

Hired! (is what I want to hear)

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of Best Brains, Inc., executive producer, director, voice of Gypsy, and spiffy fellow. After all, why suck up to Juliewa when you can suck up to Mr. Big Producer himself. He confirmed that the company needs interns and told me where to send my resume.

Later in the afternoon, the amazing Randy and I got a special press tour of Best Brains. Oh sure, everyone got to go on a tour, but we got the special Important People tour. We saw the prop room, where the 'bots are built and the costumes are kept, and we got to stand on the Satellite of Love set. This was extremely exciting and I tried real hard not to gush all over the place. Ask Randy, but I don't think I succeeded very well. Frankly, I gushed. Here's to hoping embarrassing displays of wonderment

don't lower my chances of employment.

For the rest of Saturday I contemplated job strategies while watching the MST movie and buying overpriced pizza.

Sunday

In the morning I tried to use my new-found influence to sneak onto the shopping trip. Apparently, word hadn't gotten from Jim to Mary Jo about our new friendship, because they wouldn't let me on the bus. Oh, well; who needs shopping when I got Jim.

Instead of my shopping trip, I watched Mike Nelson cheat at Doom. I didn't tell anyone, though; staff loyalty and all that.

After watching Mike reduce innocent little boys to tears, we took our Regular Person tour of Best Brains. I had just gone the night before, but I went figuring there may have been some other Important People hanging around the office. As it turns

out, Kevin Murphy's wife was there and she seemed to like us and talked to us for a while. Hopefully, she put in a good word to hubby that night.

Sunday night was the end of the convention and thus the costume ball. Amidst the many scary Torgos and Mr. B. Naturals, I got a photo-op with Kevin Murphy. Overwhelmed by excitement, he had to go pee and I couldn't ask him for a job.

Monday

On Monday, we went to the Mall of America on our own. The convention having technically been over the day before, I was hoping some of the stars would be shopping at the mall and I could catch them off guard. Unfortunately, when no one showed up, I realized my blunder. I had forgotten to tell Jim Mallon that I would be at the mall, so he didn't know and I lost my chance to suck-up further. For



Dr. Thirsty researches for *WheatBread*

lunch we decided to support the sponsors of the Shop Ahoy! contest and eat at Planet Hollywood. The food was okay, but over-priced, and it was really scary to have to eat under a model of a naked Sylvester Stallone.

After shopping and checking out of the hotel, I flew home, confident in my weekend's achievements.

In Conclusion

All in all, I stand a pretty good chance at an internship, once I move to Minnesota. Oh sure, I would have to take a leave of absence from Clark and I wouldn't get my money back for this year; but nevertheless, a copy of my resume will accompany this copy of *WB* when it's sent to Eden Prairie, MN. •

...and the bats kept following me...

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The rest of the shit went, too. Within five minutes, we had sacked the room's complimentaries: the iron and instant coffee-maker seemed useful finds, along with the room's four surviving pillows. I figured living out of the Hilton's MST screening rooms for the next couple of days wouldn't be a big deal. A lot of the MSTies were already doing this kind of thing and we weren't spending much time at the Mariot anyway. We'd probably fit right in— besides, the best place I could think of to evade an outstanding tab in one hotel was to hole up in another, close by. "Genius," I thought, "A legend in my own mind."

Escaping from the Mariot wasn't particularly hard. The hotel and the adjacent mall were connected via an entryway on the 5th floor, and after crossing over, we slipped onto the skyway and made our way north towards the parking garage. "It's my way or the skyway," I exclaimed to my editor as we descended down a flight of stairs to street level. He grimaced at the reference. I didn't see any sign of pursuit, but I kept the .357 handy anyway... I get paranoid sometimes when I'm awake for more than 38 hours... drugs and booze aside.

Within the hour, we were striding into the Minneapolis convention center, all smiles... but... upon entering the convention room, I was immediately struck by a sense of foreboding. For the first time in two days, I began to truly question my senses ...Something evil hung in the air... I smelled DEATH: The neat, exact, professional type. Someone was here to sever heads from shoulders without breaking a sweat... Someone was here to clean. The crowd knew it too, but they laughed it off. They seemed to think the cleaner was among them.

A crew had set up two PCs back to back on the stage, along with two corresponding projection screens, one on each side of the room. Everyone in the place could clearly see each player's perspective. It wasn't a bad setup for Doom, but it didn't calm my nerves.

Gone was the sycophantic mob from the night before. The remaining 50 or so fans were not your typical garden variety MSTies, they were the hardcore freaks— the ones who didn't or couldn't draw the line between a silly space pup-

pet show and a gutsy sci-fi shoot 'em up. These were the nutballs who had seen that rare promo in '95 in which Mike had innocently chided him on his aim with the rocket launcher: "Jeez, Mike! I told you not to use it at close range!"

Oh, how these foolish fans had laughed at the thought of playing *Doom* with this spare-framed, adolescently humored Minnosotean. Oh, how they had laughed: "Doom players from Minnesota! Space marines from the Midwest!" they roared. "Bah!"

The jests came in rapid succession until finally, Mike Nelson coolly entered from stage right... Something was wrong... You didn't have to ingest a galaxy of drugs to realize something was out of place. Nelson didn't look transfixed at first, just weird. No one was laughing now... Even the bats swirling around my head ceased temporarily. He calmly sat down at one of the PCs and called the first challenger. Things started to get a little fuzzy for me here.

[At this point, Dr. Thirsty's transcript breaks down completely. After sorting through the source tapes, we have been able to reconstruct the rest of the event, with Dr. Thirsty's help, as best we could under the circumstances.—Ed.]

Squinting through a fresh wave of mesc visuals, I eventually noticed Mike's chin had elongated a good three or four inches, and he hunched over the keyboard so far it didn't look like he was sitting at all... he simply appeared to levitate. His eyebrows had drawn together into a tight, unbroken, pencil-thin V, and the tip of his left ear gradually came to a sharply defined point. In short, Mike had his *Doom* face on.

A few MSTies in the room appeared to recognize the change in Mike's once genial mug, but evidently I was the only one who caught a glimpse of the black-robed Renaissance fest-type leaning over him, snickering as Mike pounded his opponents with rockets or hosed them down with plasma. Once or twice I noticed Mike's space marine calmly eluded the occasional (and seemingly inescapable) cloud of incoming rockets, or leisurely leapt two stories to the safety of an alcove with the greatest of ease.



Best Brains, Inc. [(l to r): Jim Mallon (producer/director), Mike Nelson (host, head writer), Trace Beaulieu (writer, "Dr. Forrester," "Crow T. Robot"), Paul Chaplin (writer), Bridget Jones (writer), Kevin Mallon ("Tom Servo"), Mary J Pehl (writer, "Pearl Forrester")] warmed up the crowd with amusing anecdotes about their contagious medical conditions.



After letting the members of Best Brains warm up the audience, [(l to r)] Brendan Sheehan, Amy Baranoski, Randy Mack, and Jeff Carter took the stage and answered the crowd's many burning questions about pyromania.

Both feats, mind you, are impossible to perform within the context of the game. In essence, Mike was cheating... I was kind of miffed. As far I knew there was no menu in the game that allowed players to summon high-ranking minions of Lucifer, but then again, nothing in the last two days had really, *truly* surprised me. Perhaps Mike had hacked the game on some weird metaphysical level. I only knew one thing for certain: I could've taken him, Mephistopheles or no Mephistopheles.

I started to get a little paranoid again, so I tried to slip away, hoping to escape to the screening rooms of the Hilton for a quick nap, but my editor suddenly grabbed my arm, laughing hysterically. I froze. Flashing paranoia! It was obvious that something was hilariously funny to him, but he was cackling so hard he couldn't spit it out. He could only gesture vaguely toward the projection screens. Then I saw the numbers: Mike had over forty-two kills, or "frags," while the entire throng of MSTie challengers had amassed a grand total of *three* against him... I was impressed. Despite the loss of his humanity and immortal soul, Mike Nelson was still in possession of a grain of subtlety.

In spite my editor's silliness, no one seemed to notice us (the MSTie's were *that* in it), so we split. Besides, I was in dire need of a drink... and some grapefruit. •