

# AT EASE

Dear Allies in Bang Bang and Shoot 'em Up,

Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their buddies — or pretend like it at least. As if board games like Risk and Stratego or video games like Asteroids and Space Invaders weren't enough — now we can jump into the action literally.

On the face of this earth as we know it, there are places where people chase, shoot and eliminate other people. We're not talking about Beirut (that war is more expensive, costing both dollars and lives). We're talking about the survival games that are now surfacing all over the country. Think of them as refereed gang wars or grown up sandbox battles — they are exercises in conventional warfare, complete with bad guys, good guys and some sort of wartime attire. On a more futuristic scale, we are talking about the life-size laser games that are also now coming into vogue. In these, people can zap into the action that was once exclusive to movies and darkened corners of video arcades.

Being champions of reporting on real experiences, we sent Tricia into the wilds of the nearby Survival Game. We were safely admiring art at the Houston Museum on that Saturday afternoon while she risked her very existence in the trenches. As usual our instructions were, "have a good time with it." We really wanted her to have fun but honestly expected a defeated warrior to return to the newsroom. Not so.

The next Monday, she rushed into the newsroom to show off her scrapes and bruises and tell us how she got each and every one. She excitedly told how, clad in crisp new camo's and a lace bow in her hair (you just never know who you'll bump into in the bogs), she set out to "get" all the regulars. More often, though, they "got" her, but it turns out she did have a blast and wants to go back.

In our report on the laser warfare we gathered information to try and give you an idea of the scope of this game. It's a complicated process of scoring with shots. Each player decks out in several pounds of zap-dress to make the game seem more realistic and then tries to shoot each other down with laser guns. "Cops and robbers" sure has come a long way since most of us ran through the neighbor's backyard to terrorize the little kids on the block.

We've left it to you to decide what the proliferation of these games actually means. Why are some players snipers, some kamikazis and some dubbed Doctor Death. Are these games a way to develop teamwork? Do they support Darwin's theories on survival of the fittest or are they a "safe" method of dealing with frustration and anger? Or, to quote Tricia, is it all "just a helluva lot of fun."

Anyway, it's food for thought. And meanwhile, a lot of people are making big bucks. But hey, all's fair in love and war, right?

Sincerely,

*Shawn & Leigh-ellen*

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Co-editors

