

It's a Virtual Life?

by Lynn Walford

"Former executives who have *cached-out* are now forming *virtual corporations*," said the *with-it* presenters at a recent business conference. In another seminar, an executive from AT&T informed us that "We've found that our sales people's sales figures increased when we created *virtual offices* for them."

Yes, "virtual" indubitably, is THE big buzzword this season and before we know it, everything we now know to be real may become *virtualized*.

There's already "Virtual Valerie," multimedia interactive sex. Why have real pornography when Valerie will do virtually every thing you tell her to do while you fondle and click your warm mouse? Let's not forget virtual reality, suited up with virtual reality goggles and gloves, you can enter a computerized world, where you are in complete control (as long as the computer programmer lets you). Books have been written on the ethics of this reality; what if someone died of a heart attack because they were frightened by a some bizarre creature in the alternative reality? Would it be considered a virtual murder? And would the victim really be dead?

Virtualalites will continue to propagate in our society. All too soon, advertisements will extol the virtues of virtual ice-cream (frozen non-dairy dessert), virtual crab (texturized scrod with orange food coloring), and virtual burgers(a.k.a. mystery meat), all guaranteed to contain no sugar, salt, fat, or taste.

Plastic surgeons will also get on the virtual bandwagon, fabricating virtual noses, breasts and erections. Once virutality hits the medical community, it won't be long until psychiatrists develop techniques for virtual families and virtual happy childhoods. They'll create a new buzzword, "virtual-relationships." You know, those relationships that aren't really real, but someone in them tries with all his/her heart and soul to keep the thing going. I hear

informed girlfriends telling their dates "I don't want to be in this virtual-relationship anymore, I want something meaningful-- a virtual-marriage!"

Reality will lose any grip it has on us. Illegal aliens will be virtual Americans. Homeless people will live in virtual homes and be offered virtual jobs for government aid. The economy will have a virtual recovery. Hillary Rodham Clinton will serve as virtual president!

Who knows how far this virtual phenomena will go, unless we stop it now! Let's get real. Why is "virtual" buzzed so often? A total lack of creativity by speakers and writers, whose wits are too dull to carve out a new concept or word.

We real people must revolt! When we see a change in society we'll refuse to put virtual in front of a pre-existing word. We'll stand tall and proud. We won't be wimpified by viriless virtualizers. We'll do what Shakespeare did, make up a new word or phrase. Instead of virtual corporations we'll call them *co-operations*. Virtual reality will seem so much nicer when we call it *dreamality*, and as for "Virtual Valerie" well, we know what to call her - *Intersmutmedia in Motion...*

Lynn Walford is a Los Angeles-based writer, who is not a member of a virtual corporation, doesn't work in a virtual office, and once fell out of a virtual reality flying machine at a computer trade show.