

Subversive Play and Submersive Theater

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A Description and Interpretation of the Street Game:

Journey to the End of the Night - Chicagø

presented in Chicago, IL 4.19.08

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	ii
I. THE MACHINE: <i>a description of the mechanics of the Chicago run</i>	1
II. THE CHASER AND THE CHASED: <i>an interpretation of the immediate experience of the Journey Player</i>	7
blue: anxiety fear suspicion survival speed	7
red: power thrill greed alienation speed	15
III. SUBMERSIVE THEATER: <i>attempting to design a game that escapes escapist entertainment</i>	20
designing the route	21
the Chicago route	25
the function of checkpoints	30
the Chicago checkpoints	33
appropriative play	40
complete design	43
IV. SUBVERSIVE PLAY: <i>a pedagogy for re-appropriation of the urban environment</i>	45
Bibliography	52

INTRODUCTION

Journey to the End of the Night is a free street game played at night over a 5 to 6 hour period. The game was designed in 2006 by San Francisco game designers Sean Mahan, Sam Lavigne and Ian Kizu-Blair, most known for their ongoing project SFØ¹. As of the writing of this paper, it has been presented eight times in seven cities from San Francisco to London (with one more presentation slated for September '08)². In late 2007, after participating in a San Francisco run, I began examining the game model to be adapted for Chicago, then organized a Chicago run which was held on April 19th, 2008.

The following description of the game is for the Chicago run only. Each run is naturally unique because of locality, but also significantly affected by the varied backgrounds and interests of the local organizer. I am honored to have had the designers' blessing to take incredible liberties in adapting the game for this city, but my examination of the game may therefore only be appropriate for this singular Chicago '08 event, which I use as my primary source. Certain aspects, especially those proposed in the last chapter, "Subversive Play," should apply to any iteration of the game.

My great thanks to the 27 volunteers who manifested the game, a number of whom came in from Minneapolis, Saint Louis, Washington DC, and San Francisco just to staff this run. Considering the incredible delicacy of the architecture of a game like Journey, it

¹ an anti-capitalist collaborative production game where players use an online forum to write and trade artistic tasks, then post their interpretations for appraisal and support – sfzero.org

² San Francisco (6.17.06), Brooklyn (9.16.06), Manhattan (9.22.06) at *Come Out & Play* festival, London (5.11.07) at *Hide & Seek* festival, San Francisco (6.23.07), Chicago (4.19.08), Washington DC (5.3.08), Los Angeles (7.12.08). Upcoming: Minneapolis (9.13.08).

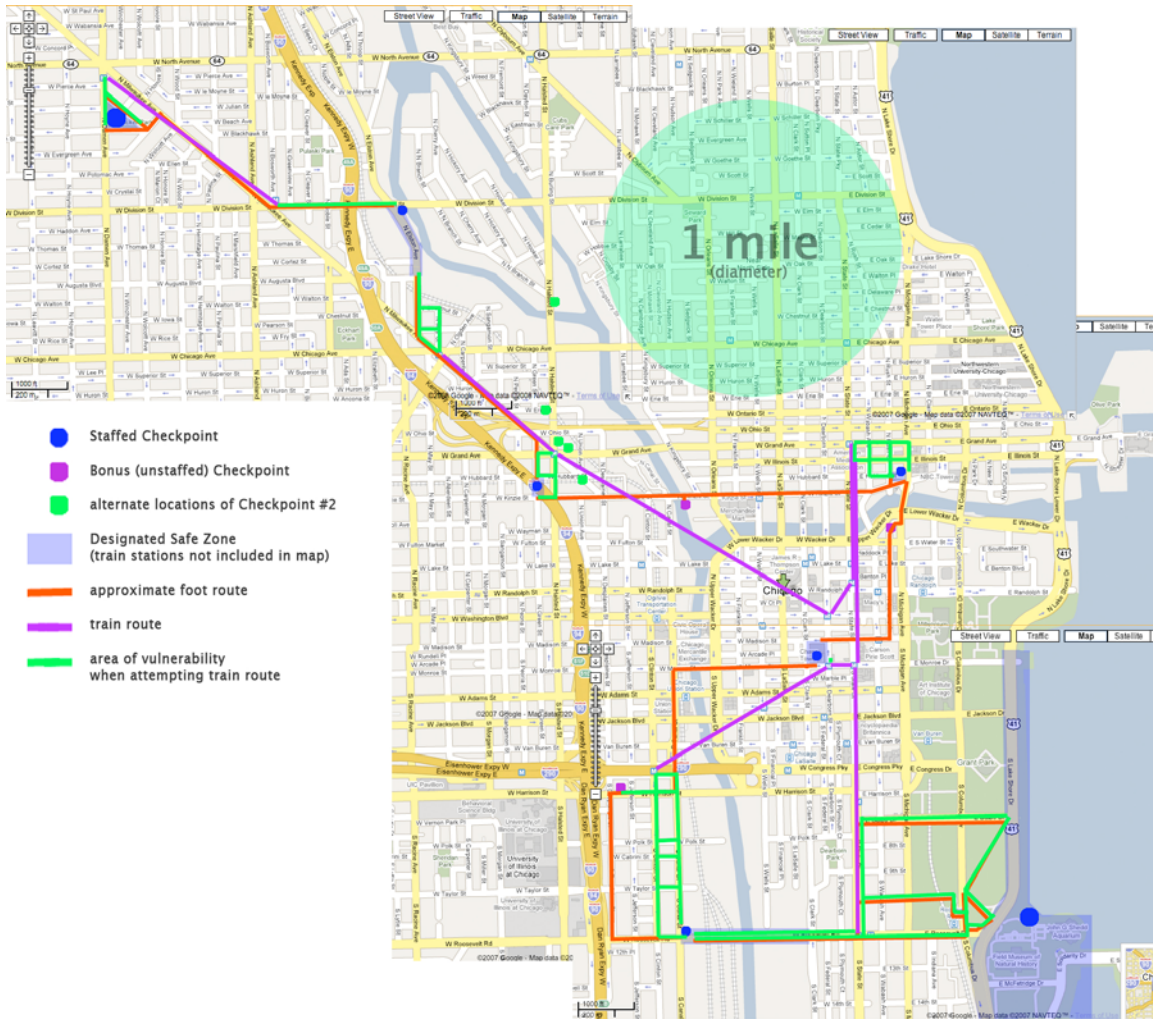
was executed unbelievably close to plan, due in no small part to the ingenuity and integrity of the staff. Thanks, as well, to the Players who risked life and limb for what is essentially a little game of tag.

THE MACHINE:

a description of the mechanics of the Chicago run

Runners, each wearing a blue ribbon, traveled through the city streets to find a number of checkpoints, each about a mile apart, attempting to avoid being tagged by red-ribboned 'Chasers,' who lied in wait along the route. If a Runner was tagged, they became a Chaser, and endeavored to catch other Runners. Players were allowed to walk, run, or ride trains. Checkpoints were surrounded by safe zones, usually the length of the block, such that they could not be easily sealed off by Chasers. Players could also find safety at train stations (and on trains).

The game began at 7.30 PM in Wicker Park (1500N, 2000W), just before dusk. The first checkpoint was outside the abandoned restaurant Life's Too Short (1200N, 1200W). The second checkpoint was on Green St. suspended between a railway overpass and an interstate underpass (425N, 825W). A bonus checkpoint was hung at the Kinzie St. Railroad Bridge (400N, 450W). Checkpoint 3 was inside the Billy Goat Tavern under the Magnificent Mile (425N, 150 E). A second bonus checkpoint was hidden in the shadows of MacChesney Ct (325N, 75E). Checkpoint 4 was at the base of Chase Tower, in the center of the Loop (50S, 50W). The third bonus checkpoint was positioned on Jefferson beneath an Expressway (500S, 600W). Checkpoint 5 was inside the White Palace Grill (1200S, 500W). The final checkpoint was originally set for the Field Museum lawn, but during the game was moved around the corner to Solidarity Drive (1250S, 550E).



The route was 7.3 miles at minimum if traveled without trains. Players were not confined to any boundaries, and could take any route they desired, short or long, with no remark for jaywalking or trespassing, as long as they only went by foot or train.

[IMAGE: The .psd map used for planning the route]

At each of the six required checkpoints were stationed two to four ‘Agents.’ Players were required to get a signature from these Agents in order to pass the checkpoint – although a stipulation was included allowing for Players to ask a stranger for a signature if the Agents had left the checkpoint. Each set of Agents had created a ‘microatmosphere’ of costume, theater, or installation at their checkpoints, responding

specifically to their assigned environment. During the game, Agents used text messaging to communicate player movement to the ‘Seeding Chasers’ and the videographers.

The three bonus checkpoints were hand-carved rubber stamps chained in place. They were positioned at the locations where live Agents could not be comfortably placed, and served to lead Players to especially beautiful parts of the route, while dissuading them from riding trains between Checkpoints 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Seven Seeding Chasers were stationed along the route in order to initiate the conversion of Runners into Chasers. Three of these Chasers were given specific schedules for what ground to cover along the early part of the route, and were directed to catch only two players each before retiring. Two of the Chasers were stationed mid-route and directed to run down the leading Runners as they emerged from Checkpoints 2 and 3. The sixth Chaser was on bicycle, and was scheduled to move through the entire route in order to delay Runners (and to catch when possible). The seventh Chaser’s job was to receive information from Checkpoint Agents in order to better direct the movements of the Seeding Chasers, as well as to pull them from duty once enough Runners had been converted to Chasing (this Chaser also patrolled the first third of the route, pursuing Runners when not tied up by the phone). The Seeding Chasers were directed to either wear costumes that helped them blend in with the city (to create paranoia in Runners), or made them



stand out (to make them visible from great distances and therefore omnipresent).

A team of four videographers documented the game.

Two were on foot, attempting to intercept the Runners at

different locations. A third rode in my bike trailer while

I monitored the game's progress. A fourth camera was

attached to the bicycle Chaser's helmet. Documentation

was taken with the intention of making a promotional

video for future projects, but the videographers also

served to Runners as neutral staff that could be potentially tapped for loose information

and encouragement... as well as beacons for Chasers who were looking for Runners.



At the starting line Players were each given a blue ribbon to wear on their upper arm, and

a red ribbon to keep in their pocket. If caught, the blue ribbon would become the trophy

of the Chaser who tagged them. The Player would then take the red ribbon out of their



pocket, tie it on, and become an independent Chaser. Players were also

given a photocopied map, which listed each of the 6 checkpoints, 3

bonus checkpoints, and the safe zones. On the map was left space for

Agent signatures, a list of game rules, and requirements for finish line

awards. Runner Awards included a Medal of Merit to any Runner who

completed the entire course, a Runner Trophy for the first Runner to the

finish line, and a Medal of Courage for the first three Runners who also

made it to all the bonus checkpoints. The Chaser present at the finish

line at midnight with the most catches received a Chaser Trophy, while the first 12 Chasers to arrive at the finish line with at least one catch received a Medal of Valor. These last 12 Medals were offered specifically to encourage Chasers to retire from the game after their first catch, in order to dampen the exponential growth of Chasers mid-game. (The sixth safe zone was designed to be expansive enough to give Runners a chance at navigating the massive amount of Chasers expected by late-game.) The Trophies had the simple function of encouraging Players to be competitive, while Medals were used deviously to encourage players to try to finish even if they had no chance of winning, to explore the extended route described by the bonus checkpoints, and to keep playing even if tagged.



Players were also advised on two important situations. Firstly, the game would be played in the real world, with real cars and real cops. Players would have to be conscious and aware of any methods of movement that, because they can be physically dangerous, are not among the usual pedestrian vocabulary – climbing fences, jumping off bridges, running through vehicle traffic. Secondly, the game was being presented without any permission from the city, or awareness by the businesses or pedestrians that lay along the route. This greatly affected the stability of the checkpoints, whose position could be put in jeopardy by the authorities. In practice, two of the checkpoints were approached by police (who left without incident), one checkpoint was moved fifty feet by security guards (to a public sidewalk), and the finish line was disbanded by police an hour early

(though the game was well over by then). No major injuries occurred during this run, though most (if not all) Players suffered some sort of minor injury, including blisters, shin splints, twisted ankles, bruises, sore feet and pulled muscles.

124 Players began the race. 45 completed the course without being caught by Chasers. An estimated 50 Runners were converted to Chasing, suggesting that 25 Players abandoned the game along the route.³ The fastest runner completed the route in approximately 90 minutes,⁴ while the last group to finish came in at 5 hours.⁵ Many players chose to run in teams. In a few instances, caught players remained with their team for solidarity, becoming inert Chasers.⁶

[IMAGE (p.3): lead chaser, in costume; photo from *Spidere*]

[IMAGE (p.4): videographer at Checkpoint 4; photo from Dax Tran-Caffee]

[IMAGE (p.4): 1st Place Runner & Chaser Trophies, by Dax Tran-Caffee]

[IMAGE (p.5): Medals of Courage, by Andrea Everman and Dax Tran-Caffee]

³two runners traveling with *TheNasz* left early due to time constraints; *almostfamousjane* opted out after Checkpoint 3, due to sore feet and a lack of socks; a player traveling with *TheAnimus* left the game after being caught, due to an old ankle injury

⁴Matt Larrain, who's adventure is prominent in the edited videos, posted to SFZero.org under the name *Pengi*

⁵the bulk of Team FOEcakes, including *raisinboy*, *lonestar*, *magnetgrrl*, *REX*, *LittleMonk*, *Gremlin*

⁶"[we traveled to Checkpoint 1 together] despite the player / chaser diversity in our group." [TheAnimus]

"I notice something very very odd. Two girls are walking towards me, one of them a blue ribbon, and the other a red ribbon. They continue towards me until the blue ribboned girl finally notices me when she is less then fifteen feet away. [...] Her friend stepped between us and told me she'd fight me for her." [Calyx]

"some of them are red. they are traitorous reds, defending their blue friends. my blood grows heated. how dare they. they will not get in my way." [ambydextrous]

THE CHASER AND THE CHASED:

an interpretation of the immediate experience of the Journey Player

I first played Journey in July of 2007 in San Francisco. I made it to two out of seven checkpoints before being caught, then traveled the remaining five checkpoints as a Chaser, making four tags⁷. As well, two weeks after the Chicago '08 run, I helped staff the Washington DC run as a Staff Chaser⁸. My interpretation of the 'player's experience' is a synthesis of my personal experiences of the game and the writings of 38 of the Players and Staff who participated in Journey Chicago⁹. Be warned that this interpretation is very idealistic in its assumptions because it is the conglomeration of all the best moments of many players' runs. This construction shouldn't be read as a list of events you can expect to have happen to you on any given Journey run... although they are definitely things to hope for.

BLUE: ANXIETY FEAR SUSPICION SURVIVAL SPEED

The essential interaction in Journey to the End of the Night is the Chase – or, more articulately, the threat and potential of being caught. Seeding Chasers are merely a phantom in the Runners' perception of the game when the whistle is blown.¹⁰ It is possible that a Runner will travel a mile or more before ever sighting a red ribbon.¹¹ This

⁷ posted July 5th, 2007 by *bustedpuppet* (myself) for *Journey San Francisco '07*
<http://sf0.org/bustedpuppet/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Glasnost/>

⁸ posted July 4th, 2008 by *DAX* for *Journey DC '08*
<http://sf0.org/DAX/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-DC/>

⁹ posted as 'praxis' on sfzero.org
<http://sf0.org/tasks/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

¹⁰ "every bicycle is suspect. i listen for the soft sound of tires on pavement, ready to sprint." [*ambydextrous*]

¹¹ "We made it to the first Checkpoint along with the others, surprised at the relative quiet along the way." [*TheNasz*]

"Our journey to the station was uneventful, and I was starting to wonder if there was more than one chaser in the game." [*Calyx*]

first leg of the route is perhaps the most harrowing, because danger is assumed to be around every corner, hiding behind every column, crouched inside every shrub.¹² The usually benign neighborhood street becomes a minefield of dangerous architecture. Assuming that Players are responding to the pre-game theatrics (posters, the promotional website, past player accounts, the opening speech), they are appropriately filled with anxiety before ever engaging in a real Chase.¹³ At the outset, many Runners insist on elaborate strategies for dealing with this unidentified pursuer,¹⁴ including electing leaders, scouts, and fodder within their self-imposed teams,¹⁵ constructing intricate communication schemes, and selecting incredibly lengthy routes.¹⁶ Some Runners even arrive to the game with props and materials that they think will help them escape Chasers¹⁷ (though I haven't seen anything show up that is better than a pair of good running shoes¹⁸). This anxiety of the potential encounter constitutes the entire excitement of the Journey experience for a considerable amount of time¹⁹ – a beautifully efficient

¹² “every sound startled us. Were the chasers behind us? Would they be on this back street, so far from most of the runners? Would they think to take this potentially dangerous trail by the highway? Each individual in the city of Chicago arose suspicion with their presence. Is that an arm band?” [VeritasNoir]

¹³ “[we] had some concerns about the upcoming game – would we even make it to the first checkpoint? We had read previous praxii – [...] there was an animal energy in the air – we were wired and jumpy, sometimes slowing down before every trash can.[...] Everything felt wrong the whole time – paranoia does that.” [lonestar]

¹⁴ “Another strategy we decided upon was to allow another group of Blues to move ahead of us, so that any hiding Reds would be triggered before we got to them.” [raisinboy]

“I subconsciously made up a test to see if we were being chased -- veer off to one side of the sidewalk, then to the other. If, like in videogames, the other person mimics you, he's definitely a chaser.[...] Soon after, we see another person walking our way.[...] I didn't see any red, but I decided to use my test, just incase. And he responds.” [TheAnimus]

¹⁵ “Meredithian's tendency to keep looking behind us landed her rearguard duty. Mr. G took the lead, and I kept a paranoid eye on trashcans, doorways, intersecting mini-alleys, and crevices between buildings.” [lonestar]

“i know the ones i am left with are the most fleet of foot and i wrestle with the discomfort. i tell myself that should a red come, i will distract them and sacrifice myself for the remainder of my group. that is what i tell myself... it is what i would like to think...” [ambydextrous]

¹⁶ “I am still convinced that the way to play this game is to avoid all major routes, which is also the way to become paranoia's special bitch.” [REX]

“We heard from anot her runner that one group went all the way down to Chinatown to avoid this stretch.” [TheNasz]

¹⁷ “people had GPS, and several different maps, and all these amazing plans. We had our feet, and a lot of anxiety. We were doomed.” [lonestar]

“To prepare for Journey to the End of the Night, I made sure to dress comfortably and wear shoes that I can run or climb in. I also tried to read up on previous praxises[...] to read up on others' strategies. Before leaving my house, I made sure to stock up on supplies (CTA map, CTA card, cell phone, uncrushable determination).” [raisinboy]

¹⁸ “Moo the Bunny was reconfiguring her GPS. ‘Take this road here.’ ‘But there's an alley here, let's take it!’ ‘:: pause :: Okay, the GPS says we need to go here, now.’ ‘Well, we can take this alley to get there.’ Not only was it confusing the fuck out of us, but the GPS delayed us quite a bit.[...] It wasn't long before we ditched the GPS and relied on our Journey maps.” [TheAnimus]

¹⁹ “We made it most of the way to the first checkpoint without incident. Which didn't mean we were calm - quite the opposite. Every bike, every pedestrian, was a potential chaser. The adrenaline started pumping early, making us extremely jumpy. More than once Shea jumped almost straight up at some bit of movement that only he could see.” [JJason/Sheawolfe]

element that can carry the game until the first Seeding Chaser actually comes around the corner.²⁰

The embodiment of the heretofore phantom Chaser is an important landmark along the Journey route. For some Runners there is a hazy moment of recognition when a distant approaching pedestrian comes just close enough to positively identify color amid the twilight.²¹ An equally common first experience with a Chaser can come as a response to other Players: hearing the sudden call of “Chaser! Run!”²² or seeing the eyes widen on a teammate who is looking over your shoulder,²³ or witnessing a pack of Runners ahead of you suddenly explode like a gang of jackrabbits,²⁴ opening up a void in the sidewalk where a Seeding Chaser will step into in mere seconds. The Seeding Chaser is truly supernatural at that first moment of encounter: the focus of all the prepared anxiety upon a single body²⁵ – and even the most level headed Player is prone to an inarguable instinctual reaction to break into running.²⁶ This will be the first vortex into the

²⁰ “The desolate stretch of Elston around Augusta had limited access to and from, and the paranoia began to set in. Leaving the safe zone, we expected chasers to be ahead of us but were in no way prepared to actually see one. With just a mere hint of chasing activity somewhere in the distance—a scream, perhaps? a glimmer of red?” [REX]

²¹ “... we noticed a man walking toward us, purpose in his stride... We slowed, uncertain. He kept coming. Something rolled over subconsciously, and we bolted...” [lonestar]

“A few moments of hesitation -- Should I act on this alone? Do I want the game to be over already? Are the others ready to run? I put a bench between the two of us. Why am I the leader? That's when I saw him nod. The big, knowing, evil nod of doom. Turn. Run.” [TheAnimus]

“Then I see them: a group of 6 or 7 targets. I approach, there is a moment of tension, when they don't know if I'm a chaser or not. I turn and head straight for them. They scream and scatter.” [OneFleaCircus]

²² “a church bell starts it's melancholy swing, ringing off the walls around us. we are in an alleyway. there is a bloodcurdling scream that echoes from a couple blocks off. [...] i don't look back because we are running now.” [ambydextrous]

²³ “Mr. G was just ahead of me. This gave me a great view when he glanced casually back, his eyes widened and he screamed, “CHASER, CHASER!” And pointed directly the fuck behind me.” [lonestar]

²⁴ “This plan went out the window when we first encountered the chasers and all hell broke loose. It happened exactly how one would want it to, cinematically speaking. It was like living through the first half-hour of *Cloverfield*... we couldn't see the monsters, but we saw the havoc they caused.” [TheNasz]

²⁵ “A lone blue man was wandering in front of us, slightly around a corner. And out of nowhere, there was a bicycle. It was a vulturous bicycle, it seemed to have wings, and it swooped swiftly down upon the lone blue man and devoured him. I've never seen anything so horrible.” [REX]

“the reds have spotted us and are making their way over, weaving through the cars like a vicious swarm. they seem like a swarm. there is probably only 4 of them, but in my panic there might as well be 40.” [ambydextrous]

²⁶ “I do remember this though: All was fine, and then there was red. I'm not sure if it was one or three of them, but I saw red, and it was close. My concern instantly became getting away. I wasn't concerned with getting lost, I wasn't concerned with losing my teammates, I just wanted to stop seeing red.” [Calyx]

“Amusingly, when instinct to 'run away' kicks in, we humans tend not to look back” [raisinboy]

‘Submersive Theater’ that the incredible experience of Journey rises out of. From here on out, however, the Chaser is no longer a storybook myth, but a real, live human being who may or may not be a faster runner than you.

Once the actions begins, it becomes impassably clear that the Chaser is all-powerful in this game of tag – one touch and you lose, without possibility of recovery. Whereas the romanticized version of the Chaser was an enemy that the mind considers trying to outsmart or somehow defeat, the cold truth upon encountering a Chaser is that they are nonnegotiable, undodgable, undefeatable, have only one desire, and hold all the cards. At this point, the game becomes simplified: run, fast.²⁷ Players moving in teams instantly split up,²⁸ as collaboration does not lend itself to the defenseless,²⁹ and all their previous planning is trampled under the shoes of their pursuer.³⁰ Runners forget the usual limits of their body,³¹ captured in a suspension of disbelief, and begin moving at a speed which is well beyond what they would have ordinarily accepted as running.³² Often, they are pushing themselves in a way that they have not in months, years, or even since childhood.³³ They taste real, untainted adrenalin, unlike what any scary movie or piece

²⁷ “All I did was run, run like heck in the opposite direction that the chasers came at us from.” [Sheawolfe]

²⁸ “I was surprised at how easily our group shattered... I was even more surpris[ed] at how I reacted instinctively whenever this happened.” [magnetgrrl]

²⁹ “Should I try to stay with my friends so we could possibly all go down together? Or should I opt for the alternative, in which I ditch those suckers to save my own ass? I’m sorry to say I think I learned that in a time of crisis, I am going to preserve myself rather than take one for the tribe. I am so ashamed.” [REX]

“Twice during the night I bolted away from the group and ended up alone. I was very good at picking a direction to run in which would afford me the most time and strategic possibility for escape, even knowing my actions would separate me from my companions or even leave them to be caught.” [magnetgrrl]

“i do not know where i am. the reds go for some of my companions. i do not attempt to save them. i do not attempt a noble deed of self-sacrifice. i run. i am prey. i think only of myself.” [ambydextrous]

³⁰ “We planned in an environment of high uncertainty, and watched those plans dissolve in seconds” [lonestar]

³¹ “It’s funny - you think that you can’t possibly run anymore but when push comes to shove, it turns out you can. Nice.” [JJason]

“The crazy thing was, I didn’t realize how much my muscles were hurting until after we had reached the finish line. Musta been adrenaline and paranoia keepin’ me goin’.” [TheNasz, a comment on his own post]

³² “After seeing him though I broke into an immediate and full on sprint. I was running with abandon, I had no idea where I was heading, and I didn’t even care” [Calyx]

³³ “I was marveling how the weight of my boots helped me gain momentum. I passed Munashii, I passed The Bunny. If this was really a chaser, I wouldn’t be done with -- but one of us would be. As we slowed to a jog and turned the nearest corner we could, I started consciously (and rather conceitedly) judging the novelty of the thoughts running through my head. ‘I’m not giving up. Fuck the rest of

of theater can synthesize (an experience that is only trumped in this day and age by getting mugged). Incredible stories come out of the adventure of being pursued, and the Chase remains the most compelling and lasting image of the game. A Player who was a simple pedestrian just that afternoon will, in that split second of fight-or-flight, suddenly recompose the entire cityscape into a new scheme: a means of escape.³⁴ Players will jump walls,³⁵ dodge moving cars,³⁶ and dismiss “no-trespassing” signs as paltry delineations³⁷ – inspired entirely by a simple red ribbon that has been prefaced by a healthy serving of anticipation.

At the same time as this revelation, the Journey, as it was, disappears. While you are being chased, there is nothing beyond the route before you, and the Chaser behind you.³⁸ The entire game – in fact, the entire breadth of the city, and the entire night, weekend, and further – collapses into a series of strides and breaths. In a good Chase, past and

them. Fuck energy. I have enough teenage angst for a fucking highschool. These boots are 10 pounds each for a reason. This is my only chance in years to prove myself to SF0, to CG0.... To myself.’ We ran into a dead end.” [TheAnimus]

³⁴ “I decide that I should take my next right so it forces him to cross the street to keep chasing me. I was hoping that traffic would prevent him from making it across and aid my getaway.” [Calyx]

³⁵ “a woman with a red band was about twelve feet back and in the middle of us, coming at a sprint, like a demon out of nowhere. We all sprinted. I tracked Mr. G, who took a flying leap over a low cement wall. I was right on his heels.” [lonestar]

“Kristin slid under a parking garage barrier! I just ran.” [deathbysteveo]

“I quickly ducked into a nearby alley. Finding a fence between me and freedom I quickly surmounted it. However, as I was jumping off my pants caught and I nearly found myself faceplanting into the ground from 5 feet up. Luckily my pants tore and I was able to recover.” [Sheawolfe]

³⁶ “and at one point they almost got hit by a car in their escape efforts.” [OneFleaCircus]

“Suddenly an opportunity presented itself to me. I was running towards a busy intersection and a cab was getting ready to make a left through it. I quickly ran up alongside the cab and ran through the intersection inches away from it, while mimicing it's pattern to avoid getting hit by any other cars. I'm not sure the cabby even noticed me, or if he did, he showed no signs of it because he didn't slow or seem startled in the least.” [Calyx]

³⁷ “We hauled ass down the alley, into the center of some kind of taxi distribution lot. Taxis were driving out, with people motioning them in and out of parking spaces and yelling at us to get the hell out.” [lonestar]

³⁸ After two full city blocks I looked over my shoulder and he was still behind me! I was quite amazed, I had expected him to give up by then, as he wasn't gaining any ground on me, and I was at a full sprint. I was figuring he would realize that he wasn't going to catch up and stop wasting the energy. Oh, was I wrong. The determination he possessed was amazing and appalling at the same time. [...] I hit the other side of the street and continued my sprint while looking back to note what happened to my pursuer. I was correct in assuming he wouldn't be able to cross the street with me. I was so very wrong to assume he wouldn't still be chasing me.[...] My arms and legs are pumping with everything I've got and he is on the opposite side of the street doing the exact same.[...] My pursuer and I have been at full sprint for almost five city blocks and this didn't seem to have an end in sight.” [Calyx]

future pull into the present in something rather Zen – a glimpse of peace manifested in a moment of speed.³⁹

And, with luck, the Runner escapes. Unless the Seeding Chaser is naturally too fast, or the Runner especially slow, the uncanny energy that erupts in this first encounter tends to outdo any vigor on the part of the Seeding Chaser (though the Runner will unfortunately be unlikely to call such energy again all night⁴⁰). The Runner will reach freedom, either by finding somewhere effective to hide,⁴¹ by going somewhere the Chaser is not willing to follow,⁴² by making it deftly into the deliverance of a safe zone, or simply by running fast enough to have the Chaser give up their prey... or perhaps because the Chaser actually ran after someone else, and the Player has been sprinting for a block or two from the ‘phantom Chaser’ again.⁴³ In any case, the team, if there was one, is scattered, and the Runner is left in the city, alone, with nothing but their breath.⁴⁴ This first Chase often ends in a lonely hiding spot⁴⁵ – five, maybe ten minutes or more⁴⁶ – while the Runner tries to convince themselves that the threat is gone and they are safe to continue their original goal of making it to the Checkpoint. They have likely left their planned route far

³⁹ “I ran on, only looking ahead[...] We kept running, neither gaining, neither slowing.” [*magnetgrrl*]

⁴⁰ “As I walked away I thought to myself-the last thing I need is to be chased again- I felt my adrenaline well had run dry from the first incident” [*Moothebunny* – a comment on her own post]

⁴¹ “We had been cornered in an alley with water cauldrons blocking the only secret exit. I climbed them anyway to only see that the secret exit was just a secret and then camped out under a semi for a couple of minutes.” [*crumbles*]

⁴² “This was only the first time that night that my finely honed Bostonian running-into-moving-traffic skills served me well. [...]I was able to I dashed straight into Michigan Avenue, with only the slightest glance towards incoming traffic. My plan was to make it to the median and to run up that if pursued. But luckily the chasers weren't quite as crazy as I was and had decided to seek out saner prey.” [*JJason*]

⁴³ “... I shot off, back onto Canal, but... the chaser was nowhere in sight. Hadn't he been right with me, only maybe 50-100 feet behind? [...] Was it someone else in black I had seen in my furtive over the shoulder glimpses?” [*magnetgrrl*]

“I ran straight on, with the lone Red right on my heels for a moment, before he veered off and pursued a slower teammate. I didn't stop running for two blocks, paranoid that I would be pursued at any moment.” [*Sprite*]

⁴⁴ “I was now over four blocks away, in an area apparently riddled with chasers, and with no idea what had happened to anyone else. All alone.” [*magnetgrrl*]

⁴⁵ “It was EXACTLY LIKE TV. The pressure to calm my heaving breathing, stop panting, and remain quiet as the bike went by almost took more effort than the sprinting. Then we had to stealthily check where the chaser was and dart out across the street down an alley.” [*almostfamousjane*]

⁴⁶ “The two of us must have sat there, crouched silently for as much as ten minutes, praying she wouldn't come our direction, before our friends gave us a hand signal that she had left.” [*NINJA*]

behind, and are potentially quite lost⁴⁷ – a little space for psychogeographic euphoria to creep in, until the Player unfolds their map and begins to look around for street signs. A quick call to a teammate reveals that nobody is interested in divulging their current location without proof of ribbon color.⁴⁸ Cell phones, which have lately risen to the epitome of communication, suddenly prove unviable within the construct of the game.⁴⁹ Players realize that the only information they can trust is what they can see.⁵⁰ The Runner experiences the weight of radio silence, and the impact of having to travel alone in dangerous territory.⁵¹

Assuming that the Runner makes it to a temporary safety at the next Checkpoint, possibly even reuniting with their lost teammates there⁵² (usually down a member or two), they have a new outlook on the Journey. At once, the ghost that was the Seeding Chaser is dispelled, replaced by the threat of familiar Players who have potentially been caught and

⁴⁷ “We sat down across from a church to check out a map. I’m telling you right now: my sense of direction is impeccable. If you ever get lost, take me with you. And yet, I had no idea where we were and could hardly read the map.” [REX]

⁴⁸ “She asked him where we were. He asked her if she was a chaser. She mumbled something and hung up.” [lonestar]

“Mr. G called me and I was extremely wary that he had been turned and was calling me for the sole purpose of entrapment! I was very vague and hedge a lot on the phone[...] I revealed nothing. I hung up on him abruptly, citing possible danger” [magnetgrrl]

⁴⁹ “‘Are you lying? Can you see me right now? Are you a chaser?’ I hung up, and immediately realized that Rex could have been turned into a chaser, and I’d just told him exactly where we were. Goddammit.” [lonestar]

“REX: ‘Are you still in the game?’ SF: ‘Are YOU still in the game?’ REX: ‘Where are you?’ SF: ‘Where are YOU?’ The church bells started clanging. These were the church bells that were heard around the world. I suddenly thought of that episode of Twin Peaks where Bobby Briggs tries to frame James for drug trafficking by sticking coke in his gas tank and then calling the sheriff’s office pretending to be Leo. The receptionist Lucy notes the clock at Easter Park chiming in the background, thus revealing ‘Leo’s’ location. Now Sparrows Fall could hear the bells and she knew that I was by that big ol’ church and she was certainly going to come and kill me.” [REX]

⁵⁰ “I was amazed at my ability to write off people I had been bonded to moments before. Once out of sight, they were near dead to me, and I would take no chances.” [magnetgrrl]

“It’s amazing how the game messes with your senses of trust and safety.” [REX]

⁵¹ “After being part of a group all night, even when I felt fettered by our need for group decisions, I found myself not wanting to be solely responsible for myself. I didn’t know what to do.” [magnetgrrl]

“I think this was where what I was really doing sunk in. I was in Chicago, all alone, and surprisingly, scared out of my wits. I mean, I find myself taking walks in the middle of the night, and don’t much care about dangerous neighborhoods, but right then, on that warm night, I was scared. I was back to my feral self, there was someone out there who was both faster than me, but also was trying to get me, and I was all alone. I huddled into a cubby between two buildings where I thought I was pretty safe and called JJason” [Sheawolfe]

⁵² “While there, we ran into Rex and Jane, and were happy to see that they’d made it this far.” [lonestar]

“I ran across another lone team member -- who nearly ran from me when he couldn’t see my armband right away, and we hooked back up. My team had gone from 20 to 2. The game suddenly seemed much harder! I knew it was going to be a long challenge to get to the end without being caught.” [Sprite]

turned.⁵³ Anxiety (of the romanticized pursuer) is replaced by fear (of the actual pursuer),⁵⁴ which makes Runners even more jumpy.⁵⁵ What's left of the route looms ahead of them, dotted with the potential for further real Chaser encounters – made much more dangerous now that the Chaser ranks are growing. Players evolve their tactics, some ideas being better than others.⁵⁶ Real desire to finish the route sets in for the first time.⁵⁷ The further the Runner makes it along the route, as well, the greater the cost of being caught: to lose after this much accomplishment becomes more and more inexcusable with each checkpoint passed.⁵⁸ As well, having seen the first few eloquent pieces of guerrilla theater presented by the Agents at each of their Checkpoints, there is the need to continue the adventure and witness what else the game staff has prepared at

⁵³ “She answered, panting. REX: ‘Are you still in the game?’ Amby D: ‘Yeah, (breath) I’m being chased (breath). Are you?’ REX: ‘Yes. Where are you?’ Amby D: ‘(pant) Down by Milwaukee and Grand. I’m being chased (breath).’ REX: ‘Wait, you’re being chased right now?’ Amby D: ‘Yes (breath) I’M BEING CHASED RIGHT N—’...click. Amby D was dead. :(Jane and I decided to carry on alone.” [REX]

“I started to work my way back towards Checkpoint 2, crossing Grand, when I spotted a survivor from my team -- with 3 Reds in hot pursuit! Even worse, 2 of them were former teammates.” [Sprite]

“*crunch* uh oh. i slowly turn around. it is my friend, Big. i haven’t seen her since checkpoint one. she is frozen in place, stepping towards me. i can’t see her arm, it is hidden behind the rest of her body. “heya Big” “hi” (crickets) [...] “blue?” i ask. i know the answer already.” [ambydextrous]

⁵⁴ “I can hear the sound of that bike in my nightmares now, just as loud as I heard it then. Jane was right. We had to hide. Now, it is not my instinct to trap myself somewhere out of fear, but it is also not my instinct to die. As we crouched on that porch, I wanted to pee. No, I wanted to want to pee. I was too scared to want to want to pee, though. Neither of us breathed.” [REX]

⁵⁵ “Tension was unbearable. There were plenty of hiding spots, and lots of other players running around.” [TheAnimus]

“The rest of the way to Checkpoint 2 was fairly uneventful, if you consider running from strangers who aren’t even playing the game along deserted, unresidential streets a couple of blocks east of Halsted and I-90/94 ‘uneventful.’” [REX]

⁵⁶ “As we passed by a factory, its dreadful machines still churning away into the night, we started to formulate a plan. At last, our years of playing games like Silent Hill 2, Metal Gear Solid and Rainbow Six would come in handy. We stayed low. We checked every corner for signs of chaser activity. Peter took point, Sam took rearguard, and I kept the map open to navigate. [...] Sure, the trains were safe... but the enemy had cut off all access to them. We should have expected this. We made a decision right then to avoid the stations. It would have to be a journey by foot, the whole way.” [TheNasz]

“We coupled up, walking hand-in-hand with hands in the middle to try to obstruct them from the side view” [almostfamousjane]

“We moved fast enough that another group of blues came into sight ahead of us, and we decided to use them for bait. We slowed down. They slowed down, having apparently decided the same thing. [...] Kevin came up with a good martyr’s plan – if we got bogged down in chasers and one of us was tagged, the tagged person was to grab the chaser in a huge bear hug. [...] We also strung out a bit, clustering into groups of two or three, so that we didn’t look like a giant glaring pack of people. We could have been any group of tense, jumpy Chicagoans out for a stroll that night.” [lonestar]

“We ran behind a bank building and made a new plan. It was right out of Saving Private Ryan. Gremlin, Rex, Sparrows Fall and I decided the only thing to do was make a mad dash for the safe zone, hoping one of us survived. We’d do it as a team or not at all. We pumped ourselves up, made our peace, then emerged...only to find that all the chasers had disappeared” [LittleMonk]

“Ran into some kids in an alley. The asked about our ribbons. We told them we were playing a game and enlisted their help in scoping the street ahead. Also got some instructions for a way across the freeway.” [starfive]

⁵⁷ “I had no intentions of finishing or collecting any prize but after being separated between 2 and 3.. with Calyx and I sprinting into a parking garage, my ending up hiding under a crane.. and Steve Richey outrunning the chaser.. we all ended up separated and upon reunion at the Billy Goat I was very determined.” [kristingish]

⁵⁸ “..Oh hell no. I did not just drive 7 hours and navigate the wonderfully broken red line at four in the morning just to get caught 1 checkpoint out from the end. [...] At this point, there was no fucking way we were getting caught by no chasers. Hells no. So we decided to take a different tact - once we got off the bridge, we went straight south. Way south. The way we figured it, there ain't no way that no chasers would be brave enough to go beyond the map. So that's exactly what we were going to do.” [JJason/Sheawolfe]

“From the beginning of the race I was convinced I might not make it past even the first checkpoint[...] but to get *this* far[...] I was on the road, with my friends, and determined and certain, for the first time, to get all the way to the end.” [magnetgrrl]

the later Checkpoints. This promised adventure is put into incredible jeopardy by the persistence of Chasers. Runners will try, more than ever, to succeed. But the original Seeding Chasers were a slave to a schedule, working alone in order to cover the most area, catching only a certain number of Runners before being called to retire. In contrast, the new generation of Chasers are out for blood.⁵⁹ The Runner will be caught.

RED: POWER THRILL GREED ALIENATION SPEED

Perhaps the Runner slips at the last moment,⁶⁰ hides in a spot that is not a hiding spot,⁶¹ finds themselves corralled into a dead end,⁶² or even collides with one Chaser while dodging around a corner to escape another.⁶³ The simplest gesture: a touch.⁶⁴ In that moment of recognition of failure, the entire game dissolves. The dream of making it to the end of the night, of seeing the rest of the route, of simple survival, is irrecoverably stripped as the blue ribbon is handed over... but then the red ribbon comes out, often tied on in a great theatrical gesture by the Chaser who did the catching. It is a significant rite of passage, promoting the Player to the exclusive rank of predator, with a new mantle,

⁵⁹ “we will gorge on the Blues innards. a feast it shall be.[...] she doesn’t want to give me her blue band. she is angry. i grin at her and demand my due. she finally pulls it off her arms and i clench the blue band in my teeth. satisfied.” [*ambydextrous*]

⁶⁰ “My shoes gave out beneath me. The gravel betrayed my weight and we were caught.” [*VeritasNoir*]

⁶¹ “I darted around the corner and around one more before ducking into a parking garage and hiding behind a wall. I had to catch my breath, I could feel my lungs crying for more oxygen to supply my muscles with. I really didn’t think he had noticed me slip into the parking garage, but I was wrong once again. He came around the corner and look directly over at me, and I had nowhere to go.” [*Calyx*]

⁶² “When I saw what I thought was an alley, I cut in, thinking this could be my chance to get away, only to find it was a dead end.” [*magnetgrrl*]

⁶³ My teammate in the SF run, Ed, was caught this way – a rather happy accident for an unsuspecting chaser.

⁶⁴ “I crouch down, out of breath. I decided that If he finds me, then i’m caught. He comes around the corner, looking around. He sees me on the ground.. reaches out a finger and taps me. I surrender my blue ribbon.. and begin a new life as a chaser.” [*starfive*]
“i don’t know where i’m going. i gain a little on her, but only for a moment. i’m lost. i’m tired. i’m hurt. i’m alone. i don’t know where to turn, literally. i stop. she pounces.” [*ambydextrous*]

and a new objective.⁶⁵ And so the new Chaser, having now survived failure,⁶⁶ departs into the night in search of blue-ribboned Runners.

Moving from being a Runner into a Chaser is truly a rebirth, irreversible and complete. With a simple act of putting on the red ribbon, the goals and desires of the game have been entirely flipped. With the new objective of trying to track down and tag the Runners, the view of the cityscape reverses⁶⁷ – everything the Player has learned about how to use architecture to escape will now be used to an opposite effect.⁶⁸ A Chaser now sees hiding spots as places to conduct surveillance,⁶⁹ analyzes the map for areas where Runners might congregate or bottleneck,⁷⁰ and checkpoints transform from fortresses of safety into Runner magnets.⁷¹ The desire is now to stalk and track live bodies, to experience speed as a means to fulfill, rather than as the moment that precedes loss. The game is perceived now as a hunt⁷² – a city filled with prey – as opposed to the landscape of anxiety and fear that was the palette of the Runner.⁷³ The Chaser is imbued with the omnipotence of being the one who tags,⁷⁴ and the Player can suddenly taste the power of

⁶⁵ “instantly i know that i have finally transitioned into my calling. the change is relatively painless. a euphoria enters my blood stream.” [ambydextrous]

⁶⁶ “I like this game better than most[...] if only because the people who are taken aren’t left to stand at the sidelines, or removed from the board entirely. They merely put on a different color, start playing by different rules...” [lonestar]

⁶⁷ “BLUE. the way of the herd. [...] RED. the way of the predator.” [ambydextrous]

⁶⁸ “she will be mine. at this point she doesn’t see me anymore. she looks back the way she came. she doesn’t see me darting and winding my way through the cars towards her... until it is too late. her eyes are so wide with surprise and she jumps in the air. i am five feet away.” [ambydextrous]

⁶⁹ “I hide on the corner behind a sign and wait. They come around the sign and I tag one.” [starfive]

⁷⁰ “we got down to the business at hand, plans to prevent any of those vile and smelly runners from reaching the finish line.” [Calyx]

⁷¹ “We stake out the area around the diner which is checkpoint 5.” [starfive]

⁷² “we have prey to catch.” [ambydextrous]

⁷³ “It was a lot of fun to try being a chaser for once, too. After a while, you start to look at things differently. When you’re a player, you’re always nervous, eyes always searching out predators, and always moving. But as a chaser, you honestly come to feel like you are stalking through the city, and you start to get a sense for movement. If it runs, it’s prey. After a while, it just becomes natural, even before looking for a blue ribbon. There were a number of times at the end, when I would see someone out of the corner of my eye and start after them...only to realize that it was just a normal person in the city, running to cross a street before the light changed.” [Spidere]

⁷⁴ “Her reaction was quite priceless. I’m sure her mind was thinking, “Calmly turn around and walk the other direction.” Her body though, it didn’t quite read the instructions that way. She stopped so suddenly and spun around with a look of horror on her face.” [Calyx]

control⁷⁵ and discover the greed for collecting blue ribbons – while envying the Players who continue to experience the accomplishment of reaching checkpoints.⁷⁶ Because the movement from Runner to Chaser is unidirectional, the Chaser finds that the burden of loss is lifted from their shoulders,⁷⁷ and are left to explore free action. They embody the romanticized image of the zombie,⁷⁸ a human who has defeated death but exists in constant pursuit of the living. Players can now experience this classic role from inside the Submersive Theater, through desire and action rather than inside a Halloween costume. Driven by desire alone, the life of the Chaser is about accumulation, not preservation – though they are now imposed with the expectation of success (not unlike the ‘zombies’ of capitalism).

In addition, the Chaser is a cast out, severed from their former future and the teammates they had once traveled with. The streets, which were previously filled with the phantoms of potential threats, are now decidedly vast and empty – Runners are not, in actuality, easy to find. Without the structure of the route, and the oppression of pursuers, the Chaser is quite lonely, left to the cold world of free action. This incredible alienation would otherwise cause large numbers of Players to desert the game after being tagged, if there were not the potential for a new community: the hunting party.⁷⁹ Some Chasers will pursue success alone, finding that they prefer the experience of tracking and

⁷⁵ “At four I experience some of the joys of being a chaser with the way that runners interacted with you. I was an object of fear. A simple smile at a blue ribboned player and a suggestion such as “I wouldn’t head south if I were you” generated a wave of reactions.” [Calyx]

⁷⁶ After being caught in the SF run, I was haunted for the rest of the game that I never had the pleasure of meeting the Agent at Checkpoint 3 who was wandering the isles of Cala Foods dressed as the Morton Salt Girl.

⁷⁷ “there is no more panic.” [ambydextrous]

⁷⁸ “Throughout the night many people, including me, compared this game to a zombie apocalypse scenario. And it *was* very similar – except that if your friends get turned into zombies they don’t ring you and go, ‘Sooooo... *where* are your brains right now, exactly? Do you have the cross-streets for that? Great, that’s great, could you just hang out there for, oh, about another five minutes?” [lonestar]

⁷⁹ “I meet up with Oliver, who has also been caught. we decide to keep moving. Suddenly we see the other girls we’re with.. I yell to get them! but.. they’ve been caught already too. So now we’re all chasers.” [starfive]

“i look at my hunting mate, Big, and am grateful to her. we are now a team.” [ambydextrous]

eliminating Runners one by one, chasing the romance of hunter and prey, the formal duel.⁸⁰ But if the goal of a Chaser is to defeat as many Runners as possible, organizing with other Chasers is an obvious choice. Cell phones come back into play,⁸¹ as well as all the trappings of true teamwork.⁸² Chaser groups can employ lookouts and decoys,⁸³ can deftly push players into traps,⁸⁴ and, if enough Chasers work together, can seal off all points of egress from a safe zone.⁸⁵

And so, like in the zombie movie, more and more Runners are caught, and the Chaser ranks grow.⁸⁶ The population of Runners are whittled down to the crafty, the brave, the indefatigably fast, and the very lucky. But before the entire game culminates in a sea of entirely red ribbons, the exhausted Runners reach the final safe zone, and the permanence of the final checkpoint. Shortly after the stream of prey trickles to nothing, the Chasers

⁸⁰ "I had to offer my respect though, if I was going to get caught, at least it was in a manner such as this, by someone with complete determination." [Calyx]

"Then I saw them, four of them, standing right outside the doors to the train station. Just. Right. There. I opened the door and took two steps into the middle of them. I joined the conversation and waited for them to notice my red ribbon. Though they weren't in the train station, something felt wrong about just tagging them in such a manner. No chase, no excitement, no nothing. Just a simple tap on the shoulders." [Calyx]

⁸¹ "We wait down the street a bit. Oliver calls me saying there's a group coming up the street on the next block. I hide in a bank alley. I jump out just as they get to me." [starfive]

"Along the way, I started receiving taunting text message from my former teammates-turned-Reds, who informed me there was a message waiting for me at checkpoint 4." [Sprite]

⁸² "From our hiding places, we could see that chasers were crawling all over the area. They weren't playing around, either. They were walking with purpose like armed guards over a military complex. Among the patrols, we spotted people we recognized from the starting line... there had already been casualties, and now they were working for the other side." [TheNasz]

The winner chaser, Whit, retired at 10:30 with 13 kills – apparently earned by organizing hunting parties that would push packs of unsuspecting players into him. [interviewed at finish line]

⁸³ "We snuck across to the east side of Halsted, creeping low behind parked cars, and they didn't seem to see us. Then two of them began walking north, passing us on the west side of the street, and we could clearly see they were Reds! We snuck ahead a bit more and realized that another Red was still waiting at the intersection -- a trap! He suddenly ran across the street, flushing us out." [Sprite]

⁸⁴ "We slowed our approach. They waved to us. We slowed some more. They began to stand up. They began to run towards us! [...] I found myself in the middle of the street and decided to dart left towards the Safe zone. Bad idea. Turns out that was a trap and I found myself running straight into a second chaser. I made a quick turn, doubled back across the street, and the first chaser once again tried to move in on me. At this point I noticed a car entrance just to the left of the safe zone and decided to go for broke. I sprinted in, hoping that there was an exit, only to be greeted by a cheer of "You're trapped, there's no way out!" [Sheawolfe]

"a while after Journey, I found out that OliverX had spent some time trapping runners who tried to do exactly what I did. Luckily for me, he wasn't there at that moment." [JJason]

"We were bombarded by a red who managed to break us apart, and we retreated into a parking garage. Turns out they had it surrounded. :(When I couldn't go back, I waited for the others to get chased away by a red, waited until they were far enough away, then bolted up the ramp[...] only to nearly run into three more." [NINJA]

⁸⁵ "We sat for a while, then decided to break so that there were two of us on either side of the street and just sprint for it. Run right into the midst of them, kamikaze, and if we couldn't get through, at least die gloriously." [lonestar]

⁸⁶ "While waiting there [at Checkpoint 5], countless newly turned Reds grudgingly strode into the diner, reminders of how lucky we all were." [raisinboy]

also abandon the field,⁸⁷ and so all the Players arrive at the finish line.⁸⁸ The game is brought to a close by an awards ceremony and an after party, and in the following days and weeks, countless stories are circulated of the unbelievable adventure of the Chase.

⁸⁷ “Eventually we are too exhausted to go on.. we make our way to the end.. limping. We barely make it to the end.. which has been moved. Every step hurts. But we make it.” [*starfive*]

⁸⁸ “Arriving at the final checkpoint reminded me of the final scene of *alice in wonderland*. We had gone through this surreal adventure, complete with danger and excitement, encountering a host of bizarre characters, who were all gathered for a big finale. Though exhausted, we hung out for a while, and chatted with chasers, runners and volunteers alike.” [*raisinboy*]

SUBMERSIVE THEATER:

attempting to design a game that escapes escapist entertainment

Charting the trajectory of Theater through Artaud to Brecht to Bond, the aim of the artwork has been to significantly affect the viewer. Efforts have often been made to invade the audience, but the departure from the proscenium into the house only cements the status of the performer as presenter and the audience as recipient. Other strategies that leave behind the house altogether, including environmental and promenade theater, merely rebuild the stage in another form or location. The attempts of performance artists like those of Fluxus, who forcibly brought the audience into the work as participants, succeeded more at alienations than epiphanies. Successful integration of audience and performer is not difficult, however, as it lies at the heart of play and therefore thrives in games.⁸⁹ It is the attempt of *Journey* to deeply invest the participants into guiding the game as both performers and audience members by crafting a game that submerses them in a carefully designed theater. Because of the scale of *Journey*, this completeness can only be afforded by discarding the desire for a seamless *mise-en-scene* in exchange for the efficiency of minimalism and the inarguability of 'readymade' sets and characters. The strategy is to nullify suspension of disbelief by creating a theater where scenes are authentic and the action is real, and so audience investment is an assumption of being a player. More than a simple offering of escapist theater, *Journey to the End of the Night* attempts to succeed at Brecht's ideal by building itself on a social agenda inspired largely

⁸⁹ Theatricalizing simple game structures has been successfully tested in party who-done-it games like 'Mafia' as well as larger street games like 'Assassin,' while complexity has been explored to varying success by Live-Action Role-Playing and Alternate-Reality Games. Incredibly successful theatrical games are being executed by the technology artists Blast Theory, though at the expense of affordability and thus accessibility

by the utopic playfulness of the Situationists, communicated through an epic and visceral Submersive Theater.

DESIGNING THE ROUTE

From the potholes and sewer covers at your feet to the massive backdrop of the skyline, Chicago is the most immense readymade theatrical set.⁹⁰ Moving through a city of this size, in any manner, is enormously visually, aurally, and temporally affective. Journey pushes for an epic experience, and therefore chooses to use the entire city as a stage. The strategy of the design was to increase the dramatic aspects of Chicago through composition of its existing elements – creating a complete cinematic architecture with sets, scenes, actors and audience, with a beginning, middle and end. The actual story is then left decidedly absent, however, such that a multitude of narratives and worlds could be simultaneously written into it: the responsibility of the audience to be a source of creativity is essential in making an experience meaningful.

Different than a scattered web of frantic movement like a scavenger hunt or a field sport, Journey focuses on the transportive effect of travel – physical and emotional. The simple act of travel, from anywhere to anywhere, is a cathartic event, and so it is the perfect architecture for a theatrical game. Travel communicates an unconscious understanding of accomplishment through distance.⁹¹ Instead of an intellectual or abstract interpretation of

⁹⁰ “I love Chicago, I love the feeling of being one with the city, especially at night time when the areas outside of all the dive bars and sports bars and faux-Irish pubs and, well, other bars take on a sort of dark mystery to them.” [REX]
“A cityscape, lit by the glow of artificial light, promising danger and the briefest glimpses of dark hope.” [Spidere]

⁹¹ “The sidewalk of Lakeshore Drive felt like heaven and i collapsed there fully stretched, head on the pavement.. looking at the sky and not caring about the way I must’ve looked. This was a trophy in itself” [kristingish]

distance, the aim is for the cathartic bodily experience that emerges from the fatigue.⁹² The route is long enough to induce fatigue for the average player (accounting for Chases), while being short enough to experience in a single evening without significant interruption. Because the game is merely theater, and therefore only a sample of transportation is presented (the distance traveled is relatively short compared to a long-distance race, or an automobile commute), the available distance must be used to maximum efficiency. Players are required to only use their feet – to the exclusion of cars, bicycles, skateboards, etc. – increasing the body’s visceral understanding of the distance. Trains were primarily adopted as an additional option for movement due to the expectation that not all players would be able to physically endure over 7 unassisted miles (though the theatric potential of urban trains and the excitement of entering/exiting stations were definitely significant in the consideration to include train travel in the game). As can be expected, in practice the train stations became locations where Chasers could lie in wait for Runners,⁹³ making public transportation an exciting gamble for players.

Because the game covers such a large field, there is the possibility of participants spacing themselves out so much that they will each wander through the game alone. This, in combination with the desire to make the game an epic experience, creates a need for a large attendance. Journeys have been run with as little as 20 players,⁹⁴ and as many as

⁹² “My lungs were in stitches and my legs were on fire. [...] The miles we walked seemed at the time to be endless and I felt as if my legs would crack into two pieces each and splinter each other. Stumbling through Grant Park my breath was heavy” [*kristingish*] “we did it! with god as my witness, I’ll never walk again” [*JJason – SFØ voicemail recording*]

⁹³ “There was a large crowd of runners ahead, moving towards the station with seemingly undue casualness. And then there was screaming. It was a panic, the runners scattering to the four winds. We didn’t need to be told what the source of it was... we knew all too well. The chasers were camping outside of the CTA stations.” [*TheNasz*]

⁹⁴ Los Angeles [*Lincoln*]

300.⁹⁵ It seems to take at least 50 people to adequately populate the playing field enough to make it exciting, though participation of 300 begins to flood the course, eating away at the space needed for adventure. This attendance, even at the bottom of that range, is enormous when compared to other street games,⁹⁶ and the excitement of participating in such a monumental game is essential to its success. For this reason, Journey requires no materials, preparation, or cover charge from players, so that it can cull a large enough participation from the public.

The route was considered as a series of scenes with an evolving set, using neighborhood architecture as the significant material. The obvious climax of any Chicago route would be the dynamic shift of entering and exiting the skyscraper district of downtown. To properly frame this climax, a series of views of the skyline were selected to be key points for players to experience. To support the effect of the climax, the rest of the route was designed to start with low energy and drama in the architecture, slowly build in dynamic, and finish with relaxation and release, like a traditional story arc. The Field Museum Campus was chosen to become the closing view of the skyline, and therefore the finish line. After months of considerations that included diversity and dynamic of local scenery, the length of the inferred route, possible train rides, route bottlenecks, and loitering possibilities, the 5 additional staffed checkpoints, 3 unstaffed bonus checkpoints, and the starting line were hammered out. While the desired route was the reasoning in selecting these checkpoints, players were free to select any and every route that could take them from one checkpoint to the next. Logistically, the checkpoints

⁹⁵ London '07 [*Mouse*], Washington DC '07 [*Spidere*]

⁹⁶ Dakota Reese Brown categorized Journey simply as a "Big Game" in his review of a New York street game festival, *Pervasive Games Are Not A Genre!* (2007)

suggested travel along the route that had been carefully designed, while allowing players to be creative in their interpretation of it.⁹⁷

In terms of lighting and population, the theatrical set was also designed to a specific position in time. While playing adventurous street games in the afternoon is ideal for visibility and safety, Journey is built for dynamics, drama and mystery, which is found best in darkness. To parallel the dramatic progression of the route, the game began in light, just before dusk, such that players would be entering their first Chases during the visual confusion of twilight, and thereafter the route was experienced under the moody city nightlights, with the last leg of the Journey played on the abandoned streets of late-night. By staging the game in the early Spring, I was hoping for cool weather, ideally with wet streets and clear skies, which would emphasize the moodiness of the city.⁹⁸ An April game would also welcome a large turnout of winter-weary players, chomping at the bit to do something active in the streets that had been denied them since October. Naturally, the game took place on a Saturday for its freedom from the work-week, a lively downtown population, and the likelihood for police tolerance of a late-night congregation at the Museum Campus after hours.

⁹⁷ “we chose to take hidden routes, behind factories, and apartment complexes...” [*KaritasCitas*]

“Almost right away we stumbled across train tracks, which were the perfect isolated avenue to take downtown. [...] The three of us found an isolated construction walkway that took us to a Michigan avenue building, just south and above the third checkpoint.”

[*Sprite*]

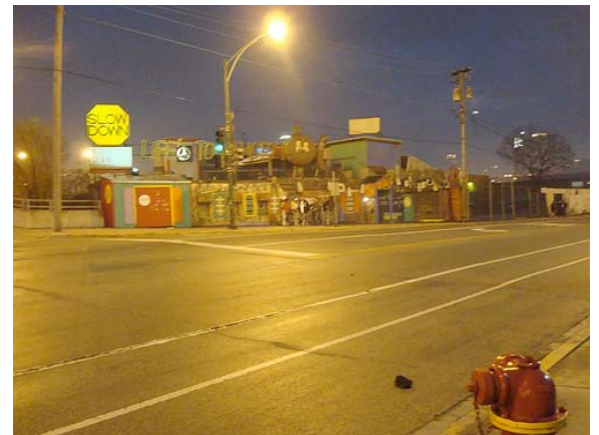
⁹⁸ in uncanny generosity of the chaotic Chicago weather, this was exactly what happened

THE CHICAGO ROUTE

The route began in Wicker Park, in full daylight, near the shopping district and nightlife of North and Damen. This starting line is in a residential area, well populated, bustling and familiar. Amid the dog walkers, 3-flats, boutiques and cafés, players experienced nothing strange or intimidating here – only the anticipation of the route ahead.

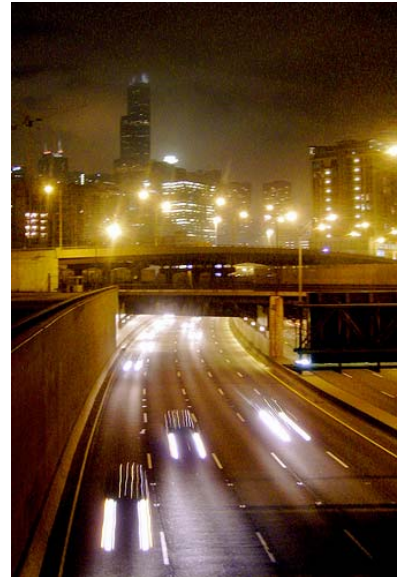
Checkpoint 1 lay to the southeast, and the path included the backstreets of the gentrified Wicker Park neighborhood, the low-brow iron-barred storefronts of Milwaukee Ave, the aged elevated CTA train line tracks, the open traffic of Division St. between 4 and 5-story brick buildings, and the ominous passage under the Kennedy Expressway with its cement columns streaked with rust and water damage.

Coming out from the Underpass, the first view of the skyline presented itself, distant, miniature and vast. At the same time, the signage of the first checkpoint location could be seen from several blocks away, juxtaposed against the suddenly industrial architecture and the raw I-beams of the Division St. bridge. At this point, pedestrians were scarce on the sidewalks and even the vehicle traffic was quiet on the side streets, leaving players to be alone with the city. This first checkpoint, stretched broadly along the river, offered a moment to pause and take in



the most panoramic view of the skyline, which had just started to glow in the fading light.⁹⁹ This glimpse of downtown was brief, as it immediately disappeared upon leaving this checkpoint.

West across the trellis bridge lead through the Goose Island industrial corridor along the river, then down Halsted past an enormous factory. Alternatively, the path south from Checkpoint 1 returned to the Kennedy, past the impressive white St. John Cantius church with its ominous bell.¹⁰⁰ The entrance to Checkpoint 2 was a sudden and ugly jump from a block of sparkling new loft constructions that line Milwaukee Avenue into the massive and ancient raised freight tracks at Hubbard St., where the underpass coincided with the monstrous Kennedy Expressway as it carved its subterranean path. With the exception of the roar of the Expressway, the streets here were entirely deserted. Just to the other side of the second Checkpoint, with the tracks lurking behind, looking out over the river of cars, the skyline appeared again. Now, in full darkness, it was towering and brilliant, framed by the monstrous transportation architecture, beckoning players to approach.



Checkpoint 3 was dead to the East, in the heart of the Magnificent Mile, but the walk was lonely and dark amid looming industrial warehouses – an entirely different world than the neighborhood just north of the expressway. The first bonus checkpoint presented itself

[IMAGE (p.25): Checkpoint 1; photo from *kristingish*]

[IMAGE (this page): view of downtown from Checkpoint 2; photo from *MyrnaMinx*]

⁹⁹ “By this point, the fog had rolled in over downtown, making its looming presence seem almost ghostly. This was just what we were hoping for. If ever there was a time for a zombie apocalypse, it would be now.” [*TheNasz*]

¹⁰⁰ “By now it was dark, and there was a chill bite to the air. The sound of deep bells began to echo through the empty buildings. They were beautiful and eerie, chiming saturating the brick and stone as we crept down the middle of the street.” [*lonestar*]
“All the while, church bells were ringing, as if to herald our impending doom.” [*TheNasz*]

along this route, encouraging players to choose the moody, gritty Kinzie street rather than the commercial stretch that is Grand Ave to the north. This bonus checkpoint, just across Kinzie's trellised crossing, was chained to the venerable Kinzie St. Railroad Bridge, an icon of the Chicago River and a gap in the cityscape where the Sears Tower could poke its head out again.

Continuing Eastward the buildings grew and lively pedestrians came flooding back to the sidewalk, but the full effect of the skyline was masked by the congested buildings.

Approaching the third checkpoint, the street split into the bright, clean, populous upper



commercial level, and the stained, amber-lit, concrete lower level where the sidewalks gave way to caged parking lots and access corridors.¹⁰¹ The checkpoint, of course, lay in that dingy lower level, but upon exiting the checkpoint and emerging into the popular Magnificent Mile above, players suddenly rose up right inside the skyline that they had been chasing up to this point. With

the incredible gothic Tribune building across the street and the massive whiteness of the Wrigley building straight above, the route proceeded south across the grandest of Chicago's pedestrian bridges. This was the energetic climax of the route, in terms of the liveliness of the downtown population,¹⁰² the majesty and dynamic of the architecture, and the roar of the elevated trains, designed to be concurrent with an explosion in the

[IMAGE: Runners on Lower Wacker; photo from *LittleMonk*]

¹⁰¹ "I *loved* that we took the Lower Wacker route, and not just because it was my idea. It had the perfect ambiance for the Journey, I thought. Strange underground tunnels, somewhat deserted... or so it seemed..." [magnetgrrl]

¹⁰² "Wary, we drifted into the Michigan Avenue crowds, trying to look at everyone's upper arms." [lonestar]

"When we arrived in downtown proper, the nature of the game changed dramatically. No longer could we check every pedestrian on the street for signs of ribbons (if they were "armed" or not)... there were just too many of them, and they were all around us. Never before had being downtown engendered such paranoia." [TheNasz]

volume of Chasers.¹⁰³ The crossing of the river from the Magnificent Mile into the Loop was a pointed transformation of the city's aesthetic from its brightest, most encouraging side to a much darker attitude.

Here the cityscape is a grid of urban canyons, dense with pedestrian traffic and crisscrossed with deserted alleyways stacked with dumpsters and jaunty fire escapes. In the grittiest such alleyway was tucked the second bonus checkpoint, serving to lure players away from the CTA Red Line, which could be used as safe passage, for the savvy, into the next checkpoint. In the



center of the Loop, Checkpoint 4 lay at the base of the arching face of the Chase Tower. In the sudden open space of the plaza, gigantic towers rose up on all sides, enormous and encompassing, dark and severe in contrast to the architecture surrounding Checkpoint 3.

From here, the route headed southwest, past the black base of the Sears Tower, the tallest skyscraper, and across the Chicago River. Under the Eisenhower Expressway, a third bonus checkpoint was chained to a fence, placed to discourage players from walking the eastern bank of the river and approaching the fifth Checkpoint backwards from the Roosevelt Street safe zone. The route continued down toward the old digs of the Maxwell Street Market, through blocks of enormous warehouses, deserted sidewalks and wide, empty and silent streets, where the epic length of the route really began to gnaw at

[IMAGE: crossing the Chicago River; photo from Team FOEcakes]

¹⁰³ "Michigan Ave. was crawling with Reds -- we spotted at least 8." [Sprite]

players' feet.¹⁰⁴ Past Checkpoint 5 lay the long span of the Roosevelt Street Bridge as it crossed the train yards. The flatness of the yards provided the first spectacular view of downtown since Checkpoint 2. Now, from the South Side, the Sears Tower was front and center, with the rest of the skyline nestled at its feet. The bridge, safe-zoned because of fast traffic and no options for escape, offered a calmer, more contemplative view of this ominous mass of buildings that the route had just cut through. The route's Westward trajectory now looked on at the new constructions of the South Loop, tall and naked along the lakefront, encrusted in scaffolding and cranes.

The finish line, just barely visible past these young skyscrapers, taunted players from across Grant Park. Many players, having survived chases and injuries, were on the verge of collapse by now,¹⁰⁵ pulled onward only by the sight of the finish line, so close. The final leg of the Journey was through the blackness of the unlit park, and the crossing of Michigan Avenue, Columbus Drive, and finally Lakeshore drive into the Museum Campus. The last view of the skyline was from the foot of the Field Museum, looking backwards at the city: a grandly lit arch of skyscrapers rising above the pavement, boxing players in from the South, West and North, with their back to the peaceful black abyss of Lake Michigan.



[IMAGE: view of skyline from Checkpoint 6; photo from Team FOEcakes]

¹⁰⁴ "At this point I was starving, and Gremlin saved me by offering me a candy bar..." [*lonestar*]

"my foot has failed, we were caught at the jewel, getting me some handicap ankle braces... and... didn't make it..." [*KaritasCitas* – SFØ voicemail recording]

¹⁰⁵ "My left boot folded, and the crease was digging into my feet and rubbing the skin off the tops of my toes. [...] My feet will never forgive me." [*TheAnimus*]

"Desperately tired, we staggered under the bridge and into the safe zone." [*JJason/Sheawolfe*]

"Our legs were just about to give out when we timed our movements to make the walk signal across LSD and found ourselves in the final safe zone! I couldn't believe we had survived. And it only took 5 hours..." [*LittleMonk*]

THE FUNCTION OF CHECKPOINTS

At each of the six Checkpoints along the route, Runners enter a safe zone where they seek out a rendezvous with a Checkpoint Agent, get their Manifest signed, and catch their breath. The logistical function of the Checkpoint is to keep players moving linearly along the designed route, though these breaks in the action of the game are



also an essential part of the narrative. While woven together by the progressive views of the skyline, each leg of the route has its own distinct character as determined by the architecture, population, and changing light.¹⁰⁶ These pauses in the Chase create discrete chapters of the entire Journey. Inside a safe zone, players' focus can shift from the rigor of the Chase and process their experience.¹⁰⁷ Players have the opportunity to breathe and think, but most importantly they are once again in a pool of Runners and Chasers who have relaxed from their prior roles, and all players can swap stories before once again setting out.¹⁰⁸ This episodic segmentation of the larger game makes the extended format of Journey endurable, while providing for moments to consider the action of the game

[IMAGE: a Runner having his manifest signed at Checkpoint 2; photo from Team FOEcakes]

¹⁰⁶ "Journeying in the downtown areas turned out to be dramatically different from our Journey so far. With so many people all around, we couldn't afford to be paranoid about every single person we saw. With all the lights, everything was easy to see and things were less creepy. But overall, it was much more unreal - your separation from the non-players, and also from your own normal life was all the more explicit now that the majority of people you saw weren't other players. [JJason/Sheawolfe]

¹⁰⁷ "We decided to rest here. Called loved ones, took potty breaks, sat in the company of goats. [...] We talked for awhile, and I tried to shake the drama of the first leg of the trip. Overall, we had a good feeling in us as we left, and we set out for Michigan Avenue." [TheAnimus]

"My feet were KILLING me at this point, but I trudged on. We made it to the third checkpoint at the Billy Goat, where I tried shoving napkins in my shoes for extra padding. In no way, shape, or form did that help, so I removed them. I then put my GLOVES on my FEET. Which felt better than the napkins..." [almostfamousjane]

¹⁰⁸ "so after a quick chat with and pardon from the chaser /slash friend, we were off to the 4th site, going the way we came.. looking back every other step.. cause even friends cannot be trusted in this game!" [KaritasCitas]

from within the game, which helps to further advance players' strategies for movement.¹⁰⁹

Similarly to Checkpoint safe zones, train rides also provided a moment of pause for players. Runners and Chasers, sometimes in mid-Chase, can trap themselves in the confines of the moving safe zone that is a train car.¹¹⁰ Suddenly thrown into close proximity, there is not only a chance to swap stories between Runners, but to interact with adversaries within these brief minutes of suspension.¹¹¹ Different from the Checkpoint safe zones, however, interactions on trains are noticeably controlled and temporary as the safe zone moves inevitably toward the next station, and the resume of the Chase.



At each Checkpoint, the staff takes the necessary human interaction of signing off the Manifests as an opportunity to draw the players further into the theatrical world of the Journey. Through costuming, performance, or art installation, the Checkpoint Agents work to create microatmospheres at their station where players either step into an altered reality, or fall deeper into the existing atmosphere.¹¹² Agents fashion themselves in direct

[IMAGE: Runners on a train platform; photo from Team FOEcakes]

¹⁰⁹ "from there made it to the third Checkpoint with relative ease, using a group of innocent bystanders as unknowing "meat-shields." [TheNasz]

"We took the opportunity to have a beer and red bull at the Billy Goat as we plotted our future path." [Sprite]

¹¹⁰ "we are stuck with a chaser on the blue line... not sure we're gonna make it, so... I guess this is the end... the end my friend... no, I shouldn't cut myself short, right?" [KaritasCitas – SFØ voicemail recording]

¹¹¹ "This peaceful moment of satisfied reflection was broken when the chaser from across the street descended the steps into the station. There was a brief moment of inner panic... we were trapped. He couldn't tag us here, but all he would have to do would be to follow us on the train and catch us at the exit. In the mean time, we laughed and made light of the situation. The chaser seemed friendly enough... like a wolf among sheep." [TheNasz]

¹¹² "The two girls (one dress) sat quietly in the back of the diner, in what someone described as a David Lynch-like scene." [raisinboy]

response to the environment at the checkpoint, working with the milieu of the architecture, sound, population, and history of the location. Designing within the constraints of uninvited theater, as well as working DIY with available materials, the Agents aim for simple, efficient gestures that worked with their station's existing assets rather than attempting to control their entire mise-en-scene. The effect of microenvironments is that players stumble, almost accidentally, out of the city and into the universe of the Agents, and this sudden revelation of meeting the Agents, who emerge from the alienating city a bit like lanterns in the fog, is a moment of magic.¹¹³ While far from monumental performance art pieces, within the context of the route the Agents' microatmospheres add significantly to the overall theater of the game, and serve to encourage players to desire each successive checkpoint. Each of the bonus checkpoints, as well, are selections of the city that are especially dramatic, but where live staff members cannot feasibly be placed. In these locations, the city itself provides all the theatrics that Players needed to feel the magic.

¹¹³ "Once we got onto the safety block, we were a little confused. 'So, what was the clue again?' 'A man, a woman, and cardboard.' '..... How the fuck is that supposed to help?' But then we saw it. The White Tower. After feeling like we walked through something from *Mirrormask*, we headed down Clark." [*TheAnimus*]

THE CHICAGO CHECKPOINTS

The starting location of the game was at the large empty fountain in Wicker Park, designated by a large CGØ flag (the local chapter of SFØ). The scene was minimal, consisting only of the flag, a small table displaying two trophies, a similar table with registration/waiver forms, a bucket of blue and red ribbons, and your's truly holding a



megaphone. The starting line was brought to life entirely by the expectant players, who milled around in anticipation,¹¹⁴ eying their competition and inspecting their maps.¹¹⁵

Rapt attention accompanied a 15-minute opening speech which restated the rules that had been posted on a website two months prior, where I attempted to casually instill fear and fervor into the players for the outset.¹¹⁶ It should be mentioned that the entire advertising model for the game was word-of-mouth, supplemented by 1000 postcard-sized flyers and a few dozen café posters that merely gave a time and place along with a poetic description of the tone of the game – all attempts were made to remain obscure about details in order to maintain the mystery of this Journey until the actual maps hit the hands

[IMAGE: flag at the starting line; photo from *zer0gee*]

¹¹⁴ “Meeting up with everyone, you could just feel the anxious excitement all around. People's nerves translated into smiles and laughs and the thrill of the unknown, as this is the first time it's been done in Chicago, so no one really know what exactly to expect.” [almostfamousjane]

“My ‘Journey’ to Chicago started weeks before the event. Myrna and I had made tentative plans to attend, and the excitement began to build. As the day grew nearer, we would exhibit random outbursts of giddiness and excitement when we discussed the upcoming event.” [Calyx]

¹¹⁵ “7:05 PM. Lots of faces. I felt smug -- there are people that want to do this too, I thought to myself. I'm not crazy” [TheAnimus]
“We also sized up the other runners, knowing full well that many would eventually become our enemies.” [raisinboy]

“I put the checkpoints into my iphone maps” [starfive]

¹¹⁶ “my attention was focused on Dax. He gave us wonderful instructions, but I couldn't help but think he was going to be a chaser. The tone in his voice, his subtle suggestions that we should lose this game and all walk home as chasers -- it definitely put me on edge” [TheAnimus]

of the participants when they arrived to play.¹¹⁷ The raw but efficient aesthetic of the starting line was to suggest that Journey was a simple grassroots, DIY presentation, where control of the game lay largely in the hands of the participants. The race was begun at precisely 7:30 with a description of the Agents at Checkpoint 1 and the blow of a whistle, which emptied the park within 30 seconds.

At the corner of Elston and Division, the location of the first Checkpoint, stood the building that once housed a lively bar, now boarded up. Brightly colored in peeling paint and covered in handmade signs, “Life’s Too Short” stuck out of the industrial neighborhood like a brilliant caterpillar amid the leaves. A mural extended to the south along Elston, fashioned mostly out of cut plywood, with the slogans “Hope Dies Last” and “I Love You So Much It Hurts.” Amid this once-cheerful display were two Agents, echoing the architecture in red-and-white candy-striped bakers’ outfits, looking quite like dolls come to life. Lit beautifully by the sunset, they welcomed Runners warmly, signed Manifests, and handed out yellow vegan cupcakes with blue frosting.



This first Checkpoint experience was an oddly cute, though surreal, escape from the fear and anxiety of the initial Chase.

[IMAGE: agents at Checkpoint 1; photo from *starfive*]

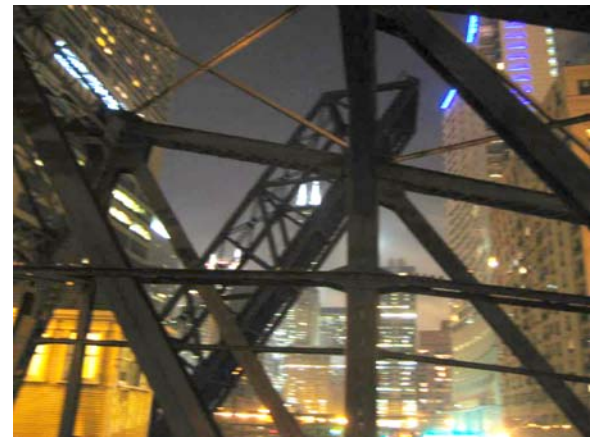
¹¹⁷ “I wondered what exactly the event would be like. All I had to go by was that darn poster and it didn’t reveal much. [...] A welcoming greeting was given by the curator as the fury of speculation and clusters became more evident....then the rules were given out. The cameras blazed and the fountain sparkled.” [*crumbles*]
“I didn’t actually know what to expect, and the reality of it is that the game surpassed my expectations in every possible way.” [*REX*]



At the north end of a deserted warehouse district, suspended on a surface street sidewalk between the freight tracks passing overhead and the deafening roar of the Kennedy Expressway below, four Agents in fancy dresses held a tea party. Laying out candles and sweets on a blanket that protected them from the rust-stained

cement, they heated water on a propane stove and invited Runners to take a break from the Chase and join them. The Agents maintained a stubbornly unaffected attitude toward their grey and empty environment,¹¹⁸ leading players to begin to view their position within the city in a similar way.

The Kinzie Street Railroad Bridge, an ancient monstrosity of trellised steel beams now permanently raised above the river, is a majestic landmark of Chicago. It was so chosen to be the logo of CGØ, and consequently the icon of Chicago's Journey, displayed proudly on the flag at the starting line as well as emblazoned front and center on each players' map.¹¹⁹



Chained to the base of the actual bridge was the first bonus checkpoint – a commemorative rubber stamp of the bridge along with the text: “Journey to the End of the Night Chicago 2008.” The view from the bonus checkpoint, inside a private parking

[IMAGE (this page): agents at Checkpoint 2; photo from *MyrnaMinx*]

[IMAGE (this page): Kinzie St. Railroad Bridge, view from Kinzie St. Bridge; photo from *starfive*]

¹¹⁸ “The rush! The roar! The ten lanes of interstate tunneling below us gave the area a constant sound of displaced air around moving vehicles. [...] And here, in our place, a small slice of refinement” [*Yasassin*]

¹¹⁹ “Then came the decision. Do we go for the first bonus checkpoint? [...] We risk it. I'm glad we did. we managed to cross the bridge and realized it was the symbol for CGØ.” [*starfive*]

lot, is quite different from the view one would have from nearby Kinzie Street, or even from the river below. The venerable black bridge is uniquely moving from the base, looking up through it from the inside at the rails and broken ties as they depart into the open night sky. This stamp served not only as proof that the checkpoint had been visited, but also as a lasting badge of participation in the game as a whole.



Beneath the Wrigley Building in the lower level of the Magnificent Mile, two Agents in plainclothes ate quietly in the classic Billy Goat Tavern. This scene, quintessentially Chicago, included the bustling kitchen staff under their marquee-style menu (titled “Enter At Your Own Risk”), a packed bar with its televised sports game, a neon-encrusted jukebox, the noisy downtown patronage, and the stench of grease-soaked food. These Agents, perfectly blending into their surroundings, were only identifiable by a description of the colors they were given at Checkpoint 2. The experience of seeking them out aimed to highlight the feeling of being an infiltrator in commercial downtown, making a rendezvous with surreptitious ‘plants.’

Just south of the Billy Goat, across the river, squats a series of high-class hotels. Behind these hotels, in an access road only accessible from the amber-lit



lower level, amid tangles of black fire escapes, flashing security cameras, an army of Chicago-sized rats, and the disintegrated asphalt that reveals the original brick cobblestones beneath, a second bonus checkpoint was chained to the twisted metal of a loading dock.¹²⁰ This stamp, taking directly from the location, was an image of a security camera and the words “No Longer Afraid.” These players could now display proof of their trek into Chicago’s architectural underbelly, but the artwork also has an agenda: to make proclamation against big brother’s array of security cameras which intimidate the pedestrians out of these parts of the public street system.

Like a pair of enrapture zealots, two Agents in white HAZMAT bunny suits frantically raced around the plaza and fountain at the base of the Chase Tower, while wheeling a

tower of white cardboard boxes that proudly waved a hand-stitched “4” flag from its pinnacle. Uninterruptible and oblivious to anything beyond their tower, the Agents manufactured a beautiful image that stunned, confused, and enraptured players and passersby alike. When Runners tried to communicate with them, they hastily pulled their tower to a halt next to a little rubber stamp laid on the ground (acting as a checkpoint signature), and began a series of enthusiastic prostrations to their “White Palace” while chanting “Two Girls – One Dress.” Instructions were written at the base of



[IMAGE (p.36): agents at Checkpoint 3; photo from Team FOEcakes]

[IMAGE (p. 36): a Runner at the second Bonus Checkpoint; photo from *almostfamousjane*]

[IMAGE (this page): runners write on the cardboard tower at Checkpoint 4; photo from Team FOEcakes]

¹²⁰ “By the way, walking along MacChesney Court? It’s truly like descending into the bowels of hell. It’s dank and full of rats and dumpsters and most certainly dead bodies and I refuse to ever go back there, until next year.” [REX]

“We eventually found the stairs down to lower Wacker (can we say “sketchy”?), and from there to the second Bonus Checkpoint. We weren’t entirely surprised when we found rats scurrying all over the place. At least they recognized that we were much larger, and therefore higher on the food chain than they were. They ran from us like we ran from chasers... an uncomfortable metaphor, to be sure.” [TheNasz]

the cardboard construction for players to write a single word on the tower, which were being added at random to the Agents' chant, and which covered the sculpture entirely by the end of the night. At intervals between Runners' visits, the Agents lay their tower down to build it wider and taller. The performance became increasingly affective as the tower grew to an unwieldy state and the Agents showed signs of authentic fatigue – though they remained entirely engrossed in their tasks, enslaved to their absurdly swelling cardboard replica of the enormous towers that surrounded them.

The third and final bonus checkpoint was a stamp of the skyline with the Situationist slogan “Sous Les Pavés La Plage” (beneath the cobblestones, the beach), which antagonizes the alienating architecture of urban progressive proliferation. This stamp was chained to the fence of an enclosed parking lot, literally beneath the pavement of the Eisenhower Expressway. As a collection, the three stamps from the bonus checkpoints are not only souvenirs of accomplishment along the route, but also a take-home gallery,



in the style of Bread & Puppet “cheap art” prints, that carry the social agenda of appropriative games.

In the back of the White Palace Grill, one of Chicago’s classic 24-hour diners replete with red vinyl bar stools, checkered tiles and jaded waitresses, exhausted Runners stumbled into a pair of conjoined twins (wearing a single conjoined dress) at a table with a fortune teller, sharing a meal after the close of some imaginary carnival. In the company of these fellow travelers, players could have a tarot reading while absorbing the route’s gradual denouement at cushioned booths. Here they could rest their legs, eat, and swap their best adventure story, while still being short of finishing the game.

At the end of the route at last, surrounded by the brilliantly lit crescent of skyscrapers, under the proudly whipping CGØ flag, two Agents in vintage Prussian soldier uniforms checked and officiated Manifests, then awarded pins to finishing Chasers and Runners with pomp and circumstance. Juxtaposed against these officials, a dozen blankets were laid on the grass of the Museum Campus, supplemented by wicker trays filled with home made cupcakes, cookies and sourdough bread, presenting a glimpse of the Situationist utopia of “an endless banquet.”¹²¹ ¹²² Players relaxed at this



[IMAGE (page 38): artist proofs of the three bonus checkpoint stamps (carved/printed by Dax Tran-Caffee)]

[IMAGE (this page): picnic at Checkpoint 6; photo from *bogushorse*]

¹²¹ “The basic demand is for... a new culture corresponding to human desires and not simply dissimulating and sublimating their frustration... An endless passion, an endless adventure, an endless banquet...” from *Heatwave #2*, October 1966, Christopher Gray & Charles Radcliff

¹²² “At the end.. a group, a joyous group.. the lights dimly lit around the aquarium, reflections upon the water that looked like fire.. and a very happy, very unique collection of people, adventurous and triumphant people laughing and smiling and relaxing on blankets and grass.” [*kristingish*]

night-time picnic, the skyline behind them encouraging contemplation of the distance, the adventure, and the playground.

APPROPRIATIVE PLAY

The Journey route is constructed as a reoccupation of the streets, in the footsteps of the Situationists¹²³ and others since. Likewise, the Checkpoint Theater demands to be guerrilla art, uninvited, subversive and invasive. Without using force and without disobeying any posted restrictions, Agents appropriated public and quasi-public space for the purposes of the game. The misuse of space is upsetting to the status quo, but because the action is playful, unfamiliar, and apparently harmless, tolerance came in the form of confused dismissal.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, the action is counterproductive to the capitalist flow of the city, and plants the seed for future appropriative actions. Led by the example of the guerrilla checkpoint theater, players could be inspired to subtly upset other social and legal restrictions to their usual movement and action,¹²⁵ wherever it would improve their ability to chase or be chased.

The aim of Debord's 'dérive' was for participants to "drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let

¹²³ The Situationist's slogan "On ne revendiquera rien, on ne demandera rien. On prendra, on occupera" (We will claim nothing, we will ask for nothing. We will take, we will occupy) proposes the occupation of the Sorbonne and other French Universities in May 1968.

¹²⁴ Checkpoint 2: "I also had the night's first encounter with the police.[...] They were sort of amused, but i couldn't tell if it was by our clothing, our tea party, or the fact that 150 young people were having good, wholesome fun on a Saturday night in Chicago. They laughed" [MyrnaMinx]

"[To the officer, we said] that the blue bands meant we were in a scavenger hunt, which satisfied him." [lonestar]
"talking to Sparrows Fall on the phone, she warned me that if I ran into cops, I should tell them I was playing a game. Apparently, that's a universal way to get away with anything." [REX]

"[at Checkpoint 1] Cops cause some alarm. / 'Openin' dat place back kup?' / A laugh shared by all." [bogushorse/swm]

¹²⁵ "We got off the train and headed for Lower Wacker Drive. 'Is there a pedestrian walkway on Lower Wacker?' 'I don't know. Let's go!'" [LittleMonk]

themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there.”¹²⁶ In the same way, the combined product of the Checkpoint Theater, the threat of the Chase, the epic theater of the route and the atmosphere of competition, aimed to excuse players from their normal lives and fully absorb them in the action of the game.¹²⁷ Where the theatrics are successful, players were compelled to bypass their personal barriers in order to learn to fully appropriate the cityscape for purposes of the game.¹²⁸ In David Bell’s martial art of Parkour, the pedestrian is empowered by treating the city as a gymnast’s obstacle course. In Journey, players find themselves in a position to invent new tactics of movement to facilitate speedy and efficient capture or escape¹²⁹ – a sudden practical instance of Parkour. As porches, dumpsters, and parked cars become hiding spots,¹³⁰ planters, fences, and moving cars become useful obstructions,¹³¹ and private courtyards and vehicle roads become pedways,¹³² Chicago transforms from an overwhelming city into the players’ playground. Every object is now useful as an opportunity for new movement.¹³³ As the elements of the city become property of the

¹²⁶ Guy Debord, “Theory of the Dérive.”

¹²⁷ “The parking garage was far more eerie than either Goose Island or Lower Wacker had been. The atmosphere thrilled me, and I jobbed along at a clip.” [magnetgrrl]

¹²⁸ “Then I saw what I thought would be my salvation – there seemed to be some kind of street, or something, running under Canal. [...] I was going to have to climb over a very high and pointy fence to find out but, well, that just seemed like more fun. My enthusiasm renewed, I bounded onto a guardrail and leapt over the 6’-8’ wrought iron fence and then slid down a gravel embankment into an underground passage.” [magnetgrrl]

¹²⁹ “I could see a car nearby had just driven into a parking garage, and the door was slowly lowering. For several seconds I debated whether or not I should dive into the garage to hide out; even when it was a few feet from being closed the idea of an Indiana Jones dive and roll seemed like a fantastic idea. Ultimately the only thing that kept me in the street was the fear of being trapped inside the garage with no way out.” [magnetgrrl]

“As Motis rolled under the rail and onto the edge, however, he discovered just in time that there was actually a two-foot gap between the building and the bridge! Luckily he avoided the fall, and we all made the treacherous jump onto the bridge.” [Sprite]

¹³⁰ “I bolted to the north side of the street, where I ducked behind a row of parked cars.” [magnetgrrl]

¹³¹ “we ran down the other block, away from the groups of blue bands, trying to find refuge behind trashcans and doorways, until we knew we were safe.” [KaritasCitas]

¹³² “‘That’s a private driveway!’ ‘So?’ ‘No through traffic!’ ‘For cars, not people!’” [LittleMonk]

¹³³ “It turns out, there was a slim break in the fence which led to a narrow area between the fence and the bridge. While the bridge was high, it grew closer to the ground as it went towards Canal – right where the group of Reds were standing. Though risky, I decided this was my exit. I trudged through the shrubbery and litter along the side of the bridge, and as I got as far to the end as I could, I was able to peek over the top of the bridge rail (about 6 ft off the ground), and was pleased to see that only one Red stood on the corner. Less than 8 feet away from the Red, I had to seize the moment as his back was to me, and he may turn around at any moment. I pulled myself up and lunged over the rail, directly behind the chaser. On Roosevelt. Safe.” [raisinboy]

game,¹³⁴ through appropriation of architecture, players become amateur Traceurs, dominating the physical obstacles that were designed to limit them.¹³⁵

Especially affected players move toward a temporary assumption of invincibility, as they consider running into¹³⁶ and with traffic¹³⁷, disregarding no-trespassing signs¹³⁸, leaping fences and walls into the unknown¹³⁹, and invading businesses¹⁴⁰. This feeling of invincibility also serves to transform injuries and fatigue – which would otherwise be reminders of the failures of the body – into hard-earned trophies that represent each player's triumph over the city.¹⁴¹ An injury, even something as simple as a blister or a

¹³⁴ “Wait, now I’m stuck in this little alcove with an apartment door and the chaser is circling back around... So I did what anyone who’s a fan of spy novels would do: I pretended to be fumbling with my keys in the apartment door, my back to the street. My heart was pounding in my chest. If the chaser saw me, I was done for. I heard the whir of the bike as it sped past. Success!!” [*LittleMonk*]

¹³⁵ “We made it across to find one last obstacle in our way: a huge, black-iron fence. It was too high to climb over, so we started scaling along its side, looking for a break that we could squeeze through, if not a regular old entrance (would that have been too much to ask? Clearly). Finally, near an overpass, we found one... but the ground was too far down to drop. So we edged our way around to the other side and scaled the fence back the other way, until a hill came up close enough to the wall to jump down safely.” [*TheNasz*]

“I climbed the railing and lowered myself quickly onto the top of the fence below. Jumping off I ran under the safe zone and found myself in a outdoor parking garage. The entire place was surrounded by a ten foot fence with barbed wire on top, which I may or may not have considered climbing, before I noticed that the gate to the place wasn't actually closed.” [*Sheawolfe*]

“Now, it the way across was a locked gate going across the train tracks but we weren't going to let a little thing like that stop us. JJason went under, Shea went over and lickety split were were jogging across the train tracks, climbing over another gate, and making our triumphant way into the safe zone. As we were climbing, the sound of police siren was heard in the distance. But we didn't care. The forces of law were no match for our fatigue.” [*JJason/Sheawolfe*]

¹³⁶ “I tried to convince people we should just charge across Lakeshore Drive, but was overruled.” [*lonestar*]

“[crossing LSD] By this time, we were so tired and so on edge that we just decided to run across. This, upon retrospection, was probably stupid. One misstep and we could have been road-kill.” [*TheNasz*]

¹³⁷ while chasing in Journey-DC, I found it easier to run alongside cars in the middle of the street rather than trying to cross the street... until I realized that one of them was a police cruiser

¹³⁸ “we reached the underside of Roosevelt Road, with no way to climb up. We started the trek around to the east end of the bridge, but as we approached, we spotted a group of Reds loitering near the intersection. We realized that we had no way around them, so we turned to Plan B: breaking and entering. [...] There happens to be a large construction site next to Roosevelt Rd., with the framework of a multi-story building that seemed to be connected to the elevated road. So we crawled under a fence and scouted around the brightly-lit interior for a way to climb up” [they climbed through four stories of the construction site to reach Roosevelt Rd.] [*Sprite*]

¹³⁹ “I found myself in a car garage and began to look for something, anything, that could get me out of there. What I found was a railing, and I realized that where there is a railing, there is an other side. My mind became abuzz with Dax's warnings of jumping off bridges and whatnot, but fortunately the ground was only a ten foot drop or so.” [*Sheawolfe*]

“So although I once vowed never again to jump blindly over a parking garage wall, the act of running from chaser zombies for dear, precious life made me forget all about it!” [*REX*]

¹⁴⁰ “I also wanted to make sure that the entire Jewel mart witnessed this incident, and to do that I couldn't just walk up and tap them all on the shoulders. So I decided to add some theatrics by leaping into their group, tagging the three of them and spinning in the air.” [*Calyx*]

“We heard later that the Reds who chased us out of the parking garage went after them, and they were caught somewhere near the produce section of the Whole Foods” [*raisinboy*]

Two runners ducked into Bennigan's restaurant, thinking that the unsuspecting establishment would protect them from being chased – two chasers pursued them right through the restaurant to the chagrin of the staff, and the runners only escaped by the lucky intervention of a revolving door [from an interview with one of the chasers at State and Roosevelt]

new hole in their shoe, becomes a badge of accomplishment that, in a way, raises the surviving player to a status above the common pedestrian.

COMPLETE DESIGN

The empowerment that comes from the playing is carefully echoed in every aspect of the design, reinforcing it as the primary purpose of the game. The entire staff, enumerating 28 including myself, the Checkpoint Agents, the Seeding Chasers, the videographers and the bakers, volunteered for their roles in the game, drawn by the excitement of participating in the project rather than by any obligation or compensation. All props and materials were supplied by these volunteers, acquired for free, or purchased second-hand where possible. The game was permeated by the hand-made at every turn, including the 45 medals, 3 medallions, 2 trophies with hand-carved figurines, 3 bonus checkpoint stamps, an original acrylic painting that appeared on the flyer, and a 5-foot flag. In order to stay personal, the advertising of the project was kept at street level, with posterage at cafés, colleges, flyers, word-of-mouth, announcements at Critical Mass, and an event listing in the SFØ community, with all game information posted on an unassisted website. All video equipment was borrowed by students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, while players were asked to bring their own cameras



[IMAGE: painting for the flyer by Dax Tran-Caffee, acrylic on paper, 12" x 16"]

¹⁴¹ "It was a tough battle from start to finish, two hours later it felt like I wanted nothing more but to chop my legs off and make a trophy out of them." [Peng]

"Tending to my injury at home, I cut open the huge blister on the ball of my left foot, fluid pouring out. SICK. But it's a battle scar I earned along the journey... so it's worth it" [almostfamousjane]

where possible – all of which produced an impressive amount of documentation for minimal cost.¹⁴² Inspired by the ethic of the Bread & Puppet theater,¹⁴³ a team of bakers produced 150 cupcakes, several gallons of cookies, and 5 loaves of sourdough bread that were handed out at Checkpoint 1 and the finish line. I was worried that the presence of currency would spoil the image of the game, and so sponsorship was turned down¹⁴⁴ and there was never a hat passed - participating in Journey to the End of the Night was free, open to anyone who showed up to play. These elements of simple enthusiastic DIY, combined with the guerrilla strategy of the game presentation and its staunch independence from sponsorship, made a strong statement about the viability of projects that attempt to exist outside the capitalist paradigm: the city belongs to the inhabitants, and art and entertainment need not be purchased.¹⁴⁵



[IMAGE: Runner with a Medal of Merit, by zerOgee; photo from *kristingish*]

[IMAGE: Chaser with a Medal of Valor, by zerOgee; photo from *leveldeaded*]

¹⁴² There are 282 images on the SFZero site uploaded by participants of this Journey in addition to the official documentation.

¹⁴³ Led by baker and puppeteer Peter Schumann, Bread & Puppet proposes that art is of equivalent importance to food, and therefore home made sourdough bread is served to the audience as part of every performance.

¹⁴⁴ The project was originally accepted to the urban arts festival, *Looptopia*, but I pulled the proposal when I realized that their sponsor structure would spoil the game's renegade ethic

¹⁴⁵ The organizer's monetary cost of Journey-Chicago was \$323.29 (materials, props and advertising). The game provided a day's entertainment for 152 people (players and staff), for an average of \$2.12 currency spent per participant. In addition to the organizer's cost, players spent their own money along the route buying food and water, and several players accrued travel expenses coming to Chicago to play the game. Despite being relatively cheap, because this did not turn out to be a \$0/participant presentation, I would like to have future runs aim for 100% capital-independence by relying entirely on salvaging and in-kind donations, while encouraging more local runs around the country.

SUBVERSIVE PLAY:

a pedagogy for re-appropriation of the urban environment

In the city, we are subjected to seemingly impenetrable inefficacy. Very little that we do, as individuals, can be seen to have any affect on the city – often, we have no power outside of our immediate living environment, if that. This self-oppression makes us anxious and the effect is quite apparent: we, the citizenry, are prone to pick at our environment, and so the city seems to bite its nails in a nervous reaction to its inability to affect itself. While some adults manage to organize small changes to their neighborhoods, through petitioning or funding private murals, I am much more impressed by the army of urban adolescents, who react much more instinctively and honestly by scrawling their names on anything they can reach – of course, the lasting affect of graffiti is arguably nil. Some ingenious urbanites have developed techniques for conquering this situation of environmental oppression by re-appropriating the architecture of the city for other uses, as in the *Dérive*,¹⁴⁶ Parkour,¹⁴⁷ Buildering,¹⁴⁸ and BASE-Jumping.¹⁴⁹ This type of recreational activity is much more than mild leisure, of course, as it simultaneously takes a chunk out of the paradigm of the impenetrable city: this is Subversive Play.

The city's self-inefficacy is not inherent to the idea of a city by any means, but a problem of the rift between powerful entities who control the city (businesses, politicians, urban

¹⁴⁶ to wander about a city responding emotionally to the architecture, ignoring the normal suggested pedestrian routes and constraints like fences and sidewalks

¹⁴⁷ as mentioned above: pedestrian acrobatic movement, designed for efficiency and speed of travel; practitioners are called 'Traceurs'

¹⁴⁸ climbing buildings from the outside, derived from "Bouldering," which is a short rock-climb without rope

¹⁴⁹ parachuting from a fixed object instead of a plane, such as a skyscraper, radio antenna, or bridge.

planners), and the common citizen who is subjected to the designs of these movers and shakers. Subversive Play proposes that the common citizen does not need to rise or replace the powers-that-be in order to restore efficacy, but that power can be casually taken within everyday actions – whenever we are not afraid to act out of line. Jane Jacobs proclaims “Streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs,”¹⁵⁰ and so this becomes the primary area to occupy. As with Reclaim The Streets, Journey players re-appropriate space benignly, not aggressively, and playfully, not angrily – a tactic that makes this action difficult to argue against. The act of playing in public space helps alter the paradigms of non-players, asked to reinvent their perception of the city, simply through the spectacle created by from the mere mechanics of the game.¹⁵¹ Dark, empty sidewalks and alleys, which are dangerous largely because there is no one in them, are once again populated through Subversive Play, bringing life and safety for everyone who uses them.¹⁵²

Any pedestrian-accessible space is prime territory for re-appropriation. Through play, a pedestrian can transform a business park into a playground, occupy a shopping center and use it as a disco, and make a theater out of a food court. With sufficient numbers, as

¹⁵⁰ from *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, a seminal critique of urban planning

¹⁵¹ “[at Checkpoint 2] Downtime- when no runners were present- was also fun, as we garnered confused stares and bewildered questions from everyone who passed on bike or by car...” [MyrnaMinx]

“‘They got a report of bizarre activity’ Strangelet says. ‘They said someone reported a bunch of people dressed as pilgrims set up under a bridge with a blanket and a teakettle.’” [Yasassin]

“I start to near a fancy hotel with a red carpet laid out in front of it and those nice little velvet ropes. The door attendant is peering at me like I’m fleeing from the police as I begin to close on him, but I take no notice, nor is he a concern of mine at the time. I end up leaping through the crowd in front of the building and over the carpet while I receive inquisitive looks from every direction. I’m not sure if the blue ribbon attached to my arm offered some sort of explanation for my actions, or if it just posed them another question.” [Calyx]

“we ran into several very confused groups of innocent bystanders. We even explained the game to a couple of them, who were envious of our youthful endeavors and were reminded of their own glory days playing Capture the Flag.” [TheNasz]

“I know this is going to be the most bizarre request, but I’m doing this game where we’re running all over the city, and I’m wearing gloves for socks because my socks are nearly worn through... you don’t have \$2.00 you could spare so I can buy some new ones, do you? I told my team to run on ahead, I’m sorry, I know this is SO weird![...] I showed her my manifest and thanked her profusely when she pulled the weathered Washingtons out of her purse.” [almostfamousjane]

¹⁵² Jane Jacobs writes: “that the sight of people attracts still other people, is something that city planners and city architectural designers seem to find incomprehensible. They operate on the premise that city people seek the sight of emptiness, obvious order and quiet. Nothing could be less true.”

proven fantastically by Reclaim The Streets¹⁵³, mere pedestrians can even defeat the arbitrary physical delineations that make drivers into elite citizens. These semi-public spaces, which businesses and city planners have designated for restrictive uses, are returned to being truly public spaces, where the users, not the owners, define the use.

But this power assumes a certain level of urban proficiency on the part of the pedestrian.

To begin re-appropriating space, a person must not only be disillusioned with the Spectacle (to use Debord's term), but also have some fearlessness for the authority that governs it – which is too often ourselves. Guy Debord, in order to teach

psychogeography,¹⁵⁴ invented as an exercise the *Dérive*: the simplest transgression against the implied plan of a city. Through the joy of wandering without constraints, a pedestrian will start to view sidewalks, alleyways, walls, private space, etc. from a new perspective. The action is seemingly safe and unobtrusive, making it an accessible exercise, but most importantly the action is driven by a desire – discovery is exciting.

Once the *Dérive* is over, of course, a person can return to their normal modes of movement, but their choices will forever be influenced by their experience during this fun and visceral presentation of psychogeography. *Journey to the End of the Night* is precisely this sort of exercise, and is in fact not very far removed from the simple *Dérive* (a modification of Debord's definition, as quoted in the last section, was perfect for use in the promotional material). It is the aim of *Journey* to train its participants in the art of re-

¹⁵³ in the 90's, Reclaim The Streets used street parties to occupy roadways around the world, including London's M41 Motorway on July 13, 1996

¹⁵⁴ the study of how we move through the urban landscape, stated for poetically by Debord as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals." (from "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography")

appropriating space. Where the *Dérive* is directed by casual desire, and is largely unobtrusive, *Journey* is aggressive, and built on immediate and gripping desire.

Journey is designed to lead its players into situations where appropriating space becomes easy and natural. Intellectualizing this experience during the game is not necessary, and even distracting, because the most effective learning methods are in action and experience, not detached thought. Players approach *Journey* as a game, which is a fun and inviting format, accessible to a broad audience. *Journey* is designed theatrically, emphasizing epic aesthetic drama, which sucks players into a suspension of their normal understanding of their status in the city. *Journey*'s theater carefully avoids telling a story, which would intellectualize the experience, instead focusing on unconscious response to dramatic design. The structure of the game puts the players into a situation of emotional response: being chased produces fear, anxiety, suspicion, and the survival instinct, while chasing evokes power, greed, loneliness (alienation), the thrill of the hunt, and the meditation of speed. These strong, animalistic emotions, generally avoided in regular life, foster a visceral experience of the act of re-appropriating city space (rather than an intellectual one), which the unconscious mind will learn and remember. Common audience/performer theater will provoke emotional response through empathy, which is necessarily once-removed and therefore dismissible after the curtains close. The Submersive Theater, however, makes emotion real wherever possible, ensuring the longevity of the learned material. In addition, the uniquely physical aspect of *Journey*, experienced both through extreme respiration (breathing hard brings us into a state of

being most alive¹⁵⁵) as well as injury, educates the body independently of the mind – breaking self-imposed limitations, while forming body-memory for new modes of movement. Live staff at the checkpoints guide players (always leading by example) to reconsider their use of public, semi-public and private space, while the execution and material aesthetic of the game proposes the viability of DIY, guerrilla and renegade artistic action. Finally, the catharsis achieved by a combination of a great distance traveled, the survival of failure through reincarnation with independent power (or its opposite: the triumph of escape), amplified by the epic proportion of the game, elevates the players into a elite group of accomplished pedestrians.

The visceral presentation of the game ensures that the experience affects the players,¹⁵⁶ unlike, say, an essay about the effectiveness of Appropriative Games. The epic proportion and duration of the game,¹⁵⁷ reinforced by the lasting effects of injuries,¹⁵⁸ keeps the



[IMAGE: the first place Chaser, with trophy ribbons; photo from Dax Tran-Caffee]

¹⁵⁵ “only now are we alive, only now are we fully here, no longer dead meat, no longer blind” [JJason – SFØ voicemail recording]

¹⁵⁶ “I would like to admit that I have been a resident of the Chicago area all of my life and I have visited the city many times. Never before though, have I experienced the city like this.” [Mootheebunny]

“This was only the first half of our isolation, our riveting descent into the scariest part of the game. The next hour will probably stay with me for years.” [REX]

¹⁵⁷ “Crossing into the final safe-zone was accompanied by celebratory high fives all around. We had traveled for almost 5 hours, and had traversed approximately 9 miles of road, allyway, train, and finally lakepath. Though we had lost a few along the, the 7 of us had made it together. We strode to the final checkpoint, and approached with our arms raised victoriously.” [raisinboy]

“We made it. It took a few minutes to sink in. We started at Wicker Park, went through the heart of Chicago, and ended up on Lake Shore Drive. We made sacrifices, we made friends, we finished the Journey To The End Of The Night. [...] We found the group of people and ran one last time to receive cheers from the crowd. The amount of accomplishment I felt at the time was insurmountable.” [TheAnimus]

¹⁵⁸ “We limp back across the park and catch a cab to the after party.[...] Much pain the next day.. a little less each day after. Three days later I can walk without much pain at all.” [starfive]

“Man, my legs were so sore afterwards that I had to hobble to work Monday morning.” [TheNasz, a comment on his own post]

“I’m glad I’m not the only one who had to hobble among the working class. My legs held up pretty strongly until the following night, but then I almost collapsed.” [VeritasNoir, a comment on TheNasz’s post]

“With that, I am retiring to bed to rest my legs that are still hurting from this event. Total Cost of Trip to and From Chicago, including all food and drink: \$330.55 Total Cost of Journey: Normal use of my legs for three days.” [Calyx]

“It’s Thursday and I’m only now not limping around because of the horrible shin splints. A Saturday night well spent! [...] one of the most memorable nights in Chicago!!” [LittleMonk]

“Now, three days later, my legs still make with the hurt in interesting and unexpected ways, but it was absolutely worth it!” [Sprite]



game in a state of importance in the players' memories¹⁵⁹ for days or weeks,¹⁶⁰ which extends the time in which the unconscious and the intellectual mind can process the actions and experiences during the game. Ideally, Journey will be a subconscious catalyst in each player's reconsideration of the city,¹⁶¹ instilling a feeling of empowerment on the street¹⁶² (and empowerment of their own abilities when removed from their electronic crutches¹⁶³) by serving as a practical example of the possibilities of passing personal boundaries and surmounting fears.¹⁶⁴

In this way, Journey is a carefully designed psychogeographer's training course, at once providing a structure to learn some basic methods of moving through the urban environment, while being an inspiration for future exploration into taking back the city.

[IMAGE: a Runner with his manifest, displaying all three bonus checkpoint stamps; photo from Dax Tran-Caffee]

¹⁵⁹ "“This is a game to me, but it's not. This is a once-in-a-life-time experience. We'll never be able to do this again. This is a test.”"

[*TheAnimus*, quoting his teammates]

"I'm approaching 35 this year, I'm no longer the slender John Cusack-meets-Morrissey guy I used to be, and I might not get another opportunity to run carelessly around a dark foreboding city being chased by strangers in armbands until I'm getting mugged in NYC when I'm fiftysomething." [REX]

¹⁶⁰ "Though exhausting, the Journey to the End of the Night introduced me to sides of my city that I have never seen before. It was the most fun I have ever had in Chicago, and I'm happy that the memory of this adventure will remain with me for a long time."

[*raisinboy*]

¹⁶¹ "My impression of Chicago will be entirely shaped by the journey paths; it's a great way to see a city." [*Spidere*]

"I think my favorite part was getting to explore parts of the city I might not otherwise go and to look at the streets from a very different perspective. That of a runner." [*LittleMonk*]

¹⁶² "Because of Journey Chicago, I can now navigate my way around downtown Chicago mildly, and if I'm ever running from a mugger, I'll know exactly where the safe zones are." [*Calyx*]

"I never felt unsafe in Chicago.. I mean from strangers." [*starfive*]

¹⁶³ "A good ole' fashion map never fails and doesn't require batteries." [*Moothebunny* – a comment on her own post]

¹⁶⁴ "There in that creepy, hard to access alleyway. Of course. But we hadn't gone this far too give up when faced with just a creepy checkpoint." [*JJason*]

"I had made friends, gotten some exercise, bonded with my city, and proven something to myself." [REX]

"I really wanted to finish. I had wanted to prove something to myself. But apparently I proved I can do things halfway... and that's it. However I also did something pretty crazy that I have never done before. [...] So I do feel like I accomplished something, even if I had to quit." [*almostfamousjane*]

"[driving home in the fog] As I was looking for my street, I began to feel the haze of sleep invade again, and I imagined that the fog was really a metaphor -- I was heading back home, to the bland obscurity of every-day living. I was heading back to comfort that would only inhibit my ability to see in front of myself." [*TheNasz*]

"my favorite part of the entire night: seeing my friend robert really, truly happy for the first time in about two years. he claims running journey to the end of the night changed his life, and i absolutely believe it. [...] after journey, i saw such a complete rejuvenation of motivation and excitement in him; it was wonderful and contagious!" [*terpsichore*]

The most important pedagogy of Journey, however, is not in any successful communication of the intentions of the designers, but in that everything the players have learned during the game they taught themselves by means of their own adventure.

“This was a fantastic voyage, and one we will remember for a long time.

You turned us from plainclothes Chicagoans into metronauts, and set us loose upon the city.” [*lonestar*]

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InkTea
<http://sf0.org/InkTea/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

JJason – post including *Sheawolfe*
<http://sf0.org/JJason/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

KaritasCitas
<http://sf0.org/KaritasCitas/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

kristingish – post including *deathbystevo* [aka steve rules]
<http://sf0.org/TheAnimus/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

leaveldeaded [aka d - clare]
<http://sf0.org/leaveldeaded/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

LittleMonk
<http://sf0.org/LittleMonk/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

lonestar [aka Sparrows Fall] – post including *magnetgrrl* [aka meredithian]
<http://sf0.org/lonestar/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

magnetgrrl [aka meredithian] – post including *lonestar* [aka Sparrows Fall]
<http://sf0.org/magnetgrrl/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

mj9 [aka mean jeanine] – see *starfive*

Moothebunny – post including *TheAnimus*, *Subatomicdeathkitten* [aka Deathkitten]
<http://sf0.org/Moothebunny/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

MyrnaMinx
<http://sf0.org/MyrnaMinx/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

N1NJ4 [aka Ninja]
<http://sf0.org/N1NJ4/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

Oliver X – see *starfive*

OneFleaCircus [aka Beetle Bomb]
<http://sf0.org/OneFleaCircus/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

Pengi [aka Matt Larrain]
<http://sf0.org/Pengi/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

raisinboy [aka Mr. G.]
<http://sf0.org/raisinboy/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

REX
<http://sf0.org/REX/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

Sheawolfe – post including *JJason*
<http://sf0.org/Sheawolfe/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

Spidere
<http://sf0.org/Spidere/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

Sprite [aka sprite infomorph]
<http://sf0.org/Sprite/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

starfive [aka star5] – post including *mj9* [aka mean jeanine], *celina*, *OliverX*
<http://sf0.org/starfive/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

swm [aka Sean Mahan], *bogushorse* [aka lara black]
<http://sf0.org/swm/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

terpsichore
<http://sf0.org/terpsichore/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

teucer [aka Doktor Harmon]
<http://sf0.org/teucer/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

TheAnimus – post including *Moothebunny*, *Subatomicdeathkitten* [aka Deathkitten]
<http://sf0.org/TheAnimus/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

TheNasz
<http://sf0.org/TheNasz/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

thepuppies
<http://sf0.org/thepuppies/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

VeritasNoir
<http://sf0.org/VeritasNoir/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

yasassin [aka Yas]
<http://sf0.org/yasassin/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

zer0gee

<http://sf0.org/zer0gee/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Chicago/>

Non-Chicago Journey Posts:

Lincoln – Journey Los Angeles ‘08

<http://sf0.org/Lincoln/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Los-Angeles/>

Mouse – Journey London ‘07

<http://sf0.org/Mouse/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-London/>

Spidere – Journey DC ‘08

<http://sf0.org/Spidere/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-DC/>

Tran-Caffee, Dax

- documented San Francisco Journey ‘07 as *bustedpuppet* [aka The Villain]
<http://sf0.org/bustedpuppet/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-Glasnost/>
- documented Washington DC Journey ‘08 as *DAX* [aka Dax Tran-Caffee]
<http://sf0.org/DAX/Journey-to-the-End-of-the-Night-DC/>