relatives and she wanted to keep the land in the family.

“What about family?” I asked. “Can she stay with relatives while she gets things sorted out so that she doesn’t have to live in a hostile environment?”

“The only person nearby is her mother. And the fights with her are worse than with her husband.”

Sounds like mental illness runs in the family.

Skitzo is picking fights with everybody. It was odd when she tried to get me to go off on her, kicking me out of her DJ group, saying it was only for people she invites to her house. Now I know that’s her MO with everyone, even in real life.

Worldly thinks I get quiet when he talks about Skitzo because of jealousy. It’s more because I think there are a lot of red flags about the relationship and he gets angry when I point out the problems. He only wants to hear people say how great the relationship is. He says he’s getting to know her so well and they are falling in love. But that fantasy will be over soon, and it won’t be because of something I say. I don’t want to get involved in their relationship because I don’t want to be blamed when it falls apart.

I don’t believe that’s she’s going through a divorce. I think she says this to play head games with guys on the computer.

### Ruby

I told Psychology about Skitzo’s fights and ‘divorce’ and brought him to Worldly’s patio so they could meet. He brought a very interesting dimension to the discussion. Psychology asked what having a partner was like.

“You can be as close as in real life or even closer, just not physically of course,” Worldly said. “We’re very close and getting closer each day. Anything else would be a waste of time for me.”

“Do you plan on meeting in real life?” Psychology asked. Worldly said they’d like to.

Just as I told Psychology that Worldly wasn’t married in real life, he typed, “Are you married?”

Wow. Psychology and I were really on the same wavelength. The questions were so similar to what I would ask, I was worried Worldly would think that I was feeding the questions to Psychology.

Psychology was so logical, it seemed like he had an agenda. But I don't think he did. It was probably the most rational discussion about partners that I'd participated in.

Worldly asked about Psychology’s experiences with women in Second Life. “I'm married, so I have boundaries. I could see falling in love, but that would be sort of a delusion. It would distance me from my wife.”

Worldly said, “People are real to me here. I´m pretty much the same person here as in real life. Everyone makes up his own rules here. If people’s rules match, fine. If not – drama.”

“There are no rules,” I said.

Worldly mentioned real life relationships that are physical but emotionally incomplete. I think he was referring to Skitzo’s divorce. “Feeling emotional support and connection are valuable too,” he said. Perhaps Skitzo makes him feel important, as though he’s ‘protecting’ her from all these bad people who fight with her. Worldly makes her feel important because he boosts her ego, making her feel desired. And he’s someone she can control.

I pondered that an online relationship could be real if you had known each other for more than three years. “But I guess if you hadn't met in person after three years, it would be very incomplete. It's not the lack of real sex that makes online relationships incomplete, it's the inability to do real things for them: bring them soup when they're sick, pick them up when the car breaks down.”

“How do you rate virtual sex compared to real life sex?” Psychology asked Worldly. Then he retracted it. “That's a private question. I shouldn't have asked that.”

I answered instead. “Online sex is comedy.”

“It's not comedy to me,” Psychology said.

Worldly said, “The most important part is the tension and connection you feel either through chat or voice. It can be extremely intense.” I wonder if he doesn’t have intense connections during real life sex. Or if wishful thinking makes him believe that his connection during Second Life sex was intense.

Worldly said he was sixteen the first time he had sex. Psychology said he was five. Silly. “Actually I was in my early twenties,” he said. I said that I met my husband when I was twenty.

“How has sex changed over the years?” Worldly asked.

“It was infatuation-like at first,” I said. “Although we had known each other for about a year. After a year of sex, we got used to each other.”

“In a boring way?” Psychology asked.

“Sort of,” I said. “But I’ve never gotten bored of being with him. There’s something new to talk about every day.”

Worldly asked how the quality had changed over the years. “Improved,” I said. “When you’re young, you don’t really know what you’re doing or how it works.”

Psychology said women hit their peak at forty. “I had my best sex with a forty three year old,” Worldly said.

## Women can be as creepy as men

### Bruce

I went dancing and got a little money. A part-cat woman came to the club. Her profile said she was partnered, but that she had been widowed. Which I think means her partner/Second Life spouse got sick of her and created another avatar.

The woman said she was going to cum all over the floor. The chat in the dance club stopped. Perhaps she had been there before and annoyed the regulars at the club. People say some stupid things in clubs, but that was worse than normal. She continued to make desperate vulgar statements, apparently hoping the guys would get turned on. Everyone seemed weirded out.

The woman was wearing a tail and invited people to pull it. Then in the public chat, she invited no one in particular to go to her sex house. I went, since I had never gone to a sex house with a woman before.

I was hoping that someone else would also volunteer to go, for the entertainment value, but I was the only one who showed up. She friended me and showed me her sex cross and bed. Sex cross? It was like the cross I had seen when I met Northern’s friend Jack in the dungeon with the sex pose balls.

The woman told me to get on the cross. She played with the menus and I moved into all kinds of contorted positions. Then we got on her bed.

I made the mistake of typing that I wanted to hear her voice. I didn’t mean it. I just thought it was something she’d want to hear/read. She turned on her microphone, made breathing noises, and talked a little.

“You’re the first one I’ve ever done voice with,” She didn’t sound sincere.

“My avatar doesn’t look anything like I do in real life,” she said in a mock sexy voice.

“Nobody’s does,” I typed.

Funny thing is that I don’t look anything like my Bruce avatar in real life either. But for much different reasons.

“My hair is brown and I’m fat,” she said. “Really huge. Almost two hundred pounds.” Was that supposed to turn me on? Not sure why she felt she had to mention that.

“We can do it once, but you won’t be able to come back to my house again,” she said. OK. Thanks for being honest.

I tried to excuse myself as politely as possible and went back to my neighborhood. Then I dropped her from my friend list.

That was creepy. Not because she said she was fat, but because she was trying to sound sexy-voiced. But it was just weird. In Bruce’s online blog, I called this entry, “Alternate avatars created because people lie about sex.” An ironic title since I’m lying about what sex Bruce is in real life.

### Bruce

Back at my neighborhood, I found Spy on Worldly’s patio. Alone.

I tried chatting with her, but she wouldn’t respond much to anything I said. Worldly logged on as I tried to get Spy to chat. Worldly had the words ‘Skitzo’s husband’ floating over his head. So odd, since she’s still married in real life.

“Hi sexy,” Spy said to him. “I missed you.”

Oh sure. She hardly says a word to me, but as soon as Worldly logs on, it’s all sexy talk.

“Hi Cutiepants,” Worldly said. “You made my day by being here when I logged on.”

I felt weird witnessing this flirtfest, especially with Worldly wearing a big sign over his head saying that he’s married to Skitzo.

“Spy was camping out here when I showed up,” I said.

“I’d let Worldly sleep in a tent at my place,” Spy said.

“Um, I should leave,” I said.

Spy tried to placate me. “Oh, you’d be welcome there too.”

“We could have a threesome,” Worldly said.

“Not into that,” I said. There was a long silence. I think I sounded a bit harsh. So I tried to break the tension. “Has to be at least four. Equal number of men and women.”

Sex talk is way too much the norm in Second Life. If I were with two people in real life talking about having a threesome, I’d be very weirded out.

After Spy left, I told Worldly about the sex cross I saw today. He said it would hot if it were the right person. On a cross? This whole Second Life sex scene is ridiculous.

I don’t think Spy is a newbie. I think Spy is Skitzo. An alt stalking Worldly to test to see if he’ll cheat. That’s why she has no interest in paying any attention to Bruce.

## Wednesday, April 28, 2010

### Ruby

I stopped by Worldly’s patio and took a seat next to him. He showed me some of the chairs he built in the Learn Avatar classes he attended. An animation I was wearing placed me under the chair. “Eh, who cares. The important thing is that we’re having a conversation,” I said.

Worldly still had the same words floating above his head as yesterday.

“How did you get a tag that says ‘Skitzo’s Husband?” I asked.

“Skitzo made a role within her DJ group and assigned it to me.”

Since she can’t make him wear a ring, she makes him wear a sign.

“What about her real life husband?”

“She says I know her better than her husband ever did.”

Puke. I suppose that’s what she thinks he wants to hear. And he believes her? As a person who has been married over fifteen years, this is the most phony thing I have ever heard someone tell a potential boyfriend. A computer boyfriend. A month of typing on a computer does not facilitate truly getting to know someone. And if she really believes that’s the case, she has maturity issues.

Worldly is well educated and almost forty years old. He speaks well, has an excellent vocabulary, has knowledge on a variety of social and political issues. He’s outgoing and attracts a lot of male and female friends. So what is missing from the picture that results in him indulging this manipulator? A hero complex? Save the woman from the big bad real life husband. The need to prove that he’s not a big bad man, that he’ll treat her like she wants?

This is playing like a bad joke. I thought about asking how long Skitzo has been married, but it didn’t matter. Even if it had been only a week, her real life husband would still know her better than someone she types to on a computer.

Spy stopped by to visit Worldly. Since you could hardly see me under the chair, I invited her to sit in it. “No thanks, I don’t want to sit on you, Ruby,” she said. “But if Worldly didn’t have a girlfriend, I’d sit in his lap.”

Nobody else in our neighborhood talks dirty like that to each other – about sitting on each other’s laps or sleeping together in tents. Strange that Spy shows up and starts talking like that right away. Perhaps it’s Skitzo trying to test Worldly, perhaps it’s Skitzo trying to scare me away from Worldly, or perhaps they are in on it together, although I’m not sure what agenda Worldly would have for doing so.

The three of us went to see Spy’s place. It looked very nice.

I sent Worldly a private message. “Too nice for a newbie.”

“Maybe she’s just good with computer graphics,” he said.

“I think she’s an alt.” I didn’t mention whose alt. I wanted to see if he could figure it out for himself.

There are so many things specific to Second Life to learn, that no matter how smart you are, you’d need a lot more time to find all the features required to build her place. Like megaprims. Second Life has a limit to the size of building materials. But if you go to the Builders Brewery and get megaprims, you can build bigger houses. I didn’t know this until recently. I doubt that Spy would have found this on her own already.

Worldly and Spy kept flirting, so I tried to change the subject.

“What country are you from?” I asked Spy.

“I live in Amsterdam. You asked me that last time.”

She’s right. I had written it in her Notes tab.

“What is living in Amsterdam like?”

“It’s fine.”

Fine? That’s all she has to say about the city she lives in to someone who has never been there?

“Say something in Dutch,” I requested.

She hesitated without any comment. A minute later, a sentence appeared, written in Dutch. Worldly knows a little Dutch, so he had some idea of what it meant. I ran it through Google Translate.

Word for word, I got back, “Why are you asking all these strange questions. I don’t need to answer any of these.”

Why was she so offended that I asked about Holland? Perhaps because she didn’t really know anything about Holland? And she knew I was suspicious about whether she really lived in Holland? I was shocked at how rude she was to me. Very passive aggressive. I was even more shocked that Worldly wasn’t shocked.

The questions weren’t strange. People chat about their countries with each other all the time.

The strange thing is that she probably doesn’t speak Dutch. It seemed as thoug she typed the sentences in English and ran it through a language translator before entering the Dutch words in chat. I don’t think she’s ever even been to Amsterdam. If you’re going to fake being from somewhere, at least pick a place you know something about so you can converse about it when people ask normal questions such as ‘Where are you from.’

I asked Worldly if Skitzo spoke Dutch. “Maybe you’d all get along well together.”

He said she doesn’t speak Dutch. He didn’t seem to pick up on the fact that I’m suspicious that Spy is Skitzo’s alt.

Since Worldly and I were on voice, I could hear him typing. Since nothing appeared in local chat, he much have been sending private messages to Spy. They ignored me and I felt completely unwelcome around them. They sat down for pizza together, so I left.

Spy sent me a private message inviting me to come back. “MarriedFlirt and some other friends are here now.”

I considered going, thinking it would be polite to accept the invitation, but realized I had no obligation to be polite. I had been chatting with so many new people at the dance that I decided not to.

So I went to dance with Romance, whom I had also met at the ballroom dance. We played the piano together. Absolutely adorable. But then he kept saying that I was his queen and that he had fallen for me.

“What kind of things do you do in real life?” I asked

“My biggest job is to love the most beautiful woman in the world.” At first I thought he might have meant his wife. “Her name is Ruby, do you know her?” Whatever.

Who even talks about queens and crowns? I don’t fall for any of the love talk on Second Life. I was convinced that Romance was from India or some foreign country because it didn’t sound like something a native English speaker would say. But then I saw his profile. It said he lived in New York City and from his picture, it was obvious that he was white. Maybe he’s originally from Europe.

Worldly and I sometimes discuss the fact that I can’t seem to find anyone in Second Life, although other people can. The difference is that I’m not fooled by any of the sweet talk. And when I hear bull, I walk away.

We talked by voice. He said I felt good. What’s that supposed to mean? He can’t feel me over the computer.

We danced and I asked about his foreign travels. He asked if I was wearing a bra. Then he controlled the dance menu so our avatars rolled on the ground. How sadly disappointing. I finally meet someone who is supposed to be very intelligent and he acts like a moron.

## Platonic friend who trolls for sex

### Ruby

I took Psychology to a slow dance. The island crashed and we got logged out. When I logged back in, I was on my land. I teleported Psychology and we stood there while I talked, he typed.

Psychology said that a woman with whom he has had regular avatar sex with was online. I’m not sure how regular is regular, he typed something that seemed to insinuate the ‘regular’ sex started only within the past week. That doesn’t sound regular to me. He forwent chatting with her to stay with me. “It’s just sex. It’s sort of empty.”

“So you find talking more fulfilling?” I asked. He agreed.

We talked about what it meant to date in Second Life. He assumed it meant avatar sex. I didn’t think that was required. It certainly wasn’t required in high school. Which is what Second Life equates to. “I think dancing, cuddling, and going to parties counts as dating,” I said. “I like slow dances. But doggy style sex animations are just goofy.”

“It’s not the sex as much as the anticipation of sex. The sex itself is only OK,” Psychology said. So, might it be more interesting if the anticipation would be over a period of months instead of an hour?

I invited Psychology to a voice chat, but he said he wasn’t comfortable with that. He feels it’s too personal, feeling concerned that it might be too intrusive on his relationship with his wife.

I can sort of understand his point. It’s one thing to play a game wandering around through fake scenery. It’s another thing to have a phone call with some woman you don’t even know.

With Worldly, it’s a little different because he either tells me about what goes on in his country, which is like having the opportunity to take a mini vacation without leaving the house. It’s even like people to people diplomacy. Or else we talk about what’s going on in the neighborhood in our little Second Life game.

“Since you’ve chatted by voice with me, I’d feel weird about us having avatar sex,” he said.

Good. I’d much rather have conversation. “Does that mean you wouldn’t want to take me dancing?”

“Dancing is no problem,” he said.

“When we first met, you seemed more distant, more aloof,” I mentioned.

“You had told me that you’d just gotten back from church. I didn’t know if you’d be offended by something I might say.”

“I think the main reason Worldly doesn’t want to be my Second Life boyfriend is that I’m married in real life,” I said. Even though Skitzo is still married in real life too.

“He’d be Second to you,” Psychology said.

“Well, probably even further down the list. Hundredth,” I said. Because we can’t do things for each other or socialize in the same circles in real life.

Perhaps Worldly thinks he and Skitzo are in love because she’s trying to fool him into thinking he’s First in her life. He knows her better than her husband? Please. She needs him to dote on her while she goes through her divorce.

## Saturday, May 1, 2010

### Bruce

TeeVee and Sweets broke up last night. They had been partnered for about two weeks. I checked their profiles. “Single and not looking,” Sweets’s said. TeeVee’s said he was no longer interested in Second Life relationships. “Second Life relationships don’t last long,” he said to me. “Remember that.”

I’ve never committed to anyone that I had known for only a few weeks. “What it was like to have a Second Life girlfriend, while it lasted?” I asked.

He liked it, she often said she loved him, they had avatar sex, they chatted by text and talked by voice.

“I didn’t think avatar sex could be much good.”

“It’s better than nothing,” he said.

I asked him why they broke up. “I called her fat,” TeeVee said.

Yeah, not a good thing to say in real life either. Why would he say such a thing?

“I wasn’t thinking.”

“Do you wish you could get her back?”

“Yeah. But that’s not going to happen,” he said.

I don’t understand why these people don’t invest more time in developing their real life relationships. Sweets is in her forties and TeeVee is in his twenties. A doomed match.

A woman whom I had met at a beach invited me to join a group called Stop the Violence, which is a part of the Four Bridges project in Second Life. The purpose of the Four Bridges project is to promote a culture of peace, respect for human rights, transformative justice and preservation of nature.

“Does the group ever discuss how men treat women like objects in Second Life?” I asked.

She suggested that I attend some of their meetings.

“I have a few neighbors who like to talk dirty to each other, saying they’re going to take each other’s clothes off and sleep with each other,” I told her. “It’s like they want to be alone and the rest of us aren’t welcome around them. When I say something about it, their attitude is that it’s the way everyone normally treats each other in Second Life and I’m the strange one for feeling that it’s inappropriate.”

“We need more true men like you,” the woman said.

Yes. We do.

I went to a dance at the Builders Brewery. They were randomly giving out money to people. I kept winning the random drawing more than anyone else. “I’m going to mug Bruce,” one of the women said. I gave her a mug of *Budget Justified* coffee with the movie logo on it.

SimpleLife asked me to dance. I thought that was really sweet of her because I haven’t danced with a woman yet. She was very pleasant. She’s a stay-at-home mom and was about to leave to go to a real life barbecue.

I went back to my land to make some furniture from some of the scripts that one of my neighbors gave me. A new neighbor was next door, trying out her sports cars. She stood in one car while she wore another. One car was sideways on top of another. “Looks like a bad accident,” I said.

While I worked on the furniture, I heard a guy screaming nearby. I flew over to where two Learn Avatar instructors were helping someone build. I thought perhaps sports car woman had run over the guy. “Do you need a paramedic?” I asked him.

I created a piece of furniture that consisted of a wooden pyramid and a pose ball. I invited a neighbor to sit on my new ‘chair.’

“Looks kinda pointy,” she said.

I made a few more pieces of ‘furniture’ and announced in the neighborhood chat that everyone was welcome to stop by and check out my new furniture.

sat on the wedge. “Love the ergonomics of this piece.”

He tried out the bowling pin with the pose ball that that made him kiss the air, the torus that made him stick his face in the ground, and the flowerpot that made him hover above it. He didn’t try the bush that made him ride it like a horse.

## Sunday, May 2, 2010

### Ruby

I saw that Grouchy was in the neighborhood, so I teleported to him. “Where did you come from?” he asked.

“I’m stalking you,” I said. “Just kidding.”

“That’s what all my stalkers say.”

He flew up to sit on the top of a tall flagpole attached to his roof. He said he liked the view from up there. I flew to find him. “I’m not a good navigator when I’m flying,” I said.

“I’m a good flagpole sitter,” he said. I flew up and floated in his lap, in spite of my navigational difficulties. “But I’m not good at getting down. I’m going to Faaaaaaaaaaalllll,” he said as he stood and fell to his roof.

I hugged him. “Ew, cooties,” he said. Grouchy seems very outgoing as far as planning events and teaching class, but I think he’s a little shy and nervous about women.

He accepted the hug, but his avatar hugged the pole. “I like the pole,” he said.

I asked him where he lives. “I don’t give out real life information.”

Geek asked to see my land, so I took him there. He looked at my bookshelf, which was part of the movie set for the scenes in Lisa and Charlie’s office in *Budget Justified*. The bookshelf in Second Life was made from a picture of the bookshelf in the movie, which is mine in real life and has all my books on it.

Geek asked about several of the books. He commented that I’m the one who knows about social psychology. “I only took one semester,” I said. “So I don’t know that much.”

“Neither to the experts,” Geek said.

Geek said he heard a weird noise. He flew around until he found a weird spinning cube floating high above the vacant land next door. I went over to listen. It kept repeating a garbled sentence. As I flew closer to the cube, it got louder.

“I think it’s saying, ‘A school, get it?’” I said.

“No, it’s saying, ‘Ask Google, faggot,’” Geek told me. I panned my view closer and was able to hear it more clearly. He was right.

We inspected the cube. The name of the object was Sculpty Ass. Not sure why they called it that. It was neither a sculpty (a special shape made with a specific software) nor an ass. It was a cube. We didn’t recognize the name of the owner – he didn’t live in our neighborhood, so we didn’t contact him to complain.

Even though Geek won’t tell me what kind of work he does, what kind of place he lives in, or what color his hair is, I can tell a lot about him. He’s very helpful to everyone. He participates in the neighborhood chat, so he must value being a part of the Learn Avatar community. He has a quirky sense of humor. I like all those things about him.

## Mass-meeting spree

### Ruby

Worldly had told me that we’d chat in the evening, but he was with Skitzo, so we didn’t say much. He asked if I’d be online over the weekend. “I can’t promise anything. I’ll be spending most of the time with my husband.”

I went to Tempura Island to see if I could meet anyone interesting. I played the numbers game – send lots of messages, someone interesting might bite. I looked at the profiles of most of the men coming through and sent them private messages.

One guy told me that he spends most of his time trying to find sex. Next.

I asked Hardwood if he knew where I could find some oak. At first he didn’t know why I mentioned oak. “Oak is a hard wood, unlike pine, which is softer,” I said.

“Most people assume it’s a sexual reference,” he said. But he meant it as a reference to his woodworking business.

“That tells you something about the people hanging out online. I didn’t even think of the sexual reference,” I said. I think that says just as much about me.

Hardwood said he was older than dirt asked me to guess his age and offered to give me a hundred Linden dollars for guessing his age within five years. Since the oldest person I had met so far in Second Life was sixty-four, I guessed sixty-five. “You don’t know how old dirt is,” he said. So I guessed seventy-five and he sent me some money.

I met Adventurer, a friendly newbie. He was a great conversationalist, having previously lived in several English speaking countries. He kept the discussion going by asking the type of questions I’m interested in when I talk to someone. He asked about the kind of neighborhood my real life home was in and told me about his. When he said he also lived in a three bedroom house, I asked if he had any kids – just as he typed the same question. “Wow. We’re on the same wavelength,” I said.

The other people I chatted with on the island just chatted. But Adventurer invited me to come with him to look at some deer. Then I took him to a place where we could dance.

He has a masters degree in a technical field. I was thrilled – he’s educated, worldly, and he works in a field similar to my former profession. So we have a lot in common.

After dancing, I went to Worldly’s house. Skitzo came online and he started chatting with her, so I stopped talking. Then Worldly disappeared, so I sent him a message.

“Where did you go?” He had gone to Skitzo’s house without excusing himself.

Guy sent me a private message that was mostly cutesy talk.

(((((((insert babble here)

“Did you go to college?” I asked him.

“I have a bachelors degree from a school in Australia.” I’m not sure I believe that. “With honors,” he said. Does anyone say ‘with honors’ if they had really gone to college?

Worldly had said maybe I was turning guys off by asking if they had graduate degrees. “It’s not the first question I ask. And if they are upset by the question, it’s a good filter for eliminating the poor conversationalists.”

I sent Worldly the silly chat I received from Guy. “You’re right,” he said. “That’s not good conversation.”

## I get an offer to have a boyfriend

### Ruby

Adventurer asked me to be his Second Life girlfriend. “That’s so sweet,” I said. “But it’s way too early.”

And it may be a red flag. I’m not sure what a Second Life girlfriend means to him. Or to me.

Adventurer took me on a walking tour of Santorini island. There were pose balls that made our avatars walk around the streets of the island with our arms around each other.

While on our tour, one of the guys we walked past sent me a teleport request. “There are sex pose balls here,” he said. And that is supposed to entice me to go there because…?

Romance asked me to come dancing, but I thought it would be rude to leave Adventurer. Unlike the time I left someone to play the piano with Romance. Because that time the guy I was dancing with started chatting about taking off my clothes. I don’t need to stick around while some guy I’ve never met before talks about raping me.

### Bruce

Although Geek insisted upon remaining mum with Ruby about anything that had to do with real life, I was able to get Geek to tell Bruce where he lives by asking what time zone he’s in. “USA,” he said.

“There are four time zones in the USA,” I said.

“The New York time zone,” he replied. So I don’t know if he lives in New York, but he lives on the east coast.

It’s two days after TeeVee broke up with Sweets and he already has a new girlfriend in his profile. I invited TeeVee to sit on my new furniture, but another friend of his came online, so he left and I didn’t get to find out anything about her.

The naked/skimpy-nurse chick who had been on Ruby’s land last week when the Indian guy got banned was at Sweet’s place, so I went to see what was going on. I brought Ruby also. (I had two computers running – I thought it would be good to have Bruce and Ruby in the same place occasionally.)

Above naked chick’s head were the words “TeeVee’s girlfriends drop dead sexy sister.” So she knows TeeVee. Had TeeVee sent her last week to find me and make friends? If so, she should have said something.

### Ruby

I asked naked chick if she knew the Indian guy, but she didn’t respond to me at all. I asked Sweets what she was doing there. Apparently Sweets and naked chick are friends. Even though Sweets is TeeVee’s recent ex and naked chick is TeeVee’s new girlfriend’s ‘sister’ – whatever a sister is in Second Life.

I told Worldly there was a naked chick at the party, so he asked me to teleport him. He asked naked chick “Who’s going to drop dead?” referring to the words above her head. She didn’t respond to him either. She must have been away from the computer. Then I told Geek and a few more male neighbors that we were having a party with a naked chick and they all asked for a teleport.

Since there were so many people hanging out, Sweets put a dance floor down for us to have a party. Meanwhile, Naked Chick was standing there not dancing, nor chatting.

Worldly and I were talking by voice. “The reason that the whole party happened was because of NakedChick, and she isn't even paying attention,” I said.

“She’s going to come back and wonder what happened around her,” Worldly said.

### Bruce

Geek tried to flirt with naked chick in local chat, even though Ruby had invited him to the party. I guess Ruby’s not his type. Then I sent NakedChick a private message. She chatted with me privately and ignored Geek’s messages in local chat. Perhaps she doesn’t like scrawny guys who wear geeky T-shirts.

NakedChick said she’s a nursing student in real life. That explains the nurse uniform. Although not the skimpiness of it.

## What actually happens in creepy places

### Ruby

I asked Geek what kind of things he did online.

“Adult stuff,” he said. Does he mean X-rated, or does he mean mature, intellectual conversations and artistic creations, as opposed to most of the adolescent stuff and immature games people play. Based on his reaction to NakedChick, I’m guessing he does X-rated adolescent stuff.

“Besides the nude beaches and the threesome I got teleported to, I don't really know what kind of ‘adult’ stuff there is online,” I said.

“Search for it,” he said.

I’d rather not. I don't even know what search terms to use.

“Teleport me,” I commanded.

When I arrived, we were standing on his land. “Damn. I thought you were at one of those adult places..”

“Where do you want to go?” he asked.

I didn't have any idea! “Any suggestions?”

He teleported me to an alley called Slut Pit. It was very different than the typical garden scenes and ornate palaces that I found on most sims. At the Slut Pit, graffiti covered brick walls, a bum slept in the corner cuddling his bottle of wine, and in spite of the presence of a dumpster, trash was strewn everywhere.

He asked what I thought.

“The place has a weird name,” I said.

Nothing was going on in the alley, so he took me up the metal grate stairs. Still nothing going on. There were a few pose balls and a few people standing around. I didn't see what the pose balls did because nobody was on them.

“Very submissive girls would enjoy this place,” he said. Oh. Is this what submissive girls are looking for? Alleys with bums. Funny how in real life, I never see these ‘submissive’ girls, or women for that matter, hanging around in alleys strewn with trash.

“I don't really know about what submissive is, but it's not me.” And I’m thirty-nine years old. I’m not a girl.

“Then what do you think you are into?”

“I have no idea,” I said. Whatever it is, I certainly don’t expect to find it in Second Life.

“Well, if you don't know what you're into, it seems like you wouldn't be into it,” he said. “What do you want to try in Second Life, that you’d never try in real life?” he asked.

“If I haven’t tried it in real life, it’s probably not something that I’m that interested in trying,” I responded.

“You're obviously not a submissive cockslut type. Pity. Those are the best kind,” he joked. “Can you see by your last statement why it sounds like you're not interested in avatar sex?”

“I see. People are into avatar sex because there's some kind of sex here that they wouldn't do in real life,” I said.

“It’s all about the fantasy,”

“I’m more interested in emotional connection,” I said.

“Avatar sex has nothing to do with an emotional connection,” Geek said. “Unless you're in a committed long distance relationship and you're using Second Life as a medium to express that connection.”

As soon as he said that, he disappeared without saying goodbye. I sent him a private message. “Where did you go?”

“You don't need me to be your guide to help you understand avatar sex,” he said.

“Maybe you could show me another place some time. With slow dancing, or something like that.”

“You don't need a guide. Just search for ‘slow dancing’,” he responded.

I asked if he was embarrassed.

“No, just busy.”

“Geek, you don't just disappear without any notice if you aren't having some hurt feelings.”

“I don’t want to be the one to show you how avatar sex works,” he said.

I don’t think that was quite what I wanted him to show me. “I thought we were going to explore some sims.”

“It's important to find partners who click with you,” he said. “Some people just don't click.”

“Do you really believe that we don't click?” I asked. “Or are you afraid to find out?”

“I absolutely believe we don't click, and it's nothing personal.”

So I asked what kind of person was his type. “Someone who's not looking for a relationship,” he said.

I’m not sure what kind of computer relationship he thought I was looking for. Or if any of these Second Life ‘friendships’ constitute any sort of relationship.

“I'm just looking for someone who enjoys communicating with me,” I said. “So perhaps I'm not your type. Maybe you could experiment with opening up to people in Second Life.”

“Second Life is an escape from being open. I use real life for that.”

I hope he does.

“Geek, even though we're looking for different things in Second Life, I still like hanging out with you. I think you're smart and funny.”

He said he thought I was intelligent. For some reason, it didn’t seem like much of a compliment.

Psychology had logged on just as Geek left. I was still standing in the Slut Pit alley when he sent me a message.

“Where are you?”

“I don’t know,” I said.

“Would you like to teleport me?”

“I don’t know,” I repeated.

He teleported me to his location. Mouse World. We got balloons, rode a carousel and a trolley. Quite a switch from the slut dumpster alley.

## Tuesday, May 4, 2010

### Ruby

Adventurer took me shopping for sneakers. We went back to my land and he looked at my bookshelf. He asked me about the programming books and we talked about *Airframe* by Michael Crichton, which I liked because it was about people in a large corporation covering their own asses after a catastrophic accident.

We talked by voice for the first time. Even though Adventurer has lived in Canada and the United Kingdom, that was over a decade ago and he’s not completely comfortable with English. His English was fine, just a little slow. His chat always has an almost childlike enthusiasm, so when I heard his deep voice, he sounded older than I had expected.

Geek came over to see how I had improved my land. I was glad that he wasn’t avoiding me after last night. I showed him how I modified grass texture to create red fabric theater seats and that I had cleaned up my movie posters scattered everywhere and replaced them with a spinning box that displayed my poster on all sides.

We enjoyed each other’s company, as long as we were talking about what we were building and scripting, not online porn. Maybe we do click after all.

### Bruce

Today Learn Avatar had class to talk about new rules for owning land. We got to vote on potential themes. I’m not so sure that themes are a great idea. When someone tried to go all rule-militant in Noobieville a couple of months ago, nobody even understood what the themes meant. Then the whole place imploded.

During class, one of the very young male instructors complained about Ruby’s land. “It’s just bunch of boxes with your website. And the web site sucks.” Hey, Ruby already cleaned up those boxes.

The instructor said he liked when people had goals. “I have goals,” I said, “They just not be the kind of goals you’re interested in.”

The instructor’s girlfriend talked by voice during class. Then she asked why someone was sending her a private message. A female classmate had also spoken out loud. Then she typed, “Why is there harassment in class,” in the classroom chat and pasted something one of the guys had sent her.

Other female members of the class said that the guy had also sent them messages. “I didn’t get a private message because he thinks I’m a guy,” I typed. Everyone in that class thought I was a guy. Because I’m using a male avatar.

The instructor went on about how guys in Second Life hit on the women who speak out loud because most of the female avatars in Second Life are actually guys. “About half the women in this class are probably guys,” he said. This guy is an ass.

I seriously doubt that most of the women in that class were guys. Perhaps half the women at a nude beach are guys, but not the women sitting in on a class.

I said, “What I want to know is how many of the men in this classroom are actually women.”

## Budget Justified theater is ready for showing

### Ruby

I teleported Psychology to see the changes I had made to my theater.

I created an electronic slide show, using meeting slides from *Budget Justified*, and put them of the wall of my movie set for the conference room scene. Every ten seconds, a cryptic chart or graph with a title such as ‘Controller Graph,’ ‘Bubble Chart,’ or ‘Budget Justification’ replaced an equally cryptic chart. I also created a coffee mug that emitted steam and placed it on the black oval conference table.

The movie set for the conference room scenes consisted of three gray walls and a door on the left that opened and closed when you clicked on it. Eight black office chairs surrounded the conference table. Now all it needed in order to look exactly like the scenes in *Budget Justified* were an empty donut box, banana peel, and a bunch of avatars sitting in the chairs, playing solitaire on their phones.

A big weird looking guy with one huge sneaker and a t-shirt that said ‘Tell your boobs to stop staring at my eyes’ stopped by my land.

Psychology sent me a private message. “He’s Edit Appearance gone bad.”

His butt was fat, but he wore tight short shorts. He had a mass of hair for a beard, and a head smaller than his arms.

I asked him how he liked my theater. “I’m trying to fix your movie screen,” he said. Fix my screen? He couldn’t even fix his beard.

In our private chat, Psychology said the guy looked like a newbie. “How can you fix a screen if you only have one big shoe?”

“Ruby knows who I am,” the big weird blob said. I did?

“Oh no, is it Desperate?” I asked.

“I teach classes here,” he said.

“Grouchy!” It was Grouchy, but using a silly alt. Of course. He had tried working on my screen before. What a hilarious character.

Psychology had to leave, then Grouchy left and came back as a cute little stuffed tiger. “Can I keep you?” I asked.

Geek asked me for suggestions on what he should put in his house. “A zoo,” I said. I also suggested a propeller and traffic signs.

I went back to my house to put a door on the conference room and make a cabinet door that gave out a box of chocolates. I invited Geek to see my new door, but he was helping another woman with something. He had been flirting with her in the Learn Avatar neighborhood chat, so perhaps he helps her often. I gave him a box of chocolates anyway.

In neighborhood chat, I asked about a script that would give someone an item when they touched a door. “Mmmm. Chocolate,” Geek said. I hadn’t mentioned chocolate in the question. Seemed as though he was hinting to the whole neighborhood that we had a friendship going.

“I already gave you chocolate, Geek,” I announced. Geek sent me some code and I copied into a script that I placed inside the door.

### Bruce

A message appeared in the Learn Avatar chat announcing that a question-asking class was about to start. I asked if we could take a class about pose balls.

Everyone in the class rezzed a sphere, Joni told us to look at the dimensions.

“Mine is .3 meters in diameter,” I said.

Another woman said hers was .4 meters in diameter.

“Her ball is bigger than mine,” I said.

The woman sat on her ball and did a face plant into the floor. Everyone laughed at her. “I can’t see myself,” she said. “What did I do?”

Then we all made our pose balls smaller and sat on them. “This is actually egg-laying class,” Joni said.

After everyone else had left the class, SlowBrain was still sitting there on the pose ball he had made. I tried chatting with him, but he didn’t say much. So I sat on him. He didn’t seem to notice.

### Ruby

I stopped by Worldly’s patio to see what progress he had made on his place. The pictures inside his house appeared before the house did. They were pictures of Skitzo. Puke. She puts her name in his profile as being partnered, makes him wear the words ‘Skitzo’s Husband’ in the tag above his head, she tells him he knows her better than her husband does, and now she puts pictures of herself all over his house. Control freak.

I didn’t want to acknowledge the pictures. I’m losing respect for the guy. Instead I asked him for a copy of the laptop he had on his table. I put it on the desk in my movie set and invited him to come over for some chocolates.

Worldly gave me a few more pieces of office supplies that he had gathered. Then he tried driving a car, a delivery truck, and a wheelchair on my land. Except that he walked while the wheelchair was attached to him. He realized he needed to sit down, then it wheeled him around my theater. “It was funnier when you walked with it,” I said.

“Do you mean more stupid?” he asked. I wish I could have heard him say that with his German accent.

“If more stupid means funny, then yes, I meant more stupid.” Either way, it got a good laugh out of me.

## Thursday, May 6, 2010

### Ruby

I sent a private message to Worldly as Boo. He knew right away who I was.

“How could you tell?” I asked.

“BudgetJustified.com is in your list of groups in your profile.”

I walked around the side of his house on the way from my theater to his patio. “Oh my god,” he said when my deformed Boo creature with a crooked face appeared in front of him. “How many dates do you find as Boo?”

We talked by voice for a little while. Then Geek came online and I wanted to go bug him to see what he’d say about Boo.

Geek was his normal goofy, friendly self. He acted like he didn’t know it was me at first, but when I asked him what his favorite scripting function was, he said, “llSomeoneSmellsLikeAnAlt().”

“Did you know right away from my shirt?” I asked.

“It was because you asked me a personal question,” he said. Yes, I had asked him where he was from. But I still think it was because of the bright green shirt.

Geek told me that a scripting class was about to start at the house of one of our neighbors. He gave me a landmark. I went, but he didn’t go. I think he just wanted to get rid of me so he could build.

Jasmyn, Northern’s porn theater whore, showed up for class. I hadn’t seen her for a few weeks. But as soon as she saw me, she left.

There was a Men Working sign near the classroom. “That’s a sexist sign,” I said.

Others in attendance agreed.” Women work here too.”

The only guy who had attended the class kept messing up and goofing off. Eventually he left. I looked at his profile. He looked about fifteen years old.

## Harassment in class

### Bruce

As soon as I logged on, I saw an announcement for a couch building class, which I was already fifteen minutes late for. But I went anyway because I want to make sure I took enough classes for the week.

The rude instructor was laying around on a couch with a woman on top of him. He said the pillows I made looked like Chicklets gum. “Chew my pillows,” I said. He was impressed that even though I was fifteen minutes late, I finished making my couch before everyone else.

Rude was saying rude things during class, interrupting Joni and distracting the students. He insulted Joni a few times.

“You’re such a jerk, no wonder people are leaving Learn Avatar,” she said. There’s been a lot of turnover in Learn Avatar. But I don’t think it’s solely because of Rude. There are a lot of other obnoxious people and we’re starting to have too many obnoxious class attendance rules that nobody has the time to obey.

A friend of Rude’s stopped by. While we were all building couches, Rude had a conversation with his friend out loud by voice for all to hear. Which distracted the students from the class.

“Did you just get back from the horizontal pixel mambo with Bambi?”

“I pixelled with all of them.”

“And you didn’t share with me?”

“Hey, my avatar is just trying to keep up with my real life sex life. You know, I have a threesome with my girlfriend and her best friend, I gotta do at least a foursome with Bambi.”

I didn’t really need to hear about this. In fact, I didn’t even really need a class. All I had to do was look at the couch and make one like it. As long as I was finished first, I made three couches. One like Joni’s, one water couch, and one brick couch.

A water couch is not like a water bed. Instead of being filled with water, it is the color of water, textured with waves. But this was no ordinary water couch. This was a Dancing Water Couch. When you sit on the matching coffee table, it makes you dance. I had put a pose ball inside of it.

I find it interesting that the rude instructor thinks Ruby is an idiot, with a bad web site and movie posters lying around her land, but that Bruce is a genius. I think it’s only partially because Ruby is female. I think it’s mostly because he doesn’t like the topic of *Budget Justified*, offended that someone is putting such a movie about sexual harassment out there. He thinks it’s an anti-man story.

## Friday, May 7, 2010

### Ruby

Rude was banned from Learn Avatar last night. He hadn’t been a member for much more than a week. I’m not sure what happened.

I showed up to a class with Grouchy and said, “I noticed that Rude is no longer in Learn Avatar.”

“Yeah, he quit,” Grouchy said. He didn’t say any more about it, so I didn’t ask.

Grouchy got my movie screen working! It hadn’t worked since I bought it. Although he may not deserve the credit for getting it to work. Two things happened. One was that I had installed QuickTime on my computer. Second Life uses QuickTime player to show YouTube videos. The other thing is that Linden Labs made an upgrade in Second Life today. A few neighbors stopped by to watch.

I chatted a little with Worldly, but he was mostly spending time with Skitzo. I asked him questions about her, but probably not the kind of questions he wanted to hear from me or think about.

“She is so sweet that people take advantage of her,” he said. “Her previous Second Life boyfriends treated her poorly.” Previous boyfriends. Plural. How long has this unsettled ‘divorce’ of hers been going on?

“In what way?” I asked.

“From what I see, she lets people damage her self esteem,” he said.

“What have you seen?” I asked.

Well, he hadn’t seen anything. “She says people take advantage of her.”

From what I’ve seen, Skitzo anything but sweet. In fact, she’s been rather rude to me – kicked me out of her DJ group, ((((

Perhaps she says this so Worldly will tiptoe around her, trying to prove that he won’t take advantage of her. She’ll tell her next boyfriend that Worldly treated her poorly too. But I won’t tell him that. I can’t save him from Skitzo. Or from himself.

I hung out with Grouchy a little on my land. He had heard me fly past Sweets’s place and followed me home. It was nice to see him because other friends were busy with other people. I think he was a little lonely. He gave me a picture of the view from his condo in real life. Ocean and race cars. Grouchy wasn’t very chatty, though. I don’t know if he was working on something or if he was chatting with other friends.

I think Grouchy is afraid of relationships with women. He has told me that he has bad luck with women in real life. He probably doesn’t want to put all his eggs in one basket by giving me too much attention. But by not giving me much attention, he doesn’t get to know me and risks losing my attention to someone else who spends more time with me.

I think he’s also afraid to spend a lot of time with a woman because if he exposed his interest, and she found someone else, then he would feel ashamed and hurt, foolish for thinking she’d want to be with him. I wouldn’t mind spending more time with him. So far he seems only partly engaged when we’re in conversation. Perhaps he needs time to get used to me.

While I was with Grouchy, Psychology came online. Since Grouchy wasn’t engaged in the conversation, Psychology teleported me to a pool and we sat on a couch. Unlike most of the couches in Second Life, it wasn’t one of those where a couple could snuggle.

“I look bored,” I said after I saw my pose.

“Are you?” he asked. I was definitely not bored.

We didn’t spend much time together, since his wife was expecting him to come to sleep. I’m not sure why he logged on. Was it to see if I was there? Was it to say hi to a different woman?

### Bruce

I invited SimpleLife over to see my couches. I hadn’t seen her since we met a week ago when she asked me to dance at the Builders Brewery. She appeared on my land as an elf. She danced on my brick couch and I showed her my other ‘furniture’ – the potted plant, the pointy wedge, the water couch.

“I’m going to call my place Roadside Furniture and Games.” I put a road down the middle of my land, but the texture wasn’t designed right and a white stripe appeared in the middle of the lane.

SimpleLife took me back to her house. She has a very nice place. The bottom floor is a work area where she builds things. A dinosaur lives there. I sat on its nose.

Her latest project is a makeover contest floor where avatars can stand and people can vote for the best makeover. She gave me a script for tallying votes.

Besides being an elf, SimpleLife often tries out different avatars.

“I have a friend who changes his avatar all the time. Sometimes a man, sometimes a woman, sometimes a dinosaur,” she said.

“How do you know your friend is a he?” I asked.

“I tried being a male avatar once,” she said. “That lasted for about fifteen minutes.”

“What had happened during those fifteen minutes?”

She didn’t say.

The second floor of her house is living space. SimpleLife designed it to look very classy. The sun even shines in the window and makes shadows on the floor from the mullions. She has bookshelves, a desk, dainty flower print couches, hardwood floors, large windows with a view of a tree-lined courtyard, potted plants, and a fireplace.

A nice newbie stopped by while we chatted on her couch. We welcomed him and told him about some of the things you can do in Second Life. SimpleLife gave him a pack of clothes and landmarks.

“That happens frequently,” she said. “I live near a welcome center.”

She told me about some of the mean things that happened when she was a newbie. “Women said rude things and a few men chased me across several of the lands.” Interesting that she found people were rude when she was a newbie. Most of the guys I’ve talked to tell me about the women who take them shopping and give them money. Although that didn’t happen to me.

I didn’t have anything overly nice happen to me when I was newer, but I didn’t have mean things happen to me either.

When I stood to leave, I landed on top of her couch. “Sorry for standing on the couch in my shoes,” I said. “You probably wouldn’t let your kids do that.”

## Adventurer is looking elsewhere for adventure

### Ruby

I sent a message to Adventurer when I logged on, but he didn’t respond. Soon Adventurer teleported me to his location. “I was in the shower while the computer was on,” he said.

“I thought you were probably with another woman,” I said. I’m not sure I believe that he wasn’t, but at least he didn’t completely blow me off.

He logged off shortly after I stopped by so, I explored the area we were in. It turned out to be a sex toy store with pose balls. So perhaps he had been with a woman. And as soon as she left, he teleported me.

A naked guy approached me, then a naked woman showed up. I told Naked Man that Naked Woman was probably a guy. “No, she’s a women,” he said.

“She might look like a woman, but in real life, it’s a guy,” I said.

Then in the local public chat, she started flirting with me. Not him.

He sent me a private message. “I’m confused.”

“I told you. She’s a guy,” I said.

“Let’s have a threesome,” she said.

Naked man got on a pose ball. “Ruby, get on the pink pose ball before that other avatar does.” As though it mattered.

I just stood there. Then he disappeared inside the bed and all I saw was his penis sticking out of the mattress. Naked woman got on the bed and it trapped her inside too.

I sent Geek a message, “There’s a male and female avatar here stuck inside a bed, but they’re both men in real life.”

I thought he’d ask for a teleport. Instead he said, “Joni is class about building a gazebo. Wanna come?” Of course. You can only laugh about idiots stuck in a bed for so long.

I teleported to the class. When I arrived, Geek said, “I’d rather go work on my class reporting scripts.” So he left. Why did he invite me to a class if he was just going to leave?

Grouchy asked if I had ever been at one million meters in Second Life. Skyboxes are usually at around two thousand meters elevations, so I knew I had never been at a million meters.

I sat on a box and set the altitude to a million meters. I started falling very quickly. My whole body turned into a jagged alien form. It was taking too long to fall back to the grounds, so I put myself back at twenty meters.

“Were you trying to get rid of me?” I asked Grouchy.

“No, but it was effective,” he said.

### Bruce

I went to a menu scripting class at the Builders Brewery. The script was designed to pop up a blue menu when you touched an object. The menu said, “You touched me.” Diana, the woman sitting next to me, changed her script a little. “Mine says ‘Stop touching me’,” she said.

“It’s rude to touch people,” someone said.

“I touched Gary,” I said.

“You touch people, and you’ll lose some limbs,” he replied.

“I figured if I touched Diana, she’d remove my limbs,” I said.

Sweets, TeeVee’s ex, has already found a new boyfriend. They were in class together and they were having their picture taken with Sweets’s Second Life son. Sweets lives next door to me. TeeVee told me to keep an eye on her. So I made a big eyeball and set it next to her.

Sometimes I look at people like Sweets and TeeVee in Second Life and wonder why they’re able to find a partner so quickly. But then I realize that they break up very quickly too. And I doubt that their relationships are very fulfilling. They might be filling a hole in their lives for a week or two, but probably get tiring as quickly as they start.

## Sunday, May 9, 2010

### Ruby

Whenever Adventurer and I are online at the same time, we typically explore various sims with each other. I told him that even though we hang out a lot, I expected that he would still want to meet other people.

“I don’t want other women, they want me,” he joked.

He doesn’t take building or scripting classes, so there isn’t a whole lot else to do in Second Life besides flirt. Someone should come up with a more creative activity. There’s a lot of shopping, but there’s so much free stuff getting copied and handed around that you don’t want to spend time or money getting more stuff you’ll never use.

There are some nice museums, but sadly, nobody else ever goes there, so it’s boring. The most crowded places are a few of the dance halls and especially the nude beaches.

“It’s not like I can stop you from spending time with other women,” I told him.

“I don’t use Second Life for meeting women. That’s what real life is for,” he said.

I’m glad he has a proper perspective on that. There are many people in Second Life who don’t. It’s one thing to goof around online with people whom you stumble across and happen to really like. But if you’re looking for a relationship, you need to spend your efforts on meeting someone in person, not on a computer.

Adventurer took me to a building with massage animations. I laid on the bed and his avatar gave mine a massage. A guy who walked past sent me a private message while I was getting a massage. Perhaps he wanted a massage when I was done?

### Bruce

I made a shiny red octagonal sign for my land, “Roadside Furniture and Games.” For anyone who wonders what furniture has to do with games, you haven’t seen my furniture. And if you’re wondering why the furniture is on the side of the road, it’s because it’s made of water, concrete, sand, and bricks.

I went to a class at the Builders Brewery. They call it a university, but it’s not like a university. The pace at which they teach is veeerrry slooowww. I read other things, got something to eat, and chatted with friends during the class. I’m used to the fast pace of graduate programming courses for engineers. This must have been a class for business students.

The class was about starting a business within a virtual world. And like a university, it was a lot of generalities that I had already known about starting a business. What I had been hoping for were some specifics about how to set up a store in a Second Life mall or online marketplace.

After class I went to look at the Learn Avatar class schedule. In the Learn Avatar office, there was a new neighbor babbling about scripting pose balls. I asked if she was scripting menus for pose balls. “All scripts have menus,” she said. Um, no they don’t. She thought she was so smart, talking about poseballs and scripts. I thought she sounded like she didn’t know what she was talking about.

## Real name?

### Ruby

Remember how I was born a naked man because I accidentally logged on with my husband’s account? Well, I’ve been using that account ever since. Until today. I pulled my LisaSchaefer Ruby avatar out from the tutorial I had been stuck in since January. When I did, I realized that I had selected a male elf avatar for her. Looked damn feminine to me. Turns out I was born a man twice.

I gave her the exact same clothing and body as I had been using all along and flew by Geek’s house. He was working on his roof with TeeVee. They both recognized me even with a different name over my head. I talked to Geek briefly. He was very pleasant, but seemed a little too grateful when I flew away.

I told Chachi that I was changing to my LisaSchaefer Ruby avatar. Chachi said, “Let me know which one it is.”

“It’s this one,” I said. I was in front of him with the name LisaSchaefer Ruby above my head, but everything else about me looked just like I had previously. He thought it was the old avatar.

Grouchy asked about my movie. He had stopped my my theater earlier and watched some of the clips on YouTube. “Am I the pariah of Learn Avatar now?” I asked. No, but it looked like I had an ax to grind. Hm. I don’t want to come across as too harsh. Otherwise people will be turned off by my message.

A new neighbor came by to find out if he could watch my YouTube clips in my theater. He installed Quicktime on his computer and the screen magically started to work on his end.

Meanwhile, Worldly stopped by. “I’ll leave. It looks like your boyfriend is here,” he said.

“He is not my boyfriend,” I said. “Look at his partner status.”

I sent the neighbor a private message. “Worldly is another neighbor. He partnered someone he barely knew.”

“Must be great sex,” he said.

“I’m not happy about men who think the purpose of women in Second Life is for their sexual gratification.”

I popped into a class as LisaSchaefer Ruby and I logged in as my old avatar on my other computer. We both went to the class at the same time, having exactly the same shape and hair, wearing the same clothes. “Hey everyone, meet my twin,” I said.

“In real life?” one of the guys asked.

“I’m seeing double,” Sweets said.

SlowBrain seemed a little confused about LisaSchaefer Ruby and the old avatar. It seemed to take him awhile to figure out they were both the same person.

## Harassment is allowed. But anti-harassment is not

### Ruby

I tried to create an object on my land, but I got an error that said I didn’t have permissions to do so. What? Why couldn’t I build on my own land? I looked at the ownership, and it now belonged to the Owner of all of Learn Avatar. How did that happen?

Turns out that Owner went around the neighborhood last night and got rid of anything he deemed inappropriate. My movie posters were considered advertising. Even Ships’s beautiful ships were gone, I guess because they were for sale and people were coming by to look at them. But Owner had told us he wanted us to be successes in the Second Life Marketplace.

Luckily Joni, Chachi’s Second Life spouse, helped me get it back. “You’re a good neighbor. We like having you here.” It’s nice to feel appreciated.

Someone nearby was talking and playing music, so I went to check it out. I panned my view over to a new neighbor’s land. She had a man over. For the third evening in a row. Different man each time. Spazkid came by and asked what was going on.

I walked up toward her house to say hello to my new neighbor. Without saying a word, she ejected me from her land.

“You went flying!” Spazkid said.

Meanwhile, Worldly stopped by my theater. Spazkid made a meditation bubble and I jumped in as Spazkid jumped all over the place. “He’s a little scatty,” Worldly said.

“He’s only twenty. Like a nephew to me,” I said.

“Like a playful puppy,” Worldly said. Yeah, like a goofy little energetic ball of fur.

Spazkid made a colorful rainstorm, and Worldly was in a bubble. As the bubble melted, he was on fire. Then Spazkid left, while the rain beat down and Worldly was ablaze. Luckily the rain put the fire out. Then the rain stopped.

## Small children are here

### Ruby

I teleported Spazkid to dance with me. In his usual ADHD mode, he jumped all around, but didn’t get on a dance ball. Instead he teleported me to a house he was looking at possibly taking up residence in. There was a sex bed there. I thought about getting on it to be funny. But I’m so glad I didn’t. Spazkid got on voice.

“I want to get a dog and take him for walks online,” he said in a high-pitched, almost girlish voice.

“You don’t sound like you’re twenty,” I told him.

“I’m not. I’m fourteen.”

“I thought you told me you were twenty.”

“That’s my cousin. He signed up for this account. He’s twenty.”

“Where’s your mom?” I asked.

Both parents were at work. He’s in eighth grade and had the day off for teacher meetings.

I asked the Learn Avatar group for some advice about helping out a fourteen year old in Second Life, maybe I could direct him toward some kids his own age. They said that adults aren’t allowed on the Teen Grid and teens aren’t allowed on the Adult grid. Although the first person I met in Second Life was a fourteen year old boy who flew around with me in Korea. Maybe Korea is neutral territory. I’d hate to not be able to take SpazKid to a few educational activities in Second Life.

Grouchy complained that there weren’t enough teachers to be able to serve all of Learn Avatar. Well, since I’m more advanced than most of the classes, I said I could make up about five classes that I could teach. So I signed up to teach a simple menu scripting class.

Unfortunately, I didn’t have permissions to send out a class notice, and besides Bruce, only one person showed up. Grouchy didn’t seem to understand that I was giving him a message to send to the group. But at least the class went well. The student said she thought the information was useful and she liked the way I explained what I was showing her, instead of just telling her what to do.

After class, Adventurer asked me for a landmark to a place with sex animations. Uh, why must he ask me these questions. I’m pretty sure he didn’t intend to take me there.

For kicks, I went to a nude beach to find a sex animation. I greeted a guy I had never met before. “You’re alive!” he said.

“Did you think I had died?” I asked.

“Most of the inhabitants of this beach are bots. Put here to make it look more crowded.”

I asked him to help me try out pose balls. “You are a woman, aren’t you?” He must have been around nude beaches long enough to know that I might not be.

He was eager to try out the pose balls. The funny part about these pose balls is that there were so many bushes and plants in the way that we couldn’t even see the avatars. So the guy teleported me to a sex bed. I got on it, but he started with the rude sex animations right away and it made me feel like he was grabbing my body parts against my will.

“I’m not into this,” I said and left.

### Bruce

I went to a class about programming menus. We had a little trouble getting started. First we went to the sandbox, but got trapped in a box and couldn’t fly out. I looked like I was pouting in the corner. So we teleported to the teaching pad, but someone had changed the settings on the land, leaving us unable create objects there. What’s the point of a teaching pad where you can’t build? So we went back to the sandbox.

One of my poor neighbors had been wandering around the sandbox, wondering what we were up to. Luckily she found us and was able to participate in class. She said she had no programming experience, but she asked several intelligent questions and followed along very well.

After class, TeeVee invited me to see his place. He did a really nice job with it. He built an office with desks and matching chairs and had it carpeted in a beautiful shade of red. “Do you have meetings here?” I asked. After all, what does anyone need a house, a car, food, or an office for in Second Life?

“Yeah, once I have my staff.” Staff? Well, he wasn’t sure how he was going to recruit staff, or what they were going to do once recruited.

“I need a staff to help Chachi out with everything that has to be done around Learn Avatar.”

I’m glad TeeVee wants to be helpful, but I don’t think Chachi needs TeeVee to get him a staff for that.

“But I’ll still be in charge,” he said.

In charge of what? Good luck with that.

“As long as you don’t bite off more than you can chew. Considering what happened with Noobieville,” I said.

A lot of questions from new residents had come in all at once and it overwhelmed the people running the neighborhood. And they weren’t very gracious about helping out. Sometimes people who are inexperienced at management don’t know what they’re signing up for when they volunteer for leadership positions.

## Friday, May 14, 2010

### Ruby

Spazkid wanted money, but I don’t have a lot to give out.

“What do you need money for?” I asked him.

“I want to buy a present for a friend who is having a baby,” he said.

Great. He’s finding teenagers who want babies. I hope these virtual babies teach girls not to have babies. But I’m not putting much faith in that. I gave Spazkid a rubber duckie instead.

“Show me where you meet these girls,” I requested.

He teleported me to a place called Teen Hang Out. But when I got there I found out that even though it was called Teen Hang Out, it was rated for adults. Which means that adults hang out there, pretending to be teenagers. I really had been hoping he’d find a place to meet other teens.

Flying around my neighborhood, we toured the construction going on. There was a beautiful ivy-covered stone palace with tall spires with a waterfall flowing over boulders surrounded by a rose garden. Next door was a Burger King. I suppose even a burger king needs a castle. Too bad nobody built a Dairy Queen. But there were a few cows roaming in a pasture nearby. I guess Burger Kings and Dairy Queens need to start somewhere.

I came across a giant sunflower, taller than the castle. With Spazkid still flying overhead, I landed at its stem and found Grouchy fishing with a female friend. They were both blue avatars from the movie *Avatar*.

“You look really cute together,” I told them.

Grouchy’s friend was really pleasant. But I think Grouchy felt a little embarrassed that I had found him with a woman. She gave me a few of the non-fish items she had caught, including a blue swimsuit. I tried it on.

“Awesome, a one-piece!” I said. “This is the first item of beachwear that looks like something that could be worn to a beach in real life.”

Grouchy’s friend tried on a copy, which made her look sort of like a patterned blue creature, rather than someone wearing a swimsuit.

Spazkid caught up with me, so put my green tank top and pink pants back on and teleported him to the Builders Brewery. There’s no alcohol there; it’s a good educational facility. We picked up some barrels of megaprims, required to build large floor slabs and walls.

“What are your favorite places in Second Life?” I asked.

“Racing cars.” He gave me a landmark.

I didn’t know there were car races in Second Life. Glad it wasn’t porn, not that I expected him to say that. He’s a good kid. He had been offended when an eighteen year old in my neighborhood said a cuss word. At the time I thought it was odd that he was so offended, but now that I know his age, it makes more sense.

After SpazKid left the Builders Brewery, TroubleMaker, a man I had never met before, came up to me and asked if I liked dancing. He must have read my profile.

He went on to do other things and I took the megaprims back to my land so I could make a balcony. But then he sent me a message asking me to come dance with him.

When I arrived, we were at a quiet rose garden alone. In the middle was a round wooden dance floor raised above a circle of rose bushes. A piano off to the side of the dance floor played a soft melody.

TroubleMaker had changed into a suit and tie, so I put on my favorite blue ball gown. He was polite and well educated. We talked about each other’s country, education, and profession. His English was excellent, even though it’s not his native language.

“My first alt was accidentally deleted recently,” he told me.

“How do you accidentally delete an avatar?” I asked. He wouldn’t tell me.

“I had a castle that I built. I put a lot of time and money into it.”

“You should contact Linden Labs. Maybe they can get it back for you.” I would think he would’ve tried that already.

He blew off the subject. Why did he bring it up if he didn’t want to talk about it?

He sent me a picture of himself. He was thin, with very short brown hair, and sort of a Hitler mustache, which was oddly out of fashion.

“Are you looking for a relationship in Second Life?” he asked.

“I’m not really sure what I’m looking for. I’m not even sure I know what a Second Life relationship is yet.”

“Would you to be my Second Life girlfriend?”

I just met him a few minutes ago. At least Adventurer waited a couple of days before asking.

“It’s nice to be asked,” I said. “But I’d like to get to know you before I decide.”

I played with the dance menus and selected a different dance routine. Our avatars came closer together and did slower, more fluid dance moves. After a minute of swaying and caressing, our avatars dipped all the way to the floor. We rolled around the floor in our formalwear.

“This isn’t a dance,” TroubleMaker said.

“Did you have dances like this in your castle?” I asked.

“No. I had a bed like this in my castle.”

### Bruce

I went to a class about software that makes files so you can animate avatars, like dance animations. Now I need to download the software and try it out. I should make something so avatars walk on one hand while they have their foot behind their ear.

Shopper sent me a message again to see how I was doing. “I’m in animation class,” I said. I’m always in class when she sends me a message. Probably because I’m usually in class.

Then I went to a class about making beds. Not like what you do in the morning after you wake up, but to create a box that looks like something to sleep on. As if I sleep in Second Life.

The teacher wasn’t there, so we all taught each other. TeeVee showed me his one-building-block coffee table and Grouchy showed me how to make the bed a sculpted object so that it didn’t look like a stiff box.

At first I put it on the bed as a color texture, like a sheet. So instead of making my sharp-angled box into a soft mattress, it made it look like a stiff tie-dyed box. Which was actually quite pretty. Grouchy helped me make it into a soft mattress, but I kept my tie-dyed sheet on it.

Today Grouchy and his friend were no longer blue Avatars, rather they were green alien creatures. “She’s not a Martian,” Geek said. Geek needed to clarify this because Martian is Geek’s last name.

Grouchy’s friend put a sleeping pose on her bed, then laid in it like a coffin. I put a dance on my bed. Chachi put a sleeping pose on my bed and laid on it. Then I danced on him. “You might wake him up,” TeeVee said.

Chachi got up, so I jumped on my bed. “My mom told me never to jump on the bed,” I said.

As long as Geek was there, we had an impromptu scripting class. We created a rumor starter.

What’s a rumor starter? Well, it detected all avatars within a certain number of meters and made them say, “Hey (nearby avatar), did you hear what they’re saying about (other nearby avatar)?” Pretty funny. Perfect to go with my dancing furniture and joke beds.

Geek asked what level of programming experience we had. “My dad had a TRS80 in 1979,” I said. Geek didn’t know what a TRS80 was. Chachi said he still has one that works. Which is interesting, because it’s older than Chachi is.

I made my rumor starter say “Geek is a Martian.” Grouchy programmed his to make it look like I said “Chachi has a cute butt.”

“Bruce is swinging,” Grouchy’s friend said.

“Bruce, it’s not good etiquette to pretend to be someone else.” Geek said. As though his rumor starter has etiquette rules.

I should drop a teeny tiny rumor starter on Geek’s land so small he can’t find it. And have it keep saying stuff in chat. Unfortunately, his land is probably set to return objects after a short period of time.

An airheaded flirt came by after class was over. She didn’t say anything to me, but friended me. I could be an old man for all she knows. Or a woman. She got on voice chat and started flirting with Chachi. I wonder if she would have come by if Joni were here.

kkkkqqqqq

## Saturday, May 15, 2010

### Ruby

When I logged on, I was dancing with some guy. By coincidence, he was attached to the same dance ball that TroubleMaker was dancing on when I had logged off, and he was alone, so there wasn’t another woman already on the pose ball.

I didn’t stay long. I went to dance with Romance instead. Poor Romance. Every time he asks me to dance, I’m dancing with someone else.

Romance teleported me to his gorgeous three story house with a hot tub and a view of New York City out the floor to ceiling windows. I turned around to see a bed on the other side of the tub.

“I hope we don’t splash water onto the blankets,” I said. I panned around to see a floor below us with couches and a kitchen. Outside of the house was not New York City, but an expanse of bare green grass.

“How long have you had this place?” I asked.

“About a year.”

That’s quite a long time. He’s probably brought many women here. I wonder how often he invites them to return.

Romance and I put on bathing suits. He put his swim trunks on first. They were the exact match to the blue patterned swimsuit Grouchy’s friend had given me earlier!

I got in the hot tub, followed by Romance. Animations in the tub made us kiss. He got out of the tub and sat on the bed.

“Take off your swimsuit,” he said. Geez. I’ve been here five minutes and he’s ordering me around.

“I don’t want to,” I said.

“Sorry. I don’t want to make you feel uncomfortable.”

We went downstairs and sat on the couch. We talked about marriage. Not to each other, but my marriage in real life.

“I see all this ridiculous stuff in people's profiles about finding their true love in Second Life and I wonder, What are they thinking? Sometimes it seems so cute to see couples hanging out in Second Life and I wish for a special Second Life best friend. But then I realize that what they really want is what I already have in real life. So I'm very blessed.”

### Bruce

Drama in the neighborhood. One of the teachers quit because Owner is changing the rules so that we have to take even more classes. I read some of the spat going back and forth, but didn’t participate because I didn’t think there was anything productive I could have said.

We’re going to have to take classes every single day. I don’t even log on every single day. The volunteers who run the place are upset because we don’t have enough teachers to make it possible for everyone to take a class twice a week, much less seven times a week.

In the neighborhood chat, I asked Owner what his goals were, if we could have a mission statement. And if the rules he sets forth help toward that goal. However he did not respond to my question, just fueled the rant. I don’t know how old he is, but I hope he doesn’t have the same maturity problems as Noobieville management , resulting in the implosion of Learn Avatar also.

Geek was brown nosing Owner in neighborhood chat for all to read. He also mentioned that he goes to Second Life whorehouses. Is that the impression he wants to give us? Not sure what to think of that guy.

## Some people can’t tell the difference between online and real girlfriend

### Ruby

I taught a class and had five students attend. Grouchy asked potential teachers to send him a list of five classes they could teach on a regular basis. I sent him a list of twelve classes. Sweets invited everyone to go roller skating. Grouchy was there, so I went skating, got a free pair of skates, and handed him my list of classes.

The reward for teaching class is over two thousand square meters of land. Whatever a meter is in Second Life. Right now I have a sixteen by thirty-two meter plot, so the new plot would be four times the size of what I have now.

I’m not concerned about getting more land. I’m glad that LisaSchaefer Ruby has the potential of getting promoted before Bruce. Because this may be a world of sexual harassment, but it seems that women are respected for their building and scripting capabilities just as much as men.

I think it would be fun to have Bruce purposely refuse promotions. He doesn’t need more land. He just puts stuff he makes in class out there.

Lots of empty plots today. Many people from the neighborhood have disappeared. Worldly and I flew around the neighborhood surveying the destruction. We decided that we’ll stay until they kick us out. No need to overreact yet.

Adventurer logged on while I was hanging out with Worldly. So I teleported him to the neighborhood and introduced him to Worldly.

Ugh, Worldly talked about meeting Skitzo in London this summer. “You get to know a person better through chat over the internet than when you interact in real life,” he said.

Really? What kind of interactions does he have with people in real life?

Adventurer asked several good questions about having a partner in Second Life.

“If you found a girlfriend in real life, would you still be partners with Skitzo?”

“Skitzo is my real life and online girlfriend,” Worldly said. “I’m not looking for someone else.”

Oh, no no no. She’s still married. He’s never met her. She is most definitely not a real life girlfriend.

“Do you bring the computer to the dinner table when you have the family over to meet her?” Adventurer joked.

Good point. Not only have they never met, but Skitzo doesn’t know any of the people in Worldly’s life.

And neither do I, for that matter. He’s never talked to any of my friends or family, and they don’t know that he exists. Because there’s no context in which to mention him. Nobody in a virtual world pertains to my everyday life. These friends I see on the computer, they go away when I log off.

Worldly didn’t mention it to Adventurer, but his parents died when he and his brother were small children. He was raised by his grandmother, who has since passed away also.

It was interesting to watch the discussion, sort of like when Worldly met Psychology. I hadn’t been with Adventurer in a group setting before, so it was nice to see how he was with my friends.

After Adventurer left, TroubleMaker invited me to visit him. “I’m no longer homeless. Want to see my place?”

When TroubleMaker had said that he was no longer homeless, he hadn’t meant that his original avatar and castle are back. He had purchased a house with his new avatar.

He took me to see his skybox. Then we came back to see my place. I had my alt stop in for a moment to give Ruby a set of textures while TroubleMaker was there. As usual, they were dressed exactly alike, and had the same hair, body, face.

“Was that your sister?” TroubleMaker asked.

Worldly was still next door, so I introduced them. They’re from the same country, so they chatted in their native language. I thought TroubleMaker might appreciate someone who spoke his language. I didn’t mind because I was building things. “Not sure what I think of TroubleMaker yet,” I told Worldly. “I think he just wants sex.”

Two seconds later I received a private message from TroubleMaker. “You want to sex with me?” Suspicion confirmed.

“Let me know when you’re was done building. We’ll go dancing.” Apparently I waited too long to finish building. Before I could say I was ready to dance, he unfriended me.

I’m probably better off. Worldly had said he was suspicious about the reasons TroubleMaker’s previous avatar got banned from Second Life. We don’t believe it was an accident. We think he must have done something serious against Second Life rules.

### Lisa

A major drawback of Second Life that is hampering its popularity is that it doesn’t integrate with real life as well as Facebook, Twitter, or any of the other popular social networking capabilities. It’s not that it doesn’t have the technical capabilities. The problem is the culture of Second Life. For the most part, people guard their anonymity. You can’t become part of someone’s life if you insist upon anonymity.

Included with anonymity is the difficulty of finding someone who lives close enough to bring them into your real life. The communication doesn’t continue after you log out of the viewer. So it’s a good environment to have some creative fun and to communicate with people all over the world, but not a good place to meet long term friends. It happens, but it’s not the typical case.

### Bruce

I invited Shopper to see my furniture on my land. She got on the pose ball for the sand and brick coffee table that has a sex animation. “This animation is kind of dirty,” she said.

“Of course it’s dirty,” I responded. “The coffee table is made of sand.”

Shopper gave me an exploding chair and invited me to a dance club. But instead of dancing, I swam around the watery blue dance floor. She said I seemed like a smart guy, with the style of writing I use in chat.

I built a parking garage to put all my stuff on. TeeVee came by to look at it, but I was at my limit for the number of building blocks I could put on my land, so there’s nothing in my parking garage.

In the Learn Avatar neighborhood chat, I said, “Since we have to have lessons every day now, I want someone to give me a lesson on what gor is.” Gor is one of the six themes that our buildings are supposed to follow. Owner decided that should be one of the themes. There was a little discussion about whether Gor belonged on a PG land. “Maybe if I made it about gor kittens it would be PG,” I said.

Geek gave me a bunch of notecards about gor. Some poses and animations came with the cards. So I told Chachi, “Geek taught me a lesson about gor.” Just to make sure I got credit for taking some kind of class today.

Geek ended up teaching a scripting class today also, which I attended. He had written a very clever piece of code to read the class schedule then return a message about what classes were being offered that day so that we wouldn’t have to go to the Learn Avatar office to know what classes were posted for the day. He said that the code could probably be used to have two objects send email to each other. “I’m going to send email to Geek’s house,” I said.

## Tuesday, May 18, 2010

### Ruby

There are new rules in Learn Avatar yet again today. Now we have to teach or take class for thirty minutes per day. This is a volunteer thing. I’m not sure how anyone is going to keep up with it. Chachi and Grouchy were offline all day. I think they’re getting tired of putting up with the pressure.

Today was the first time that Adventurer and Psychology were online at the same time. I wasn’t sure which one I should hang out with, so instead of inviting them to visit, I kept building the movie set for Tim’s messy office in *Budget Justified* while chatting with each of them individually via private message.

Finally, after Psychology logged off, Adventurer asked for a teleport. Since Psychology has been hiding his online status from me most of the time, I decided that Adventurer is going to be my priority from now on.

Adventurer stopped by to see the new balcony and rooftop garden I made. Worldly stopped by while Adventurer was there, but they didn’t get to chat much today. I asked them what they thought about the rooftop garden.

“If I had land, I’d build a house, and buy a bed to put in it,” Adventurer said.

“I don’t sleep online,” I said.

Adventurer and I flew over to Zteampunk’s place because her house was smoking. “Fire!” I shouted.

Zteampunk invited us to look around inside. I clicked on a pose ball in a large bird cage loft hanging above us. It made me lie down to sleep.

“Oh, what’s this,” Adventurer joked. “‘I don’t sleep online.’ Sure you don’t. I’ve had enough of your lies, Ruby.’”

### Lisa

Well the first one to lose land will be Bruce. I’m not going to stress over trying to make sure he’s in a half hour class every single day. I’m already beyond the level of most of the classes. No problem logging on every day, but there’s no way I’m going to have him look for a class every day. Especially when I go out of town.

I could have Bruce just sit in on every class I teach. After awhile that will look suspicious. But I’m not going to prep and teach a half hour class every day. I was almost unwilling to teach a ten minute class every day. It’s easy to show up and say a few things a few times a week, but a half hour class requires prep.

I didn’t come to Second Life to teach. It would be fun to do it every once in awhile, and nice to show people things, but I want to spend my time learning what I want to learn and creating things for my business.

Someone told me I could get land for ten dollars a month. I might look into that. I’ll at least explore other options.

### Ruby

I went to a jazz club, but it was mostly women and nobody paid attention to me.

“We needed to flirt harder,” one of the women said.

“I’m too old to flirt,” I said.

Instead I went to Help Island and bothered an alien spider. He was a curmudgeon with an electronically altered voice. I think he liked that I wanted to hover near him, but he wouldn’t admit it.

Some people got really mad at a newbie who had just been created. I didn’t see what happened. So I gave her some landmarks so she could go somewhere else and get away from these obnoxious people.

Romance came by to see the theater I had built. I took him over to see Worldly. He was on his patio with Shopper. Romance and I showed them our matching swimsuits, then Romance took me to his place.

He did his silly fantasy talk again, calling me his queen, telling me I’m the only woman, or at least the best woman. Then he asked me to take off my swimsuit. If he wants to see a naked female avatar, he should create his own.

“Why I don’t you encourage your husband to play online?” he asked.

“He tried it already and didn’t like it. I also created a Facebook account for him, but he deleted it. He’s not into social media.”

“You’re just afraid that he’ll cheat on you online.”

Does he think that because that’s his reason for being online, to cheat?

Romance got on the pose balls on his floor. I thought they were dance pose balls. I got on a pose ball too and our avatars made out. Then he started describing a scene as if he were raping me – telling me to take off my clothes, saying he was going to slam me into a wall, telling me he was sticking his hands down my underwear. Does he always slam his queen into a wall? I left. No intentions of ever returning. After he logged off, I deleted him from my friend list.

### Bruce

I logged on and saw the thirty minute class requirement. TeeVee was on my land so I said we should have a class. “Classes don’t work that way,” he said.

Actually, he wants to be ‘in charge,’ so he doesn’t want me to teach him. And he’s already taught me both of the classes he knows how to teach.

Grouchy told me about the strange women he encounters. I suggested that instead of posting in his profile what he doesn’t want in Second Life, he should put a positive spin in his profile and say what he does want out of being online. He didn’t seem interested in doing so. More fun to attract weirdos and complain about them.

### Ruby

I helped a neighbor with a complicated texture she designed that had clear windows and stucco walls. But the walls ended up being partially transparent. She put the texture on one huge block that took up her entire land. The texture on the simple gigantic block made it look like a really big, really complicated structure.

I don’t have that same graphics software that my neighbor has, so I couldn’t walk through the process of creating the texture with her. I wonder if she had the transparency set below one hundred percent.

I asked questions in several forums about partially transparent textures. They thought it had something to do with the alpha channels. I had to translate the technospeak of the forum to her.

## Glass ceiling

### Ruby

My stucco/window neighbor got a land promotion today! I can’t believe I taught her all this complex stuff about textures yesterday, and she gets promoted today. I’ve been here since the beginning and I haven’t received bigger land. She’s only been here a couple of weeks. I wonder if Grouchy, Joni, and Chachi got the class report I sent mixed up and thought she had taught me about alpha channels.

I created my own red-and-transparent checkerboard texture to see if I had the same problems as I did with the glass window and stucco texture. I didn’t. I created a giant – fifty meters cubed, the biggest size building block possible – complicated-shaped spiral structure and placed my new texture on it. It ended up looking like a fifty meter high complicated peppermint twist. I put a picture of myself at the ends, put it several meters above my rooftop garden, and made it spin around.

On top of my giant spiral, I placed a clear platform that hovered over my entire land. On the edges I put the words “Glass Ceiling.” The spiral looked like it was drilling through the glass ceiling, like a symbol of slowly creating a hole in the ceiling. Either that, or screwing your way through the glass ceiling.

I went looking for different land today. Instead I found two guys. One has grandchildren and runs marathons. I found him while I was logged on as an alt, who looks and dresses exactly like Ruby. So on my other computer I logged on as Ruby and teleported myself to meet us.

“I’m surrounded!” he said. I took him back to my theater showed him the video clips of *Budget Justified*.

### Bruce

Some guy was hovering over a million meters above my land again. And when I tried chatting with him, his responses seemed like they had come from an artificial intelligence software. “Do you know Eliza?” I asked. Eliza was a fake computer psychologist software that my dad had in the late 1970’s.

“The he or she that you mention may or may not be known,” the avatar responded. No person talks like that. Not even someone with poor English.

I went shopping for land and arrived in a tree-lined neighborhood with Victorian mansions surrounded by flowering bushes. Ducks and fish swam around a pond in the center of the island. The pond was flanked by stepping stones and flower beds. A tree swing hung from a grand oak.

But it seemed deserted. If people lived in these houses, why weren’t they gathered around the pond for a barbecue? Or at least a building contest.

The land owner was very attentive and showed me around. A woman came up and started chatting to the land owner.

“The neighborhood is wonderful! I love living here. I’m so excited about this place.”

“Why are you so excited about it?” I asked.

“It’s great!”

OK. Nobody talks like that either. I think the woman was the owner’s alt.

### Ruby

Last night I met someone in real life who mentioned funneling money to terrorists through Second Life. We exchanged Second Life names, so today I showed him my theater and movie set.

He had worn a suit in real life and showed up at my theater in Second Life also in a suit. He’s an engineer, so we worked on some scripts for animating my coffee mug. When I wasn’t looking, he left me a bouquet of flowers on my conference table.

I went to a Builders Brewery class about programming menus for pose balls. This is the topic I had been waiting for. Or Bruce had been waiting for. To make a joke bed.

The first half hour of the class was not hands-on and I almost left. She seemed as though she was going to spend the whole time just talking about pose balls and menu scripts.

But finally we went through the folder of objects the instructor had given us and put a red blanket on the ground. I turned mine purple so I’d be able to distinguish it from everyone else’s. The guy next to me made his green.

The instructor told us to told us to click on some menu options to get the pose balls to appear. Since she was talking by voice, I didn’t have something to refer to when I didn’t see her menu options right away. So I asked her a question by voice. Instead of telling me what to click, she did it herself. I got on the blue pose ball, then Surprise! Green blanket guy got on the pink pose ball on my blanket.

Now in real life, this might have felt scary and threatening. But on a computer, I thought it was so cute he had appeared on my blanket, that I repositioned my blue pose ball so that I slid onto his blanket after he returned to it. I stayed there for the rest of the class and chatted with him until class ended.

LeetDork, a zero-day-old newbie, appeared on my land. I showed him a little of my movie theater.

“Do you make money in Second Life?” he asked. There’s been a lot of publicity in mainstream media lately about people making money in Second Life.

“I’ve only given away freebies so far,” I said.

He seemed uninterested and left. I offered friendship, but he didn’t accept.

### Bruce

I logged on in the middle of a class in progress and met LeetDork. He was learning about building basics, created a box, and put a texture on it. He had selected the granite texture, so his box blended in with my pants.

LeetDork said that he was interested in scripting, so I gave him some scripts. He told me that he did some programming in real life. Interesting that LeetDork was interested in Bruce’s scripting abilities, but not Ruby’s.

One of the leaders of the Builders Brewery sent a message out to the group. “Hi Brewers.”

I responded, “Hi Diamondbacks.”

“There’s no MLB in virtual worlds,” he replied.

I said, “And there’s no beer.”

“Darnn, I paid some guy for MLB camp,” another member said.

“And I paid some guy for beer,” I retorted.

I asked the group for tips on buying land.

“If you get a premium membership, you get land that comes with a house.”

“Who needs a house,” I said. “I don’t get rained on and nobody steals my stuff.” I just want a place to bring people to show my stuff to. And get them to do silly dances on my poseball furniture.

## What really happens at creepy places

### Ruby

Neighbor Zteampunk helped me with her script for an elevator. Perfect. I keep falling off stairs. We had trouble with the script, so in the Builders Brewery chat I asked about scripts still running even after I deleted them from an object. About ten people sent me scripts for clearing scripts.

Two people sent me private messages. Anna said I was welcome to dance any time. Seemed like a strange offer, but I suppose a wingwoman wouldn’t hurt. Then I looked at Anna’s real life picture in his profile and realized that Anna was a man.

Anna had several BDSM sims listed in his profile. Bondage, discipline, sadomasochism themes are popular in Second Life. Lots of people talk about it, but I had never been to any of the role-playing sims for BDSM. The closest to that has been the castle that Desperate took me to when his partner wanted a threesome.

So I went to one of the BDSM landmarks in Anna’s profile to check it out. I was expecting it to be an elaborate game with complicated rules. But instead it was a gray room of people who didn’t speak much English. Anna said he didn’t like BDSM and doesn’t go there anymore. Then why was it in his profile?

Anna took me to see his store where he sells clothing. Then he immediately left to go to a skybox with his ex-girlfriend. I have my hypothesis about what they did there. Doesn’t seem like the kind of guy I want to hang out with.

In the Builders Brewery chat, a guy named Coyote said, “I occasionally get a question like ‘I’m getting a conflict between my Suckomatic 8100 and my UltraShock dog collar. I notice that the problem only occurs when I am holding my partner underwater for three minutes. It never happens when I have her on the roasting spit.’ And we look in the wiki and wakka pages like it's all normal business. I wonder how they’d feel if their real life friends found out about all this.”

I rarely send private messages to people chatting in a group chat, but I thought the way he said it was so funny, I decided to say hi.

It turns out that he lives about ten miles away from me in real life. We also talked about our real life neighborhood and Second Life relationships.

“A real life friend asked me once if I wanted to be his Second Life girlfriend. I can’t put my finger on the reason why I don’t want to have a real friend as a Second Life boyfriend.”

“A Second Life relationship could feel like a downgrade from a real life relationship,” Coyote said. I think he was on to something, but that his view of it was still incomplete.

He said he has a Second Life girlfriend from Belgium. I told him about Adventurer. “I’m not sure if I want him to be my boyfriend,” I said.

“If you’re not sure, he’s probably not the one.”

I think Coyote is right. Even though I really like the cute tours he takes me on, our conversations don’t seem to be advancing. We’re not getting to know each other better. He’s more interested in shopping for animations and skins. Our conversations aren’t very deep, in fact they’re starting to get boring.

### Bruce

I went to a newbie dance at the Builders Brewery. Everyone there changed their appearance to look like a newbie from several years ago. I looked a lot like a newbie too, and I didn’t even change my appearance.

The chat at the dance was more fun than the typical chat at a dance club. In general, people had smarter things to say and there was none of the squiggly characters that fill up the chat window with nonsense.

One woman mentioned that some guy had just broken her heart.

“Did you know him for a long time?” I asked.

She hadn’t. But she had just found out that he had a Second Life wife.

One of the guys had a female sounding name. His profile said that he sometimes changes to a female avatar.

“What’s it like to go around as a woman?” I asked him.

In broken English, he said, “Tired. Not answer now.”

One of the women piped up and said, “The guys need to start asking the women to dance.”

“I don’t respond to general invitations in public chat,” I said.

Then LevelHead sent me a private message asking me to dance.

Since it was crowded, there were too many scripts running and the graphics ran very slow. It was difficult to move. LevelHead got on a dance ball and ended up dancing with a red head woman for several minutes before she was able to do an elegant ballroom dance with me.

I had a link to my blog in my profile, so LevelHead read my blog and asked about the people I meet.

“Several of the women are airheads in their twenties,” I said. “Especially when they get on voice and I have to actually listen to their blather.”

She promised not to blather. “I have an engineering degree,” she said.

“So do I,” I said. “Actually, I have more than one.”

The whole while we danced, the red head danced with some other guy. She had something in her profile about rolling in the hay, so I wasn’t interested. But the two of them looked so peaceful together, I wished I had someone to share a romantic dance with. Yet I’m sure they don’t know each other and may never speak to each other again. So I think I was the lucky one to have shared a ballroom dance with LevelHead the Engineer.

### Ruby

The guy dancing with the red head had a landmark for a cuddle beach. So I went there to check it out. At the bottom of a tall cliff, avatars milled among palm trees and sand on a curved shoreline. A gazebo constructed of bamboo with a palm frond roof invited patrons to take a free drink from several trays atop the bar underneath. Several benches faced the shore. A few couched couples locked in a tender embrace. A few empty benches teased those of us unmatched, hinting that the rest of us may enjoy a seat if we find a willing partner.

Rather than start a chat or invite someone to sit with me, I got on one of the cuddle pose balls alone. Then some guy hopped on the blue pose ball next to me. What if he’s 19, or 65, or an idiot. I could always get off the bench. I chatted with him for a moment. Luckily he turned out to be quite pleasant.

Adventurer and I hung out by the boards waiting to win our very own pose balls. He was able to win some, but I didn’t. We went to my land to arrange them. He kept getting them stuck in my desk. They were still there after he left, so I had to return them to him. Like picking up the trash he left laying around at my place. And not just trash, but sex toy trash, that he went out and acquired while in my presence, for the purpose of using with some other chick.

Grouchy accidentally sent me a rant about an ex-girlfriend that he meant to send to someone else. I guess I’m glad I’m not the only one he complains to.

“I liked to get to know a person very well before deciding on any relationship commitments,” I said.

“But by then she’s with some other man,” he said. If she is, she’s probably doing him a favor.

Well, I’m not exactly with another man yet. And he doesn’t seem to be pursuing me very hard. Honestly, I don’t think he’s interested in any woman in particular. He’s interested in any woman he can have.

## New friend or just a liar (Crock)

Still shopping around. But not for freebies. For Ruby’s match.

## Sunday, May 23, 2010

### Ruby

I received a note from Joni about the rules in Learn Avatar so I asked Worldly if anything had happened in the neighborhood. He came back to check on his land. Everything seemed fine; everything on our land was as we had left it, and the neighborhood hadn’t disappeared. We chatted about how things were going with Adventurer and Psychology.

“Fizzling with both.

I went to the cuddle beach again and met a guy named Crock.

“I’ll tell you about anything you ask if you want to get to know me better,” he said.

“Hmm,” I responded. “What would I have to know about you to determine whether I want to get to know you better?” I asked him if he had gone to college, what kind of things he did in real life.

“I write books about World War II,” he said.

“Do you have a Ph.D.?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said.

“You win!” I said. “That’s the answer that makes me want to get to know you better.”

I took Crock to show him my movie theater. “This is the most interesting building I’ve seen in Second Life.” I think he meant that in a good way.

Crock told me he had just broken up with his Second Life girlfriend after walking in on her having sex with someone else. Which makes me wonder what kind of person she possibly could have been. And what kind of judgment he has in selecting dates or what he expects from girlfriends.

“I’m hoping to find another girlfriend,” he said. He seemed interested in me.

“I’m available,” I said. Well, in Second Life I am. “But hard to get.”

I went to a role playing event at the Builders Brewery. Or maybe it was a class. I thought it would be more like a party where you drop in. It didn’t seem like much of a role play. We all just chatted weird sentences that had no context.

SimpleLife was there. I had never met her as Ruby instead of Bruce. She offered to give me a wood elf avatar for role playing, but I decided I’d rather use my spacesuit. We were supposed to introduce ourselves in our role. “I am Moron from planet BudgetJustified,” I said.

Adventurer teleported me to go shopping. As we sat on a cuddle couch, I panned the view so I could see where we were. There was a movie theater on the other side of the wall. “You’re not in the moment,” Adventurer said. He was right. I wasn’t. I appreciate the time he spends with me, but we’re still on a shallow level of communication. And I don’t know if that will ever change.

Crock invited me to dance as soon as he logged on. I’ve always hung out with Adventurer whenever he was online, but this time I felt like I should find out if I enjoyed Crock’s company more. I’m bored of going shopping for freebies with Adventurer. I invited Adventurer to a Builders Brewery class. He showed up, but didn’t follow along and soon left.

Then I went dancing with Crock. We had a nice time, chatted a lot about our Second Life friendships and relationships. I think the conversation flowed better than my conversations with Adventurer. He said he was kind of ugly and didn’t have many dates. “But do you have a good personality?” I asked. He said he had lots of friends.

Some people came by while we danced. I was in private chat with him and it took a few minutes before I saw that they had said hi. “Sorry,” I said in local chat. “I didn’t even notice that anyone else was here.”

“That means she’s really into you,” one of the women said. Crock and I had a friendly conversation with them. I appreciated that he was social enough to have a short conversation with them, but not so social that he ignored me.

As Crock was about to leave, he asked, “Love you?” as if he was asking if that were alright to say.

“You don’t yet,” I said. I like to keep expectations at an appropriate level. But I don’t want to be too distant either. “Maybe you will eventually.”

Worldly was at his place with Skitzo’s friends, so I stopped by. They stood around talking about fast food and television, so I didn’t engage in the conversation much.

Disaster stopped by for a moment. I hadn’t seen her for awhile. She said that she was going back to her teenager avatar because she was tired of adult relationships in Second Life. Then she said something about taking pictures of Worldly naked. I don’t know where that comment came from. Probably just the usual nonsense people chat about at Worldly’s place.

### Bruce

TeeVee stopped by and showed me how to make a sculpted vase. He gave me a bunch of sculpted items so I could make different shapes. I even made a banana. I should go to the nude beaches, wear it on my crotch, and chase the guys who run around with penises sticking up. “Is that a banana, or are you just happy to see me?”

I went to a class and learned how to put together an animation override. They gave us some animations and poses to put in our animation object. I put in animations that made my butt wiggle when I walk and made me recline when I jumped. I know I’m supposed to recline when I lay down, but who does what they’re supposed to in Second Life. There was a Snoopy avatar in class who said he/she was from China. I don’t know if the person was male or female and didn’t think it mattered enough to ask. I rarely meet people from China, so it was nice to have a little chat with him/her.

## Tuesday, May 25, 2010

### Ruby

Crock sent me a message. I asked where he was. “I’m by a bed, but it’s not what you think.” Turns out that he was shopping for a bed. Which is almost as bad as anything else one might think about being by a bed. Because it means you intend to use a bed.

Crock teleported me to the bed store. “I also bought a house,” he said. We all know what a house is Second Life is for. To use a bed in.

But he didn’t have any land to put it on. So we went to a public sandbox where he rezzed the house then put his new bed there. We sat on the bed and chatted about real life family and where we grew up. I’m not sure what he expected, but I was glad he didn’t try anything stupid.

I noticed that Crock had checked the option to allow me to see his location no matter where he is. That’s like the opposite of hiding your online status from someone. Not only can you see when they’re online, but you can teleport right to them.

There are some people who set their status so all of their friends can see their location at any time. These are the good people of Second Life. They aren’t doing anything they don’t want anyone to see, so they aren’t concerned whether anyone drops in on them unexpectedly. In fact, they welcome people stopping by to visit them. I always reciprocate and set my status so these friends can see my location.

Some people set their status so only their best friends can see their location. If he’s buying houses and beds, I doubt that Crock lets everyone see his location. I’m guessing he wants me to think that I’m something special to him. But having just met him, it seems so artificial. Which I suppose is to be expected from a friendship within a computer game.

While I was sitting on the bed with Crock, I checked Psychology’s profile to see if he was online. He was, but he still had his online status hidden from me. I sent him a message.

“Lisa, it’s been awhile,” he said.

Yes. It has. Don’t sound so surprised. Guilty conscience? Well, really it’s only been a week, but that’s a long time in Second Life.

“What have you been doing lately?” I asked.

He mentioned a few real world household projects. He was polite, even friendly, but not chatty or very engaged in the conversation. I asked where he was.

“Chatting on a beach,” he said.

Meanwhile, I was chatting with Worldly about the land promotions given to airheads lately. The woman who was promoted based on her misunderstanding of transparent textures was moved to yet another plot. Based on her rank in the Learn Avatar group, it looked like she was demoted. I haven’t heard of anyone getting demoted yet.

Now that I had Psychology on the line, I mentioned to Worldly that Psychology had been hiding his online status from me lately.

“I wonder if he is sick of me or if he just likes playing head games,” I said. “I want to confront him, but I’m not sure what I want to say.”

Worldly encouraged me to ask Psychology what was going on. So I chose to send Psychology a straightforward message.

“Are you tired of me?” I asked.

Unfortunately, since I couldn’t see Psychology’s online status, I wasn’t aware that he had logged off before I sent that last question. He didn’t even say goodbye or good night. He just left without saying anything. Well, I’ll keep Psychology in my friend list. But I won’t be sending him any messages.

### Bruce

I went to the bed store where Crock obtained his bed. A couple, was trying out a bed and a Noob guy hung around them. Noob got on pose balls when they stood up, doing sex motions by himself.

“Noob’s having sex with the air,” the Male half of the couple said.

“Feels good,” Noob said. “Why are you watching?”

Another woman appeared above the bed. The Female half of the couple told her to get on the bed with Noob. The woman hadn’t entered anything in her profile and didn’t say anything to us. “She’s a guy,” I said. “Her profile is blank.”

So I got on the bed with Noob and turned into a bald male elf. “Ewww,” MaleHalf said.

“Noob, are you 18?” I asked.

“Twenty-two,” he said.

“Close enough. I’m 78,” I said. Noob got up and left.

I wandered down the beach and the couple followed along. “I want to see your tits,” some guy said to FemaleHalf in public chat.

“Are you 18?” I asked him. He was seventeen.

“I’m old enough to be your dad. Do I have to do all the babysitting around here?” I asked.

MaleHalf said, “The kid is young enough to be my son too. I’ll help with the babysitting.”

I looked at MaleHalf’s profile. He had been in Second Life for only three weeks and hadn’t entered anything in his profile.

“MaleHalf needs to put something in his profile,” I commented in local chat. “It’s blank.”

“Does that mean he’s actually a girl?” FemaleHalf retorted.

## Wednesday, May 26, 2010

### Bruce

I asked a neighbor about how to sell items on Xstreet. She gave me some good starter information and seemed to be knowledgeable about selling items.

She told me she had moved in with one of the former teachers from our Learn Avatar neighborhood on a sim that he owns. They’ve only known each other for six weeks. But they’re business partners, not lovers.

“I was interested in being lovers, but he wanted to meet in real life first and date before having a romantic relationship online.”

“Interesting approach to online relationships,” I said. Sort of a Why Bother with the Computer approach. Perhaps it would behoove more people to have that attitude.

She had posted in her real life profile that she is polyamorous. I asked her about that.

“I’m married, but I have other romantic relationships,” she said.

“In real life or just online?” I asked.

“Real life,” she said.

Really. And she chooses to put that in her profile. I had never heard the word before. Basically it’s a euphemism for, ‘one who cheats on his/her lover.’

There was some chat in the Learn Avatar group about a guy in our neighborhood running around naked. One of our neighbors admitted that he was her friend. Grouchy has talked to her before about telling her friends not to harass the neighbors. She had been moved to a different plot recently. She better not have been promoted. She had built nothing of interest on her first plot of land.

There is such a big turnover of plots in my neighborhood. I’m not sure how the land is assigned and reassigned, but there’s a big meeting in my neighborhood tomorrow about new rules. Which makes me not want to keep up with classes or building. I sense impending doom, like Noobieville. We’re all going to implode soon, so why bother cleaning up my land?

My plot looks like a garage sale – water couch, brick couch with sand pillows and coffee table, tie-dye bed, misshapen furniture, construction signs. I put floating text on the stop sign under my parking garage. It says “Parking Garage Sale.”

### Ruby

Desperate asked me to dance. He took me to several places. At one of the places, a naked woman ran around with a naked guy. She asked Desperate if he wanted a threesome with them. As if I weren’t there. He declined. “You only said no because you knew she was actually a guy,” I said.

He said he thought I was really nice, even reminding him of his wife who he thinks is the sweetest person in the world. “We have an open relationship,” he said.

I don’t think I want to know how I remind him of his wife.

Today Desperate’s profile said he was partnered. That has to be new, because I would have noticed if that had been there before. Desperate didn’t even wait until he knew her for two weeks, Like Worldly did. At least in the case of Desperate, I don’t care. He’s just another goofball who provides uneducated conversation.

Funny thing is, I suspect he has no intentions of turning other women down if they offer sex. But I have to wonder what his partner thinks about his supposed sex slaves. If they do exist, what he’s going to do with them now?

Desperate teleported me to a sex ball store, then to a sex castle. He said this one was only a mild version of BDSM. He wanted to gradually get me used to the more intense version. That’s not going to happen. He also said that he has sex slaves. What would that be? People-shaped graphics you can buy that wiggle around doing whatever sex animations you set them to do?

I was surprised that Desperate sent me a message as soon as I logged on, considering that I had sent him a message while he was offline asking who ThreeSum was. “My partner,” he said.

“What does she think about all the sex slaves?” I asked.

“I got rid of them,” he said.

“In a day?”

“Shhhhh.” I think they must still be around. I asked him to show me his BDSM castle.

Instead, he asked for a teleport, so I invited him to my land. I hope that wasn’t a mistake. Now he knows where I live. He went inside my neighbor’s house. “Boring,” he said. So he teleported me to an island with cuddle pose balls.

I asked a guy there to follow me to the sex pose ball. He seemed irritated. “You’re actually a guy in real life.” Apparently he knows how nude beaches works.

If Desperate has sex slaves and a partner, how does he have time to be attentive to me? Perhaps his sex slaves have abandoned their avatars and formed new alts, no longer logging in as the slaves anymore.

Normally, I’d be creeped out and avoid Desperate, with all his sex slave talk. But for some reason he totally amuses me instead of creeps me out. I want to see where he wants to go with this, just out of curiosity.

### Ruby

Desperate teleported me to the sex store again. This time he was with his partner, ThreeSum. He asked me to join them at their sex castle. But he said that if I was going to join them, I had to wander through the store and ask ThreeSum if I could join them. I had to pretend like I didn't know him.

I approached ThreeSum and asked if I could join her. She friended me and teleported me to their castle. Out of curiosity and amusement, I went. When I arrived, ThreeSum got on top of me. Perhaps ThreeSum is really a man. Desperate just stood around and watched. The whole girl on girl avatar thing was so gross I left. So ThreeSum unfriended me.

Since Desperate wasn’t available for amusement, I went to visit Professor. While I was gone, Desperate sent me a private message. “ThreeSum already came six times.”

“How would you know if she came six times?” I asked.

“It’s about trust,” he said. Yeah, like he teleports me to the store, tells me to pretend he doesn’t know me, and their relationship is about trust.

Desperate invited me to an island. “Come and watch us.”

I told Professor about what Desperate was up to and asked if he wanted to come to the island to bug them. We both teleported to the island and wandered around Desperate and ThreeSum as they hopped from poseball to poseball.

Professor wandered off on his own, so I went back to my land to work on my movie theater.

Desperate kept sending me private messages. I asked him what he was doing. “Licking ThreeSum out.” Nice. Meanwhile, he’s sending me messages.

To play along with his weirdness I asked, “How many times did you cum?”

“Thirteen.” Sure he did.

“You can come back to watch. But you’ll have to create another avatar,” he said. “ThreeSum is getting suspicious because you’ve stopped by twice.”

No kidding.

Adventurer finally came back online after I hadn’t seen him for days. He had sent me a few Facebook messages instead. I found it unusual that ninety-five percent of his Facebook friends are women.

Adventurer’s plot of land in my neighborhood had already been confiscated because he hadn’t put anything on it, he hadn’t taken any classes, and he hadn’t logged in for a week. Probably better for me not to have him right next door anyway.

Adventurer took me to the online Santorini Island. I thought that was adorable because he lives in Greece in real life. We rode on a donkey which gave us a tour of the island and shared some Greek wine.

While I was on the island with Adventurer, Desperate sent me a picture of ‘himself.’ A muscular shirtless man with flowing hair.

“This is a picture of a model,” I said.

“No, it’s really me.”

Adventurer logged of, so Desperate teleported me to a sex place again. Wouldn’t he be done with this by now? “How many times do you cum per day?” I asked.

“Seventeen.”

Right.

He kept hopping from sex ball to sex ball. Then he teleported me to a few different sex places. The kicker was that he logged out as soon as I hopped on some sex balls with him.

When I first met Desperate, he told me I reminded him of his wife. I’m not convinced he has a wife. I’m not even convinced he’s over eighteen.

At first I thought Desperate was funny. Now I think he’s just sad. Part of the reason he doesn’t scare me away is that he’s like a cartoon. Sex slaves, on again off again partner, threesomes, seventeen orgasms per day, a picture of a big hunky model. Yet he tries so hard to get my attention. Way too amusing to ignore.

I wonder what’s going on in his life that makes him want to pretend he’s a macho model who has sex all day. He must have some serious issues with his masculinity. And I wonder what kind of a person ThreeSum is.

Desperate sent me a message as soon as I logged on. “Boooooooooo,” he said.

I told him I made an alternate avatar so I could go visit him and his partner, ThreeSum. I named my alt Boo.

I sent a message to ThreeSum with the alt, but since she didn’t know who I was and didn’t invite me for a threesome. What I didn’t tell Desperate was that Boo is a male avatar.

Desperate teleported me to a sex beach. I changed into my version of Edit Appearance Gone Bad with a small head, weirdly-shaped male body, no hair, and the bright green tank top that Ruby always wears. “What the hell?” Desperate said. “I wanted a sexy avatar.”

He walked away and I chased him around the beach. “I’m not good enough for you if I don’t have a pretty avatar?” I asked. That was the last time I ever saw him again.

## Thursday, May 27, 2010

### Ruby

Psychology took me on a boat ride around an island. A river flowed through dusty mountain terrain. Large ornate tents alongside the river covered golden lanterns and elaborate Egyptian vases containing tall stalks of bamboo. Brightly colored rugs and throw pillows were arranged around tables set with dishes painted with hieroglyphics.

We didn’t say a whole lot as we explored the boat and the land nearby. He was about to log off when I finally asked him, “Are you playing games with me?”

He seemed a little shocked by the question, and stayed around to answer it fully.

“I go dancing and on tours with, other guys,” I said. “But you have been one of my priority friends. I don’t understand why you’re hiding your online status from me.”

He said it wasn’t about me. “I often hide my status from all my friends. Sometimes I’m with someone and don’t feel like chatting with other people.”

Yeah, ‘with’ someone. That doesn’t explain why he needs to pretend he’s offline.

“Whenever I get a message from a friend while I’m busy, rather than pretend that I’m offline, I just say I’ll get back to them later,” I said. “When someone hides their online status from me, it seems like they’re playing games with me.”

When someone pretends they’re offline, it’s like they don’t want you to know that they’re ‘with’ someone else.

“Why do you even bother spending time with me when you could be with other women who do other things with you?” I asked.

“You’re easy to talk to. You have more interesting things going on here, like your builders neighborhood – classes, an evolving theater, fun neighbors. I don’t get to know all of the women I meet.”

I’m glad he seems to appreciate my company. His conversations are more intelligent than those of many of the people I meet in Second Life.

I’m not sure what I should think of Psychology’s statement that he doesn’t get to know all of the women that he meets. It sounds like he spends most of his time here going off with women that he doesn’t know and does intimate things with them.

After Psychology logged off, I walked into the river. A boat floated past, so I hopped in. The guy rowing, sent me a private greeting. His profile said that he had a partner. The boat dropped us onto the shore next to kissing pose balls.

“Look. Pose balls,” he pointed out. As if it were a surprise to see those in Second Life. “Want to kiss?” Sure. Why not.

“Where is your partner?” I asked.

“She’s watching,” he said. I looked at my radar and sure enough, she was nearby. Either this guy is an ass or has a great sense of humor. Or both.

She came over to us, then walked over to a guy standing alone. “She’s chatting this guy up now to make me jealous,” BoatRower said. “She gets it. She knows I’m not her one and only committed lover. But we’re good friends. We hang out and do silly things together.”

They’ve been partners for three years and they’re both married and have kids in real life. His are grown and out of the house. Hers are still babies. There was a thirty year difference between them.

BoatRower mentioned that he’s writing a book about Second Life.

“So am I!” I said.

He guessed that I had a male avatar. “I created a female avatar for my book,” he said.

“I have not told any of my closest friends about my male avatar.” I told him. Whatever ‘closest’ means in an online world.

“My female avatar could go out with your male avatar,” he said.

That might be interesting, but I’m not sure what the point would be. Perhaps it would be funny in social settings, at parties or classes in my neighborhood.

When BoatRower’s partner returned, he went off in the boat with her, but stayed in chat with me. I went up to the guy that BoatRower’s partner chatted up because he was now standing alone. But he didn’t respond. He had been away from the keyboard the whole while.

“How much of your book have you written so far?” I asked BoatRower.

“Hundreds of pages, almost forty thousand words.”

That doesn’t make sense. “I’ve written only one hundred fifty five pages and have almost seventy thousand words,” I said.

“My book is mostly chat logs,” he explained.

Chat logs? That’s mindless banter, not a book. Nobody wants to read chat logs.

### Bruce

Our Learn Avatar neighborhood had a big meeting tonight. The directors clarified some of the rules about keeping land and getting promotions.

Everyone’s land is getting moved to a new plot and I was afraid to log in for fear that the whole neighborhood will have imploded, wrapped in police tape, as Noobieville did.

I haven’t decided if I really want to keep any land for Bruce. I don’t need it for anything he’s building so far. I could just build in a sandbox and store my stuff in inventory. I could still go to all the classes I want and have more freedom.

Yet I’m thinking it would be good to keep land in a neighborhood. I’d have a place for people to look at what I’m creating. A place to hang out, ask questions, and find out what other people know. If my neighbors really don’t know very much, I could leave.

At the meeting, Chachi announced, “There will be six groups, each with its own theme. Each theme will have a staff to take care of administrative duties and a house master.”

Master?

“We’re going to have to serve six masters, all the teachers, and the land owner,” Worldly said. “I don’t have that many bosses in real life.”

Oh, I had more. I even mention how many bosses we had in *Budget Justified*.

The house masters had already been chosen. Chachi told us who they would be.

“I want Joni to be my master,” I said in local public chat.

“You will all be my slaves. Where’s my whip?” Joni joked.

I decided to keep land a little while longer. After the meeting I picked up everything on my land and put it on my new plot in Joni’s neighborhood. I won’t give up my land willingly. I’ll wait until they pry my land from my cold dead hands after I haven’t obeyed enough of their rules. I’m an overachiever in real life. I came to Second Life to be a slacker.

### Ruby

Worldly and I made comments to each other in private messages during the meeting.

“I’m this close to abandoning the place and paying five dollars a month for land,” he said.

“The purpose of the rules is to make the headmasters feel as though they have power over something,” I responded.

“I don’t have enough time to maintain my land to conform with changes every few days, let alone take classes,” Worldly remarked.

“They won’t be able to keep us volunteers around if it becomes a chore.”

“I went to the teacher meeting last week. Owner is just throwing them to the wolves. He gets a bunch of people to volunteer to run the place then abandons them,” Worldly said.

“I don’t understand why Owner is even letting us use the land.”

“Joni told me Owner buys land for half the price if it’s classified as nonprofit. Then when he gets enough renters lined up to make money off the sim, he turns it over as rental property.”

Aha. “That must be why we keep moving to different sims,” I said.

“He’s hoping that the teachers will train enough new builders that he’s get more renters out of this eventually.”

“If Owner thinks free land is worth the time commitment he’s asking of us, he doesn’t understand his customers very well.”

“There’s free cheese in a mousetrap,” Worldly said.

I don’t know how much of this is speculation on behalf of the new headmasters and how much is fact. Funny, I brought Worldly into this neighborhood. He just wanted to hang out and chat on his patio, only doing a little token building to justify his existence on the land. Now he’s going to teacher meetings.

BoatRower offered to show me the islands that he owns and designed. I was impressed with the detail in the landscaping of the view of the skybox. Mountains covered with blossoming trees towered in the distance over a small village of shops, dance clubs, and apartments.

In the valley, modern stucco apartments furnished with animal print couches housed renters. Exotic zebra and bearskin throw rugs covered their marble floors. Fire flickered in the hearths on all floors of the chimneyless homes – no need to dissipate smoke in animated pixels.

Though the place was deserted, flickering lights and a tune with heavy beats filled the dance club. Spinning rainbow orbs hung from the ceiling – one for making your avatar dance, several others for entering raffles. The midnight blue disc-shaped dance floor sparkled with stars. At one side of the floor, a bright blue S-curved bar with seven chrome bar stools waited for customers.

Behind velvet curtains, six softly-lit ‘cuddle rooms’ ensconced pillow-covered couches. Framed photos of snuggling avatars covered the walls. Even several pillows on the floor contained cuddle poses and animations.

“A lot of people are turned off by all the sex rooms they run across while they’re out exploring,” BoatRower said. “But several women have told me they really like the cuddle rooms.”

He asked me to dance while we chatted by voice. I told him my husband was in the next room, to let him know that another person would be listening.

“Put on headphones,” he suggested.

I thought he was going to tell me secrets about things that happen online. Instead, he told me what he thought I was in Second Life for.

“You have a lot of fun here and don’t tell your husband,” he said.

I didn’t know how to respond to that. I couldn’t think of a way to refute it without making it sound like I had something to hide. Yet going along with it was against everything I stood for online and in person. How could he be so presumptuous? Is this what online society has set up for us to expect from each other?

Perhaps it wasn’t that he wasn’t trying to convince himself that I was there for his pleasure, rather he was trying to convince me. Trying to tell me who to be.

“You should try more things here. I met a Mormon woman who was too uptight. Then I took her to have sex in a beach out in the open. She said it wasn’t that big of a deal after she tried it. It wasn’t like anyone could see her for real. So then I took her to a BDSM castle. And it’s all just play. Nobody is actually handcuffed in a dungeon. It’s just an avatar. She could have logged off if she wanted.”

“She was probably curious about what BDSM in an online game even was,” I said.

“Of course. We’re all here to explore,” he said. “The next time we were online together, we went to an orgy. It started as a threesome, but other people came along and eventually there were ten of us writhing on the floor.”

Of course. Because after you watch avatars in handcuffs for an hour, you get really bored. You need more people to keep a chat going.

So that’s what his online life is about. Grooming women to become sex slaves. Sure, it’s not as big of a deal as if it were real life. But there’s a reason the military does simulations. If this is the kind of thing you do online, you’re training yourself for acting like this, treating others like this, in the real world.

As we wandered toward the village shops, BoatRower noticed that I didn’t have a female-specific walk animation.

“I hate all the ones I’ve seen,” I said. “They make me look like a twenty year old airhead.”

“That’s the point,” he said. “It isn’t you. You want to look like a twenty year old here.”

“No I don’t ,” I said.

“Yes, you do,” he responded.

Control freak. Don’t tell me what I do and don’t want to be in an online game.

Then he said that my avatar didn’t have enough cleavage. “You’re still a newbie. You need to change your avatar so men will want to have sex with you,” he said.

I am not a newbie. And I don’t go around desperately seeking men to have sex with me.

I question the business acumen of anyone who spends most of their time in Second Life looking for avatar sex. I would think that if someone is serious about their business, they would spend their time on higher-minded activities. Even during the time they are online, spending time away from their real life business activities and spouse.

### Lisa

At least he didn’t talk about raping me and insist that I was supposed to like it.

There are a lot of guys, like BoatRower, who like to try to convince women that everybody has sex all the time online and it’s the only reason anyone joins Second Life. Yet at the same time, BoatRower did create a cuddle room for those who weren’t interested in sex animations. So that’s an implicit admission that there are many couples who only cuddle.

All of BoatRower’s lobbying to convince women that it’s abnormal not to have sex all the time reminds me of my coworker at the FAA who kept calling me a bad girl, trying to make me feel like I’m asking to be harassed just by being there. The bad behavior isn’t limited to online forums. It’s just easier to hide behind it there.

## Friday, May 28, 2010

### Ruby

Twenty minutes after I logged on, Adventurer had been online the entire time but hadn’t sent me any private messages. So I sent him a message. He didn’t respond. Ten minutes later he finally got back to me.

“I’m at work and busy at the moment. I’ll get back to you soon.”

After several minutes, he teleported me to a store to get some free pose balls. I can’t help thinking he intends to use them with someone else. Because he doesn’t do much with them when we’re together.

The store was on a crowded beach with lots of avatars lounging on beach chairs under umbrellas. Most of the avatars were male. Several were naked with penises hanging. One guy was fully clothed, but had a penis attached outside his pants.

I wondered what the protocol is at nude beaches in real life. Is it mostly a bunch of guys standing around each other naked? Were most of the guys gay? Perhaps it was a gay beach. I’m not sure what the homophobic would do at a nude beach.

Then I took him to a place where my neighbors were signing up on a freebie board to win free sculpted items. I went with a few neighbors to sign up for free skins too. I lost Adventurer around that point because I was more busy with my neighbors and not really paying attention to him.

### Bruce

I logged Ruby off for a moment and went to the pose ball store to get some for myself and met Adventurer. Since he keeps up on the freebie fashion blogs, I asked him where I could find better skins and shape. He gave me a link to a fashion blog that didn’t even mention skins and didn’t give me any recommendations.

He pretty much told me to go look at things on that site and be on my way. I’m not sure if he was chatting with women and I was just bothering him, or if the tone was lost in the translation to English and typed text. I got the impression that men were of no use to his social life.

I occasionally worry that people who meet both Bruce and Ruby will suspect they are the same people, based on their style of chat and the timing of when they appear. – one logs off as the other logs on. But it was obvious that he didn’t suspect that I was Ruby.

### Ruby

I should meet Adventurer as a slutty woman and see how he reacts to me. Or just walk around as a slutty woman while he’s with LisaSchaefer Ruby and see if he sends her a private message. Hmm. Sound like something Skitzo/Spy would do. Except I wouldn’t be doing it to check up on a boyfriend I had already committed to. I would be doing it as an experiment.

Adventurer invited me to his house that he just bought on some other land. Great. I know what houses in Second Life mean. The only thing most people use them for is sex.

I went to his house anyway and didn’t stick around long enough to get a tour of the bedroom. “Why did you buy a house?” I asked.

“So I could be with you, my amore,” he said. He gave me a long hug and said that he wanted to see me more often.

I’m pretty sure I’m not his only amore. If I were, he wouldn’t buy a whole house to hang out in. I don’t even want to be his amore.

He was preoccupied in a private chat with someone else while he was with me. I think he’s trying to keep his options open with various women, but that ends up making all women feel like their second string, that he’d rather be chatting with others. No matter what he says about wanting me to be his amore.

I decided it was time to have a serious talk with Adventurer about expectations and other relationships. I didn’t want him to continue to expect me to come along shopping with him. We walked to the edge of a nearby pier.

“Do your remembered when you asked if I wanted to be your online girlfriend?” I asked Adventurer. “I said that I wanted to wait to get to know you first and let you explore and meet new people since you were still new here.”

“Yes,” he said. “And now you think we’re incompatible?

Interesting that he immediately jumped to that conclusion. Perhaps because that’s the way he feels.

“I’m not sure I really know you well enough yet to decide that yet. I still want to hang around with you. But I understand if you want to spend time with other women.”

“I prefer to hang around with you,” he said.

Was he just saying that?

“Why?” I asked.

“You talk nicer than the others. All they want to do is have sex.”

Where is he meeting these women? Nude beaches? They’re probably men.

“What kind of things do you do online while I’m not around?” I asked.

He wasn’t willing to be serious about it. “I do terrible things,” he said.

“Oh? What’s so terrible?” I asked.

“I have crushes, go dancing, make love, shopping.” He said there were about thirty five women.

I thought he might have been joking. “How could you have time for me if you have thirty five women?” Maybe he wasn’t joking. Several of the women might be avatars he had sex with once and never spoke to again.

“I feel bad about the terrible things I do here,” he said. “So bad that I will drown myself.” He jumped off the pier and landed waist-deep in water. Um, that’s not drowning. So he wandered away until his head was submerged. I jumped in after him.

“If you drown I will drown too,” I said.

“That’s so sweet,” he told me. “But you didn’t save me.”

## Friday, , 201

### Bruce

Chase took me to visit her Second Life family. She thought the monkey bride was hilarious. But she quickly bored of it and dropped me from her friend list.

## Saturday, May 29, 2010

### Ruby

Psychology sent me a message as soon as I logged on. Wow. Maybe he wanted to prove that he wasn’t tired of me. I didn’t even know he was online. His status was still hidden from me and it wasn’t a typical time of day for him to be online.

I had sent Psychology a message last night. But he didn’t invite me to join him, so I didn’t invite him to visit me today. Plus, Adventurer was also online, so it was possible that he would ask me to join him any moment. I stayed on my land and edited my coffee vendor so that it gave out coffee mugs with my *Budget Justified* logo. I love those mugs. I gave one to Psychology. “Good coffee,” he said.

Adventurer didn’t send me a message while I worked on my coffee mug, so I sent him a mug. After a few moments of chatting, he invited me to join him. Perhaps he needed time to excuse himself from visiting someone else?

We went freebie shopping. Again. I’m accumulating a lot of free stuff I don’t use. While on a scavenger hunt for a free formal dress, I got a message from Crock. Yikes. Adventurer and Crock were both online simultaneously for the second time. Since I had blown off Adventurer last time they were both online, I made a point of staying with Adventurer.

“I like getting new formal dresses,” I told Adventurer.

“I do too,” he replied.

So I gave him a dress.

“I meant for men,” he said. Something must not have translated quite right. Next time I find a formal dress for men, I’ll give him one.

We went back to my place. He asked about the flowers on my conference table.

“They’re from a friend in real life,” I said. I don’t feel the need to hide the fact that I have other visitors and dance partners.

There was also a banana on the conference table, just like in the All Hands Meeting in *Budget Justified*. I wore the banana on my pelvis and arranged it to stick out.

“That doesn’t look like a banana,” Adventurer said. “That looks like something I have on my body.”

Psychology finally asked if I wanted to join him. Too late. “I’m already chatting with two other friends,” I said.

I asked him where he was.

“I’m in a cave.” A cave?

“What’s in a cave?” I asked.

“Dancing, a couch, a bed,” Psychology said. Why would he invite me to a cave with a bed?

Perhaps he has been trying to back off lately, make me seem more anonymous, like the other women he hangs out with. The women he has sex with.

I told Psychology that I wasn’t interested in visiting him in a cave. “I’m still in chat with someone else.” He didn’t respond.

## Virtual rape?

Adventurer took me to a hot tub at a secluded island surrounded by palm trees and flowering bushes. He got a little erotic with his chat and asked me to take off my swimsuit. He was at work, a government agency in a European country. I thought it would be strange to be nude on his screen. “I should keep my clothes on,” I told him.

I wasn’t really in the mood for erotic chat. I was more focused on my conversation with Crock, telling him about the hilarious couple at the beach yesterday. So I ignored our chat for several minutes.

Adventurer’s chats are always slow, thus it’s easy to keep up with another conversation when we’re together. I don’t know if it’s because he’s distracted by work, his hesitancy with English, or if he’s chatting with another woman.

When I got back to the chat window with Adventurer, I realized that, although we weren’t doing any sex animations, he was going on and on about taking off my clothes, kissing me all over, and describing body parts.

I didn’t know what to say. “Mmhmm,” I said, so he wouldn’t wonder whether I was chatting with other men this whole time. And I ignored our chat a while longer.

I figured this was the end of our online friendship. Perhaps he had been getting bored of our chats lately too. So he decided to spice things up. Spicing up a relationship that never was is like putting chili paste on a wooden stick. There’s nothing to enhance. Straight chili only burns.

When I got back to the screen again, I said it was great and that I had to get going. I didn’t care what I said. We were no longer building a relationship. We were bored with each other. I knew we were never going to explore Second Life with each other again.

### Lisa

Did I just fake an orgasm over the computer? He had to have known that I wasn’t paying attention. Not responding while someone is chatting erotic stuff is the equivalent of laying there like a cold piece of meat.

Or maybe it was more like virtual rape. I didn’t consent to it. Nonresponse does not imply consent. My avatar was there as a blowup doll. A pretty shape with nothing running its show. Either way, I don’t know what he wanted to get out of it, but whatever it was, I don’t think he got it.

Wasn’t he at work? What kind of an office does he work in? Sounds like the office I worked in at the FAA, people pulling all sorts of demented games. Anything but actual work.

At first I didn’t think it was a big deal that I didn’t tell Adventurer I wanted to slow it down. But later I felt it may be irresponsible to let him think I was feeling something I wasn’t. I felt even more sad when I thought about the fact that I’m going to dump him.

Not so much that I felt like I was hurting him; I doubt that I was. I was more sad about how a fun ‘friendship’ with someone who seemed friendly, someone I used to enjoy exploring new lands with, had devolved into something I no longer care about, something to be tossed aside.

He’s a person I’ve never met. He doesn’t know me. We don’t have deep conversations. We don’t live on the same continent. We’ll never run into each other. He hangs out with many other women when I’m not online. Perhaps he confused me with one of them, one who enjoys when men talk about taking off her clothes. I was just another doll among thousands of others on the computer screen.

## Bruce gets promoted

### Bruce

What the hell? I got promoted to builder. My land used to look like a big garage sale.

I selected to move to the Gor neighborhood because I wanted to learn about online role play. The Gor theme is about some misogynistic book I’ve never read, where women are sex slaves. I’m not really familiar with the story or why there are so many sims related to Gor. It seems to have a big presence in Second Life, but it hasn’t really caught on anywhere else. No surprise.

Sleepless is a mentor in the Gor neighborhood. “I just noticed that I got promoted,” I told her.

“Have you attended at least five classes?” she asked.

“Waaaay more than five,” I said.

Five classes that’s all it takes to be promoted? Maybe I was promoted because hardly anyone else wanted to be in the Gor theme, so they wanted the long timers to be promoted and build stuff on the potentially vacant land.

A neighbor came over to chat by voice. I think she saw a male avatar and wanted some attention. I’ve heard her flirting with various guys by voice several times before. We talked about what the Grunge neighborhood would look like. Graffiti, slum-like. “Is there crime in that neighborhood?” I asked.

Sleepless gave me my plot of land and I put up a castle in about twenty minutes. I just used twelve building blocks to put it together. It doesn’t need doors. I made the blocks phantom so you can walk through the walls.

My land is next door to Worldly now. Shopper came over to see his new place and she took us to a store where we could put our names on a freebie board to win a prebuilt castle.

### Ruby

Psychology took me to a snowy mountain. We were both wearing beach clothes. I felt like I should have put on a coat. I wanted to have a conversation with him but wasn’t quite sure what the conversation should be about.

“How many friends do you have in your list?” he asked.

Glad he brought that up. It was along the lines of the conversation I wanted to have.

I had thirty-seven friends. I’ve added many friends who were good conversationalists upon first meet, and deleted many who didn’t keep in touch. He had over fifty friends, but he didn’t remember who all of them were.

Soon, I figured out what the question was that I had been wanting to ask. “What does our friendship meant to you?”

I was curious to find out what he’d say. Although, I’m not sure how I’d answer if he had posed the same question to me. He wasn’t sure how to articulate his answer right off the bat either.

“Most of my friends are neighbors or people I met at other building and scripting forums,” I said. “I’ve had several dance partners, but only two other men have been my priority friends. You’re one of my priority friends.”

“I usually like to make a point of contacting you if we’re online too,” he said, and mentioned another woman he really liked.

“What do you like about her?” I asked.

They had never had avatar sex; she had an online boyfriend. “She made an alt to be with me,” he said.

This is what he likes? A woman who is deceitful to her boyfriend?

“She didn’t tell me it was her at first. When she was online as the alt, she said she was her friend, and the woman I like was having trouble logging on. She said that her ‘friend’ called her and asked her to contact me to let me know she couldn’t log on. But then the she asked me to dance. I was touched that she went through the effort.”

He’s got to be kidding me. A grown educated man. Likes it when women play childish charades. Oh what a tangled web.

“I figured out they were the same person while I was hiding my online status. The woman I like and her ‘friend’ always log on when the other logs out.” So he was hiding and messing with her too.

What really got me was that instead of realizing she was deceitful and immature, he was flattered that she used deceit to be with him. He shouldn’t be too flattered. She also thought that he wasn’t smart enough to figure out what she was up to. I wouldn’t be flattered if someone lied to their girlfriend to hang out with me. I’d wonder what kind of lies he was telling me so he could hang out with his girlfriend. Now I have serious doubts about Psychology’s judgment.

## Monday, May 31, 2010

### Ruby

Crock’s avatar had problems. Or, at least that’s what he told me. Supposedly he crashed during teleport. When he tried to log back in, he couldn’t. He created another avatar and sent me a friend request so I’d receive it as soon as I logged on. I found his new avatar at Cuddle Beach, as usual.

He seemed concerned that I’d think it was someone else pretending to be him. “It’s me, Crock. I live in Belgium and have an eight year old daughter.” I suppose he could have previously told that information to other friends too. But who would go around pretending they were him, then contact me? I hadn’t met any of his friends yet.

I didn’t think it was one of his friends, or enemies, impersonating him. “If you were going to mess with me, you’d create another avatar and *not* tell me it was you, then…do some crazy stuff,” I said.

I did notice that his other avatar was logged in. He still had his settings checked so I could see him on a map and teleport to him. But when I tried teleporting to his location, the mouse cursor turned into a wheel that kept spinning.

I asked Crock about his previous online girlfriends. He didn’t really say much. “I’m still like a teenager here,” I said. “I don’t know what dating is like, or what I want to expect from it.”

I didn’t want to pry, but I wanted to know what an online relationship meant to Crock. He didn’t seem too engaged in the conversation, so I left.

### Bruce

Worldly invited me to see his new place. Shopper was visiting and CollegeCS from next door ran over us in her car. Worldly and I got in the car and she drove us up his wall. Literally. Then she drove through my phantom walk-in castle. Now it’s a drive-through castle. She drove us across her land, or field, with tiny cows roaming through it. Above the field she had posted the Hollywood Hills sign. What does that mean? Hollywood is full of cows?

I tried sitting in Worldly’s car, but wasn’t able to drive it. Worldly had set out a pile of grass for Skitzo’s bunnies, so I sat in the grass instead. Shopper sat in his rocking chair and landed with her face against the chair’s back and her legs through the spindles.

I invited LevelHead over to see my walk-through castle and dance on the couches. “Most guys take me to their castles for sex,” she said.

She had just come from a place where a bunch of child avatars were hanging out. “Child avatars are so creepy,” she said.

I thought a lot of the adult avatars I’ve met were creepy. “What’s so creepy about child avatars?” I asked.

“Many of the people with child avatars are pedophiles who perform for other pedophiles,” she said.

Oh man, that concept had never even occurred to me. Beyond creepy.

“It’s like a training ground for pedophiles to figure out how to approach children,” she said.

LevelHead mentioned that most of the people on her friend list were men. “Women should share friend lists with men so there’s more same sex friendships,” she said. Not a bad idea.

### Ruby

I gave LevelHead a tour of my theater. One of my neighbor’s chickens got loose and was running around on the ground floor. LevelHead chased it around, but it kept running away.

I noticed that Crock had removed himself from my BudgetJustified.com group. I was disappointed. Every time I saw him, he had the group name over his head. I had thought that was so sweet of him. Now not only does he no longer have it over his head, he’s not even in the group. Instead, he’s a member of Debbie’s Friends.

Normally I wouldn’t have thought much of his removing himself from the group, but since he has had a mysterious avatar problem also, all within a twenty-four hour period, I am suspicious.

Adventurer was online today the whole while I was online. I didn’t send him any messages. And he didn’t contact me to say hi either. I think he’s met someone else.

Something about seeing Adventurer online and not even saying hi makes me feel sad. Yet I didn’t feel like having him invite me to go shopping. It’s sad because a friendship is waning. But I think if I tried to pretend I wanted it to grow, it would make things worse. He was good to hang out while it lasted, so I hold no grudges or regrets.

### Bruce

Joni taught a class where we made beautiful fountains. I was on a laptop with slow graphics, so I didn’t follow the directions exactly. But the fountain was gorgeous.

I invited LevelHead to attend, but she didn’t have any building experience yet. She asked about the progress on my castle.

“I’ve been out learning, not building,” I said.

“I might have stolen your couches while you were away,” she said.

She wanted to come run through the fountains after class, but class lasted so long, she was already offline by the time we finished.

CollegeCS walked on water and climbed to the top of one of the fountains. Joni told us to make the water building block ‘phantom,’ which means you can walk through them. Which means CollegeCS fell through them. She could have drown!

Grouchy had scripted a device to count attendance after class. We all had to gather around Joni because our fountains were too big for us to be close enough for the counter to detect all of us. Worldly called it ‘The Big Brother Box.’

## Thursday, June 3, 2010

### Ruby

Crock came online, so I teleported to where he was. “I missed you. I want to see you,” he said. Apparently he wasn’t looking, because I was right in front of him.

He really didn’t say much more than that. After a few moments, he realized I was there. I told him I was about to log off, so he teleported someplace else. So I followed him. I found him at a nude beach chatting with some chick. He offered to teleport me someplace else, so he left and I asked the chick how long she had known Crock, but she only responded with a series of question marks.

Crock took me to some place I didn’t recognize. It looked like a house. Since he had set the permissions so I could edit his objects, I clicked on a few things in hopes of editing them. But none of the objects were his. Seemed like we were in someone else’s house.

“I’m going to drop all of my other online friends,” he said. “I want to be with only you.” Very odd. Made me wonder if he has alts to hang around with all his other online friends.

“I’m going to start a fashion line,” he said. “If only I could get ten Linden dollars so I can upload a design.”

I don’t come by Linden dollars often, so I didn’t offer him any.

“How much money did your old avatar have?”

“Over $100,000 Linden.” That’s worth around $400 USD. He didn’t even seem upset about losing it.

“Where did you get all that money?” I asked.

“I won it racing cars.”

Racing cars? I had seen a car racing sim once before, but it was deserted. I couldn’t imagine anyone could win thousands of Linden dollars there.

Crock said his fashion line would be called RC4. It means Ruby Crock Four. What a strange idea to talk to me about. A fashion line named after us? Where was this conversation going?

“Why four?” I asked.

“It’s my lucky number.” Okaaaay.

He sent me a link to the logo he said he created. Nice logo, but I googled the file name and found it was from an Austrian web site.

The whole conversation was so weird. “You’re the only drug I need,” he said. Interesting he brought that up. It had occurred to me that he might be an alcoholic. It was 2:30 in the morning in his time zone and I wondered why he was even awake.

“Do you ever do drugs or drink a lot?” I asked.

“I only drink wine on Christmas. I’ve never been drunk.”

Well, if alcohol wasn’t the explanation for his odd behavior, what was?

“It seems odd that you don’t want any of your old friends or money.” He agreed.

I don’t think he is the same guy he was before his old avatar got ‘stuck.’ Perhaps he got bored of me and sent some weird guy in his friend list to keep me company. Perhaps he felt he had to make a point of telling me that he wasn’t someone else pretending to be Crock because he actually was someone else pretending to be him.

I was still chatting with Worldly and told him that some guy had given me permissions to edit his objects and took me to a house that didn’t belong to him. “Run like hell,” he said.

## Friday, June 4, 2010

### Ruby

Crock was online again. So I teleported to him. This time he was having sex with someone else. In a house that belonged to a woman other than the one he was having sex with. “Can you give us some privacy?” the woman asked.

You have sex in someone else’s house, you don’t get privacy.

“I hope your children are proud of you,” I said.

“I’m fifty and my children are adults,” the woman responded.

“And are they proud?” I asked.

Do people have no self respect anymore? Why do they spend their time degrading themselves instead of making this world a better place?

After they were done, Crock sent me a message. “You’re still the best person I’ve met here. I’m glad I met you. I broke up with her because of the way she treated you,” he said.

The way she treated me? How about the way he treats me? “What did she do?” I asked.

“She was getting smart with you,” he said. Smart? Seemed like a pretty stupid exchange to me.

Crock said he wanted to see me again, so I teleported him to my land. I wasn’t interested in chatting with him, and he wasn’t saying much, so I chatted privately with a few neighbors nearby.

I no longer believe anything he tells me. He had told me that he lives in England, but he seems sort of American. So. I asked him what time it was for him. Three o’clock AM. It was ten o’clock for me, so that answer would be correct if he were indeed in England.

Just to see what he’d say, I asked him if he was working on any history books. “I just finished one. “Hitler: Rise to Power.” I googled it, but didn’t find any books with that title.

“What was the most interesting information you found while writing the book?” I asked.

“That Hitler was a jerk,” he said. He supposedly has a Ph.D. in history and that’s the answer I get? I asked for more details.

“That Hitler was surprised when Normandy was invaded instead of Calais.” Sounds like something he googled out of a high school text book. This guy doesn’t have a Ph.D. I’m not convinced he even has a bachelors degree. In anything.

I asked how old he was. “Thirty four,” he said.

I checked my notes from our previous conversations. “Didn’t you used to be thirty eight?” I asked.

I wonder what kind of things Crock told his sex partner about himself. Did he tell her he was fifty? I wonder what country he said he lived in, if he told her he wrote history books. He probably never mentioned any of it. They probably met ten minutes earlier and will never see each other again.

Am I uninterested because I am married or am I in a good marriage because I’m uninterested in the nonsense of a fantasy?

**DIARY OF AN AVATAR**

## **Real Intellectual Community in a Virtual World**

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## Era Post-Dating

So far, the ‘relationships’ I’ve seen, except for the ones with people who are married to each other in real life, have been between two people who have dysfunctional relationships in real life and come online to pretend they have a relationship without putting in the effort to develop one.

I’m not sure how I feel about having a boyfriend in Second Life. When I joined Second Life, I didn’t even know the concept existed. When I heard about it, I saw no purpose. After meeting Chachi and Joni who have known each other for six years, I thought it would be kind of sweet. Now I feel like I don’t need it, and that it is foolishness. It’s like a bandaid on a hole in people’s lives. And when you tear the bandaid off, it makes the hole worse.

I still wanted to find out what a Second Life relationship was. But finally realized that it would not be within the context of having one myself. Purpose of building community. Can I find a community or a few good friends?

## Saturday, June 5, 2010

### Ruby

Turns out I’ve been promoted and didn’t know it. I have the title, but didn’t get the land yet. Worldly also got a land promotion, but didn’t get the title. I’m sure it was an oversight.

Grouchy is now headmaster of the themeless island. We chatted for a little while and he finally convinced me to squat on some land in his neighborhood. I selected the vacant plot next to his.

Grouchy took me for a ride around our island to look around at what people are building. He complained about people who had things floating in the air. He said it doesn’t look right. I’m not sure if that was a hint to me. I have a glass ceiling that is floating. But it’s clear, so wouldn’t it’s supports be clear too?

I sort of get the impression that Grouchy is lonely lately. I think he spends a lot of time going around the neighborhood and greeting the women. He seems to be trying voice more.

And just when I had given up on finding a decent male friend online, I met a robot at the meeting. He had made a few humorous comments that I responded to.

Toward the end of the meeting, I turned around and faced him for about five minutes before I finally said something to him. I thought he would be irritated or scared and leave. But he stayed there. So I sent him a private message asking where he learned about building and scripting.

He showed me the naval observatory that he’s building. Roboto is an unusual guy. His first avatar was a woman. He had tried being a host as a man, but women got better tips, so he started using a female avatar.

I told him about a discussion that happened earlier today where someone said she didn’t know scripting and wanted to make money online, so she asked for some advice on how to become a pole dancer.

“She got suggestions for being an escort. Then someone said she’d get more money if she used voice. What does this say about a person, young women, or society in general when a tech-savvy young woman is willing to learn how to be a sex worker, but not willing to learn scripting?”

One woman had defended the sex worker option by saying, “She should have the freedom to choose to be an escort.” Freedom to be a prostitute? It’s more likely due to lack of choice that this young woman selected sex worker as an online profession.

“Escort, voice, webcam,” I said to Roboto, “The internet porn keeps escalating. At what point will it ever stop being OK to continue?”

I went to visit Worldly. He had just received his new plot of larger land and is no longer next door to Bruce. He gave me some materials from a class he attended, then put the Big Brother Box out to count attendance and pretend that we had a class. I talked to him by voice and he showed me the castle he won. I didn’t tell him I had my own.

I invited Roboto over to see my movie theater before I make changes now that I have a larger plot. CollegeCS also stopped by and flirted with Roboto, even though she’s almost young enough to be his daughter. After CollegeCS left we chatted a little more about men playing female avatars. He said that a PhD psychologist friend of his is writing an academic book about Second Life relationships.

Roboto and I experimented with water textures, sounds, and scripts. We made a water barrel and kicked around the land. He put swim trunks over his robot avatar. They matched a swimsuit I had! We got inside the water barrel and rolled around in it with each other. We called it a class and set out the Big Brother Box.

Baardes had been following me around since he joined Learn Avatar three days ago. But today he got a girlfriend. I went to visit them. They told me that she’s already online-pregnant. That totally weirded me out. They just met yesterday, and she already wants his online baby.

At first I was irritated that they’d be so flip about relationships that they’d not only want to be committed as soon as they met, but that she’d get pregnant immediately. But then I felt sad for them. Baardes is young, and said that nobody wanted to be his girlfriend in real life. He seems like such a nice guy. So I thought it was nice that someone wanted to be with him. Even if it was in a weird way.

### Bruce

Grouchy invited the neighborhood to try out a new invention he created. You have to get each of your friends to sit in a chair and when fifteen avatars are sitting in chairs, the table passes out a gift to everyone there. It’s a good marketing tool to get people to invite their friends to your store.

A few days ago I entered a Midnight Madness contest with Shopper. If enough people sign up on a board before midnight, everyone who signs up wins whatever is being offered on that board. I won a castle. At midnight that day, it went into my inventory and I didn’t think much of it.

I finally took it out of inventory to check it out. It was huge! It was fantastically gorgeous. I wished I could take it apart and use parts of it because I don’t want to put an entire prebuilt castle in my neighborhood. Especially since it has several obscene pose balls in it.

I went to Grouchy’s Big Brother Box class where he discussed how to submit one-on-one class attendance. He gave each of us a Box, but mine didn’t work. I got a majong table out of Worldly’s Box. CollegeCS was giving out a cow, but she deleted it before I could retrieve it. “I wanted to have a cow, man,” I said.

Worldly called his fake lesson, “How to learn while sleeping – advanced class.” I almost spit water out my mouth when I read that. CollegeCS wanted to learn how to play majong. She seems pretty smart.

Yesterday Sleepless had sent around a message encouraging people to get Builder-level plots in the Gor theme. If I get a promotion, that’s the size of plot I would be given. So I had sent her a message saying I was interested.

Well, today she replied saying, “You need to impress the directors before you can get promoted,” blah blah. Like I don’t have enough of that crap in real life. Impress the directors? The directors don’t even impress me.

She gave me a hard time because she hadn’t seen me lately. Of course not. She wasn’t online yesterday when I was looking for her.

But then Grouchy came over and asked whether I wanted the Builder or Scripter title. I selected Scripter. Honestly, I don’t think I need a bigger plot if I’m scripting, but I’ll take it.

LevelHead asked me to come dancing with her at Hotlanta Blues. It was a good place because there wasn’t so much garbage text spewed in local chat.

After LevelHead left, a woman named Mary said hi to me. I asked her to dance. “What do you do in real life?” we both asked at the same time. I told her that I’m an engineer. She said her son is an engineer, so she must be a little older. It was nice to dance with her, but I didn’t add her to my friend list.

## Sunday, June 6, 2010

### Ruby

Roboto took me to a place to sign up for free Linden dollars in exchange for putting the place in my profile. It was a nude beach. “Do I have to take off my clothes?” I asked. Roboto was already not wearing clothing because, after all, he is a robot.

I said I should get on some sex pose balls with him as a robot. “I don’t have the right parts for sex,” he said.

“I see no point in having penises in Second Life anyway. It’s not like you can feel anything online.”

We both agreed that watching avatars having sex isn’t very erotic. “Don’t people think that random phone sex is creepy?” I asked. “How could avatar sex be any less creepy than phone sex.”

Roboto also showed me a casino where we could win Linden dollars. I brought in an identical alt with matching clothing to win some money also. My alt and I were both wearing clothing from the first episode of *Budget Justified* – a white jacket and purple pants made from pictures of the fabric of my real life clothing. A nasty woman with big hair wearing a low-cut blouse, thigh-high boots, and a microskirt that didn’t cover everything typed all sorts of rude things about me in local chat.

“You’re a noob who dresses like my grandma.” I ignored her. “Ruby is the ugliest bitch in Second Life.” I still didn’t bother saying anything. “You think you’re fooling us by bringing your alt, but you’re the one who’s fat and stupid.”

Was she trying to pick a fight? I didn’t want to stoop to her level, so I \ figured the best thing to do would be to pretend I didn’t notice her. I got my money and left. I suppose I could have sent her a private message saying all sorts of polite PhD-level things. I mean really, would she have treated me like I was a braindead nerd if she had seen me wearing professional clothing in real life?

I met a guy who owns an online store. He asked if I was into sex role play and told me about the women he hangs around with. “The most common fantasy women have is forced sex,” he said.

“Women do NOT want to be raped,” I replied. What the hell kind of women does this guy meet? Probably men posing as women who want to be raped.

You find what you look for in Second Life. If you look for rape, you’ll find rape. BoatRower had told me that people spend eighty percent of their time online having sex. He probably thinks that because he spends most of his time looking for sex. I spend most of my time on building, so most of what I find is related to an intellectual pursuit. Although I still find an awful lot of crap that I’m not looking for. Like people who think I want to be raped.

### Bruce

I saw an avatar named Doctor in my neighborhood. Roboto had told Ruby that was the name of his female alt, so I teleported to her/him. I thought it would be funny to be with Roboto’s female alt while he was with my male alt. Except it’s only funny to me, because I’m the only one who knows that Bruce is Ruby’s alt.

When I showed up, CollegeCS and Roboto were working on a dance ball. Doctor was an Indian avatar. He had chosen an Indian woman because his fiancée is from India.

Since I was the only male avatar there, CollegeCS asked me to get on the male pose ball so she could test out her dance ball. Doctor Roboto got on the female pose ball and we danced. He wanted to make it clear that he was actually a man in real life. “You don’t know whether or not I’m actually a woman in real life,” I said.

When Doctor Roboto was finished dancing, CollegeCS got on the pink poseball, and selected a dance. My hands went all over her breasts. I wasn’t sure if she was too short and my hands were supposed to go on her waist.

“Was that on purpose?” I asked. CollegeCS got off the dance ball and landed on my head. “You’re sitting on my face,” I said.

Doctor Roboto danced with me again. When he/she disembarked from the pose ball, he/she also sat on my face.

CollegeCS went to get another man to dance with us. When Worldly arrived, I said, “I want to dance with Worldly.”

“Only if you don’t tell my wife,” he said.

“Alright, but don’t tell my husband,” I said.

CollegeCS thought it was hilarious to see two male avatars waltzing. And of course, when Worldly got off the dance ball, he sat on my face.

Worldly noticed that his hair wasn’t fitting properly and the top of his head showed through. “I thought maybe you were going bald,” I said.

CollegeCS went to monitor the neighborhood and noticed that a few people had taken several plots of land, even though everyone is allowed to have only one plot. She announced this to the Learn Avatar neighborhood chat.

“I’m buying several plots next to me as we speak,” I replied in the chat.

Another woman announced in the neighborhood chat that she was very popular today. “Are you running around naked?” I asked.

I’m not sure why she would announce her popularity to the whole neighborhood. The sad thing is that in Second Life, women are popular with men for only one thing. Was she trying to make the whole neighborhood think that she was easy?

## Tuesday, June 8, 2010

### Bruce

CollegeCS stopped by with the title ‘novice’ over her head. “CollegeCS, you’re not a novice,” I said.

“There was a little discussion and some changes were made,” she said. I thought maybe she no longer want the time commitment that being a mentor required. Then she changed her title and it said ‘Headmaster.’ Very funny.

“Congratulations!” I said. She had been promoted to be in charge of the Asian theme of our neighborhood.

Worldly stopped by on his motorcycle. In the neighborhood chat, Sleepless said she was looking for something to do, so I teleported her. Chachi stopped by to see what was going on with so many people around.

We were looking at the stage coach Sleepless had made out of over two hundred building blocks. Quite complex, considering that everything total on my land takes up about a hundred building blocks. She said she didn’t have any horses to pull it, so I turned into a zebra and sat next to her on the stage coach. “Oh, I’m supposed to get in front of the coach, not get in.”

I took a flying pig out of my inventory and rode it. It went uncontrollable. I rode it off the edge of the island and I couldn’t get off of it or teleport back. I went into blue undefined space as a jagged-shaped avatar. “PIGS…IN… SPAAAACE” I typed in the Learn Avatar neighborhood chat.

Chachi tried teleporting me, but failed. I was afraid to log off, lest my avatar get lost in limbo as Crock’s avatar supposedly did. But that seemed to be my only solution. Luckily it worked.

Chachi showed us a person-shaped building block he made and named it Bob. “Gives new meaning to the phrase “making friends’,” I said.

Then CollegeCS decided to give a role playing class. She introduced the scenario of getting hit with snowballs and needing a doctor. Sleepless typed, “Daydreaming about the handsome doctor.” I thought it was stereotypical to assume that the doctor was male. So I said, “Daydreaming of a beautiful doctor.” No, I wasn’t referring to Roboto.

I went to a country dance bar with a new male alt to see if I’d get any women who wanted to help a newbie. I got messages from two women who were rude. And one was the hostess of the bar. I told her she was being a bitch. I very very rarely say things like that, but I thought that the hostess should have been much more professional.

I also met a guy who was nicer to me than the women. He friended me and offered me some clothes so I wouldn’t have to go around looking like a noob.

One woman who sent me a message was nice. I friended her but don’t expect to be using my alt much, so I’ll probably never see her. I’m not having much fun pretending to be a newbie. Even if I did find someone who wanted to take me around to find good stuff, I’d probably be bored while shopping.

## Friday, June 11, 2010

### Ruby

CollegeCS sent out an announcement for a class she was going to teach. “I have the brain the size of a planet and they’re making me teach a class about poseballs.” Modest.

Worldly brought Skitzo and a friend of hers to the class. I said hi to both of them, but Skitzo said nothing. They were unimpressed with how disorganized CollegeCS was in teaching her class. Just because you’re smart doesn’t mean you can teach.

Worldly told me about a guy who is marrying GoldDigger, his strange online friend who engages in obscene online flirting with men who are already taken. She told Worldly that her online fiancé is a wealthy business owner who has his own airplane.

“Wealthy business owners aren’t going to spend their time hanging around online planning weddings with GoldDigger,” I said.

Worldly sent me a landmark for the guy’s online office.

### Bruce

It looked like a regular real life office with wooden desks, sleek television monitors, and a black conference table. I’m not really sure what the function of the office was.

The land was deserted except for one employee. She told me they used the office to hold a meeting there once. But you can have a meeting in a lot of other places online without renting land and paying someone to set up a building. I’m not sure how the computer image of avatars sitting around a table enhances the meeting communication.

“What does the company do?” I asked.

“We help clients with media,” she said.

I think that means they make web sites or make comments on Twitter for clients.

I asked where GoldDigger’s partner was.

“He retired from the company and is no longer heavily involved.” Retired? According to the guy’s profile, he had been in Second Life for only a month.

I wasn’t sure if that meant he had retired from the real life company or if he abandoned his online office so he could spend his time online fooling around with GoldDigger and planning a wedding.

“Could I have a link to the company web page? I’d like to read more about what you do.”

“We don’t have a web page,” she said.

Huh? What the hell kind of media company doesn’t have a web page? Is this a company or is this online office just a ruse so GoldDigger and her partner can tell people that he’s a wealthy businessman?

Worldly had given me a link to the guy’s Twitter account. The last post had been made over a year ago. There was a link to his free-hosted blog page. At the top of the page was a picture of an ice cream shop. A street address and a few customer testimonials were pasted into the text of the web page.

I pasted the URL into chat. “Do you know about this ice cream shop?” I asked.

“Oh, that’s our old web page,” the employee said.

Their old web page? It’s not even the same field of business. How long has this guy been in the media business? And what have they accomplished?

I looked at the employee’s profile. She had been in Second Life for two months and she mentioned that she was gay. If she’s online for business, I don’t think it’s relevant or even appropriate to mention sexual orientation. I don’t have anything in my profile mentioning that I’m straight, or anything else about my sex life.

So, is bringing the business into Second Life just a way for the employee to play online on company time? Because any serious business isn’t going to want a company with no web page and new avatars with no experience to help them get established in Second Life.

CollegeCS teleported me to a building contest she was holding in our neighborhood. The theme was weddings. Since people went swimming at my house after my real life wedding, I made a cake with a swim theme. Frosted with swirling water, decorated with duckie floaties, and topped with a swimming couple. The groom was black to represent a tuxedo and the bride was white. “A bi-racial couple,” Grouchy said.

CollegeCS’s creation was a runaway bride. It was an armless large-breasted white object that ran back and forth. Joni made a beautiful cake that gave out cakes.

Grouchy created a complex arched fire pit. He won first prize. I’m not sure what that says about online weddings. Chachi won second place for his gorgeous gazebo. Which was ironic, because he donated the money for the prizes.

## Saturday, June 12, 2010

### Ruby

I teleported to the building contest display and landed near Grouchy’s wedding fire pit. I left roses on it; it looked like it needed some. Later I rode around the neighborhood on a pink pony and found Grouchy. He had already found the roses. He seemed flattered.

I chatted with him a little about how he got his idea for an invention that he sells online. He was a little rambly, I think he’s nervous around women. Especially me. Because he knows I’m a lot smarter and more mature than most of the other women.

Sleepless had been complaining about my skin and my nose not lining up correctly. So, like Grouchy goes around with a big eye covering his head, I put a box on my head so my face wouldn’t matter. I don’t feel like bothering with fixing the problem with my nose.

Baardes came by to hang out while I created my chair for the Gor Chair contest. It was nice having him around, but I was not good company while I was trying to build and write scripts. Baardes asked why I had a box on my head. “I need a nose job,” I said.

Baardes asked if I had found a Second Life boyfriend yet.

“I’d be yours if I didn’t already have a girlfriend,” he said. How sweet.

“I’m a little old for you anyway,” I told him.

“Age doesn’t matter in Second Life,” he said. Well, it doesn’t matter in exactly the same way as it does in real life. But it still makes a difference. Maturity has a big effect on the kind of conversations you have online, just as it does in real life.

### Bruce

I went to a fantasy chair building class in my neighborhood. A lot of numbers were involved in shaping the chairs. One of the women said she would have failed pre-algebra if she hadn’t dropped it. “I took twenty years of math,” I said.

“Clearly male,” she responded.

“I’ve known a lot of women in my lifetime who are awesome at math,” I said.

CollegeCS announced there would be a Fantasy Chair Contest. I decided to enter, but had some scripting to learn before I could get my chair to do everything I wanted it to. My brain was exhausted by the time I stopped working on it.

I call my chair Bruce’s Royal Throne. It’s a fancy golden toilet decorated with a purple silk seat cover.

Shopper stopped by while I sat on my toilet. “Excuse me, Shopper,” I said. “Can’t you see I’m doing my business?”

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” she said. Sorry? What was she sorry for? What else was I going expect. My wall was raised so people can see in. Of course people walking by were going to see me sitting on the toilet.

When you click on the toilet, it asks if you have to go number one or number two. There’s a third button that you can push with the option ‘Let me read.’ When you press that button, the toilet gives you a page of a technical article. You can open both lids of the seat by clicking on them. If you look inside, you’d see that the water in my toilet swirls. But when you flush my toilet, it overflows and tells you to call the plumber.

I won the chair building contest! Geek donated the L$100 Linden dollar prize that I received. I hadn’t seen him for over a month. I thought he had disappeared from Learn Avatar. I don’t know how he even knew about the contest. Perhaps he’s been hanging around as an alt.

I saw a large gathering in my neighborhood. Thinking it was a class in progress, I teleported over there. But it wasn’t a class. Someone had dropped a pre-fab house on the land and invited all their friends. Several people claimed to be sooooo drunk. And a few people were pole dancing. Sigh. Can’t even get away from the pole dancing by hanging out in builders neighborhoods.

I had never met the party host before. The owner of the house was not the owner of the land. In fact, it was Chachi’s land. I sent him a message to let him know that someone put a house there and was having a pole dancing party. He didn’t seem to mind as long as everyone cleaned up when they were done.

The pole-dancing party host drove her car around so I tried to sit on it, but she drove into a lake and the car disappeared. I found the car underneath Chachi’s land when I accidentally panned my view underground. I’m not sure how the car got there.

The party hostess went away from her keyboard a little too long, so I tried driving off with her car. But I didn’t have the right permissions. So someone gave me a different car. I drove around the buildings and into Shopper’s house. A neighbor hopped in. “I’m going to crash!” I said.

“You already did,” my neighbor responded. Then I logged out. As if my computer crashed.

## Wednesday, June 16, 2010

### Ruby

I went to look at the chairs from the building contest, along with several women. With a crowd of women hanging around, it didn’t take too long before a guy wandered over.

“Did you win?” Baardes asked me. Well, yes, I did. But not as Ruby.

“I didn’t enter,” I lied. I wasn’t going to tell him that I had won as my male alt.

I flew over to his house and landed on it. Everything went gray. When I zoomed out, I realized that I had fallen down his chimney. “I guess I’m supposed to leave you some presents.”

3Timer had left several chairs in his house. Was she moving in? She has an online partner, and she’s old enough to be Baardes’s mom, so perhaps she had fallen down his chimney and left presents also.

He told me that he had already broken up with his ‘pregnant’ girlfriend.

“What are you going to do about the ‘baby’?” I asked. He didn’t know.

Later on, in neighborhood chat, Baardes’s exgirlfriend asked for some help making a baby-sized casket. Creepy. All she had to do was delete a few scripts. I had never heard of abortions in Second Life before.

Sleepless stopped by while I chatted with Worldly about the chairs on display. She said she wanted to move to Worldly’s neighborhood.

“What happened to the project you were building with Grouchy?” I asked.

“I don’t know what happened to him. He hasn’t logged on for several days. I think he left Learn Avatar.”

Then she bopped around to chat with Roboto, then two other guys nearby. Like she was shopping for men, now that Grouchy isn’t around. After she left Roboto, I went to see him. Then she returned. Then CollegeCS and a few more women stopped by. “Roboto is popular,” I said.

Sleepless said it wasn’t Roboto, that was popular. “You’re the popular one, Ruby.”

Ha ha. Funny.

SlowBrain and a woman rode by on his horse. He stopped to say hi, then offered me a huge bunch of scripts and animations. The woman on his horse left without saying anything.

One of the folder was titled ‘Sex.’ So in local chat, the message ‘SlowBrain gave you Sex,’ popped up. That was so silly, I pasted it into Learn Avatar’s neighborhood chat.

“That SlowBrain sure gets around,” Sleepless responded.

“Yes, he does,” replied the woman who had left without saying anything. Geez, lady, is he not allowed to talk to neighbors while you’re on his horse?

I stuck around on Roboto’s land to work on things quietly. I felt comfortable hanging out with him, quietly building stuff side by side.

I like hanging around with Roboto. A lot of women do. He’s very respectful of us. I had thought it would be nice to be a priority friend of his, but he builds things with other women more often. He spends way more time online than I do. He has to hang out with someone while I’m away. Plus, I don’t want to spend all my time online with him. I don’t want him all to myself.

## Thursday, June 17, 2010

### Bruce

SlowBrain sent me a message. “I was up all night helping a thirteen year old buy some skins.” Something about staying up all night with a thirteen year old seems very odd. And why would he contact me to mention that?

Sleepless put barricades through my land that were labeled ‘Future Road.’ I didn’t know why we needed those there, but I didn’t want to log on tomorrow and find out the hard way. So I slid my castle over to make sure I wasn’t run over on the future road.

I headed straight for class when I logged on, but it had ended and attendance had already been taken. People stayed around to hang out with each other and make stuff. Roboto showed up late and built a chair. Then he and CollegeCS built a giant hamburger.

CollegeCS had also built a bus stop and placed dummies of all the housemasters around it so it looked like they were waiting for a bus. The dummy Joni was seated on the bus bench, so Joni sat her avatar next to dummy Joni on the bench. I tried to take a seat between the dummy and avatar Joni, but landed inside the fake Joni instead. I couldn’t tell if I was on her lap or if she was on mine.

Since I missed the Learn Avatar class, I went to a Builders Brewery class. The instructor taught by voice and was very disorganized. She had an assistant who insulted me when I asked questions, assuming I was too dumb to understand, rather than noticing that the instructor was too dumb to teach.

“You should have taken the beginners menu class before coming here,” she said. No. That class is for people who just learned what an If statement is. It’s not for people who have been programming for thirty years.

The only reason nobody else asked questions was that nobody could even figure out what to ask. And because the assistant was a bitch. But unlike at the country dance bar, I didn’t tell the assistant what I thought of her.

I got a private message from a woman asking if I was able follow along. I looked at her profile. It said that she’s a hooker in Second Life. She accepts money for dirty chat and avatar sex. Great. Second Life has hookers. I didn’t continue to chat with her.

## Friday, June 18, 2010

### Ruby

Grouchy was there and sent me a private message just to say hi. Last time I chatted with Sleepless, she said she didn’t know what happened to him, she thought he quit Learn Avatar. Something must have happened between them.

“While I was on vacation, I got removed from the Learn Avatar group,” he said. As headmaster of gor, Sleepless should have made sure the directors knew he would return.

“What ever happened to the project you and Sleepless had been building?” He ignored the question.

I went to a class Scars taught about making glass cages for trapping people. I had been chatting privately with Worldly, then he showed up for the class too, even though he thinks Scars is a jerk. He had disrupted a class while someone else was teaching.

As people showed up for class, a friend of the instructor showed up and laid on the ground. So I stood on him.

When he got up, he said he was giving me a hug. “\*Kiss\*,” I replied. Someone made a comment about how cute that was. “Yeah, but I just met the guy,” I said.

“Hi baby,” one of the women said.

“Who’s baby?” I asked.

“My boyfriend, Scars,” she said. “Look but don’t touch.”

So I walked into Scars. “TOUCHING!!!” I said. She must have thought that was funny because she added me as a friend. Either that or she wants to keep her eye on me.

Scars handed out a notecard of all the steps for making the cage. I started following the notecard and got ahead of everyone. I asked a question, several steps ahead of everyone.

“I’m going to wipe boogers on you Ruby, if you don’t wait until we get to that part,” Scars said. He must be no more than eighteen years old.

Worldly sent me a private message. “This is why I don’t like the guy.”

After class, Worldly wanted to talk to me by voice. He had gone land shopping with Skitzo and they bought a large parcel so she could have a home, build a shop, and breed bunnies. Worldly told me a little about the bunny breeding business, but it didn’t make a lot of logical sense.

“You buy a breeding bunny, buy grass for it, and keep it on your land for a few weeks. The grass eventually disappears and more bunnies get duplicated onto your land. You can sell them. Every few weeks it makes more bunnies, as long as you buy more grass.”

Why ‘breed’ an entity that can be copied and pasted?

Worldly showed me the estates of the guy who owns the Learn Avatar neighborhoods. They’re more expensive than most lands, supposedly they have more permissions and capabilities for editing the land. “So the land is meant for builders, not squatters,” Worldly said. Most people want land so they can put a house on it, have people hang out, store their sex beds.

We gossiped about Owner’s intentions. So Worldly put out the Big Brother Box and called it a class. “Perhaps that’s why Owner wants to get people to join Learn Avatar. To groom builders,” I said.

I noticed that Skitzo is a member of the Learn Avatar group. I’ve only seen her in one class. She wouldn’t need to have land in our neighborhood if she already had her own place, so I don’t know why she joined.

Worldly said that Learn Avatar is getting two more islands, in addition to the three we already have. Interesting that he’s in the loop and knows this information before the rest of us. Of course, this means they’ll need more volunteers to run the place.

## Saturday, June 19, 2010

### Bruce

I went to a class on how to set up a Marketplace store. I set it up to sell the clothing I wear in a few of the episodes of *Budget Justified* for $0. Three people purchased it already.

I built an entry for the Sci Fi Chair contest. It’s a rocket that goes to Mars and Saturn (planets I placed floating high above) when you sit on it. I also have some space rocks twirling near the rocket.

Strangely, my rocket chair was facing backwards in the display area. I don’t know why. But with it facing that direction, nobody would be able to see where to sit.

I sent a message to Sleepless saying that our chairs were the best. “One of us should have won.”

“Your chair didn’t even work right,” she said.

Well yeah. Since it was facing backward, it would be like trying to enter a garage from the back. Why is she such a grouch? Maybe my message came across as grouchy to her.

“I liked the chair that won because of the attention to detail,” she said.

‘Because of the attention to detail.’ That’s exactly how the winner announcement that went out to the neighborhood was worded. Sounds like corporate groupthink to me.

There was a party among the chairs after the judging competition. Joni went around as a big green monster and ate everyone hanging out during the judging. Or at least crawled through everyone as a phantom monster avatar while her giant monster mouth opened and closed.

CollegeCS brought out a trash bag that exploded all over the place.

“Great. Now we have to clean up this mess,” I said. After twenty seconds, it cleaned itself up and disappeared. Interesting. Objects that pick themselves up before you leave.

CollegeCS also made a merry-go-round of dummies of all the headmasters. I sat on the Joni dummy and spun around while Joni ate the merry-go-round.

SlowBrain wandered around the neighborhood as a shirtless male child avatar. He said he had been to a milk and cookies event. What would an online milk and cookies event in a forum for adults be about?

“Can you take me there?” I asked. “I want to go.”

He took me to a dance with all male child avatars. There were a lot of vulgar gay statements in the local chat. I asked SlowBrain about it.

“I often get hit on by guys here,” he said.

“Are you hoping for them to hit on you?” I asked. He said he wasn’t.

Maybe there was nothing unusual going on, but there was something really creepy about a shirtless child avatar. Even more creepy was a whole room of adults playing male children. And the vulgar statements just made it really, really weird. Sure, I didn’t observe any blatantly pornographic activity, but it certainly looked like grooming toward child pornography. I reported it as child-sex play.

I told Grouchy about SlowBrain, just in case Learn Avatar leadership needs to be observant of strange behavior in the neighborhood. At first Grouchy seemed like he didn’t know why I would be telling him about this. But then he sent out a notice to the neighborhood telling us to be watchful for potential pornographic activity involving minors.

### Bruce

I stopped by the main office to find out what classes are coming up. A new mentor was there to post a class he wanted to teach. I showed him the chair I made that won the contest two months ago. “If you understand how that works, what do you need a class for?” he asked. Exactly. Why don’t they have classes for the more advanced learners? Probably because besides me, there are none. Learn Avatar isn’t engineering school. It’s anyone who has an internet connection.

Mentors get twice as much land as I’ve ever had. That could be seen as more prestigious, but it’s Learn Avatar. Prestige in Learn Avatar gets you… a bigger plot of free land in a game. And I didn’t building much stuff on the land I already had. So I’m not out to get more prestige.

I teleported to a class about being a host or hostess at a club. I was curious, since I’ve never worked in any of the clubs and I don’t know how those businesses work.

I didn’t get much out of the class, other than that you have to be friendly and try to make it fun for people to be there. That part was pretty obvious. Someone said that Club Zola pays very well.

Another person said that she hosts at a club, doesn’t get paid, and the tips are bad. So right as we were in class, she sent a message to the club owner saying that she should get more money. The club owner fired her.

Then she sent a message to Club Zola and they hired her on the spot. But a few minutes later, she found out that Club Zola is a strip club.

Then the instructor wanted to take attendance, so she moved the class away from me so I wouldn’t get counted by the avatar detector.

I checked the instructor’s creation date. She was newer than I was, but she had been promoted to mentor. So she probably thought she was smarter than I.

So I put on my LA Scripter tag above my head. Because most of the mentors don’t even know any scripting.

## Sunday, June 20, 2010

### Bruce

Sleepless came by my land today and said it didn’t look Gor enough. Whatever that means. She had a Headmaster tag over her head, so I asked what that was about. Joni had stepped down and now Sleepless is headmaster of the Gor theme. I think I’ll switch themes.

Sleepless was also nasty to someone in neighborhood chat.

“Someone has been leaving their garbage all over their land and the rest of us have to look at that slop they call a house. Do we need more remedial classes?”

You know, sometimes things are under construction. In fact, things are under construction all the time. We definitely don’t need any more remedial classes. The classes are already way to remedial.

I think her comments were directed to SlowBrain, TeeVee, or both. Maybe she comes across harsher than she means to be. She has mentioned previously that she is in a ‘male-dominated field.’ So she’s probably just treating others how she’s used to being treated.

The chair contest theme this time was grunge. Which means slum-like. I’m not interested in building a slum, so I thought of my chair as more of a Halloween decoration.

My chair was a mattress that was kind of green, maybe mold-like, on the edges. I hadn’t even thought of the color and shading I put on it as looking like mold until someone else mentioned it. The mattress had cobwebs and flies swarming around. It was propped up by two blocks of concrete next to a campfire. And when you sat on the mattress, it fell into the fire and smoke started coming out of it. Behind the mattress was a brick wall with a window. When you touched the window, it broke into shards that fell around it. And twenty second later, they picked themselves up.

Several people sent me messages saying they liked the ‘chair.’ Turns out I won the chair contest!

One of my neighbors won a free month of an entire island in Learn Avatar for submitting a chair for each contest. A whole sim to decorate sounds like too much burden. And then what do you do with everything you’ve built when you no longer have anywhere to put all of it?

Sleepless finally offered to give me bigger land. I told her that I wanted to hold off on that. I’m considering switching to the sci fi neighborhood where Grouchy is the headmaster. He’s much more tolerable. Sleepless has been complaining lately that she doesn’t see me around often enough. I’m not sure if she’s making up new neighborhood occupancy rules as a power trip, or if she missed me.

I don’t really need more land. I’m not building large houses, I’m building furniture-like devices. Maybe I’ll give up my land and become a Learn Avatar nomad.

I kind of like the nomad idea. It could be Bruce’s Thing That He Does. Goes around making a point of being homeless. Like Jack was the hobo of Noobieville. He could leave his stuff in the sandbox or at other people’s houses every once in awhile.

## What’s it like to be a man?

Meanwhile I was participating in a bad discussion in the Braincrave group. I forwarded a few pieces of the discussion to Worldly to show him the confrontational tone of the discussion. Worldly likes these kind of philosophical discussions, but gets irritated when an egomaniac takes over and vilifies one side of the argument while saying his side is the only one that can be right.

I wanted to be involved in the Braincrave discussion because I was considering that my BudgetJustified.com group should be a discussion group. But I’m not sure what the focus would be. Complaining about how men treat women poorly in Second Life seems appropriate, but I don’t want it to be a whiners group. We could talk about episodes of *Budget Justified*, but that assumes that everyone makes a point of watching the episode beforehand.

Perhaps it should be about government waste or misuse of technical talent.

Another problem with a discussion group is that you also need to have enough people online at a time who are interested in having a discussion. There’s usually only around four or five people engaged in a Braincrave discussion at a time. Is that worth the effort of preparing a topic and scheduling time at the computer?

The Braincrave group had a discussion about European countries proposing to subsidize vacations as a right for all citizens. Sort of a ridiculous idea, but I thought it would be interesting to mention an argument for it.

“If it creates a more worldly population, maybe it should count as free education,” I said.

“I learn a lot when travelling,” someone replied.

Controversial said, “We should get free vacations to travel to the moon too.”

“And when people travel and understand other cultures, there's less support for unjustified war,” I said.

“I'd rather have a vacation than a war,” another person responded.

“Let's send the poor to Iraq and Afghanistan. They’ll learn a lot,” said Controversial.

“Heck,” I said, “Send the poor to Iraq and call them soldiers. Give them a salary too. Oh. We already do that.”

## Era of Homelessness

Gave up Ruby’s land so I can explore and not be tied to classes.

## Friday, June 2, 2010

### Bruce

I finally decided to give up my land today. Actually, I decided a few days ago, but couldn’t bring myself to abandon it right away. I deleted my spartan castle and sent a message to Sleepless to let her know that she could give my land to someone else. I’m officially a nomad now. I build in sandboxes and pick everything up before I leave.

I joined the Braincrave smart-people chat group. Today’s topic was men’s sexual health. Not many people participated. The discussion leader mentioned a study that said men who had more frequent orgasms lived longer. “Did the study include avatar sex?” I asked. Hey, if this is the topic they propose, this is the kind of comment they get.

I went to a nude beach wearing only a pair of jeans and a penis. Sticking out. Like how the obnoxious guys do when they’re wandering around on a nude beach. Except I also added breasts. I chatted with one guy who didn’t even acknowledge the penis. Two other guys sent me a message, but at first they only noticed my naked breasts.

“You’re a shemale?” one asked.

“Nah, just goofing around,” I answered.

A woman, I assume an employee at the beach, kept harassing me about clothing not being allowed there. I ignored her and kept my jeans on. The thing about ‘employees’ in anonymous forums is that the communication regarding the reason for various rules isn’t very clear. On top of that, you end up with some people who have no life and use their ‘employee’ status online as a power trip and start enforcing their version of the rules.

I met a guy who said in his profile that he had a slave. So I asked him about it. He said he loves her so much that he wants to be her master and anticipate her needs. I said that didn’t sound like a master and slave relationship at all. “You’re thinking in stereotypes,” he told me. Um, not stereotypes. Dictionaries. Sounds to me like the words ‘slave’ and ‘master’ are not being used correctly.

Another guy was lying on a chair with a woman. His profile listed a partner, but it wasn’t her. Yet he had entered in the free-text portion of his profile that he had a second slave, which was the woman he was with. Why would both of these women be fine with him having two partners? And why did they want to be called his slaves? I wonder how often he changes the text in his profile. Probably every time he meets someone new at a nude beach, he puts her name in his profile then deletes it when he leaves.

I asked him about being a master. His answer didn’t explain anything.

“It’s like I know everything about them. I control their thoughts and feelings.” How would he know? I don’t think he has any clue about their feelings. “I’m their God. I give them so much happiness and so much pain at the same time.” He gives them pain? What kind of asshole would do that. “It can’t be explained. They follow me wherever I go.” Except when they’re offline. Which is probably most of the time.

Then he said he was really busy and couldn’t talk. Yeah, he was lying on a chair with a slave. It really grosses me out what some people do online. How am I supposed to respect that kind of ‘busy?’

They were giving out free Fourth of July clothing at the nude beach. It was a promotion to get you to their store. Do they sell clothing at a nude beach incase you were thinking about being naked after you left?

It was interesting from a marketing perspective. When you walked into the store, there was a greeter who said, “All the clothing here is great!”

She reminded me of the hostesses that most dance clubs hire. Nice clubs pay about a hundred Linden dollars per hour. That’s worth about forty American cents. Way less than min wage. But it’s not for the purpose of making a living, the point of a job in Second Life is to play the game, meet people, and be part of the community.

It seemed that all the clothing at the beach had been designed by one person. So that was nice that she had a location for selling her product.

Some items in Second Life are sold by any idiot who can put boxes in a store you can walk through in Second Life or on the internet store Xstreet. You don’t need a license, like in the real world. You just need to exist. So there’s often no consistency in pricing similar items. In fact, many items are stolen and copies are resold. Which is illegal according to copyright law. But that probably only matters within the United States.

Yet some of the stores seem to be known brand names within Second Life, just like the real world. There’s Vista Animations that sell dance animations for poseballs at clubs and standing animations for avatars that want to look cool. They don’t have any for people who want to look professional. I tried making my own with some free software, but it looked awkward, not professional.

I got a free banana phone avatar. It came with a giant spoon to hold. I haven’t tried on the banana costume yet, but I’ve been carrying around the spoon. I accidentally stood in just the right spot so that as people teleported to the beach, they landed on the spoon. They’d eventually fall off, but then they’d land so that the spoon was inside their rear ends.

“Excuse me, but your butt is on my spoon,” I said to one woman. She said she was sorry. As if it were her fault.

### Ruby

I went to a dance beach. Some guy was going around with his penis standing straight out of his pants and kept saying, “Bitch,” in local chat. I said that he needed his mom. So he hopped on me and made sex motions.

He got off of me and said, “I’m done. Closing your hole.”

“I’m old enough to be your mom,” I said.

I changed my figure into a misshapen humanoid blob. “I just got done with you and you’re already pregnant,” he said.

A friendly guy chatted me up, saying he was a model in real life. He sent me several pictures of himself, one in the nude. “Um, I’m not offended,” I told him, “but I probably didn’t need the nude picture.”

I morphed into a creepy weird shaped guy and said, “Hi sexy,” to no one in particular, in local chat. A guy responded in German. As if I were talking to him. We chatted for a little while, although the conversation probably didn’t make much sense since he chatted in German and I responded in English.

He must not have looked at me right away because he probably would have thought I was too weird to chat with while I was shaped as a scary man. But I think he saw me eventually because he left without saying goodbye.

I met a guy who had OpenCollar in his profile. We had a long discussion about that.

He seemed very nice and normal to me, so it seemed out of character. But to him it’s not just an online thing, he calls his wife in real life his slave! I was horrified. But I didn’t come out and tell him I was horrified, because I’m not really sure what slave and master means to him. I might just be horrified about the words. Although it does sound like she’s decided not to think for herself anymore. But I have not witnessed any of their interactions, so even if I say I’m against master and slave, I’m not sure what I’d be speaking out against.

I went to Worldly’s new plot to talk by voice about all the changes that happened while I was gone. Everyone’s land got rearranged again. Grouchy stepped down from being director. CollegeCS is the new director of Learn Avatar. She has land next door to Worldly and stopped by to tell us a little about the new, stricter, land themes. She even gave us a class credit for it. Generous.

Worldly became headmaster of Gor. TeeVee left Learn Avatar. He has a skybox with Sweets and they’re shopping for wedding items, although they don’t have a date set yet.

One of the new guys from my neighborhood teleported me to his place. He was with another guy and they were trying to get each other to ask me out. One of them called me a chick. I need to stand up for the more dignified members of my gender. “I’m not a chick,” I said. “I have a PhD in engineering.”

I asked them where they were from. They said they were from San Diego, which didn’t seem right because their English seemed as though it was not their first language. Perhaps they were foreign born. Or not.

“How old are each of you?” I asked. Early twenties. “I thought so,” I said. And told them that I’ll be forty in a few weeks.

Grouchy has a partner. I recognized the name, but I’m not sure from where. I sent him a message, but he logged off a minute later without responding.

I was surprised that Grouchy has a partner. I didn’t think he spent his online time on that sort of thing. At first I sort of felt like I was missing out for still not having a partner myself. But in some ways, I feel like I don’t want a partner at all.

## Saturday, July 10, 2010

### Ruby

And today when I logged on, Grouchy was no longer partnered. I sent him a message to ask what he was up to. Seems like he’s mostly doing work. He mentioned a deadline.

Worldly took me to see a place where instead of having land, people hung out at a camp in their own tents. Their names were above each tent and they could color them however they wished and leave a few things in them. The land was owned by the House of Prayer. I haven’t been there for months.

I thought the tents were a great idea for building a community. Even though you couldn’t build anything there, you could leave your mark on it and hang around.

The reverend invited men to come ride their bull. I don’t understand why he was so chauvinistic about it. Several women came to ride too.

So I rode it. I got the high score! My name got posted on the scoreboard. Along with several female runners up. Good thing there’s a scoreboard there, so everyone could see. Although it doesn’t really matter. It’s all random, so it’s not like I used any skills to win.

The minister said he needed to log off to minister to his wife. “I hope she’s OK,” I said, thinking he meant she was sick.

“She’s very OK. I just need to love on her,” he said.

What? I thought that if any place online was clean, it would be the House of Prayer. Even the minister at the House of Prayer has to announce when he has sex?

I went with Worldly to visit Skitzo and Shopper on Skitzo’s land. Skitzo’s land? She had decided to get a large plot near Worldly. Not a newbie plot, but one the same size as the one I had.

Skitzo was her regular not very friendly self. At some point while Worldly and I were chatting about what’s been going on in the neighborhood lately, Skitzo said, “Didn’t you say you had to go to sleep?”

Yes, I had. And since my presence was so unwelcome there, I politely logged off.

## Wednesday, July 14, 2010

### Ruby

But I did not politely leave Skitzo’s land before I logged off. And when I logged on again, Skitzo, Worldly, and one of their friends were nearby. As I tried to fly out, Skitzo came over to me and banned me from her land. Not just eject, but banned me from returning. No words were exchanged. Then she logged off.

I sent a message to Worldly to let him know I was floating in the air nearby. We chatted for a little while before I let him know that Skitzo had banned me from her land. “Look, the two of you will never be good friends. There’s always drama when you get together,” Worldly said.

“Drama?” I asked. “What happened? I didn’t even know there was any drama going on.”

He admitted that it wasn’t just me. That Skitzo’s been arguing with him because most of the residents of Learn Avatar are female.

I’m not sure if Skitzo was trying to goad me into an argument with her, to make me look like the bad guy. It isn’t going to work because she isn’t important enough to me to care. Perhaps she wants to force Worldly into choosing between her and me. I don’t understand how Worldly can stay with her acting like this.

Plus, since Worldly doesn’t seem to want me to be around for fear of Skitzo’s wrath, I don’t want to spend time with him except to find out what’s going on in the neighborhood.

I went to Cuddle Beach to see if anyone would approach me for a private chat. Or at least to witness some comedy. Someone did send me a private message. “I’m looking at your ass and stroking my dick in real life.”

“You’re extremely creepy,” I responded. Then I muted him.

Another guy started to chat with me. I asked him what he likes to do online. “Have sex with women,” he said. He asked what I did.

“Build a theater for speaking out against sexual harassment.”

I intended to ignore him after that, but he asked to see it. Sure, why not. So I teleported him there. He showed up naked.

“You have to put on clothes! It’s a PG land! You’ll get banned!” I told him. He said sure, he’d put on clothes. But he didn’t. So I teleported back to the beach.

A couple was hanging around at the beach, talking by voice. The guy was saying rude things just to irritate his girlfriend. “He sounds like an ass,” I said.

“Obviously Ruby knows me,” he replied.

One guy said he was going away from the computer for a few minutes and asked me to tell him if a woman named Starla came by. “And tell me who she’s with.” He was zero days old, a newly created avatar. I asked how he knew Starla.

“She’s my girlfriend. I created an alt to see who she’s with when I’m not online.”

“Don’t commit to someone you don’t trust,” I told him.

Spying sounded like something someone in his twenties might do. Turns out he’s sixty. But his girlfriend is in her twenties. Creepy. But probably the right mentality level. A normal sixty year old would just dump her ass if he didn’t trust her. A normal sixty year old wouldn’t be dating a twenty year old in the first place.

He asked me, “Are you a single mom, or unhappy in your life?” Why does everyone assume I’m online for sex?

“I’m here for business purposes,” I said. Yes, I was on a beach wearing a bikini top. “And sometimes for comedy purposes.”

## Tuesday, Ju 1, 2010

### Ruby

I landed in a place with a crude name and asked the guy next to me what the place was. “It’s where nice girls like you get their holes filled with hot cum,” he said.

“You’re creepy,” I said.

He asked if I was wearing underwear, if I was a submissive. I refused to answer either question.

“You’re obviously not in the mood.” Obviously not.

What did he want from me? To start talking dirty after two yes/no questions? “You aren’t very good at this,” I told him.

I looked to see what was he said about himself in his profile. His avatar was created last week. “Your profile says you’re new, but you don’t seem new,” I said.

“Sure I’m new. Someone gave me some help and a lot of money,” he said.

“Nobody gave me money or help when I was new,” I told him.

“You probably didn’t go to a back alley to be someone’s cock bitch, like I did,” he said. Um, true.

I asked about the place with hunting grounds. He gave me a landmark to a place where all the women were prey and men were hunters. “Why can’t women be hunters?”

“If you talk like that, you’ll just piss everyone off and they’ll kick you out.” Well, what a lovely place for women to visit. All the female avatars there are probably guys.

I found a place where women could be hunters too. A few helpful people showed me how to play. One guy let me hit him with arrows so I could capture him. His profile said that he was very submissive. I put him on a leash and wandered around. I got lost and ended up on someone else’s land. We got ejected.

The guy on my leash suggested going to some buildings. He was supposed to do whatever I told him to do, so I told him to get on a cross.

“This is the point where you should tell me to take off my clothes and have your way with me,” he said. I didn’t really want to push him around.

“Keep your clothes on,” I commanded.

“When did you decide you were submissive?” I asked.

“I’ve always wanted to be with a dominatrix.”

I believe in free will, not in ordering people around. I think he may have been disappointed that I was the one who caught him. “I’m quite tame,” I told him.

There were pose balls on the cross. I got on the blue one, but my avatar didn’t do anything I found to be erotic or sensual. He entered some erotic rambling into chat. I didn’t find sensual writing to be erotic either. It seemed like something written in advance, copied from a romance novel and pasted in. It was nothing specific to me or the moment or any feelings the moment might have stirred in him. And he didn’t know anything about me. I was just some chick who shot him with arrows. I was bored, so I set him free.

What I should have done was take him to my theater and tell him to teleport five of his friends to watch the trailer.

### Bruce

I keep hearing that guys get help and lots of money when they’re new. I created a newbie alt to see if someone would give me a lot of money. Unfortunately, I didn’t meet any women who were interested in taking me on as a newbie project. Just as well. I hate following people around to stores.

I toured a prison. It had four levels: Hell, Purgatory, Prison, and Heaven. The first level I toured was Purgatory. “So this is what they were talking about in Catholic school,” I said.

A few people were locked up. There was no sex going on, just people with balls and chains, in handcuffs, or inside cages. The people in cages had to be there, or be online, twenty-four hours a day. The jail warden said that people like it because the interaction between the visitors and the prisoners can be amusing.

I wonder if what actually happened to Crock is that he’s in a jail, not stuck in teleport as he had told me. He had said that he had gotten into a fight with his vampire boss. So maybe the boss put him in a jail, and Crock created another avatar so he could be free.

## Wednesday, Ju 2, 2010

### Ruby

I tried out the woman-as-prey-only place, now that I kind of know what happens. I didn’t even get shot at as much as I thought I would. In fact, when someone did shoot at me, another guy said that he wanted to protect me and shot at anyone who hit me.

“Do not shoot at this beautiful woman.” He seemed horrified that men would shoot at women. One of the shooters captured me, but then the Protector captured him and the shooter left me alone.

“Other men shoot you, I treat you well,” the Protector said.

I’m not sure what’s worse. Men who shoot at me or men who think they need to rescue me, as if I can’t take care of myself.

I thought that the rules were that he had to shoot and capture me in order for me to go somewhere with him. “Do you really want pain? You can come with me, but you do not have to have pain,” he said. So I went with him to a house.

I asked him about collars that you can use to drag captured prey around. He gave me a collar that he had control of the menu for and it made me sit different ways.

“What’s the purpose of a collar that changes someone else’s sitting pose?” I asked.

“To see if the slave obeys.” But he had control of the menu, so how could my avatar not obey? So I make her jump around the room even though she was in the sitting positions. Then I got on some contraption where I hung upside down.

“That’s only for punishment of bad slaves,” he said. I’m surprised he didn’t put me on it. I’m not very good at being a slave.

He had to leave, so I went back to the hunting ground to see what else happened there. A boring guy captured me, dragged me to into a building, didn’t say much, then left. I felt kind of bad for him. Instead of chatting with a few women, hoping someone would want to be his friend, he sought out a woman and fought a battle to get her. But capturing me didn’t guarantee that I would enjoy his company. From a set of women on the grounds, he had selected me to be with him, but I rejected him.

Another guy captured me, then asked me what I wanted to do. I thought the rules were that he had to tell me what to do. He seemed like he didn’t want to offend me by dragging me around.

He took me back to his house and pretended I was his prey that he just brought home. So he wanted me to take a shower. I went into the shower and he stayed in his bedroom. I’m not sure why he didn’t come into the shower. Then he gave me some lingerie and I put it on.

He didn’t have anything erotic to say. I don’t think he knew what to do. He got the woman to come over to his place…now what. We just bumbled around awkwardly, not knowing what to say to each other. I suppose that part was similar to what it’s like for many people on a date in real life.

The problem with spending time at hunting grounds is that although I’m finding out about some of the things I’ve heard others talk about, I’m not building relationships. I’m never going to see these people again. The people at the hunting ground aren’t as bad as I thought. They seem to be concerned about my feelings and don’t want to be disrespectful. I think they go there because they don’t understand how to have healthy relationships. Unfortunately, hunting grounds are not the place to learn.

## Thursday, July 15, 2010

### Ruby

I got a message from the guy whom I had asked about how collars work. “Do you know who I am?” he asked.

“The German guy,” I responded. As if he were the only German I had ever met on Second Life.

“I’m your master,” he said.

“Um, I don’t have a master,” I responded. He asked if I wanted to go looking for collars. I said that I didn’t want to at that moment, then logged off.

What makes him think he’s my master? Because I asked him about a collar? I never agreed that he was my master. I want to go looking for collars with him. I don’t think I’m even curious about how they work anymore.

I went to a location called CMNF Corporation that I had seen in someone’s profile. I thought it would be some type of business. Instead, it was a place where people could role play sleazy boss and secretary having sex.

A guy sent me a private message asking for sex. Which, according to their rules, I wasn’t allowed to have there because I wasn’t a ‘staff’ member. It costs three hundred Linden dollars to join the staff. Meanwhile, he was having a conversation with the ‘secretary’ about having sex with her. They went to a sex room, however she left without having sex.

One female avatar there had ‘CMNF Intern’ as her title. “The intern is a man,” I said.

When she was done having sex on the desk, she said, “You’re annoying.” I’m annoying? Who was the one having sex in plain view in the office? Note that the intern didn’t deny being a man.

The ‘company’ president had an office upstairs. My radar showed that he was in. A sign said that women could only go up if they were going to have sex with the president. I was about to go upstairs to see what would happen if I went up there, but the president disappeared before I got past the first step on the staircase. Maybe he saw my profile, which says I produced a movie about sexual harassment in the workplace. He didn’t log off, however. I checked his profile and it said he was still online.

What a creep. He sets up an office building and calls himself the president of a fake company, makes people pay to join, then says no one is allowed upstairs unless they’re going to have sex with him. As if having sex with him would be special just because he calls himself the president. He’s just some lowlife who bought a plot of land and put a building on it.

I should have known that it wouldn’t be a real business. The guy who had the location in his profile insulted me for making a movie because I was “surprised to be harassed at work.” At what point does this stop being playing around and becomes what people think is the norm, practice for what people attempt in real life? The guys in CMNF probably grope the women in their offices in real life and think they have a right to do so.

## Sunday, July 18, 2010

### Ruby

I logged on at the CMNF office. But I got booted just outside the land because I had been banned from CMNF property. Banned? What kind of an online game bans people for being against sexual harassment? A place run by a deviant coward.

I checked out the ban list. There was a very long list of banned avatars. I looked at the ban list of the dominant female land next door. Only one person was banned. Seems like the CMNF owner has a paranoia/insecurity about being questioned.

Not that I enjoyed my time there and wish to return. However I wanted to have someone who is against sexual harassment trespass on their land. So I sent in Bruce.

### Bruce

I wanted to find out what kind of products or services CMNF created. The building had several offices for ‘sex therapy.’ CM stands for clothed male, NF stands for nude female.

I was still carrying my giant spoon that I had a few weeks ago. A guy in the lobby suggested that I use it to spank inappropriately-named Dominique, the woman next to him. She got down on all fours and stuck her rear end in the air. “Dominique, have some dignity,” I said. I can’t help but wonder if Dominique was a man in real life, acting out his fantasy that women are puppets.

When you enter the CMNF building, you get a set of rules. The rules list the roles than men and women are allowed to have. Women can be nurses, secretaries, cleaning ladies, and interns. Men can be security guards, doctors, or executives. I thought about joining CMNF and signing up to be a nurse to see what would happen. But I don’t want to support such an organization.

CMNF is located next door to a sex building where women are dominatrixes who insult the male slaves. I wonder if women put that building there as a protest to CMNF. It belonged to a female dominator group. A man was waiting for his master in a cage. “Why do you want to sit here in this cage?” I asked him.

“It’s what I do, sir. It’s not up to me,” he said. Whatever.

Inside the building was a bald guy with ugly maze-like tattoos all over his body. He knelt on the floor in front of a woman who kept insulting him. She invited me to join in. “I’m not really interested in this,” I said.

I met a married guy who has an online ‘girlfriend.’ He took me to see a yacht he had built with the girlfriend. After chatting with him awhile, I found out that the girlfriend is actually a bisexual man with a female avatar. But he felt that mentally, the girlfriend is actually female.

Um, OK. Sounds delusional. Or maybe he didn’t know the guy was actually a guy until after the relationship started and he doesn’t want to let go of the fantasy that he’s interacting with a female. Poor guy. He seemed so nice. Just not mentally all-together.

If I met someone online who thought he or she was in love with me after typing things to each other for a few months, I’d think that something was wrong with him or her.

## Saturday, August 7, 2010

### Ruby

I went to a feminist meeting. During the meeting some guy who lived nearby invited me to his bed. I told him I was in a feminist meeting. So he came by and sat in on the meeting. I don’t think he understood what feminist meant. Just because there’s a bunch of women hanging around doesn’t mean the guy’s chances for finding a woman to take to his bed have increased.

“I have a masters degree in engineering,” he told me. Oh yeah? Am I supposed to be impressed?

“I have a Ph.D. in engineering,” I told him.

My real life friend Chandler invited me to visit his land. I mentioned that most of the people I meet don’t keep in touch with me.

“Your standing animation is for newbies and your skin looks out of fashion.”

Skin tone goes out of fashion? OK, too many people are complaining about my skin. First Sleepless, now Chandler. Other people had made remarks about it before, but I thought they were just being annoying.

So Chandler took me to a store that his friend owns to look at skins. I thought I looked just fine. I’m not so concerned about having the right skin, the right clothes, or the right car in Second or any other Life. But he said that if I look like a newbie, people won’t take me seriously and will think I’m unprofessional. And looking like a slut is professional?

The skins at the store weren’t bad. But I thought I should go through the many skins I already had and never looked at to find out what I thought of those first. There were a few that I kind of liked, so I stuck with one of them. I teleported Sleepless to see me to get her opinion. She said it was better than the one I had been wearing.

I also changed my hair. I had a nice long wavy hair object in my inventory, but it was light brown and in my eyes. I edited it and was able to move the strands out of my eyes and make the hair darker. It’s nice hair, but unfortunately, it’s not very professional. I haven’t seen any hair in Second Life that might be suitable for Hillary Clinton or Carly Fiorini. It’s mostly for whores.

Now I have new skin, I need to try out standing animations. I didn’t like any of the ones I had. I describe them as making me look like a twenty year old airhead.

In the Free Fashions group chat, I asked if anyone has ever seen any business woman animations. It seemed like they didn’t know what I was talking about. They asked if I wanted one with a woman carrying a briefcase. A briefcase is not an animation. Who even uses briefcases anymore? I just want something that Hillary Clinton and Carly Fiorini wouldn’t be embarrassed to be seen doing.

Well, nobody had anything even slightly professional. With all the articles I’ve been reading lately about people bringing businesses into Second Life there has got to be a demand for professional animations. And professional hair. I’m surprised it’s so difficult to find.

### Bruce

I haven’t logged in for a week. When I came back online, I discovered that not only had Learn Avatar been completely rearranged, but I had been removed from the group. I rejoined. Not that it matters much when I don’t have land. But I’m back to the Novice title instead of Scripter.

While I was away, I missed TeeVee’s birthday AND his wedding! Not only that, but TeeVee and Sweets have virtual twin babies.

I’m not sure what they do with virtual babies. Seems sort of like virtual pets – you wear them on your shoulder.

A new guy in Learn Avatar was going on and on in neighborhood chat about how some guy who modified CollegeCS’s avatar to make her look like she does in real life must have gotten to see her avatar naked a whole lot. Well, whoop-dee-doo. I can make a female avatar and look at it while it’s naked too. And if I got excited about that, someone should have my head examined.

“Do you harass women like this in real life too?” I asked him.

“No, I’d get written up,” he responded. Well if that’s the only reason he doesn’t go around harassing people, I don’t think I want to spend a whole lot of time around him.

CollegeCS invited the neighborhood over to see her avatar. I was the only one who showed up. I was prepared to be all impressed with the shading and realistic attributes of the avatar. Instead, she just looked like a spindly Barbie doll. No muscle tone, no shading. She didn’t look realistic at all.

Well, the guy who did her avatar just did the shape. Not the shading. Big deal. Shape is easy to modify. It’s the skin and face shading that’s really tough to make look real. And based on how long and skinny her legs were and how narrow her hips were, I doubt he got the shape right either. At least I hope nobody is Barbie-shaped in real life.

Baardes invited the neighborhood to a club he built. He had purchased a dance ball and dance poles. I didn’t recognize anyone who showed up. The neighborhood has such a huge turnover, I can’t help but wonder if anything productive is coming out of Learn Avatar. I don’t think it’s drumming up any business for Rich, the owner of the lands, and I don’t think any of the residents are learning how to sell anything in Second Life.

There was a lot of dirty talk going on at Baardes’s club. Too bad. Baardes seemed like such a nice kid. Seems like the smut culture is getting to him – everyone in Second Life acts like a whore, it wouldn’t be normal not to.

### Ruby

Baardes said that Worldly had recommended Skitzo as a DJ for his neighborhood dance club. “Skitzo’s a sweetheart. But I’m on her bad side.”

I tried to console him. “It must be easy to get on her bad side because I’m apparently on her bad side too. Although I don’t know why.”

“She’s mad at me because of something I said at GoldDigger’s wedding. I kept crashing and when I came back, I said a cuss word out loud.”

If anyone should be upset, it would be GoldDigger. The cuss word had nothing to do with Skitzo. Why did she need to make it about her?

“You went to GoldDigger’s wedding? I didn’t think you knew her.”

“I don’t, really. I just went because Worldly introduced us. I think they wanted a lot of people there.”

Interesting. I’m not sure how I should interpret the snub – Worldly invited Baardes, whom he barely knows, but didn’t even mention the wedding to me. Not that I felt I needed to be there. I’m sure the slight was because of Skitzo. She claims to be submissive, but she’s a control freak. And Worldly is letting her ruin his friendships.

Meanwhile, Shopper must have heard us talking because she walked over. But didn’t say anything. I couldn’t see her because I was working on my Marketplace web page. I knew she was there because Baardes said, “Shopper is staring at you.”

But she didn’t left without saying anything.

I showed him the animation I created that’s supposed to look sort of like a politician at an event. So he showed me a couch set he created with an external sculpting software. We played with arranging the pose balls. Our avatars were sitting on the couch kissing, while talking about technical issues. I asked where his new partner was, but she wasn’t online.

## Friday, August 13, 2010

### Ruby

In the Learn Avatar neighborhood chat, there was some talk about getting a new headmaster for the Fantasy themed island. “I can’t keep up with any of this,” I said.

Worldly had his online status hidden from me when he asked in Learn Avatar chat what I couldn’t keep up with. “Who’s headmaster of what, whether Worldly is online or offline, that kind of stuff,” I joked.

Worldly teleported me to his castle and updated me on all the latest gossip about changing headmasters by voice chat. I asked how Skitzo was doing. Seems as though she hasn’t been online much lately. I’m wondering if their friendship is dwindling. They used to be together all the time. Perhaps the excitement of a new relationship has faded.

He mentioned Baardes’s new partnership. “Their relationship is going a big fast I think,” he said. Yes. I agree. But I didn’t go into it because that seemed ironic coming from him, considering how quickly he partnered Skitzo. Perhaps he’s starting to realize that getting together so quickly is not necessarily a great idea.

Although Worldly has been online as much as ever lately, Skitzo hasn’t been online much at all. However her profile now says that she’s engaged. They’re already partnered, what could engaged really mean? I suppose it means they’re planning a party about it. I’ll have to wait and see if Worldly mentions it to me, or if it’s going to be a secret everyone else knows but me, like GoldDiggers wedding was.

I’m surprised at the amount of work Worldly is putting into the castle he is building. At first it seemed that he wanted just for the purpose of hanging out with neighbors. But now he’s headmaster. I think it’s because he’s smart and reasonable. He doesn’t start fights with people, he ends them. And because he’s a great guy to hang out with. He has always said that I’m the most real person online. But he’s pretty much been his real self here too.

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## Monday, August 16, 2010

### Ruby

I was still having some problems with the green tank top I made to match what I’m wearing in an episode of *Budget Justified*. In the Builder’s Brewery chat, I asked how to get rid of the stuck-between-breasts look that every cleavage-covering shirt has.

One woman said that she has a nun's habit. And even though it’s basically a black sack, it still has “vacuum boobs.”

“What do nuns have breasts for?” someone retorted.

“Nuns have breasts?” I asked. “I didn't even know they had legs or feet.”

Worldly logged on just as I typed the question about nun breasts. “Lisa’s silly,” he responded.

“WORLDLY!” I typed in the Builders Brewery chat. He seemed pleased to get such a warm greeting. Privately I sent him the text of the nun conversation that he missed.

I asked Worldly where he was. “I’m at home.”

I went to his castle, but he wasn’t there. “You’re not at your land,” I said.

“I don’t consider Learn Avatar home.”

Worldly was building a skybox for Shopper and her boyfriend. “Who’s her boyfriend now?” I asked. “Have I met him?” Sock. Well, Ruby may not have met him, but Bruce was talking to him and Shopper, on another computer, as we spoke. Worldly likes him a whole lot more than Shopper’s last boyfriend.

Grouchy taught a class where we put poseballs in chairs. Again. He gave us all chairs and told us to make balls with scripts to attach to our chair. I made a poseball, sat on it, and moved the ball over so I was sitting inside Grouchy. “Who’s on my knee?” he asked.

I teleported Worldly. He sat silently while the rest of us tweaked our poseballs and scripts. I moved my poseball so I hovered over his head.

I had a chair identical to the one Grouchy handed out, except it had a script to explode and go up to four thousand meters when someone sits on it. So I put that chair on the ground in front of me instead of the one the rest of the class had.

Grouchy went around the class checking to make sure everyone understood how to follow the lesson. “Try sitting on my chair, Grouchy.”

He did so. And when he landed, he said, “I just got a free trip to the clouds,” he said.

I tried to get Worldly to sit on the chair. “I’m not getting on that,” he said as a burst of flames surrounded it. “It’s already on fire.”

“Worldly needs to fix his chair,” Grouchy said. “And Lisa needs to fix her attitude.” We all laughed.

## Friday, August 20, 2010

### Bruce

On my radar, one of my neighbors was .01 meters away from some chick whose profile said she was wild. I’ve been to this guy’s place before. It was a bed out in the open. So I knew he was sleazy and decided not to spend time with him. I panned my view above his land and found an open pod in the sky. He was having sex with the chick there.

Baardes sent a sex table out to his group. I tried it out and sent a message to his group. “For those who have been searching for a sex bed that allows you to watch your avatar play with itself, here it is.”

Then while I was experimenting with it, the poseballs disconnected from the table and floated somewhere else. I asked Baardes about that. “Maybe you’re banging on it too hard.”

One of my new neighbors has a lesbian group in her profile. I realized that I had not seen anything yet about a whole aspect of virtual worlds that might be quite interesting – the gay community.

Well, it wasn’t interesting. I teleported to two lesbian clubs, but nobody was at either of them. The entire islands were devoid of other avatars. So I searched for a male gay club.

I found one that had about ten guys and one woman standing around. She was talking by voice, so I knew she was female in real life. There were no virtual alcoholic beverages around, but there was a stand that vended coffee, smoothies, and triple scoop ice cream cones.

I wondered if there was some kind of special implication in having ice cream at a gay bar, so I googled it. I got a lot of hits, but also got a lot of hits when I googled sex and ice cream, so I’m not sure if there is any inside joke about gays and ice cream.

Most of the people were outside, but one guy was dancing by himself inside, so I went in. He was wearing only a pair of shorts. “Do you have any clothes I could have?” he asked by voice. “I haven’t logged on in a long time and I’m missing most of my clothes.” I gave him a t-shirt and he thanked me. Then a bunch of the other guys came over. Maybe because the guy was talking by voice.

I went back outside and sat at a table next to another guy. “Hola,” he said.

“Como esta?” I responded. I wanted to ask where he was from. I typed ‘Donde esta…’ What next? ‘From’ in Spanish is ‘de,’ but it also means ‘of,’ so it’s not correct to say ‘Donde esta de.’ I decided to ask where he lives instead. So I typed “Donde esta viva?” But that didn’t seem right either. I think that means ‘Where is life.’ “Sorry, my Spanish isn’t even conversational,” I said. “But I tried.”

I tried another lesbian club. This one had a lot more people standing around. But they ejected me when I arrived. Didn’t look butch enough? Makes them sound pretty superficial. Kicking people out based on their avatar’s looks.

So I logged on with a female avatar and went back. This time they didn’t eject me. I stood around, but nobody chatted with me. Nobody chatted in the local chat either, so I didn’t have anything to play off of.

I thought about sending a message to one of the other female avatars hanging around. But I wasn’t sure what that would imply. I wasn’t interested in flirting, and I didn’t want to imply that I was looking for some type of relationship, long or short term. So after ten minutes of standing around, I left.

What would the intentions of kicking a male avatar out of a lesbian club be? Is it a really just a club for people who like looking at two female avatars have sex? That’s not necessarily just for lesbians.

It’s an avatar. You can’t tell if the person running the avatar is male, female, gay, or straight.

And even if you did know which of those four categories the person belonged to, what difference does it make if you’re never going to interact with them in person? Even if a guy is typing dirty stuff to a stranger that he knows is a straight woman, it’s still weird. Typing dirty words to a gay or straight man or a lesbian woman isn’t that much weirder.

### Ruby

I went to the lesbian club. This time a few people typed in the local chat, but again, nobody sent me any private messages. So I changed my shape into a man.

Then I got a message. A woman threatened to eject me if I didn’t turn back into a woman. Hey, at least my name was still female.

In the Learn Avatar chat, I asked why the lesbians insist that my avatar be female. You would think they’d rather insist that I be homosexual.

TeeVee knew a few things about different lesbian clubs. I think he visited some with the neighbors. “I even got kicked out of one non-lesbian club for being male,” he said.

One of the neighbors said that the reason for the No Male Avatar rule is that they often get men who come in to harass the women. They don’t mind if men are there, but they have to prove that they aren’t so vain that they refuse to be seen as a female avatar.

A neighbor sent a notice about some clothing templates she had found at a store. But when I got there, all I saw were pictures of models wearing clothing. And when I picked up the freebie, it was clothing, not a template.

So I asked the group what a template was. Someone asked me if I sew. No. Just because I have a female name, that does not mean that I spend my time sewing. If my name were Bruce, would she have asked if I sewed?

I don’t want any sewing analogies. I want to know what electronic format a template comes in and what technical capabilities and functions do I have if I use such a file.

## Sunday, August 29, 2010

### Bruce

GoldDigger sent a message out to her partner’s dance club offering a hundred Linden dollars to the first person who came by to dance with her. “I’ll dance with you,” I said. So I teleported there, we danced, and she gave me a hundred Linden dollars.

GoldDigger was jumping up and kissing everyone there. I think it was some animation script she was wearing. She was being quite amusing, telling everyone to watch out for her, giving out her phone number as 1-800-CALL-GOLD.

A club employee had posted boards around the place with clothing items for sale that were unrelated to the club or the ‘business,’ whatever the business was. I’m not sure if the employee was using her affiliation with the club to make money of her own, or if he gets the money when an item sells.

But I also noticed that the employee didn’t create the sales board herself. Which is odd, because they’re very easy to create. Instead, a third party business created the boards. Which makes me think that nobody in their business knows enough about Second Life to run his business. And that they’re either too egotistical or to lazy to learn. Instead he pays other people to do a little of this and a little of that. It seems that it’s less of a business and more of a forum for feeling important by having people do things at his beck and call that don’t really accomplish any goal.

People asked where GoldDigger’s partner was, although he had never been around any of the previous times I had stopped by. “He’s on a plane,” GoldDigger said.

“Where’s he going?” I asked.

“Heck, I don’t keep track of him,” she responded.

How close could you possibly be to someone who doesn’t tell you where they’re going on a trip to? Was he really on a plane, or did he tell her that because that’s what she’d want to hear? Or did she make that up because it sounded impressive?

I think GoldDigger has been abandoned GoldDigger to run the place on her own. Which she does gladly because she thinks her partner is an important man and that he wants her as a wife. I don’t think it’s occurred to her that she’s just an unpaid slave.

## Friday, September 3, 2010

### Ruby

I attended a meeting for nonprofits that I had found out about through a friend’s Twitter post. There were around forty people there. I told them about *Budget Justified* and found out about projects they were working on for the deaf, blind, women, transgendered.

There were several people who had mentioned in their profiles that they have PhDs. So I finally entered that into my profile.

I had previously been concerned that people would be less likely to chat with me if they knew I was much more educated than they were. I haven’t found many PhDs in Second Life so far.

But then there’s GoldDigger’s partner. Who tells people that he’s a millionaire in real life. Who has GoldDigger as his spokesperson for how important he is. Who doesn’t have a PhD. But inflates himself to get attention. Funny how a man gets a woman to do his bragging for him.

## Friday, September 10, 2010

### Ruby

Chachi was around today! I hadn’t seen Chachi forever. Nor Joni. I looked at his profile. He was no longer partnered to Joni! How could this be? The one partnership that I actually acknowledged as meaning something. Because they had known each other for six years.

Turns out that Chachi is getting married in real life! Good for him. He understands that pining for a woman on the computer is an indicator of mental instability.

Some guy named BigBalls walked up to me this morning. He was one day old. “Smells like an alt,” I said. “A griefer alt.” People who use Second Life objects, such as exploding chairs, to harass others are called griefers.

“Can you guess who I am?” he asked. Then I turned around and saw that BigBalls was a guy wearing high heels and a bikini. Then he ran off.

In the Learn Avatar chat, I said, “Watch out for BigBalls, a one day old guy in a bikini.”

I said that I thought it was Grouchy. He had come up to me as ‘edit appearance gone bad’ a while back when Psychology was visiting. “Yeah, it’s me,” Grouchy said. I found him on his land, but when approached in person, or in avatar, he denied that it was him.

“I don’t have time to run around in a bikini. I try to spend as little time around here as possible.” Which isn’t true because he’s always around. He’s just being his usual curmudgeon self.

I thought about a few people that BigBalls could be. First I thought of guys. Then I asked myself if it could be one of the women. I doubted that a woman would call herself BigBalls and dress as a man in high heels and a bikini, although I did think it was something that Joni might have done, or maybe even 3Timer or CollegeCS. I sent a private message to BigBalls, asking if he was LeetDork, TeeVee, Chachi, or Geek.

“Don’t you think I might be a girl?” he asked.

“No.” I responded without hesitation. “Because you have to be over eighteen to be here.” A brief pause. “And if you were female, you would have referred to yourself as a ‘woman,’ not ‘girl.’”

Worldly said that he knew four of my alts. “But this is my REAL alt,” I said.

BigBalls laughed. “What’s a real alt?”

Then he excused himself. “A girl needs some time to do her shopping,” he said.

I looked through the Learn Avatar member list to see if there was any likely candidate that I might have missed. I saw Rascal’s name. I had met him at a nude beach a while back. He had told me his wife doesn’t want to have sex with him. “Does anyone know if Rascal has land in Learn Avatar?” I asked in the neighborhood chat.

Worldly replied that he had land in his castle community. I told Worldly that I had met Rascal a while ago. “He’s kind of a perv,” I said. Worldly said Rascal wanted to have land near his girlfriend in Learn Avatar.

Girlfriend? Really. “I had tried to convince him to spend more time on his real life WIFE,” I told Worldly.

## Saturday, September 11, 2010

### Ruby

Why hadn’t it occurred to me that the BigBalls alt might be Baardes? We were just talking about alts last night. So I logged on as an alt and went to visit Baardes. Rather than wearing my usual attire from *Budget Justified* episodes, my alt wore a green letterman’s jacket, blue jeans, and sneakers.

Baardes wasn’t online when I stopped by, so I left a box with a bikini in it on his land. He had built an ornate archway with ivy and floral scrolls next to his dance club. A swing hung from the arch by two long ropes. When I sat on the swing, it swayed. Baardes showed up a minute later.

“Hi David,” I said.

His real name. I’m obviously someone he knows. He paused for a moment, probably looking through his friend list to figure out who I might be.

“Ruby,” he finally said. I wonder if he would have guessed it was me if I had appeared as a man.

I asked if he was BigBalls, but he denied it.

“Are you wearing a letterman’s jacket because that’s the kind of thing you’d wear in real life?” he asked.

“Well, I do like the jacket,” I said. But unlike the clothing Ruby usually wears, I don’t happen to own one like it.

“Would your husband prefer that you wear more girly clothes?” he asked.

First of all, my husband doesn’t dictate what I wear. Second of all, why would anyone expect a grown woman to wear something girly?

Baardes asked about the box I had left.

“I should leave boxes on Someone’s land as a griefing alt. She banned Ruby from her land.”

“Whose land?” Baardes asked. “Oh, I know. The jealous one. If you’re talking to Worldly, and female, you’re on her bad side.”

At least I’m not the only one who noticed that she has a problem.

As I was about to leave, Baardes mentioned, “You might want to take your box with you. I don’t have any use for that item.”

“Why not?” I asked. “That’s what BigBalls was wearing.”

I flew to Skitzo’s land and checked to see if my alt was also banned from her land. She wasn’t. But it was completely empty. Skitzo had removed her entire castle. Did she give up the land? No, I checked the ownership and it was still hers. Perhaps she wants to keep it so no other woman can be next door to Worldly.

Shortly after I left, Baardes sent a sex outhouse around to everyone in his group. I hadn’t actually intended to leave boxes on Skitzo’s land, but I thought that as long as Baardes had sent something out, I should leave it laying around. So I put the sex outhouse on Worldly’s land, facing Skitzo’s empty property.

### Bruce

When I logged on, a forty-five year old neighbor was telling everyone in Learn Avatar chat that someone had changed the textures on his gazebo. Well, it’s not possible for anyone to edit someone else’s objects unless you give one of your friends editing permissions.

I was nearby, so I went over to help.

Then the guy went on a rant for the whole neighborhood to read. “I found the guy! He RUINED my gazebo! I’m gonna make him fix this! He’s right here! Everyone come and take him out!”

At first I didn’t know who he was talking about. Then I realized he was referring to me.

What an idiot. I had come over to see what he was bitching about. I’m not even in his friend list. The gazebo wasn’t ruined. There was nothing I could do to help him, so I walked away.

Several people tried defending me in Learn Avatar chat.

“Just change the damn texture back to whatever you want it to be.”

“Our land is a learning environment. There’s a reason we don’t allow ban lines. We’re supposed to go around and see what everyone else is building.”

The guy’s partner said, “Brad has a device that changes textures on other people’s objects.”

She’s an idiot too.

“There’s no such device,” one of my neighbors said.

“If there were, people would go around changing textures on competitors’ store display boards, or put graffiti and advertising in popular areas,” another replied.

I found Shopper on her land nearby. “That guy is weirding me out,” I said.

Shopper said, “You’re still new. You couldn’t possibly have such a device.”

I’ll always be a newbie to Shopper. After all, I was wearing my brick t-shirt and granite pants.

One of the headmasters went over to the guy’s land to see what was going on. She must have explained that I couldn’t possible have anything to do with his gripes because he ‘apologized’ to me in the neighborhood chat.

“Sorry. But would you come on to someone’s land uninvited in real life and expect that I wouldn’t accuse you of stealing?” Nice backhanded apology.

Well, this isn’t real life. And you can’t steal people’s objects if they aren’t set to get taken. And this isn’t his land. It’s Learn Avatar’s land. He was given the privilege of reserved space to build things on a specific plot.

TeeVee got into the discussion, mostly to put in a good word for me. “Bruce is a good guy. He wouldn’t go around griefing you like that.”

Then Grouchy got into an argument with TeeVee and Sweets about something that happened yesterday. “You and your girlfriend need to keep your parties on your own land.”

“What are you talking about, Grouchy,” Sweets said. “We all hang out in the neighborhood on everyone’s land.” Nobody could figure out what Grouchy’s problem was about.

I sent TeeVee a private message. “I feel bad for Grouchy, being grouchy all the time.”

“It’s probably because Grouchy doesn’t have a girlfriend, but Sweets and I have each other,” he said.

“I think you’re right,” I said. “I’ve seen Grouchy hanging around Learn Avatar with different women, but he seems uncomfortable getting too close.”

## Monday, September 20, 2010

### Ruby

Grouchy complained to me about the device I put on my land that invites people to join my BudgetJustified.com group. “It’s spamming everyone,” he said.

“Has anyone complained?”

“Yes,” he said. “Me.”

“It’s not spamming everyone. Only people who come near my land.”

“You have a sidewalk on your land, so it affects people passing through.”

So I scrammed back to my land to change it. By moving it farther away from the sidewalk.

I don’t know if Grouchy was trying to tease me, or if he was trying to police me. It seemed like the latter, although I think he likes having me around, so maybe he sounded harsher than he meant to.

I chatted with BigBalls again. He had a male body with female hairstyle. He was wearing tight pink pants and a zebra-striped half shirt while pole dancing at a neighbor’s place. This neighbor has pictures of boobs everywhere. Sure, it’s OK to have faceless boob pictures, but not my BudgetJustified.com group.

There’s something humorous about a guy in woman’s clothing. Must be some type of Corporal Klinger effect. Except it’s much funnier when it’s hot pink and zebra striped, rather than a dowdy dress.

But maybe it’s not the clothing, nor the gender. Maybe it’s the attitude with which the clothing is worn. Not even a woman can wear hot pink and zebra stripes and expect to fade into the corner.

### Bruce

When I logged on, I was in the middle of a fire building class. Luckily I didn’t appear in anyone’s fire. Although Shopper got her fire in her skirt a few times. She solved that by wearing her fire in her hair.

So I selected “wear” for my fire too. My fire jumped to my butt. “My butt’s on fire,” I said calmly. As anyone would, if their butt happened to be on fire.

TeeVee set a box with a picture of Sweets on fire. He and Sweets broke up again. I don’t know what happened, but TeeVee’s status is ‘single and looking.’ I wonder what they did with all their Second Life kids.

Shopper said, “Worldly and Skitzo are getting married soon. I’m putting together a few things for their honeymoon.”

“Like a fire pit?” I asked.

I looked through my inventory to see if I had anything that might help. I found a dog penis.

“Here’s something,” I said and handed her the penis.

“What am I going to do with a dog penis?” she asked. I didn’t know. I didn’t even know I had it, or where it had come from.

## Monday, October 4, 2010

### Ruby

I flew over to the sim where Worldly had his castle. But it wasn’t there. I said hi to the people nearby, but they only chatted in Spanish. Then they ejected me from their land, bouncing me several meters away. Then they ejected me from that parcel. I landed several meters away again, only to get ejected again. I tried to fly back to my land, but their parcel had been designated as a no fly zone. I may not have been able to fly, but I was able to bounce up and down in the air above their territory as I continued to get ejected whenever I landed on the top of their parcel. Eject, fall. Eject, fall. Boing, drop.

“Someone in Learn Avatar keeps ejecting me from the land,” I said in neighborhood chat while my view kept bouncing on my screen. Then I looked at the perpetrators’ profiles. Although they owned the land, they weren’t in the Learn Avatar group. “Unless the Golden Valley sim is no longer owned by Learn Avatar,” I added.

“Owner sold it,” someone replied. Grouchy teleported me back to our neighborhood. “Our new neighbors aren’t very friendly,” he said.

Worldly was promoted to head director. I searched his profile and found out he was online. So I went to his land to see if he was around. I didn’t see him, but landed on Grouchy’s head instead.

Grouchy was standing on his land, wearing bright yellow shorts. “Hi banana pants,” I said. He must have gone away from his keyboard because he didn’t respond. So I left around twenty bananas on the ground in front of him.

When he returned, he sent me a message saying that a monkey had been by to visit him. “Oooh! Oohhh eeee ah ah ah!” I responded.

“Is that Ruby or the monkey talking” he asked.

“A monkey took over my account,” I said.

Grouchy and Sleepless stopped by during their weekly review of everyone’s land. “You’re holding hands,” I said.

“We are?” Sleepless asked.

At first I wasn’t quite sure if that’s what they were doing. But their hands were still next to each other while they walked around. It’s cute that Grouchy has someone to hold hands with.

## Thursday, November 18, 2010

### Ruby

I tried to go to a Ruby on Rails programming group. But when I tried to teleport, the place no longer existed.

So I sent a message to the group members who had most recently logged in. Then I sent a message to the Builders Brewery group to find out if anyone knew anything about a Ruby on Rails group.

Most of them had never heard of Ruby on Rails. Obviously not programmers. One guy was into web programming and talked to me on voice chat about it. I gave him a few vague details about what I am working on. He suggested integrating it with Facebook to start. Nice idea, but I’m not sure that what I’m doing isn’t similar enough to Facebook for that to work well.

I got a message back from one of the Ruby group members. He said that the original group owner died in a car accident. I’m not sure how he would have found out this information.

A guy that I had never met before posted a question in Learn Avatar chat. “Someone want sexo?”

To which another person replied, “Someone want banning?” I don’t think anyone banned him from the group, but he was told not to ask for that again.

“What’s sexo?” Baardes asked.

“It’s a type of cakes,” someone replied.

“Mmm…cakes,” I said.

Then the guy sent me a private message. “You want?”

So in neighborhood chat I said, “Don’t send me private messages asking for sex. I’m old enough to be your mom.” Of course, I don’t have any concrete information regarding his age, however I’m guessing that anyone who goes into a public neighborhood chat and asks for sex is under 21.

Worldly and I chatted awhile. I told him that I had been having problems logging on. “Personal or technical?” he asked. Technical, dear. I’m not the one with personal problems. Turned out that the old viewer I had was incompatible with an update to Second Life.

I checked to see if Skitzo was online. She wasn’t. But her profile said they had gone to virtual Vegas to get married.

He didn’t mention his “marriage.” I don’t think he wanted to bring it up. I don’t care. I roll my eyes at the thought, anyway.

Lately I’m not interested in finding a Second Life best friend, boyfriend, or even dance partner. I don’t want to acquire another Adventurer then get bored of his company. From what I know of most of the people I’ve met, I think I’d tire of them quickly after spending more time with them.

In some ways, I’m still like a teenager in Second Life. Feeling out what it means to date, what kind of friends to hang out with, and where I want to meet people. Deciding what kind of boyfriend, best friend, or if I even want either. I came into Second Life a clean slate; nobody knew anything about me. I get to experiment with how I present myself to others. And I’ve pretty much been presenting myself the same way I do in real life.

But I’m growing out of that teenager phase. Instead of hanging out, wanting to be popular, looking for a boyfriend, I’m more interested in experimenting with online interaction.

I used to worry that people would figure out that Bruce and Ruby were the same person. Yet nobody blinks an eye. Does that mean my personality could pass for a man in real life? I’m not sure there is much difference between men and women personality-wise. People just want to think that there is.

## How about a store

I’ve gotten pretty comfortable with playing Bruce over the months. I decided to make him my main avatar since I had been going around as Ruby the majority of my time online so far.

I wanted to find out if Bruce would develop more friendships without Ruby around so much. And if those friendships would be different than those I’ve had so far.

## Monday, November 22, 2010

### Bruce

I went dancing with Bruce at a country dance bar to win money by voting for each other. You don’t even have to stare at the computer the whole time. You can work on something else and still win as long as your avatar is still there at the end of voting.

I went to a country dance bar and chatted with a woman wearing pink bunny slippers. In broken English, she said she was in Germany. I asked where she had learned English. The United States. She wasn’t German, she was a US soldier stationed in Germany.

I was concerned about how much longer it would be before the vote took place, because I wanted to go somewhere in real life. I could leave the computer on while I was out, but Second Life logs you out if you’re inactive for more than thirty minutes. Bunny told me to change a setting to 999999999 seconds. I entered 99999, it wouldn’t let me enter any more characters. But the number changed to 600, apparently the limit for this setting.

I mentioned this to Slippers. “It’s still a lot of seconds,” she said. Where did she learn math? It’s ten minutes. Not good enough to keep me from getting logged out in half an hour. Good old American education system. Those who get a crummy education are given the Darwinian treatment – send them off to be shot in a war.

Slippers was there with several real life coworkers. Instead of going out to a real bar after work, they all came to a country dance bar in Second Life.

She said she’d vote for me in the contest. I voted for her. But after the results were displayed, I didn’t win any votes. At first I thought there was a glitch in the voting machine. Then I realized it’s more likely that a human lied than a computer. She must have actually voted for one of her friends.

I had thought she might vote for one of her friends. But I wanted to build a rapport with someone, so I voted for her, as I said I would. I would’ve been much better off voting for Ruby. I don’t think I’ll be contacting Slippers any time soon.

### Bruce

I had set up Twitter, Facebook, and blog accounts for my Bruce when I created him. Well, I haven’t checked the email account that I used for these accounts for months. Bruce had over forty Facebook friend requests. By the time I responded to them, several of the avatars weren’t even on Facebook anymore. I also had over a hundred group, fan page, and event invitations. And I don’t want to get started on how many Farmville notifications I received. Got to change my settings so I don’t get any more email.

I’m renting shop space! Ruby stopped by to give me several items to put in my store.

The mall where my store has trees and park benches right outside my shop. Two streets run among three rows of shops. I have a front and back entrance, one on each street.

CatMan, the owner of the mall stopped by and chatted with Ruby and me. He has a partner but is very friendly to Ruby, even though Bruce is the renter. He’s from Brazil and plays a human cat. The mall theme is supposed to be about people who play cats, or Nekos, but there’s also a Santa store and an India store.

I like having Bruce work on this store because it gives the appearance that it’s not just me, that I have a team. And because having a guy putting up stuff about a harassment movie looks like it’s not just a whiny woman going out to rant.

A woman named Manalo stopped by. Everything she chatted ended with an exclamation point! Trying to make it seem like she’s talking in a high squeaky voice? I chatted with her a little while, asked how she found the mall. Then she disappeared and sent me a teleport invitation.

The location name seemed familiar. And when I arrived, I knew why. Ruby had been teleported there several months ago by a weird guy who didn’t speak any English. He had been teleporting a whole bunch of women there, and they disappeared as soon as they saw the red sex beds and cages.

On a stage amongst the red beds, Manalo was pole dancing. “Are you a man in real life?” I asked.

“No, Manalo is my boyfriend’s name,” he/she/it said.

I hadn’t thought of that, but since Manalo ends with an ‘o,’ it’s more likely a man’s name. Especially if it’s of Spanish or Portuguese origin. But I wasn’t guessing Manalo’s gender based on the name. I was basing my hypothesis on the actions. Not many women going around as female avatars use so many exclamation points! Or blindly teleport people to pole dancing orgy halls.

## Friday, November 26, 2010

### Bruce

I went to a pole dance club where there were a lot of women hanging around, but not many men. Or at least not many male avatars.

One of them told me I should buy a new standing and walking animation override so I wouldn’t look like such a newbie. “I think it makes me look as though I don’t care for any of the AOs that are available,” I said.

And to tell you the truth, I’ve noticed that I don’t care for the people who go out and get fancy skin, clothes, animation overrides, etc. either. To me, that’s a sign of shallowness. I don’t want to chat with anyone who is preoccupied with the glamor of their avatar. I’d much rather spend my time with people who are here for intellectual reasons than with people who are trying to be digital A-listers.

The pole dancers chatted about which items of clothing they were removing and where they were putting their fingers, even though you could clearly see that their avatars weren’t doing any of those things. I’m not sure why the pole dancers think they’re being erotic. It seems so contrived to me that it’s just silly. Weird what people choose to do when they’re anonymous.

I got bored of the finger chat so, curious about what kind of people stopped by such a place, I looked at the profile of the only other male avatar in the room. He had some kind of nonsense math equation in his real life profile, so in local chat I said, “If x+x=female, and x+y=male, what does y+y equal?”

“Gay?” one of the women guessed. Actually, I think that would result an extreme physical deformity – if it’s even possible.

“There’s a naked blond on stage and you’re asking questions.” Well, there was a blond avatar near me, but I didn’t have her in my view.

“I thought the math question was more interesting,” I said.

“You’re being disrespectful to the pole dancers by chatting about math,” the club owner said. And she meant it; she wasn’t trying to be funny. Math is disrespectful, but pole dancing isn’t?

In the Learn Avatar chat, I asked what the chat protocol was for pole dancing venues.

“That’s why I like Second Life. People can do whatever they want here.” Is that the kind of society we want to associate ourselves with? A forum where we can be rude and offensive, but we can’t talk about math for fear of insulting the pole dancers.

## Saturday, December 4, 2010

### Bruce

I popped into a class that I had no idea what it was supposed to be about. The title on the announcement was ‘3D sketching.’ The instructor arrived and, although I believe that her native language was English, she said in broken English that the goal was to “renew our inner self through building.”

“What’s this Inner Self stuff?” I asked.

“Its an underwear store that went bankrupt,” Shopper said.

“It’s building from the heart without letting the left brain interfere,” Sweets said.

“The spontaneous builder in you,” the instructor said.

“I can be spontaneous,” I explained, “but it’s not because of my heart.”

“Is it your head?” the instructor asked.

“Fingers,” I said. No, I wasn’t referring to chat about where I stick my fingers, I was referring to what I use to type.

While I waited to figure out what the class was about, I created pants that were made out of a sculpty file. Sculpties are graphics files that contain data for creating a shape out of a prim. If you open them, they look rainbow colored. When you put them on pants, you get tie dye. Then I created a shirt out of a graphic of a technical paper.

Jak was running around all over the sandbox while we chatted. Someone told him to settle down. “Just get to the damn lesson,” Jak said.

“Be patient,” the instructor said.

“All this heart crap is tiring,” Jak responded.

“Stop complaining,” Sweets said.

“We should mute Jak,” Sleepless said.

Then Worldly showed up. The rest of the class decided to leave and hold class elsewhere. I started to follow them, but then Worldly sent me a private message asking what had happened.

“I didn’t think Jak was any more disruptive than anyone else in the class had been,” I said.

Interesting that out of everyone who was attending that class, Worldly asked me what happened. Maybe Bruce seemed more impartial than the other people standing around. Perhaps because Bruce was male.

Jak said he had around thirty alts. “I keep having to create a new one because people keep getting mad at me.”

I looked at his profile and saw that he belonged to a hobo group. I asked him if lives in California. He does. “Do you have an alt named Jack?” I asked. He wouldn’t admit to it.

I asked if he used to live in Noobieville, if he used to have a hobo girlfriend named Crystal, if he had been friends with Northern. He denied it all. But when I saw him the next day, he admitted that he was indeed Jack, Northern’s friend, whom I hadn’t seen for almost a year.

Jak mentioned that he had met Skitzo at a club a while ago. He said that she was one of the better DJs, with a good microphone and selection of music.

“Where’s Skitzo?” I asked.

“She disappeared about two months ago,” Worldly said.

“WHAT?”

“She decided to get back with her husband in real life.”

I looked at her profile. It still says that she and Worldly got married in virtual Vegas and that she loves him so much. I wonder if she’s wandering around as an alt now.

After Jak left, Worldly asked me, “So you’re single in real life?”

“Pretty much,” I responded. I didn’t want to give details about Bruce’s real life love life. Because there are none. No real life Bruce, no love life.

Skitzo probably got bored with Worldly, he didn’t create enough drama in her life. So rather than be straight with him, she just disappeared a few days after their elopement. Why did she even bother with the wedding?

But if she is getting back with her husband, I think that’s the right thing to do. Although I wonder if she ever even ‘left’ him, since she was still living in the same house with him. And if Worldly was just a distraction, a boyfriend in the computer, cheating without going out. It would have been one thing to play that he was the guy she hung out with online, but if in order to play that game she had to pretend that she was in love with Worldly and had to tell him that she was leaving her husband, that she was his real life girlfriend too, that’s just cruel.

And here I had been waiting for Worldly to tell me he and Skitzo had gotten engaged, then I waited for him to tell me that they had gotten online married. Now I’m wondering if he was afraid of an “I told you so.” Or just didn’t want to talk about it. Or maybe he’s just closer to his other online friends.

Since Bruce’s persona is a single person, I couldn’t justify discussing dating someone over the internet versus having a long term in-person relationship. Kind of like, if in-person dating is so meaningful, why haven’t I already found someone in real life.

This wasn’t about my love life anyway. It was about Worldly.

Maybe Worldly didn’t want to talk about himself anymore either. I was in private chat with Shopper, so I teleported her over to hang out with us, break the sadness.

Still wearing my paper shirt and tie dyed pants, I asked Shopper, “How do you like my outfit?”

She asked if I wanted the truth. “No,” I replied.

“I love it!”

## Saturday, December 4, 2010

### Bruce

This morning I had a dance removed from my inventory. Apparently others did also because there was a chat about it in the Builders Brewery. “I don’t know how anyone knew what I had in my inventory,” I said.

“Big Brother Linden knows what’s in everyone’s inventory,” someone replied, referring to the creator of Second Life. “And they’re reading all chats too.”

“I didn’t think it was the Lindens reading our chats,” I said. “I thought it was the CIA.”

“The CIA just monitors the Al Qaida training lands,” someone else replied.

“Al Qaida is training here for their 17 virgins,” I said. With all the sex rooms here, they probably are.

“Haven’t you heard of Osama Bin Linden?” someone asked.

Someone asked for a script that would prompt a noise when you sat on an object, and then changed when the animation changed.

“You’re making a whoopee cushion?” someone asked.

“No. A dishwasher,” the guy replied. “But the idea is the same.”

“Dishwasher my ass. It’s a whoopee cushion,” someone replied.

“It’s a sex dishwasher,” I said.

The guy gave me a suitcase and told me to click on the handle. It opened into a bed with pose balls. But not sex pose balls – reading, sleeping, dancing, eating, and jumping on the bed. Damn. This is the joke bed I had been thinking about back when Joni gave me the sex bed she was working on.

Linden Labs sent out a notice that they were going to start allowing teenagers into the main grid, or lands where all the adults hang out. Right now they’re only allowed in the teen grid. The Lindens said that they are confident that the limits on the teen avatars are sufficient to prevent them from engaging in porn.

The Builders had a few words to say about this. The most vocal people were upset that teens were going to be allowed into their world.

“I’m horrified that my son’s college professor introduced the class to Second Life.” Oh? What are you doing online that you should be horrified about?

“It would be nice if there were more educational activities, something that we didn’t have to be ashamed to show teens around here,” I said.

Well that unleashed a torrent of hostility. “If we had educational activities, it would be boring and everyone would leave…” What does that say about someone’s intellectual level, when they believe that everything educational is boring and that the only interesting thing to do in Second Life is pornographic? Really? We shouldn’t have to be exposed to something we might be able to learn from?

“I don’t want Second Life to be like going to church…” Who said that having teens in the community was like going to church? If anything, it would be very unsolemn to have teens around.

“I should be able to have sex and not worry about whether it’s with my fifteen year old daughter…” Anyone who has sex with people they know so little about is scary. How sick are they, that they’re doing activities that might expose a fifteen year old to porn? It’s sad that the ‘builders’ online are deviant pornographers. What kind of a world are we building?

I defended those who were sick of the porn. “A friend of mine,” (I was referring to LevelHead) “left Second Life because of all the harassment she experienced.”

“If you don’t like what goes on in part of Second Life, don’t hang out there.”

Exactly. LevelHead didn’t like the way she was treated in ALL areas of Second Life that she visited, so she left. The way I was treated in the Builders Brewery was hostile. I should leave it.

## Sunday, December 5, 2010

### Bruce

LevelHead was online for a long time today. Her profile said that she had signed up to work at a club as an escort. Weird, because she was totally not interested in the sleazy stuff.

I went to the Learn Avatar sandbox to fix a picket sign someone gave me. I changed the graphic to a screen shot from *Budget Justified* and added a slogan, “Vote Against Masturbation in Government Offices” to explain the activity I would be protesting against. It was a sign I had made in real life to bring to the Rally For Sanity in DC. Coincidentally, it was also quite relevant to what goes on in Second Life.

I left a copy of the sign in the sandbox. Soon thereafter I received a message from Grouchy asking me to pick up my trash. He’s always policing the place.

One of my neighbors gave me a car so I drove it past Grouchy. He was alone building an overhead rail system so I stopped to chat.

Grouchy said that the turnover rate in Learn Avatar was about a hundred per month.

”How many people are still around who joined back when Learn Avatar started?” I asked.

We thought there might be around ten. When I first joined Learn Avatar, there were two sims and about a hundred residents. Now there are twelve sims and over nine hundred residents.

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“If you were still married, you wouldn’t be able to travel,” I said.

Hm, perhaps I shouldn’t have mentioned his late wife. Ruby knows that Grouchy had been widowed, but he hadn’t mentioned it to Bruce. Perhaps Grouchy would be flattered if he thought that Ruby had been talking about him. But would he think it was likely that she’d mention that information?

We joked about partnering, and commented on a few partnerships that were jokes. “I think I'd have a very different impression of a lot of people in real life,” I said.

“Yes, I’m sure,” Grouchy replied.

I think Grouchy suspects that Bruce might be Ruby, especially since Bruce has *Budget Justified* in his profile now. I’m not sure Grouchy would have chatted about personal things with Bruce, whom he has met only a few times. But he would chat awhile with Ruby.

Grouchy really enjoys being online. I’m not sure if that’s good or bad. Sometimes I feel like even though it’s real people, it’s a pretend world that takes away from my real world. Grouchy is hopeful for the growth of Second Life and sees it as a powerful tool for the future of how people work together across continents and build communities.

“I’ve gone to a few meetings where people talked about the charity work they do in real life.” He asked how that went. “Very professional. People with advanced degrees. Not the same people you meet in clubs.”

“Not the riff raff showing Linden love,” Grouchy said.

I wonder if the riff raff are predisposed to making sexual innuendos online because there is no body language. You can’t tell if the person is attracted or repulsed by you, so you have to use flirt chat to communicate interest. It would be so hollow to have sex chat online with my husband. Because the sex chat wouldn’t reflect the way I’d wish to interact with him. I’d much rather see his eyes, posture, smile. Yet when it’s a more abstract, more imagined person, and more imagined relationship, the flirt chat is no big deal.

## Sunday, December 12, 2010

### Bruce

The nonsense math equation guy and his rude girlfriend are now a part of Learn Avatar. I recognized him from his equation and her from her rudeness.

Equation guy sent out a notice that he was offering a class. So I teleported to the sandbox they were in, wearing my paper shirt and tie dye pants, carrying my BudgetJustified.com Vote Against Masturbation in Government Offices sign.

“What do you want?” the girlfriend asked.

“Class.” I wanted a class. What does anyone who shows up in a Learn Avatar sandbox upon receiving a class announcement want?

“I don’t like your sign. Get lost.”

I didn’t want to be associated with that bitch any longer so I teleported out of there with no further words. I’ve been in Learn Avatar since it began. She just showed up. What makes her think she has any right to boss anyone around.

I stopped by a few nude beaches carrying my Vote Against Masturbation sign. At one beach, a chick told me to get rid of my sign or she’d ban me from the beach. She kept arguing with me about what the sign meant. She obviously wasn’t the owner of the beach. Just a lackey patrolling the beach. Owners don’t harass customers.

Just as I was about to teleport away, she said I could continue to hold my sign as long as I joined their group. Yeah, right. I’m going to pay five hundred Linden dollars, after getting chided like a little boy, to hold my sign at their orgy.

Not the kind of people I wanted to hang out with.

I stopped by my store, still wearing my paper shirt and rainbow pants. CatMan told me I needed to upgrade my avatar. “A lot of people tell me that,” I said.

CatMan took me to an empty field. A friend of his showed up. The only thing he had entered in his profile was, ‘I’m gay.’ A few of CatMan’s other friends at the Neko mall had seemed gay too. CatMan has a female partner, so I don’t think he’s gay.

He gave me a few skins, shapes, hair, clothes, and an animation override. I sent Shopper a message. “A guy is giving me a makeover,” I said.

“It’s about time,” she responded and asked for a teleport.

CatMan told me to take off all my clothes and put on the new skin. “In front of Shopper?” I asked. Luckily his gay friend had already left.

I put CatMan’s skin, shape, and Brazil clothing. The jeans he gave me looked gay. Like women’s Capri pants. So I put on some other jeans I already owned.

“You look hot,” Shopper said. “Worldly would be jealous that you’ll be getting all the women.”

“I don’t look like this in real life,” I said. But didn’t get into the details of how different my real life look is.

I have to admit that I liked the face more than any others I’ve ever tried. And even though the muscle shading and shape were extreme, they looked more realistic than many angular hulk shapes I’ve seen.

Still wearing CatMan’s jacket that said ‘Brasil’ across the front, I went back to Learn Avatar and met two women from Brazil. “See my jacket?” I asked. “Chaqueta,” I translated.

They continued chatting in Portuguese, I said a few things in Spanish and English. I don’t know any Portuguese, but I know a few words in Spanish, which is close. I think they said my jacket was bonita, or pretty. I think I responded by saying that the women were bonita.

## Sunday, December 19, 2010

### Bruce

I gave up the store after my rent expired. I wasn’t spending enough time on it and it wasn’t like anyone was dropping by.

LevelHead isn’t an escort anymore, or at least it’s not mentioned in her profile. I didn’t ask her about it. Although she said she has been dating a lot online lately.

I asked how that was going. “Some people are jerks. But I teleport away if I get sick of them,” she said. I have a feeling that happens a lot.

She’s currently involved in a week-long fling. She received a private message from him. “I think he’s about to break it off,” she said. “He thinks I seem uninterested. Probably because I am.”

A few moments later she said, “Nope, he didn’t break it off.”

Then she asked if I was interested in flings.

“Not really. I don’t feel like boring myself by trying to lead someone on that I have no interest in.” And it’s creepy. No matter what gender I happen to be in real life. I’ve tried to meet women, not for flings, but I didn’t try very hard. I wasn’t into it. I felt that I’d rather be doing something else.

I visited Shopper and her latest boyfriend. They have a house together. He wasn’t being very chatty, probably chatting in private message to someone else.

“How is Worldly doing?” I asked.

“He’s dating Dakota now. Skitzo stopped by to tell us that she’s using her alt from now on.”

“I thought alts were supposed to be secret. If she’s gonna tell you about it, why bother having an alt?”

“She’s a drama queen,” Shopper said. “Her alt is partnered to someone already. But she told us that her partner is yet another alt.”

Sure he is. She probably also told her partner that Worldly mistreated her and ‘took advantage of her sweet demeanor.’

I’ve met Dakota, although I haven’t had much interaction with her. She’s a mentor in Learn Avatar. She has some odd conspiracy ramblings in her profile, but she’s nice enough.

## Saturday, January 15, 2011

### Bruce

And today Worldly is partnered with Dakota. Not that I expected him to mention something to me about it first.

I stopped by Silverado during a dance contest and asked a few women if they wanted to do a three-way vote. But they weren’t smart enough to understand how three people would share votes. I still won money because someone voted for me anyway. Although I never found out who it was.

The theme during the contest was Cup o’ Coffee. If you put your name on the voting board, you had to be drinking coffee. So I gave everyone a cup of BudgetJustified.com coffee.

The second dance contest was called Assless. Assless? What does that mean?

I figured it out when the owner of the club said, “You can’t wear those pants if you’re going to be in the contest.” I looked around and noticed that everyone else was wearing chaps with their fashionable underwear in full view.

I didn’t have any chaps, so I made tightie whities and thigh-length purple socks. They were assless, but had more of a Superman look than country dancing. The club owner took one look and gave me chaps and a black thong.

Once I had those on, I announced in barroom chat, “Check out my awesome asslessness.”

I asked how I could find a partner. “That takes time,” someone responded.

“Not in Second Life,” I replied.

A woman said she found her partner at one of the stores nearby.

“How much did he cost?” someone asked her.

“I thought Partners were supposed to be in western saloons,” I said. You know, like Howdy Partner.

The profile of one of the bar owners said she was ‘taken’ by the club co-owner. But she wasn’t partnered to him.

“Why aren’t you partnered?” I asked.

“You’ll have to ask him,” she replied.

He was there, so I chatted with him a bit before asking. They had known each other for almost a year. He didn’t think that was quite long enough to justify getting married. I agreed. “So many people get partnered, but that lasts for a month,” he said. He wanted the relationship. Not the status. Yeah, no tax breaks or free citizenship for virtual marriage.

One of the guys there told me about Dry Gulch, another country dance place. I went to check it out. There were tumbleweeds, but they didn’t tumble. They slid.

Dry Gulch was just as hopping as Silverado. The theme was pajamas, so I put on my BudgetJustified.com t-shirt and my granite pants. I gave a BudgetJustified.com shirt to all the guys who weren’t wearing shirts. One guy gave me a cool pair of jeans.

Funny how the guys there were more friendly to me than the women.

## Tuesday, January 18, 2011

### Ruby

I logged on and appeared in the middle of a class. The instructor sent me a private message that seemed a little rude. “You’re in the way. Sit down on one of the seats mis ruby,” she said.

“It’s Dr. Ruby,” I responded. I rarely pull that, but it often seems that the twenty-year-olds treat everyone like street rats. It’s time I get a little more respect online.

The instructor only allowed eight people to attend this class. She had placed eight seats in a circle and turned one person away because I was there. I sent him a private message offering my seat, but he declined. The instructor wouldn’t even let him hover near the class to watch. “What is the purpose of rules if nobody follows them,” she responded.

The purpose of rules? It certainly isn’t for the sake of rules. It’s not as if he was harassing people. In fact, the purpose of many rules around here is to harass. I don’t blame the guy for not wanting to come back to her class.

What was very interesting about the attitude is that this instructor chooses to go around as a child avatar. Appropriate, since she was acting childlike. I don’t need to take classes from children.

In Learn Avatar chat, someone asked to borrow money. “Begging is not allowed here,” Dakota said.

“Never live above your means,” I added.

I sent Dakota a private message congratulating her on her new partnership with Worldly. She didn’t respond.

Now I’m imagining Dakota sending paranoid messages to Worldly asking who I am, how does he know me, why hasn’t he mentioned me before, etc. Then Worldly telling me not to hang around him when Dakota is around because there’s too much drama.

Roboto teleported me to a skybox where he was building a grid from the movie *Tron*. It looked pretty futuristic – black squares with light blue gridlines. Metallic robots and sleek cyber vehicles occupied the grid. A neon green circuitry hologram appeared in front of Roboto whenever he typed.

“Grouchy let me build a *Tron* mockup here, even though we aren’t supposed to have skyboxes in Learn Avatar,” Roboto told me. I decided I didn’t need to tell anyone about it. If too many people in Learn Avatar found out that Grouchy let him have a skybox, there might be an uprising. And I don’t need to be a part of that fight.

We talked about putting on an event, or even some type of class, where I would create a digital movie of avatars acting out scenes in *Budget Justified*.

I mentioned it to Worldly in a private message. He didn’t like the idea. “It could be construed as advertising, which isn’t allowed,” he said. The *Tron* megastudio movie set is allowed, but little indie *Budget Justified* is considered advertising? Who is making up these rules?

I let Roboto know that Worldly wasn’t too keen on the idea.

“Maybe he’s concerned that you might use non-LA actors,” Roboto said, referring to non-Learn Avatar avatars.

“Is that a union joke?” I asked. As in non-Los Angeles actors.

Grouchy was in the Learn Avatar office. He’s always in the office lately. He seems so lonely there. I thought about mentioning Roboto’s skybox, but thought I’d try chitchat first.

“Why haven’t you ever partnered with Sleepless?” It seemed only logical, since they often built projects together. I had seen them holding hands once a while ago.

“I have a girlfriend,” he said.

“Really? Who?”

“Not a Second Life girlfriend. I met her in a different online forum.”

Eh, that doesn’t count.

Offhandedly, I asked, “Do you want to be partners with me?” I thought it would be funny if people saw our names in each other’s profiles and were confused, or at least gave him a hard time. I think the request confused him too.

He wasn’t interested. “Partners are ridiculous. Like TeeVee and Sweets, for example.”

Yeah, that was a weird couple. Heck, they were weird individuals. I’m not online as Ruby enough anymore anyway, and I don’t want to feel obligated to come online just to sit and watch while he builds things nobody is going to use.

He probably thought I wanted something from him. To do some work for me, or at least to allow me to advertise my BudgetJustified.com group.

### Bruce

In the distance, three primary-colored hemispheres zipped back and forth across the horizon. I went over to find out what they were and found noob hair and a pair of shoes building train tracks. According to the tag above the hair, it belonged to Grouchy, who appeared to have problems appearing.

“Are you trying to be hair and shoes, or is there a problem with my viewer?” I asked.

“I’m fiddling with my cache size,” he said. “So I might be the problem.”

Grouchy added a big brown box to the train setup and put a texture on it that had a window with illegible graffiti underneath.

“Is this another project you’re working on with Sleepless?” I asked. Sleepless was into the slum look.

He didn’t answer the question I asked, perhaps because he didn’t know the answer himself.

“It’s an overhead steam railway.”

I wasn’t sure where this railway was supposed to go. The place was deserted, with not much else being built. Grouchy and I were the only ones within radar distance. It seemed pretty lonely.

“Nobody’s around anymore,” I said. “A lot of the original people here – Worldly, Ruby, TeeVee – have given up their plots.

“Turnover is around a hundred people per month,” Grouchy said.

“Why do you stick around? Because of what you create, or for female attention?”

“The participation in something for the future. Virtual worlds will be used to map the real world. To plan roads, building developments. Imagine going to work every day online in a virtual world.”

So much of today’s business is online, through social media, collaborative web sites, that in some ways, we are going to work in a virtual world. It will happen, but not in Second Life.

“I’ve gone to a few business meetings in Second Life. They were very professional, although a few people were dressed horribly. Most of the people there had advanced degrees. The people who attended that meeting are not the same people you find at dance clubs online.”

“No riff-raff showing poseball love,” Grouchy quipped.

“Obscenity is expected at clubs,” I said.

“The obscenity is just acting,” Grouchy observed. “People come here to act out roles that they’d never play in real life. Too inhibited.”

I wouldn’t label it ‘just acting.’ It’s reinforcing and enhancing their thoughts and attitudes toward propagating obscenity. Like practicing to become porn stars. Or porn consumers. Becoming less inhibited.

“I wonder how some of these people at online clubs act in real life. I've met three people from Second Life in real life. One I knew in college. And one I'm related to,” I said, referring to myself. I figured I needed to throw that in to prevent him from thinking that Bruce and Ruby were the same person.

“He he,” Grouchy said.

Hey, why did he chuckle? Does he know who Bruce really is? I think he suspects.

“I think we'd have a very different impression of a lot of people in real life,” I said.

“I’m sure we would.”

Was that another jab, teasing me because he knew I was actually female?

“How we truly look makes a big difference,” he said.

I suppose that’s true. I’d think differently about someone dressed like a whore than someone dressed like a businesswoman.

“What are you like irl?” I asked. “I think you and Sleepless would be shy.”

“I move silently,” he said.

“Except with the Lady at the Shop. And your dog,” I mentioned, referring to his statement in his profile that he had muted everyone in real life except his dog and the lady at a neighborhood shop.

“I only get out when I need milk. She's good for a quick chat, but I have no interest in her. I think she’s married.”

“Do you live alone? Besides the dog?”

“Even the dog deserted me. He died last Christmas. I had a cat too. At twenty years old, he had three teeth and was blind. But he was still lovely.”

“You should get a new puppy who wants to go on walks,” I suggested.

“I’ll be travelling soon. Around the world.”

“Are you going to visit Sleepless?” I asked.

“Maybe. Probably not.”

“How long will you be gone?”

“Fifty years.”

Hm. I’m not so sure he’ll still be up for that when he’s in his nineties.

“I suppose if you were still married, it might be difficult to take a wife along.”

“A slave would be better.” Slave? Is that the Second Life riff raff culture rubbing off on his real life? “I want to get away from here. I'm miserable in this house. My life was with my wife.”

“How long has she been gone?”

“Not long. Since 2004.” Seven years. Seems like a really long time to me.

“What was she like?” I asked.

“Loud, exciting. Smart, but not academic.”

I tried to offer hope. “Maybe while you travel, you'll find someone else loud, exciting & smart.”

“I don't think we can replace people. Just start over.”

“I guess you don't have kids either,” I said.

“We had a son, although he was born before I met his mother. I’d like my own kids some day. After my wife died, the son and I had a falling out.”

That’s kind of sad. He lost his wife, and now the son he raised with her isn’t speaking to him. He sounds depressed. I hope he does go out and travel the world. He needs to move on.

“I've never gone through the death of a spouse,” I admitted, “but you just might find someone you enjoy being with when you aren't looking.”

Was this the kind of conversation he would have had if he thought I were a man? It’s hard to tell. I don’t know if he thought I was some guy, or if he really knew that I was actually Lisa. It’s possible that when men are having ‘guy talk,’ this is the kind of things they’d say to one another. Bruce really hasn’t had much guy talk with anyone.

## Thursday, January 20, 2011

### Bruce

I taught a mug reengineering class today. We took apart a coffee mug and resized each of the geometric pieces that made up the mug. Then the advanced students stuck around to mess with the script parameters that created the steam.

Of course, the mug was a BudgetJustified.com mug. And I had a movie set out, along with my Vote Against Masturbation in Government Offices picket sign. Nobody complained. After all, I was the teacher. And while we were messing with the steam script, I put in a script that invites people to join the BudgetJustified.com group.

Someone in the class made their giant mug 5 meters in diameter instead of the 0.5 meters I had recommended. It swallowed the entire class.

“We’re getting mugged,” Roboto said.

During class, someone came around in a g string. A few women complained that he was harassing them. They asked for one of the headmasters to ban him from Learn Avatar. Before a headmaster got there, however, he threw exploding fire bombs all over the sim.

“It’s a war!” I said. “G string man’s is after our oil!”

I’m tired of taking the ‘classes’ that are currently offered. You don’t learn anything. You just follow a list of instructions to make something exactly the same size and shape as everyone else makes them. I’d like to put a bit more creativity into the classes. I asked Worldly about the requirements for mentor status.

“Teach three classes a week and help people with questions,” he said. Then I asked about headmasters.

“Attend staff meetings, help people out, and make sure the place doesn’t look like a yardsale.”

“What if the theme is Yardsale?” I asked.

“We have that,” Worldly responded. “It’s called Themeless.”

Coincidentally, he found me in the sandbox a moment later. I was carrying my sign. I didn’t put it away. I wanted to see if he’d bug me about it. He asked if I was on an advertising mission, but didn’t say any more.

Later I asked Grouchy about the requirements for mentor and headmaster.

“You have to be selected by the leadership based on commitment to Learn Avatar,” he said. “You must teach five classes a week, which must be posted on the schedule board in the office. After you’ve demonstrated teaching expertise, leadership skills, the ability to manage lots of people, good judgment, and a good attitude, the leadership selects potential candidates.”

Interesting that Worldly was encouraging volunteers and Grouchy says you don’t earn the status, you mysteriously get granted status by dictators who want to feel powerful. If they feel like granting status.

## Friday, January 21, 2011

### Bruce

I went with a few neighbors to a club. There were pole dancers when I arrived. I figured since I was wearing a shirt with BudgetJustified.com across the front, I was not their type. I went through a few things in my inventory, attaching coffee and various signs to myself.

A man came up to me and stood less than a foot away without saying anything. Since he approached me, I waited for him to speak first.

“Put that sign away or you’ll be banned,” he said. Nice to see you too. He also told me to change my shirt and the tag above my head because they had URLs. I suppose it was against the message that their pole dancers implied.

I see. More odd rules. To protect pole dancers from people against pole dancing?

He probably told me to change my shirt because it made him feel powerful. It seems that many twenty-somethings enjoy these pole-dancing forums where they have a false authority to police a few people, making up their own rules as they go along. Because they can’t get away with policing people in real life.

A women asked me to dance. I told her I live in Phoenix.

“My partner also lives in Phoenix,” she said. “He’s not online much anymore.” I wonder if he made an alt because he got bored of her and he wants to find other women.

“Is Bruce your real name?” she asked.

“No. And I don’t look like my avatar either.”

“Neither do I,” she said.

“But I run a half marathon every weekend.”

“I don’t get out much. There’s mold in my apartment and I have a hard time breathing when I walk.”

Hm. She sounds like an odd one. Like a very large, smelly couch potato. But she was very pleasant to chat with.

I went to the weekly meeting at the Nonprofit Commons. The couch potato wanted to come with me. A presenter discussed an immersion journalism project. In addition to writing about what it was like at Guantanamo Bay, they created an experience, so people could feel what it was like being there with their senses, rather than being limited to reading the story.

I was still carrying my Vote Against Masturbation sign. I thought it was borderline offensive in a professional environment, but nobody had a problem with it. It must have been OK with their theme, to be supportive of women, gays, transgendered, and any other nonprofit cause.

## Saturday, January 22, 2011

### Bruce

I taught a class I called ‘Baking a Cake.’ We made cakes that we could jump out of. Then we put candles on them, walked inside our cakes, and flew out of them.

The couch potato followed me around. I think she’s a little lonely and desperate. She didn’t know anything about building, so she just watched.

It was obvious that most of the class knew what they were doing. They created cakes as big as they wanted and put all sorts of different textures on them. One person even had an icing texture. After class couch potato and I had fun with a lesson on how to make a box.

I think I like teaching classes more than taking them. I put a lot more creativity in them, trying to make them more like group building sessions rather than following a set of instructions. Sort of like the chair building competitions had been. Perhaps we should have more contests and fewer classes.

I asked one of the mentors what he had to do to become a mentor. He said he had been in Second Life for several years, so he already had the skills and the headmasters just gave him mentor status. He also had to agree to teach a bunch of classes.

Sleepless was nearby, so I asked her about becoming a mentor. We went through a whole song and dance about why Owner had deleted me from Learn Avatar and I lost my scripter status. “Could I have mentor status after teaching classes for a few weeks?”

“No, you have to go through the whole process,” she said. Process? “You have to start as an apprentice and show us what you can build.”

“Really?” I asked. “I’d have to start over again at apprentice?”

Is she truly that airheaded? I’d have to go back to apprentice status when I have a PhD in engineering and have been in Learn Avatar way longer than Sleepless has? Rules for the sake of rules. I can go teach graduate courses at a university, present research papers at international conferences, but these assholes don’t want me to teach their foolish little How To Make A Box classes. I don’t need these people.

## Tuesday, February 1, 2011

### Ruby

I went to the nonprofit dance. I expected it to be different than other dance parties. Nonprofit Commons seems to attract a more educated crowd. But when I arrived, one woman was topless.

Turns out that wasn’t on purpose. Her clothing wasn’t rezzing correctly. She logged out and back in. This time her clothes appeared, but she wasn’t wearing much more than she had when she was naked.

There were only two guys at the party. One was the singer. A third guy appeared. “You have a lot of options for dance partners,” I told him.

“I already have my eye on someone. If she’s available,” he said.

I guessed it, he went for Naked Chick.

Actually, in Second Life, I kind of take it as a compliment that nobody asks me to dance. I’m usually the only one dressed professionally. It would be as if Hillary Clinton were there. No one would ask her to dance. Because she’s too smart and professionally advanced for any of the guys there.

Worldly stepped down as Learn Avatar co-director. I’m kind of bummed because he was the most reasonable person in Learn Avatar leadership. But I can understand. Actually, I can’t understand why anyone would volunteer for the job in the first place. Most of the reasonable people have left.

Grouchy came online. It was the first time I had seen him online as Ruby since I had asked if he was interested in being my partner. But he didn’t contact me to chat.

## Friday, February 4, 2011

### Bruce

I logged on in the Learn Avatar main office. I had signed up to teach a class the previous day, but then had to return to change the class to today because a real life meeting came up. That is why I don’t like putting classes on the announcement board.

I don’t think anyone even noticed that my class was on the board in the first place. When I sent out a message in the neighborhood chat, it seemed like it was the first anyone was hearing of it. Maybe next time I’ll just put my class on the board right before I go to the sandbox to teach.

There’s a new rule (there’s always a new rule) that you have to teach in the sandbox. You can’t teach on your own land. Apparently, someone had been teaching classes, then banning certain people from their land. “Teaching on your land is fine,” I said in neighborhood chat. “Banning any Learn Avatar resident from your land at any time is not.”

A neighbor sent me a message stating that she agreed. I looked at her profile and notice she got promoted from apprentice directly to mentor within a few weeks of joining Learn Avatar. Geez. I’ve been in Learn Avatar since March, and I’ve been demoted to Apprentice, regardless of my teaching. All because Owner went through and flushed everyone from the group while I was out of town and lost my land during a sim move. I suppose I could find someone who would give me the title if I really valued their inane hierarchy. But I don’t need a title to hang out. For all these ‘rules’ Learn Avatar has, promotions don’t seem to have any rules.

These rules are dumbing the place down to the most asinine students. Rules imposed because of assholes are punishing the people we want to keep around. It’s worse than Catholic grade school.

I stopped by to visit Grouchy A Girl was with him. I say ‘Girl’ because she was a child avatar. I greeted her, but she was away from her keyboard.

“I haven’t been online for a week,” I told Grouchy.

“Neither has Girl,” Grouchy said.

We discussed Worldly’s departure from being Learn Avatar director. “I’m not sad about that,” Grouchy said.

A while back, Worldly had mentioned that he thought that Grouchy was under the impression that Worldly didn’t like him. “He’s just a curmudgeon,” I had said to Worldly.

“Grouchy, Worldly thinks you’re a good guy.” I don’t think he believed me.

Grouchy logged off and twenty minutes later a strange avatar named WorldlyIsAnIdiot that was zero days old showed up and went to harass Worldly while he was hanging out with Dakota, taking some time to relax, now that he isn’t in charge. “You’re a fuking clown. You’re soo stupid. You can’t even runn a circus.”

“I think it’s Grouchy with one of his alts,” Dakota said.

“He seems drunk,” I said.

“Again,” Worldly interjected.

I had seen chat from him in the past that made me think he was drinking and suspected he had a drinking problem. His chat didn’t make sense and the spelling was atrocious.

“I’m a little worried about him,” Worldly said. Me too.

You have to have a problem to sit around by yourself on the computer while drunk. I don’t think there’s much we could really do for him, on the opposite side of the world, with the only connection being a computer.

I logged off, but found out later that Grouchy kept this up for a few hours. Apparently, Grouchy had wanted to be director of Learn Avatar and had been making things difficult for Worldly. Anyone who needs to be in charge of something so badly, should not be allowed to have a leadership position. Leading is not about What’s in it for Me. It’s about doing something for someone else.

### Bruce

I went to the Nonprofit Commons weekly meeting again. The greatest thing about the weekly meetings is that everyone says what organization they are with and include a link to that organization’s web site. Learn Avatar leadership seriously needs to take a lesson from these people. None of this ‘no talking about web sites’ crap. Really, how is a URL offensive to anyone? I spent the most of the meeting going to everyone’s web site, Twitter, and Facebook pages, learning about their work.

I invited a woman from Learn Avatar to come to the meeting. She had often stopped by to visit Grouchy and Chachi, sitting around and flirting on voice chat. I think she came because she thought I was male.

“Nobody’s talking by voice,” she said. Then she disappeared and logged off. I think she was actually disappointed that there were mostly women there and they were much smarter than her.

I went back to Learn Avatar to teach a class about megaprims. The couch potato wanted to come again. She’s nice, but she isn’t as fun to hang out with as Shopper, or as smart as LevelHead.

Unlike regular building blocks, which have size limitations, you can’t resize megaprims. The Builders Brewery gives out barrels with thousands of different sized mega-building blocks so that builders can make large buildings. So I handed out barrels, textures, and scripts to the students.

We made our megaprims into funny shapes and put scripts in them and made them spin. I tried to get my prim to stop spinning so I could show them how objects spin around different axis when you change numbers in the code. But it wouldn’t stop spinning, even after I deleted the script. “It’s possessed,” I said.

After I submitted the class report, Sleepless gave me the third degree about giving out megaprims from the Builders Brewery. “You can only give out items that you create yourself,” she said.

Huh? “You can’t create a megaprim yourself,” I told her.

“If you needed a megaprim, you should just give them one,” she replied.

But the whole purpose of teaching about megaprims is to teach them to fish. Not to give them a fish. They have to know how to retrieve megaprims later if they ever want to build with megaprims again. I tried to argue the point with her, but she was set on insisting that rules are blind rules with no purpose for having rules.

Then she got on my case because the title of the texture I handed out had a URL in it. “I gave them something that I had created myself,” I told her.

“I’m protecting the community,” she said. But who is protecting us from the protectors?

If Learn Avatar wants to keep its volunteers, they need to treat instructors as forty year old adult with a Ph.D. Not as drunken asses who run around as griefing alts. Oh wait, the leadership members ARE drunken asses.

If I ever volunteer to teach a class again, I should throw in items with titles like b\*tch, f\*kc, a$$hole. In Second Life, those titles are not only acceptable, they’re expected. Yet my anti-harassment web site URL is not.

## Sunday, February 6, 2011

### Bruce

A guy from the Nonprofit Commons threw a Superbowl party at the Wisconsin museum. One of the guests was a substance abuse counselor. I asked if there was an Alcoholics Anonymous in Second Life. He gave me a notecard, which I passed along to Grouchy.

“Why did you send me this?” he asked.

“I heard about your griefing alts.”

“That wasn’t me,” he said. Sure it wasn’t.

I attended a dance class in Learn Avatar for newbies to show them how to use dance balls at clubs and parties. Do we really need a class for that? I went to stir trouble.

I scrounged through my inventory and found some female shapes, skin, hair, and turned into a woman. I tried on a pink latex whore outfit, hopped on a pose ball and started dancing. "Who wants to dance with me?" I asked.

Nobody. So still wearing my pink whore outfit, I changed back to a man. Then Katie danced with me, or more like through me. “We don’t fit well together,” I said.

“Definitely not personality-wise,” she said.

Before I logged off, I made a point of saying hi to LevelHead since it’s been a few weeks since we chatted. When I opened her profile I noticed she has a partner.

“He asked me today if I wanted to be partners, so I thought why not,” she said.

I don’t know what I think of partners yet. “I thought about making an alt named Steve and partnering him, but then people would probably think I was gay,” I said.

“I’d think you were gay,” she said.

LevelHead said she wasn’t sure what being partners meant to her. “He lets me play around when he’s offline,” she said.

“Oh?” I responded. She has hinted about fooling around several times in the past couple of months. I sort of wonder if she’s trying to see if I’ll pick up on it and ask her to join me on some pose balls.

“If he’s offline, I don’t think you’d really need his permission.”

LevelHead used to be so straight laced. She thought it was inappropriate to fool around. It seems as though the anonymous sex culture has gotten to her. I think it’s good that she’s letting up on artificial constraints that she used to follow for the sake of what society expected of her, but if she was ‘pure’ only for appearances before, she’s probably still putting on a front in real life.

## Sunday, March 13, 2011

### Ruby

I finally decided to give a talk about *Budget Justified* in Second Life. I invited people from the Nonprofit Commons, since that seemed like the right audience and a talk about women in technology was the type of activity they commonly participate in. I prepared an introduction for the event:

*Budget Justified* is a true story about my experiences working as a woman engineer in federal government offices.

After I graduated with my Ph.D. in industrial engineering from Arizona State, I moved to Washington to work for an FAA contractor. I was a visiting professor at American University for a year, then was hired by another FAA contractor to work in FAA offices. That’s when the trouble began.

Basically, I was hired to charge hours to a project that the FAA had given to a large contractor. There wasn’t any work to be done on the project and many of my coworkers would often congregate to speculate why so many new people were being hired when there was no work.

Some comedy came out of that, so of course *Budget Justified* is part comedy.

But some abuse also came out of that, including skipping work, sleeping on desks, and “sleeping” on desks.

Shortly after I started working in the FAA offices, one of my coworkers started a habit of putting his paws on me. It began with just touching my hands, but elevated to the point where he would come up behind me and put his hand down my shirt or up my skirt.

It was getting to the point where I dreaded entering the workplace each morning. But one afternoon the guy masturbated in front of me. The next day, I was fired.

They told me that I was fired for my blog. I suppose that could be the true reason – if they were afraid that I would post all the crap going on in the office in my blog.

But by firing me, they no longer own me. If they didn’t like my blog, they’ll hate the movie.

Smog chatted with me while I set up. He showed me a gift box he made. It was cute, but I don’t think he’s aware of the extent of my programming skills.

He told me that he’s in his thirties. I don’t believe that. He had told Bruce a while back that he was 18. I think Smog was just looking for some pose ball action.

### Bruce

I set up the movie screen and some couches for the talk. I also put the movie set out. Worldly and his partner, Dakota, came right over. Dakota made one complaint that this was like advertising.

“We’re giving a talk about being a woman engineer,” I said. Is there no freedom of speech in Learn Avatar?

One of the women from the Nonprofit Commons was shocked about the story. Dakota had worked for the federal government and understood the problem about being a contractor in that situation, as opposed to being a federal employee.

The woman from the Nonprofit Commons offered to forward a petition around if I drafted one up. A petition. What a great idea. Interesting that she offered that to Bruce and not Lisa.

I haven’t seen couch potato or LevelHead online for awhile, but I took a look at their profiles – both of them are now unpartnered.

## Thursday, March 31, 2011

### Ruby

Everyone’s land in Learn Avatar has been taken away! I asked Grouchy what had happened. He said he was busy and didn’t have time to talk about it.

This was the first time I contacted him since I asked if he wanted to be partners. I don’t think he was that busy. I think he just doesn’t want to talk to me.

As I perused the class announcement board in the Learn Avatar office, Smog entered. He didn’t say much. Soon a sleazy chick walked in and he started chatting with her instead.

There is still land left to take classes on. Anyone who has been participating in classes regularly was given a tent. They took everyone’s land away and gave them a tent? I knew that free land deal couldn’t last forever.

Even the headmasters are living in tents. They went from owning over four thousand square meters of land to living in a tent. Apparently the economy has been bad in Second Life also. Those who had mansions before have been reduced to homelessness.

Grouchy’s profile listed an ‘amateur BDSM’ group which had only two members – himself and Sleepless. I asked him about it. He didn’t respond. But then, he also wasn’t moving, which makes me think that although he was logged on, he may have been working on something else.

Sleepless came through the Learn Avatar office and asked if I was in private chat with Grouchy. She probably tried chatting with him with no response also. So I asked her about the amateur BDSM group.

There seemed to be a communication gap over chat. I got the impression she was being cagy, but maybe she was just joking around. The conclusion I went away with was that the group description was changed at some point and that Grouchy was likely unaware that he was a member of a group that had BDSM in its description.

I told Sleepless that I had asked Grouchy if he wanted to be my partner. “Are you lonely?” she asked.

Not quite. “I’m married in real life,” I said. “I thought it would be funny because then people would give him a hard time about having a partner.”

“Poor Grouchy needs some laughs,” Sleepless said.

“You should partner with him,” I suggested. “Then I could give him a hard time.”

Ruckus came by and offered to teach me some scripting. I hate to burst his bubble, but I’m a bit more advanced than the rest of the Learn Avatar residents. In fact, I’m one of the few designated scripters.

It bothers me that as I wander through Second Life, people mistake me for an uneducated girl. It’s not Ruckus’s fault that he’d assume I’m not very smart. He’s just acting on his observations of what the rest of the people are like.

The majority of females in Second Life are dumb girls – although many are guys acting like what they want women to be. Of course, most of the guys in here wouldn’t win any prizes for intelligence or maturity either.

A woman with the same last name as Ruckus came over. “Are you related, or is it just a coincidence?” I asked.

They are married in real life. This makes sense, seeing how Ruckus acts like a decent, mature individual. The guys who wander around without their real life spouses usually don’t display as much respect for women.

After everyone except Grouchy left, I sent Worldly a message asking what he was up to.

“I’m in a place not appropriate for married ladies.” He teleported me anyway. It was a weird place with skeletons and porn paintings on the wall. We bathed in a pool of blood. Or maybe it was just red water. I’m not sure why he was there – if he’s into the porn, or just touring around to see what people build.

“Dakota is coming to visit him in real life in a few weeks, along with her toddler.” She lives across the ocean from him.

“That will be quite a trip for them. I hope you have fun,” I said.

It’s nice to travel and have someone to visit when you get there. But I don’t understand why they don’t go out in public and meet people in real social settings. They could be spending time with people they can see every day, people who have mutual friends, people who can do things with them besides sit at the computer. This can’t be healthy for the toddler, who can’t get out on her own.

In the spirit of April Fools, I went around as the character I named Griefer. I landed in a help area where a lot of people were standing around talking by voice.

Griefer is a weird, deformed creature. One guy whose every other word was “Fuck,” started insulting Griefer’s looks. “I’m Edit Appearance gone bad,” I said.

Then I went over to the Insulter. “Stop following me, you faggot,” he said.

“Who are you calling a faggot?” I said by voice.

Everyone was quiet for a moment.

“Who said that?” one guy asked.

“Griefer’s a chick,” another guy said.

Then they started laughing. “Oh, sure. She’s a chick, so that makes everything alright now,” someone teased the Insulter.

“But you’re bald and you’ve got Man Hands,” the Insulter said. “You’re a dude.”

“Nah, I’m just a weird monster,” I said. And then they were nice to me.

But they didn’t become nice because I was female. Part of the reason the insults stopped is that I wasn’t rude back. But I think the real reason they stopped being mean is that I became human. I wasn’t just a weird-shaped blob scooting around the screen. I was a person with voice inflections and a personality.

“To whom do I address complaints around here?” I asked in Builders Brewery chat.

One person said he appreciated my grammar usage. Someone named Douglas said, “A name like that will get you banned.” Other people gave helpful, and silly, suggestions on logging complaints.

“Just mute him,” Douglas said.

“Him who?” I asked. “I’m female.”

Then I proceeded to make my complaint. “Rebecca Black has a terrible voice,” I said in reference to the exploitation of a thirteen year old girl in her YouTube viral video.

Many people agreed. “Stephen Colbert’s version had better lyrics,” someone commented. On his show the previous evening, Colbert sang, “Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.” I have to admit, those lyrics are more original than Black’s song.

“I don’t give a crap who Rebecca Black is,” Douglas said.

“Douglas is quite a curmudgeon today,” I responded.

A few people asked what curmudgeon meant. I don’t think anyone expected Griefer to be polite, educated, and female.

## Tuesday, March 29, 2011

### Bruce

I joined a Braincrave group a while back which is a forum for intellectual discussions. I joined the group when it was free, but the moderator has since required a fee to join. Hardly any groups require fees. No group is worth it.

They don’t have land, so it’s purely a chat forum. The chat is integrated with an external web site, so you don’t have to be on Second Life to participate. It’s a great idea, having a chat forum with a topic and a moderator. The problem is that the moderator is a jerk. I think he’s trying to be provocative, to get people excited about participating, but most of the time it makes me not want to be involved with his drama.

I haven’t engaged in a Braincrave discussion for a long time. The moderator mentioned something about Ayn Rand and taxes.

“Vote against masturbation in government offices,” I replied.

“Uh, what does that mean?” Braincrave asked.

I told him that I had worked as an FAA contractor and that I had seen that happen. The discussion then turned to the topic of the FAA being a waste of our tax dollars.

It’s always different people who join in the discussion and I never see any of them in other forums. I often look at their profiles, but never found anyone that I had enough in common with to keep in touch. Thus, Braincrave isn’t a community, it’s an occasional random discussion.

I did find one profile that said, “Women are just as likely to have a male avatar as men are to have a female avatar. However, men use their female avatars four times more often than women use their male avatars.” I asked her where she got that statistic.

“Someone’s Ph.D. dissertation,” she said. She’s a social sciences researcher doing studies on Second Life. I’ll have to look into this research.

SlowBrain sent me a landmark, so I checked it out. When I got there, Sleepless was dancing on a stripper pole. In Learn Avatar chat, I asked if anyone else had received a landmark from SlowBrain, or just Sleepless and me.

“No advertising,” one of the mentors replied.

Huh? “This is why I don’t keep land in Learn Avatar anymore,” I said. “I ask a question and I get accused of advertising for a strip club.”

Yet I’m the only one who doesn’t go around dressed like a pole dancer. Seems like somebody wanted to feel important by bossing someone around. If it were in person, I doubt he’d have the audacity to boss around his elders.

No wonder nobody ever has fun chats in the neighborhood chat anymore.

Later the guy sent a message to the Builders Brewery asking, “Does anyone want a teacher who wears armor?”

I was tempted to say, “No advertising,” but several people responded with, “What the hell are you talking about.” Then he offered to bring his own guns. This is who Learn Avatar chooses to be a mentor. A guy who offers to bring guns to class.

I got a notice about a live story reading. Sometimes Bookstacks puts on readings. It sounded like a nice idea, so I went.

Except, it wasn’t so nice. It was porn. Not only was is porn, but it was about a private school principal calling a teenaged student into his office to beat her and have sex.

Enough of the creepiness, enough of the control freaks, enough of the abuse. I don’t take this treatment in real life and I don’t need to spend my time visiting this community to be abused and fraternize with psychos and pedophiles.

I don’t care about what a Second Life relationship is anymore, from neither the male nor female perspective. The people who are here for ‘relationships’ or sex don’t know what relationships or sex is about.

Only in Second Life is this kind of story accepted and encouraged. It’s part of the culture. I said “Enough child rape story.”

Then Bruce logged off. For a very long time.

## Era of Real Life

interested in developing business relationships and learning about the technology. I often used to log on to say hi to friends if I was on the Second Life home page and saw that some of my favorites were online. Now I look at my list of online friends and wonder why they’re spending so much time online.

It’s time for me to move on to a different social set, expand my horizons. Sort of like how I felt about being cooped up in my cubicle at my former real life job, and how I got out into the real world more by going to the ivory tower of academia for a year.

And when I went out to network in political groups, filmmaker groups, journalist groups, novelist groups, etc., I felt as much as an insider as I had in engineering groups. Which wasn’t difficult to surpass, since I was always looked at like some foreign being when I was one of the very few people with a uterus who showed up to the engineering meetings. For that reason, I stood out so much less at the journalist meetings, despite my complete lack of journalistic background.

I’ve noticed that when Bruce receives an instant message from women, I often don’t even want to bother with them because I’m trying to follow a class and learn. I’m not as invested in getting friends for Bruce as I am for Ruby. It doesn’t matter to me whether he’s popular. He’s just a doll I play around with. Ruby has my real name. Her backstory is my real life. Bruce is a made-up character. He isn’t really me.

I took several months off. I’m myself now, not switching between Ruby and Bruce. Using my real name, real identity. I still pull Bruce out as a toy, telling people I’m female, he’s my alt.

## Friday, April 8, 2011

I found a coffee shop that I had never visited before. Desc coffee house (((((

The chat was much more intellectual than the nonsense you find at dance clubs. Although an eighteen year old kid came through with exploding grenades. He kept crashing and relogging, appearing in the same chair each time, in someone’s lap.

“Everyone has much better grammar here than most places online,” I said. “Although Nonprofit Commons is a good place too.”

Then I got a private message from the coffee shop owner. “You’re not allowed to talk about other locations here,” she said.

What kind of a control freak cares if you mention other places? It seems like people are making up a lot more rules than they did when I first joined. It’s becoming a police state.

I went to the weekly Nonprofit Commons meeting. Someone spoke about an exhibit about nuclear power, in honor of the Japanese power plant that was damaged in the earthquake. At least we were allowed to speak of other sims at Nonprofit Commons. They even gave out a landmark.

There was a bot there named SunTzu that kept inserting a few odd statements in chat before they turned him off.

I chatted with a transgender person. He has been married for over forty years and says his wife has been very supportive. He told me the difference between transgender and transsexual is that transgender just has to do with what you wear and people who are transsexual have had a sex change operation.

I told him that a former coworker was planning a sex change operation. “I don’t understand what he was going through, but I didn’t feel I needed to judge him about it,” I said. Transgender said he liked that statement.

## Saturday, April 9, 2011

I had a cup of coffee that someone from the coffeehouse had given me and went to the Learn Avatar sandbox to play with it. When I drank it, I fell asleep. Or, at least I laid on the ground. I tried walking, but scooted along the ground while lying on my side instead.

I scooted up to a guy building a house. “Are you asleep?” he asked.

I turned my view and noticed my eyes were still open. “I thought I was,” I said. “But maybe I’m dead.” I sent a message to the coffeehouse telling them that their coffee had killed me.

The homebuilder gave me Duff beer. We both drank it until we stumbled around and fell under the floor of the house.

Then Homebuilder gave me some pompoms. We wore them and did a simultaneous dance.

Roboto came by, so I put on my space suit. “A robot with pom poms?” Roboto observed.

So I gave him a pom and asked him to wear it. I entered the command to start the pom routine and we did a simultaneous dance. “It’s even funnier as robots,” I said.

I took Roboto to the coffeehouse and we did the dance there. Another guy started doing the dance with us. “How does he know this dance?” I asked. He had the poms also. Someone else had given them to him a while ago.

Roboto was working on a script to make a robot follow him. He showed us his robot, so I wanted to show my favorite creation. I put out my hobo scene with the breaking window that I had created as the winning entry to the Learn Avatar chair contest over the summer. Roboto broke the window and another guy sat on the mattress, causing it to burst into flames.

Then the coffee shop owner deleted my entire hobo scene. “There isn’t enough room here. Go build that somewhere else,” she said.

Fine. So I left. And I took Roboto with me. One of the coffeeshop patrons offered to take to us to a talk about an artificial intelligence robot. So everyone except the coffeeshop owner wanted to come with us, with no intentions of returning. Apparently the shop owner had the same effect on most of the people who stopped by because that coffeeshop is no longer there.

When I arrived, I realized I was on a sim owned by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the official professional organization for electrical engineers, which I’ve been familiar with since I was an undergrad. Besides Nonprofit Commons, owned by TechSoup, it’s one of the few places I know of that owned by a real world organization. IBM and several other large tech companies used to have sims, but gave them up.

Desc ieee (((((

A guy named Joey talked about his bot that he programmed. The bot was named SunTzu – the same bot that had been at the Nonprofit Commons meeting on Friday.

A woman named Archivist is in charge of putting on the IEEE talks. Her profile listed a lot of awards for her work in virtual worlds, which is part of her real life job. She was wearing a business suit. She said she liked my space suit, so I gave her a copy.

The bot also could be commanded to follow someone. I tried to get the bot to follow me, but there were so many avatars around, I think it got confused. So Roboto programmed his avatar to follow me.

## Tuesday, April 12, 2011

I asked Joey from the IEEE talk if he knew about any other good work going on in Second Life that I could go see besides his artificial intelligence bot. He took me to a simulation of a medical surgery, Desc (((((

Joey then took me to the start point of a robot hunt he had designed. I was still wearing my space suit. He gave me a notecard that explained the hunt. It stated that if anyone had questions, to address them to either Joey or Roboto.

“You know Roboto!” I said. I didn’t know that Roboto had gotten involved in virtual IEEE.

One of the prizes in the hunt was a robot avatar, so I tried it on. It was short and ugly. My torso was a wide, squat tin can. The arms and legs were skinny pipes with knobby joints for knees and elbows. My head was a red box with bug eyes, funnel ears, and a rectangular mouth fixed in a menacing grin. Five antennae stuck out of the top of my head at various angels. I changed back to my human avatar with my clothing from *Budget Justified*.

“You’re naked,” Joey said.

Well, I saw my clothing just fine. He sent me a screen shot from his computer. I was naked. So I sent him a screen shot from mine. I tried changing clothing, but it didn’t work. Since it’s just a cartoon avatar, I really didn’t care. So I stayed naked on his screen.

It was late and I was getting tired, so I drank the coffee that puts me to sleep when it’s empty. As I was lying on the floor, Joey gave me Duff beer. So we both drank that and stumbled all over the place. Joey fell on the floor and I landed on top of him.

“You just wanted a naked woman to fall on you,” I said.

“Yeah, that happens to me all the time,” Joey responded.

## Wednesday, April 13, 2011

### Bruce

I went to the IEEE auditorium. Joey and Roboto came right over to ask if I had any questions about the Robotics Week hunt. I was wearing my BudgetJustified.com shirt. “You must know Ruby,” he said.

“She’s the one who told me about this place,” I said.

“LisaSchaefer Ruby? She said she knows you,” Joey told Roboto. They both agreed that Ruby is very nice. “She has weird stuff in her profile,” Joey added.

“What kind of weird stuff?” I asked.

“That web site,” he said. I told him that *Budget Justified* it’s a true story.

I asked Roboto why he left Learn Avatar. “It’s good for beginners, but I’ve moved on,” he said. Yeah, we all do.

I took LevelHead on the robot hunt. She said she had broken up with her partner because he was too into her, and she wasn’t that interested. I introduced her to some of the IEEE people. She was impressed with all of Archivists awards. Roboto told us he had put the hunt together for IEEE on a volunteer basis. He’s a staff member at a community college and does some work in Second Life assisting professors with building projects. Joey’s real life company does some work in virtual worlds for the federal government.

## Thursday, April 14, 2011

While I was on the robot hunt, someone blessed me. Blessed me? What does that mean in a virtual world. Well, I got a message that said “Mike blessed you,” and sparkles fell around me while a zephyr sound played. Then Mike gave me a rose, which I wore. It went into my mouth.

“Thank you for the rose,” I said. “It’s delicious.” Then he gave me a rose that went into my hand. I thanked him for the second rose. “This one probably tastes good too,” I said.

Two newbies showed up wearing the attire assigned to those who chose the ‘Student’ look when they signed up – jeans, sneakers, t-shirt, and a backpack. “I bet this backpack has a lot of money in it,” one of them said. “I’ve got to take it to the bank.”

“How old are you guys?” I asked. “You seem young.”

“How young is young?” they asked.

“Twenty,” I said.

“That’s exactly right. How did you know?”

I guess you just figure it out after observing the chat of enough people.

Joey took me to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration land. There was a Department of Commerce airplane there. “Didn’t that crash in 1996?” I asked. It took him a moment to figure out that I was referring to the plane crash where the Secretary of Commerce died.

Then Joey wanted me to follow him by flying around and I crashed. Into a window.

He showed me an island he created for the military. The funding was discontinued, so it’s been sitting around for two years. However, it hasn’t been deleted, so someone must be paying a lot of money to keep it there.

Joey gave a talk again at the IEEE auditorium about commanding robots by voice. He gave the talk by voice and his dog kept making funny sounds in the background.

Someone asked about the objects all over Second Life that cause avatars to do certain animations on typed command, wondering if you could do the same thing with voice commands instead. Archivist was speaking to the group by voice and mentioned hug animations. So I send her a request to cause her avatar to give me a hug.

IEngineer was wearing a formal blue dress, long blond hair pulled back, and a female shape. Perhaps because Archivist and I were the only women there. ‘iEnGina’ IEngineer called his female avatar. We were standing near a dark blue circular art piece that rotated around a nine-foot tall robot at its center like a playground merry-go-round. Several equi-distant primary colored circles hovered at its circumference. I assumed they were seats waiting for children to come play.

I hopped on a seat and went spinning around. IEngineer hopped on with me, then changed back to a regular guy with glasses, blue jeans, and a sweater vest. I teleported Roboto to join us.

“They set up these conferences and the participants run around all over the place and play on the furniture and the sculptures,” IEngineer said.

“Just like in real life,” Roboto joked.

It’s funny how that’s acceptable behavior for children in real life. And acceptable behavior in adults in a virtual world. But not acceptable behavior in adults in real life. Maybe since everyone has been in Second Life for less than six years, we’re all still children here. Perhaps in twenty years, playing on the merry-go-round won’t be acceptable behavior in virtual worlds. A spinning art piece won’t be a novelty anymore.

## Saturday, April 16, 2011

### Ruby

Joey found me reading the robot hunt sign. There was a robot there with text floating above him that said robots took his brain. “I hope you aren’t hitting on him, Miss Lisa,” Joey said.

“His brain was stolen,” I said.

“He’s mindless now,” Joey responded.

Joey kept calling me Miss Lisa. “It’s not miss,” I said.

“Sorry. Missus,” he said.

“Not missus either,” I responded.

“Ms?” Joey asked.

“Nope.”

“Oh! Dr.” Yes. That’s it.

Joey mentioned that he had been wary of me at first, thinking that I was trying to be suggestive by being naked. He asked some groups if it really was possible to see an avatar naked on one computer, but not another and they confirmed that it was. I thought I had already confirmed it by showing him the screenshot with my clothing on, that we had gotten past it, and had moved on. Apparently it’s still an issue to him.

“Are you OK with me now?” I asked.

“You’re OK.” he said.

He made a point that he is not looking for an online girlfriend. Or a real life girlfriend.

“Why not a real life girlfriend?” I asked.

“I don’t want to talk about it,” he said. Obviously his previous relationships didn’t go well.

He sent me some drawings of nudes that he had done in real life. Nude drawings? Why does he draw people who aren’t wearing any clothes? Just because my avatar appeared nude on his screen, doesn’t mean I want him to send me pictures of naked people.

The graphic files automatically opened themselves when I accepted them into my inventory. “The first one is of me,” he said.

“Aak!” I replied. “Do I want to look at this?” It was a side view of him sitting down, not very detailed. He could have been wearing clothing and it wouldn’t have been a much different drawing.

He sent me not just nude drawings, but nude drawings of himself. Who’s the one trying to be suggestive.

A guy who teaches at a university near me in real life was scheduled to give a talk at the IEEE auditorium about a bot he created. I logged in after it had already started, still in the middle of the rotating merry-go-round. A few people saw me there and hopped on with me. Playful group.

Joey sent me a private message. “I take back what I said earlier.”

“About what?”

“Maybe you’re not OK,” he teased.

The bot at the talk had a phone number. And of course since he professor was in Washington, it was a local call for me. So he asked me to call the number and command the bot by voice. I turned on the mic so people could know what I was saying.

Somehow the robot fell over and turned upside down. “Never do demos with children, animals, or robots,” the professor said.

I forgot to turn off my mic, so when my husband got home, I greeted him loudly and people heard me talking to him. Several people sent me private messages to let me know they could hear me chattering away.

“Soooooo sorry,” I said.

## Sunday, April 17, 2011

At a robot demo at the IEEE sandbox, one of the presenters had a tag that said ‘PhD in Stuff.’ So I changed my tag to say ‘PhD in engineer stuff.’ They kept calling him Doctor.

“Are you a professor too?” I asked.

“No, it’s my nickname.” Apparently that’s the name that everybody else but me saw. Time to get a new viewer.

Doctor had a slide that said the robot could make coffee, fix the coffee machine, and read to your child.

“Then I wouldn’t need a wife,” one of the guys said.

“My wife doesn’t make coffee,” I retorted.

One presenter made an avatar-following script. He had several objects that looked like flagellum following him. I sat on one of the flagellum. It took off and floated away into space. “Where is the flagellum taking me?” I shouted and someone teleported me back. I don’t know where the flagellum went.

One woman created a bot that helps people who are hearing impaired when people are using voice. “If it can help someone communicate better, it helps them get over shyness,” she said.

“I think a lot of people are online because of shyness,” I commented.

I saw Joey appear in my radar, but couldn’t see him on screen. Behind me was a gigantic white puffy thing, about ten times the size of my avatar. “What’s this doughboy?” I asked.

“I’m the Staypuf marshmallow man,” Joey said. “Don’t make me marshmallow you.”

I tried to make my hat taller than Joey’s marshmallow man, but since the hat was a regular prim, the size was limited. I zoomed out and saw the ten meter cylinder on top of me. “I’ve got a pole on my head.”

“Is that what it is,” Joey said. “I thought you were just happy to see me.”

Since the mega hat didn’t work, I decided to wear the giant fifty meter spiral drill from over the glass ceiling I used to have on my land in Learn Avatar. The sandbox was set so we couldn’t rez anything, but we could still wear obnoxious things. It took up the whole sandbox.

“Whoever is rezzing giant things will have to leave,” Archivist said.

“Sorry, I was wearing a megaprim,” I said. “Bigger than I remembered.”

“We noticed that,” Roboto said. “At least it wasn’t the Empire State Building.” Then he wore a tall, pointy tower. “You’re wearing the Empire State Building!” I said.

Then he put on a space rover. Or maybe it was a space rover avatar. Not quite sure if there’s a difference. Since Roboto was the rover, I couldn’t sit on it, but I was able to fly inside of it. “I’m inside Roboto,” I said.

I haven’t seen Northern, my first Second Life friend, for almost a year. We have been Facebook friends, but I haven’t been paying any attention to his profile. Until today. He sent out a message about getting kicked out of a real life strip club.

It was over two thousand words long, rambling about how they had no right to kick him out because he’s a regular and spends a lot of money there. He claimed that the strippers wanted him to touch them, that he gave them huge tips therefore he is allowed to touch them. It wasn’t clear whether it was fiction or fact.

A friend of his replied asking if that really happened or if it was just a story.

It really happened.

Why is he sending us this stuff? Does he really want us all to know that he spends his time at strip bars?

It seemed like a classic case of what is ‘normal’ in Second Life affecting a person’s norms of behavior in real life. Except that most of the paragraphs didn’t even make sense.

“Maybe it was fate or destiny. The women without their bras smoldered to me like color on the beach. I went inside for a drink but came out with a nightmare. Who could ever say? My mind was not on them, neither were theirs. It was something I said, or did, or didn’t do. I’ve been there before. But was not recognizable. Waving waters on the highway with no looking out to sea. All the eels were gone. I could live forever if it were legal, a white hot beat purring underneath it all. All the same. Fucking whores want me, so what else would I do. Can you not see they are like fish? Blood runs from their fingerpits and they cannot hide.”

Most of his story went on like that. In all of our chats, he had never spewed nonsense before. He may have been rude and selfish, but not psychotic.

So I looked at his Facebook page to see if his brother was on there and if I could suggest he make sure Northern got some help. But according to the pictures and the comments, that’s where he had already been for the past year – at a psychiatric rehabilitation center. The friends who were in the pictures of the center had posted greetings on his wall, asked how he was doing. Which led me to believe that he was no longer at the center. I’m not a proponent of medication; only as a last resort. But it seems he either needs to get back on his meds or go back to the center.

A while back I had removed myself from dance club groups. I no longer visit them and have no interest in their announcements or chat and needed to make room for the builders or discussion groups I wanted to join.

Shortly after the Facebook rant, Northern posted a comment in the one last dance group that I hadn’t deleted from my list.

“Mommy, mommy! Uncle Dilly is sticking out his pee pee!”

The rest of the group thought this was a silly non-sequitur someone had posted for laughs.

“Stop tattling, Northern. Go back to Uncle Dilly’s room and say you’re sorry for running away.”

“Uncle Dilly is a Catholic priest. Say ten Hail Marys into your pillow.”

Northern responded, “Why is Uncle Dilly’s pee pee bigger than mine?”

“Ask him,” someone responded.

“He said ‘Shut your hole and go get us some beer’,” Northern said.

“Is this the asylum channel?” a woman asked.

“When is Halloween?” Northern asked. “October 31. Thank me. I’m welcome.”

“I’m shutting off the chat now,” the woman said.

“Asking about Halloween gets chat shut?” Northern said. “What a weird world. Dog pile.”

“I can’t be in the dog pile. I’m a cat,” a neko (cat-person) said.

“I’m in the cat pile!” I responded.

I sent Northern a private message. “Northern, is there some medication you need to take today?”

“Yes, thank you for reminding me,” he said. “But it’s not that kind. There’s no cure for Northernitis.” I didn’t ask him to elaborate on what kind of medicine he does or does not take. I figured the answer wouldn’t make any sense at this time.

## Tuesday, April 19, 2011

Joey had watched the 19 minute version of *Budget Justified*.

“It didn’t have much of a point,” he said. No point? US taxpayer dollars are being wasted on people masturbating in their offices! Does nobody care?

He was being a real curmudgeon about it. Like other men I met who didn’t want to associate with someone who doesn’t get kicks out of sexual harassment, I wonder if that means he won’t hang out with me anymore.

“What are you looking for in virtual worlds?” he asked.

“A business consultant had recommended it for building online community.” I didn’t want to go into detail.

He gave me more links for information about open source projects being done in virtual worlds.

“Look into the wider metaverse,” he said.

Wider metaverse? Sounds like buzzwords some ex-military guy likes to throw around. He mentioned *Snow Crash*, a book that several people have mentioned over the past week, which was the inspiration for Second Life. “It’s the original idea for the metaverse,” Joey said.

We talked about a virtual abilities talk a woman gave at the Nonprofit Commons. She was also involved in IEEE Robotics Week activities. “I was in a wheelchair for a few months after a motorcycle accident,” Joey told me.

He showed me a picture of his dog and said he quit smoking after his previous dog died of cancer. “Biker, smoker…you’re really not my type,” I kidded him.

“I told you I’m not looking for that,” he replied.

“I’m not either.” I told him I was married in real life.

Then he said he was going to go shopping for a Second Life house. Well, the only reason I’ve ever known anyone to buy a house was to have virtual sex in it. “I thought you weren’t interested in that,” I said.

In Builders Brewery chat I asked, “Anyone got a cigarette?” Someone gave me one that had an animation that made me look like I was smoking.

Then I asked, “Anyone got a motorcycle?” and put the text ‘Smokin’ biker chick’ above my head.

I put the motorcycle in the IEEE sandbox and rode it. I don’t have permissions to put objects anywhere outside of the sandbox on the IEEE land, but the motorcycle kept going. The whole island turned rainbow colored and I crashed.

## Tuesday, April 19, 2011

IEngineer had promised me a tour of a French village he had built, so when I logged on, I asked him where he was. I was a little worried that he might have been on a date. I didn’t want to intrude.

But he offered me a teleport. He had been chatting with a guy who was pretending to be a 1920’s French police officer.

We went underground into a subway station. A trash can was lying on the tracks.

“Someone drove the trash into the station,” he said.

“Drove the trash?” I asked. “Like a dump truck?”

“You can race trash cans,” he said. When I sat on a trash can, I was able to drive it with my arrow keys. So we had a trash race.

“If I ever go to France, I’m going to drive trash,” I said.

Then he took me on a tour of the NASA moon lava tube and NOAA ship he built. He is quite talented, and creates complex models. ((((((moon tube

But nobody ever comes to these lands anymore. It’s unfortunate that his work has gone to waste.

After quite a while of chatting, I said I’d let him get back to his other girlfriends. He showed me a private message from a female friend of his, who also did real life work in Second Life. She had a partner listed in her profile, but she told IEngineer that she was ‘patting him on the butt.’ Ah, Second Life. Equal opportunity harassment.

Before I logged off, I sent a message to Joey.

“I’m working around the house,” he said.

“Then why are you logged on?” I asked. “Oh, you mean your virtual house. I’d like to see it.”

“It isn’t ready to be seen yet,” he said.

“Do you have a girlfriend there?” I asked. “Or all your online girlfriends?” He said he was monogamous.

“So you have one girlfriend there then,” I said.

“I told you I wasn’t interested in that,” he replied.

“It doesn’t matter to me if you have a lot of girlfriends,” I said. “I’d just like to see your house one of these days.”

“I’m tired of all the drama,” he said. Drama? I didn’t start any drama. I think he started drama by getting a virtual house, telling me about it, then refusing to let me see it.

## Friday, April 22, 2011

I asked IEngineer if he was doing anything interesting.

“At a developers meeting for the viewer,” he said.

Ooh. Programmers who work at Linden Labs. I asked him to teleport me.

To use Second Life, you have to install a viewer software on your computer. Second Life is too complex to run in today’s web browsers.

The developers meet daily to talk about their progress on implementing new features in the Second Life interface. The meetings last less than fifteen minutes. Some of the volunteers who work on the third party viewers attend also.

I’m not sure why volunteer organizations get together to program other viewers that do the same thing as the one Linden Labs develops. Probably because they can. But it seems like reinventing the wheel.

All the Lindens in attendance gave a status report, summarizing past and current issues. “Past: Out on Friday,” one of the Lindens said.

“You passed out on Friday?” a colleague asked him.

“Yes,” he replied. “It was my birthday.” So I gave him a birthday cake.

One of the bug reports mentioned at the meeting was ‘Physics problem with fat avatars.’

“Is that a joke?” I asked. No, it seems that some of them are falling over.

“My alt was a short, fat guy,” the leader of the Linden team said. So I turned my avatar into my big deformed Edit Appearance Gone Bad shape.

A new feature they came out with today was ‘bounciness.’ Bounciness? “For more realistic motion,” I was told. More realistic, or more obscene?

After the meeting IEngineer stuck around and chatted with another guy. I stayed there also, editing a problem with my coffee mug. Suddenly I heard IEngineer address me out loud. “Lisa, where did you get your PhD?”

Apparently they had been asking me in text chat, but I hadn’t been paying attention. IEngineer is an engineer and seems like a sharp, friendly guy. He sounds like he’s from California. Or maybe gay. Which could explain why he dressed as a woman in a skimpy halter top. “Are you gay, or just secure about your manhood,” I asked him. He didn’t really answer.

He jumped up and down and shouted, “The breasts go out of control!” He moved back a forth, saying, “They can be set to sway.”

Who the hell wants that.

“Or they can be set to move back and forth,” he said. “Like they’re crawling.” Creepy.

Then he gave me an air horn. “How to get attention at meetings,” he called it.

“Or, you could just dress like a whore with swaying boobs,” I said.

“I resemble that remark,” he said. Yes. He certainly did.

IEngineer seemed pleased to have met someone with a Ph.D. He gave me landmarks for several science-themed lands and invited me to the weekly Science Friday discussion gathering.

The Science Friday talk was about electric cars. While the NPR radio show played in the background, people chatted about the kind of cars they have. “I drove here in a snit,” Daffy, a duck avatar, said.

“My wife can get a lot of mileage out of a snit,” one of the guys said.

“I tried to build an Ohm,” Daffy said. “But there was a lot of resistance to it.”

The second part of Science Friday was about things that were annoying, such as fingernails on a chalkboard.

“Goofy puns are annoying,” I said.

“Let’s leave Goofy out of this discussion,” Daffy said.

IEngineer invited me to his house. Usually when that happens, the guy is looking for at least some cuddling, if not pose ball action, and has porn on the walls. On IEngineer’s walls hung a picture of his cat playing in his real life woodworking shop and other pictures from his real life workshop. No pose balls. In fact, his virtual house is his virtual workshop. Like Learn Avatar, it’s his place to build things.

“I’m glad there’s no porn on the walls,” I said.

“It’s a PG island,” he said. “No porn allowed here.” A guy who chooses to be someplace where there’s no porn. I like this guy.

## Thursday, May 5, 2011

Today Joey was online, but had hidden his online status from me. Either trying to avoid or create drama.

All week there were several online tours associated with a real life conference in Washington, DC. I went on a tour given by Noaah who works at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in real life. He was guiding some people who worked at a real life museum.

Noaah’s colleague Designr and her employee TechBiz were also helping out with the tour. Designr and her staff had had created a simulation of a tsunami for the NOAA island. It was a pleasant beach scene with beach chairs, a row of beach houses with gray wooden siding, and a low wall along the shore, separating the sand from the lawn of the houses.

When Designr started the tsunami, an alarm sounded and a huge wave came at us. I was quite surprised to see a giant wave coming at me, although I’m not sure what I expected.

“I can’t swim!” I said. I wasn’t quite sure if I should start flying, teleport out of there, or just stand around. Designr wasn’t leaving, so I figured I should stick around to see what happened.

Everyone else stood on the beach, but I headed away from the ocean, past the houses, as the wave caught up to me. The wave splashed down and flattened the houses. All that was left was a dirt-brown rubble and broken slabs of wood where the houses had been. Finally I was surrounded by gray on all sides.

“Help! I’m in a box,” I said. Then I realized I had been swallowed by a house. Everyone who had stood on the beach remained there unscathed.

I sent a friend request to Designr as a blue notice appeared on my screen requesting friendship from her. Apparently we friended each other at the same time.

“Do you do anything in Second Life for fun?” one of the museum staff asked Noaah.

“That’s a loaded question,” he said. “Are you implying that work isn’t fun, or that you’re not supposed to have fun at work?”

“They wanted to know if you’d like to go dancing,” I said.

“I would, but not while I’m at work,” Noaah said.

“Then we can just dance here,” I said and started moving to one of my dance animations.

The museum staff all went off to something in real life. The houses that had been reduced to rubble popped back up onto their green lawns as nothing had happened. The museum staff forgot to log off, so ten avatars stood around slumped over, lifeless.

“They made it through the tsunami, but the rebuilding killed them,” I said.

There was also a tour of a military training island. It wasn’t in Second Life however, it was in OpenSim, which is exactly like Second Life except you have to run it on your own server instead of servers controlled by Linden Labs. The military training was run on a server owned by a university.

I had to sign up for a separate avatar on their system, and couldn’t contact any of my Second Life friends, teleport them, or teleport to any of my landmarks when signed into OpenSim. I can understand why the military wouldn’t want random people popping into their simulation, but for most organizations, having your own OpenSim seemed pointless. The whole fun of Second Life is finding new communities and inviting new people to your community.

The military simulation wasn’t part of the Second Life community. Like meeting random people then talking to them on Skype, it takes you out of the experience of the community. If you only have access to a small group of people, it may be an open source sim, but it’s no longer an open community. You can’t take them to other community activities. Community is the value Linden Labs offers to virtual worlds by linking all the servers so people can meet each other and gather in groups.

The next tour was a demo of a medical training facility. Too many people were trying to go to that tour, so when I tried to teleport there, I got redirected to a safe hub.

At the safe hub, there were two pregnant women. It’s rare to see one in Second Life, so I was surprised to find two. Incase you couldn’t tell from the size of their bellies that they were pregnant, their avatars’ pregnancy attachments kept announcing their condition in local chat. Every time someone walked past, one women’s attachment would say, “Lisa, watch the belly. I’m pregnant.”

The other woman was apparently about to give birth. Her attachment went into detail describing labor pains and the changes in her vagina. I don’t know why anyone would want such attachments. The vaginas of women who are pregnant in real life don’t announce their activity to everyone nearby. I should have taken her to the hospital with me, but it wasn’t a maternity hospital and I didn’t think we needed to have her vagina announce anything to us during the tour.

Joey told me about some federal contracts his company has for doing work in virtual worlds. I told him I was writing a research proposal. My profile mentioned Web 3.0, so Joey asked, “What do you think Web 3.0 is?”

I didn’t think he would grasp my vision of interacting with people over the web in the future in the same way that we do in person now – seeing people and virtual spaces in front of us, projected from a special attachment on our collar or glasses. Finding or creating events, parties, discussions we want to be involved in, meeting people from all over the world and inviting them to various gatherings. All in the comfort of our own home or back yard, without the inconvenience of driving ourselves all over the place or taking an hour-long metro trip. A revolution in the way we do business, learn, and socialize.

So I just said, “Building online community.”

“You don’t know what Web 3.0 is,” he said. OK, I don’t need a community college dropout insulting my intelligence.

He gave me some interesting things to read, but then said, “A research contract is out of your league.” Oh? Why?

“Lot of legal issues you aren’t set up for.” I didn’t tell him that’s what local Small Business Development Centers are for.

He recommended going in with another small company. Well of course I’m going to team with other people. But not him. Perhaps he wants me to write a proposal and ask him for feedback on how to do it ‘right,’ so he can steal my proposal and give it to his boss.

## Thursday, May 11, 2011

I went to the real life conference in Washington about virtual worlds. In person I met Noaa, Designr, TechBiz, and their colleagues. They’re all nice to chat with online, but really good people to hang out with in person. Too bad I don’t see them online very often. It seems that they used to be occupied full time on Second Life projects, but over the past year that work has dwindled and they now spend time on other work. I also saw Joey, who is online often and seems much less of a curmudgeon in person than in his chat.

There were also a lot of people there who I hadn’t met in Second Life yet. I friended them, but don’t see them online much either.

I met a graduate student and her professor who ran a nonprofit that had permission from James Cameron to have Avatar-themed landscaping on their land. Although she said it was a nonprofit, she also called it her business. It wasn’t clear what was university sponsored, what was just a hobby, or how any business activity was generated from it. It seemed more like just another island where people hang out and pretend they’re some character.

The graduate student told me an odd story about how her professor convinced her to move to their rural town to be his student. They met online through some random activity – nude beach, dance club – it wasn’t clear. He wanted her to be his partner, but she was wary. Then he told her he was a professor and she let him know she had a masters degree. So he asked for her resume. Then he showed it around the department and he offered her a research assistantship. Not for the following year, but to come immediately for the spring semester. She had to bring her baby.

She told the other grad students and they were floored. She said she gets over a hundred thousand dollars in scholarships.

I’m sure they were. It was such a dysfunctional way to get into the department, I doubt they wanted to be associated with them.

While she told this story, the professor brought her more wine and she held his hand. The professor was wearing a wedding ring, but she was not.

I’m not sure if any of these details are exaggerated or even true. There was an open bar during the evening gathering where she told me the story. She had been drinking quite a bit and slurred her words. The professor didn’t say much. I’m not sure he wanted that story to be told.

When I got home, I checked out the Avatar land. It was mostly deserted. One blue Avatar came by. (((((( The tree that the Avatars plug their tails into stood majestically in the center of the land.

I looked at the woman’s profile. Turns out that she actually is partnered with the professor. They have all the typical creepy professions of love in their profiles.

Note: One year later I looked at his profile again. He is now partnered to his ‘wife of over twenty years.’ I wonder if the wife ever found out about the grad student.

I had thought that the people who are here for professional reasons would act like professionals. Or at least like people with dignity. Unfortunately that was not the case.

## Era of Books

I haven’t logged on for several months. I finally came back online to find people from Afghanistan to ask how they use social media for an online ebook project I’m creating.

Last time I was online, I must have logged out somewhere that no longer exists because I landed at an orientation site. I met a blue fox who hadn’t been online for three years. “Are any of your friends still around?” I asked. Not a one.

## Tuesday, January 8, 2012

### Ruby

At Sweethearts dance, a newbie ran through naked. “Don’t they give out clothes when you sign up anymore?” I asked.

I sat on the Sweethearts piano. “I’m a chanteuse,” I told the piano player.

“What inspires you to sing?” he asked.

“Driving a car or while in the shower,” I said.

“I like to play with the people at Sweethearts,” he said. What does that mean? Play a game? Play with their heads?

“What do you play?” I asked.

“Things for adults.” I told him I wasn’t in Second Life for the ‘adult’ things, rather the science talks. Then he didn’t say another word to me.

The piano player’s profile said he liked science fiction and that he was looking for a partner. Was he looking for a true partner, or just quick pixel sex? He wasn’t doing a very good job of looking.

Some guy named SecondRat sent me a private message asking if I wanted to make lots of money. “Are you a dude?” he asked. I thought he was looking for a hooker, which was strange since I have things in my profile about having a Ph.D. and running an internet startup, while other women in the club have information about their sexual habits.

“What? Why do you think I’m a dude?” A few women had sent me pornographic messages, so I started to wonder if something wasn’t clear about my formal dress or the name Lisa.

“U say ur engineer. Like saying that men can b nurses.” Like I do to many people in Second Life, I asked what SecondRat’s age and native language was. He said he was 45.

I didn’t believe him. Nobody over 40 chats with “ur.” Then people wonder how I could possibly tell how old people are from just reading their chat. Perhaps you’ve noticed, but I significantly clean up all the quotes in this book.

However instead of asking for sex, he asked me to let him send money to me from Nigeria.

“Is anyone else getting Nigerian money laundering spam in their messages?” I asked in public chat.

Turns out he’s actually an Australian, with poor English skills, just being a practical joker. A woman came up and announced that she was pregnant. “It’s not mine,” the Australian said.

A guy named Name blurted in public chat, “Excuse me for living. Can’t a guy poop or fart or burp?”

“Uh, Name, do you realize that you’re in public chat?” I asked. So then Name asked me to dance. I wasn’t sure if I should bother. Based on his previous comments and where he put them, I didn’t have any confidence that he’d have much of anything intelligent to say.

I was right. After we started dancing, he decided to ask about my underwear.

Then SecondRat got upset that I was dancing with someone else and left. Yeah, sure he was 45.

### Bruce

I popped into Sweethearts. A guy named Bawdy was talking about the Sweethearts dating site. “You mean I can get a date?” he asked.

“Can I get a partner?” I asked. Some of the women said they were going to hide in the corner.

“Partner?” Bawdy said. “I can’t even get a dance, much less the mount of all Rushmores: a partner.” For a name like Bawdy, he was quite eloquent in his chat.

“Bawdy seems like a funny guy. Which of you ladies is going to ask him to dance?” I asked.

“Did you just toss out a mercy request for me?” Bawdy asked.

“Just goading the ladies,” I responded.

“Are you going to sweet talk me into a dance?” one of the ladies asked.

“I tried sweet talk once,” Bawdy commented. “It became a sticky situation.” He reminded me a lot of Geek, whom I haven’t seen for over a year and a half.

### Ruby

I logged Bruce off and returned as LisaSchaefer.

“The tricky thing about dancing is that the woman expects you to have an intelligent conversation with her,” Bawdy said. Hm. Most of the people I meet in Second Life do not have intelligent conversations.

“Who cares about the dancing part. I just want the intelligent conversation,” I said. “Hard to find that in Second Life.”

Bawdy said he was writing a book. I asked him what it was about.

“Not sure yet. I started it three minutes ago.”

I remarked that people over forty chat better. One guy said he was forty-one. I said I didn’t believe it. Several people asked why not. “’im that guy I talk politics all that stuff’ sounds like it came from a twenty year old, not someone in their forties.”

“He changes his age to suit the audience,” Bawdy said. “I’m pretending to be thirty-two right now.”

I was planning to ask Bawdy to dance, but then he mysteriously disappeared.

## Friday, January 13, 2012

### Bruce

I popped into Bookstacks, a literature-related sim that I’ve visited many times as Bruce and as LisaSchaefer Ruby. They occasionally hold book discussions there and the chat is better than most places in Second Life.

While I was there, a woman in Learn Avatar chat invited everyone to go dancing. I invited everyone to come to Bookstacks, but went to the other woman’s event for a moment anyway.

“Great. There are pole dancers here,” I said in Learn Avatar chat. I probably should have known, based on the BDSM references in the profile of the woman who invited us.

“You’re not into that?” someone asked.

“No. I’m a woman in real life,” I responded, resulting in a slew of lols and hahas. I guess they didn’t believe me. I said I felt that pole dancing is demeaning to women and left.

Alena, a woman from Learn Avatar, came to the Bookstacks dance. She kept flirting with me.

## Tuesday, January 17, 2012

### Bruce

I went to a nude beach to see if anything interesting was going on. “Anyone have a penis I could borrow?” I asked. “I’ll give it back when I’m done.”

Someone gave me something called ‘giant penis.’ I tried to wear it, but couldn’t see it. So I made a few copies and tried to wear all of them on my mouth, hand, leg. But nothing appeared on me.

“What’s with the bacon.” some guy said.

“What bacon?” I asked.

“Bruce, put those away,” a woman scolded.

Put what away? I looked around and saw three thin strips taller than me flapping around about a meter away from me. I clicked on them to see what they were and who they belonged to.

They were flat pictures of penises on tall, floppy strips. They belonged to me.

“Oh, I was wondering where those went.” So I shrunk them down and moved them so they were attached to my avatar’s hand, mouth, and butt.

I sent a message to the guy who had given them to me. “Thanks! They’re perfect!”

## Wednesday, January 18, 2012

### Ruby

For the past week, I’ve been chatting with Amore, a normal-seeming guy I met at the Sweethearts dance. I think he lives in the DC area. I told him that I occasionally go around with a male alt and invited him to a poetry reading. He wasn’t able to stick around for the reading.

“What would you warn your college aged daughter about Second Life?” Amore asked. He kept making references to my real life kids. Which I don’t have. I didn’t bother to correct him.

“How long have you been married?” I asked him.

“Let’s not talk about my real life until we know each other better.” Well then don’t ask about my real life kids. And how are we going to know each other better if we refuse to tell each other anything?

He warned me against giving away real life information. “Some guy might decide he really needs you right away and come over to get it.” Come on. I’m not giving out my address. I’m also not giving out anything that any weirdo online will want to come over and get.

He asked when I am and am not allowed to talk by voice. “I can talk whenever I want.” As though someone is in charge of me.

“What, your husband doesn’t care?” What kind of floozy does this guy think I am? When a well educated woman comes into Second Life, is it that hard to belief that she doesn’t have to go around looking for sex? I think I’d better start avoiding this guy.

I put on a business suit and went to a nude beach to see if anything interesting was going on. Rubyen, whom I had met over a year ago, was there. I knew he wouldn’t remember me. I remembered that he was an asshole whose real life wife didn’t want to have sex with him very much. Probably because he creeped her out with all his online affairs.

He asked if I wanted to join him on some poseballs. “I’m just looking for someone to masturbate with,” he said. Really? Do you need someone else at another computer to be able to masturbate?

“How about you teleport my avatar over to wherever these poseballs are and I’ll park her on a poseball while I go work on something else in real life.”

“What would you get out of that?” he asked.

“What would I get out of it if I didn’t go work on something else?”

Meanwhile, I got a private message from Abdou who was standing nearby. “I tell you what. I’ll give Abdou a female shape and skin to put on. You go with his avatar to some poseballs.”

Then I responded to Abdou. “Rubyen wants to go on some poseballs with her.” I wanted Abdou to think Rubyen was a woman. “Would you teleport her to some poseballs?”

Abdou said he couldn’t see Rubyen. “She’s just a cloud.”

“That’s OK,” I told him. Teleport her and you’ll be able to see her when you get there.”

### Lisa

Really, if there’s some stranger at some other computer in some other city, why does it matter if they’re male or female? Does it matter if they’re black, white, or Asian? If they’re fat? Smelly? Creepy? Artificial intelligence? Which one of those traits makes a difference about the words appearing on the screen?

### Ruby

A doctor chatted with me for quite awhile. An avatar with small breasts and a small penis stood between us.

“Are you looking for a threesome?” I asked him/her/it.

“Don’t ask for sex in public chat, Lisa,” someone said. Um, it wasn’t an invitation, it was a question. Suddenly I got five instant messages inviting me to have sex.

Shemale left and offered me a teleport. “I’m old enough to be your mom,” I told him.

Doctor was amused by Shemale, but also a little weirded out. “I don’t have any problem with people being whatever they need to be, but not when they’re standing right in my face.”

Doctor asked why I came to the nude beach. “I’ve met some of my favorite people at nude beaches,” I said. Come to think of it, I haven’t seen Psychology for a very long time. Perhaps he goes around as a different alt now.

“A lot of people are here,” I said. “It’s for the amusement. Guys with small penises ask for threesomes. I show up in a business suit to see if that matters. I ask everyone if I can borrow a penis.”

“Why would a woman ask for a penis?” he asked. I hadn’t mentioned that I did that as a male avatar.

“I didn’t need a whole man when just the penis will do,” I said.

Doctor was reasonably good to chat with, but he talked about my avatar’s breasts too much.

## Saturday, January 21, 2012

### Bruce

I came across a guy whose profile said, “All females who want penis come to me.” I sent him a message asking for a penis.

“Are you a female?” he asked.

I told him I was, but he didn’t give me any penises. So I gave him one. I said that as a woman, I was offended that he was offering penises.

Then I asked what his native language was. He claimed to be from the United States. Scary. His English was much worse than most foreigners’.

“Do you go around in real life wearing a sign offering penises to women?”

He called me a dumb dumb and told me to go away.

I read a very short excerpt from this book at Bookstacks. Yes. I sounded like a woman. Nobody seemed to flinch. At least, nobody said anything in chat that led me to believe that they were surprised.

I told Alena that she missed my reading at Bookstacks. She wished she could have heard it. I seriously doubt that.

I sent a ‘partner’ request to Amore, He sent back a message saying that I must be mistaken because he’s a man.

“You missed my poetry reading,” I responded. “This is my new way of playing practical jokes.” But he repeated that I was mistaken, he is a man.

Apparently his memory isn’t very good.

## Sunday, January 22, 2012

### Ruby

I logged on at the nude beach again and got bombarded by several instant messages. Some were broken English. A few logged off without warning. Two were educated scientists. I chatted with both of them for awhile. Robin logged off but the other invited me to come with him and NotTooShy, his girlfriend, to their new house.

At first I was worried that they were inviting me to a threesome. But they seemed too nice and normal, so I went. The guy had to leave, but I went with NotTooShy to ballroom dancing.

That was actually kind of cool, to have a wingwoman to hang around with. She gave me landmarks for good places to chat with guys. The first place had mostly women. We didn’t get asked to dance, so we tried another place where we got lots of invitations.

She left with one of the guys she met and went to another part of the island. I could tell from my radar that they were on top of each other. I thought about flying by to see what was going on, but I figured she’d just get pissed off.

I hopped on a poseball to lie on a beach chair and without introducing himself, he hopped on the poseball to lie next to me on the chair. So I told him that I was a man in real life.

Then I hopped on a beach chair further down the beach and a guy named Rex hopped on next to me. Rubyen saw us together and left.

“Are you female?” Rex asked me.

“Yes. Why do you ask?”

“Some guy just told me that you’re male.”

“Some people are just jerks,” I said. “I’m female. I’m two hundred and fifty pounds.”

Robin came online and asked me what I was up to. “I told one guy that I’m a man and he left. I told another that I’m female, but over two hundred pounds. He didn’t flinch.” I don’t know what people are OK with and what they aren’t OK with.

Robin asked me to teleport him. I was still dancing with Rex, so I told Rex, “I’m sixty seven years old.” I thought about telling him that I was smelly and creepy, but wasn’t sure how to describe that to convince him. Didn’t matter. He left. So I danced with Robin.

## Tuesday, January 24, 2012

### Ruby

Indian guy I met in London

Said he was kissing me. I didn’t say that was OK. I could see where he thought this was going, so I left.

I popped onto a nude beach for a little while. I ended up being the older sister’s shoulder to cry on for a few lonely young guys. One told me about how he tried meeting women in real life at speed dating events, but didn’t meet anyone worth following up with.

I told another that I was over two hundred pounds. “That’s OK,” he said. “So am I.”

## Thursday, January 26, 2012

### Bruce

I went to the nude beach where everyone wears clothes as a monkey in a wedding dress. “That is the most bizaaarrrrre avatar,” the beach monitor said.

“Thank you.”

“That wasn’t a compliment.” She told me to change into beachwear or leave.

Second Life: where you get harassed when you’re not wearing clothes, where you get harassed when you’re wearing too much clothing

I went to another beach and teleported LevelHead, whom I hadn’t seen for a long time. I’m not sure what she expected out of my invitation to a nude beach. A sexy dance?

“What are you?” she asked.

“A monkey. Monkey bride.”

### Ruby

Some guy was going up to all the women at the beach and asking them for sex in broken English in public chat. A few gathered around and made fun of him. He left.

He came back two minutes later and said he had sex with two ladies while he was gone.

“We’ve got a minute man here,” one of the guys said.

“Those weren’t ladies,” I said.

A newbie asked how to have sex in Second Life. “This isn’t a magic box,” I said. “You still have to do it yourself.”

“But how does that work?” he asked.

“Do we really need to explain it to you?”

I created a new female avatar named EngineerPhD. This time when I signed up, there were some animal avatars to choose from. I decided I wanted a unicorn. I figure it’s easy to create shapes and clothes for people. If I can get a free animal avatar, I’ll take one of those.

I went to Sweethearts dance and said hello to Bawdy.

“Hello Mr. Engineer,” he said.

“Why do you call me Mr?” I asked. “I’m pink. Please. Call me Dr. Engineer.” Then Bawdy disappeared. I guess I scared him off.

I looked for a different avatar in my library. I found a dragon, so I put that on. I went to get a free dress and hair upstairs and came back as a dragon in a dress with a long-haired wig.

I received a few messages from women. I thought they were going to offer the newbie a better dress and human skin. But instead they made chit chat. I guess they thought I was a man. A dragon in drag. I didn’t make a point of telling them that I was a woman. What difference did it make?

### Lisa

Gives me an idea for a designed experiment. A statistical analysis of what kind of people get the most attention in Second Life. My next Second Life book will have the results of this study.

## Sunday, February 12, 2012

I found a place called Book Island. It’s run by Uncle and Auntie who collaborate well, even though they live on opposite sides of the world from each other in real life. Uncle is a white bearded gentleman in his sixties. He’s very calm and patient with everybody. He always speaks by voice and He is very welcoming to anyone who stops by Book Island and likes to encourage writers by talking about them in his blog.

There are several book-related discussions throughout the week. We don’t stay on-topic very well, but it’s a nice group of people and none of the weird head games that go on with the people I meet at other venues.

Someone had come to Book Island during the week and griefed the neighborhood by leaving all sorts of phallic objects strewn around the island. “Someone with a mood disorder, I’m sure,” Uncle said.

NyceGuy arrived in mid-conversation. “Wow, taking it up a notch I see!”

“Oh, I wasn’t referring to you, NyceGuy.”

“I've come across many people in online whom I suspect have serious mood disorders,” I said.

“Is a mood disorder like ADHD?” Kat asked.

“It’s a euphemism for insane,” Auntie said.

“Unless they commit suicide,” PowderMilk said.

NyceGuy typed, “How very Romeo and Juliet.” At the same moment I entered, “Like Romeo and Juliet.” Jinx.

NyceGuy apologized for being late. “I just finished my first five mile race ever.” I wanted to tease him for being a wimp, I had been on a twelve mile run that morning. But I had just met him and didn’t want to seem like a jerk.

Uncle asked what we’ve all been reading recently. Most people mentioned novels. “*The Ruby Way*,” I said. No, it’s not about my avatar. It’s about the Ruby programming language.

“Learning Ruby is on my To Do list,” NyceGuy said. Cool. Someone who knows what Ruby is. “I’m reading *jQuery For Mobile*, even though I don’t have a smartphone yet.” A man after my own heart. I go to mobile events in real life, even though my own phone is pretty useless. I want to learn about what people are doing with smartphones, I just don’t want to pay fifty dollars a month to use one.

Wow. A guy who is into running, does programming, and jinxed me. I friended him instantly.

“I keep Amazon open during Readers Chat and I'll add things to my wishlist,” NyceGuy said. “Or I have a list called 'Items of Note' that I throw things into. I take notes on everything. Use my brain for CPU. Not memory.”

“I just put everything into a folder called ‘such’,” Uncle said.

“I also keep directories named 'stuff,’ 'junk,’ 'garbage',” NyceGuy said. “I'll add 'such' to that list.”

There was just something precious about the way he chatted. He seemed kind of like a sweet, younger, smart guy.

A tall blond woman showed up. I didn’t see any clothing on her and wondered if her clothing graphics weren’t loading correctly on my screen.

“Someone looks naked,” I said.

Rhi, the tall blonde, corrected me. “I call it nude.”

She had entered something in her profile about nudeness being her burqa. If being without clothing is something expected, it takes the salaciousness out of it.

I gave a reading as Bruce. Which was fun because I obviously have a female voice. He won the door prize, which was a scripted parrot that flies around and comes to sit on your shoulder.

Someone from Learn Avatar gave me some land to put my theater on for a little while. Grouchy came by to see it. I hadn’t seen him since last February. We chatted about the old neighborhood. I told him that Bruce was really Lisa. He was amused and offered to become Facebook friends.

## Monday, February 28, 2012

Auntie is in charge of building and maintaining Book Island. We were on the wooden deck of the beach house sitting in round wicker chairs. I clicked on a Box of Calm. Monks droned a Gregorian Chant. Desserts and candles covered the coffee table. Auntie was concerned that there weren’t enough chairs for an upcoming event.

“We could sit on other pieces of furniture,” Barbara suggested. Kat sat on a table.

I sat next to Kat on top of the strawberry shortcake.

“We’ll call you Sweet Cheeks,” Barb said. “Or Strawberry Shorts.”

I took a piece of cake handed it out to everyone. “Food fight!”

“Let’s all go take a walk out to the water,” Uncle said, “with our clothes on, of course, because this is a PG sim, and the ocean will wash all the cake off.”

When I was all clean, I logged of to run an event at the library in real life.

## Tuesday, March 6, 2012

There is often a chattery gathering on Book Island on Tuesday evenings. We mostly talk out loud. A writer comes to lead the discussion, but her writings are strange and the discussion seemed to be just banter. Nevertheless, it was fun chatting with everyone.

(Feb readers chat, NyceGuy) I mentioned GuruTapas. An interesting discussion about editors, agents, ensued…

As I chatted with Barb about Wisconsin, Igor came by with a deck of cards, which he shuffled every time he typed. “Nice card trick,” Barb said. I was afraid his hand would slip any moment and all the cards would go flying everywhere.

“Do you know fifty-two pickup?” I asked.

“Is that an American thing?” Igor responded.

“It’s more of a seven-year-old thing,” I said. “My cousins used to make us play it all the time when we were kids.”

A cardboard waiter stood behind the couch. I clicked on him and he gave me something called ‘marijuana tea.’ “Uuuuncle! That waiter gave me marijuana!”

Auntie’s cat rolled on the floor while we talked. When I clicked on her she meowed. When I sat on her, she was quiet.

I edited clothing while everyone bantered. I used pictures from my real life bookshelf, and put scripts in my hat so people would get a link to GuruTapas.com when they clicked on it. Igor said he wanted the book Bermuda shorts. I gave him my huge formal dress covered in books.

“Lisa’s booking me,” Igor said.

Igor has a raspy British accent. “It’s English,” he says. “If the Scottish and Welsh don’t want to call themselves British, then the English don’t have to either.” He calls Auntie a criminal because she’s from Australia.

He 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 Igor 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 Igor is really saying isn’t about ghosts. It’s a silly joke just to see if you’re paying attention.

I gave Igor a copy of my book Bermuda shorts. “You should get a book avatar,” Igor suggested. “Then you’d really be wearing books.”

What a great idea. “I don’t need to get one of those, I can make one.”

I created an avatar that was a big copy of *Diary of an Avatar*, with a preliminary book jacket that consisted of a picture of myself in a screen shot of *Budget Justified*, side-by-side with a picture of Bruce sitting next to Ruby. Online Ruby and real-life Lisa are wearing the same clothing, purple pants and a white jacket.

Igor seemed interested in the items I was making and was impressed that I had the skills to create unusual things to wear and script them. So he joined my GuruTapas.com group.

## Sunday, March 18, 2012

I went to a poetry reading at the Blue Angel. I read my piece about the first chapter of *Diary of an Avatar*, so someone asked one of the guys to read a piece about Second Life that everyone called *The Penis Piece*.

“Everyone asks about my penis,” the reader said.

It was about going to the penis store, then taking it to a sandbox to modify the penis. “That’s what sandboxes are for. A place to go play with your penis.”

“I’ve found penises on the ground,” I said, referring to the time someone came around and left his junk all over my Learn Avatar neighborhood.

The reader handed his penis out and let everyone touch it. It even had a Penis Management System, or PMS.

“Why do you need a penis online if your avatar doesn’t go to the bathroom,” an audience member asked.

“I don’t even know why you need a penis for avatar sex,” I said.

Global Peace Chat discussion. Teleported NyceGuy as he logged in.

“Hi all, clothes are in the dryer and I have my dinner here, so I’m ready for Peace Chat.”

“Glad you made it, NyceGuy,” Uncle said. “We’re discussing the balance between material and spiritual needs.”

“For some reason I feel compelled to let you all know about the balance between my dining and laundering activities.”

We all went around the circle taking turns with our initial thoughts about the topic.

“I was going to say something about parity in justice as an expression or manifestation of spiritual practice. If you have a system where people can meet their material needs but isn't so demanding that it precludes giving folks space for reconciling their spiritual needs, I think you'd be set,” NyceGuy said.

“according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the physiological material needs (food, water, sleep) must be achieved before the higher level needs can be attained. Self-actualization, the highest of the 5 needs,” I said.

“I think there is something that, for me, equates to a kind of spiritual practice when deeply concentrating. In this case while I’m writing code. I suppose others would also see spiritual practice in through love of one's fellow humans.”

## Sunday, March 25, 2012

In addition to the clothing I’ve been creating clothing out of pictures from my real life bookshelf, I made GuruTapas coffee mugs, bookshelves, and of course, tapas. I give out a folder of these items, including a notecard containing the first few pages of this book, to people who ask about the items I’m wearing.

Worldly had been hiding his online status from me for several months, but today he was no longer hiding from me. Shortly after I logged on, I saw that he had logged off. I looked at his profile to see if he was still with Dakota. He was.

As I browsed his profile, I noticed something else. His avatar had been created on March 25 two years ago. It’s strange that it’s been almost two years since I first met him on a sleepless evening at a beautiful garden that no longer exists in Second Life.

Although he was offline, I send him a message. “Happy Rez Day.” He immediately logged back on.

“I didn’t even remember that it was my own rez day,” he answered.

“I didn’t remember any of mine either,” I said. “All nine of them.”

“You have nine alts?” he asked.

“Well, I rarely ever log on as any of the other eight.”

I was attending a Global Peace Chat with Uncle, Auntie, and their gang. The topic was whether balancing religion and science would help foster world peace. As a devout atheist, I figured Worldly would enjoy the debate. I gave him a landmark.

“They have these talks every week,” I said.” You should stop by.”

He asked how long the discussion had been going on.

“It started an hour ago. We’re just about done.”

Uncle 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 that likely came 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 prompting or context.

I sent a message to Worldly. “The conclusion of our discussion is this,” then I pasted the last few lines of chat. “Auntie: Religion is not necessarily faith. Ruby: You are an ass hat.” I kept my microphone off because I was laughing myself silly at this point.

Worldly promptly appeared on Book Island to see what was going on.

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

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

## Saturday, March 31, 2012

On Saturday afternoons, Book Island visitors hang out and discuss books we’re reading or have read. Barb said we could also mention any good cereal box reading we may have encountered.

“There’s good T-shirt reading at my programmer meetups,” I said.

“I like reading oven manuals,” PowderMilk said.

“Fahrenheit 451?” Uncle asked.

I was wearing my skirt made from the pictures from all the books on my bookshelf. “You can read my dress.”

One guy started talking on his phone and forgot to turn off his mike. He was going on and on about a grocery list for dog food.

“I’m having friends over for dinner tonight,” he said when he returned.

“Dog friends?” I asked.

“Actually, I was talking about a Cambodian rice and fish recipe. It’s such an irredeemable mess, I call it dog food,” the guy said.

One of the books mentioned was *Snow Crash*. I had never read it, but it was the futuristic story that inspired the creation of Second Life.

“Is it sexist?” I asked. Because Second Life attitudes sure are.

“Stephenson doesn’t write women well,” Auntie said. “But I don’t think it’s intentional.”

“Sexism is never intentional,” I said. “That’s the problem with it. People don’t think of it as sexism, they think of it as the way things really are.”

“George Sands writes women well,” Mark said. Coming from a guy, I don’t know if that means Sands writes Mark’s views on women well. Another man said that Tolstoy wrote women well. I don’t know. Most of those older books make everyone seem like a cartoon. Perhaps he thinks women act like cartoons.

I looked at the poses of all the women sitting on the circle of couches at our gathering. We all looked like twenty year old airheads with our heads cocked and our fingertips touching our cheeks as though we were oh so impressed by what the men had to say. Some of us were lying on our sides with our head in one hand and our other hand caressing our hips.

“These couches are sexist,” I said.

“The pillows are sexy,” Mark said. I’m not sure what he meant by that. He liked the way the women sat around like bimbos?

There happened to be three ‘cats’ sitting in a row. A tiger avatar, a panda named PowderMilk, and Kat. PowderMilk had entered the Chinese word for panda in his profile, which translated into English means ‘bear cat.’

“I have a Bear cat in real life,” I said.

PowderMilk is a librarian at a prison. He has a calm voice and makes a point of being very pleasant to everyone. He says Uncle is an important celebrity in Second Life because he leads the Book Island discussions.

“This is one of the highlights of my week,” NyceGuy said. I wasn’t sure if he doesn’t have anything else going on in his life or if he was being nice.

Uncle mentioned that he lives in Dayton.

“I lived in Dayton for a summer,” I said. “In fact, I wrote a story about it.”

I dug the story up from some internet archives and gave it to them. PowderMilk read it aloud. I had written it in the summer of 1998. It was about my paycheck getting stolen out of my mail while I lived in campus housing at the University of Dayton while working on a research fellowship at Wright Patterson Air Force Base.

The woman who stole the paycheck was named Ruchika. When I received a copy of the cashed check, I notified police and had a talk with her after they brought her back to our apartments. She was from a foreign country and offered to pay me the amount of the check so she wouldn’t have to deal with the police again.

“I’m biased about that story,” PowderMilk 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.

## Sunday, April 1, 2012

PowderMilk 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 Igor saying he was at a poetry reading.

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

“That’s PowderMilk,” Igor 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.

Igor 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. PowderMilk wanted to have the wallpaper in his real life house.

After Igor read a few people’s short poems, I read the story about my paycheck getting stolen out of my mail.

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

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

PowderMilk read a piece about online love. “If you have any feedback on the piece and you don’t want to talk about it out loud, or if you want to say something nasty, send me a private message.”

Bruce sent PowderMilk a nasty message. “I think you’re hot.”

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

I sent Igor a partnership request as Bruce.

“Check your email,” Bruce told Igor.

“Email? Why should I check that?”

“I sent you email,” Bruce said.

“You don’t have my email address,” Igor said.

“Doesn’t matter,” Bruce responded.

Igor checked his email.

“Nice,” Igor said. “How does Bruce take rejection?”

“Bruce doesn’t care,” I answered Igor.

“Did Bruce send you one of those nasty messages too?” PowderMilk asked.

Yet, Bruce never received that rejection.

Uncle leads a Global Peace Chat right after my bedtime every Sunday evening. Sometimes I stay up for it anyway. Today was Uncle’s avatar’s birthday, known as his ‘rez day,’ so we all had cake. He also gave us giant bubbles.

“I welcome you to float in the bubbles during Peace Chat,” Uncle encouraged us.

I figured that if we could all wear giant bubbles, I’d wear my own large item. Of course, not something as big as a house – that wouldn’t have fit in the room – but something the size of a person. I searched through my inventory and selected a popcorn machine. I turned myself into an invisible avatar, took off my hair, and wore the popcorn machine.

“I just tried to remove the popcorn machine,” Auntie said. “I thought someone left it here by mistake.”

“I’m a popcorn machine avatar,” I said.

“Lisa, could you change into something else?” Uncle asked. “I can’t see the people sitting next to you.”

So I removed the popcorn machine, expecting to be totally invisible. But I had forgotten to remove my glasses, which now floated in midair. “Now I’m a glasses avatar,” I said.

“That’s better. Glasses are much easier to see through,” Uncle quipped.

Lyle gave me a bubble wand that emitted smaller bubbles everywhere. We both got into bubbles and floated around the room. “I’m having a bubble war with Lyle,” I said as I rammed my bubble into his.

“Oh dear,” said Auntie. “A war during Peace Chat.”

I got a notice about a live comedy act, so I put on a merman outfit and went to see it. Lyle asked for a teleport. When he arrived, he landed on the roof of the club and couldn’t get in. I couldn’t find a way out, so I asked him for a teleport.

We stood on the roof chatting. “That’s a weird avatar,” he said. “Do have a normal shape?”

It was a strange avatar. I was all black, with a shrunken head and bone-shaped limbs. So I changed into my normal Ruby shape.

## Monday, April 2, 2012

Auntie said she liked the land where the tiny animals live, so I turned into a panda and went there to see it. Several of the animals were playing a large drum. There was a vacant seat, so I took it. When I sat down, I got chopped off from the legs down. I lost my arms below the elbows and my stubs banged on the drum.

Lyle asked me to teleport him. He landed on a bunny’s head. We all greeted him, but he wouldn’t respond. He sent me a private message.

“You’re all creatures,” he said.

“Yeah. Auntie recommended this place.”

“Turn back into a person,” he said.

This is the second time he’s told me to change my avatar. Why is he ordering me around?

“Your avatar represents how you want the world to perceive you,” he said.

No, my avatar is what I put on to make funny jokes, or to see what I can create, build, or script. So I changed into a zebra. Then he left without saying anything.

I sent him a message. “What. You don’t like zebras?”

He didn’t respond.

## Tuesday, April 3, 2012

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

“Hello, Iggward,” I greeted Igor in chat.

Igor and I were in private chat and I asked him if he had a big family. “I wanted kids, but my wife didn’t.” He told me about her serious health problems.

We’ve both been married the same number of years. He had spent the day at the vet with his young cat because she has a bad heart.

“You’re a good Cat Dad,” I said.

I told him I had a sister who lives near my mom. “The grandkids are over at her house every day. Which is a really nice thing because my mom is agoraphobic.”

“My wife sometimes has panic attacks when she goes out. Sometimes she cuts herself. She says it relieves stress. I’m really worried about her.”

Oh my. That’s way worse than my mom. My comment was just my armchair diagnosis, based on the fact that my mom rarely leaves a two mile radius of her house.

“But after everything she puts me through, I still love her,” he said.

It really says a lot about his character that he’s taken care of her all these years.

“It would be one thing if she was just a girlfriend you knew for a couple of years. But you have to take care of family.”

“Sometimes I wish I could run away and start a new life. But I’ve come to accept this.” A lot of people online feel the same way. That’s why they’re here.

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

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

“Is Grief someone we know?” Uncle asked.

“Hello, Iggward,” I typed.

There was silence for a moment.

“Iggward?” Igor typed back. “Lisa?”

I got on voice. “I thought you might start to wonder whether someone posted a sign on you that said ‘Iggward,’.”

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

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

## Thursday, April 5, 2012

Lyle sent me a message. I was surprised to hear from him, since I thought he was angry at animals.

“I’m sorry I was in a bad mood last time. I don’t like being around animals when I’m in a bad mood. If you’re a person again, teleport me.”

This guy was too psychotic, I didn’t want to have anything to do with him anymore.

When Igor puts on a female avatar, he calls her Iggette. He even has her in one of the Picks in his profile. “I have to put on a dress so all the women don’t chase me.”

I created an alt named Iggette and gave her the nickname ‘Iggward’s Alt.’ She was born as a pink unicorn with a white helical horn. Then I created an alt named Iggward. I went to Book Island and found Igor standing alone.

“Hi Iggward,” I said.

He didn’t respond. I walked away from the computer to get my walking shoes, wallet, library card, and a book to return. When I got back to the computer, Igor still hadn’t responded.

“Gotta go,” I said. “Heading to the real life Book Island.”

When I returned, Igor had left me a message. “Hey. I’ve become a victim of identity theft.”

Not really. Iggette claims to be Iggward’s alt, not Igor’s alt. I’m the owner of Iggward.

Igor was DJing, so I asked him to teleport me. But since Iggette had not been age verified, I couldn’t get there. So I hung out on Book Island while I changed my settings. Uncle, Auntie, PowderMilk, and a few other people chatted by voice about ebook authors and methods for selling ebooks.

“Hi Igor,” Uncle said.

“Not Igor,” I typed. “Iggette.”

“Oh, it’s Lisa,” Uncle said when he noticed my nickname said ‘Iggward’ and I had my GuruTapas.com tag above my head.

“Are you running two viewers?” Kat asked. She must have seen Igor online in her friend list. So I got on voice to emphasize that I was not Igor.

Auntie complimented my unicorn outfit and mentioned how much she likes the people at the island where all the tiny animals live.

“One of the guys I met at Book Island got mad when I teleported him and everyone was dressed like an animal.” Auntie couldn’t imagine why.

“Some men get angry about very irrational things,” PowderMilk, the prison librarian, said. I sat on the arm of his chair like a pink pet.

“Not PowderMilk, though,” I said. “He’s always very nice to everyone.” The prisoners probably need a calm, understanding librarian like him around.

By the time I got my age verification set, the conversation had turned to bacon milkshakes. My cue to leave. I said goodbye and went to the club where Igor DJs.

The only other person there was RealFriend. She was a tall, dark-haired, pale, skinny goth in torn jeans and a black jacket. She looked like she was about to faint any moment. I should have offered her food. Igor 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,” Igor 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 wearing Maggie Simpson’s winter coat. I had never seen this happen before.

“What am I doing?” I asked.

“Tiny dances,” Igor 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 RealFriend, poking the floor with the helix sticking out of my head.

“Sorry, RealFriend. 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 Igor 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 RealFriend. Then I became a human star.

“My body is schizophrenic,” I said.

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

I teleported back to Book Island. Everyone was leaving. So I came back to Igor’s club. Whew. I was normal again. I offered a teleport to PowderMilk without asking. I do that to him a lot lately. But he never responds.

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

“Thirty years,” Igor said.

“Come on. Second Life hasn’t been around that long. The internet hasn’t been around that long.”

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

“Really!” I love when real life merges with online life. I rarely meet people who know each other in real life online. When I do, I get a better glimpse into their actual persona and the kind of people they choose to let into their lives. “Tell me something embarrassing about Igor.”

If she had any good stories, she didn’t want to share at the moment. I asked how they had met, if they were related. I thought perhaps she was his alt, but they sometimes typed at the same time.

“What’s his name in real life?” I asked.

“You haven’t told her?” RealFriend said.

“She never asked.”

“Fine, Igor. 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. He took a little too long to ‘remember’ his name.

“It’s Dracula.”

Now that’s something embarrassing.

“You’re making that up.”

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

“That’s a Halloween name.” Although it fit his voice perfectly. Spooky, vampire-like, with a Transylvania accent. Perhaps that’s the character he’s going for online. I wonder if he’s spooky in real life. I imagine his attempts at being scary in person end up making him endearingly goofy. “Are his parents goth?”

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

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

“Igor is a good Cat Dad,” I said.

“And Dog Dad,” RealFriend added.

“And Guinea Pig Dad, and Tortoise Dad,” Igor said. “We take in rescue animals.”

Aw. “How sweet of you.” I have a soft spot for animals and the people who take care of them. I hope he has a big back yard. “My mom has three desert tortoises that were born in her back yard years ago.”

“Does she live in a desert?” Igor asked.

“Phoenix.”

“Where do you live, Lisa,” RealFriend asked.

“Washington, DC, suburb.”

“She’s posh,” said Igor.

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,” RealFriend 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.”

Interesting conclusion to jump to. Igor has never been to the US before, but most of the Washington, DC, suburbs in fact are very fancy, or at least extremely comfortable. While I live in a really nice neighborhood and I have more money than I need, I choose not to be fancy. Which is exactly why I have more money than I need.

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 RealFriend.

Igor had finished DJing, and after seeing that profile, it was definitely time to go to sleep.

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

## Friday, April 6, 2012

I went to Club Gomorrah again while Igor DJed. He wore a black pirate jacket with a white frilly blouse and a red sash tied around his waist. He carried a sword in each hand. There were a few more people there this time and I recognized everyone at the club.

“It looks like Igor brought Book Island to Club Gomorrah,” I said when I arrived. Then I noticed that everyone there was female, except Igor.

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

Since I had seen all of them at Book Island several times, I friended the women there whom I didn’t already have in my friend list.

“No, Igor’s my dad,” Kat said. “Dad, 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.

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

“Gay wedding!” I said.

“How many alts do you have?” RealFriend asked.

“Around ten. But this is my real alt.”

“She’s on the lam,” Igor said.

Yeah. On the lam. That’s why I use my real full name in my main alt.

“They were all experiments. Bruce was to see what it was like to be a man. Tiffani was supposed to be an airhead, but I wasn’t any good at that.”

“And Iggette is an experiment in bothering me,” Igor said.

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

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

“Where’s the monkey?” I asked. I wanted to turn into one, but Bruce is the avatar with the monkey costume.

Was I the only one Igor gave that role to, for the sake of giving me a hard time? I looked into the group information to find out what titles were available. Everyone had been given the Monkey Toucher title, but we had also been given a second title, ‘I’ve been Igor’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. RealFriend had the ‘Igor’d’ title over her head. I changed my title also. Most of the others just put a different group’s tag over their heads. Poor Kat had ‘Monkey Toucher’ over her head the entire evening.

Kat wanted to hear a song by Journey. “Come over to the DJ if you want to make a request,” Igor 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 Igor, “I think you have enough girlfriends to keep you company tonight.”

“But they’re all taken,” he said.

I looked at Kat’s profile, but she didn’t have a partner or any mention of a boyfriend. But she had mentioned that she wanted Igor to be her online dad. “I assume Kat’s too young.”

“She is. And she’s been with PowderMilk a long time.”

PowderMilk? There had never been any hint that they’re an item. I thought of him as being shy about girlfriends. I’m pretty sure he doesn’t have a girlfriend in real life.

“PowderMilk’s a good guy. I’m glad he has somebody in his life. Even if it’s just his Second Life.”

“They used to call PowderMilk a pig,” Igor said.

“Why? He’s such a nice guy.”

“His avatar was a pig.” Badum bum.

“Have you ever had a partner?” I asked.

“I was partnered for two years.”

Two years. That’s a long time for an online relationship.

“Why did it end?”

“A misunderstanding,” he said. “I was offline for a few months and she never received my emails.”

“If it was only a misunderstanding, you should be able to explain what happened and get back together.”

“She had given up on me, thinking I was gone for good. By the time I came back, she had another boyfriend.”

She moves fast. I have a feeling if that’s the kind of online relationship he’s looking for, I’m not his type.

## Saturday, April 7, 2012

Igor was talking to the Club Gomorrah owner. I came over to say hi, but then he teleported away. Thanks a lot, Igor. The club owner had taken him to meet the online Pink Floyd tribute band. We were still in private chat.

Then I got a message from PowderMilk. He was at an event where someone was rambling on and on about weird philosophy stuff. Alter thought it was hilarious so he teleported me.

“For millions of years there was no reason to think. We had centuries to modify technology. If the invention was bad, we had time to change it…” the guy rambled.

There were only two other people there – one audience member and one rambler. Then the audience member left.

“We don’t have that luxury anymore. Inventions come one after the other in bundles. What happens when these inventions interact with previous inventions? It spells disaster…”

“He’s a moderator and audience all in one,” PowderMilk said.

“The space program leads the way in making products durable and autonomous. These inventions travel across space for millions of miles for fifty years…”

Another guy wandered through and immediately left. “We should teleport a flash mob here,” I suggested. I wanted to teleport all the guys I had met over the past year who had teleported me to sex beds without saying where we were going.

“And energy when this technology trickles down to earth manufacturing. It will take two years for space technology to be available for industry…”

“He’s filibustering Second Life. Maybe he thinks he can stop time,” PowderMilk said.

“Remember it took us millions of years to get a rocket off the ground. A great chain in humanity contributed to space flight. Rockets evolved from everything that came before it. …”

“Is this supposed to be a lecture?” I asked. We weren’t sure. “Or is he a bot?”

“Far back to the invention of the bow and arrow. Many people contributed. All of humanity foresaw space rockets. Something in our genes points us to space…”

Couldn’t be a bot. His chat was filled with poor grammar, spelling mistakes, and repetition. I don’t think English was his native language. He could have made his point in a few sentences. If he was going to give a lecture, he should have typed it out beforehand.

“He has BOTulism,” PowderMilk said. “Can we call a shrink?” Second Life really could use some shrinks.

“Human genes make more genes to send to space and proliferate on other planets. Are we looking for god?…” That’s all humans are. Genes that make more genes. Other planets don’t need our genes.

Then the guy disappeared without warning. “Maybe he figured out we didn’t care,” I said.

Igor also logged off without saying anything. It was very late for him, so I assumed he fell asleep at the computer. I didn’t feel I needed to chat about botulism anymore, so I logged off too.

## Sunday, April 8, 2012

Igor left a message letting me know that his viewer had crashed last night. I had just finished editing down the beginning of my Book Island chapter to a readable length and asked him if there were any prose readings tonight.

He teleported me to a picnic at the bottom of a steep hill. Igor was with several Book Island women again. A giant cherry blossom tree blocked my view every time I turned around. A blanket was spread on the ground covered with pillows. I had arrived as a cushy brown chair avatar and invited people to sit down. Of course, nobody could, because avatars aren’t programmed to sit on avatars.

Sevi asked if Igor had written anything lately. He hadn’t.

“We need to find you a muse,” Sevi said.

“Igor’s my muse,” I said.

Everyone wanted to know what I had written about Igor. So I offered to read an excerpt from my Book Island chapter of *Diary of an Avatar*. It didn’t have a clear ending, so I said, “Igor will have to continue to amuse me for the story to go on.”

“I didn’t say my name was Dracula,” Igor referred to the part where I met his real life friend, Scooby. “I said it was Warlock.”

“Same thing,” I said. “I didn’t want to use your real life name in the story.”

“Igor loved it,” Sevi said.

“Can’t I have my own opinion?”

“Not when you’re on my sim,” Sevi said. “I’m in charge.”

“I don’t need a leader,” Igor said.

“He needs followers,” I said.

“Disciples,” Igor corrected. For his Legion of the Forsaken. “Go spread my word. I feel like I’m part of a rockumentary of DJ Igor.”

Since I had ended the story with him saying that all the women at the club were taken, the women were giving him a hard time, telling him they needed to find a woman for him. “I have someone in mind,” Sevi said.

Igor got really embarrassed. “I don’t want a girlfriend. I’m happily single. Forever,” he said.

“That’s a load of crap and you know it,” Sevi said.

I didn’t believe him either, but I was also pretty sure he didn’t want to be set up.

“Are you answering for me again?” Igor asked.

“Igor will come around,” Sevi told us.

“I feel like I’m in grammar school again,” Igor said.

“He needs a good woman,” Sevi said.

“I do,” Igor agreed.

“Kat’s not taken,” Sevi said. “Now’s your chance.”

Kat arrived as a cute little Easter Bunny with a basket full of eggs. Perhaps Sevi had teleported her there. Kat’s little brown bunny ear flopped over as she hopped around.

“What! No, Kat is my daughter. Hello, Daughter.”

“I was just talking about you, Kat,” I said, since she was in my story.

Kat came over and stood by my feet. “Where’s my mom?” she asked. She must have known what I was saying about her.

“We’re looking for one,” Sevi said.

“No mom,” Igor corrected. “I made you in a test tube.”

“Nice view here,” Kat said.

“Are you looking up Lisa’s shorts?” Igor asked. “Naughty daughter.”

“Can I have a hug, Dad?”

“No, you’ve been naughty.”

So I gave her a hug. Igor gave her piggy back rides around the picnic blanket.

“Hey, how does Kat get a piggy back ride?” I asked.

“Because she’s my daughter,” Igor said.

Well, fine, but Second Life doesn’t allow people to sit on each other. I asked How, not Why.

Sevi gave me an object to wear so Kat could have permissions to attach to my back. So I gave her a piggy back ride around the cherry tree. I also wore a monkey, put my ‘Monkey Toucher’ title above my head, and gave Kat a copy of the monkey.

I told Kat she could be my daughter. “Igor and I will be single parents.”

“A modern family,” he said.

Sevi laid on the pillows, so Igor and I did so too at the same time. We landed on the picnic blanket as Siamese twins, our torsos merged with my legs sticking out of his side and his face sticking out of my hair.

“Aren’t we cute together.”

“We look like a circus act,” Igor said.

I got a message from Amore, whom I hadn’t seen for two months. He offered me a teleport. He’s always a good conversationalist. But since he was trying to get information out of me about my possible real life children while refusing to mention anything about his real life, I decided I was much happier paying attention to those whom I was already with.

“I’m with my Book Island friends.” And so not to totally blow him off, I said, “You should come hang out at Book Island. Lots of nice people there.”

He didn’t seem interested. Hey, not my fault. I gave him the option to be a part of it the last time I saw him by giving him a landmark.

I told Igor that I had been offered a teleport. “But I’d much rather spend time with you here. Book Island is a really nice community.” I wanted to make the point that I had made a conscious decision not to go off to other engagements while I was already with him. With the underlying message that I’ll continue to do so.

## Monday, April 9, 2012

I went to a fifteen minute writers dash. I showed up as a chair-shaped avatar. “Have a seat, Lisa,” the moderator said. “Or be a seat.”

Soon another writer arrived. “Lisa, I see your name tag, but I don’t see you sitting in that chair.”

“I am the chair,” I told him. Then I sat in one of the other chairs provided at the venue.

We had to use the word ‘bottle’ in our story. I wrote about the time I drove over a bottle in my high school parking lot with my car, Shark Machine, and my tire exploded. I combined it with a story about the time my ex-boyfriend locked his keys in the car while it was running. Except in this story, I was the one who locked the keys in Shark Machine.

Since I had been writing away like a madwoman, I didn’t realize what was going on around me until the fifteen minutes were up. After I finished, everyone was talking about Penis Boy, so I went through the chat to figure out what they were referring to.

Some guy had stopped by. “Im poor boy. Pls give mony.” He must have been young. Older people rarely employ liberal use of poor grammar and spelling. Nor do people over forty call themselves ‘boys.’ Most of the people at the writers dash were likely in their fifties or sixties, based on their life experience mentioned in their profiles.

“You could at least spell out the word ‘please’ when you approach a group of writers,” one of the gentlemen responded.

The leader of the writers dash told the ‘poor boy,’ “Begging is not considered good manners.”

Well, if begging wasn’t acceptable, what the kid did next was heresy. He attached a penis to the outside of his pants and set it to constantly spew a fountain out of it. The dash leader ejected him and permanently banned him from her land.

When we were all done, Dave gave me a notecard giver that distributed my story notecard to everyone nearby so we could all read each others’ stories. I thought mine was the best story of the night. I tried to distribute a root beer with it, but the root beer stayed inside my giver. I modified the script to give out root beer, but instead of handing it out, it just deleted the root beer.

I rezzed the Tiny carrier Sevi had given me last night that enabled me to carry Kat around when she was a bunny. Dave is a Tiny pink bunny, so I got him to come over and try to sit on me. “Has anyone noticed that there’s a chair sitting in a chair?”

Igor wasn’t much of a muse today. In fact, he fell asleep for several minutes during a gathering at Book Island. “Bombard him with private messages,” I said. Then sent him a teleport. Even though he was already there.

He told me that his wife doesn’t cuddle anymore and that she often sleeps over twenty hours a day and hasn’t had sex with him for several years. I’m not sure he’s known me long enough to be saying things like that.

“I hate to suggest this,” I said, “but it might help if you spent less time online. The problem doesn’t go away when you do nothing about it, and this is a medical problem that’s beyond your ability to treat.”

But he seemed to be uninterested in actually doing something about it. He probably expected me to say, ‘Oh poor thing, I’ll take care of your needs and treat you better than your wife does.’ But I’m not interested in being a part of the problem. Who knows, she might be a perfectly lovely wife and he’s just making up stuff that has worked with other women in the past.

PowderMilk was online, so I offered him a teleport. I told the crowd, and mentioned I got no response.

“Maybe you should stop offering him teleports,” Auntie said.

“But he deserves it,” Igor said. “He offers me random teleports all the time.”

I told Igor I thought that Auntie thinks I’m annoying.

“Maybe she doesn’t like being offered teleports,” he said.

I found the bug in my object giver script. Barb said she wanted a bratwurst for dinner, so I inserted a bratwurst to test it out. It worked!

“Is it a Johnsonville?” Barb asked.

“It’s from Sheboygan,” I answered.

“Close enough,” Barb said.

I pulled out the notecard giver and handed out my bottle story. “I would have loved to have seen Shark Machine,” Kat said. It was a 1975 Pontiac Grand Am with a V8 engine that got about eleven miles to the gallon.

Auntie talked about the publishing business and vowed to never give away the rights to her books again. “Publishers don’t know their own business. They don’t know what will sell or how. If anything sells its because of the authors’ efforts, not the publishers.”

“They need to collect and analyze their data. Every successful business has to study their industry through data. Grocery stores do it, political parties use data to figure out what makes people give money, the Huffington Post uses it to select headlines.” I told them about an article in the Washington Post about how Target figures out which of their customers are pregnant so they can send them baby coupons. “Publishers need to analyze their industry’s data.”

“Oh goodness,” Auntie said. “No, not data.”

Really? She doesn’t think data will help them understand their business? What rock has she been hiding under. Then she started talking about her astrologist. Yeah. That’s what the publishing industry needs. Astrologists.

In fact, I think that’s why she thinks I’m annoying. Because I know how to analyze data and have the skills to script a box than hands out bratwursts. I get that attitude from several women older than I who don’t understand computers. Well, I’m not going to stop talking about math and computers when we’re on a computer.

A woman I didn’t know stopped by. She didn’t have much to say.

“Will you marry me?” Igor asked.

Where did that comment come from? I looked to see if the woman was wearing a wedding dress. She wasn’t. We had been discussing non sequiturs earlier. Was that another?

“Nobody answered your question, Igor,” Auntie said. Yeah. That’s because nobody knew who he was talking to. So I put on a wedding dress.

“Yea! A wedding!” Kat said.

## Wednesday, April 11, 2012

I got a message from PowderMilk saying he had been watching television yesterday when I had offered him a teleport. If he wasn’t paying attention to the computer, why was he logged on?

I was building some bookshelves that handed out books and tapas. Igor had been helping Scooby build objects a few days ago and she was online, so I invited her over to show her a few things. She picked it up quickly.

Roboto was nearby building a spaceport. I hadn’t seen him for awhile, so we went to see him. He had a nice typing animation that made holograms appear in his view. It was like a picture I used in my slides for a real life talk, so I wanted a picture of it. I took a snapshot of the three of us.

Unfortunately, I had been going through my inventory getting rid of clothes and was still wearing a blouse that showed most of my breasts, along with only one shoe. Scooby was wearing a very professional blouse and pinstriped pants. She had shoulder length reddish brown hair and tasteful makeup.

“I like that look,” I said. “You could go to the office in that without people talking behind your back.”

“People would still talk about something else,” she said. So true.

Igor teleported me to a dance club he likes to go to. As I arrived, someone mentioned, “I always wanted a unicorn.” So I put on a unicorn avatar and danced by him. But I was half his height and went through his legs. “Watch that horn,” he said as it poked through his crotch.

Then he mentioned he had just gotten a popcorn machine. So I wore my popcorn machine. “Yeah, like that one, except without a person in it.” He thought it was funny to see a dancing popcorn machine. I invited everyone to click on me and get some popcorn before I put the machine away.

A woman named Panda was the DJ. So I turned into a panda and danced by her. “Do you like your bamboo long and hard?” Igor chatted. What am I supposed to respond to that.

This club didn’t have as much of the dirty talk that there usually is in several of the online clubs. But when there was, Igor was the instigator of it. I was disappointed in the tone of some of his chat. Another indication that we’re not meant for each other.

“Let’s get ten more people in here!” Panda shouted. People teleported their friends and Igor started counting.

A newbie named Hutch wandered through so I welcomed him to Second Life. He had a picture of some boys in his profile, so I asked who they were. “I’m a pedo,” he said and typed some other poor grammar and misspellings.

“Are you eighteen and from India?” I asked.

No, he was eighteen and from Germany. I had the age right.

“Hutch is where bunnies live,” Igor said. Then I turned into a bunny.

“Lisa has turned into four different avatars since she got here, so I’m counting her as the tenth person.”

Panda said that doesn’t count and he should eat crow.

“There are crow worshipers in England,” Igor said. “In honor, of them, we don’t eat crow.”

“There are no crow worshipers,” I said.

“Lisa, you have so little faith.”

“Little faith in crows,” I retorted.

“It’s midnight,” Igor said as the clock struck seven at my house.

“Are you going to tell us a ghost story?” I asked him.

Panda encouraged us to click on the ball for couples dances and excused herself from the computer for a moment to get some ice cream. I brought out my object giver and put an ice cream cone in it so everyone else could have ice cream too.

I clicked on the couples dances and invited Igor to join me. I thought he might refuse to dance, not wanting other women to think he was with someone else. But he came right over. Perhaps he was flattered to be asked. I turned back into a person so I’d be tall enough to dance with him, although should have done so before I clicked on the dance ball because it set the dance animations so low that our legs were inside the floor.

“All the women are jealous because I’m dancing with Igor,” I said.

We didn’t chat by private message very much. I’m not sure if he was feeling quiet or if he was chatting with others. I don’t think he was chatting with anyone else because when I logged off, he did too.

## Thursday, April 12, 2012

I had told Igor that I wouldn’t be online during the time he’s usually on because I was going to a meeting in real life. He ended up logging on earlier than usual, so I wonder if it was in hopes of catching me before my meeting. I logged on at the club I was in yesterday. Igor was still at the club too, dancing right next to me.

“Igor, you’re still in the same place you were yesterday,” I said.

“I’m too lazy to move,” he said.

“I tried to get him out further into the dance floor,” Panda said. Since she was in charge of the place, I told her to drag him by his feet.

“I don’t want to get near his feet,” she said.

The pants of a guy named Moonlight appeared blurry on my screen. I could see the pant legs, but not the part covering his rear.

“Moonlight is mooning me,” I said.

“I’m too poor to afford a belt,” he said.

“I have some string you could borrow,” Igor said.

Uncle sent out a message to all of Book Island announcing that Peace Chat was about to begin. I thought I was sending Igor a private message letting him know about it. “There’s a Peace Chat about to start,” I entered. But I ended up entering it in Book Island’s chat window.

“Yeah, I know,” Uncle responded. Of course he knows. He just sent out the message.

“Oops. Wrong window,” I said. “Sorry, not trying to be Obvious Woman.”

So in the real Igor’s window, I asked him if he was going to go.

“Still too lazy to move,” he said.

So I went anyway because I appreciate Book Island conversations much more than club chatter, and I don’t want to be Igor’s tagalong. I was still dancing like a maniac when I arrived. Uncle told me to stop dancing, all the animation was distracting. A few minutes later Igor showed up. So… he’d rather hang out where I am?

PowderMilk logged on so I teleported him.

“I’m going to skip this one and take a nap,” he said.

“Then why did you log on?” I asked.

“Background music. The computer is my radio.”

In some ways, I could see the point of logging on even if he had no intention of doing anything while logged on. Drop in, see who’s around. Come back twenty minutes later to see if anything is going on. When you live alone, the house can be isolating. When you’re logged in, there are friends in the background.

PowderMilk took his nap on the roof during our chat. Sat in the eaves, eavesdropping. I wanted to put a blanket on him, but didn’t have permissions to leave objects on the land. I should have given him a teddy bear.

The topic of the discussion was whether we should consider all of humanity as part of our family. Uncle invited us to take a copy of the ass hat graphic again.

“The more we send aid, the worse global problems get,” Igor said.

“You are an ass hat,” I entered in chat.

“Yes, that’s at the bottom of the graphic,” Uncle said.

“No, I was calling Igor an ass hat,” I joked.

“You’re the one wearing a hat,” Igor said. Yes. I was wearing a hat. A book hat.

Uncle asked if we agreed with Igor, regarding foreign aid.

“I’m not sure that makes sense,” I said.

“Nobody asked you, Lisa,” Igor replied.

“Igor, I asked her,” Uncle corrected. He asked Igor to explain his statement about aid further.

“The planet can’t sustain the entire population if they consume at the same rate as Americans,” Igor said. Interesting, coming from a Brit. “When others see how much the First World has, they start to rebel.”

Barb talked about nineteenth century farmers who worked longer hours than nineteenth century factory workers, but were happier.

“People are productive when they think they have purpose in life,” Igor said. “When we figure out the purpose of life, there will be less fighting.”

“The meaning of our lives is to justify where the managers spent their budget,” I said. Uncle totally agreed. He used to be in the military.

I asked Igor what the purpose of his life was. “I don’t know,” he said. “I’m still trying to figure out.”

I think we won’t know the purpose until after we die. The purpose keeps evolving.

I mentioned the calendar of real life book events that I’m putting on GuruTapas.com. Uncle told me about a retired professor who is the owner of another literary island, Cookie Island, that is trying to get a calendar of online intellectual events together. I sent a message to him and showed him my web site. I’ll have to coordinate with him later to make sure we don’t duplicate efforts.

“Did someone say cookies?” Barb asked.

So I pulled out my object giver and handed out fortune cookies.

“Lisa, don’t give out objects unless you ask them first,” Uncle said.

“But then it wouldn’t be as fun,” I said. I think Auntie complained that I was handing out bratwursts with the script I had written a few days ago. But it wasn’t as though nobody had asked for the bratwursts or cookies. If I was going to bring them, I need to bring enough for everyone.

Why does Uncle keep complaining about me? I can’t help but wonder if he would have not complained if I had showed up as a man. Perhaps it’s time to bring Bruce back.

## Friday, April 13, 2012

I went to be supportive of Igor while he DJed. The club had been redesigned and when I got there, I landed in a haystack.

Everyone there but Igor was female again, except this time Brokali also showed up. Perhaps he likes to hang out with Igor because there are always women around him.

I had showed up as a bookshelf avatar and decided to change to something more suited to the venue. “Looking for skanky clothing…not finding any,” I said.

I clicked on the dance ball for dance poses and pink and blue balls appeared in front of me. I hopped on the blue dance ball and a naked woman with a tail and a tag over her head that said ‘lesbian’ hopped on the pink ball. Great. Just what I had been hoping for. Luckily she left, then Kat came by and danced with me.

“Everyone loves to watch two women going at it,” Igor said.

“Hey all you sexy Gomorrans,” the hostess shouted.

“What about the unsexy Gomorrans?” I asked.

“There aren’t any,” she answered.

Then I turned into a weird-shaped blob. “There’s one down here in the book hat,” I said.

Someone asked for a beer. I looked through my inventory for beer, but all I found was root beer. So I deleted the word ‘root’ from the object and placed it in my object giver. Everyone thanked me for the beer – nobody complained. Although they might after they open it and find out it’s root beer.

Igor danced with a woman I had never met. She kept typing stuff in public chat such as, “Igor is feeling me up,” or “My thighs are juicy while Igor runs his fingers down my back.” I think she was trying to keep the numerous women there away from the only man around by telling everyone they were getting it on. There are so many insecure people online trying to get attention. This seems to be the only way they know how to get it.

The event had devolved into a litany of boob talk. Another guy showed up and ran around the club saying he was grabbing all the women’s asses. He mentioned each of us by name, to let us all know we had been fondled, according to him.

I was so disappointed in what I had thought was going to be a dance event with the intellectual people from Book Island. Instead it was just like every other harassment venue all over Second Life. I tried to think of a way to stage a peaceful protest, one that would show that it shouldn’t be normal to talk about women as grope objects, yet without alienating all these people who are used to boob talk as part of usual conversation.

I was about to log off when my wish was granted. NyceGuy logged on and I teleported him to the club right away. He always seems pleasant, sweet, young, and innocent. But then, I haven’t encountered him at an ass grabbing event yet.

So when he showed up in a suit, I was thrilled. Among a crowd of sleazy avatars, I bring in the guy in a suit. I put on my formal book dress and we danced. If that isn’t a subtle statement, I don’t know what is. An elegant, dignified couple among the dregs. We looked awesome together.

There was a vote contest, so I said. “Vote for me ‘n NyceGuy because we’re so cute,” I said.

“Don’t beg for votes,” someone said. “It’s unbecoming.”

Oh, it’s not OK to campaign, but it is becoming to tell everyone that your thighs are juicy. It didn’t really matter. NyceGuy and I voted for each other and each won some money.

NyceGuy told me he has advanced degrees and has been in his job for several years. “That would put you at around thirty-two years old,” I said. Which was slightly older than the impression I originally had, based on his mobile app programming book preferences.

“Well, I spent several years doing a lot of eclectic things before I went to grad school. So I’m in my forties.” Perfect. A sweet, innocent man, yet mature with life experiences. Sounds like a lot of people I hang out with in real life. Why don’t I find more people like this online?

NyceGuy didn’t participate in any of the trash speak going on in local chat. “This place reminds me of a club called Eternal Desires,” NyceGuy said to me.

“I’ve never heard of it,” I said. “I rarely go to these skanky clubs.”

He seemed to be glad about that. “Would you rather go to a discussion a friend of mine is putting on?”

“Please.” My hero. He swooped in, made a subtle statement, and took me to someplace classy and social. We took our prize money and ran.

We arrived at a place to sit in a circle.

“The Chinese developed an ‘off switch’ for the internet. They tried it out yesterday for an hour. All traffic with foreign websites were suspended for 'technical reasons' and 'testing purposes',” NudePhd said.

“I suspect that ‘switch’ was made by Cisco Systems or some other company in the United States,” NyceGuy said.

“On behalf of the Chinese Communist party I'd just like to say a big 'thank you' to Cisco Systems for making that possible,” Rhi retorted.

“Oh, I have no knowledge of whether or not Cisco was involved. I was just making a guess about where the ‘switch’ may have come from. I suppose this is how rumors get started.”

## Saturday, April 14, 2012

I went to a discussion about online relationships. Several of the people there were bisexual. It didn’t sound like any of them had ever been in any kind of online or real life relationship that I would want to be involved in. One woman was married in real life, but had a female online wife.

“It’s a big taboo to be bisexual in society,” she said. “But online, it’s not a big deal.”

“Online forums are a refuge for misfits,” the moderator said.

One guy said he was suckered into a ‘game’ where someone ‘role played’ that she had anorexia and needed help, without telling anyone she was just ‘role playing.’ Sounds more like someone who liked to tell lies for attention and said ‘Just kidding’ when she was caught. Someone else knew someone who ‘role played’ a dying woman. People contributed to a cancer society and planned an online funeral on her behalf. Turned out to be a hoax.

I asked if anyone thought that online relationships were healthy or if they were all patches like a bandaid over peoples problems that they refuse to face.

“Some relationships are good, like Bi’s.” No. No, not Bi’s relationship. Bi’s relationship is an example of weird – coming online to date a woman because you’re married to a man. Even if her husband thinks it’s OK. Is it that much different than dating another man online because her husband isn’t black, or smart, or any other list of things that make him different than what she could find online? Perhaps this isn’t the right group to talk to about what constitutes ‘healthy’ or ‘normal.’

“There is some ability to offer emotional support online, but not as much as real life,” Bi said. “You can’t ask an online friend to loan you a cup of sugar or bail you out of jail.” We all admitted that luckily none of us has ever had to ask for bail from a real life friend.

“I find it much easier to find brainy people online than in person,” the moderator said. Really? Where is he hanging out in real life? Or perhaps I want to find out where he’s hanging out online.

## Sunday, April 15, 2012

NyceGuy puts on his own weekly discussion, *Ideas of Things to Come*. Right up my alley, sort of a futurist theme. NyceGuy seemed really happy that I showed up. But he’s pleasant to everyone, so he was probably happy about everyone who showed up. He’s quite plugged in to the discussion series circuit. The audience voted on the topic and selected personal artificial intelligence assistants.

Someone came in, said, “Hi, Love,” to NyceGuy, and didn’t say anything else. Shortly afterward, she said, “Goodbye, Love,” to NyceGuy and left. I don’t know if she was a girlfriend of his or if she called everyone ‘Love.’ Probably the latter. Based on the information she entered in her profile, I got the impression she was an older hippie.

We talked about Siri and how the phone is becoming a personal digital assistant. Someone mentioned they don’t wear a watch anymore because the time is on their phone.

“Watches are too big,” PowderMilk said. “I went to buy one recently. Selected a small one with an analog display. The salesman was disgusted – ‘That's a woman's watch, Sir’.”

“Interesting… the gendering of old technology,” NyceGuy said. “We don't have 'men's cell phones' and 'women's cell phones'.”

“We sorta do,” NudePhd said. “You can make anything pink and sell it as a Women's Whatever.”

“I took my niece to the store to buy Legos,” I said. “’That's for boys.’ Well. She wanted the goddamn pink legos. I’m sick of Marketing telling us from early ages what girls can and can’t do. The pink legos are a cupcake bakery. And it’s pretty much already built.”

“An assistant artificial intelligence could help you be in more than one place at once,” NudePhd said. “Like a remote robot avatar.”

“I bet that will happen through camera and microphone,” I said. “Gatherings like this in the future will be like everyone is in the same place. But it won't be avatars on a screen.”

“Something like the holodeck in Star Trek?” NyceGuy asked.

“We'll have video of ourselves and others combined into a hologram that we see in our field of vision as we walk down the street. Not phones.”

“That would be a kind of augmented reality thing?” NyceGuy asked.

“Yes.”

“Virtual worlds will go away,” Kat said. “People are weirded out by them.”

“People weren’t used to others talking to themselves as they walked down the street either,” I responded.

“I've long grown accustomed to people randomly talking – or shouting – into their hands or just to the air Lulu,” NyceGuy said. “I’ve lived in San Francisco for years.”

“But will the AI assistant be free?” NudePhd asked.

“Free as in beer?” Kat asked. I handed out my root beer minus the root to everyone.

“Thanks, Lisa!” Kat said.

“No problem. It was free.”

“The engineer in me wants to say the beer – I mean the AI – will be free. I'll write it myself!” NyceGuy said. But I know I'm being full of arrogance and hubris to think I can do it myself.”

“What if your AI goes on strike?” PowderMilk asked. “What are the ethics around AIs becoming enslaved?”

“I suppose auto-factory robots might only be developed to the point where they need to do the particular task in an assembly line,” NyceGuy said. “No self-awareness or higher level functions required.”

“Robots have no need to strike” I said. “Instead they break down and pretend they can’t work.”

“There's probably a dividing line between when a robot is what they largely are today, a tool that repeats certain operations,” NyceGuy said, “and what may be possible later, which is to have higher-level functions.”

“It seems cruel to give intelligence to things made for drudgery,” NudePhd said. So true of humans also.

“Perhaps we’ll become the AI’s slave,” Kat said.

“With so much of our money going to Apple, we already are,” I said.

After the discussion, NyceGuy excused himself and walked out the back door. Back door? Why was there a door, and why did he have to walk out the door before logging off?

So after he logged off, I walked out the door. Nothing was there. It was just a platform. I walked off the edge and plummeted past a house floating in the air and landed near a two-story glass house on the ground. Outside of the house was a tall sculpture of twisted stone. It was elegant, like an art piece you’d see outside of a library or office building.

Inside the house were posters of maps and sleek white couches. I went up the stairs, where there were more couches and map posters. In the corner there was a urinal. Urinal? If you clicked on it, you could stand next to it as if you were a man going to the restroom. That didn’t seem like NyceGuy’s type of humor. I inspected it and determined it belonged to a gay woman. Most of the furniture on the second floor belonged to her.

I received a notice from NyceGuy’s discussion group about an upcoming discussion. It was sent by Rhi, another gay woman. Only co-facilitators have permission to send group notices. I looked at the list of co-facilitators in NyceGuy’s group and noticed they were all gay women.

I went back up to the skybox where the discussion was held and left a friendship bear on the platform for NyceGuy to find next time he walked out there. Then I jumped off the platform again and flew toward the floating house.

When you walk into the floating house, the first thing you see is psychedelic swirly blue and purple artwork. Two posters of planets and a painting of mottled blue and green shapes also hung on the wall. Between two windows that let in bright sunlight, a ladder to nowhere rested against the wall. Alongside an empty bookshelf, simple blue couches were available for cuddling on. But they did not contain sex animations.

On the way out of the house, I walked into a small, empty room hidden behind a translucent curtain. I think it was meant for changing clothes. I left another friendship bear there, since it was an odd semi-secret room. I wanted to see how long it would take before he found it.

## Saturday, April 21, 2012

NyceGuy had gone to a discussion about Descartes, but I was offline, so I hadn’t known about it. “I think in real life, therefore I missed discussion,” I said. He appreciated that humor.

Then NyceGuy and I went to a different talk together. The topic was, ‘UFOs: are they real?’

“A spaceship landed near my house in real life a few days ago!” I said.

“Do you have pictures of said spaceship?” the discussion leader asked. I sent the group a news article of the Discovery landing at Dulles airport on top of a 747.

I told NyceGuy I had been checking his place out. “Are you a gay woman in real life?” I asked. He wasn’t.

“A gay man?” No. Straight.

He’s been in Second Life for six years, much longer than I have. “Have you ever had a partner?” I asked.

“I’m not really here to relate to people that way,” he said. “I go to the discussions, sometimes I help artists with their projects.”

“Yeah, I think these online partnerships are a poor substitute for a real life relationship,” I said. “They aren’t even a good way to practice for having a relationship.”

He told me who he mostly hung out with online. Most of them were gay. But they were all smart and interesting.

During the UFO discussion, I sat in my chair all slumped over. Everyone else was sitting fine, so I don’t know what was wrong with my chair.

“Please excuse my avatar,” I said. “She’s drunk, even though I don’t drink in real life.”

After the discussion, I stood up, thinking I’d return to normal, but I fell to the floor. I sat in a chair again and stood up, hoping that would help. It didn’t.

The host asked us to contribute to the tip jar. “Second Life is an expensive hobby,” he said. I never contribute to the dance clubs because they’re skanky and I don’t care if they go under. But the discussion groups are worth hanging on to. I don’t have a lot of Linden dollars, but I don’t spend a lot either.

Still on the ground, I crawled around looking for the tip jar so I could put something in. I was on a small laptop screen with too many chat windows open and couldn’t see it.

“I’m too drunk to find the tip jar,” I said.

## Sunday, April 22, 2012

It took NyceGuy almost a week to find the friendship bear. Probably because he goes to his discussion skybox only once a week. He had sent me a message as soon as he found it. He really liked it.

There are two more items I hid on his land that he didn’t find yet. One was small, but in plain sight. Nobody seemed to notice it during the discussion.

I didn’t want to disturb NyceGuy while he was in charge of the discussion, but he did chat with me a bit through private message anyway. PowderMilk teleported me to a poetry reading during the discussion. I was gone for a few minutes, but returned before NyceGuy’s discussion finished. There were so many people at NyceGuy’s discussion, it was standing room only. So I took out my own chair and wore it.

I ran into a couple at the poetry reading who were from different countries and met online. Then they met in person and the woman moved to the man’s country to live with him. They told their story to several of us hanging out. PowderMilk was there with a really interesting woman whom I think is his potential new online girlfriend. They thought it was so romantic to move overseas to be with their online lover. I thought it was foolish. She hasn’t been there very long yet. I hope it doesn’t turn out to be disastrous for her.

## Tuesday, April 24, 2012

On one of the lands where I occasionally meet a discussion group, I stumbled into a woman who was showing her real life class around. The sim owner was there and answered a few questions, but we never figured out what subject she taught or why the professor wanted to show Second Life to her class.

After the professor and the sim owner left, I noticed that the other guy we were hanging out with had a vest with a map on it. I had the exact same outfit, so I put it on.

“Love your outfit,” I said.

I had forgotten about that vest. I had gotten it about a year ago. I saw it on another guy and liked it so much that I asked him where he got it. He didn’t have permissions to transfer the suit to me, so I had to go to the store to obtain a copy for myself. I wanted to send a copy to NyceGuy because he likes maps. But again, I didn’t have permissions to transfer it to him.

I was wearing my GuruTapas.com book top hat and carrying my *Diary of an Avatar* book, so the guy asked if he could have copies. He wore them and we matched.

He offered to show me his neighborhood, which also hosts intellectual discussions. “I have a big white house and a meeting area,” he said.

I wasn’t sure why he mentioned the house. Usually when people say they have a house, they mean they’re inviting you to have avatar sex with them. But NyceGuy also has a house on the land where he holds discussions. I’m not sure what he uses the house for, but there are no sex beds there. Since I had seen this guy at Book Island and other discussions before, I figured this guy’s house was probably as benign as NyceGuy’s.

We teleported into a beautiful Victorian house decorated with ornate molding and accented with tall spires. It wasn’t even his personal house anyway. It belonged to the neighborhood. We walked out and crossed a bridge over a stream to a flowering shade tree surrounded by patio tables and chairs. I think I had been to a prose reading there before.

Then he took me to a neighbor’s spacecraft where there had been a dance over the weekend. We got on the dance balls and ended up doing a dance where I was constantly doing dips.

“You’re very lithe,” my dance partner said to me.

“I bend over backwards for you,” I responded.

“I’m panning around to see what’s up here,” I said.

“There’s no sex beds,” he said.

Why did he bring that up? “That thought hadn’t even occurred to me.”

“There are several very proper ladies in this neighborhood who have sex beds.”

“That doesn’t sound very proper to me.”

Luckily my offense at sex beds didn’t result in him acting like I was a waste of his time. He mentioned he’d had a small problem at the party due to lack of theme-appropriate clothing, so I gave him a space suit. We both put our spacesuits on and he gave me a no-gravity animation. We hovered back and forth above the spacecraft until it was time for me to go.

“Let’s do this again sometime,” he said. “You’re fun to hang out with.” Or, at least to hover out with.

I went back to the store where I had gotten the map vest. I looked all over, but it was no longer there. I sent a message to the creator, asking if there was any way to find another one that I could give to a friend.

She got back to me quickly and gave me a link to where I could get the suit at the marketplace. Soon NyceGuy came online and he invited me to a discussion his friends organized about words in the dictionary that we find useless.

I think most of the ‘words’ we mentioned were not in the dictionary. It ended up being a fun discussion that somehow went from the influence of Latin on English to Catholic military kindergarten.

I had changed back into the suit with the map vest and sat next to NyceGuy. “Did you notice my vest?” I asked NyceGuy.

After he took a look at it, I said, “I got a present for you.” I explained that it was a No Transfer item, so I gave him the link to acquire it from the marketplace. He downloaded the suit and put it on.

“I like it!” he said. “It’s so nineteenth century.” He commented on the book hat I was wearing, so I gave him a copy and he wore it.

“Has anyone noticed that NyceGuy and I match?” I asked.

His friends said we looked adorable.

## Thursday, April 26, 2012

Second Life was having a lot of technical issues, so I couldn’t log in as Ruby. Therefore I logged in as Bruce. I went to a writers dash, where everyone writes for fifteen minutes about the word of the day, but got there as everyone was just about done writing.

“There are too many distractions to write today,” one guy said.

“Are you paying too much attention to my boobs again?” a woman said. Really? Did she need to make this into a conversation about her boobs?

Several of the men commented that they love her boobs. I swear, some people think that this is the only way to get people to pay attention to you online. Talk about women’s body parts. It’s a signal that you’re willing to be someone’s pixel sex partner. Like a mating call. Whomever is the loudest and most frequent about boobs gets private chats that lead to more dirty talk and possibly avatar sex.

“Not interested in conversations about boobs,” I said and teleported to Book Island, where I found a newbie, a monkey avatar dressed in a suit. I asked if he was a writer.

“I’m writing about a monkey that lives totally immersed in virtual reality. I’m here because it’s the closest thing I can use to research what that would be like.”

“I love that idea,” I said, and told him about GuruTapas.com and my vision for the future of online events and augmented, or integrated, reality.

I gave him the excerpt from *Diary of an Avatar* about spawning Bruce and wore my book cover avatar.

“Are you Lisa Schaefer?” Interesting that he would ask that question to a male avatar.

“Yes. Did you read the story already?”

“No. Your name is on the cover of the book.”

“Just because I’m wearing the book doesn’t mean I’m the author.”

“You can’t judge an author by the cover,” he responded.

“You’re funny. In a mature way.”

“Yes, I’m old,” he said. Funny how I can estimate age by sense of humor.

Then I wore my Ruby avatar and became female. Even though I still had the name ‘Bruce’ over my head. Monkey newbie was confused.

“How are you Ruby if you still have the name ‘Bruce’ over your head?” He thought I had gone into Ruby’s inventory to become Ruby. I had to explain that Ruby and Bruce have separate accounts. Ruby gave Bruce a bunch of her stuff so they could go around as twins.

“I still have a lot to learn about how Second Life works,” he said.

“I have to log off so I can return some books to the real life Book Island. If you come to future discussions, I’ll see you around,” I said.

“Do you see a lot of monkeys in suits on Book Island?” he asked.

“Just me.” Then I turned into a monkey and put on a suit.

## Saturday, April 28, 2012

I went to a Book Island chat while I was at a talk at the real-world Book Island. The Northern Virginia Writers Club was having its monthly meeting at a library, as usual, which is during Readers Chat at Book Island online. I had to mute the computer, so I wasn’t able to follow along well with what was going on. I just thought it was a novelty to be at both.

Uncle announced there would be a raffle and limo tours of Book Island for its five year anniversary. Too bad I deleted most of my alts today. I could have entered twelve times. I took a few alts to Book Island to sign up for the raffle so Uncle would feel popular. But then I realized it might backfire on me. They might get a list of everyone who signed up, possibly resulting in them figuring out that it was just a bunch of my alts.

NyceGuy asked Uncle for some tips about leading discussions by voice. Uncle sets a very good tone during his discussions, so much different than the usual obscene chat that is the norm everywhere else in Second Life. That kind of talk just wouldn’t be acceptable on Book Island. How is Uncle able to keep a respectful atmosphere and why has the rest of Second Life degenerated into objectification of others for personal pleasure?

Uncle went away from keyboard for a moment and left us to discuss what we could do today to create a better tomorrow.

NyceGuy said, “Find a form of capitalism that doesn't result in the accumulation of wealth in a few hands.”

“How are you going to do that today?” I asked.

“Oh, I have no idea.”

“We’ll elect NyceGuy to be President of the World,” I said.

Uncle came back and asked what he missed.

“NyceGuy is now the President,” I said.

“I miss all the important stuff,” Uncle lamented.

## Sunday, April 29, 2012

I found out what NyceGuy’s real name is. Someone whose name I didn’t recognize had browsed my LinkedIn profile. So I looked at his profile and recognized the educational and professional information as being pretty much what NyceGuy had told me about himself.

I also saw his picture, so now I know what he looks like. A normal, friendly-looking guy. He has large features – big nose, full lips, broad shoulders. He looked a little like an ex-boyfriend of mine.

So I googled his real name and “Second Life.” I knew that he had joined Second Life around the time he started his current job, so I wanted to know if he used Second Life for job-related activities. I found a chapter of a very interesting book about virtual worlds that he authored a few years ago. It was really well-written. But I didn’t find anything he had written more recently.

It was ironic that I had appointed NyceGuy as president of the world. His paper was about governments within virtual worlds.

NyceGuy held his Ideas of Things to Come discussion. Over twenty people came. I’m not sure if it’s because NyceGuy is so popular or because he’s been having these talks for four years and he’s had time to build a following who likes to come for each other.

He was still wearing the map vest I had given him. And he had moved his friendship bear into the discussion room, where everyone could see it. “I was happy when I saw it here,” I told him. “Like you weren’t embarrassed to let people see that I had given you a present.”

I asked NyceGuy how he would feel if I knew his name. “I’m not asking you to tell me your name,” I clarified.

“I’m used to having an alias, like I’ve had in most forums over the years,” he said. Nobody else online knows his real name except for the people he knows in real life.

So, he likes having his name unknown. But he is OK with dropping lots and lots of pieces of information about his city, marital status, parents. So, he’s not trying to be totally anonymous. Many people online, like Geek – whom I haven’t seen for over a year – won’t say anything about their real lives.

I didn’t think he was quite ready to know that I had already found out what his real name and employer were, so I decided to wait until he knew me a bit longer. If it ever becomes helpful to share that information.

I got into a discussion with one of NyceGuy’s friends about his thoughts on identity online. He has an alias, but puts his real name in the tag over his head. He also has a male partner.

“Second Life is a way for me to accomplish my goals in real life.” He has a group that discusses politics and world peace. “So I share information about myself as freely as I do in real life. My partner is a collaborator toward our goals.”

I asked NyceGuy if he did anything in Second Life for his job.

“No, but I joined Second Life because a co-worker recommended it.” Perhaps he only wrote that one paper about virtual worlds, possibly the co-author was his co-worker, and hasn’t done anything professionally in virtual worlds since.

“Is Second Life is a way to fill a hole in your life?” I asked.

“In a way, yes. I miss the discussions we had in grad school. This is a way to engage with others like that again.”

Seems like the most mentally-stable reason I’ve heard yet.

After we went offline, I thought about NyceGuy’s academic paper and Uncle’s leadership. I’ve often thought about influence in Second Life and wondered why nobody had any influence over a large population in Second Life. Possibly because of anonymity, more likely because no source of media has come out that everyone in Second Life ‘must see.’ There’s no television network or record label to control the culture. Even the creators of Second Life don’t come out to speak to the masses. Probably a lost opportunity for PR. They might benefit from a town hall meeting.

I thought it might be an interesting topic to discuss at Ideas of Things to Come. So I sent NyceGuy a message because I now know that the topic of democracy and leadership in virtual worlds is near to his heart.

I placed my suggestion within the context of *Future of Power*, a book I had told him that I read. “The book mentioned a few interesting things, such as nation governments and appointed leaders not being the only entities with power over worldwide populations anymore.” I related it to a comment PowderMilk had once made that Uncle is famous in Second Life. Nobody appointed him to have influence over us.

The specific topic I suggested was ‘How people emerge as leaders in online forums.’

I had been wondering how someone or a group becomes influential over small groups of people online, such as the people who visit Book Island. Does this influence ever extend beyond the small group, into other online groups?

No one or group seems to be influential over all of Second Life. In real life, most of the population knows certain media personalities that influences culture because of traditional control over media networks, who ‘appoint’ people to be famous. But since it’s cheap for anyone to distribute media now, traditional networks are losing influence and famous people emerge through viral choices made by people.

Why is the culture of Second Life mostly porn? How does that culture affect whether people stay in SL or leave? How can we as a group or individual influence the culture of Second Life?

I wondered if the control of information by virtual governments was part of the reason NyceGuy doesn’t like to give out his real name. Anonymity means that no one can have authority over you. If they don’t know who you are, they can’t control you. The less information you give out, the less they can govern. Those with the greatest amount of information have the greatest power. Especially if they have information about you that you don’t know they have. We don’t know what the Powers that Be know.

I think that online platforms will become the ‘world’ for doing business in the future. We’ll meet partners, customers, and vendors. We’ll collaborate, buy, and sell. And since the internet crosses all nation boundaries, there is no one government over that world.

## Sunday, May 6, 2012

NyceGuy told me about a Second Life friend of his who he used to work with in real life. I found the friend’s avatar on Facebook and verified that this friend was the coauthor of the virtual worlds paper NyceGuy had written.

On this guy’s avatar page on Facebook, he had a discussion about his view of online communities. They had created a community, but Linden Lab’s pricing structure changed to the point where having their own land was no longer feasible. He believes that they can have a community without land, but that they’ll have to go into other existing communities to continue their efforts.

After reading NyceGuy’s paper and seeing his friend’s Facebook profile, I realized that we had a common interest for being in Second Life in the first place – to build a community. I joined Second Life because I mentioned building online communities to a business consultant and she recommended trying Second Life.

NyceGuy liked the topic I suggested for his Things To Come discussion series and sent out a notice for the discussion:

This week we’ll discuss the nature of online communities. How do leaders and influential individuals emerge? What leads to groups thriving, persisting, or dissolving?

Sadly, it was my topic, but I was not able to come for the discussion and logged on just as it was ending. I missed out.

NyceGuy told me about a book by Sherry Turkle, an MIT professor, about online interaction, so I browsed it. It wasn’t specific to virtual worlds, but it seemed to be too much about how high school kids text a lot. Some of it resonated with me, but much of it I couldn’t relate to. The part about Second Life just didn’t ring true. It was obvious she didn’t try out Second Life much herself, rather asked one or two other people about it.

But the book has come up in two conversations already (one conversation on Facebook), so I was glad NyceGuy had recommended taking a look at it.

NyceGuy was at an online counseling demonstration and invited me to observe. A psychologist was experimenting with holding counseling sessions over the internet and was speaking out loud. Laying on a couch

The patient was a woman who has written a strange book about online sex. A big poster for her book took up half of a wall in the counseling room. SexAuthor has been sending announcements about her book to various discussion groups I belong to, so I read pieces of the book. It wasn’t well written and she talked about a lot of the creepy things she and her friends do online. I asked NyceGuy if he had seen the announcements. He had.

“Did they make you want to read the book?” I asked.

“No,” he said. “Well, I have other things to read that are a priority.” I think he was being polite, didn’t want to insult the poor, odd woman. I didn’t think I should badmouth her either, so I didn’t offer my opinion on what I had read.

They talked about how typing to each other online is like knowing each other ten times longer than in real life.

“I don’t want to start an argument with them,” I told NyceGuy, “but two years of typing to someone is not *anything* like knowing someone for twenty years. And that’s the problem that people in Second Life relationships have. They have a twisted view of reality, what a relationship is.”

During the session, SexAuthor was chatting by voice also. She talked about her real life divorce and online relationships. Perhaps the divorce prompted her to try out creepy stuff online.

“I don’t really understand what they’re talking about,” NyceGuy said.

I wasn’t sure what part he didn’t understand. It was pretty obvious they were talking about sex, but perhaps he had never seen sex pose balls? I doubt that’s the case, since he’s been in Second Life for six years, three times longer than I have. It seemed like a cute, perhaps naïve, statement to make considering the conversation. Perhaps he was embarrassed that he had teleported me to an event where people were talking about sex out loud.

## Sunday, May 13, 2012

Zym vodka, glasses

A bunch of alts were standing around named IamGluttony, IamSloth,

## Sunday, May 20, 2012

A while ago a capability was added so we could choose nicknames. I hadn’t been able to set my nickname until recently, after I installed a new viewer. I changed my nickname to GuruTapas.comFREEsites4Authors. Because I could.

I went to a discussion (setting)

A grouchy guy named GoddamitLisa who often comes to various discussion groups sent me a private message. “What’s with that name?” As though his name wasn’t offensive to anyone named Lisa.

I told him, “I was messing with the nickname feature.”

“Anything free looks like a scam.”

“My site isn’t a scam. Just a kludge. Free means ‘Please try out my web site while I’m throwing it together’.”

“Are you going to have headsets and jumping couches?” he asked.

Was that supposed to be an Oprah reference? I had no idea what he was talking about.

“Um, no couches,” I said. “It’s live video talks by authors and book clubs.”

“I’m not wasting bandwidth on scammy seminars,” said the guy who hangs out in Second Life discussions.

SexAuthor held a talk about her book at the online Clemson campus library. Amongst the book shelves and classroom style chairs, SexAuthor displayed a huge poster created from the cover of her book about avatar sex.

At this event, she said that she was married in real life but has ‘intimate relations’ with her online partner. So she must have been roleplaying as someone else during the online counseling session where she had said she was divorced.

Her husband is OK with her talking dirty and having avatar sex with some guy online. I still think that’s weird, no matter what her husband thinks.

How is having an online partner different than creepy phone sex. I have other male friends that I met in person. I don’t have creepy phone sex with them. When I meet a friend online, I don’t want to have creepy phone sex with them either. For the same reasons. Just because we *can* do it doesn’t mean that should be society’s new norm.

I dropped by NyceGuy’s skybox where he holds his weekly Ideas forum and saw that SexAuthor’s big book poster was displayed there too. It was left there by someone I didn’t know. Perhaps it was SexAuthor’s alt? It seems that her MO is to introduce people to online sex. I hope she isn’t trying to seduce NyceGuy, and that the poster is there in return for her attentions.

The next time I stopped by the skybox, it was gone. I asked NyceGuy what had happened to the poster.

“Someone I didn’t know had left it there. It didn’t really look right in my forum, so I deleted it.”

I’m not sure what kind of creative endeavors and to what extent NyceGuy participates in with his friends. I was pretty sure NyceGuy did not intend to get involved with promoting the avatar sex book. But there’s a gay woman who built his office on his land. Which includes a urinal. She’s a co-organizer for his Ideas of Things to Come group, however I don’t think they do much together.

NyceGuy’s skybox had been redesigned. Another female friend of his, who has a partner, made it much larger. He needed a larger venue, since his Ideas forum is so popular and gets a lot of participants. But I’m not sure why she volunteered to rebuilt his skybox. Perhaps they hang out and build things together?

I realized I hadn’t invited NyceGuy to my GuruTapas.com group, so I invited him. He kept the ‘GuruTapas.com Books’ tag on during his Ideas forum. I want my group to assist authors with getting together a community that is interested in what they’re working on. Authors would announce their progress on their works to interested readers. Perhaps NyceGuy could be a part of this effort.

Back at Book Island Beach.

Uncle wants to try something new with Global Peace Chat. Possibly toward implementing solutions. I like that goal, but I’m not sure it can happen in this limited forum. It will require doing something outside of Second Life.

One of the rules or provisions Uncle devised for the new format was that the ideas discussed within Global Peace Chat would become the property of the group. The rest of us weren’t sure what that was supposed to mean. You can’t copyright or patent an idea. I’m not sure what the group would do with the ‘idea property.’ And I don’t think they could enforce such an agreement since there doesn’t seem to be any way to legally bind chat participants to it.

Most of us come here to chat with each other, not to do homework or sign nondisclosure agreements. So I’m not sure if anyone will really do anything beyond that.

But I believe that if we have a common goal, it would better facilitate building community. Which is something that NyceGuy and I are interested in doing online. We can’t have an effective community if we have no impact outside of Book Island, or even if we remain anonymous and have no impact beyond Second Life.

NyceGuy told me a lot about real life but still wants to keep separate. I asked about his family, friends. “Who’s your best online friend?” He listed four of us.

“Yea! I’m in that group. You’re definitely my favorite. You've been the most down to earth probably since I've joined.”

“I suspect there isn't a lot of competition for that,” NyceGuy said.

“That's unfortunately true,” I said. “I have standards for what kind of behavior I expect from people in real life. People act out online, so I’ve been tolerating bad behavior here. But since I met you, I don’t take anymore.”

NyceGuy is a good, decent person online. Proof that acting like a sex starved ass doesn’t have to be the norm, the default set of behaviors. If NyceGuy can be respectful online, surely others can too. And if they aren’t, I don’t need to associate with them.

## Sunday, May 27, 2012

One of the guys at a talk last week was really friendly. He teleported me to visit him at an unfamiliar land. We chatted for a few moments then he disappeared. I saw him at the other side of the land with a woman.

“Sorry for my rudeness, I needed to visit my love,” he said.

The woman’s profile said she was twenty-one years old and partnered to some other guy.

“How long have you known her?” I asked.

“Not too long,” he said. Yeah, probably met her last night. “Why?”

“She’s partnered to another guy.”

“Oh, I’ll have to look into that.”

Yes, you should. How could he not have noticed?

Aimee and Brian were online. She saw I was online when she looked over his shoulder at his computer and sent me a message. Then he sent me a message too.

NyceGuy had a lot of people at his forum, so I created my own chair and raised it above the coffee table so I hovered above everyone’s heads. “NyceGuy’s forum is so popular, I have to sit in the second tier of seating,” I said. Then I scooted my seat over so I was sitting on NyceGuy’s shoulder during the discussion.

NyceGuy sent me a private message. “I had a really bad day at work.”

He described problems with the servers, the web site crashed, he got a call early in the morning while he was still asleep, begging him to come in.

“So, was this stressful, or just annoying?” I asked.

“Stressful in spades,” he said.

“Is your boss angry?”

“No, she didn’t even seem annoyed,” he said.

I didn’t understand why he was stressed out. “It sounds like your boss trusts you to fix it. You have enough social and political capital to get through this.”

“I thought I had backed up the site every night, but my script had a glitch, and we lost a lot of data,” he said.

Oh, now I understand. “So, you feel bad because due to your glitch, everyone has to do more work to get the site data back together.” It said a lot about his character and work ethic that he felt it was his responsibility to make sure the site went back up.

Of course there was nothing I could do except listen and understand. I think that’s all he wanted from me. “\*Hugs\*,” I said. It was really touching that he wanted some small form of comfort from me.

I went to an open mic at Book Island and signed up to read an excerpt from *Diary of an Avatar*. PowderMilk played guitar and sang a song. “I should invite you to karaoke one of these days,” I told him.

PowderMilk was a giant rose today. I had a rose just like it, so I wore it, became invisible, and expanded the rose to ten times its size so that I looked just like PowderMilk.

NyceGuy was in a homeowners association meeting for the neighborhood where his Ideas forum is held. “I’m going to do a reading in a few minutes. We should go to an open mic together one of these days.”

NyceGuy decided he wanted to hear my reading and showed up as an alt. I thought that was so sweet of him to take the effort to figure out a way to come listen, even though he had another commitment.

“I’m trying to look like PowderMilk,” I told him. “But I messed up the rose a bit.”

“That’s why I’ve never messed with my avatar,” NyceGuy said. “It never turns out as you hope.”

NyceGuy’s avatar is a scrawny, short guy with sallow skin and shaggy hair.

“That’s part of what I like about you. You don’t make ridiculously muscular avatars to impress people who care about ridiculously muscular avatars.”

After the open mic, I changed back to a human and put my hat and my hair back on.

“You’re deflowered,” PowderMilk said.

PowderMilk invited me to a poetry reading that his potential new girlfriend had set up. PowderGirl had a cute purple house at the Nonprofit Commons for a Girls organization she works for. (((((desc) Throw pillows were scattered around the floor for everyone to sit on.

I brought NyceGuy and he sat on one of the pillows, hunched over, with his chin in his hands. “My avatar looks sad,” he said.

“Maybe your avatar needs a hug,” I said.

“Hugs are always good to have,” NyceGuy said.

I was wearing a hug animation, so I typed “/1/hug NyceGuy,” in local chat. But that was a typo. If I had typed what I had meant to, nobody would have seen what I had typed. But I didn’t, and it went into chat for everyone at the event to read.

“Oops. Darn, everybody wasn’t supposed to see that,” I said.

“That’s perfectly OK,” NyceGuy said to me in private chat. I think he liked having everyone see that I offered him a hug. Which surprises me, because he’s a shy, private kind of guy.

So then I typed the correct syntax and offered NyceGuy a hug. He accepted, and our avatars stood up next to each other and faced the stage, hugging the air in front of each of us with our right legs bent at the knee, toes pointed to the sky. We looked silly.

“It was the thought that counts,” NyceGuy said.

As he was about to leave, NyceGuy put a large tip in PowderGirl’s tip jar. “You’re a classy guy,” PowderMilk told him.

Book Island Beach.

“For those who just arrived, take a look at this week’s topic on blackboard behind Lisa and NyceGuy,” Uncle reminded people as they arrived a Global Peace Chat. This week’s topic was a continuation of last week’s discussion about changing the mission of the group ‘.’

The rule that none of us liked last week, regarding not owning an idea seemed to stem from Uncle’s own tendencies.

“I used to argue and try to fight for the ideas as my own.”

I wanted to get a feel for how Uncle’s efforts at changing Global Peace Chat were related to my interests in building community in virtual spaces. “It seems to me that Uncle is trying to build community online, but to be effective, we need to have impact outside of Second Life. Therefore we need to make efforts outside of Peace Chat, but some of us can’t commit to individual efforts outside of our Sunday meeting.”

“We’re starting with Second Life to influence the world,” Auntie said.

“What happens online affects us in real life,” PowderMilk noted.

There was some irony in going off to do isolated activities in an effort to build community. With over ten people in attendance, the concept didn’t stick for long and we went on to another concept. Uncle asked for examples of adversarial systems.

“My former employer,” I said.

“My current employer,” someone wearing a big black sheet commiserated. Perhaps wearing a burqa to Global Peace Chat is a political statement.

Since my mind was still mulling the idea of using online discussion groups to build community, I sent NyceGuy a message. “I have a question for you. Did telling me about a problem at your job in real life helped you feel like you got a small amount of sympathy or support that you needed?”

“Yes, I really appreciated that.”

“So, there’s something powerful in that.”

“Simply sharing concerns and anxieties. Is that what you're getting at?” NyceGuy asked.

“I’m all over the map here,” I admitted. “You’re really good at helping me hash out my thoughts about virtual worlds. That’s important to me.”

“Thank you. It seems the whole group is grasping at the Meaning of Second Life tonight.”

“I think socializing online is going to change society over the next twenty years. Real life and online networks will become the same because the fidelity of online communication will be like in person. I'll see you're mannerisms, hear your tone of voice …”

“Be able to tell I haven’t showered today…” NyceGuy joked.

Ah yes, the basement dwellers will have a problem with this. “Perhaps it will be a bit longer before we have good fidelity with smelling,” I pondered.

“So, pulling my ‘map’ together, we have friends to sympathize with, a network of people, and people to work on creative endeavors with.”

“With that, you have shared experiences,” NyceGuy said.

Shared experiences. That’s definitely a common thread in the thoughts I’m weaving together. “You’re on to something,” I said.

“A posse,” NyceGuy said. Posse? That’s one way to look at it. Am I looking for a posse online?

“I have a question for myself,” I said.

NyceGuy seemed to think it was funny that I was asking him questions for myself. “What would you like to ask yourself?”

“Why are some of my online friendships important to me? What do I get out of them?”

“And what does Lisa say about that?” NyceGuy prompted. As though he were playing the role of my conscious, asking myself questions.

“Well, I like the idea of people being here when it’s inconvenient to go out. But that's not the answer.”

“Perhaps certain friends here define your experience in this space.”

And that may be true of life offline too. People we associate with define what each piece of our world becomes.

## Sunday, June 3, 2012

I arrived at Book Island. PowderMilk was lying across PowderGirl’s lap.

I asked, “You know who I haven’t seen around for awhile?”

“Igor,” PowderMilk said.

“How did you know?”

“We were just wondering where he was,” PowderGirl said.

I looked through my friend list so I could send him a message. He wasn’t in my friend list.

“Now I know why I haven’t seen him online for awhile.”

PowderMilk and Kat joked about Igor’s habit of dropping people from his friend list. “He even dropped Auntie once,” Kat said. “Then he asks to get back onto your friend list next time he sees you.”

I wasn’t online much this week, so I didn’t see NyceGuy until Sunday. NyceGuy was supposed to have his weekly *Ideas of Things to Come* forum, but while I was gone, he sent out a notice cancelling it, saying something else came up. But he came online shortly after I logged on and stayed online chatting with me past the time his forum would have been held. So I don’t know if he postponed whatever he was supposed to work on so he could hang out with me?

“There’s a dance in my neighborhood today,” NyceGuy said. “Would you like to go?”

“Is this a date?” I asked.

“Sure.”

He sent me a notecard which stated the event was a formal affair to be held at their art museum. The intention was to have more events in the neighborhood to help grow their artist community by giving residents and their friends more opportunities to get together.

“Ooh, a fancy formal for community-building,” I said. “Of course I’ll go.”

I went offline to get things done so I could make sure I was back in time for the dance. As soon as I logged back in, NyceGuy teleported me to an icy white dance floor with matching tables and short stools. Bouquets of roses. A dancer in a huge fluffy bright orange, red, and purple dress tumbled wildly around the floor. A weird guy in an Indian kurta did jumping jacks.

NyceGuy was wearing the map vest and nineteenth century tie I had given him, along with pants and matching suit coat. Since I received the teleport invitation as soon as I logged on, I was still wearing pants and my book-covered top hat. Wanting to wear a fancy dress for the occasion, put on a veil and wedding dress while NyceGuy and I were in the middle of the dance floor.

“Excuse me for changing in public,” I said.

The woman who put the dance together was having trouble hearing the music. She got on voice and asked, “Can anyone hear me?” I turned my speakers up and turned off the music so I could hear her better. A heavy-breathing snore-like noise filled my speakers. Had she gotten bored and wanted to annoy us by pretending she fell asleep?

“I can hear you snoring,” I said.

“That’s OldMan,” NyceGuy said.

It was around five o’clock in the morning in OldMan’s time zone. Perhaps a bit too early for him to wake up to come to the dance. I wasn’t sure why his mic was on. Especially if he was just going to fall asleep on top of it. Thus I turned my sound off so I wouldn’t have to hear him.

Turned out that the problem that the dance organizer was having hearing music and voice was that she had accidentally muted her speakers.

“Would you like to dance?” NyceGuy asked. Pink and blue dance orbs appeared in front of him. He hopped on the blue and I on the pink. The dance ball was ADHD with the dance moves. It randomly changed the dance moves every sixty seconds.

The first move was to hold each other close, cheek to cheek. The next was some kind of leap frog activity. We hopped over each other, legs wide in a hunched pose. Since I was wearing a bridal gown, the skirt flowed underneath me while everyone got a clear view of my bare legs. Then we did cartwheels around each other, then a more conventional ballroom dance, back to the cartwheels, and then I spun over NyceGuy’s head.

There wasn’t much public chat going on at the dance, so NyceGuy and I had a private conversation to ourselves during the event.

“Why are you fine with telling people lots of stuff about your real life, but you don’t want to tell anyone your name?” I asked. “Is that part of the experience of the ‘game’ of virtual worlds?”

“I don’t think of it as a game. It’s more like another plane of existence, in a digital world.”

More neighbors continued to arrive. One came as a queen with a sceptre, purple robe edged with hearts and a jeweled crown much taller than it was wide. Another came as a sheer, translucent butterfly, which floated above the dance floor out of sight, silently observing the people below. And some came as art sculptures they had created for virtual exhibits.

“A plane where you can be something you can’t in real life?” I asked.

“Not something different, but I can emphasize certain parts of my life differently here. People can maintain a separate identity for only so long before fatigue sets in. Eventually their natural mannerisms and character assert themselves and it becomes taxing to maintain a different personality.”

And that was part of the reason I no longer wanted to pretend I didn’t know who he was in real life. It takes mental energy away from more important things. I have to consciously tell myself, ‘Don’t think of all that interesting professional information and technical papers about virtual worlds that I read in his LinkedIn profile.’ When I was dying to ask him, ‘Please tell me about that paper you wrote.’

“Oh, Steve, if I go on too much longer without telling you, it would be like hiding something behind your back,” I said.

NyceGuy paused for about a minute. “So, you already know my name!” Instead of sounding upset, worried, or disappointed that I knew, he seemed amused that I had figured out his name before he told me. “I hope you used a complex mathematical algorithm to figure it out. Or developed a sophisticated software.”

“No, it wasn’t as cool as that,” I said. “LinkedIn told me you browsed my profile. I recognized the academic background on yours.”

“So let me ask you a question,” NyceGuy said. “How do you feel about me browsing your LinkedIn profile?”

“A lot of people browse my LinkedIn profile,” I said. “That’s what it’s there for.” I have a different attitude about social media than what mainstream media tells us to have. “This big deal about discouraging the sharing of information about yourself is oppressing people – especially women – from running for public office or speaking out in public. ‘Shut up, stay in your corner, don't speak out.’ Or else you’ll get stalkers. Does Hillary Clinton hide for fear of stalkers?” Heck, I know which house she lives in.

Just as the dance was ending, OldMan came onto the dance floor and spoke up in public chat. “I’m back.” Poor guy. He missed the whole event.

As usual, NyceGuy left a tip in the tip jar. Perhaps he’s always conscientious about tipping because he runs his own event. And has money in his account to leave for a tip.

After the dance, NyceGuy and I arrived at Global Peace Chat at Book Island Beach in our formal attire. Chairs, couches, and pillows were arranged in a circle around a coffee table that had a few books arranged on top. I clicked on one of the books, and received a notecard with a poem written on it.

NyceGuy sat on a couch surrounded by pillows. I sat on one of the pillows on the floor near his feet, with my knees in the air and feet wide apart. If I thought the dances looked bad in a wedding gown, the sitting pose looked worse.

Next to the couch stood a set of wooden file cabinets. Uncle asked us to click on the cabinets and grab the notecards inside. I clicked and a menu asked me to select from a list of ten notecards that Uncle and Auntie had developed. I didn’t want to deal with them all, so I just took the first one. The first item on the notecard was a website. My computer freezes when I use my Second Life viewer and internet browser at the same time, so I decided not to deal with the notecard.

While participating in Peace Chat and having a private conversation with NyceGuy at the same time, a strange man I met at one of the discussions I went to recently sent me a private message. “I just got a skybox. Want to come see?”

He often sends me messages, so I wondered what his intentions were in showing me a skybox. With people I meet at discussions, it could be a place to display cool things he’s built. But it is Second Life, so it could be a place to keep a sex bed.

“I’m at an event right now, so I’ll have to come look at it later,” I said.

I’m not as curious about creations people want to show me as I used to be. And I’ve met more interesting people lately, therefore I’m not so enthusiastic about chatting with everyone who sends me a message these days. To be nice, I could send him a message asking about his skybox the next time I see him online. But I no longer wish to spend my time with random people. I’ll probably never see him again.

It was the third week of Peace Chat where we talked round and round about talking. One thing we decided on was that over the next several weeks, we’d read and discuss the notecards from the file cabinet.

“So, we’re all in agreement on this. If anyone has a contrary opinion, now is the time to say so,” Uncle asked.

“If anyone disagrees with this marriage, speak now, or forever hold your peace,” PowerGirl said.

“I’m the one in a wedding dress here,” I said. “Whom am I marrying?”

“The file cabinet,” said NyceGuy, the man in the three piece suit and tie.

Well, maybe we were all committing to the notecards in the file cabinet.

“You’re marrying PowderMilk,” Kat said.

“PowderMilk isn’t here tonight, so he misses out on a chance at a wedding,” I said.

I thought about offering the dress to PowerGirl, but since PowderMilk wasn’t there, she couldn’t marry him either. Plus, I wasn’t sure if PowerGirl would appreciate a premature public announcement about a wedding between the two of them.

Of course, we didn’t agree on the way we were going to read the notecards. I thought we were going to read them on our own, but since it’s hard to make sure that everyone who shows up at Peace Chat has read something beforehand, Uncle decided we should read the notecards together.

“Several of the discussions I go to use automated notecard readers, folks read the text then we discuss,” NyceGuy suggested. “Would that be easier?”

“That’s way too much work,” Uncle said. “Who do you expect is going to prepare all of that?”

Notecard readers are all over Second Life. They’re used for every prepared class at the Builders Brewery. The Nonprofit Commons uses them when people give talks at their weekly meetings. NyceGuy tried to explain their ease of use.

“Since the notecards are already written all we have to do is get one of the automated readers that many event organizers have. The reader does all the work.”

“No. I am going to read the notecards,” Uncle said. “I’m the one who wrote them, so I know the material.”

I thought Uncle was being awfully hard on NyceGuy. I sent him a message hoping he’d feel better knowing I was on his side. “A notecard reader isn’t a bad idea. I’m not sure Uncle understands what a notecard reader is.”

“OK, I mentioned all the points I wanted to bring up,” NyceGuy said in public chat. “I’m willing to go ahead and try something out.”

A shapely pixie with tree bark clothing and wispy wings on the other side of the circle from us said, “Sending smiles to you, NyceGuy.”

I wasn’t sure if she was flirting with NyceGuy or just trying to soothe him after Uncle had been so harsh toward him.

## Sunday, June 10, 2012

NyceGuy told me he would be going to a discussion about Descartes today, so even though he wasn’t online yet by the time it started, I teleported to the landmark in the announcement. People were sitting in the circle of chairs, as typically found at a discussion.

Except the ‘chairs’ at this venue were wooden crates, barrels, and treasure chests, along with a sack of flour. I walked across the extra-wide planks of the wooden floor onto the oriental rugs and took a seat on a sack.

Stars sparkled on the black walls. Ropes hung from the ceiling. The room was an oval shape. Never saw that before. The bottom section of the wall was wooden up to the chair rail. A male mannequin lurked at the edge of the room. A blimp floated near the wall on one side of the room. Some type of giant elaborate eggcups perched at the edge of the room.

I recognized Chrae, sitting on a crate next to a woman I didn’t recognize. Chrae is partnered to Rhi, a woman who has a large following.

“You’re here with three women,” Chrae said to the guy in the middle of the circle.

I hadn’t met him before, so I looked at his profile. “He’s partnered,” I said. “Not that it matters.”

MysAlt “bores a hole in Origen with her dark brown eyes” I looked at MysAlt’s profile to see that she was not partnered.

“Stop that,” the guy teased.

“Yes sir. Holding Chrae's hand and looking innocent,” MysAlt said.

NyceGuy finally logged on.

“OK, I'm teleporting a guy,” I warned them.

NyceGuy landed. “Sorry I’m late.”

“I didn’t think you were serious, Lisa,” Chrae said.

“The women here wanted to meet with an unpartnered man,” I told NyceGuy.

“I’m fanning the air and batting my eyes at him,” MysAlt said.

“Hi Sexy,” Chrae said. Which was funny, because she herself was partnered. To Rhi, another gay woman.

I was underprepared for this discussion. I had never read any of Descartes’s work. So I didn’t have much to contribute and spent most of the time trying to understand the passages the discussion leader had sent around.

MysAlt sent me a few messages during the discussion. “What do you think of my riding outfit?”

She wore a burgundy velvet blazer, dark green hat with furry ear flaps folded up, black riding pants, and high boots.

“It looks classy,” I said. “Way better than most of the outfits I see around here.” But I wasn’t sure why she was asking my opinion of it. Perhaps because I was wearing a blazer also?

During the discussion, MysAlt mentioned that a Scandinavian princess was in love with Descartes. “So his ulterior motive was to convince himself that this hot, rich, princess really did exist.”

“Some men are like that,” NyceGuy said.

“Wink,” she said to NyceGuy

So, she flirts with the guys, holds Chrae’s hand, and sends me messages. Perhaps she’s bisexual.

Of course, NyceGuy never flirts back. He never cusses. And he never engages in obscene chat, even when everyone else does.

After the discussion, NyceGuy left a nice tip for the host, as is his manner.

The discussion leader invited everyone to explore the sim. “Check out the island,” he said.

Island? When I zoomed out, I realized it wasn’t a room with starry wallpaper, it was a space dirigible!

NyceGuy popped away. I looked for him in my radar. Ah. There’s the island, floating in space. I popped onto the island by clicking and selecting Sit. I landed on a swan made of green stone sitting in a pool of matching stone filled with water.

NyceGuy sat on a bench, knock-kneed, with his shoulders hunched and hands splayed on the bench. I sat next to him, landing way on the other end of the bench, as if I didn’t want his cooties. Knees wide apart, elbows resting on my thighs, I hung one hand in between my knees, the other held up my book.

“Looks like we’re waiting for a bus,” NyceGuy said.

I looked through my inventory and found something called Idiot Bus. Since I couldn’t rez it on that island, I wore it. A huge graffitied bus landed upside down with NyceGuy and me inside it.

“One has arrived,” NyceGuy said.

“Have you seen *The Fountain*?” NyceGuy asked. I hadn’t. “Part of it is set on an island in space with a tree in the middle. Like this place.” The tree looked like a Siamese twin out of a Dr. Seuss book, with two heads of mop hair.

“Would you like to go on a balloon ride?” NyceGuy asked. “I got a landmark from MysAlt.”

Had she invited him, with the intention of taking a ride alone with him? If so, she was disappointed because he took me on the tour.

Took off without me.

The balloon narrated the tour. “Dancing. Shops. Waterfall.”

Like I’ve been doing at the *Ideas of Things to Come* forum lately, I created my own seat. I rezzed a box, sat on it, and scooted myself not above the crowd in ‘balcony’ seating this time, but half inside NyceGuy.

“NyceSchaefer, I’m sorry about your transporter accident,” PowderMilk said.

Ha ha. Transporter accident. Like in Star Trek. Where their molecules are all decomposed to go into the transporter, but when they’re reassembled at the other end, they’re in the wrong order and people are morphed together.

Chrae showed up to NyceGuy’s *Ideas* forum. I checked MysAlt’s profile to see if she was online. She wasn’t. But. She was partnered.

To someone named Chrae2. Partnered? She hadn’t been partnered yesterday.

“Chrae, do you have an alt named Chrae2?” I asked.

“Yes. Why?”

“MysAlt wasn’t partnered yesterday.”

“Ha ha. MysAlt is Rhi.”

“That is so funny!” I said.

“Glad you’re amused. Why?”

“NyceGuy told me to ‘Spot the Rhi’.”

“There are fifty people in Second Life,” Rhi said. “The rest are alts.”

So MysAlt *is* gay. She’s not after NyceGuy, she’s friends with him. Perhaps she was sending me messages to get a better idea of what kind of woman is hanging out with NyceGuy so much these days. And was being helpful to him by offering a balloon ride that he could take me on.

“Did you know that MysAlt was Rhi?” I asked NyceGuy.

“I recognized her chat style and the avatar looked the same.”

Ah, the avatar. Perhaps that’s why she was calling attention to her wardrobe. To see if I recognized the shape, hair, face. But I don’t pay much attention to the avatars. I notice the clothing or actions sometimes, but I’m usually reading chat. Which explains why I didn’t notice I was on a ship at the Descartes discussion.

“I don’t understand how Chrae came into Second Life and found a girlfriend so fast,” I said. “We were at a discussion where I asked what dating meant to her. They talk a lot, go dancing, and are really good friends.”

“I supposed that’s one category of relationships,” NyceGuy said. “I wonder what SexAuthor would say.” She’s the one who’s married, has avatar sex with her partner, and had him come visit in real life to meet her husband.

“I don’t understand her relationship either.”

“Oh, I meant in her book.”

Has he read her book? Does that mean he’s curious about role playing sex online?

Sat next to NyceGuy on the couch. If I slid any farther forward, I would have fallen off. Playing footsie.

NyceGuy had lots of books to recommend about imperialism from his bookshelf at home. His questions were very well written. I didn’t put much effort into mine.

After Peace Chat, NyceGuy said, “Rhi sent me a teleport to a club. It’s exactly one of those places I think you dislike.”

“Do they talk about breasts there?”

“There’s some of that. I usually go there to park my avatar, then do my laundry.”

Like the Seinfeld episode where George pretends to be a bad boy when he’s on the phone, but he’s actually ironing.

“Would you like me to take you there?” NyceGuy asked. “We could dance.”

Upon teleport, I landed in a giant poster of a nude woman. I tried to walk forward, but couldn’t move to get anything else in my view. I was stuck in a giant breast that filled my screen.

I panned my view and found a box to sit in. ‘Free kitten’ was written on the front. My avatar hopped in and slumped over, looking up pitifully at pole dancers.

Rhi was one of them. I didn’t know she did pole dancing online. She has a Ph.D. and leads discussions. She always goes around naked, as a political statement. I’m not totally sure the nudeness supports her statement. But I appreciate the inside joke her lack of wardrobe has become.

Rhi kept making the typical pole dancer comments in the club’s chat, such as, “Bends over gracefully placing her hand on her thighs and slowly runs her nails up her body. Touching her breasts she circles them making her nipples hard. Ahhh.”

I didn’t understand why she was doing the pole dancing. It seemed counter to what I thought she had stood for. Perhaps I was wrong about what she stood for.

NyceGuy got some poseballs for us and selected a dance. We put our arms on each other’s shoulders and kissed. Then NyceGuy floated away and started dancing on his own. I still had my arms raised, hanging in midair.

“Hey, we were kissing and you danced off.”

“Sorry. Some other animation took over. I don’t know what my avatar is doing.”

“Now I’m standing here like a zombie.”

Incase you weren’t interested in watching the pole dancers, the club owner made several games available around the room. I tried whack-a-mole while NyceGuy disciplined his avatar back into shape.

We tried dancing again. This time he selected a dance where our avatars held each other close, pressing our noses into each other’s hair. I was still holding a book, just beyond NyceGuy’s shoulder, as though I were reading it.

“We’re snuggling, and I’m here reading a book.”

“I like books. Let me read with you.”

Based on his lack of dating experience, he seemed the type to absentmindedly read software manuals while he had a woman breathing in his ear. I detached the book.

“Too late. I put it away.”

Rhi sent me a private message. “Are you and NyceGuy a becoming an item?”

I hemmed and hawed, entering some polite chat before answering. Because I wasn’t sure how to answer that question. “Gosh,” I said. “I’m not sure. I don’t think NyceGuy is into coupledom online.”

And for that matter, I wasn’t sure if I was either. I sort of like the idea of being known as a couple within the context of the community of people who frequently attend discussions. I’m not sure why. Perhaps because he’s been in that community for awhile and has some really interesting friends. Maybe because he seems well-respected among those people. He’s helpful and adds a lot of very intelligent, well-reasoned thoughts to discussions.

Yet for those reasons, I’m concerned about what would happen if I were partnered to him. Many people may assume it means we have avatar sex. I don’t want that to be the impression of why he, nor I, participate in this virtual world.

“We’ve known each other for a few years. We dated, but I don’t think he’s looking to be part of a couple.”

“You dated him?” I asked. That didn’t make sense. “I thought you were only interested in women.”

That opened up a whole can of worms about her dating experiences online, which I had been curious about. How did she end up finding a bisexual woman who was interested in her? And society’s attitudes about dating. Why don’t I ‘friend-date’ women? It’s not as though my dating activities here are leading to any form of mating.

Or maybe they are. It’s not as though I close-dance with women while our avatars kiss. Is kissing a mating activity?

“Well, it wasn’t really dating,” Rhi said. “Going to events as friends. Dancing online is like meeting for coffee in real life. You just chat while your avatar has something to do.”

“I think that’s the same with NyceGuy and me. He’s the best Good Man I’ve met online.”

“Yeah, he pretty much single-handedly changed my opinion of men online,” Rhi said. “He doesn’t look for pixel sex. He’s just grateful to find a woman on his intellectual level.”

That exchange left me hanging with so many unanswered questions in the air. But I wasn’t quite sure what the questions were. I didn’t mention my conversation with Rhi to NyceGuy, but I stuck around online longer than I had intended because I was feeling the conversation was incomplete. A gay woman who goes around naked and does pole dancing and porn chat at clubs didn’t seem like his type. What was his friendship with Rhi like, and why had they stopped friend-dating?

“He’s the best man I’ve met online,” Rhi said. “But don’t worry. You can have him.”

I thought that was implied. Especially since she’s partnered to a woman.

There was a voting contest, so I put my name on the board. I didn’t bother to look at what the contest was this time. Usually it’s best dancer or best jeans or best looking. Nobody pays attention to what the contest is because they just vote for their friends. I pasted my voting confirmation into my private chat with NyceGuy to let him know I voted for him.

“Oh, the popularity contest,” he said. “I voted for you too.

It wasn’t until the voting contest was over, and NyceGuy and I won some money, that I noticed what the contest was this time. Our names appeared on the winners board under our new title, ‘Trashiest sluts.’ Great. NyceGuy and I had voted each other as best sluts. Popularity indeed.

“I always said you were a trashy slut, NyceGuy,” Rhi said.

Funny, she basically said to me that she thought he was the classiest guy around.

“No you didn’t,” I joked. “You told me he was a classy slut.”

NyceGuy left a generous tip for the dancers. Since we had won some money, allowing me to have something to spend on a tip, I thought about giving them one. But I don’t like encouraging pole dancing, so I’ll save it for their next discussion.

As we left, I bid NyceGuy goodnight. “\*Kiss\*,” I said.

“\*Kiss\*,” he replied. “Have sweet dreams.”

Very sweet. I thought he might not return the kiss. He never flirts with anyone else, at least not in public chat. Maybe he did only because he thought it might seem cold if he didn’t. Yet he was the one initiating the kissing and nuzzling dances. So, perhaps, unlike most people in Second Life, it takes him time to work up to a peck on the cheek.

## Tuesday, June 12, 2012

“You dated Rhi???” I asked NyceGuy.

“???????????????”

“??????????????????????” I added for emphasis.

NyceGuy had just invited me to come sit in on a Socrates Café discussion with him. Only two other people were there and the topic didn’t lend well to conversation. So we sat in a circle, pretty much conversing privately with each other while two other people were there, probably also involved in their own conversation.

“Hm. Good question,” he said. “We sort of dated. But one could also argue that we didn’t.”

“How did it end?” I asked.

“We moved on.”

Not much of an answer. I asked him to be more specific.

“Well, Rhi was the initiator of that relationship and it had always seemed a bit odd to me.”

“Because she’s a pole dancer?” I asked.

“No,” he laughed. “Because of the difference between real life and virtual life. She sees online relationships a bit differently than I do.”

“I don’t understand exactly how the difference between real and virtual made it odd.”

“I suppose I don’t either,” he said.

I’m guessing perhaps what he is calling ‘odd’ is that he has the same unanswered questions about virtual ‘dating’ that I do. What is the purpose? What level of ‘knowing’ the other person can you expect? And how does that relate to the feelings you have for a person you type to on a computer.

NyceGuy is surprised by the amount of real life I insert in my virtual experiences. But I can’t have any amount of care, sympathy, friendship, or understanding for someone if I don’t know who they are or what goes on in their lives.

If NyceGuy and I were hanging out in real life, I imagine we’d be coworkers or grad students who stop by each other’s office every morning to say ‘Hi, I’m here.’ We’d go to lunch a few times per week, sometimes alone, most of the time in a group. When people got together after work or on the weekend, if one of us was included, the other would automatically be invited.

However this environment isn’t work or college. So we interact differently. We teleport our avatars to venues where we move around and type things to each other. There’s an exclusivity in the fact we go to the same venues when we’re online together and we have a lot of private conversations. But I’m not sure what the significance of that level of exclusivity is.

“Then, are *we* virtual dating?” I asked. “Although, I suppose I don’t quite know what that means.”

“I don’t either. I suppose this is how SexAuthor got the idea to write her book.”

For trying to find out what online dating is, hanging out with NyceGuy it’s sort of like the blind leading the blind. Neither of us have ever really dated much in real life, much less online. And maybe that’s a good thing, for me at least. I probably wouldn’t be interested in hanging out with a serial dater.

I wonder if part of the reason his past ‘relationship’ or whatever it was with Rhi bothers me is not only because I don’t understand what the nature of the relationship was or how it affected NyceGuy’s perspective of our relationship, but also because I’ve never really been the paramour of someone else’s ex. Especially where the ex was still very much involved in their life. Online or in real life. Logically, I don’t feel that I’m a threat to Rhi or that she’s a threat to me. But I guess I don’t know where she stands, where I stand, or where I want to stand.

“So, does it feel odd for the two of us to hang out online?” I asked.

“No, I like hanging out with you. You bring up interesting topics and have interesting perspectives.”

“I feel more comfortable with you than with most people,” I said.

“Most people in Second Life, or in general?”

“Well, in general,” I responded. “I have a lot of in-person acquaintances on Facebook. I’ll post stuff to their wall, but I wouldn’t initiate an extended chat conversation with them.”

And that was an interesting observation about online communication I had never thought of before. The norms of Facebook encourage people to communicate publicly to people, as part of an open invitation to all acquaintances to have a brief dialog. So conversation with people you wouldn’t normally contact happens because it’s nonintrusive. Just like due to the way Second Life is set up, we have extended chat conversations with people from around the world that we would never meet otherwise.

“It might be interesting to compare to a real life friend you see regularly. How is that similar?” NyceGuy asked.

“Mutual acquaintances,” I answered. “It’s important to have mutual friends in order to know someone. We have mutual online acquaintances. But my knowledge of these people is more limited. I don’t pay as much attention to their lives.”

“Yes. A lack of well-defined social context,” NyceGuy said. “So let me ask you a question. How do you define your space here?”

I had to think about that for a moment. In some ways I’m wandering through, looking for whatever seems interesting. Then I thought of his question within the frame of why I’m here, rather than how I define it as it currently is.

“These discussion forums will evolve with technology. They will become the way people meet, interact, opening social and professional opportunities to anyone with an internet connection. We won’t have this 'separate real life ' culture that currently exists in Second Life. We'll gather as ourselves, not as something we pretend to be. We'll interact in time and space, just like in real life.”

“The three dimensional aspect conveys something important to the interactions in this space,” NyceGuy said. “Although I can’t nail down what that is, or why a regular text chat can't accomplish the same thing.”

“In the future, there will be holograms. The difference in the three dimensional interactions will be that we’ll see body language, hear voice inflection. Some day I will interact that way with you, even without a plane trip. Ten years from now we will hang out in a forum like this.” I said, referring to the discussion we were at, in the virtual home of a discussion facilitator. “We'll be sitting in our living rooms or at a real life café just as we do now, except we'll see each other’s holograms instead of avatars. Other people at my café will see your hologram too. It will be much like you're sitting in the cafe with us. That's where the mutual friends come in. We'll be sharing lunch. I'll buy it for you. But it will be brought to you by a server in your city.

“That’s probably not the kind of answer you were expecting, but that’s exactly what I have in mind when I'm online. It's just that it’s not anyone else's paradigm of what we’re doing here yet.

“I hope it resonates with you, even if you don't feel you totally grasp it. I'd like to plant that idea in your head, to see if it grows inside your brain and becomes something.”

“Okay,” NyceGuy said. “We'll have to see if that idea germinates.”

SexAuthor invited a few people to her place to chat. As I teleported in, a giant sea turtle swam over my head. Several of us took a seat on seaweed-covered coral couches.

“What’s your definition of dating in Second Life?” I asked, as bubbles floated upward from my lips.

“When you do things together, such as scuba diving or to an amusement park, to get to know each other to find out if you want to be intimate with that person,” she said.

By ‘intimate,’ I think she means chatting porn to each other while watching your avatars wiggle between each others legs.

“I hang out with a friend of mine a lot, but we don’t really call it dating. I guess I don’t care what we call it,” I said. “I just like hanging around and chatting with him.”

I don’t necessarily agree with her definition of dating. When I was in high school, I went out on dates with absolutely no intention of finding out if I wanted to have sex with my boyfriend. And I don’t agree that avatar sex could necessarily be described as ‘intimate.’ In fact, in most cases, it’s quite creepy.

I suppose that some people want the avatar sex because they’re looking for some form of intimacy. And they don’t have the verbal skills to form an emotional bond through conversation. So they use physical images as a way to establish exclusivity, as a way to communicate that they want to share a bond that they don’t share with others.

One thing I think is odd is that in dating relationships, people wouldn’t trust the other with their email passwords or access to their bank accounts, but they do trust each other with access to their bodies.

## Saturday, June 16, 2012

Took NyceGuy to karaoke. Sung as Bruce, then friended his alt. “Hi Steve.”

He didn’t realize it was me.

NyceGuy’s alt is an older gentleman with a white beard. I gave him a hug.

“Awwww,” he said.

“It looks like you’re my dad giving me a hug.”

“I was going for the older professor look,” he said.

We went back to his house, sat on lawn chairs under palm trees, and chatted around a barbecue.

“Would you feel about working on GuruTapas.com with me?” I asked. “Don’t feel like you have to answer that now. I’m not sure how I feel about that yet myself. It needs to be a conversation.”

“I like the idea. Sounds much better than most of the new web sites out there. We’d need to do a pilot project first, to test our working styles.”

“To make sure we don’t kill each other.”

Rhi was her usual naked self at Readers Chat on Book Island Beach today. A naked guy named Darc showed up too.

“Is Darc Rhi’s brother?” I asked.

I thought I’d turn Book Island into a nude beach so I took off my clothes, but left my extra tall book spine top hat on.

The island owner stopped by to see how we were doing. “Hi everyone. I’m here with my dad today to show him what a virtual gathering looks like.

“Oh, great,” I said and quickly put my clothes back on. Today it looks like a bunch of naked cartoon characters hanging out.

## Saturday, June 23, 2012

Landed at a talk in a pool. A neighbor lurked in a three story building nearby, perhaps hoping for bikinis, but no luck on his behalf. We floated around in inner tubes. “Perfect. It was over a hundred degrees here today.”

NyceGuy got in an inner tube wearing the suit with the map vest I gave him. I clicked to sit in his inner tube and landed in his lap.

“NyceGuy and Lisa sitting in a tree,” Lulu said.

“No, this is clearly an inner tube. Not a tree,” I explained. “Lulu, come sit in our laps,” I beckoned.

The three of us were in a pile on the inner tube. “NyceGuy is popular with the women,” I said.

So I surrounded NyceGuy with ‘women.’ They were quite ugly women. I created them of standard fake noob avatars I’d had in my inventory for a long time, ever since I made a Gor chair with a bunch of noobs bowing before it for the chair building contest back in Learn Avatar.

Of course, it was a male noob. It wore jeans and a plain yellow t-shirt, so I had to put some hair on them and I put a dumpy one-prim skirt on over their jeans. Once I created one ugly woman, I cloned her, then attempted a second clone. However, although I had selected simple hair, the noob women consisted of too many prims to be able to put more than two of them on the land.

Unfortunately, there were scripts in the noobs that put the title ‘Phillip Linden,’ the avatar name of the creator of Second Life, over their heads. I removed the scripts I could find, but that didn’t delete the title from their heads.

“Hey, there are two Phillip Lindens floating behind us,” NyceGuy said.

In spite of the setting, the discussion leader wanted us to talk about fire. “Like fire in the belly, or a gathering around a campfire,” the leader said. “What do you think of when I bring up the topic of fire?” We went around the circle, taking turns talking about fire.

NyceGuy sent me a private message. “I think of the lyrics to *Pyromania* by Def Leppard when I think of fire. I’m singing them now.”

“You should so totally enter lyrics in chat when it’s your turn. It would be so un-you. You’re always intellectual about everything. Lyrics would be inane.”

I didn’t think he’d do it, but at his turn, he entered the first four lines of the song, one at a time. Yes!

Of course, he concluded with an intellectual summary. “It makes me think of all the songs written about fire throughout history.”

Hm. A song about history and fire. I pasted the lyrics to Billy Joel’s *We Didn’t Start the Fire* into chat.

“Another fire song,” the leader commented.

“NyceGuy started it,” I said.

After the poolside discussion, we went to NyceGuy’s weekly forum. I rezzed a box and scooted it over so I was next to NyceGuy on his chair. He had his elbow resting across the chair back with his hand hanging down, so it looked like he had his arm around me. After a while, I realized I had positioned myself so that his hand rested on my breast.

“I’d like to hear more about how you envision GuruTapas.com. Is it related to indie publishing?”

“It’s totally indie publishing,” I said. I was so glad he brought up the topic. He seems interested in being a part of the project. But being interested and actually helping are two different things. I can’t force him to be a part of it. He has to want it. So if he’s bringing it up, he must be somewhat serious about considering it.

“How about editors?” he asked.

“Up to the authors,” I said. “I know that’s not popular, but authors who deliver a good final product will get a reputation for doing so.”

“I’m split on the idea of publishers and publishing,” he said. “What about academic publishing?”

“I suppose classrooms will be involved with this eventually,” I said. “But right now, having a plan for that is not a priority.”

Last week NyceGuy had also mentioned that his ex-wife had met her current husband in Second Life. I didn’t think much of it at the time he mentioned it. But after that information was in my head a few days, I figured that if she was playing on Second Life often enough to meet someone she had enough knowledge about to decide to move to another country to be with him, she didn’t suddenly start hanging out on Second Life after she divorced a guy who spends a lot of time on Second Life.

“Did your ex-wife meet her current husband while you were still married?” I asked.

“Yes.”

As I read his one word response, a really powerful sinking feeling plunged through my stomach. I imagined how helpless he must have felt, to know that his wife was trolling for other lovers, while still living in the household they shared. He could demand her to stop, but if she had been willing to stop, she wouldn’t be doing it in the first place.

I figured that if NyceGuy and his former wife both played online, they probably hung out online together while they were still married. “Did her current husband know who you were?”

“I think he did.”

What kind of guy did his ex-wife marry? It’s one thing to marry someone who goes trolling for others while she’s still married. But quite another to facilitate in the trolling. I wonder if she’s already trolling for new lovers now that she’s been married to this other guy for a few years.

NyceGuy needed to get to a homeowners association meeting he was holding on his land. But he crashed, then I never saw him log on again. Twenty minutes after he was supposed to have been at the meeting, he still hadn’t logged back on yet. I teleported back to his land to see if his neighbors were still meeting at his place. When I arrived, he was there. But my friend list said he was offline.

Was he hiding his online status from me? I thought about sending him a message to say that was uncool. But if he was hiding his online status, that meant he didn’t want me sending him any messages, and I didn’t want to get into an argument about that.

So I sat in his skybox for a half hour while I worked on something else on my computer, wondering if he’d notice I was nearby and ask me what I was doing there. He didn’t, so finally I sent him a message about something funny that happened with my graphics while I was editing my GuruTapas logo. As soon as I hit ‘enter,’ he appeared as online in my friend list. So perhaps he hadn’t been hiding his online status from me. Instead, it was just a technical glitch. Good think I didn’t go all ‘uncool’ on him.

“Looks like everyone is melted into each other on my radar,” I said.

“We’re right underneath you.”

“I should drop an egg.”

So I created an egg three meters wide, set it to physical, and shoved it off the edge of his balcony. It bounced off the house and into the ocean, so I tried again, resulting in the egg falling off the sim again. So I wore it, flew a few more meters away from the edge of the sim, and dropped it.

I stopped flying and plummeted to the ground to see where it landed. It was just outside the door of NyceGuy’s house, where all his neighbors were gathered inside. So I shoved the egg through the wall and into the room where they were meeting, leaving it behind someone’s chair and teleported back to the skybox.

“Something appeared behind that chair,” a neighbor commented.

“I didn’t do it,” another neighbor said, and inspected it. “Looks like Lisa did.”

“Lisa’s in my skybox,” NyceGuy said. “She dropped an egg.”

“I’m glad it didn’t land on me,” said the neighbor in the chair.

After NyceGuy’s meeting, it was time to log off, so I gave him a hug. Our avatars jittered a bit as they bumped into each other.

“Looks like you’re kicking me,” NyceGuy said.

“It’s a love/hate thing,” I explained.

## Saturday, June 30, 2012

PowerGirl had a dance party at her house. Igor DJed. I hadn’t seen him for awhile. He was dancing with his chick again.

“Igor’s used to my ass,” she said. “He’s been humping it for four years.” Odd, since Igor had told me that he had been partnered to someone else for two years. She must have been his whore on the side.

I looked at her profile. Igor was listed as one of her ‘picks.’ “Best sperm thrower ever,” she put under his picture. Ewww.

I created an entourage of clones. I left one in NyceGuy’s skybox and another at his meeting location on the ground. He moved her inside.

“Incase it rains.”

I took my entourage with me to Global Peace Chat so I could surround NyceGuy with women.

“Lisa, could you remove the clones. I can’t see NyceGuy,” Uncle requested. I had my entire screen filled up with the chat box, so I couldn’t see anybody at all. It didn’t matter. Nobody’s avatar was doing anything, we were all just chatting. I wasn’t sure why Uncle felt he needed to see NyceGuy. So he can tell if he’s throwing spit balls?

The conversation turned to Pink Floyd lyrics and one of the guys turned on his mic and started talking about Pink Floyd. So NyceGuy got on his mic too.

“NyceGuy speaks!” I said. I had never heard him speak out loud before.

He has a really fun voice, lots of inflection. Sort of the same friendly, expressive tone of his chat.

“And now you’ve heard my voice,” he said to me.

That evening I had a dream that I was in a yoga class and heard him come in while I was on the floor stretching. I looked up, waved at him, and he came over to stretch by me. Then we whispered our own conversation to each other while the other participants paid attention to the class.

## Saturday, July 7, 2012

Since NyceGuy had taken the step of speaking by voice, the next day I initiated a private voice conversation with him. Our avatars were at a discussion about robots, but it was more like being on a phone call because our avatars did not affect our conversation. We spoke for about an hour about our interests, goals, and dreams. Not the yoga dream, but his love of graduate school and my vision for how people will work and learn in the future.

We set up a time later in the week to talk about GuruTapas. He’s the one who keeps bringing it up, so I asked if he wanted to work on it with me. He’s not sure yet. He wants to continue discussing it. Definitely a good listener.

At NyceGuy’s Ideas of Things to Come discussion, I sat in my own chair instead of snuggling next to NyceGuy.

Arisio sent me a message. “You’re not sitting by NyceGuy today.”

NyceGuy was slumped over with the ‘Away’ tag over his head. I’m not sure why the tag was displayed. We were in private chat, so he certainly wasn’t ‘away.’

“Looks like NyceGuy has gone away,” I said to Arisio.

“You have beautiful eyes,” Arisio said.

Huh? Why is he saying that?

“Are you referring to my avatar?”

“Of course. I can’t see you in real life,” Arisio said. “Not yet.”

I didn’t continue the conversation any further. Instead, I logged off.

I asked NyceGuy what he thought of Arisio. “Pretty smart, a little older. Seems like a good guy.”

Yeah, that’s because NyceGuy is a man. Arisio doesn’t make a habit of sending harassment messages to him. Note to the men reading this: Take a look around your office. Think about which people seem like ‘good guys.’ Then take a very close look at every detail in how the women react around them. Because some of the men who may seem like ‘good guys’ to you, probably aren’t good guys to the women.

Afterward, I realized what I should have said to Arisio. I should have told him he could see video of me at BudgetJustified.com. The site about how I was always getting harassed.

NyceGuy and I had a really great conversation about…everything. It was supposed to be about GuruTapas. I had sent him a long list of topics to think about and discuss. I also sent him a list of related technologies and web sites. But of course the conversation went all over the place and I had to steer us back to the list a few times.

I suppose at this point, that’s appropriate. We’re still in the phase of getting to know about each other’s lives and deeper knowledge about who we are. It could also mean that we’re not focused enough. In general, I tend to over-enforce agendas and timelines to the point of degrading the experience. So in the case of our conversation, I wanted to enjoy getting to know him more than I wanted to hit bullet points in the list of topics. We have time to cover them all eventually.

“I still have a hard time visualizing you,” I said. I had seen pictures of him, heard his voice, but I hadn’t seen the two together to get an idea of his mannerisms or facial expressions.

“We could try a video chat on Skype next time,” he suggested.

I popped online for a moment the next evening to say hi and went to the discussion NyceGuy usually attends that evening of the week. I received the typical “Hi Lisa!” NyceGuy always greets everyone with. But this time he seemed more enthusiastic than usual to see me. He didn’t participate very much in the discussion, rather was chatting with me.

“You seem to be in a very good mood tonight,” I said.

“Maybe because I went to a really good class in real life tonight.”

I suppose it’s possible that his enthusiasm stems from the class. He would really like to get his PhD in history, or at least be a perpetual student. And that may be the thing that pulls him away from working on any projects with me.

## Friday, July 13, 2012

I had noticed an app called Facetime in my iPad and it reminded me that NyceGuy had suggested a video chat. He’s enthusiastic about the new iPad he just got, I asked him to open Facetime and try it out.

“There you are!” he said, when I appeared on his screen.

There we were, watching each other, having a conversation. He’s quite a smiley guy, which I hadn’t been able to tell from his pictures because in pictures he doesn’t smile much.

Suddenly I realized I could carry him all over my house! I showed him my bookcase, my piano, my kitchen, and my cats. He showed me his apartment and since it was still daylight at his place, I could look out the window.

He brought me to his kitchen while he made dinner and had a beer. It was sort of like what I pictured GuruTapas being in the future, where people share a meal while sitting in two different cafés.

“I could take you to parties,” I said. “And say Look at my new friend I found in my iPad.” Because with the context of video, we’re much more immersed in each other’s experiences than when we just talk.

We chatted for a couple of hours before I finally went to sleep. So the next day, we were kind of chatted out. You can only be with someone for so long before you feel you need to tend to other things. We were both logged on to Second Life, but I just listened to people talk at Book Island in the background while I read the news. I liked knowing he was around while I did other things.

## Saturday, July 21, 2012

I tried an experiment with virtual presence. Soon we will be making friends over the internet, integrating them into our lives in spite of the physical distance between us. In fact, I’m doing that now.

NyceGuy and I have mutual online friends, but since we don’t see each other in person, we know things about our mutual lives only by what we say or see on Facebook. So I wanted to try introducing him to my offline friends.

I went to a programmers conference and since we had WiFi, I initiated a Facetime call on my iPad. He could hear and see video of what was being discussed at the conference. I could introduce him to my friends by showing them video of each other on my screen and they were able to greet each other.

I think it went well. It wasn’t as high fidelity as in person, but it was fun to introduce everyone to my friend who lives in my iPad.

## Saturday, August, 2012

NyceGuy decided he didn’t want to be a large part of GuruTapas. I didn’t expect he would

“But I want to be supportive while you build it.”

“How about writing an article together?” I suggested.

He liked that idea. I didn’t have an agenda for what I wanted to write and I didn’t want to force him to write an article with me, so I asked him to come up with a topic he was interested in. But he never got back to me on that. So I never brought it up again.

## Saturday, September, 2012

I created an alt named GuruTapas.com Free Book Website and made him or her my partner. I’m not sure if that alt has a gender. I never log on as that alt. I asked NyceGuy if he wanted to be my online Partner.

“No, I’m not really here for that,” he said.

“Are you concerned about what others would think of you if you had a partner? Like, it implies porn, even if that’s not what the partners are up to.”

“It’s not that either.”

“What do you think of me having a partner in my profile?”

“Doesn’t make a difference to me. Looks more like an ad than a partner.” Probably because that’s exactly what it is.

“If you made an alt to partner, what name would you give him or her to have in your profile?”

He didn’t have any particular name he’d select for having a partner in his profile. I tried to think of a partner name that would work. I decided to try out the name of a famous academic who had the same last name as NyceGuy’s avatar. So I created an avatar named AlbertEinstein and sent NyceGuy a partner request. If he accepts, we’d have the same last name. Not that I have the same last name as my real life husband. Because I don’t.

But he didn’t accept.

## Saturday, October, 2012

I logged on as AlbertEinstein in time for Global Peace Chat and teleported to Book Island. But I had somehow ended up in some land I had never seen. So I teleported to Book Island again. I saw NyceGuy and Uncle, but then got ejected to a land next door. I tried walking over to them, but they had ban lines up and Al kept bouncing off them.

NyceGuy sent me a message. “They’re being a bit paranoid about griefers.” Turns out that they banned any avatar under sixty days old from their land. So my alt named Griefr is allowed on Book Island, but AlbertEinstein isn’t.

Governmental structure on Philosophy Island

NyceGuy and I should try an Ideas event in real life, on Ustream, to see how it goes.

what makes me laff abou t the sl sex poses

[14:28] QQ Galthie: their faces have such a horrified look on them like a telephone pole is being rammed up their bums

ted talk http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtLVCpZIiNs

## Epilogue

When I first joined Second Life, I felt like a virtual teenager. I didn’t know the cultural norms or the technical capabilities yet. I went to classes. I tried to find dates to go with to dances. I wanted to make lots of friends and hang out in this new world.

Maybe because I think real life relationships are sweet, I think it would be sweet to have a friend in Second Life that was so nice and close that I’d want him to be my partner.

But Second Life partnerships aren’t like real life marriages. You don’t go home to your partner after work. You don’t pick your partner up from the metro in the rain. You don’t spend Christmas with your partner with your family. All you do is spend a little time with them in a computer game. And a lot of the time, one partner isn’t even online at the same time as the other. So if you don’t have any housework that needs to be done in Second Life, you might as well go dancing with someone else.

As my Second Life matured, the place seemed like it had so much potential for doing business, for helping charities, for doing important work. Within a few months of joining, several news stories appeared in major news publications about businesses in Second Life.

But the hubbub died down. Perhaps the mainstream found too much porn and abandoned the platform. Normal people didn’t stand for the norms of abuse and objectifying women. Perhaps most people quickly grow tired of the control freaks.

I started Second Life in a snowstorm at the beginning of 2010. The ironic thing, I found out later, is that Second Life was inspired by a book called *Snow Crash*, by Neal Stephenson, although the term ‘snow crash’ refers to the pixelated static on an old television set when the stations go out.

The hours of time required to be online in order to not get kicked out of the Learn Avatar builder neighborhood, weeding out a lot of good people. Those who stayed ‘needed’ Learn Avatar in order to feel important, to boss people around.

Mobile technology has grown much faster in the past year than Second Life. Perhaps there are too many limitations on Second Life. It is what it is. It’s not used in a web browser and it’s anonymous. Thus it doesn’t integrate well with the rest of the web. Facebook, Twitter, and other methods of social media play well together. Second Life does not.

What happens in Second Life stays in Second Life. Many people don’t want their real life identities available in real life. The anonymity allows them to do things they should be embarrassed about. People who are doing good things in Second Life are few and far between.

However this may be improving. I have seen a few Facebook status updates about Second Life recently.

And there are technical limits on the number of people who gather in one space, so even if something did get popular, not many people would be able to participate. Second Life doesn’t scale well, compared to Facebook or even Ustream. If you’re going to give a talk, you’re better off using Ustream because more people can watch and questions can still be asked in chat.

The people using other forms of social media have more influence. Those who do not have influence in the real world hide behind the anonymity of Second Life to play power games, but do not grow influence.

A few people in the Second Life community have some potential for influence, such as the Builders Brewery owners. It’s a popular resource, but the owners seem to stay quiet. Others seem to have brought some of their real world influence into Second Life, such as TechSoup holding meetings at the Nonprofit Commons to bring together social charity organizations from all over the world, although mostly the United States.

The activity within the Stop the Violence Against Women group seems to have grown also. However violence against women in Second Life hasn’t decreased, thus their influence has not spread. Many social deviants still come to Second Life for the purpose of being violent to women. And women in Second Life are less likely to stand up for themselves there, thus a culture of sexual harassment that not only goes unchecked, but is encouraged. Anyone who speaks against the objectification of women is vilified. You’re supposed to harass women, not complain about it when it happens.

I am disheartened by women’s willingness to be objectified and to compete for attention by being sluttier than the women around them. The chat, clothing, poses in profile pictures. Even at poetry readings in Bookstacks. The women read in breathy voices about how having avatar sex often. How can we expect to be treated with respect when we don’t treat ourselves with respect?

I created Bruce to find out what it was like for men in Second Life. I got approached by a few women who were looking for sex with whatever male avatars were around. But not nearly as much as Ruby was approached by men looking for random sex. And Bruce was never approached by a male avatar, although Ruby was approached by a few female avatars.

Since there’s no body language, people chat about sex as a way to indicate that they’re available, to get attention.

Many people who would otherwise be pleasant, engage in the dirty talk because that’s what happens in certain Second Life forums. Many others, who don’t want to be a part of that, leave Second Life altogether rather than waste time trying to find the forums where respectful behavior occurs.

Some people think the stories about meeting online and moving to another country for that person are romantic. I think they’re desperate and creepy.

I never figured out why some people spend so much time with a computer spouse rather than try to find fulfilling relationships in real life. I certainly never found anyone I wanted to partner with, and nobody wanted to partner with me.

I also never figured out how to find anyone whom I would want as my partner. But it became obvious to me that in order to get someone to want to be my partner, I’d have to have regular avatar sex with them. Which explains why nobody wanted to be my partner.

I think the main reason I haven’t found a close friend in Second Life is that I haven’t met anyone that I have much in common with. The people that I am compatible with aren’t hanging around in Second Life.

What does give me hope is that the most active communities were the building and learning communities. The Builders Brewery has thousands of members, many of them very active. New Citizens and Happy Hipsters, along with Learn Avatar, are also still popular.

A lot of the people who stay active in Second Life are there to create. They keep the place interesting for those who have yet to join and become a teenager again, even if only for a little while.

Second Life never became what I thought it would and I wasn’t able to create the online community I had hoped for. But I don’t consider my time in Second Life a failure. It inspired me to take the initiative myself to create what I wanted Second Life to be. I’m writing proposals for grants to put together an online people-to-people library. A platform for online events. That community is evolving at http://GuruTapas.com.

## Friday, January 13, 2012

### Bruce

LeetDork was hanging out at the Learn Avatar office, alone, since nobody really goes there anymore. I told him that I’m actually Lisa and when he first met me on the day he joined Second Life, he blew off Lisa, but was cool to Bruce. He seemed genuinely sorry. Honestly, I didn’t care that much. I just wanted to point out to him that he treats women differently than men.

I asked Worldly if he had seen Shopper lately. He said she hadn’t been online for awhile. “She was always really nice to me,” I told him.

I asked Worldly if he had been reading the Learn Avatar chat. “Did you notice that I said I’m a woman in real life?”

“Someone called you a woman?” he asked.

“Yes. Me.”

Then I asked if he suspected that I had an alt.

“I suspect everyone has an alt.” He thought about it for a moment. “Are you your own cousin?”

I’ve often thought he suspected that I was also Bruce, but he said it was a total surprise.

## Saturday, January 14, 2012

### Bruce

Shopper was online when I logged on. She immediately logged off. I hope Worldly didn’t tell her I was Ruby.

## Saturday, March 3, 2012

### Bruce

I hadn’t seen TeeVee for awhile he sent me a message as soon as I logged on. “Dude!”

“You know my alt.”

“LisaSchaefer Ruby.”

Silence

“Yeah, I’m a chick in real life.”

He had to leave.

I never had the heart to tell LevelHead. Especially since her ex-husband is gay.

I compared how I felt about LevelHead to how I felt about my favorite male friends.

With most of my good male friends, such as PowderMilk, I’m sure I could go around with them as Bruce, see what they acted like and said around him instead of a female me, then tell them about it later and have a good laugh.

However with a few of my male friends, I’d feel like doing so would be equivalent to checking up on them. That was definitely true with Northern. It felt that way, somewhat, with Worldly. Because in some ways, I was checking up on them. Although I had created Bruce before I met Worldly and that wasn’t my intention, I was observing him without his knowledge that I was there. But also because they both exhibited some deceitful behaviors behind my back when they were with other women. Not just deceitful to me, but deceitful to the other women also.

For the opposite reasons, showing up as Bruce seemed like it would be dishonest to NyceGuy. NyceGuy never led women on or snuck around with women behind other women’s backs. He friended me as his alt and has his main avatar’s name in his alt’s profile for everyone to know who he is. His alt isn’t used to hide from anyone. It’s so he can be in two places at once.

However I’m not sure why I’d be OK with following PowderMilk around, but not NyceGuy. Even though PowderMilk also has his alts names in his profile and isn’t trying to fool anyone. Perhaps it’s because PowderMilk has exclusive relationships with other women and I’m not interested in having that kind of friendship with PowderMilk. Perhaps because I’m not completely sure where I stand with NyceGuy It’s possible that I’m his primary chatting friend on the weekend and he has other primary chatting friends on weekdays that I’m unaware of. And I don’t want it to seem like I’m spying on him, trying to find out if he has another special friend.

But that’s all different than my situation with LevelHead. I don’t care if she has other men. I know she has. When I see her online, I think, ‘Yea, Bruce’s friend.’ She was the best to chat with. It was more like setting two ‘friends’ up, even though one of those friends was fictional. She didn’t know anything about my real identity anyway, so I didn’t feel as invested in that friendship as I do with people who know who I am.

Invested in a friendship where the other knows who I am offline. Not as invested in people I just read chat from at discussions.

How would you Feel if I came around as an alt, without telling you who I was? With Brokali it could be a funny joke. With you, it would feel like I’m checking up on you behind your back.

Is it because you don’t tell me your real life identity?

Why is it that you feel free to share a lot of info about your real life, but not your name? Is name-anonymity part of the ‘game’ experience you think makes most sense in Second Life?

- I’ve met a few people who wanted to talk by Skype. But I felt there was no purpose to doing so because that took us out of the ‘game.’ Part of Second Life is the Community aspect, and people can’t belong to that shared community when they go to a different software to communicate. Going into Skype is no better than a phone call with a random person on the internet.

The anonymity we created in this system constrains the discourse that we have here.

Besides your real name, are there other general types of information that you feel you need to keep secret from people in Second Life? There is no inherent information in a name itself. However names are a key for finding more information on a person. Is there information about you that you don’t want found out? I am not under the impression that there is.

So, is part of this about level of trust &/or comfort? I can understand why you may not feel as comfortable sharing information with someone you’ve typed things to on a computer for a few months than with someone who you see irl once a week who has mutual rl friends.

With most of the people at the discussions, I don’t know how to view some of the things they say. I have no context on their academic or professional background, their age or maturity level, the country they live in, or any of their other experiences that may shape their contribution to the discussion.

Why would it seem weird to me to ‘date’ a woman online? It’s not like I’m going to mate with the men I go on dates with.