

# pendragon

## GOING DUTCH Trophies of the World

### **Bronzing yourself**

Immortality through Metallurgy

### **Gold-plating the iPhone**

Not just for pimps anymore

### **Participation Awards**

Is just bothering to show up actually worth a trophy?



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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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You may notice that there aren't exactly a lot of "trophy" stories actually included in the issue. That's because fuck you, that's why. The relation of the cover graphic to the rest of the issue is an artificial "creative constraint" that isn't enforced at all. Silly magazine covers are fun to make<sup>1</sup>, and then you have a "theme" for the issue. Plus, I'm doing a lot of writing for the issue, and seventeen pages on a single topic each month, specifically from me, isn't likely to be particularly sustainable. I'm writing and making about things that interest me, and being what I'm like, that shit changes ALL THE TIME.

For example, this month I've been watching a shit-ton of comedy videos, researching and responding to body image/eating disorder shit<sup>2</sup>, learning some new Android prototyping software and hardware, writing new flash fiction, writing new games, and reading a ton of books<sup>3</sup>.

I realized today that I haven't seen many movies in the theater this year. I think it's got more to do with my tastes in media consumption changing, there are also a lot of butt movies out. My top three of 2013 (which are also apparently the only three I saw in theaters this year), as I submitted to a survey earlier today are:

**Pacific Rim**

**The World's End**

**Iron Man 3**

These are the ranked order, not the order I saw them in. Ones I missed include: Joss Whedon's *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *The Wolverine*. I explicitly skipped *Star Trek: Into Darkness* because Jar Jar Abrams has missed the goddamn point of *Star Trek*, and Zack Snyder doesn't know what it means to be the goddamn Superman.

- Tim Rodriguez  
<facehole@pendragon.us>

EDIT: I saw *Star Trek*. It was worse than I expected. Fuck you, Abrams.

1 As in stupid-crazy-awesome fun. Try it sometime! What's the worst that happens? Something like this: <http://photoshopfail.net>

2 As seen in the included article "Make Mirrors."

3 "Playing Tyler" by T.L. Costa, "Who Owns the Future" by Jaron Lanier, "Coming Out Everyday" by Bret K. Johnson, "On the Road" by Jack Kerouac, and "The Handmaid's Tale" by Margaret Atwood.

## Recent favorite twitter noise

@scriblit

The best things about *Labyrinth* are the set & David Bowie's tights. A maze; balls.

@wlonk

What can I do for you, today? How can I help? This is a serious offer—if you need help with something, let me know.

@ChuckWendig

Oh, for fuck's sake, Apple. Really? Ben Affleck is going to be the new iPhone? \*burns down everything\*

@ladysisiphus

I want to go to pon farr night at the Vulcan nightclub.

@ProfessorEmily

Glamdring Foe-Hammer = best name for a kitten.

@JustOneJawa

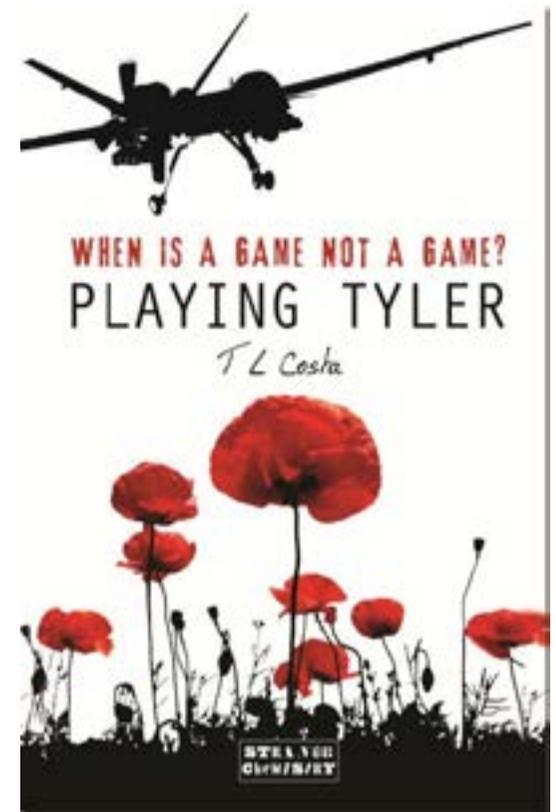
Stephen Hawking is what happens when you min-max a character.

# REVIEWS

Playing Tyler, by TL Costa

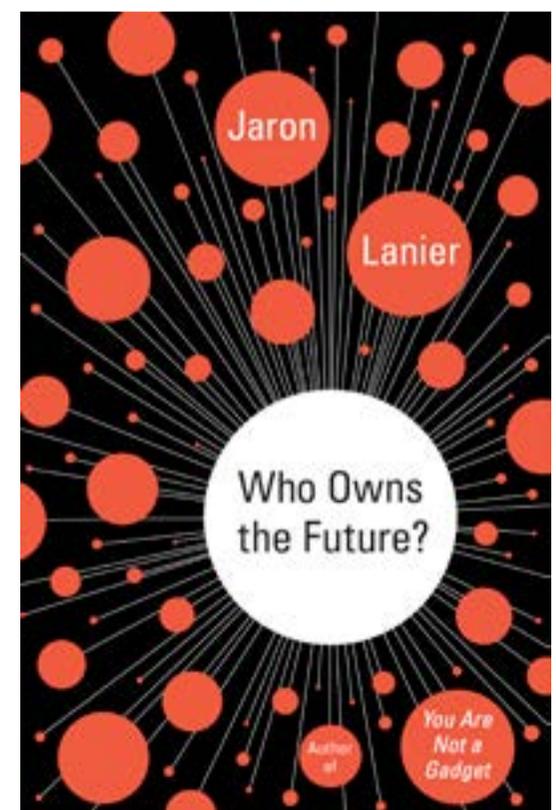
I read YA sometimes. I'm by no means an expert, but I'd say this one passes muster. There are a number of seemingly standard tropes that go into a lot of modern young adult fiction, the main one being that teenagers have real problems in addition to the fictional ones that come with being full of raging hormones. I think this is good; to my mind it helps temper the fake ones, and provide information and reassurance about the real ones. Boy does this one have 'em in spades. Tyler, the eponymous (God I love that word, ever since R.E.M. used it for an album.) character has ADHD and the associated school problems, a brother in rehab, a dead father, and an emotionally void mother. And then there's the plot of the book to deal with too. Heavy. But I really enjoyed it. It's about standing up for your beliefs while remaining open to being wrong especially when that's hard. The book gets pretty decent reviews. The bad ones I saw are mostly critical of the dialect writing of Tyler's ADHD-tinged internal monologue, which as far as I'm concerned doesn't make a particularly good review topic. It didn't really teach me things (which isn't a critique...I'm a lot older than the intended audience), but I think it makes a lot of rough topics potentially approachable and in that, contributes value to the world. Overall, solid story despite a somewhat rushed climax.

-TR



Who Owns the Future?, by Jaron Lanier

This is something like the third big fat book on economics that I've read in recent memory - and by far the most interesting one. Lanier's approach focuses on the digital technology/network aspects of how American economy has changed (and suffered), creating a number of new terms to describe new features of the interactions we have each day online (some might complain about that...but he's actually got a resume that earns it). In a wonderful, and unsurprisingly stark contrast from the other very conservative books I've read, Lanier puts forth some really interesting ideas on how a future humanistic digital economy might play out and even better, he comes across as really loving people and what people are capable of doing—despite the occasional flaw and sometimes knavish behavior. Lanier's is a liberal viewpoint to be sure, but even if you're solidly in a



conservative camp, I think it's worth reading because no conservative book I've read addresses possible future outcomes of how technology can and does affect contemporary markets. I really liked it because he's up front about where and how he believes technology can make a difference, presents ideas and possible outcomes, all with a very clear up-front understanding that he does not and cannot know everything, or propose complete solutions. He just wants to see people succeed, with, not despite technology.

-TR

### Throne of the Crescent Moon, by Saladin Ahmed

I read this as part of a new book club for game designers. Hang on, let me give you the explanation of that first...

*The goal of Chroma is to take works by authors of color that are set in atypical worlds from the status quo of SF/F and to make short games or game hacks based on the works.*

I got this from the library and blew through it fast. It's a delightful take on sword and sorcery, set in a fantastic middle-eastern setting. More books ought to be like this, evoking and describing culture. It reminded me in some ways of the Iain Banks novels I've read, in that Ahmed takes great care to get you in tune with the city of Dhamsawaat for all it's good and bad.

One thing I particularly liked about the story of "Throne" is that it fits entirely within a single book. So many books I've read recently are just pieces of much bigger stories. The setting is big, and there are more stories to tell. But for now, [spoiler redacted].

The next step is to write a FATE Accelerated hack for the book club. All of those will be collected and pushed out sometime after the end of October 2013.

-TR



# BOARD GAME COMMENTARY

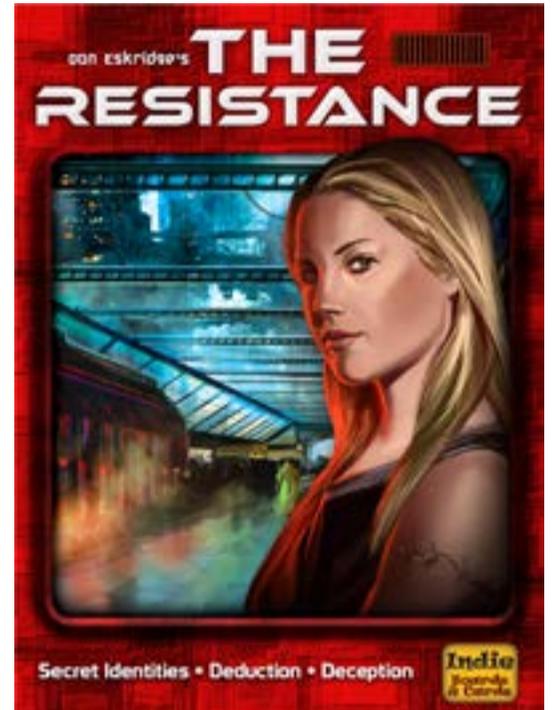
## The Resistance

Do you have 4-9 friends you \*think\* you know? How can you be sure?

Play The Resistance and see if you can spot the spies- or, if you are a spy, lie to your friends to throw off suspicion! You have five missions to succeed or fail, depending on which side you're on.

It plays fast and intense- you'll find yourself accusing your friends of being the spy while playing other games- just out of reflex! Those shifty eyes obviously mean they are, right?<sup>1</sup>

—Jenn Martin

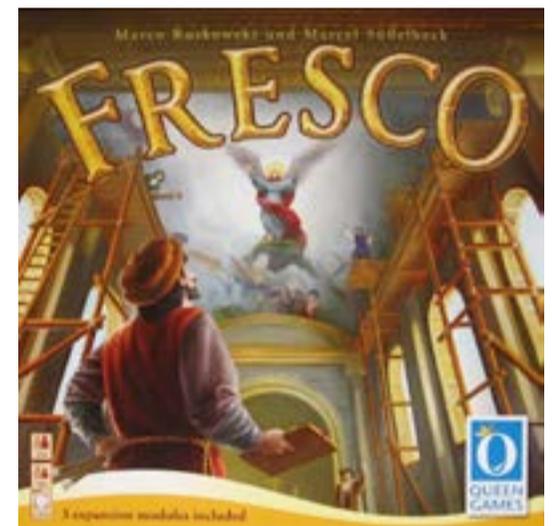


## Fresco

I finally got a chance to break this *Euro Nouveau*<sup>2</sup> worker placement game at my office board game night. Let me tell you, getting designers together to play a game with paint-mixing and art restoration? brilliant. It's very thinky, but in a logistical, recipe/task list sense rather than a "do the math and hose your opponent" sense. I think this reconfiguration of the planning method by itself makes it a lot more potentially appealing to a wider audience.

My copy includes three expansions—the most interesting of which is the add-on portraits, making an otherwise strictly functional Studio (money-making) action into a much richer potential choice.

Next step: break out the spare small plastic baggies (because there are a LOT of little wooden pieces) to reduce the setup time for next time I break this one out.



<sup>1</sup> I'll note that Jenn doesn't ever mention whether or not she likes the game, instead choosing to revel in shiftiness and ambiguity. She's probably a spy, trying to throw you off the trail... -TR

<sup>2</sup> *Euro Nouveau* refers to a style of game that plays more or less like a traditional euro-game, but with a tendency to have a deeper connection to the theme, as well as more player interaction. I've also heard this referred to as *mid-atlantic* which is intended to mean "halfway between North America and Europe," but I suspect might get confused with a particular region of the U.S. So, in clarification, I coined the term Euro Nouveau.

# SKULLDRINKER

By Matthew X. Gomez

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The old man pushed his cart down the cobblestoned street, his wares clinking and banging together. The sun was just dipping below the city skyline, long and ominous shadows reaching like grasping fingers along the walls and ground.

He stopped outside a tavern, the sign swinging back and forth declaring its name as The Knight of the Burning Pestle. A few younger folk were lounging outside, pipes clutched in teeth. The mayor, in his infinite wisdom, had recently declared smoking inside verboten, citing fears of fires. Most people thought it was because he couldn't stand the smell of pipe smoke, while he did enjoy taking in the local color at every opportunity.

"What's that you've got there?" one of the smokers asked, pointing to the canvas that covered a number of the cup-maker's wares. Given the weapons they carried and the clothes they wore, the old man took them to be adventurers or mercenaries. Wasn't much difference between the two when you got down to it.

The old man smiled, resting against the handles of the cart. It was obvious he'd been a large man once in life, and his frame still possessed a large portion of that strength. "Oh, just a few trifles," he said.

He pulled aside the cover, revealing a variety of goblets. Each was unique in their grotesquerie, stylized as a severed head, but with gemstones where the eyes were to be. In most cases the lower jaw was missing, having been worked into the base of the drinking vessel. "You made these yourself?" a woman asked. From her robes and the staff she carried, the old man marked her as a mage.

He nodded. "Took me a long time to get it right, too. Skulls make for a piss-poor vessel you see. All those holes. It's not just where the eyes were either. There's the ear holes, the place where the nose used to be, and you have to seal the bottom part neatly too, otherwise all the wine runs out. I found the trick is using something to seal all those little holes. Resin works pretty well, and I found a way to make it stand up to alcohol as well."

"What? You expect us to believe that those are actual skulls? Ha!" the biggest of the group laughed. His hand rested on a massive broad sword, and his beard was tangled with bits of food and bone. "If that were true, old man, I'd have you killed for a murderer or worse." He

scratched at his beard. "Of course, you could just be a graverobber. That's almost as bad."

The old man shook his head. "Oh no, I've acquired all of these over the years from the bodies of those that have crossed me," he laughed. "Ever heard the tale of King Latimer the Friendless?"

A slender man, a lute slung on his back, nodded slowly. "I heard he abdicated his throne ten years ago. There's rumors he went away, looking to perfect a secret technique and vowing to return to his kingdom when he felt the time was right. Honestly, we're better off without him. He was a tyrant and a despot of the worst sort."

The old man grinned, drawing a silver-runed axe from under the cart. "Friendless? Hmm. I suppose. But I did finally figure out how to drink wine from my enemies' skull, and let me tell you, there are few things as sweet as that."

The screams that rose that night heralded the return of King Latimer, and that night he earned the new appellation of Skulldrinker, his legend and his infamy echoing down the centuries.

## **SMOOTH SKIN**

By Tim Rodriguez

"Your skin is so smooth" I lied, brushing my fingers across her subtly pockmarked cheek; a remnant of bad acne from a dozen or more years ago. She protested and playfully pushed my hand away. She'd kill me for saying it out loud, but I adore that texture. Her skin is a glorious sensory experience that is her unique, individual, history and I'm desperate to know these faded craters like one knows the back roads of their hometown. Just the touch of a fingertip tells you where you are.



# MAKE MIRRORS

By Tim Rodriguez

pendragonzine.us

*"You guys know about vampires? ... You know, vampires have no reflections in a mirror? There's this idea that monsters don't have reflections in a mirror. And what I've always thought isn't that monsters don't have reflections in a mirror. It's that if you want to make a human being into a monster, deny them, at the cultural level, any reflection of themselves. And growing up, I felt like a monster in some ways. I didn't see myself reflected at all. I was like, "Yo, is something wrong with me? That the whole society seems to think that people like me don't exist? And part of what inspired me, was this deep desire that before I died, I would make a couple of mirrors. That I would make some mirrors so that kids like me might see themselves reflected back and might not feel so monstrous for it."*

—Junot Diaz<sup>1</sup>

I have a slightly different view of the monstrosity Diaz describes here. After all, despite my partial Mexican heritage, I'm pretty white and have always been treated as such — even after people discover my surname. But I've always identified as brown, which ends up very confusing and exclusionary to both sides. My skin color and lack of multilingualism keeps me apart from folks I would otherwise identify with, and my last name, and sense of multicultural "self" keep me apart from traditional whiteness.

In a similar vein, albeit one that starts to depart from the cultural/racial context of Diaz's quote, I've always been on a different scale than other people. I'm big. I was wearing a size 12 shoe at age 12 (with regards to Men's Fashion, once you get bigger than this you become a statistical outlier that very few clothiers will bother to stock. I wear a 14EEEE shoe now, which is beyond the pale. That is, unless you're being held up as a famous freak via an endorsement deal. Which actually isn't any better for us large folks, because it's not like they make shoes that size for anyone but those lucky freaks anyway.

People have always told me that I'm not fat. But every single semiotic in American culture tells me otherwise. My BMI says I'm obese. The pant cut for my 40" waist suggests that I have an enormous belly. Nothing at H&M fits my body.

But frustratingly, I found a G+ discussion amongst friends of the "Arrow" poster that showed the men of the cast shirtless, and the topics turned from male "sexiness" to eating disorders, specifically this comment "boys don't have eating disorders, they have gym bro disorders" really tweaked me badly. I think that the biggest problem is, that while wom-

1 [http://www.nj.com/ledgerlive/index.ssf/2009/10/junot\\_diazs\\_new\\_jersey.html](http://www.nj.com/ledgerlive/index.ssf/2009/10/junot_diazs_new_jersey.html)



en have had a moving target in terms of a beauty ideal (currently, being thin-ness), Men have a multi-modal landscape of competing ideals. Fashion requires thin-ness. Masculinity requires muscle mass, and Power discards both of these for a sort of old boys' club look; nice suit, a little paunchy, balding/white hair. As Bryan Goldberg, in a recently infamous New Yorker article described it "[in San Francisco,] the schlubbier you are, the more credibility you have."

MASCULINITY

pick one,  
and hope  
your body  
type fits.

POWER

FASHION



Note the callback to the Charles Atlas ads telling "90 lb. weaklings" that with his program, they too can kick sand in the face of bullies and win the girl.

The combination of fashion and masculinity here is a juxtaposition that makes an effective ad because of its irony (playing further to contemporary fashion).

There's no way you can possibly be all these things at once. But just saying that is not useful for a someone trying to figure out a role to follow. It drags someone in three different directions, creating a dysfunctional catch-22 where you're supposed to be small and thin, big and muscular, and old and fat all at the same time. That is the male ideal. But it's okay, because eating disorders are a women's disease. Which makes sense, because the best known ones (anorexia, bulimia) have until very recently<sup>2</sup> measured by an intense fear of gaining weight and/or dysmenorrhea, i.e. the diagnostic criteria have been entirely focused on women.

It turns out I feel strongly about this topic. It's not much of a surprise. I've dealt with body image issues my entire life, and a cousin of mine died in a car accident, after falling asleep at the wheel. Which we're fairly certain was related to her Bulimia. The point is that young people need healthy paradigms in a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and colors. If we don't make mirrors, we make monsters.

<http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>

<sup>2</sup> DSM-5, which changes these criteria, was published May 2013. <http://www.dsm5.org/Documents/Eating%20Disorders%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>



# CONTRIBUTORS

Tim Rodriguez is honestly too busy to actually edit another project like this... But he's doing it anyway because otherwise his brain would claw free and learn to type with its stem and it would still happen—it would just take a lot longer. He sometimes writes fiction, non-fiction, rare pieces of poetry, rap songs, book reviews, games of all sorts, Ruby, Javascript, HTML, and Perl code, and could probably go on and on. He also makes silly graphics like the cover image when people are feeling mopey about what they're doing.

- "Making Mirrors"
- "Smooth Skin"
- Book Reviews
- Board Game Commentary

Jenn Martin

- Board Game Commentary

Matthew Gomez is an amateur writer, husband, dad of two toddlers, owned by two cats. He used to fence and that sometimes makes its way into his writing.

- "Skulldrinker"

James Abendroth is a lifelong Texan and has been interested in books and role-playing games for almost as long. He has recently tried his hand at crafting the latter two. To see (and buy) the results, please visit [blackguardpress.com](http://blackguardpress.com)

- Fables

Lisa Aurigemma enjoys Hawkguy comics, playing the mandolin, making things look good, and watches Project Runway to keep her boss happy.

- Design consultation

Scratchy drawings on pages 8, 10, 11

- reclaimed from my dayjob co-workers. No idea who drew what.

