## Sunday, February 12, 2012

I found a place called Book Island. It’s run by Sandor and Arton who collaborate well, even though they live on opposite sides of the world from each other in real life. Sandor is a white bearded gentleman in his sixties. A few of the Book Island patrons have adopted him as our uncle.

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.

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 Brad was really Lisa. He was amused and offered to become Facebook friends.

## Monday, February 28, 2012

Arton is in charge of building and maintaining Book Island. We were on the wooden deck of the beach house sitting round wicker chairs. I clicked on a Box of Calm. Monks droned a Gregorian Chant. Desserts and candles covered the coffee table. Arton was concerned that there weren’t enough chairs for an upcoming event.

“We could sit on other pieces of furniture,” Barbara suggested. Car sat on a table.

I sat next to Car 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,” Sandor 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.

As I chatted with Barb about Wisconsin, Izzy came by with a deck of cards, which he shuffled every time he typed. “Nice card trick,” Barb said.

“Do you know fifty-two pickup?” I asked.

“Is that an American thing?” Izzy responded.

“It’s more of a seven-year-old thing,” I said. “My cousins used to do it to us when we were kids.”

A cardboard waiter stood behind the couch. I clicked on him and he gave me something called ‘marijuana tea.’ “Uncle Sandoooooor! That waiter gave me marijuana!”

Arton’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. Izzy said he wanted the book Bermuda shorts. I gave him my huge formal dress covered in books.

“Lisa’s booking me,” Izzy said.

Izzy 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 Arton 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 Izzy talks, you feel like it’s midnight and he’s reading a ghost story in the dark. You expect demons to moan, witches to cackle, accompanied by an eerie guitar riff in the background. But of course what Izzy is really saying isn’t about ghosts. It’s a silly joke just to see if you’re paying attention.

I gave Izzy a copy of my book Bermuda shorts. “You should get a book avatar,” Izzy 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 who is wearing the same clothing as the real life Lisa in the screen shot.

Izzy 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 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 Peach Chat with Sandor, Arton, 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.”

Sandor asked everyone to click on an item on the coffee table. When we did, we each received a graphic of a pyramid called ‘Good Arguments.’ At the peak was an example of how to reach mutual understanding. The entire pyramid was a serious graphic 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. “Arton: 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 Sandor’s graphic.

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

## Saturday, March 31, 2012

At Book Island, Uncle Sandor, Brother Brokali, and I were the only ones left after the Saturday chat. Brokali is a librarian at a prison. He has a calm voice and makes a point of being very pleasant to everyone. He says Uncle Sandor is an important celebrity in Second Life because he leads the Book Island discussions.

We were all talking by voice and Sandor told us 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. Brokali 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,” Brokali said.

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

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

Oh, is that the reason.

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

## Sunday, April 1, 2012

I’ve been giving a few readings online and in real life of the first chapter of *Diary of an Avatar*. Brokali asked if I was interested in attending a poetry and prose reading.

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

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

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

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

“That’s funny.”

“He does it to irritate me.”

“Then it’s even funnier,” I said.

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

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

“Just trying to irritate you,” I said.

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

http://www.zillow.com/homedetails/20319-Schaefer-Rd-Reedsville-WI-54230/40373714\_zpid/

After Izzy read a few people’s short poems, I read the story about my paycheck getting stolen out of my mail.

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

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

Brokali read a 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.”

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

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

I sent Izzy a partnership request as Brad.

“Check your email,” Brad told Izzy.

“Email? Why should I check that?”

“I sent you email,” Brad said.

“You don’t have my email address,” Izzy said.

“Doesn’t matter,” Brad responded.

Izzy checked his email.

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

“Brad doesn’t care,” I answered Izzy.

“Did Brad send you one of those nasty messages too?” Brokali asked.

Yet, Brad never received that rejection.

Uncle Sandor leads a Global Peace Chat right after my bedtime every Sunday evening. Sometimes I stay up for it anyway. Today was Uncle Sandor’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,” Sandor 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,” Arton said. “I thought someone left it here by mistake.”

“I’m a popcorn machine avatar,” I said.

“Lisa, could you change into something else?” Sandor 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,” Sandor 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 Arton. “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

Arton 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. Arton 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, Izzward,” I greeted Izzy in chat.

Izzy seems that it would be short for something. Why not Izzward?

“It’s like Wizzard,” I said.

Izzy and I were in private chat and I asked him if he had a big family. “I wanted kids, but she 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 had to log out and go to a different computer. Twenty minutes later, I came on as my GriefFuck alt.

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

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

“Hello, Izzward,” I typed.

There was silence for a moment.

“Izzward?” Izzy typed back. “Lisa?”

I got on voice. “I thought you might start to wonder whether someone posted a sign on you that said ‘Izzward,’.”

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

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

## 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 Izzy puts on a female avatar, he calls her Izzette. I created an alt named Izzette and gave her the nickname ‘Izzward’s Alt.’ She was born as a pink unicorn with a white helical horn. Then I created an alt named Izzward. I went to Book Island and found Izzy standing alone.

“Hi Izzward,” I said.

He didn’t respond. I went in the other room in real life to get my walking shoes, wallet, library card, and a book to return. When I got back to the computer, Izzy still hadn’t responded.

“Gotta go,” I said. “Heading to the real life Book Island.”

When I returned, Izzy had left me a message. “Hey. I’ve become a victim of identity theft.”

Not really. Izzette claims to be Izzward’s alt, not Izzy’s alt. I’m the owner of Izzward.

He was DJing, so I asked him to teleport me. But since Izzette had not been age verified, I couldn’t get there. So I hung out on Book Island while I changed my settings. Uncle Sandor, Arton, Brokali, and a few other people chatted by voice about ebook authors and methods for selling ebooks.

“Hi Izzy,” Sandor said.

“Not Izzy,” I typed. “Izzette.”

“Oh, it’s Lisa,” Sandor said when he noticed my nickname said ‘Izzward’ and I had my GuruTapas.com tag above my head.

“Are you running two viewers?” Kat asked. She must have seen Izzy online in her friend list. So I got on voice to emphasize that I was not Izzy.

Arton 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.” Arton couldn’t imagine why.

“Some men get angry about very irrational things,” Brokali, the prison librarian, said. I sat on the arm of his chair like a pink pet.

“Not Brokali, 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 Izzy DJs.

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

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

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

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

“What am I doing?” I asked.

“Tiny dances,” Izzy said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“My body is schizophrenic,” I said.

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

I teleported back to Book Island. Everyone was leaving. So I came back to Izzy’s club. Whew. I was normal again. I offered a teleport to Brokali, but he didn’t respond.

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

“Thirty years,” Izzy 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,” Scooby explained.

“Really! Tell me something embarrassing about Izzy,” I beckoned Scooby.

If she had any good stories, she didn’t want to share at the moment. 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?” Scooby said.

“She never asked.”

“Fine, Izzy. What’s your real name?”

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

“It’s Dracula.”

Now that’s something embarrassing.

“Are you making that up?” I asked.

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

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

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

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

“Izzy is a good Cat Dad,” I said.

“And Dog Dad,” Scooby added.

“And Guinea Pig Dad, and Tortoise Dad,” Izzy said.

“You almost have a farm,” I said. “My mom has three desert tortoises that were born in her back yard years ago.”

“Does she live in a desert?” Izzy asked.

“Phoenix.”

“Where do you live, Lisa,” Scooby asked.

“Washington, DC, suburb.”

“She’s posh,” said Izzy.

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

“Like the Spice Girls?” I asked.

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

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

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

“She creeps me out,” I told Scooby.

Izzy had finished DJing, and after seeing that profile, it was definitely time to go to sleep.

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

## Friday, April 6, 2012

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

“It looks like Izzy brought Book Island to Club Gomorrah,” I said when I arrived. Then I noticed that everyone there was female, except Izzy.

“Is this a party of Izzy’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, Izzy’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.

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

“Gay wedding!” I said.

“How many alts do you have?” Scooby asked.

“Around ten. But this is my real alt.”

“She’s on the lam,” Izzy said.

Yeah. On the lam. That’s why I use my real full name in my main alt.

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

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

“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 Izzy 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 Izzy’d,’ which seemed much better.

Very funny. It was like a test, to see if we were smart enough to look for the second title. Scooby had the ‘Izzy’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,” Izzy said.

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

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

“But they’re all taken,” he said.

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 Izzy to be her online dad. “I assume Kat’s too young.”

“She is. And she’s been with Brokali a long time.”

Brokali? 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.

“Brokali’s a good guy. I’m glad he has somebody in his life. Even if it’s just his Second Life.”

“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.”