

## Immersive Storytelling

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/39716550) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/39716550>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings</a>
Category:	<a href="#">Gen</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Hermitcraft SMP</a>
Character:	<a href="#">Rendog</a> , <a href="#">Docm77</a> , <a href="#">Grian</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Alternate Universe - The Magnus Archives Fusion</a> , <a href="#">Spiders</a> , <a href="#">Transcript Format</a> , <a href="#">Arachnophobia</a> , <a href="#">Giant Spiders</a> , <a href="#">Hermitcraft (Hermitcraft)</a>
Language:	English
Series:	Part 17 of <a href="#">From the Archives</a>
Collections:	<a href="#">Hermitcraft x TMA fics</a>
Stats:	Published: 2022-06-18 Completed: 2022-11-08 Words: 3,105 Chapters: 2/2

## Immersive Storytelling

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

### Summary

**[GRIAN]**

I *don't* believe your name is Ren Diggity Dog.

**[REN]**

That's what Ma and Pa Dog named me at the hospital! Cross my heart!

**[GRIAN]**

*(Suspicious silence)*

**[REN]**

Look, do you want my spooky scary story or not?

**[GRIAN]**

Fine, yes, I do, go ahead. Statement of *(groans)* Ren Diggity Dog, regarding... discoveries made in the course of a virtual treasure hunt. Recorded direct from subject today, June 17th, 2022. Statement begins.

### Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

**Statement:**



[Click]

**[GRIAN]**

Statement of- okay, I do need your real name.

**[REN]**

I gave it to you, man! It's right there!

**[GRIAN]**

I *don't* believe your name is Ren Diggity Dog.

**[REN]**

That's what Ma and Pa Dog named me at the hospital! Cross my heart!

**[GRIAN]**

*(Suspicious silence)*

**[REN]**

Look, do you want my spooky scary story or not?

**[GRIAN]**

Fine, yes, I do, go ahead. Statement of *(groans)* Ren Diggity Dog, regarding... discoveries made in the course of a virtual treasure hunt, recorded direct from subject today, June 17th, 2022. Statement begins.

**[REN]**

Heck yeah, dude!

So, I've got a podcast. *The Octagon*. It's been going for, uh... about two years, now? It started off as just a little thing I was doing for fun, lots of riffing off listener questions, or sharing stories from my life, 'cause I've always got *something* interesting going on. Sometimes I would have one of my friends come with me and do an episode on some event, like a concert, or exploring some historical spot in the city and doing spooky narration- all sorts of stuff!

I was mostly just doing it for kicks in my free time, but people seemed to like it enough that I built up a bit of a following in the first year or so of the show. I wanted to make it a little more of a professional enterprise, so I asked a couple people to start helping me out on a regular basis. There was my brother, who composed a rockin' little theme tune for the show, and my friend Doc, who started helping me out with the whole writing/editing side of things.

Doc's a genius, man. He's a wizard with computer stuff- and, listen, I'm no slouch myself, but Doc makes me look like a monkey banging rocks together or something. He's crazy. Love him to death.

But, anyways- so, what happened was I was talking to Doc about how I was kind of wanting to step it up with my storytelling on the podcast. Like, don't get me wrong, I was still having tons of fun, but I was just worried my usual bit would get stale eventually, for me and for the listeners. And nobody wants that!

So me and Doc hatched a plan. He and I were gonna set up, like, this mystery story, right? With clues, like- a scavenger hunt, or, uh, an ARG, if you know what that is. And then I would follow the trail on the show over the course of the next few months or so, and unravel it live for the audience. We were really excited about it. I've always been a sort of theatrical guy, and Doc's the same way, so we got *really* into it.

The first clue that sort of kicked off the mystery would be this notebook with nonsense text inside it that would eventually be revealed to be encoded. And like, once it got started, I didn't actually know that much about what was coming next or how to get to the next clue. Doc and I had talked through some of the broad strokes of it, but we'd agreed it would be way more engaging if I had to figure them out, so I was sort of in the dark about a lot of the stuff he was planning out. I knew how it was gonna end, roughly- there was gonna be this big, grand reveal. But getting there was all on me.

So I got the book of clues dropped off on my doorstep one day, and the game was on.

The notebook had all these pages of different codes in it. I wound up getting a lot of help from listeners- you know, I would post pages online asking for help, and they'd help me crack it. One would decode to a website link, and then the website source code had an image of a bookstore nearby, and I had to go check the bookstore out- that sort of thing, you know? It was fun! And the fans were absolutely loving it.

But the bookstore was the first place things started to get... weird. I knew this set of clues was supposed to lead me to one of the books on the shelves, and after putting together some letters and numbers at the end of the website URL, I figured out I was looking for the last book on the bottom of a specific shelf, but the book I found there was... well, first of all, it was absolutely *buried* in cobwebs. Like, points for the spook factor, for sure, but I was definitely wondering how on earth Doc could've planted it there anytime in the last *decade* and had it look like that.

And it was *sticky*. Like, I pulled the book off the shelf- after a *healthy* amount of hesitation- and it stuck to my hands. I had to scrape the stuff off on my jeans in order to be able to even set it down at checkout long enough to pay for it. The cashier didn't seem to know what to do with it- she didn't want to touch it, and I really couldn't blame her. She told me I could take it for five pounds if I got it out of the store.

At the time, I thought it was just a really well-made prop. The cover was leather, *old* leather, and there was this complicated pattern worked into it of all these intersecting points and lines. Fourteen points. I remember that, cause at that point I had gotten used to counting and remembering important numbers in case I needed to key them into something else as a password later, or use them as a code cipher, or- any number of things, really.

There was a lock on it, like proper old one. So I figured, well, obviously the next thing I needed to do was find the key. So I posted a picture and put out a call to the fans, like usual, only...

Doc called me up. He sounded confused, on the phone, and a little nervous. Which was weird for him. He's normally the sort of guy who isn't really fazed by anything. He asked me where I'd gotten the book, and I said at the bookstore. At first I thought maybe I'd grabbed the wrong book off the shelf by accident, and that's what he was calling about, but that would've surprised me, because- well, it had 'next clue in your spooky mystery hunt' written all over the cover!

But what Doc said was, 'What bookstore?'

And that threw me, man. Like, I thought he was doing a bit. Playing a part for the story, you know? I'd actually started recording the conversation, cause I thought it was part of the game, but the more we talked about it the more I realized he was genuinely worried. So I told him how I'd found my way to the bookstore and sent him the photo of the storefront that the listeners had fished out of the source code, and he was quiet for a long minute and then he said, 'I didn't put this here.'

I was like, *what?* Like, it was his website. It had had clues in it before that were definitely real. How could he *not* have put it there? And he sounded just as confused as I was, and more than a little unnerved, but he told me that the next stop on my hunt was supposed to have been an old games store, not a bookstore. He hadn't planted anything in a bookstore.

So, obviously the question was- if *he* hadn't put the book there, who had? *Someone* had wanted me to find it. And I couldn't just set it down and forget about it. No way. And not gonna lie, I was excited. Like, weirded out, a bit, obviously, but at the same time... it's exciting, right? Stumbling into something like that?

So he came over, and we looked at the book together.

Obviously, we needed a key to open it up, unless we wanted to take a hammer to it. We tried every key we could find between the two of us, but nothing worked. Eventually, Doc said the plan for the treasure hunt originally *did* involve a key at one of the next steps. It was supposed to open a door, not a book, but we figured it would still be worth a try. If one of the clues had been changed, it made sense to assume others might've been as well, you know?

He'd hidden the key under a loose paving stone that the original track of the treasure hunt was supposed to lead to eventually, so that night we headed out with a crowbar and pried it right up.

Well, there wasn't a key under there. What there *was* was a hole. Narrow- *real* narrow, straight down, with ladder rungs set into the side like a sewer drain.

Doc was just staring at it. He said it wasn't there a week ago. Like, he said it with absolute certainty. 'This can't be here.'

We had a bit of an argument over whether we were gonna climb down it. I thought we should, and he thought we should leave and come back better prepared. But I just had this feeling about it, like if we didn't go now we'd never find it again. So eventually I made up my mind that I was going to go whether he wanted me to or not, and he swore at me for awhile, but when I finally started down the ladder, he followed me in.

I won't lie and say I wasn't scared. I was *terrified*, dude. Especially the further down we got, and the less I was able to see, the more aware I was of how sticky the rungs were. It reminded me of the book cover. I couldn't see them, but I just *knew* they were coated with spiderwebs. But we were in too deep, you know? We couldn't just turn around and go back.

Eventually, though, there was this faint, faint light from underneath us, and we dropped out into a tunnel.

There was dirty water running through the bottom of it, like an old sewer or something. I think I saw Doc pick something up and pocket it, but when I asked him what it was he just said he'd tell me later. There were lots of bugs down there. You couldn't see them, really, but you could hear them moving. And it was *thick* with spiderwebs. I didn't want to touch them, but they were so dense we had to push past them to even get anywhere at all. Eventually, they got so solid they forced us to start sticking real close to the tunnel walls- like, we had to go around them instead of through them. It felt like walking down a throat, or something.

The tunnel was long. It had all these little offshoots along the sides as we walked, but they were too small for us to fit down, so there was only one way forward. The ceiling was always just a *little* too low to be comfortable, and you could *hear* the things moving along the walls and in the webs. I had to keep glancing over my shoulder to make sure the tunnel out was still there behind us.

And eventually we hit the end of the tunnel.

It opened up into this *massive* cavern. We were standing on just a little ledge, and it just dropped away completely under our feet. There was no way to see how deep it went. And the thing was- the tunnel stopped, but the wall of spiderweb we'd been walking alongside didn't.

The cavern was the center of a web.

It was so big it took me a minute of staring to even start to wrap my brain around it. The walls had all these holes in them... must have been hundreds of smaller ones, and a dozen or so big ones. ...

Fourteen, if I had to guess. And every tunnel had these impossible cables of tangled-up spidersilk, stretching out into the cavern and crossing together in the center of it. And it wasn't *quiet*, either. It was loud. You could hear all the bugs moving along the webs, *constantly*. The cables were shaking and buzzing from it.

I tell you, man, I've never been particularly scared of spiders, but ever since that night... *ugh*. Can't stand 'em.

I don't know how long we stood there, just staring, but there was... another noise, eventually, from the depths of the pit. This horrible rough sort of... scraping, like... I don't know, like a hairbrush on concrete? And it took me a minute to realize, but- well.

If the *web* was that big...

I booked it. Whatever I'd felt that had made me climb down that ladder, it was long gone. I just needed to get us out of there. I grabbed Doc by the wrist and started running. He seemed sort of frozen, at first, but after I dragged him a few feet he got his head back into the game and started moving, too.

I don't think anything chased us, because we made it back to the ladder safely. Honestly, I think we were too small for it to care about, and thank goodness for it.

We went back to my place to debrief and just talk it out, since it was closer. Doc was... rattled. And, I mean, I can't *blame* the guy, after that. I was too. But he kept checking out the windows to see if anything had followed us, and muttering under his breath.

Eventually, once we'd both calmed down a bit, we decided we'd drop the whole scavenger hunt entirely. Move on with other things. I didn't want to get any deeper into whatever that was we'd stumbled on. Doc... agreed, but he still seemed pretty distant. Lost in his head. I worried... I don't know. He's always been the sort of guy to get all caught up on something until he can puzzle it out, and it's taken him to some great places, but this time...

I don't know, man. I worry.

He left to go home, eventually. I told him to call me up if he needed anything, or if anything else spooky happened, and he promised he would.

It was only after he left that I realized the book was missing.

I don't know if he took it, or if something else happened to it- maybe it dissolved into freakin' spider silk, for all I know. But he's been hard to reach ever since, and I have a bad feeling about it. I'm doing my best here, but- well. If you guys have heard about anything that might explain any of it, it might go a long way towards pulling my best friend out of his own head again.

[Click]

[Click]

**[GRIAN]**

Unfortunately, so far as I can tell, we *don't* have anything that might cast light on this particular situation. I told Pearl to have a look through our library, just in case, but unfortunately the Archives are still a royal mess, and I have a feeling that if there's going to be any helpful information, it's buried somewhere in these piles of folders. But I definitely haven't uncovered anything yet

about... giant spiderwebs.

Definitely an interesting statement, though. And so far as I can tell, it holds up. Ren's podcast is still up online, and the treasure hunt episodes as he detailed them are definitely real, right up to the abrupt cancellation. I guess it's possible somebody would put in that much effort for an online hoax, it's certainly happened before but... I don't know, I believe it. And I feel like if it were fake, surely they'd include the final section in the tunnels as part of the show? As is, the narrative in the podcast ends abruptly after Ren buys the book, which, judging by the comments, led to a fair amount of fan backlash.

I wanted to follow up with Doc personally, but Ren wasn't able to give me a last name for him, only a last initial, which sort of put a wrench in things. The only thing I can verify is that he's credited as an editor and writer on most episodes of *The Octagon*.

...Huh. I, um, that's odd. I haven't eaten all day- I was going to get lunch with Mumbo after this interview. But all of a sudden I feel full, like I've just eaten a proper meal. *Ugh*, Mumbo's gonna look at me so strange when I don't order anything.

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## Supplemental:

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**[GRIAN]**

Since it first came up on this tape, update on the whole hunger situation thing.

Mumbo did in fact look at me weird, but thankfully he didn't really *ask* why I wasn't eating, and I was hungry by the point in the day when I tend to mooch off him for dinner, so that spared *me* an awkward conversation.

For now, at least.

It hasn't happened again, exactly. There's been nobody in to give a live statement in the week since Ren Definitely-Not-Diggity-Dog was here, so I haven't gotten a chance to experiment. It *could* have been some weird fluke. Sometimes you just stop being hungry!

But I don't think it was. I didn't just stop being hungry. I felt full. *Satiated*. You know that thing where if you've just eaten something delicious, the taste stays in your mouth, and you don't want to eat anything else for a bit so you don't lose it? I had that. I don't know *how* I had that, because all I'd done was listen to a guy with fake dog ears on talk about spiders, but I did. And I want it again. I want it *back*.

I tried reading some of the paper statements we have around out loud, while I was working this out, and I think I felt *something* from them. But it wasn't the *same*. I guess I might not have been hungry enough when I read them? Ugh.

If someone doesn't come in with a statement in the next couple weeks I'm going to go out and drag a random guy in off the street, I swear.

Aaaaand I think that's everything? Just gonna click this tape off and do my actual job now, I guess. This is all so weird. Pretty cool! But weird.

[Click]

## End Notes

this was one of the statements i've had on the list ever since i first started this series and it absolutely started entirely from the joke about grian not believing that's ren's real actual name. the backstory behind ren having a podcast is also very funny, i'm sure i'll explain it in one of these end notes eventually.

my dear cowriter zeph wrote the very last paragraph of this statement. specifically, they sent it in dms as a one-off bit, and i said *oh perfect, can i please use that in a statement*, and they said yes.

i don't know... how much posting i'm gonna be doing over the next two weeks since i'm gonna be on vacation, but i will be back eventually! i have a lot planned. i actually have a spreadsheet for planned statements now. it's color-coded. god help me.



uhh if u want to ask me questions or chat about this series i am on tumblr at sixteenth-days!  
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