



## Episode 100

### A Time for Reflection

They said we couldn't do it. Sitting in their ivory towers, they looked down with disdain on a lowly debate soap opera struggling to rise out of the primordial murk of the World Wide Web. "They'll only last a month," the media pundits claimed. "Two months, the good Lord willin' and the creek don't rise," added the media pundits from the Appalachians, in between chaws.

But we fooled them. We lasted not one month, not two months, but however many months it takes to make a hundred episodes (you'll have to do the math yourself on that, and don't forget to throw in the odd hiatus for this and that, like the time we took a leave of absence in sympathy with the gelding of Unix the Cocker Nostrumutt). A hundred episodes. They said we couldn't do it. Others said we shouldn't do it; they are still saying this, as a matter of fact, but we ignore them, and we advise them to do the same. (I.e., ignore us; what's the matter with you? Do we have to explain everything?)

One hundred episodes. Definitely a time for reflection. And a time you answer your many cards and letters. If you've made the attempt to print up all the Nostrum episodes, as we have, you'll see that their bulk is about to surpass *War and Peace*, with at least twice as many characters, and none of that bloviating about historical movements, although we have been known to bloviate ourselves about nearly everything else. Come to think of it, we've probably even bloviated about historical movements. But at least we don't have a Russian guy named Pierre, which immediately makes you wonder what Count Leo was thinking about when he came up with that one. Pierre? What was the matter? Luigi was already taken? Jeeesh! Anyhow, those cards and letters have been pouring in, sort of, and we've tried various ways of sharing them, but never successfully. First there was the guestbook at the Geocities site, but that was hard to maintain as a communications arena. Then we discovered the Korean bulletin board, which wouldn't link a good half of the time, and which despite the occasional epistolary repartee, ended up primarily a holding area for our weekly epistles until we finally gave up. So we decided to devote this special episode to answering

your questions, as we prepare to embark on our next hundred episodes (the good Lord willin' and the creek don't rise).

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Dear Nostrum:

I just got my first computer last week, and discovered your web site my first day on line. I would like to read all of it, but it's just too long. Could you please summarize the story so far?

Newbie

*Dear Newbie:*

*Sure. Buglaroni goes to the Little Johnson where Had falls for Jasmine but is distracted by Cartier who ultimately humiliates him at the Veblen mall before she relinks with Braun, who has been thrown out of the house by Brett who is back from the Yucatan only to discover Cartier's notebook among the cookbooks. Amnea Nutmilk runs into Tarnish Jutmoll at the Little Johnson (or, more correctly, she's at the Little Johnson while he's at the Reconstruction Memorial) and also meets Seth B. Obomash, who eventually is run out of Veil on a rail after a Miami indiscretion. William Hand and David Brillig dissolve their duo team at the Messerschmitt after William admits his sexual orientation to David, who finds solace in twin Bahamians. Amnea puts together a team that includes the day's detention group, but among them Binko proves to be an opportunist with his eye on the main chance and an Asian soulmate, and Gloria changes from What to Fudless and falls for Buglaroni at the Lodestone despite the longing glances of Disney Davidson, but she still hasn't broken up with Bark Santorelli. The two Dons Vitelli die on the same day, leaving the donship to Proscenio ("The Whale"), who lives in a swimming pool and so far seems to have nothing to do with the story whatsoever. Alida Devins is planning to upset the Hebrides duo team of Hannah and Hughes, while Lisa Torte is going lovenuts over Invoice (nee Bill) O'Connor, much to the chagrin of Tara Petskin, who has reunited with webmaster Haircut Puente to become the winningest Policy Team ever. Hans Castorp has discovered Buglaroni and is going to test him for his next blockbuster motion picture; Camellia Maru has also discovered Buglaroni and now owns him. We may have missed a few things here and there.*

*Got all that?*

*Jules*

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Dear Nostrum:

Howcum the Nostrumite never writes any epistles? Does the Nostrumite do any work at all?

Suspicious in Seattle

*Dear Suspicious:*

*Contrary to popular opinion, the Mite pulls his weight around the Nostrum Episode Factory, and is equally responsible for the output of the story. He does not write the epistles because he is usually enervated by the creative process by the time we get around to shipping our week's output, and he takes this opportunity to recover and recharge his batteries.*

*Jules*

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Dear Nostrum:

How exactly do Jules and the Mite split the writing of the episodes?

Samuel Gompers

*Dear Gomp:*

*I am responsible for the nouns and adjectives, the Mite handles the verbs and the adverbs, and we outsource the prepositions and punctuation.*

*Jules*

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Dear Nos:

Why do you pretend that you don't write the episodes ahead of schedule?

Nosey Parker

*Dear Parker:*

*All right. Once in a while we get a little ahead of ourselves. I admit it. Especially if we're working on a pastiche, like New York, New York or The Debating of Dan McGrew. But mostly we're just going from episode to episode, trying to keep body and soul together like any other debate soap opera writers on the web.*

*Jules*

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Dear Nos:

Why do you pretend to be Jules and the Nostrumite, when everyone knows for a fact who you really are?

Nasty Parker

*Dear Parker:*

*I have made no secret of my identity from day one. Jules O'Shaughnessy. I'm in the phone book. Look me up. The Mite, on the other hand, has kept his identity under wraps. He does this because he frequently judges at northeastern tournaments, and he does not wish to be surrounded by adoring fans when he should be dropping their asses like lead grapefruits. Nevertheless, from the beginning we have been hounded by assorted Sherlocks who have determined unquestionably that we are, in fact, a coach (actually, 5 different coaches have been suggested so far, three high school and two college), Stephen King (which is why the Myra Moon story is still under wraps -- it will scare the living daylights out of you and he's saving it for his next novel), Marilyn Manson, Francis the Talking Mule (who, they said, was Mr. Ed's father, thus proving that the concept of mule hadn't quite sunk in), and Chelsea Clinton. Putting aside Chelsea Clinton for the moment (and who wouldn't want to put aside Chelsea Clinton -- sorry, Chel, just joking), I categorically admit to all of them.*

*Jules*

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Dear Nos:

When will the cast of Nostrum get movie jobs in smirky horror films?

Neve Parker

*Dear Parker:*

*We've answered enough of your questions.*

*Jules*

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Dear Nostrum:

I love your work and read every episode three times. I would really like to buy some official Nostrum merchandise, like maybe a tee shirt or something. How can I do this?

Thorstein

*Dear Thor:*

*You're Thor? I'm tho thor I can't-- Oops. Wrong audience. Yes, we too have often daydreamed over the possibility of throwing together a line of official Nostrum merchandise, and we hope to make this a virtual reality in the not too distant future. We imagine some Lisa Torte "Narrative Isn't" coffee mugs, some "We Almost Didn't Make It This Week" mouse pads, the ever popular Grandma Buglaroni "Shut Up. Eat." cookbook, and of course, the "Welcome to the Bahamas" Speedos. Watch this space for future announcements.*

*Jules*

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Dear Nostrum:

Is it true that all the coaches' names are anagrams?

Margana

*Dear Margana:*

*No. They're palindromes.*

*J. Slue*

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Dear Nostrum:

So, like, why doesn't anyone ever swear or get nekkid in yore stories?

Encee (17 years old)

*Dear Encee (17):*

*This is a family soap opera, and unlike most debate-oriented web sites, it does not require an adult check. We do not take credit cards, and we do not include the words "babe," "scanties," or "hubba-hubba" in our metatags (I don't think, although we probably should, come to think of it). We do not wish to be accused of innate foulness. By keeping our act clean, we can deal with serious issues in an enlightened, adult fashion. Sometimes. The good Lord willin' and the creek don't rise.*

*Jules*

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Cher Nostrum:

What does *mes etoiles* mean?

Votre ami, Pierre

*Cher Pierre:*

*Oh my stars, this is what comes of Russians parading as Frenchmen. You should be ashamed of yourself, you fraud.*

*Jules*

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Dear Nostrum:

Have you ever thought of turning Nostrum into a novel?

Count Leo

*Your Grace:*

*Like a novel, Nostrum has a beginning and a middle, but at the moment, it does not seem to have an end. We marginally imagine covering one academic school year, but so far it has taken us 100 episodes to cover a little over a month of Nostrum time. At this rate, we should reach National Finals and the grave at roughly the same time. We do, however, know how Nostrum ends. Whether we will ever get there, and whether we will then reprocess the material into a novel, remains to be seen.*

*Jules*

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Dear Nostrum:

How far in advance do you plan your stories? Can you tell us, for instance, what will happen with Lisa and Invoice?

Nostradamus

*Dear Nostrum Damn Us:*

*It depends on the plot line. As we've mentioned above, we do know how Nostrum ends. We do work out many of the stories well in advance; we can tell you right now, for instance, that Buglaroni is going to-- But we won't.*

*Jules*

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Dear Nostrum:

What's the story with the Falutins? Who gets High and who gets Low?

K. Starr

*Dear K:*

*The Mite is romantically involved with High, while I take the Low road. The Falutins came into our lives like angels from above, and they have elevated us to their exalted plane. Or is it plain? Whatever. In any case, aside from being twins they are quite unlike. High, the Episcopalian, is planning on a big-city ministry, while the Unitarian Low will bring summers-off religion to heathens in far-flung lands like Abu Dhabi, Tierra del Fuego, and the 12th arrondissement of Paris.*

*Jules*

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Dear Nostrum:

Where do you get all your ideas from?

Blocked in Boise

*Dear Idaho:*

*Nostrum is based on a true story.*

*Jules*

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Dear Nos:

Please send me an autographed 8X10 glossy of Jules and the Nostrumite.

Snazzy Parker

*Dear Parker:*

*Okay.*

*Jules*

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And that about wraps it up. So now we're on to our next hundred. Thanks to everybody for your support, especially our long-suffering subscribers. Keep those cards and letters coming in, and remember, when the world is getting you down and you simply can't take it anymore -- Welcome to the Bahamas!