Cassanova Blue
Jon - Nawaaz Jacobs a.k.a. Karakal
Verolin - Vilenthra Srinivasa
Brendan - Sergei Andreyovich, a.k.a. Dark Knight

In a world that is practically run by super-powered humans known as Novas, five humans from all around the world were brought together under extremely bizarre circumstances. They quickly found themselves in a pit of deception and doublecrossing as they came under constant attack from various agencies. The strangest and most interesting thing to date, though, is that in the space of a week all of them have erupted. On a mission from their benefactor, Frederick Daemas, they continue to battle the people that want to stop them from accomplishing their goal. Will they succeed? Or will Decimation and his host of lackeys turn them into a bloody pile of quantum charged flesh?

Ars Magica: Alastair Pearson

Garrick - Neville, twice-resurrected Auram mage
Markus - Alex, lycanthropic shaman
Philip - Marka, Vim specialist obsessed with knowledge, mind-linked to Frey
Waynne - Frey, Mentem specialist
Simon - Ajax, Tytalus swordsman, follower of Athena

The words 'epic fantasy' were coined to describe this campaign. The magi began as apprentices of the Monte Blanc covenant in the Alps. While they were taking their gauntlet, the antichrist arose prematurely. A long battle against the forces of evil ensued, climaxing in the complete re-making of the universe with the help of the four archangels and the Greek Pantheon.

The magi now find themselves in a much changed Europe and are residing in Athens. A major war is brewing between the religious order the magi control and the Moors to the south. Ancient undead have been seen walking the land and raising armies.

And all the rest of them...

We tried valiantly, dear readers, to bring you the scoop on every campaign currently being run in Cape Town. Unfortunately, some wily Dungeon Masters have managed to evade even the long lens of the Inquirer.

We have it on the best authority that **Dylan Craig** is running an **Unknown Armies** game called "Book of Lies". We sent one of our reporters to interview Mr Craig, and didn't hear from him for quite some time afterwards.

He called us last night from Brazil. It seems that he no longer has any toes, and doesn't want to work for us anymore. He refused to tell us anything about his experiences, but he did keep mumbling a mysterious URL: **http://www.eyeballkid.co.za/blies.html**.

Mr Craig's press agent had no comments regarding this incident, and would only tell us that Mr Craig is currently busy writing modules for Dragonfire.

We are also sad to report that the bloodless corpse of another of our intrepid investigators was dredged up from the bottom of the Liesbeeck yesterday. The last time we saw him, he was staking out **Ryan Kruger's Vampire** game.

We don't even know what happened to the man we assigned to **Jem Norton's play-by-email UnderWorld** campaign. His car was found parked near an open manhole in the centre of town. Police have been searching the sewers for weeks, to no avail. We looked through the internet history on his laptop, though, and we have good reason to believe that he was looking at **http://faerie.kwill.org** shortly before his mysterious disappearance.

New Leads

Keeping our ear to the ether, we heard the following rumours:

- Tim Lawrance plans to start a beginners' GURPS game set in the gameworld of Sid Meier's "Alpha Centauri".

- Down at Woolsack Tim, Ryan and d@vid seaward are putting a variety of systems through their paces. Well, they plan to. At the moment they're playing a converted AD&D adventure. d@vid plans to run an Unknown Armies adventure next.
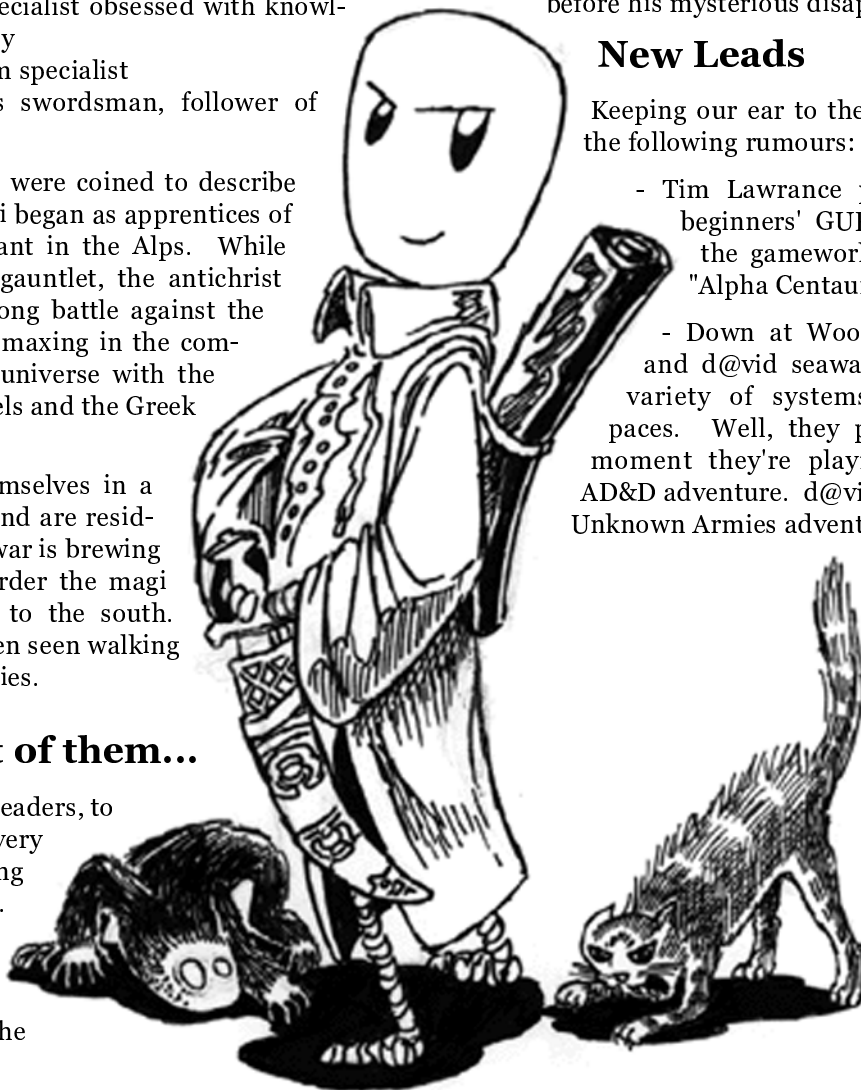
Rolling the d26

d@vid seaward rediscovers the cave crawl

There was a time before FPPs, quests or platforms, before Doom Guy, Guybrush and Mario, when spelunking, high adventure and mind-rending puzzles were rendered in arguably the most vivid format this side of Angelina Jolie's rack. Text. Unadulterated, 80-column, chunky text. And the funny thing is... those games are still with us.

> x calendar

Not just all of the legends from the early days of computing either. Sure, you'll find *Adventure, Hunt the Wumpus* and buccaneered versions of *Hitchhiker's Guide*, but you'll also find games that were made just last year. Quest games without graphics?! Are these people trapped in some kind of Vonnegut timequake, worse yet than people who still listen to music from the eighties? To a degree, yes. If you're willing to accept some kind of exponential graph of human history, they're a mildly advanced version of the Society for Creative Anachronism, recreating the Middle Ages of computer history, but without the price tags and horrendous download times.

The focus of text-based adventures (or interactive fiction as it is now called) is exploring a created (text) environment, typically with the intention of solving a particular storyline. (Much like graphical adventure games, er, but without the graphics.) But the intention is not necessarily to recreate the laborious mazes and tedious puzzles of yore, but to use and explore the medium itself, to find out what can be done with it. As well as having a vast choice of genres and storylines (special effects being cheaper in text), authors are now more willing to push the expectations of players in terms of interaction and form.

## Which lantern do you mean, the brass lantern or the brass lantern?

Games as art and "exploring the medium"? Don't I ever get tired of this line? Er, no :) But while the indie roleplaying scene is still in the beginning stages and to a large degree reliant on a commercial environment (as much as I am an expert of online communities, which I'm not), this crowd have been around for ages. That, and the fact that they're completely different. The point is that there are many avenues for someone interested in taking a fresh (or first) look at interactive fiction.

> read news

An excellent starting point would be to lurk on rec.games.int-fiction (the newsgroup for players) and rec.arts.int-fiction (the newsgroup for games writers), read their respective FAQs and get a feel for the community. And that means you could try out Google's new(ish) newsgroups feature if you haven't already. Mmmm... Google... There's obviously a large overlap between the readers of both groups, but they get antsy if you direct your post incorrectly so GET IT RIGHT.

> get in competition
You enter the competition.

The big events of the i.f. calendar are the annual competition, IFComp, which anyone can enter and everyone judges, and the XYZZY Awards which, like the Oscars, are awarded by some mysterious process, probably involving the Illuminati. If you want to get to the good stuff quickly, go for the
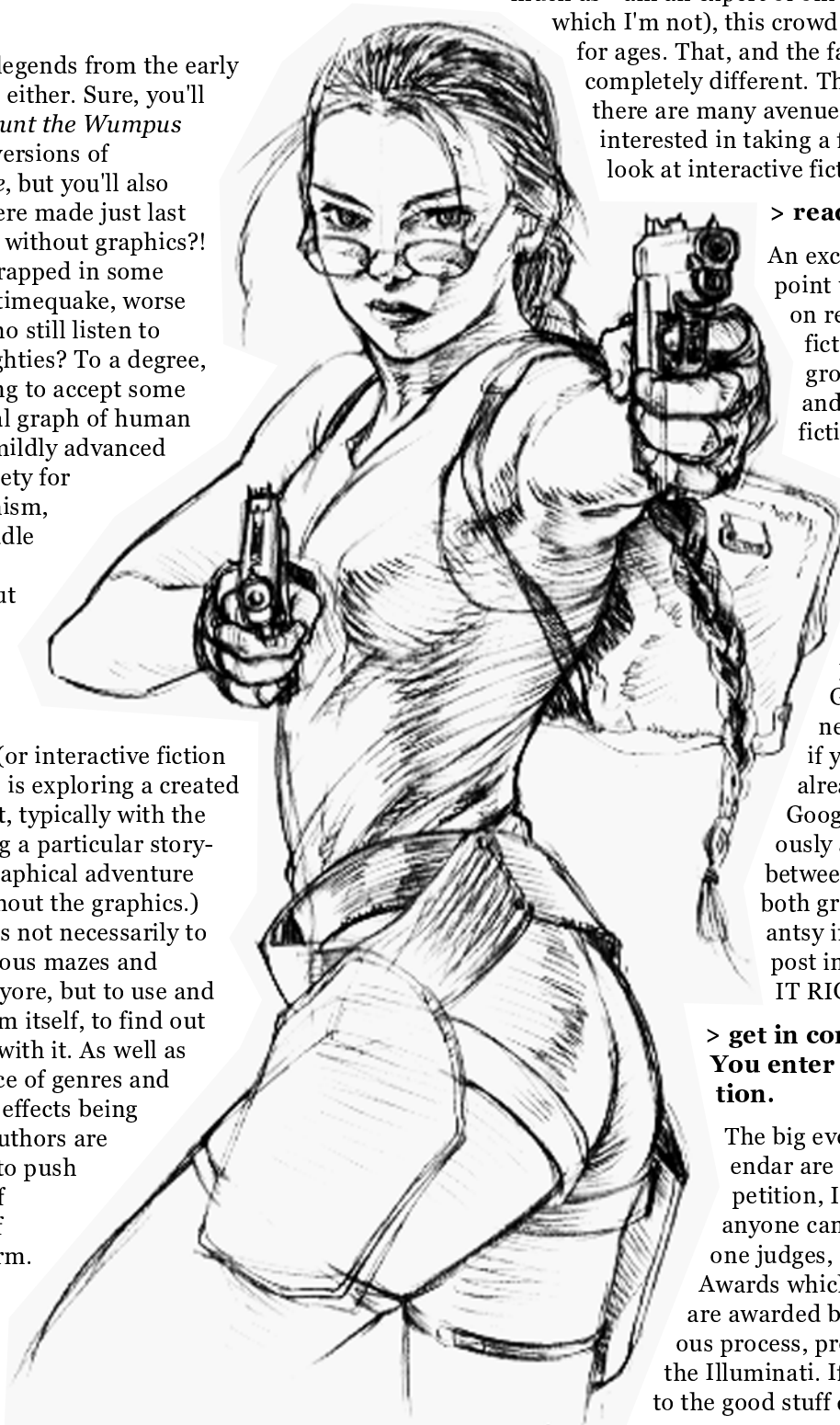
top games from each year. Of course tastes differ and all that, and it is worth remembering that these aren't all run-of-the-mill puzzle games (whether this is a good thing or not is often a topic of discussion). I recommend *Photopia* by Adam Cadre (1st place, IFComp 1998) as an example of a really well written piece of i.f. that is not standard fare in several ways (for starters, if you're on a PC use DOSFrotz rather than the WinFrotz to make sure you see the colours, they're important!). Slightly more traditional (but more *Gabriel Knight* than *Colossal Cave*) and of interest to Call of Cthulhu fans is *Anchorhead* by Michael Gentry (Best Setting, XYZZY Awards 1998).

If you can make it (I haven't, yet) the XYZZY Awards presentation is held on the ifMUD each year, and the transcript suggests that it's quite fun, in an IRC kind of way. The XYZZY Awards aren't limited to the competition entries, which means that a few interesting pieces that aren't competition-style i.f. - like Emily Short's *Galatea* (Best Individual NPC, XYZZY Awards 2000) - are brought to the fore.

> go west
In the open air.

Galatea is an example of a piece developed for decidedly different goals. It is one of many pieces on display at the IF Art Show, with the intention being (in this case) to develop an interesting, conversing NPC (it was awarded Best of Show in the IF Art Show 2000). This means that other aspects of the game are ignored; as the curator states "...interactivity hasn't been explored enough on its own (as much as the I can be separated from the F)." There's certainly no such artsy exploration evident in more modern game paradigms (no, Nude Raider does not count as artsy).

In short there are (down)loads of games out there if you?re looking for something a little different or mildly retro. People come into i.f. from a variety of angles and you'll come across literati experimenting on these computer thingies, cs geeks trying their hand at prose and even a few roleplayers (Michael Gentry, mentioned previously, being one of them). Applications to roleplaying aren't direct (most obviously neat story and gimmick ideas), although it's interesting to see how much fun people have in a much more restrictive medium (noting also that i.f. is typically single-player).

> xyzzy

So you want to make your own? Of course you do. Making your own parser (the bit that accepts and interprets the user's commands) is out of the question, not only is it tedious in extremus (as any cs student will be able to testify), but the job has already been done for you - several i.f. programming languages and engines exist. It comes down to a relatively simple choice, but one that is unfortunately not easy to make. The "big three" languages are Hugo, Inform and TADS. As a cultured player of games, you may as well get all three: there's nothing to be gained and some good games to be lost by not supporting them all. But as a programmer you can't really be expected to jump between them. Check them out for yourself and decide based on whatever your criteria, be it ease of use, platform support or whether the language uses semicolons. For what it's worth, I've gone with Hugo, the newest language of the three, which has decent support for graphics, sound and multiple text windows should I need them. Andrew Plotkin's Glk interface standard, Glulx virtual machine and associated libraries and projects are also worth a look, although they aren't widely supported (yet).

Then it's just a short step to entering your masterpiece into the competition, exhibiting it in the art show or just uploading it to the archive, leaving directions at rec.games.int-fiction and cackling as mournful users try to figure it out. Ahem. Which is to say, I'll hopefully be writing up a game and doing so -- as soon as I get past this damn snake that's blocking my way. Where?s Ms Croft when you need her?

You are in a maze of twisty passages, all alike.

Newsgroups: rec.games.int-fiction (for players), rec.arts.int-fiction (for writers)

raif and rgif FAQs: faqs.org/faqs/games/interactive-fiction/

gmd.de i.f. archive, the only collection you'll need: ftp://ftp.gmd.de/if-archive/

Angelina Jolie: tombraider.com (as if you didn't know!), imdb.com/Name?Jolie,+Angelina, ajolie.com

The Annual Interactive Fiction Competition (IFComp): textfire.com/ifcomp/

XYZZYnews, newsletter and XYZZY Awards: xyzzynews.com

IF Art Show, pieces developed for examination rather than play: members.aol.com/iffyart/gallery.htm

ifMUD: A MUD Forever Voyaging: ifmud.port4000.com:4001 (web), ifmud.port4000.com:4000 (MUD)

Adam Cadre, including *Photopia* and Gull (an introduction to Glulx Inform): adamcadre.ac

Michael Gentry's Enantiodromia, including *Anchorhead* and various roleplaying resources: edromia.com

Emily Short, including *Galatea*: emshort.home.mindspring.com

zarf (Andrew Plotkin), including Glk, Glulx and i.f. pieces: eblong.com/zarf/

i.f. languages: generalcoffee.com/hugo.html (Hugo), tela.bc.ca/tela/tads/ (TADS), www.gnelson.demon.co.uk/inform.html (Inform), also: zarf's page (above)

The World's Shortest (Yet Technically Complete) Adventure: A Parody

The Orc and the Pie

Adventure Background: An orc has a pie.

Adventure Synopsis: The PCs kill the orc and take his pie.

Adventure Hook: The PCs are hungry for pie.

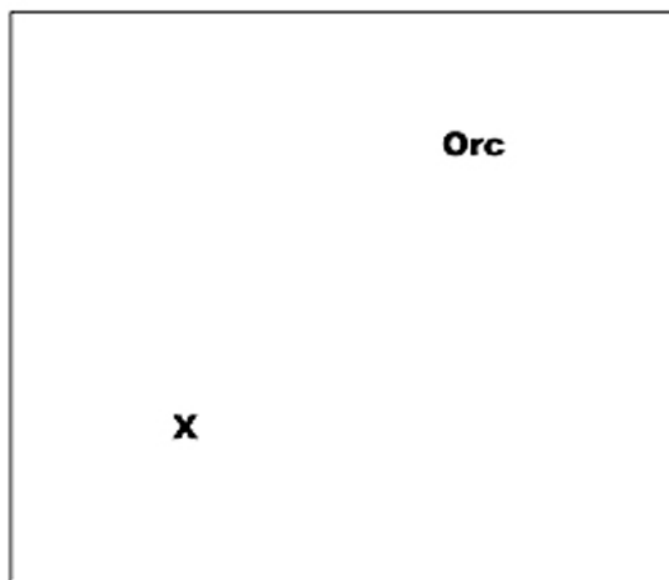**Room 1: The Orc's Pie Room**

> You see an orc with a pie.

The room is 10 feet by 10 feet.

Creature: An orc.

Treasure: A pie.

Concluding the Adventure: Pie tastes good.

Further Adventures: Somewhere, there is a bakery making these good pies. Perhaps it's guarded by more orcs.

Orc

X

Key:
X = pie
Orc = orc

1 square = 10 ft.

Classified!

Overheard

"When my horse turns into a giant ape, I'm selling it." - **Simon**, L5R

"I am a saaaaaaaaaad panda." - **Robyn**, L5R

"Philip! Do not mutilate my elephants!" - **Jessica**, Ars Magica

"Excuse me, I have to go to the little tower." - **S i m o n**, L5R

"That's not seven inches!" - **Waynne**, Ars Magica

"He's not hellspawn *per se...*" - **d@vid**, D&D

Ryan: For example, the Toreador have their balls.
Steve: I'd rather watch CNN.
Michelle: I don't want a sense of polony.
Andrew: We could stay with my sister.
Steve: I'd prefer to stay with the Sabbat.

Markus: Do you know why it's a good idea to take your thing out?
Duncan: It's so, like, firm, yet not too hard...
Darryn: Nice toss!!!
Markus: That was a bit of a judgement in error.
Michelle: This is one of Darryn's balls.
Dave: Ouch, steam is hot.
Juan: I'm going home to play with Norm's thing.
Dave: Have it with tomato sauce otherwise it will get cold!

Bevan: You have to believe in Satan to be a Satanist.
David: I was just about to stick my finger in my mouth, when I realised I've been in the cable.
Juan: It felt so comfortable in my hand; I didn't realise it wasn't mine.
Norm: There's a million one-ways of doing it.
Bevan's bag: Bzzzzzzzz.
Bevan: I can't go any slower; it's like foomp... and it's out.
Dave: I often talk aloud though.
Juan: Sorry, I burnt your cigarette...
Buggs: I'm copying my MP3's to my hard drive... It makes them play faster.
Campey: ... and that's not going on the fridge!
Campey: No, I'm just moaning for your pleasure!
Bevan: It's actually quite easy. Screw, screw, plug, plug.
Campey: Are you showing Joe how to beat the cream?
Juan: I was trying to pull it out, but I didn't realise there was one screw left.
Norman: I've got hair in my hair!
Campey: Love is blind...
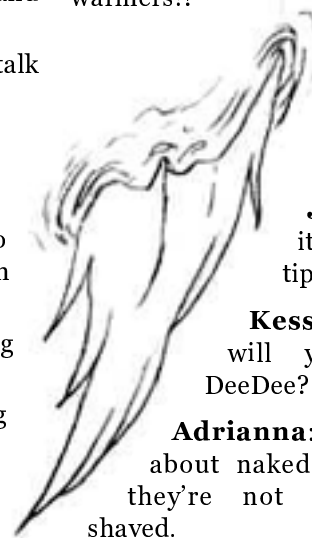**Markus**: deaf & dumb...
Campey: and stupid.
Markus: Bevan, should I click "next"?

Bev: What's it doing?
Markus: It's waiting for me to click "next".
The Door: Look, a decoy!
Dave: Yes, I was officially camping.
Dave: I'll wrap it in Carlton towel, then put the plumbers' tape on so the tape doesn't melt.
Bevan: I was trying to get off quickly, so the guy behind me could get in.
Bevan: Turner threw him down the stairs. I was not impressed. So I ate him.

Tim: Free booty is not necessarily good booty.
Tai: Eight inches of rippling muscle.
Gareth: They won't notice a bulge halfway down.
Ryan: I meant that in a violent way, not a sexual way.
Ryan: Nipple warmers!?

Mark: I like the thing with the monkey too.
Jon: ...because it's got a wooden tip.
Kessler: Colette, will you kiss my DeeDee?
Adrianna: The point about naked sheep is that they're not furry; they're shaved.
Mark: I don't remember saying that.
d@vid: I don't remember taking it down.

27

R.I.P

Douglas Noel Adams

1952 - 2001

We apologise for the inconvenience.

Sarah. Three crossbow bolts to the back - still alive.

Each arm and leg impaled on long metal spines - still alive.

A silver-spined metal collar clamped on to your neck - still alive.

"Bleeding from every possible orifice" - still alive.

Finally throttled to death by the priest.

- General Frilant

P.S. I have kept your eyelids in a little jar by my bedside.

Sarah. Forgive me. Well, look, you were going to die anyway, and *I* lost my soul.

- Brother Haden

A bunch of were-wolves. Corpses left to the dwarves.

28

The universe. Don't worry, we fixed it almost as good as new.

Some level-draining undead dwarf spirit thing. You put up a good fight for something at half the recommended challenge rating. Ahem.

Trolls! Eat our flammable sheep! (Don't mind the cleric, he's only casting Summon Creature I again.)

Hans. Somebody set up you the bomb.

A nose. The owner was bitter.

A future nose. You cannot escape.

Wanted

Hitman to eliminate Irish Brujah. Contact Rachel or Samantha at a sewer near you.

Quiet scholarly community in the middle of the forest seeks miscellaneous labourers. Must be non-judgemental and prepared to accept i.o.u.'s. Apply to the Covenant of Waldenstein at Regensburg. No cattle.

Sleep. The editors.

For Sale

One **inflatable pig**. In need of repair. 20 000km, only one owner.

A **Cunning Exploding Sheep**, fine Dwarven manufacture. Ideal for troll baiting.

Apologies

To all people of good taste. For too many partially-clad womyyyn. My apologies. The editor.

Dear Alan,

We're awfully sorry about your pizza. We stole it. Then we left it on the train. We really don't like avocado.

Adrianna, Mark, JD & Tim

Dear Robert,

We're really, really, really sorry. We're sorry for accidentally killing you with a solid punch, then re-animating you as a zombie, then nailing your head to a plank to hold it straight, then hiding you at the bottom of the harbour, then making you cling to the bottom of our boat for three days so that crabs ate your eyeballs, then for dragging you behind our horses to strip off your flesh, then for crucifying you in a tree to allow crows to remove more flesh, then for making you walk ahead of us in the dungeon to set off traps, then for trying to bring you back to our world as a slave. We're usually very nice people, really.

Robert. Well, look, I'm a necromancer, what do you expect?

Notices

Married - Zara (nee Betts)

To Greg Knight. No longer will Zara be terrorizing the freshers (at least not obviously).

Happy Birthday, Laura!

Paint It Fuchsia
F-U-C... bugger
DERMATOLOGICAL
CORATIFICATION
INTERORGANIZATIONAL

Call me 'Twiggy' one more time...
- Three Bamboo Spinning