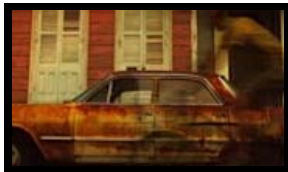


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CORY DOCTOROW

POSTED AT 7:17 AM JANUARY 6, 2009

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Tumbarumba: a surreal fiction anthology in the form of a browser plugin

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Ethan Ham sez,

“Tumbarumba,” a project by Benjamin Rosenbaum and myself (Ethan Ham). Tumbarumba is an anthology in the form of a browser add-on. To read the stories, readers must stumble upon them while browsing the web. The browser add-on will occasionally insert a story fragment into a web page as it loads it. The result is a disorienting surreal sentence that sometimes is nonsensical and sometimes amusingly close making sense. If the reader spots the fragment, they can interact with it in a way that will cause the full story to appear—albeit in the format of the web page on which it was found.

The authors in the anthology are:

Haddayr Copley-Woods, Greg van Eekhout, Stephen Gaskell, James Patrick Kelly, Mary Anne Mohanraj, David Moles, John Phillip Olsen, Tim Pratt, Kiini Ibura Salaam, David J. Schwartz, Heather Shaw, Jeff Spock

Tumbarumba (Thanks, Ethan!)

7 Comments | Leave a comment

holtt | #1 | 09:29 on Tue, Jan. 6 | Reply

Report

Thoughts...

boing boing video

a) What a cool alternate reality game!

b) Tell me more about this plugin. Is it tracking all the websites I go to and reporting them? Is the story itself encoded in the plugin, or is the plugin sending a server the URL of every website I go to so that the server can decide whether it has story components?

c) Spock!

 **Ethan** | #2 | 09:36 on Tue, Jan. 6 | [Reply](#)

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Thanks HoltT! We were in fact thinking of alternative reality games when we came up with the idea.

Regarding your point b, here's the scope (I'm cutting & pasting from our FAQ):

We do not collect any information about our users or their computers. The add-on exists exclusively on the user's computer. The only information that is transmitted to a server is for an image search on Flickr.com using keywords from the short stories. No personal information or information about your web browsing habits are transmitted to a server. Your privacy is respected and protected.

The extension does store on your computer the web page where each story has most recently been uncovered. It stores the information so that the stories can be easily accessed via the Table of Contents page.

 **Bruce Arthurs** | #3 | 14:02 on Tue, Jan. 6 | [Reply](#)

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Speaking as a grumpy old fart, may I ask why you think it's a good idea to make it more difficult and cumbersome, involving a certain amount of luck, to find the contents of your anthology?

The list on contributors contains a number of names that would make me interested in reading the contents.

But I don't want to have to pat my head and rub my stomach at the same time in order to do so.

Am I missing something here? Because the setup for discovering the content seems counter-productive to me.

 **Ethan** | #4 | 15:36 on Tue, Jan. 6 | [Reply](#)

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Well, it isn't for everyone... Folks who simply want to read the stories (and who see the add-on as a barrier) probably won't enjoy it.

It's really intended for those who enjoy the journey to the stories as well as the stories themselves. There's something really fun about reading something that doesn't quite make sense, being flummoxed for a moment and then realizing it is an effect of Tumbarumba... or conversely reading something that doesn't make sense and then realizing it's simply poor writing and has nothing to do with the add-on.

 **Talia** | #5 | 08:57 on Wed, Jan. 7 | [Reply](#)

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#3 I, for one, enjoy the random aspect of it. Its like a treasure hunt, of a sort. If its not your cup of tea, its not your cup of tea, but this is fun for me!

I just found my first story and it was really great. It was funny, I installed the thing yesterday and forgot all about it until I was reading a webpage today and the text morphed from perfectly inane drivel about a dance festival into something else entirely. I was totally confused and thought there was bug with the webpage until I remembered what'd I'd installed. :)

 **zombiemaster** | #6 | 20:57 on Wed, Jan.14 | [Reply](#)

[Report](#)

Simply, it's a Treasure Hunt. People who enjoy that and Hide and Seek will enjoy this add on. Brilliant idea, I can't wait to find my first story.




Swell Season on Boing Boing Video



Video: man in Japan weds anime game character



N.A.S.A. feat. Tom Waits + Kool Keith:  
"Spacious Thoughts"

 [chumpmeat](#) #7 | 21:46 on Thu, Jan. 15 | [Reply](#)

[Report](#)

I love it! It gives me surreal non sequiters like

"Getting an error or need to restore your iPod Touch check the video but leaving out the ooky-spooky stuff, the other half of me is talking to his sobbing half: loudly, trying to be heard over the tornado."

whereas without it I would have just read "Getting an error or need to restore your iPod Touch check this post."

And for everyday use the former is clearly superior. It makes me warily scan pages thinking, is this real? Is the crazy writing I find on the internet authentic or is Tumbarumba having me on? And sometimes I'm happier not knowing.

I love thinking, is today's news brought to me by batshit insanity or 'art'? Any text is suspect and I can't take any of it at face value. Wonderful. Genius.

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#### [Gibberish rock song written by Italian composer to sound like English](#)

In this remarkable and fully rockin' video, an Italian singer performs a rock piece whose lyrics are gibberish intended to sound like English. Entitled "What English Sounds Like to Foreigners," the video is meant to illustrate which English phonemes and syllables carry i... [More](#).

#### [Why it's time to lighten up about "weird" Japan](#)

A book called Crazy Wacky Theme Restaurants: Japan landed in my mailbox a couple of months ago. It's a beautifully-designed volume full of photos and essays chronicling author La Carmina's journey into the world of fetish restaurants in Japan. Carmina, who is from Vancouver, has a Gothic-Lolita Japa... [More](#).

#### [Little girl can type 119wpm](#)

This little girl can type 119 wpm. It's not just a skill, it's a hobby. She started playing on the computer at age 4 and spends her weekends typing. Her goal right now? "I'd like to get to at least 200(wpm)." While this may sound strange, I can understand the allure of the type test — when I... [More](#).

### **Black Tattoo Art: Modern Expressions of the Tribal**

Edition Reuss recently released *Black Tattoo Art: Modern Expressions of the Tribal*, a photographic homage to a particular genre of skin art. The book is curated by Marisa Kakoulas (lawyer, writer, circus lady, and blogger.) Above and after the jump, Boing Boing's exclusive peek at some of the... [More](#).

### **Weirdly sexual abstract "fetish objects"**

Artist Marc Woods made this collection of oddly erotic "fetish objects" for the London Wapping Project. Charlie Stross once wrote one of these into a novella we were working on together -- this is exactly how I pictured it. To Have and to Hold by Marc Woods (via Cribcandy) ... [More](#).

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