



TIGHTBEAM #283

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This is issue **#283** and is edited by Bob Jennings. Letters of comment are solicited from everyone reading this; also, reviews of books read, movies seen, and convention experiences recently attended, and any other fannish material that would be of interest to our members is also requested. Please contact Bob Jennings at—

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You may learn more about the N3F by going to our website at **n3f.org**

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

by **Bob Jennings**

OUR COVER THIS ISSUE is a science fiction travel poster of the future created in the art-deco style of the early 1930s by The Jet Propulsion Laboratory of the California Institute of Technology. They were developed as a promotional effort for their organization, which as they note, has always been concerned with turning positive technological developments into workable solutions for the future.

Fourteen different future-style travel posters, collectively titled “Visions of the Future” were created by a team of nine different artists, designers, and illustrators, consulting with the laboratory’s science and tech experts. The original concept was projected to be a series of posters about exoplanets (planets orbiting other stars) to celebrate NASA’s efforts to locate and study of these far-distant objects, an effort spearheaded by the Jet Propulsion Lab. Later on the director of the JPL saw a classic travel poster while vacationing in the Grand Canyon region, and suggested it might be a good idea to create posters for some of the amazing destinations in our own solar system, which the JPL is also partnered with NASA to study.

The art style was deliberately chosen to echo the style of the old WPA government posters from the Depression era. Printing and photographic efforts are considerably more advanced now than in the 1930s, but the unique style and enthusiasm of those original posters has really been captured in this new series of science fiction future travel pictures.

I am indebted to Jeff Copeland for bringing these posters to my attention. The whole series is well worth checking out, and, as noted on the website, any and all of those posters is free to download, print up, share with friends, or otherwise make positive use of. The website designation is--- <https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/visions-of-the-future/about.php>

To quote the creators concerning the Martian poster: This was the very last poster we produced for the series. We wanted to imagine a future time where humans are on Mars, and their history would reverse the robotic pioneers that came first. There are a few fun things to point out here. You can see the silhouette of Olympus Mons in the background, there's a hint of underground water, and the rover's wheel is spelling out JPL

on the ground in Morse code, just like the Curiosity rover does (for what the rover drivers call "visual odometry.")

I think it's an impressive poster. If I had the buckos and if practical space travel and adequate tourist hotels and facilities were available on Mars I would probably be calling my travel agent right now to book the Red Planet tour.

FAAN AWARDS BALLOT---

Yes, it's that time of year again. It's time for voting in the annual election for the FAAn Awards. What are those you may ask? Well, it's where members of fandom (people like you and me) send in votes to choose the best (or at least the most interesting) in a number of different categories associated with fanzines.

Fans produce fanzines, and these awards are specifically linked to the people who produce fanzines for our hobby. This has nothing to do with professional publishers, movies, TV, media, or any of the other things one might normally associate with such industry-wide awards as the Hugos. The FAAN awards are specifically and very narrowly devoted to fanzines and the people who write, draw, edit and publish fanzines.

This year Nic Farey is in charge of distributing and handling the ballots, and he has done an excellent job of both explaining the awards, along with the separate categories, plus he has also assembled a pretty comprehensive ballot listing almost everything concerning fanzines that appeared in the past year of 2017.

I say almost, because there are a few omissions. Specifically, clubzines are not listed on the ballot, which seems an odd oversight to me. So you will not find DASFAX or TNFF listed, for example, but that doesn't mean you can't vote for those fanzines and the people who produce them if you want. You can enter omitted information when you vote (you just have to explain what/where it appeared).

I had originally intended to reprint Nic's entire mini-zine with the complete ballot, however it turns out the whole thing is 15 pages long, which is a bit more than I am comfortable with running here. However, you can read the entire mini-zine (and I urge you to do so), by going to this web link---
<http://efanzines.com/TIR/Incompleat2017.pdf>



The title of the zine, if you forget, is *The Incompleat Register 2017*, and it is posted on the efanzines.com website. Please go there, look over the entire zine and the ballot in particular, and then vote. You can vote by email, or by printing out the sheets and sending them in via regular mail. The deadline for all voting is 15 March. That leaves lots of time to mull over all your choices, but I suggest voting early, before you get diverted with other things and forget.

Please do vote. Everyone would like to see a major surge in returned ballots this year. The awards will be announced at the upcoming Corflu 35, a fanzine oriented convention that will take place on May 4-6, 2018 in Toronto, Canada. The results will be published on the efanzines.com website shortly thereafter.

SCIENCE FICTION/FANTASY/COMICS IN THE MAIL

Or more properly, on the mail, specifically, the outside of the mail. I am informed that the special commemorative set of Star Trek postage stamps from the year 2016 was phenomenally successful for the Post Office. Not only were millions of the things purchased and used to mail out letters, but, more importantly for the Postal People, plenty of the sheets sold were not used to mail out letters. Instead they landed in the hands of people who kept them as collector's items. Many of those individuals were not even serious stamp collectors, they just happened to be Star Trek fans.

This is a big deal for the Post Office, because every stamp that gets purchased but goes unused represents a hefty profit for the PO. Considering that the PO is currently running millions of dollars in the red due to a number of factors (but mainly, meddling by Congress that insists they future-fund retirement benefits for employees who haven't even been hired yet---yeah, don't even try to figure the whole mess out, none of it makes any sense), every penny of net-net profit they can squeeze out is a big win.

With that in mind, one might reasonably expect there will be even more science fiction/fantasy oriented stamp sets issued in the future. A quick glance at upcoming commemoratives due to be issued in 2018 by the Post Office reveals that there are a couple of items of interest. There will be a stamp honoring Sally Ride, America's first woman into space (deceased 2012), and a series of four stamps about fire breathing dragons. But that's it. There are a couple of issues for science/technology, notably a series for STEM education, and undersea bioluminescent life, but nothing else even remotely related. The fire breathing dragon stamps feature oriental-style artwork, and do not relate to any dragons from our literature.

I think much of the problem here is that the Post Office has been milking the commemorative market for so many years that they have literally almost run out of things to use for these special issues. In the summer of 2018, for example, they will run a series of ten stamps devoted to frozen treats---that's popsicles to you and me. Popsicles! Really! What the hell is left?



Luckily, in the area of science fiction/fantasy they would be plenty of things left, if the Postal People would actually look around and dig deeper. How about stamps devoted to pioneering science fiction magazines? In addition to those strait *Amazing Stories* covers from the 1920s, we could run a few Burgey covers of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* featuring well endowed beautiful damsels with brass bras and ray guns.

Or how about a series of stamps reprinting classic science fiction movie posters, going back to the silent era? I think they could come up with a hundred or so to make a full set pretty easily. A set commemorating science fiction end-of-the-world/universe stories might be of interest to the chronically depressed, or how about a set of stamps devoted to aliens invading planet earth and destroying things right and left. It could be sort of a *Mars Attacks* card set, only on postage stamps.

Since the *Star Trek* set was so successful maybe they could run some stamps devoted to lesser known, but nonetheless historically significant television SF programs, things like *Captain Video* and *Space Patrol*, for example. Sales might not be robust, but the hardcore of TV fans would probably grab up a few.

Or how about a double stamp set, with one sheet featuring photos of UFOs taken by witnesses from 1947 to the present, along with a second set of pictures showing what the US Air Force and the government says the UFO pictures really are? True believers could buy the UFO set; skeptics could buy the *Swamp Gas-Weather Balloon* set. At the end of the year the Post office could report sales figures to see which side, either the believers or the skeptics, was most prevalent.

I'm sure there are even more possibilities. Perhaps some of you folks reading this might offer a few ideas. I'm sure the Post Office would appreciate any help we could give them toward trimming back that deficit.

And that brings right up to the Letters Section---

LETTERS

Hmmmm, there don't seem to be any letters in the Letters Section. What's wrong with this picture? I'd sure like to run a letters section in *Tightbeam*, but you know, we can't have a letters department unless you folks out there reading this (yes, you, you right there), actually send in some letters. How about sitting down right now and sending out a letter of comment on this issue? That way, we could have a full fledged letters department next issue. Seems like a good plan to me. You could email some comments right now.

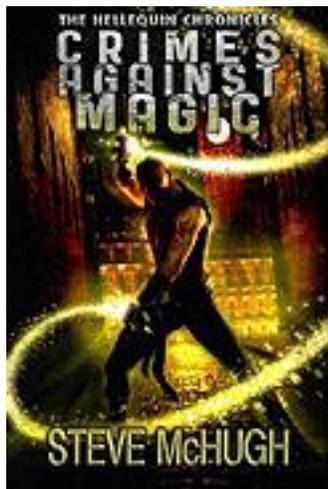


books

Norse Mythology by Neil Gaiman; \$25.95 hardcover, \$9.99 e-book

In his introduction to this collection of fifteen stories, the author revealed that of all the world's mythologies, his favorite is the Norse. That mythology is summarized in these stories with the emphasis on Odin, Thor, and Loki. My favorite was "The Master Builder", because at the end, Loki becomes the victim of his own joke. Otherwise, they are all well written, although they are kinder, gentler, and more humorous than other versions I have read. I would strongly recommend this book for young adult readers, but older ones might be dissatisfied with a book that is really just a recycling of the Snorri Sturluson's Edda.

---review by Tom Feller



Crimes Against Magic by Steve McHugh; trade paperback \$14.95 (heavily discounted most places), e-book version available

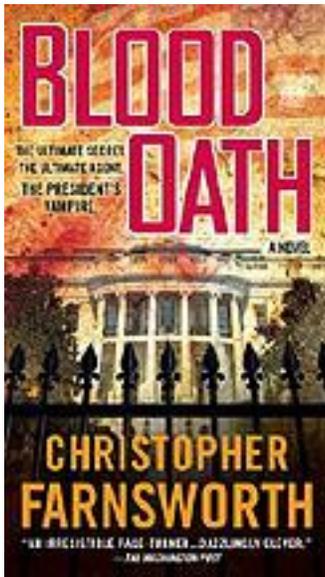
This is what I would call an "everything but the kitchen sink" book. It includes vampires, werewolves, gargoyles, sorcerers, psychics, and characters from both the Homeric and the Arthurian legends. The main character is Nathan Garrett, a sorcerer who is at least seven hundred years old at the beginning of the book. I know this because there are two storylines, each narrated by Garrett. The first is set in France in 1414 and the second in contemporary London. In the second story line, Garrett had lost his memories ten years previously. As he re-learns them, he reminds me of Jason Bourne in the first Bourne novel by Robert Ludlum. In those ten years, he has been working as a thief until he comes to the attention of an old enemy, also a sorcerer. There is a lot of action, and I believe there was at least one fight scene in every chapter. Unfortunately, this does not leave much room for character development. This book is somewhat entertaining, and the first one in the author's Hellequin Chronicles.

---review by Tom Feller

Nightlife by Rob Thurman; paperback \$7.99; e-book version available

The narrator of this novel is a 19 year old half-demon half-human named Caliban "Cal" Leandros. At the beginning of the novel he lives with his older half-brother Niko in New York City, but they do not stay put for long, because they are on the run from demons called alyphes, a kind of dark-elf. Their deceased mother was an alcoholic fortune teller who took money to sleep with a demon one night, and the result was Cal. The brothers also meet a troll, a vampire, a banshee, a psychic, and a werewolf as they fight for their survival. The action is almost non-stop, and it is a very entertaining read with gritty narration.

---review by Tom Feller



Blood Oath by Christopher Farnsworth; hardback & paperback at wildly assorted prices, e-book version available

I must confess, I don't read a whole lot of novels these days. Somehow my iPad and social networking eat up a lot of what was once my book-reading time, and keeping up with theological and apologetic issues tends to get priority, since that stuff actually abets ministries that I'm involved with. But now and again, I still like to kick back with something light, and I keep a stack of books near the bed for that purpose when the mood strikes. Recently, I read a novel that I picked up quite a while back at a local dollar store: Blood Oath by Christopher Farnsworth.

This novel is built on an interesting premise: a powerful vampire, Nathanael Cade, who is eternally sworn to do the bidding of the President of the United States. Cade has been serving presidents since the time of Andrew Johnson, and continues to do so in the modern era. His work is coordinated by agents of the president who are specifically assigned – for life – as his handlers, and much of the story in this book revolves around a transition in that position. Agent William (“Griff”) Griffin has been Cade’s handler for decades, but he is dying of cancer, so a replacement has to be selected. A young, up-and-coming White House staffer named Zach Barrows is the choice, and he begins to train under Griff and to work with Cade. That sounds innocuous, but Zach wasn’t consulted as to whether he wanted the job, and he wasn’t given a choice about accepting it. As it happens, Zach’s career in the White House had already been negatively affected when he was caught having sex with the president’s daughter, so he wasn’t in much of a bargaining position.

As this troubled transition is taking place, there is, of course, a threat to the security of the nation that needs to be dealt with by Cade. A 350-year old alchemist from Germany named Konrad is crafting a group of unstoppable zombie soldiers with the ability to wreak great havoc and destruction. Worse, Konrad is working with traitorous forces in the White House who are willing to help him destroy the nation. It’s up to Zach and Cade to uncover and overturn the heinous plot. You’ll find political intrigue, lots of action, secret behind-the-scenes maneuvering by various individuals on behalf of nefarious forces, possible vampire romance between Cade and a female vampire with whom he has a history and Zach’s development from a rather wimpy desk jockey into a character who can actually handle a powerful vampire like Cade – this book is a page turner!

Apparently, this was a successful novel, and I can see why. There are currently two sequels available, and I have both of them sitting in my reading stack for use in the near future. I read somewhere that the author is planning at least a 10-book series, so it seems like this set of characters could be entertaining us for some time to come.

---review by Tom McGovern



We are Legion (We are Bob) by Dennis E. Taylor; e-book available

In 2016, Bob Johansson is a 40-something science fiction fan who has just sold his software company and made arrangements with a cryogenics firm to freeze his head when he dies. While attending an SF con, he is killed while walking across the street. When he wakes up 117 years later, he finds that there is no longer a United States, because it had been overthrown by the religious right. The great powers are Faith (most of the former United States), China, the United States of Eurasia, Australia, and Brazil. The Middle East is in utter ruin because terrorists obtained nuclear devices. Cryogenics were outlawed in Faith, but his consciousness and memories have been copied to a computer server. His legal status is that of a slave, although Bob does have the choice to become an artificial intelligence for an interstellar probe or to be erased permanently. He chooses the former and is successfully installed in the probe which travels to Epsilon Eridani.

As he leaves, World War III breaks out, and he loses contact with the Earth. The probe is also a Von Neumann machine, meaning that Bob is able to use advanced 3D printing technology to utilize the metals he finds in the system to make copies of himself, which in turn travel to other stars. Each of the copies gets to choose his own name. Since Bob was a Star Trek fan, one of them names himself Riker, who decides to return to the Earth to find out what happened.

The original Bob moves on to another star system and finds intelligent life. One of the probes finds a system with two planets suitable for human life, and another finds an alien artefact. The novel is very entertaining and contains many pop culture references, but little character development in the sense that Bob does not fundamentally change when he goes from being human to a computer program, although his copies each develop their own personalities. The novel ends abruptly, although not in a cliff hanger, and it clear this is the first book in a series.

---review by Tom Feller



Holy Boredom, Batman! (YET MORE SPOILERS)---Gotham: Dawn of Darkness by Jason Starr; mass market paperback \$7.99; e-book version costs exactly the same as the paperback version

Yeah, I know. Novelizations aren't great literature. I wasn't expecting a lot from Gotham: Dawn of Darkness by Jason Starr, and I didn't get even as much as I expected. In my own defense, the book isn't technically a novelization; it's a pastiche, a prequel to the prequel, as it were. In fact, it's billed as the "official prequel" to the popular TV series (which, of course, is itself a prequel to the entire Batman mythos).

Now, understand, I'm a big fan of the Gotham TV series. The acting is amazing and the storylines are completely over the top. David Mazouz, the young man who plays the adolescent Bruce Wayne, is an incredibly convincing actor. When the series began, I couldn't see how this skinny kid was going to turn into Batman, who is anything but skinny. But Mazouz plays the part so well that I can actually see him developing into the Caped Crusader.

The point of Gotham: Dawn of Darkness is to recount the storyline that brings us up to the iconic murder of Thomas and Martha Wayne, which sets the stage for Bruce's development into The Batman, and therefore for everything that happens in the Gotham TV series. What it provides, however, is a bunch of seemingly unrelated storylines, including a central one in which Thomas Wayne tries to hide his earlier involvement with Hugo Strange in performing experiments on humans that turned them into monsters.

It begins with a robbery of a valuable Picasso from Wayne Manor, in which Alfred kills one of the robbers who is threatening the Wayne family. Harvey Bullock and his current partner, a female detective named Amanda Wong, set out to find the perps, and much of the novel focuses on their efforts to do so. But there is little consistency. And after all the focus on the Picasso it turns out that the theft was just a creative endeavor by one of the thugs hired by Hugo Strange to relieve Dr. Wayne of evidence of their collusion in the human experiments. The evidence was never in any danger, of course, being secured by Thomas in his secret office in the caves below Wayne Manor – and we know what those caves will eventually become.

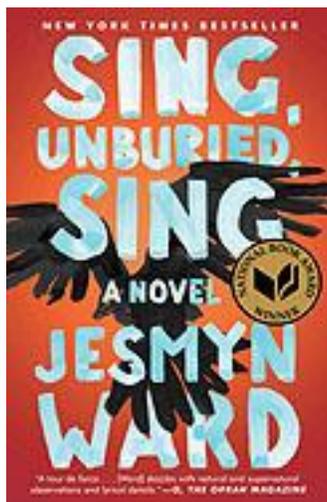
The characters are poorly drawn: Thomas Wayne, though well-intentioned, seems rather sleazy, while his wife Martha is overly suspicious and a bit paranoid. Hugo Strange lacks subtlety and Harvey Bullock comes across as drunken and thuggish. Amanda Wong, though an interesting character, is clearly a placeholder and needs to die before the book's conclusion in order to make way for Jim Gordon as Bullock's partner in the TV series, though Gordon never actually appears in the book. Amanda Wong dies in a rather implausible fashion, at the hand of a character that seems to have been written into the story for no reason other than to kill her. The only characters who seem reasonably consistent with their personalities from the TV series are Bruce and Alfred, and there's far too little of Bruce in the story (except for his near-constant whining about wanting to take boxing lessons and an extended bullying incident that appears to serve little purpose other than that to establish that Bruce can be a tough kid when he needs to).

Overall, the story is disjointed and the motives of characters are unclear. When the final scene, the murder of the Waynes, finally does arrive, it seems unconnected to much of anything else in the story. The

implication, I guess, is that Hugo Strange is somehow behind it in an effort to silence Dr. Wayne, but the connection is never quite made. The book is easy enough to read, though it never really becomes a page-turner. There was no point at which I found myself thinking that I really had to know what was coming next. Things just drifted along, aimlessly at times.

I wasn't expecting great literature from this novel by any means, but I was hoping for a good time; unfortunately, it didn't deliver. My advice: don't bother.

---review by Tom McGovern



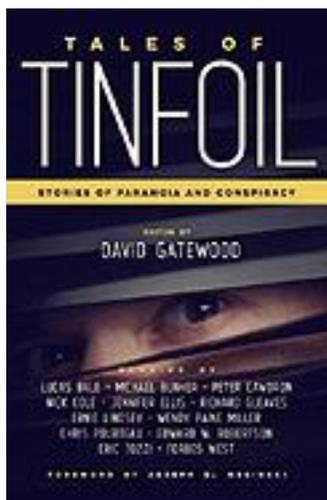
Sing, Unburied, Sing by Jesmyn Ward; hardback \$26.00; paperback \$14.95; e-book \$13.99

Although it is not marketed as such, this is really a ghost story. The main ghost is Richie, a twelve-year old African-American boy who was killed in Mississippi in 1948, and he is one of the narrators. There are two other narrators: Jojo, a thirteen year old mixed race boy, and Leonie, his mother, an African-American. They live in Bois Sauvage, a fictional present-day Mississippi community close to the Gulf of Mexico, with her parents, Pop and Mam, and Leonie's three year old daughter, called Michaela by her mother and Kayla by Jojo, Pop, and Mam.

Michael, Leonie's European-American husband estranged from his parents, is serving time at Mississippi's maximum security prison in Parchman for making methamphetamines. Pop raises goats, pigs, and chickens while Mam is the voodoo local witch and folk healer, but herself ill with terminal cancer. Leonie is a drug addict who sees the ghost of her deceased brother Given when she is high. Given had been murdered by Michael's cousin when he was eighteen.

When Michael is scheduled to be released, Leonie, Jojo, Kayla, and Leonie's European-American friend, co-worker, and fellow drug addict Misty, go on a road trip to pick him up, which provides the novel with a plot. When they reach Parchman, Richie attaches himself to Jojo, who, along with Kayla and later the family dog Caspar, are the only ones who can see him, and he accompanies them back to Bois Sauvage, where he has business with Pop, who once did time at Parchman himself. I found it hard to put this novel down while reading it.

---review by Tom Feller



***It's a Conspiracy!* Tales of Tinfoil edited by David Gatewood; Trade Paperback \$18.99; e-book version \$3.99**

I've expressed in these pages before that I'm not totally fond of e-books. Normally, I'd much rather enjoy the paper variety. But one advantage that e-books have brought to the marketplace is lots of free books, if you know where to look for them. In my case, I subscribe via RSS feed to a listing of free books available for Kindle at Amazon.com. Usually, the books are only available for free for a few days, and then revert back to whatever the regular price is. I'd rather read a paper book for sure, but when the e-version is free, I can usually deal with the format. The only problem I have is overindulging – it's so much faster and easier to download e-books than it is to read them! Since I spend a fair amount of time in doctors' offices waiting for appointments these days, my iPad with the Kindle app has proven very useful.

Anyway, one of the books I got for free from Amazon was Tales of Tinfoil, a collection of "stories of paranoia and conspiracy" edited by David Gatewood. It's a very enjoyable collection, and the short story format works well with the situation of reading in doctor's offices that I mentioned. It hasn't been unusual for me to finish a story in one session of waiting for a tardy physician.

I'm not going to go into detail about the stories, though I will say that the collection leads off with one of the better tales about the supposed conspiracy to kill JFK that I've read. If you want to know where the fatal shot really came from, who pulled the trigger and what happened to said gunman, this is the place to go. Other stories relate to Elvis' supposed faked death, what really goes on at Area 51, who John Wilkes Booth really killed, whether some Hollywood stars gain fame by occult means, and a number of other glimpses behind the scenes of reality. There are twelve stories in all, and most of them are quite good. I've been enjoying this collection for better than a year now, and I was sorry to realize that I'd come to the end.

The book isn't free anymore, but as of this writing, you can get the Kindle version for just \$3.99. It's worth every penny, but I have to wonder what they really hope to accomplish by selling it so cheaply...

---review by Tom McGovern



Akata Witch by Nnedi Okorafor; Trade Paperback \$10.99; e-book version about \$9.99

Okorafor is the winner of last year's Hugo for Best Novella with "Binti", and she returns here with the beginning of a new Young Adult series that explores the magical traditions of East Africa. The title character is Sunny Nwazue, a young girl born in the US to a power couple of Nigerian émigrés. Shortly before the book starts, the family returns to Nigeria so Sunny's mother and father can practice law and medicine in their native land. Sunny soon discovers that she is a Leopard Person, an African magic user, and is recruited along with two friends into the study of magic.

The Leopard People keep themselves carefully hidden from mundane society as they have found from long experience that the two cannot co-exist peacefully. Sunny is at a greater disadvantage in that she's the only Leopard in her family, and so she must keep her growing powers and the dangers her three-person coven face later completely secret from them.

Sunny, Orlu, and Chichi are all very gifted Leopard People, and together they must confront a developing threat from the dungeon dimensions. They are the third team that the Powers sent to destroy Black Hat Otokoto, a dark wizard serially killing both mundane local children and other magic users trying to stop him. The three novices must band together to stop Black Hat because the elder magicians cannot, because the Black Hat knows all of their juju. The three must work together to invent a completely new sort of magic in order to defeat the Black Hat.

The book was very enjoyable as it introduces us to the world of Nigeria, a place which can seem as alien as another planet. This book, and its sequel "Ataka Warrior" create a world that's equal parts Harry Potter, Earthsea, and coming-of-age teen drama.

The biggest revelation for me was that native Nigerians have a derogatory word for a Nigerian who has become Americanized. 'Akata' is an igbo word for a wild beast, and it's about as complimentary as racial slurs in the US. I think it's a fascinating concept that in any culture there is a need to separate out the *Others* and find ways to inferiorize them. I put Nnedi Okorafor in a similar category as Ian MacDonald in setting stories in places we might be able to locate on a map, but don't know much about the people there or how they live.

---review by Gary Robe



So, Just Who Was Andre Norton, Anyways?

by

Jeffrey Redmond

Whenever you mention the name of Andre Norton to anyone who's read her stories, and you will immediately see their eyes light up. There was just that particular something about Andre Norton. She always called herself an old fashioned storyteller. And, indeed, whether it was fantasy, science fiction, adventure, romance, or any other genre of popular literature, she always managed to capture and hold your attention in the gracious style of the old bardic masters. That quality, as acknowledged by both her readers and critics, has forever given her the title of The Grand Dame of Science Fiction and Fantasy.

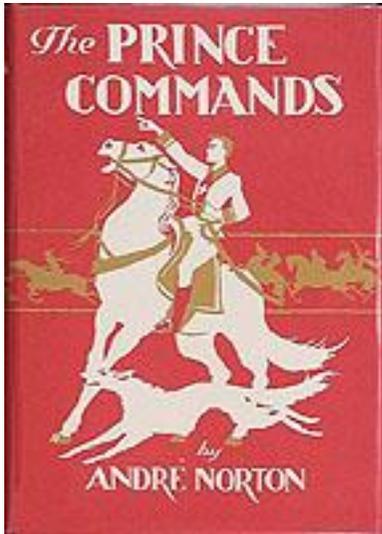
Alice Mary Norton was born on 17 February 1912 in Cleveland, Ohio, USA. She was the second daughter of Adalbert Freely Norton, owner of a rug company, and Bertha Stemm. Being a late child, born seventeen years after her sister, she never developed close relationships with her siblings or contemporaries and was influenced primarily by her parents, especially her mother, who later on did all her proofreading and served as a critic-in-residence. Alice always had an affinity to the humanities.



Growing up, much attention was given in Ms. Norton's family to books, the visible sign of which was always the weekly visit to a public library. Even before she could read herself, her mother would read to her and recite poetry as she went about various household chores. Even her good grades at school were rewarded by books, namely by copies of Ruth Plumly Thompson's Oz novels. It was this literary fondness of her parents that remained with her throughout her life.

She started writing in her teens, inspired by a charismatic high school teacher. She started writing at the Collingwood High School in Cleveland, under the tutelage and guidance of Miss Sylvia Cochrane. She became an editor of a literary page in the school's paper, called *The Collingwood Spotlight*. As such, she had to write many short stories. It was at the school hall, where she wrote her first book, "Ralestone Luck", which was finally published as her second novel in 1938 (the first one was "The Prince Commands", published in 1934).

Also in 1934, she legally changed her name to Andre Norton (Andre Alice Norton, to be exact). First contacts with the publishing world led her, as many other contemporary female writers targeting a male-dominated market, to choose a literary pseudonym. She expected to be writing for young boys, and the male name was expected to increase her marketability. The androgynous Andre didn't really say "male," though it let readers reach their own conclusions. Up until recent years young males were basically disinclined to read anything written by a female author. The famous "Harry Potter" series author, J K Rowling, used only her initials for the same reason.



After graduating from High School, she continued her education at the Flora Stone Mather College of Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve). She was there for a year, from the autumn of 1930 until the spring of 1931, and intended to become a history teacher. Then, due to the Great Depression, she was forced to find work in order to support the household. She took evening courses in journalism and writing that were offered at Cleveland College, the adult division of the same university.

In 1932 Ms Norton was employed by the Cleveland Library System. She spent most of the next eighteen years of work in the Cleveland Library System as an assistant librarian in the children's section of the Nottingham Branch Library there in Cleveland. Although she became something of a troubleshooter for all of the library branches, her lack of having a college degree prevented her from advancing as her abilities might have otherwise dictated. She couldn't change jobs, because there weren't very many other employment opportunities during the Great Depression.

In 1941, for a short period of time, she owned and managed a bookstore and lending library called the Mystery House, situated in Mount Ranier, Maryland. Unfortunately it was a failure. At much the same time, from 1940 to 1941, she worked as a special librarian in the cataloguing department of the Library of the Congress. There she was involved in a project related to foreigners getting citizenship, which was abruptly terminated by the beginning of the World War II.

She returned to work with the Cleveland Library System, but "retired" in 1950 due to declining health. However retirement was a word Ms Norton never recognized. She began working as a reader for Martin Greenberg at Gnome Press while continuing to write, turning now to science fiction. After eight years she left Gnome Press to devote herself completely to writing.

During the time she had been working as an assistant librarian she was also writing. She primarily wrote short historical adventure novels aimed at the young male audience. Between 1934 and 1948 she had five novels published. There is a persistent rumor that she also wrote pulp magazine stories during the 1930s and early 1940s, but thus far no definite evidence of this has emerged.



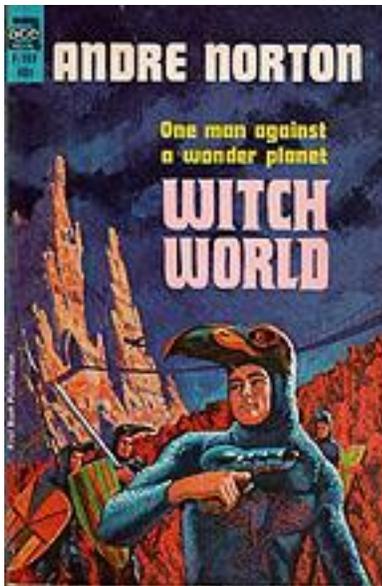
Altho she was familiar with science fiction, her first science fiction/fantasy story to see print appeared in 1947, published as the cover feature in the very first issue of *Fantasy Book Magazine*, a semi-pro magazine produced by William L. Crawford under his FPCI label. For some reason that story, and the one that followed in the third issue, appeared under the pen name of "Andrew North".

The 1950s and 1960s were extremely productive decades for Andre Norton. In the space of twenty years she turned out seventeen novels, most of them science fiction or fantasy, offered in both hardback and paperback editions.

In November 1966, her uncertain health necessitated a move to Winter Park, Florida, where she lived until 1997. She then moved to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where she established a writer's retreat called the High Hallack Library project.

Her death, from congestive heart failure, came at her home in Murfreesboro at age 93, on March 17th 2005. It was a relief to her many fans to also receive the report that her death came peacefully in her sleep at about 2:30 am.

The science fiction and fantasy world certainly lost a wonderful friend in author Andre Norton. She was most famous for such works as the popular "Witch World" and "Time Traders" series. The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America recently created the Andre Norton Award for young adult novels, and the first

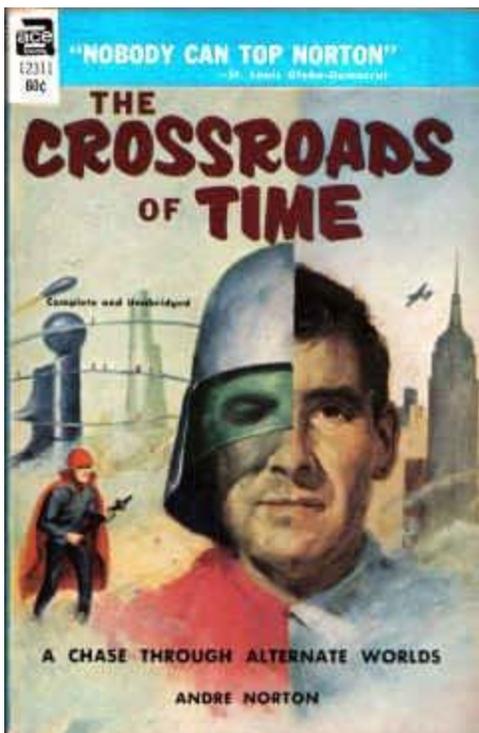


award will be presented in 2006. Ms Norton was the first woman to receive the Grand Master of Fantasy Award from the SFWA in 1977, and she won the Nebula Grand Master Award in 1984. And her last complete novel, "Three Hands of Scorpio," was released in April 2005.

She was often classified as a writer for young adults, but maybe that could be redefined as for the "young at heart". Anyone, either gender, or any age, who enjoys great, emotional stories will find at least one segment of her enormous range of writing to treasure. Her style was clean and simple. She didn't digress into an examination of minutiae, of either exterior or interior worlds. With graceful ease she leads the reader to the very essence of her characters, and clearly created her settings, much like an artist who could suggest the whole shape of an object by the thickness of the line with which she drew. The results were always lean and rich stories that moved the reader onward.

But there was also something beyond just the skillful plots and incredibly imaginative settings; something intangible that fused her writing into the deepest parts of the reader's soul. The Lady, as her fans called her, reached the hearts of people like no one else before or since. Most new readers are usually in their teens when they first find her. And for those who do, it's like falling through a secret door into a universe of other worlds. Wild, beautiful worlds where being different is no crime, and great, courageous heroes overcome their own fears and prove stronger than evil. Her characters always seem to find just that right place to accomplish the most good.

Andre Norton was a spiritual life blood to people growing up with her stories. Part of it was the validation one gets from the reading of the protagonist. And part has all of the thematic elements dealt with in her books that were always so fundamental and as close to a universal appeal as you can get. And part of it was just how well told her tales are, how much the reader believes them and wants to live in those worlds. And part of it was perhaps truly just her personal magic.



Without profanity or graphic violence, Andre Norton wove tense, dramatic tales. Her protagonists are frequently young. The virtues of the past, and of nature, are important elements in many of her stories. And all of her books are meticulously researched and provide a treasure of historical information, as well. It has been said that science fiction is primarily philosophy that expounds the right to be different. Nowhere is that truer than in Ms. Norton's writing, where protagonists of many ethnicities have shown their intelligence and valor, and the value of all living things is affirmed.

The critics weren't always quick to support her. But eventually they began to notice the consistent quality of her work. Today she is one of Science Fiction and Fantasy's most lauded female authors, and the first woman to receive the Gandalf Grand Master of Fantasy and the SFWA Nebula Grand Master Award. Her success paved the way for other women to write in these fields. Writers such as C.J. Cherryh, Anne McCaffrey and Mercedes Lackey are inheritors of Andre Norton's legacy.



Although her work encompassed many genres, Andre Norton is probably most famous for her fantasy, and in particular her Witch World series. She began these in 1963 with the Hugo Award nominated book of the same name. The popularity of the Witch World series has been so great that Ms. Norton continued it, to the delight of her many fans, for an incredible total of thirty-five books.

And then there's that something else. When reading one of her books, you feel that she wrote that story just for you alone. That somewhere, in a world very nearby, the person in those pages lives. Her characters are real in a way authors who have expended three times as many words can never achieve. And throughout the course of your life they remain permanent

companions.

Today, almost all of her books and short stories remain in print. Some titles that have inadvertently fallen out of copyright are posted on free e-book websites, such as Project Gutenberg (which currently has 16 books listed). Many other titles are available in inexpensive e-book versions thru the websites of popular book sellers.

So thank you Andre Norton for all of your many years of fascinating reading. We will certainly miss you, dearest friend. And especially even more so because now we know just who you were, are, and forever will be.



DETOUR

by

George Phillies



Captain Marcus O'Bryan glared listlessly across his bridge deck. Command of the *Twilight Princess* was supposed to be the pinnacle of his career. The *Princess* was Orpheus High Lines' finest starship, her fittings a triumph of modern Artistic Engineering. Now everything had gone wrong. Halfway through her voyage's longest leg, passenger after passenger had fallen unconscious. His crew joined them. The ship's physicians had no explanation, no alternative other than placing the sick into temporal stasis. He had a skeleton watch, barely enough men to fly the ship.

The nasal voice of Chief Engineer Oswald Mengler intruded on O'Bryan's reverie. "Sir? There's uncharted turbulence, level seven, dead ahead. We can avoid most of it. We sideswipe a vortex line in ten

minutes." O'Bryan's displays flashed to life. The turbulence bank, now swimming into range of the ship's detectors, displayed as a shimmering mass of distortions in the fabric of space.

"Can we avoid it completely?" O'Bryan told himself he should ask, no matter how obvious the answer.

"It's very large, Sir. We'd lose at least ten hours. This area was extensively surveyed before our new route was approved. I don't see how it could have been missed." Mengler brought the survey report up in false color.

"Surveys! At least the old *Conquistador*-class scouts had nice big windows. You could look out and see what just hit you. Compute a path around it. Alert the crew!" O'Bryan leaned back. Most of the passengers were already in stasis. The remaining engineering staff, spread the length of the ship, was problematic. For healthy men, turbulence was unpleasant. For men drifting toward unconsciousness, turbulence was potentially lethal. All his choices were bad. If he went through the turbulence, he might be left with too few people to fly the ship. If he did an emergency stop, changed course, and worked up to speed again, the extra flying time might kill. No one might be alive to pilot the ship at voyage's end.

A clatter of dishes marked a robot delivering his dinner. The noise was a welcome intrusion into his gathering gloom. He could put the ship into orbit, someplace, put absolutely everyone into stasis, and hope for rescue before engineering failure did them in. But in the Rift, that approach was foredoomed.

"Sailing Master?" O'Bryan peered haggardly through the transceiver at Master Richard Hamilton. They had both been on active duty for three days. Chemical substitutes for sleep were wearing a bit thin. "Any help?"

"I just sent you up an additional person, a qualified engineer. There are no other possibilities." Hamilton spread his hands.

"Mr. Hamilton," the Captain's voice was shrill. "I must check with Dr. Kiyamura. No. You go and talk to him. You know how he is over a transceiver. He must be told -- no matter his ethicals -- he must get volunteers for forced revivification. We can't go on if we lose more officers. I know. Some people will d... will be irreversibly terminated. Friends of mine. What else can we do? We must protect the passengers."

Mengler glanced up at the Captain. "Ready for course change."

O'Bryan surveyed his domain. Helm and Engineering consoles were manned---all you really needed to steer. The servitor and its human escort had stayed entirely out of his sight. He nodded. The Bridge's full-field visual displays snapped into place, blocking his sight of the room. Background sounds faded to silence. When he spoke, the voice-to-text converter displayed his written orders to his officers. They might fail to hear, or be momentarily distracted. Text conversion meant the orders waited to be read.

On the display, blue threads of light crept toward the ship's prow. O'Bryan gritted his teeth. He hated even low-level turbulence. The deck shuddered. His skin felt heat and cold and jabs of pain---his nerves responding to spatial distortions. The deck seemed to sag infinitely down, then snapped back to place.

O'Bryan's task was to monitor his crew. He stood figuratively at their shoulders. Was the ship responding properly? Automatic controls made space flight possible, but extensive human judgment was needed. And judgment was needed now! The turn was too sluggish, taking them deeper and deeper into the turbulence.

"Engineering!" he called. "We're losing drive phasing. Mengler! Mengler?"

The Captain's voice-to-text converter came to life. "Mengler disabled: turbulence plus Yamamoto syndrome. Passenger Marshall-FitzRyan/Warrant Engineering Officer via Sailing Master/A Level Engineering papers/request clarification."

O'Bryan blanched. Who was FitzRyan? He must be the passenger Hamilton just mentioned. Whoever he was, he had valid papers. The safety interlocks would have ignored him if he didn't.

"Are the controls familiar?" Of all the positions to lose, engineering was the worst. O'Bryan braced for the answer.

"Your drives and controls were lifted from *Canopus* Class giant scouts, which I've flown regularly." Marshall-FitzRyan answered. "Sailing Master said the controls matched." O'Bryan tapped a touch panel. The authorization matrix said 'PASS'. There really were not any alternatives. The turbulence was getting worse.

The Helmsman slipped in a few sentences. "*Canopus* is an Outer Reach survey vessel. We're functionally identical, just more chrome around the drive cores."

The captain tensed. "Very well. Proceed with caution." Ever so slowly, the drives shifted back into phase. The *Twilight Princess* answered properly to her helm again.

"You're Outer Reach?" O'Bryan said to FitzRyan.

"Correct." FitzRyan's words formed on the heads-up display. "Controls match your Engineering specs. I wasn't sure the manual was totally up-to-date. Shall I finish the retuning?"

The Captain's estimate of FitzRyan's judgment went up appreciably. FitzRyan had done the absolute minimum, given that it was definitely not desirable to fly straight into a turbulence line. Having done the minimum, he had the sense to ask for further instructions. O'Bryan wished the turbulence would come to an end so they could talk like normal human beings.

Warning lights paled from amber to white. The turbulence receded. O'Bryan yawned, tried to shake out the cramps in his back. The heads-up display vanished. He would have to thank FitzRyan, whose competent intervention had prevented a real mess. He looked over to the Engineering console, where the robotdoc was loading poor Mengler into a stasis shell. Next to it stood a girl, perhaps ten or eleven years old. Where, he puzzled, was Passenger FitzRyan? And how had a child gotten onto his bridge? Damn the Security computer! And double-damn its alleged programmers!!

She glanced up at him, blue-green eyes sparkling over her smile. Her hair was the finest of spun gold, gleaming though a fragment of the sun itself lay trapped within. With almost military precision, she wore a long-coat pantsuit laced with bronze piping.

"Young lady," he asked, more harshly than he quite intended, "What are you doing there? Where is the other passenger, the one who adjusted the controls?"

"Other passenger?" She sounded totally baffled. Contrary to O'Bryan's expectations for someone her age, she gave no sign of being paralyzed by a fear of being disciplined. "That was I who retuned your drive." Her voice had a childish trill, but none of the hesitation of a child being challenged by an adult.

"Will you please come here?" O'Bryan realized he was using in the tones he reserved for adults. Her stride up the stairs to the Captain's console was vigorous and assured. You're treating her as an adult because she is well-dressed, O'Bryan thought. She's well-clothed. Most modern children look scruffy.

"I have flight papers," she said.

He looked back, smiling gently. "I'm afraid the sort of papers you have aren't really going to be useful. Where are you from? Newholme?"

"These," she pulled her certificates from her over blouse, "ought to be adequate."

O'Bryan managed to avoid choking. "Why don't you sit down?" he stammered, gesturing at an acceleration couch. He held a set of Flight Certificates. He could have believed a white J level packet, representing an ability to read data panels with accurately. From its color, the rose-garnet case in his hand represented senior flight licenses.

The hologram was the girl's. Scanners confirmed that the papers were hers. Data plates spelled out her name and ratings. "Barbara Marshall-FitzRyan," he read, "A-level Pilot clearance, Master Singleship Pilot, Engineering A level/ *Canopus* class..." This, he thought, is ridiculous. How can a ten-year-old have this background? Through the corners of his eyes, he noticed a tight grin on her lips. He shook his head again. "What's your home port?"

"Outer Reach. Cymbeline."

"Oh, Cymbeline. You have a private pocketcalc, in where you can't drop it." He tapped his skull.

"It's not separate from me. I'm as much in o- as n-mind." She abruptly stopped talking. The techniques which enhanced her neuronal n-mind with massively-parallel organanooptic processors -- o-mind --were illegal in the Republic. There was no need to correct his tap of the head: Her o-brain sat in her chest cavity, using her lungs to enhance cooling capacity. He pursed his lips, suddenly deep in thought.

She glanced over his library. O-mind borrowed control of her eyes, optimizing focus at the visual periphery where its detectors were located. For the barest shade of an instant, n-vision blurred: despite careful re-engineering, the eye's lens had noticeable spherical aberration. In the shade of an instant, o-thought scanned the wall, storing each title, binding style, and place on the shelf. By the time she glanced back to the Captain, n- and o-memories both knew the Captain's interests and hobbies: ocean sailing, ocean navigation, and philosophy of reason.

"Are you really that bothered," she began, "that I'm a woman?"

"That hadn't even occurred to me. We aren't all that bigoted," he answered. "Most of us, anyhow. If you'll forgive my bluntness, how did an eleven-year-old, Outer Reach or not, manage to earn all these papers?"

"All...what?" Her face flushed slightly. She hadn't expected his question. "Things are a bit different on Cymbeline." He remained baffled.

"To fly a ship you need masses of empirical knowledge, not just the talent for logical extrapolation that mark a child genius."

"Oh, I see. I'm First Extension. I'm a bit older than twelve."

"Oh, of course." He should have recognized the obvious. Extension blocked aging. A Republic adult expected centuries of mature good health. The Outer Reach used Extension twice. Full Extension prevented old age. First Extension, applied reversibly to children, separated physical and mental maturity. In the Outer Reach you gained a profession, a mature standpoint on life while inhabiting a child's body, and then later, much later, you grew up and faced the hormonal issues. "You returned the drives cleanly. What more can a Captain ask of Engineering? But..." he hesitated.

"Yes?" She smiled again. It was a captivating smile.

"I don't care how old you are. You don't get A-level clearances without emotional maturity. But turbulence---most kids your, ummh, physical age--and that's what counts, isn't it?--would be out cold." O'Bryan wondered how reliable she was in a real emergency.

"I've manned duty posts in unshielded force through eight storms. It's mostly a matter of being tough with yourself. I guess Republic children are never asked to be tough," she countered.

"That's for sure. Most are never asked for anything. Especially anything like work. Thank you again for stepping in when you did. We were in a spot of trouble, or close to." O'Bryan tried to fake a show of enthusiasm. For all her good looks, her ageless serenity grated against his sensibilities.

She forced a wider smile. "Look, if you need an engineer, I'd be happy to continue. I'd asked the Purser earlier, but he said the Sailing Master had picked the passengers he wanted."

O'Bryan shook his head. "If I recall Mr. Hamilton's words aright, he looked among the *male* passengers. An unfortunate oversight, though not an oversight unnatural in the Solar Republic. So welcome on deck. You've heard my helmsman, Mr. Murchison, though I prefer my Bridge Deck to know each other's first names."

"The name's 'Clyde' to friends, especially those in a storm." The Helmsman, a lanky young man with shocking red hair, grinned broadly.

"Barbara' is fine. I'd be delighted to talk, though I ought to take another look-through on the controls." She waited for the Captain's nod. As she turned her back, O'Bryan gave Murchison a firm thumb's-up sign. Murchison grinned stiffly. O'Bryan saw the look in Murchison's eyes. The Helmsman wasn't quite comfortable with his new crewmate yet. Not surprising, considered O'Bryan. There'd never been a female bridge officer on this ship, let alone an officer on First Extension.

O'Bryan hoped that Murchison didn't believe all the nonsense in the tabloids. Supposedly Cymbelines were inhuman monsters with super strength and instant reflexes. Anticipating Murchison's thoughts, O'Bryan excused himself and left Murchison with the conn. The ship's course was clear. Letting Murchison and FitzRyan talk would ease Clyde's discomforts.

* * * * *

"This can't be your first flight, then, Barbara?" Murchison finally asked.

"Hardly, Clyde. I had my maiden flight twelve, no, thirteen years ago. I was old then for that, by our standards." She could feel his discomfort. "I've been in my share of sticky spots. Two with Guild Inquiries afterward." She saw him frown at that remark. "Came out with commendations both times." He nodded in admiration.

"That's good. That's very good. I mean, Barbara, if the Captain seemed cold, it wasn't intentional. He just didn't think you might have proper flight papers. Especially not the level you do," Clyde explained defensively.

"Is being a woman that strange, Clyde? I'd thought that there were female officers in the Republic," she asked.

"Well, some. I've even met one. But you keep saying 'woman'. That's not the problem. We know the Outer Reach has first-rate female officers. Even the Republic has a few. It's how old you are---I mean, how old you look. "

"I'm not that short, and definitely not that fragile. I can take more turbulence, or more acceleration for that matter, than most grown-ups. And I have; even though I didn't enjoy it,"

"What's bothering the Captain---and I've flown with him for years, I know how he thinks---is your age. He doesn't see"---Barbara could tell that 'he' meant 'I'---"how you could take being locked up in a little girl's body. Don't you miss not having boyfriends?" asked Murchison.

"Clyde, I've got plenty of friends." She giggled softly. "Oh. That sort of friend. No, Cymbeline isn't so different from Earth. I'll have them in time. But I don't think about it now. First extension is a chance to grow up, without getting distracted." Barbara said.

"What I should ask is how well you really know our controls. We may be reverse-engineered from a *Canopus*-class, as closely as possible, but the arts and crafts types sometimes move switchbanks hither or thither." He gestured at the panels in front of her.

"The Sailing Master dropped the ship's engineering specs in my Cabin Library, all three terawords of them. I had a good ten minutes to study." His face showed dismay.

Oh, right, she thought. "Cabin Libraries have datacable?" O-mind caught the first premonitory tremor of a nod. "Which I can use." She pulled up a sleeve to expose her forearm. Black circles marked optical interface ports, extensions of her o-brain lying almost exposed to the open air. He flinched, ever so slightly. "My o-mind is as much me as my sense of smell." O-mind chided n-mind more harshly. She was being impolite.

Murchison shook his head. "At the Laurent Academy we had a professor from Cymbeline. I saw him in action. If you've integrated the file, I'm completely happy."

Barbara smiled. She was sure he had other reactions, but couldn't interpret them. She stared at the meter panels in front of her. "Are there unlogged calibration factors hidden someplace? Your Engineer was using programs I can't access, not while he's in stasis. The computer data panels and the hard-wired meters have stopped matching. We should have constant speed. The meters claim we're losing a light a second. That doesn't make sense."

"What? Agreed." Murchison paged the Captain. "I always trust meters. They're the way God intended starships to be wired. To slow down that fast, we'd need to be heading straight at a star. But the screens are dark." He waved at the ceiling display, which showed only distant faint points of light.

"We're still slowing down. The backups to the acceleration compensators went to stand-by. Computer denies it, but the hardwire lines say we did. What are those backups, anyway? The manuals are a bit vague," she said.

"There's an acceleration compensator on each crew position. If the main bridge compensator goes down, the positions stay at one gee. The space between our posts loses acceleration shielding, so the rest of the bridge can have a six gee gravitational field. If I stay at my post, I feel nothing. If I leave my post, and head towards you, I get about three paces, hit uncompensated acceleration, and---Pow!---pilot pancake."

Barbara shook her head. "There must be a star in front of us. Drive fields are polarizing."

"But there's nothing there. The scanners would show anything dark and dense," he objected.

Barbara slipped an ellipsoidal cover plate off her porthole. "Dead ahead. Magnitude minus six absolute. The other stars don't match the ones on the display, either. It must be as messed up as the data panels."

"Clyde," snapped O'Bryan, now back at his post. "Cut the ceiling display. Let's see what's really there."

"Done." Murchison tapped at his keypad. The starfield displayed across the Flight Deck's domed ceiling did not change. "There seems to be a slight hang-up here." Murchison tapped again and again at his keypad, all the time staring in disbelief at the ceiling.

"Why is the display still on?" asked O'Bryan.

"That's it. The datapanel says the display is off. Yes, I see it, too. But the computer says it isn't there, and gives me error messages when I try to turn it off again," said Murchison.

"Pull the plug," suggested Barbara. "We're losing five lights a second. Internal gravity, without compensators, would be six gees."

O'Bryan reached to the intercom. "Hamilton! To the Bridge! On the double!"

Sailing Master Hamilton's face appeared on a transceiver plate. "Not possible, Captain. I'm sealed out of the Engineering Spaces. And the transceiver was dead until you called me." His face blurred into static snow.

O'Bryan leaned back in confusion. Frozen in indecision, he looked at the other people on the Bridge. He and Murchison perched like birds on their individual flight consoles, suspended well above the main flight deck. Fifteen feet below him, Barbara pored over her meters and data panels, trying to find a rational explanation.

After a silence, Barbara turned and fixed O'Bryan in her eyes. Captain," she half whispered, "If you want to dump your computer completely, I can hold the hyperdrive steady on manual."

"Dump it? All the way? No, let me think. Meanwhile, please cut the display. The connectors are behind your console," reminded O'Bryan.

"Check." O-mind searched a terabit of engineering specs. She dropped to hands and knees and disappeared behind a bank of dials and meters. She could imagine a Solar Republic girl, refusing to crawl because her clothes might get dirty. It was a shame, but duty had precedence over convenience. The display above him flickered, blanked out, to be replaced with real stars, which shone wanly through a now-transparent cabin ceiling. Dead ahead, shining bright through reflections of cabin lights, a single sun obstructed their path. Where had it come from? Their plotted route showed no star there. Why hadn't the image intensifiers revealed it? Nothing made sense, even if you assumed that the liner's computer banks were in as bad shape as its crew.

"Clyde, let's go to manual. I just hope the lower decks aren't thoroughly confused," O'Bryan ordered.

"That will not be necessary." A voice from behind brought both officers whirling around in their seats. The voice belonged to a stranger perched on the rear balcony. "You have no further need for your ship. I am taking control at this time."

"You'll what?" shot back O'Bryan. "Young man, this is a very poor time for jokes. We have an ailing computer, and a crew too sick to work." The shadows and backlighting hid the intruder's face.

"We do not jest." The intruder turned on another bank of lights, revealing a black uniform with silver trim. "I am ArchDeacon Rupert, and this ship is now given over to the service of Aruble, Lord of the Upper Dark."

"Oh, God! A Chaos lunatic. Don't you people know that you're all dead?" O'Bryan asked.

Murchison shook his head. "Lord Aruble? You've got to be joking. Those stories are twentieth century fairy tales. The Unenlightened cannot recognize that, unbeknownst even to Himself, The True Prophet wrote His Works while under Divine Guidance. This is of no consequence. We are in control, and I will direct the final course adjustments. Pilot!" Rupert snapped.

"You can jolly well join your master!" Murchison dove for a cabinet. The air around him sizzled. He screamed and fell twitching to the deck.

"Well shot, von Morwitz!" Rupert's gaze remained fixed on the Captain.

"Thank you!" A second intruder, clad in white and gold braid, stepped into sight on the balcony. "The passengers are sealed out from the Engineering spaces, awaiting your tender mercies after we rendezvous with the *Obliterator*. I have dealt with the untermensch below in a final manner. Only the three crewmen here remain alive in the Engineering Spaces."

"Three?" Rupert shrank back in sudden alarm. "I found two."

"The third cowers under an acceleration chair. You!" von Morwitz snarled, "Get up, you coward! I have you in my sights. Up! Or I'll fry you where you lurk."

Barbara peered around the edge of her couch. She found herself staring down the muzzle of a weapon. What was it? Not a machine pistol or a disruptor. Shaking with fright, she tried to stand.

"That is a crew person?" asked Rupert. "Isn't it a little small?"

"No one else is on the bridge," answered von Morwitz. "Security displays say a crew member is at her exact physical location. Can I help it if untermensch machines cannot distinguish adults and children?"

Rupert glared at O'Bryan. "Our course is precomputed. Your remote controls are entirely adequate for the simple maneuvers we will now perform. And you might be in the way. Join now the Upper Dark!" There was a flicker around O'Bryan. He fell soundlessly to the floor.

Barbara leaned over and gagged. Her blood roared in her ears. "Little child," she heard distantly. "Little child, you should be strong. He didn't suffer nearly enough. His true suffering is yet to come."

"Yet?" Barbara forced herself to stare at Rupert. Perhaps the Captain was alive.

"Yes, oh yes. Later! Later for your fellow passengers will be the Blessed Suffering of Aruble." A beatific glow crossed Rupert's face. "Well, Eric, let's finish this. Congratulations!"

"Yes," answered von Morwitz. "Congratulations. Hail Aruble!" His final words lacked conviction.

"Hail the Leader!" Rupert, sounding more convinced, took the helm. "You pulled our program bubbles from the ship's computer?"

"Every one. The data panels now show reality, not the illusions they displayed until moments ago. The life support now distinguishes your plague virus from standard air additives. We approach our destination. The ship now accepts only our orders. You see the new command roster?" von Morwitz pointed at a data panel.

"Yes, but why is this little girl listed? Surely Solar perverts do not employ children?" said Rupert.

"Some emergency failsafe," answered von Morwitz. "I think everyone on the bridge is listed automatically. She's at the bottom, so she can't do things as long as we're here." He looked up. "You! You are Barbara, nicht wahr?"

"Yes." Her voice quavered. She faced a pair of apparent lunatics, complete with unknown weapons, bizarre costumes, and phony European accents. She tried to sound like a petulant ten-year-old ill-mannered Inner Arm brat. "Who do you guys think you are? Don't you know it's against the law to carry guns?"

The white and gold uniform shivered with laughter. "I am Erich von Morwitz, Commodore of the Faith's invincible space navy, and this is my comrade-in-arms Michael Rupert. Now, what is a little girl doing up here with all these old men?" He gestured at the bodies around him.

"The, the, Captain O'Bryan said I could help, as long as I was very, very careful to do exactly what he said---and never, ever touch any controls, no matter what. You don't want me to do that, do you? I was afraid he might ask me to do---it's too complicated, and I'm afraid." Putting a crying flutter in her voice ought to confuse them.

"A wise set of orders! You will not touch any controls, is that clear?" he barked.

"Yes, yes, I'd never do that. I want to sit down, I..." She affected lapsing into tears.

"Go ahead. But face me! And no monkey business, or it's the end for you!" von Morwitz made a slicing gesture across his throat. Barbara dropped into a chair and covered her eyes, pretending to cry. After a little digital filtering, the pirates' conversation would be entirely audible.

"We are on course," announced Rupert. "Decelerating as per plan. Only the overhead display is malfunctioning."

"We can live without that," von Morwitz responded.

"Then you have another ship, and we have a Gift for the Upper Dark!" Rupert gestured at Barbara.

"Gift? You won't hurt me, will you?" She knew very well what they planned. Chaos Servants had bloody altars, instruments of torture, and mind-control drugs to forestall insanity. Getting away from them was absolute top priority. If the pirates would keep talking, they might give her some clue as to how she could get off the bridge, reach a pinnacle, and escape.

"Hurt? We only cut the throats of old men. For a pearl like you, my dear, the outcome will be far more exquisite, far more brilliant." Rupert looked upwards in rapturous prayer.

"It is perhaps a shame to waste her," von Morwitz remarked blandly. "From her hair and eye color, and her height at her age, she appears to be ideal genetic material, suitable for breeding future generations of Naval Officers."

"The deal," snapped Rupert, "is that the Navy gets the ships, while the Clergy get the passengers, especially the young, the beloved of Aruble."

"True. The Clergy always receive the final benefit of the young. I merely suggest that, even as the Clergy make temporary use of our ships, the Fleet make temporary use of her body. Strictly for reproductive purposes, of course. What else could you possibly want from that body?" von Morwitz, without denying his partner's claims, continued to probe Rupert's calm.

"Of course," grumbled Rupert.

Von Morwitz turned toward the girl. "How old are you?" he snapped.

"Thirteen," she answered. And then some, she added to herself. The older the better, for this argument. If the fools she faced could be persuaded to view her as a walking embryo tank, she was prepared to play along, at least for now. Anything for time!

"You see, von Morwitz? At her age, she should have blossomed. She hasn't. She must have defective genes!" Rupert glanced back at the helm. "Two hours to rendezvous. Meanwhile, the trash in the passenger compartments...?"

"I spy upon them. They know nothing. They think only that their captain is sick." von Morwitz eyed Barbara again. She smiled, wishing she had some idea how to make her smile more seductive. N- and o-

memories returned a complete blanks on the topic. The question was disgusting, but suddenly a good answer would have been really, really useful.

"Who's this Leader fellow?" she asked. "Is he is a good guy?"

"Who is The Leader?" He pointed at his shoulder patch, which merged lightning bolts, fleur-de-lys, bumblebees, and scarlet stars. "He is the supreme leader of the Totalitarian Front, of course. You have heard of us, haven't you?" She nodded weakly.

"Go ahead," said Rupert. "Recruit her. It is too rare that Our Lord in the Darkness is offered a member of the Action Arm."

Von Morwitz ignored his partner's jabs. "The Front seeks to revive the common political philosophy of great twentieth century leaders, Stalin, Napoleon, Takamura, and Hitler, as revealed in the True Faith of Aruble. We almost won in Europe, some decades back, but the traitors in our midst had no sooner gained a parliamentary majority for the Front than they voted us out of our own Party."

"You were the *Democratic* Fascists." Rupert shrugged apologetically.

"Didn't Hitler kill people?" Barbara really wasn't sure. History had never been her strong point. The names belonged to the remote past, someplace between Elizabeth I and the invention of the stardrive. Hadn't Takamura been Shogun of Hawaii? The pirates seemed to have two political factions. Could they be persuaded to fight?

"Your schoolbooks," von Morwitz responded unctuously, "are contaminated by twenty-third century lies by the Caliph of Jerusalem. All competent historians agree, and it has been scientifically proved, that Hitler was a great humanitarian."

"The after-twenty centuries liars can distort everything." Rupert had the sound of a man totally confident that his truths were historically inevitable. "That's why The Faith is so strong. Only our one true religion could survive so long without any change at all."

Barbara leaned back. They were crazy. They also had the ship and its security systems. Claiming an age of thirteen hadn't gone well. They might have been more interested if she'd claimed to be younger. All she had were her bare hands. In an action novel, she could swagger seductively between them, get them each to put an arm over her shoulder, and then take them both out with a two-handed karate chop. She knew she was a lot faster than they expected, and somewhat stronger, but not that much stronger. They both had a hundred pounds on her, and were armed to the teeth. She stared at the consoles around her, pretending to be amused by the pretty lights. The ship was still slowing down, its acceleration compensators close to maximum power.

"You guys must be real clever. Did you invent the death ray, too?" Barbara asked.

"In fact, it is my own invention, and a highly clever one, showing the superiority of totalitarian science." Von Morwitz waved his pistol. "It's a drive turbulence generator. When I shoot, the target gets hit by twelfth level turbulence. Even behind a wired control panel or a ship bulkhead, you get level eight force, enough to knock out your teeth. The secret is how to control where the turbulence happens. The weapon creates a sphere of potential turbulence. Microwaves beam power. Where there are microwaves, there is turbulence. Elsewhere there is no turbulence."

"Microwaves? Are those like submillimeter waves?" She hoped he wouldn't notice how astute her question was. What wavelength was he using?

"No, no, a fraction of a centimeter, hence the muzzle. Microwaves diffract. They leak around corners. With old-fashioned materials like sheet titanium, I have shot someone around three corners. With composite materials the scattering is diffuse, so I can fire without getting a ray back in the face. The ray is less clever than my sabotage of the computer banks. The crew thought they were on course while they were actually headed in a completely different direction. In all their displays, only the turbulence lines were real. The rest was illusion. Now, no more! I am busy!" he announced.

He's a dunce, Barbara thought, like everyone else in the Solar Republic. A lot of ego, no common sense, no tolerance for pain. I can take force eight turbulence all day. I could take force twelve for a few seconds, I think, if it would do any good. All she needed was a plan, and some sort of screen. Then what? She might be able to walk their guns down, but they hardly need weapons to fight her. She thought some more, waiting for some new clues to fall into place. To try and take the role of an amazon princess from some hero tale was impossible. She would continue to pretend to be an innocent, pretty little girl. They seemed to like gold-braid uniforms. Her cloth-of-gold gown was true to her mother's aphorism: 'When in Rome, be a Roman candle.'

A half-hour passed. Barbara hoped the pirates had relaxed. "Mister, ummh, ArchDeacon Rupert? If I'm going to meet Aruble, couldn't I please be a little better dressed? My mother always says clothing counts a lot on first impressions," she asked.

"Daughter, I am delighted that you appreciate the honor about to be bestowed upon you." His enthusiasm sounded genuine. "But where can I find you better clothing?"

"It's in my cabin. A robot could fetch it. I wouldn't have to leave you. No one would ever notice a robot," she said.

"Well, all right. After all, it is for the Glory of Our Lord of the Upper Dark," Rupert answered.

* * * * *

Von Morwitz made a show of scanning the parcel, then let Barbara step into the Ready Room to dress. She slid the box open cautiously, half-afraid that some one had smuggled in a bomb, despite von Morwitz's precautions. The box held the expected dress and, at the extreme bottom, an envelope. She desperately wanted to tear it open. Instead, she pretended not to see it. She would pretend to find it at the very end, after she was dressed. Von Morwitz was doubtless using the security monitors to watch her change, and not just to see if she was smuggling a machine pistol onto the Bridge, either. She made sure he saw everything, everything except the o-mind ports in her wrists. She was very careful, and hoped he would be too busy looking elsewhere if she made a slip. The note was best used to lull her captors' suspicions. Dressed, she knotted her kerchief over her head, spent a few moments checking in a mirror, and stepped back into the Bridge.

"Do I look better now?" she asked. Her gown was scarlet, heavily woven throughout with gold lace. Cuffs, collar, stockings, and gloves glittered in the light. A gold-mesh kerchief hid the top of her head, its metallic sheen accenting her hair. Around her neck ran a gold chain, stamped in heavy square links ending in a massive sunburst. The ruby it framed burned brilliantly.

She heard Rupert's breath as an indrawn hiss. "Lord Aruble will be highly pleased that you wear his colors."

"Oh, wonderful," she simpered. "I'm glad he'll like it. But what should I do with this note I found? I'm sure it wasn't there when Mommy packed everything. Besides, the outside isn't her handwriting." She waved the unopened envelope.

"What does it say?" Rupert had his gun out.

"I didn't think you'd want me to read it. I don't want to get into trouble." She handed it to von Morwitz.

"Very clever." von Morwitz opened the envelope. "Neutral paper. To the scanners it looked just like the box. Let's see it." He laughed. "It says they hear us, see us, know what we're doing, and can't get in to stop us, so they want you, little girl, to kill us both. They even say how. Of course, letting all the air out of this room would kill you, too, but they promise you a new body: a grown-up body." He looked thoughtful for a moment. "Would you like a grown-up body? I prefer you now. Any healthy person would! They must think we are complete idiots who took absolutely no precautions at all."

"Quiet!" snapped Rupert. "They hear us, remember! No need to advertise exactly how thorough our precautions have been." Rupert wished von Morwitz would stop boasting. There were still only two of them. If the Sailing Master and friends decided to enter Engineering, matters might become rather sticky. He turned to Barbara again. "Why? Why did you actually give us this note? Don't bother to lie. Unless you want to feel the sting of my weapon. Von Morwitz has a verifier pointed at you."

"I want you to trust me." O-mind locked her face in bemused innocence. "I want to meet Lord Aruble, not have someone kill me." He has a verifier, she thought, but my heart beats at the rate o-mind sets for it.

Von Morwitz stared at his data-pad. "The verifier confirms her words. Rupert? Do you want also her oath signed in her own blood? Her friends told her to go kill herself. It would be a truly painful death. What sort of friends are those?"

"Yeah, some friends!" she chimed in. She fumed at Hamilton's casual suggestion that she should save his ship by dying. Sacrifice in the course of duty was one thing, but she was a passenger. The pirates hadn't killed her yet because they still thought she was only a little girl. Hamilton's comments about reincarnation practically told the pirates how old she really was.

From what the note did not say, they couldn't bring her back in first extension. She knew they couldn't restore her o-brain. It could be replaced later, though the process involved a decade of rehabilitation. She

wasn't sure whether becoming an adult was better or worse than losing half of her mind. In either case, she would lose the clarity and insights of her o-mind until she reached Cymbeline again.

A child's incompletely developed brain really couldn't hold even her n-mind; for a time, it would act as a gentle soporific. On the other hand, an adult mind would come with new sets of emotions and desires, with which she had never learned to cope. Passions! How could people in the Republic stand up to their lusts with little more than a child's set of thoughts and restraints? With that stress, you would go out of your mind or spend all your time... Of course, Republic adolescents supposedly did spend all their time doing that. It sounded pretty terrible. How could you grow up if you had no time to sit back and think without your body providing massive distractions?

It didn't really matter. She had her own plan to execute. The pirates most likely assumed that her gown was woven from metallized plastic. The glint was actually masses of pure gold. The extra weight dragged, enough that she was grateful of her conditioning, but for once the material had an entirely practical use.

* * * * *

"Five minutes to rendezvous," Rupert announced.

"Can I see your friends yet?" Barbara stuck her head into the porthole, in the same motion sliding the porthole cover back under her acceleration couch. She knew it was too soon. She saw nothing, and drifted back into her seat. "One of the real emergency lights is blinking," she added.

"Which one?" asked Rupert. His data panels showed nothing. Had von Morwitz's program adjustments all been removed from the computer banks?

"Right here," said Barbara, pointing at the console with one arm. She leaned forward to read the label, her body screening her left arm from the pirates' sight. "It says 'Drive Int, interf...'" pretending not to know the word. Not looking down, she counted off switches on the panel to her left, opened a safety cover, and pressed the tabs underneath.

"Just the *Obliterator* coming up," said von Morwitz. "Nothing to worry about. We just see a little drive interference."

"Yes," said Barbara, "That's right. This emergency light!" She waved her hands. N-mind braced itself for pain. O-controlled motions were twenty-fold faster than their n-counterparts, for the seconds it took them to exhaust local metabolic reserves, but even genengineered muscles rebelled against being driven so hard. O-mind momentarily took complete control of her hand, setting her nerves on fire as it splayed her fingers. In a few instants she struck a dozen widely-spaced switches, all by seeming accident.

"Don't touch those," screamed Rupert. "Sit down! Eric, she cut helm power. I can't see what we're doing."

"I'm sorry. I'm real sorry," whined Barbara. "I was only trying to help. Should I put it back? I think it was one of these." She affected confusion again.

"No, sit. Eric, go fix it!" She sat. Obediently, von Morwitz rose and started down the stairs.

The acceleration compensators are cut off, she thought. Once he's away from his post, he hits six gravities. That's a fifteen foot drop for his head, and impact momentum scales as the half power of the acceleration. Call it a forty foot equivalent fall, with a half-ton pushing him.

"What?" von Morwitz stepped forward, clutched at the railing, lost his hold, and fell face forwards down the stairs, ending with an exaggerated flailing gestures in a back shattering flip into the deck plates. Okay, though Barbara, now if number two idiot will please run to his friend's aid, we'll be all done the easy way.

"Eric?" called Rupert. Barbara hoped he had not noticed. There was something odd about what he had just witnessed. Rupert tossed a stylus across the room. It glided lazily through the air, reached the field boundary, and slammed deckwards at six gravities. Bother! Barbara thought. Who would have thought he had the brains to check.

Rupert paled, then glared at Barbara. "That was no accident, was it? You know how to use some controls, don't you? Hamilton's detailed orders were all just a ruse to fool us, except for his crack about 'not underestimating the gravity of the situation'. Well, you live by those controls, and now you will die by them. Die! Die! Die!"

In a flash she turned her back and started throwing switches. The helm was nominally without power, but Rupert had ways around that. She had to isolate him completely, and let Hamilton into Engineering.

The beam from Rupert's weapon took her in the back. She was confident that her gown contained a better mesh than any set of control cables. The blast from the weapon was a spray of ice scouring her skin. It leaked around corners, through gaps in the weave, numbing her wrists and the back of her neck. Turbulence leaked up her sleeves, setting digital hallucinations chattering through data cables into her o-mind. She kept tapping at two keypads. If she could just finish the sequence Rupert would be completely trapped.

His weapon blasts struck her again and again. It was like standing in a blizzard, holding a place against the wind while the cold etched deeper and deeper toward her bones. For a fraction of a minute, the microwave beam reflected from something buried in the wall. The reflection left her dazed, half-blinded. She could hear a clanking sound behind her. Rupert had finally remembered the non-helm controls. The sound was a maintenance robot inching its way towards her. The bursts of cold from his weapon turned into a spray of frigid needles, locking the muscles of her back and shoulders.

She let her knees sag. She had planned that she would pretend to collapse, but the pretense was a little shallow. Stiffly, she clutched at the porthole cover. Her hearing had blurred. Rupert was raving in a language she could no longer understand. Stray irrelevant ideas crept across her brain, driven by the weapon's static. If she were a Technodeist, she found herself thinking, she would be on her knees, offering up hosannahs of praise to St. Faraday for his protection. Her metallized dress seemed to work as well without those prayers. She pivoted, lifting up the cover as a shield. Wherever the microwaves go, she thought, there goes the turbulence--- and this is a half-meter reflector.

Her head burned. For an instant, she took the full unshielded force of Rupert's weapon. o-mind staggered through optonic chaos. The reflector covered her face. Barbara gradually realized that Rupert's weapon had ceased to fire. A glance around the cover revealed Rupert sprawled across the deck. The medical display confirmed he was unconscious. His pistol lay on the deck below. He couldn't have gotten more turbulence than I did, she estimated, counting all that stuff in my face. He's out cold, and I'm still standing. N- and o-minds allowed her a grin of pride.

A maintenance robot crept closer. "Back!" she croaked, her voice almost gone. "Orders cancelled!" Would it obey, she wondered? Or would it continue to chase her?

"As you command!" the maintenance robot responded. It rolled back towards its storage closet.

"Command?" she asked herself. Who did the ship acknowledge as Captain? Someone had to be in command, and that person had better have a way to deal with the pirate raider on their tail. To her surprise, she saw that hers was the only name on the Command list.

She wanted nothing more than to lie down and lose herself in darkness. Rupert and von Morwitz were both out cold, medical robots had rolled out and were dutifully loading them into stasis shells. She tried to remember. Had she turned off the Security monitors and restored Bridge gravity? She heard Hamilton on the transceiver; his voice sounded as though it was coming from a great distance.

"Miss FitzRyan! Miss FitzRyan! The ship still won't let me through! It thinks I'm a pirate. You've got to reset..." His voice faded into the roar in her ears.

The world was swathed in cotton fog, through which clear thoughts slowly marched. The pirate was still in hyperdrive. A solution to the pirate problem suddenly became apparent. She began programming the hyperdrive settings. Fortunately, all she needed from o-mind were a few math calculations.

"I'll get'm" she mumbled. Before Hamilton could respond, she threw the main drives into action. "Emergency escape," she slurred to the computer. Her voice was almost gone. There were sudden telltale warnings of unusual stresses on the engines. There was a very brief, very bright flash behind *The Twilight Princess*. She looked at the screen thru blurred eyes. She had expected the other ship to be damaged, not to dissolve into pyrotechnic sparks. The pirates, she guessed, had expected no resistance, had raised no protective shields and had not been prepared for surprises. The passenger liner surged ahead.

She passed her hands over the controls. Normal bridge gravity returned. Hamilton's name reappeared on the Command List. Security hatches unlocked. The pirates and their ship had been terminated. All would soon be back to normal.

So much for a quiet vacation trip through the outer Rift. She fell back into her acceleration couch, exhausted, unable to do more than watch foamspace swirl around her like snowflakes flying before a winter's gale.



THE FLYING SAUCERS ARE REEL!

by

Sourdough Jackson

Gail and I just returned from the annual symposium of the Mutual UFO Network, in most a years a collection of sober, scientific papers on sightings of unknown things seen in the sky, which remain unidentifiable even after thorough analysis. In case you were wondering, 85-90% of the cases studied by MUFON investigators are found to be either human-made objects or natural phenomena. We expected this year's symposium to be no different.

The theme was "The Secret Space Program", by which they did not mean reconnaissance spacecraft, early warning satellites, or orbiting electrical listening posts. There was nary a mention of such wonderful code names a Corona, Zenit, Yantar, White Cloud, Jumpseat, or Midas, not to mention that Soviet catch-all: "Kosmos". Instead, we got a parade of badly-written science fiction, with a liberal does of fantasy thrown in for good measure (mostly of the paranoid variety).

The insanity promoted as "observed fact" was enough to make me want to hide out in a skeptic tank. Viewing a few of the classic flying saucer movies of the 1950s would have vastly improved the content of most of the presenters' papers.

In 1950, famous ufologist Donald Keyhoe published the first of an avalanche of books on the subject "The Flying Saucers Are Real". To which Hollywood asked. "How many reels?" – with the answer always being—"enough to make a fortune, if you sit down hard on the budget."

A classic flying saucer movie was "Earth Vs. the Flying Saucers", a 1956 B-movie release. This low-budget film, profitable despite barely clearing a million at the box office, did feature two major names: screenwriter/SF novelist Curt Siodmak (most famous for "The Wolf Man" and "Donovan's Brain"), and stop-motion special effects master Ray Harryhausen. It was supposed to be based on Donald Keyhoe's nonfiction



best-seller “Flying Saucers From Outer Space”, and was released in some markets under that title, but that basing must have been the most tenuous in Hollywood’s history of mangling books.

My familiarity with the book and the movie tells me that both works concerned flying saucers, but otherwise they shared no common ground. According to Harryhausen, the movie had more connection to the books of the notorious UFO contactee George Adamski, as he consulted with Adamski regarding the appearance of the flying saucers.

The story begins with rocket scientist Russell Marvin and his newlywed wife Carol, who are buzzed by a saucer on the way to work at Project Skyhook, which launches satellites into orbit (curiously, in car scenes, Carol is always the driver, uncommon for the 1950s). Marvin, head of the project, finds that of his ten experimental satellites, all have mysteriously fallen from orbit. He suspects alien interference, but can prove nothing---and then the eleventh satellite fails to reach orbit (interestingly, the satellite launch depictions show launches of the Viking sounding rocket, forerunner to the later Vanguard series of pioneering orbital boosters.)

The next day, a saucer lands at Skyhook, and aliens—clad in opaque metal suits—emerge. When a trigger-happy guard shoots one of them, they respond by killing everyone at the base except the Marvins, who escape. Marvin later discovers a message on his tape recorder, stating that the aliens really wanted to have peaceful discussions

with him, but were met with violence when they landed.

Half-believing this, Marvin attempts a surreptitious meeting with them, in which he is told the aliens destroyed all the Skyhook satellites, fearing they were weapons, and that they are refugees from their home system’s destruction. They also state they want to meet with the world’s leaders in fifty-six days’ time.

From this meeting, and also from other observations he has been able to make, Marvin deduces that the aliens’ protective suits are made of “solidified electricity” (whatever that is). He also finds the saucers can be shot down using a simple counter-weapon, which he successfully tests against a single saucer.

A mass attack at the time of the supposed conference with the world’s leaders is fended off using the new weapon, and soldiers discover the aliens are vulnerable to small-arms fire whenever they are too far from their saucers. The attack, however, takes out the U.S. Capital, the Washington Monument, and several other landmarks.

Thus may have been the first time any movie destroyed Washington D.C. in an attack from outer space, but it was certainly not the last. The mayhem depicted forty years later in “Independence Day” is reminiscent of “Earth Vs. The Flying Saucers”. The movie ends with the newlywed Marvins honeymooning on a beach.

One picture that definitely fit the Grade-B horror mold was “The Thing” (also called “The Thing From Another World”) released in 1951. This one, at least, had sterling antecedents: it was based on “Who Goes There?”, arguably John W. Campbell, Jr.’s best story.

A crashed icebound flying saucer is found by an arctic expedition, but the saucer is destroyed by the attempt to remove it from the ice using thermite bombs. They then find the frozen-in pilot nearby, and recover it from the ice. So far, so good---the movie follows the novella closely, except that “Who Goes There” is set in Antarctica.

The film then diverts sharply from the original story. The Thing (movie version) is a plain old bloodsucker, which kills and then drains all blood from the victim. If seriously injured, it regenerates itself—a kind of combination of vampire and at least one traditional form of Norse troll.

HOW DID IT GET HERE ?



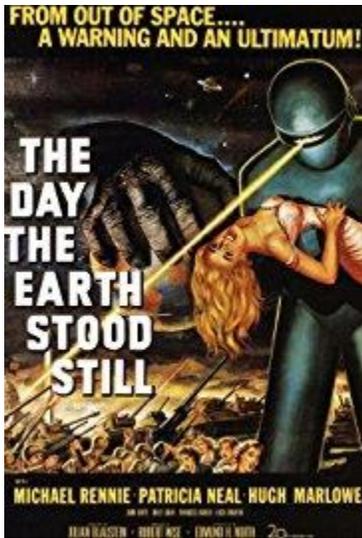
After several deaths in the expedition's base, the survivors find the monster can't regenerate from severe, repeated electrocution-strength shocks. It was scary when I first watched the movie at age twelve, but unbelievable when reviewed in adulthood.

Not so the original tale. That one still gives me the shivers. In the story *The Thing* is no vampire; it kills and eats its victims, and then creates mimics of what it just ate. These simulacra are virtually impossible to tell from the originals, and can in turn, kill, eat, and create new mimics. The fear of all the unassimilated survivors is, what are they dealing with when they talk to others in the expedition? Is this the real human they know, or a monster? *Who goes there?*

The solution is a blood test---samples of alien blood react differently to the insertion of a heated wire. The certified humans kill all the alien simulacra, and ensure complete destruction by reducing the bodies to cinders with a blowtorch. In the end the human victory is found to be an even narrower escape than the survivors had thought, as the last of the human-mimicking Things had been attempting to build an antigravity device which would have enabled it to escape to the outside world.

The story probably had its roots in the author's childhood. The mother of the young John W. Campbell Jr. was warm and loving, but her identical twin sister, who often visited, disliked her nephew and coldly rebuffed him. The boy could not tell the two women apart---an instance of 'who goes there?', albeit with far less disastrous consequences. For those looking up this novella, it was published under Campbell's most frequent pseudonym: Don A. Stuart.

Transcending the infinite cellar of the B-movie, "The Day the Earth Stood Still" has to be the finest of the UFO genre prior to Steven Spielberg's 1977 blockbuster, "Close Encounters of the Third Kind". Like the other two films, it was based on a published work, in this case Harry Bates' 1940 short story "Farewell to the Master".



A question often asked about UFOs is, “if they are so interested in talking to us why don’t they land on the White House lawn?” The answer, portrayed in this film, should be obvious. A large flying saucer, bearing the alien humanoid Klaatu and his robot assistant, Gort, lands on the National Mall (close enough to the White House), and is surrounded by nervous, well-armed soldiers. When Klaatu emerged, bearing a strange device, he gets shot, after which he is taken to Walter Reed Hospital. Visited by the presidential secretary, he says he must give a message to all the world’s leaders simultaneously, which the secretary states is impossible. He then expresses a desire to go among humans, the better to understand them. This, too, is rejected.

Klaatu escapes, swiping a suit, and takes a room at a boarding house under the name of ‘Mr. Carpenter’. There he befriends Helen Benson and her young son, Bobby, who takes him on a tour of Washington, including the Lincoln Memorial and his father’s grave at Arlington. Through the boy and his mother he makes contact with the physicist Professor Barnhardt, a stand-in for Albert Einstein. Klaatu secretly meets with Barnhardt, who suggests he give a harmless demonstration of his power.

This takes the form of all electricity, except for that needed in hospitals and airplanes, stopping for thirty minutes at noon the following day---the “day the earth stood still”.

Due to Bobby’s innocent spying on Klaatu, Helen realizes who “Mr. Carpenter” truly is, and assists him. On the way to Barnhardt’s home to prepare for a conference of the world’s scientific leaders, he informs her that, should anything happen to him, she must go to Gort and say: “*Klaatu barada nikto*”.

When Klaatu is cornered and shot dead, she escapes and makes her way to the landed saucer, where Gort has been mutely standing guard. She utters the code phrase, whereupon Gort acts quickly to retrieve Klaatu’s corpse and revive it. Klaatu then addresses the scientists who have hurriedly been assembled around the saucer, informing them that they must cease their violence, or face the consequence of extinction. Earth’s bad habits had long been ignored, but now humanity was on the verge of space flight, and had already developed nuclear weapons. The bringing of such weaponry into space was absolutely forbidden. He and Gort then re-enter their saucer and depart.

There is doubt in my mind as to whether Klaatu’s message was an echo of the teachings of UFO contactee George Adamski. That self-style “professor” had long been involved in Oriental mysticism, pre-digested to suit Californian mental appetites, and had been observing and photographing UFOs for years by the time of the movie’s 1951 release date. However, all his books concerning purported contact with aliens and their simplistic moral messages---similar to Klaatu’s---were published in 1952 and later.

I have no doubt about the contactees who followed Adamski. My only question about them is: Were the stories published by them influenced by Adamski, the movie, or both? The messages allegedly given to Truman Bethurum, Daniel Fry, Orfeo Angelucci, George Van Tassel, Howard Menger, and others are remarkably similar, although no all accompanied by “Ban The Bomb” with the threat “or we will destroy you!” Of course, it’s barely possible that these were all gullible people who actually did have flying saucer experiences involving handsome men and beauteous ladies possessing infinite wisdom, accompanied by growing noses and combusting pants.

Unlike the other two films, “The Day the Earth Stood Still” is a thoughtful presentation, the first movie to show an alien as a person in search of knowledge, not a monster to be destroyed. Klaatu finds the humans of Earth to be a mix of devil and angel, features their potential for great good might be ruined by their potential for great evil, and warns that great evil will not be allowed to wreck the neighborhood. Unstated is the likelihood that we won’t wait for Klaatu’s people to destroy us; that we will do the job ourselves.

Incidentally, the phrase, “*Klaatu barada nikto*” has taken on a life of its own in fiction and popular culture. It has turned up in other movies and fictional works, even as far as “Star Wars”---three of Jabba The Hut’s crew in “Return of the Jedi” are named Klaatu, Barada, and Nikto. As far as is known, the phrase has never had an official translation. Unofficially, translations abound, including one I interpret to mean “Get Lost!” Years ago, I was confronted by an early autonomous robot at an SF convention. I told it: “Gort, Klaatu

barada nikto". The contraption, which had hitherto been purposefully moving about became confused, spinning around and moving slowly in random directions.

It has been thirty-five years since E.T. phoned home. And it's been forty years since we had close encounters of the cinematic kind. These delectable treats from the Spielberg stand—"E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial" and "Close Encounters of the Third Kind"---shook the box-office world as no other UFO movies have, before or since. They seemed to spring, unassisted and fully-formed, from the head of Steven Spielberg, not unlike Athena from the head of Zeus.

And yet, both films had antecedents, perhaps as deeply buried as Athena's mother (for the record, Zeus is said to have swallowed the old goddess Metis, who caused him to become pregnant. Lacking a womb, he gestated the girl in his cranium---Home and Hesiod were lousy at anatomy. So there was a woman involved after all---*Parthenos*, my foot!).

Consider this plot summary: an extraterrestrial is left on Earth, is found by a human child, and is helped by that child and his friends. The children assist the extraterrestrial through multiple culture-shock problems and collisions with the authorities, finally getting the stranger to a rendezvous point to be picked up by a rescue ship. Sound familiar, Spielberg fans?

Actually, I've just described "Star Girl", a 1957 children's novel by Henry Winterfeld, originally published in 1956 as "Kommt ein Madchen geflogen" ("A Little Girl Came Flying"), used as the title of the first chapter of the English translation. Winterfeld had an adventurous career as an author and artist. A German Jew, he fled with his family to Austria, France, and the U.S., always one step ahead of the Nazis. Although he became a naturalized American citizen in 1946, he wrote his children's books first in German for a German audience, translated later for Americans.

"Star Girl" is the story of Mo, a girl from Asra (Venus) who falls overboard from her father's spaceship just before dawn and lands in a tree near a German village. In the space of a day, the local children who find her must get her to the clearing where her father, in his parting shout to her, says he will pick her up. Due to the darkness, he can't see her, and the ship has to keep going.

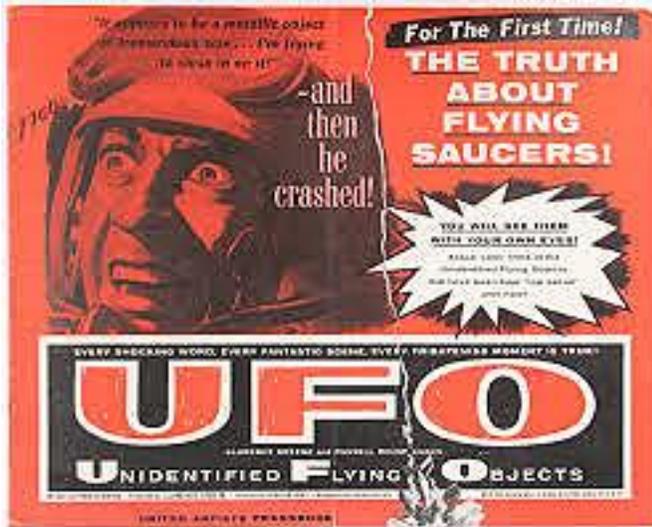
Much of the story concerns eluding the parents of the children (who don't believe them), as well as a clumsy, obtuse policeman named Klotz (who tries to confiscate Mo's diamond necklace---on Asra diamonds are as common as glass). The public librarian is sympathetic and helpful, giving Mo and her new friends refuge in the library until late afternoon, when they set out to find the rendezvous point.

This involves a rough scramble through a swamp and a forest, during which Mo becomes disoriented. Their main clue is that Asra is the Evening Star---Venus. Just when the kids' frantic parents, accompanied by Klotz and the librarian, find the party in a clearing in the woods, several ships from Asra land there. The librarian formally welcomes Mo's father, who is overjoyed to find his daughter. Before leaving Mo gives her necklace to Walter, the boy who first found her and who organized her rescue, implying the poverty of all the children's families will be relieved.

This is not to say that Spielberg consciously based "E.T. the Extraterrestrial" on "Star Girl", but I think I have a case for influence. Born in 1946, Spielberg was the right age to run across the book when it was published, and the volume was widely distributed. When I was in the fifth grade, I found it in the school library in Sitka. The plots are certainly similar in outline.

After first seeing it, anyone well-versed in ufology knew that "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" was based on intensive research. The movie took its title from J. Allen Hynek's formal classification system of UFO sightings, and drew heavily upon books by Hynek, Donald Keyhoe, John Fuller, Frank Edwards, and Jacques Vallee. The last-named ufologist also served as the model for the researcher Claude Lacombe (played by Francois Truffaut, in his sole appearance in either an English-language film, or in one which he didn't direct).





Given the serious treatment of UFOs in “Close Encounters”, the first since “The Day the Earth Stood Still”, it is difficult to think of a movie that might have influenced Spielberg. There is one candidate, however: a 1956 documentary titled “U.F.O: The True Story of Flying Saucers”. Often called “The Chop Film” by UFO buffs, it is the result of Project Bluebook public relations officer Albert Chop’s work with movie producer Clarence Green after Chop left Bluebook.

The film begins with the famous sighting by Kenneth Arnold on June 24, 1947, in which Arnold described the unknown objects’ motion as resembling that of a saucer skipping across the water---which a journalist mutated into “flying saucer”. It briefly summarized the wave of popularity of the topic that year, including a few humorous hoaxes, such as

tossing trash can lids and advertising disks out of airplanes.

What follows is serious business. The Thomas Mantell incident, in which an Air Force pilot chased a UFO beyond the safe limits of his aircraft and crashed, is dramatized in detail, as is the subsequent Air Force investigation of the phenomenon, called Project Sign. This aggressive search for information was changed abruptly to a debunking operation, appropriately named Project Grudge. It is at this point that Albert Chop enters the picture.

He begins his work on Grudge as a skeptic, wishing to do his PR job, but finding himself between the rock of antagonistic journalists and the Project Grudge hard place. As Grudge mutates into the more neutral Blue Book (or Bluebook; I’ve seen it spelt both ways), Chop’s skepticism changes to a willingness to accept some of the evidence as pointing to a phenomenon unexplainable as either natural or human-caused. Two key pieces of evidence are shown: movies of UFOs shot by Nick Mariana in Great Falls, Montana in 1950, and by Delbert Newhouse near Tremonton, Utah in 1952.

One extended scene, in which Chop views a demonstration of a control tower’s instrument landing radars seems tedious at first, but is vital to understanding the movie’s climax: the radar-visual sightings of large numbers of UFOs over Washington, D.C. during several nights in June 1952.

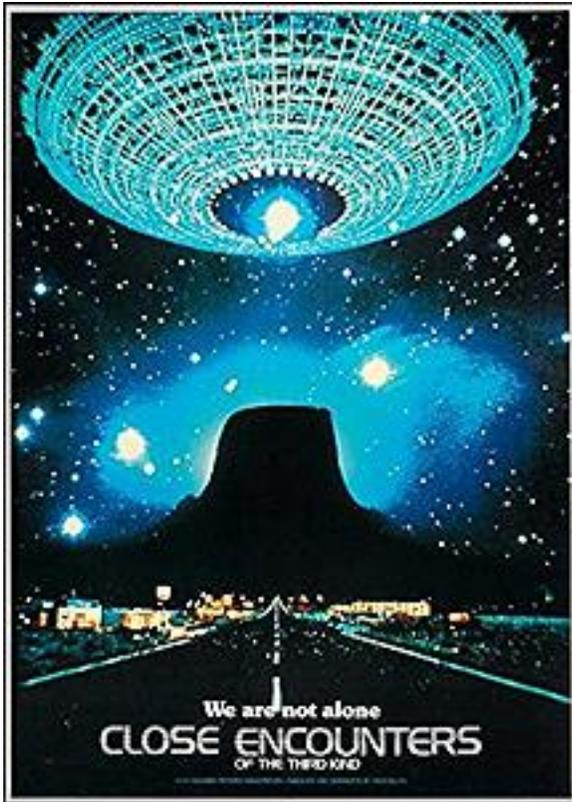
When I saw this film at age eleven on television, I was impressed by the clarity and neutrality of the presentation. Chop’s approach was similar to that of Joe Friday on “Dragnet”. That radar demo stuck with me. Ever since I’ve had a good understanding of what aviation radar can and can’t do.

This film was released when Spielberg was nine or ten years old. I would be surprised if he hadn’t seen it---he was an avid movie buff from an early age, and he began his own amateur cinematic productions at age 12 (for the record, it was of a train wreck staged on his model railroad layout).

Another antecedent of “Close Encounters” was an earlier Spielberg production “Firelight” (1964). Made during his high school career, this science fiction movie was his first feature-length film and his first commercial success. Its budget of \$500 was exceeded by box-office receipts of \$501. The plot centered around investigations of UFO abductions, resulting in alien contact.

“Close Encounters of the Third Kind”, of course, displayed a far more mature approach to the subject, and its budget was blockbuster, not frayed shoestring---that last due to the enormous success of his previous movie, “Jaws”. Despite many cost overruns during production, the 20-million dollars needed to make the film reaped over 300-million at the box office. It is fortunate for Columbia Pictures that they ignored their cold feet and let Spielberg see it through to completion. Likewise it is well that, when he asked NASA for information, he ignored their twenty-page letter concluding that the movie was “dangerous”. The Air Force didn’t respond at all, and he chose to employ noted ufologist J. Allen Hynek as his scientific consultant. He also gave Hynek a cameo appearance in the movie’s final scenes.

In brief, the plot of CE3K has three main threads. Ufologist Claude Lacombe, working for the French government, is investigating a series of returns of missing aircraft and ships (minus crew), along with increased UFO activity worldwide. One UFO leaves a cryptic message of numbers, which Lacombe finally deduces are



geographic coordinates---that of Devil's Tower National Monument in Wyoming. This prompts the American government to set up a secret landing field near that unique rock formation.

Single mother Jullian Guiler and her three-year old son Barry have several uncanny experiences, culminating in a UFO close encounter in which Barry is abducted. Jullian has seen recurring images, which she draws, and realizes are of Devil's Tower. Hoping this might have something to do with her missing son, she travels in that direction from her home in Indiana.

Also from Indiana, Roy Neary has had several encounters with UFOs. Afterwards, he begins to build models in his home, culminating in a clay structure of Devil's Tower filling an entire room. Certain that her husband has gone insane, his wife leaves him, taking their three children with her. He also heads for the Tower.

The threads come together at Devil's Tower at night. Despite preventive measures, Neary and Guilen penetrate the secret landing field in time to see a large flotilla of UFOs approach and signal to the people on the ground. Then a huge mother ship descends low enough to drop a boarding ramp. Out of the ramp come sundry missing sailors and aviators (including someone who might have been Amelia Earhart), as well as Barry Guilen, who is reunited with his

mother. Several aliens also step out, but they reject several astronauts for their contact, choosing Roy Neary instead to be Earth's ambassador to their people.

This bare outline cannot hope to capture the grandeur of the contact, or the wild and disparate events leading up to it. Suffice it to say that Steven Spielberg was, and is, a cinematic genius, with few peers in his use of visual effects. "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" has to be seen to be properly appreciated.

Five years after the grand drama of CE3K, which avoided tragedy only by failing to kill any characters, Spielberg romped though a comedy when he returned to the UFO theme. Paralleling "Star Girl", consciously or otherwise, he produced a box-office monster in half his earlier film budget. "E.T." reaped 792-million in gross receipts on a 10.5-million dollar investment. When adjusted for inflation, this placed it sixth on the Guinness Book of World Records' all-time money making list of movies. (For the curious: "Gone With the Wind" placed first, "Star Wars" third, and "Jaws" ninth. Spielberg is the only director with two movies in the top ten).

How he reached that pinnacle is difficult to explain. "E.T." is the only true comedy on a list dominated by tragedy and heavy-duty drama (#10, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" has been mistaken for comedy, but it's a Grimm fairy tale in which the villain dies after several serious attempts at murder.) I think the key is the universal appeal of this picture. From the beginning, the kids loved it and still do. Unlike far too many great kids' flicks, this one has also never worn out its welcome with parents---it's a film for kiddies and grown-ups too. I can attest that this particular grown-up loved the movie, as did my wife (who also once pointed out that E.T. did not resemble any entity observed to be or near a UFO).

Spielberg greatly enhanced the story line of "Star Girl" (assuming there was any conscious connection). E.T. is much shyer than Mo, and has considerable difficulty communicating. He learns a rough pidgin English from Sesame Street and other television shows, and forms an empathic bond with Elliot, the child who discovered and helped him. This bond is on the physical as well as emotional level. When E.T. becomes ill, so does Elliot. After he assembles a communicator from odds and ends---some electronic, some not---found around Elliot's home, he manages to get out and set the device to working---E.T. phones home as he told Elliot he must. Unfortunately, he begins to die at that point, and Elliot also becomes deathly ill.

Elliot's mother has been oblivious all this time to E.T., only discovering him when her son is in mortal danger---and when the government agents who've been on E.T.'s trail for several days finally catch up. E.T. dies in the quarantine facility the government people have hastily assembled in Elliot's home. Then Elliot

FANZINE REVIEWS



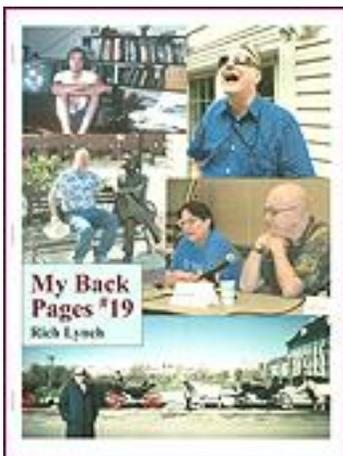
A regular feature of **TIGHTBEAM**

by

Bob Jennings

In my opinion fanzines are one of the pillars of fannish existence, as much the heart and core of fandom as conventions, correspondence and clubs. Despite the popularity of the Internet, there are still many fanzines being physically printed and actually mailed out to interested fans. I will try to take a glance at some of the print fanzines that I have received since the last issue of *The Insider* was mailed out. Copies of print fanzines intended for review should be sent to---**Robert Jennings; 29 Whiting Rd.; Oxford, MA 01540-2035**

Most of these fanzines are available to interested parties for “the usual”, which is fan shorthand for sending the editor/publisher a letter of comment, or a copy of your own print fanzine in trade, or contributing written or artistic material for publication. Most editors will cheerfully send you a copy of their zine if you send along a card or letter asking for a sample copy, or, if you want to be a nice guy, you could enclose a couple of bucks to help defray the cost of postage.



MY BACK PAGES #19 8-1/2X11”; 32 pages; irregular from Rich Lynch; P.O. Box 3129; Gaithersburg, MD 20885---The Usual

This is one of the most attractive, well produced fanzine being produced these days. The layout is quite professional, and the issue abounds with full color photographs on almost every page. The appearance is visually stunning.

Each issue of this zine is composed mostly of articles Rich wrote in the past that were primarily presented to a limited audience, as thru a science fiction apa, for example. Some of them are relatively recent write-ups, others are drawn from his long history as an active science fiction fan. This issue most of the material is drawn from the past year, altho there is one reprint of an article he wrote back in 2004.

This is a good idea that other fans might want to pursue; pulling articles from low circulation or limited edition fanzines that very few people have had a chance to read, and presenting them in an anthology format so they can be read by a much wider audience. Rich goes the format one better, by writing

connecting mini-articles after each longer piece, explaining some additional details and bridging the articles together. He also provides additional new original articles in each issue, so it's not a total reprint collection.

Rich has a government job dealing with environmental issues that requires him to travel frequently, and frequently he is directed to go to far distant locations. Hey, let's say it right...he gets catapulted to some incredibly remote places on this planet to deal with conferences and scientific forums. Sometimes he gets a day

or two or even three off before or after the event, and he makes full use of the time to explore the local area and examine the history and sights. He often discusses these junkets around the country and around the world, accompanied by color photos of scenes, people, relics, buildings, oddities--all kinds of fascinating things.

Not content with this globe-trotting existence, he and his wife Nicki also take local jaunts on their mini-vacations to places like Philadelphia, New York City, to concerts, and of course, to assorted science fiction conventions hither and yon.

And he writes well about his adventures. I have to admit that travel reports by most people tend to be pretty dull stuff. They tend to be mainly lists of people seen, foods eaten, travel problems and the big event of the excursion. For whatever reason fans seemed obsessed with the foods they gobbled down at conventions or on travel jaunts, and they report it avidly, as tho anybody else actually cared about what they had for lunch that particular day. Rich doesn't do any of that. He concentrates on things that a general reader would find intriguing or amusing and writes about them in a casual yet detailed manner that makes even the most obscure and unique thing interesting. It takes a good writer to do that, and he adds in lots of full color photos of some of the places and things he experienced along the way.

This issue details his trip to Japan, a work and adventure tour that was threatened by a developing typhoon of monumental proportions that was due to hit the entire Pacific coast islands including Japan while he and his team were there for a conference on carbon sequestering techniques. Luckily the big storm sputtered out before it could form into a major weather catastrophe, but it was close. For those that care (not me), he does spend a good part of this write-up talking about sushi and other Japanese style foods that he experienced on the visit. The comments about historic temples almost made up for that, and he did note that the fortunes following meals do not always carry a happy prediction. Indeed, one of his party got a fortune that consisted of a dire warning of future misery and disaster. But so far nothing has come of that, so they brushed it off later.

The rest of this issue deals with sights seen in the USA. He tells about an interesting visit to the ancestral home of Alexander Hamilton in New York, a structure that was barely saved from destruction, and was in such bad condition that extensive renovations had to be undertaken, renovations that are still taking place years later. Rich notes that the house may have been posh living quarters back in the late 1700s, but it seemed very small and cramped by modern standards.

There is a short article on Elvis Presley, followed by a much longer article on Mozart, who Rich blithely describes as the world's greatest composer. He might have a bunch of arguments on that claim. Then, to keep the variety going, he details his reactions on reading the DC Omnibus volume of the earliest Batman comic book stories, noting that in the very beginning Batman was much different from the character we know today. Of course, most of those early oddities (Bruce Wayne was originally a newspaper reporter, for example), were unified into the traditional persona within a year after that first Batman story was published in *Detective Comics* #27 in 1939.

There are other articles about buildings, including an excellent write-up of the Bradbury Building in Los Angeles, an odd, old structure that has shown up in a lot of movies and TV programs over the years, along with a look at the old Washington, D.C. Post Office Building which today is a Trump Hotel, plus coverage of a craft fair where Morris Dancers were an unexpected integral part of the proceedings.

It's all good fun stuff, and there's more here as well.

In years past Rich and Nicki won multiple Hugo Awards for their fanzine *Mimosa*. *Mimosa* is no longer being published, but folks who appreciated that publication would do well to check out this issue of *My Back Pages*.



DASFAX December 2017

8-1/2x11", 6 pages; published monthly by the Denver Area Science Fiction Association; c/o Tay Von Hageman; 4080 S. Grant St.; Englewood, CO 80113; it comes with a club membership; membership fees are \$15 per year, or available for The Usual.

This is the newsletter of the Denver area SF club. The group is unique in that almost every meeting features a guest speaker, often a popular SF/fantasy author. There are also club wide games, discussion groups, and the meetings are usually followed by a party at one of the member's homes. The first Saturday of each month there is an Alternate Meeting, which is another party hosted by a different club member.

The heart of every issue of this fanzine is the feature article written by 'Sourdough Jackson', a long time club member, and a long time fan who discusses science fiction and fantasy as part of his "Writers of the Purple Page" series. Indeed, in the past year the rest of the club's contributions to the

newsletter seem to have dropped off almost completely. Fortunately 'Jackson' seems able to carry the monthly issues entirely on his own. The subject range is very widespread, but usually the focus is on previously published science fiction material, as in, pre-2000, and more often, pre-1975 stuff, but that emphasis is certainly not a hard and fast rule. The observations and analysis are always interesting and often insightful.

This issue carries another part of his series titled "My Golden Age of Science Fiction". He talks about the joy of reading *IF* science fiction magazine in 1962 when he was in the sixth grade, encountering Heinlein's "Podkayne of Mars" there as a serial, but especially the guest editorial by Theodore Sturgeon where he discovered there were such things as science fiction conventions. He reminisces about the family moving, discovering science fiction in bigger community libraries, newsstands filled with lots of other SF magazines and paperbacks, and of reading science fiction stories to his younger brothers over the next few years. He says his two younger brothers enjoyed his readings, but he doesn't mention if either of them became ardent science fiction fans the way he did. This is a nice, pleasant bit of nostalgia about revisiting those first bursts of elation after being exposed to the very first science fiction magazine he had ever encountered. Nice stuff. The series will continue next issue.

Dasfax carries another long article every issue. You do not have to be a member of the Denver club to get copies of this fanzine, altho supporting memberships are offered at very reasonable rates and would certainly be appreciated



DAGON #695

8-1/2x11", 10 pages, published monthly by John Boardman; 12716 Ginger Wood Lane, Clarksburg, MD 20871; \$15 for ten issues or The Usual.

This is technically John's APA-Q zine, but he usually doesn't bother with mailing comments and when he does they are extremely brief. This is a mostly monthly fanzine devoted to whatever John happens to find interesting or worth commenting on at the moment.

This issue carries several interesting articles, particularly John's commentary about the development of submarines as weapons of warfare, an effort mostly spearheaded by American inventors and engineers. It turns out that one of his relatives was David Bushnell, who tried to design a submarine for use in the American Revolution. His idea was to use a submarine with an attached drill to bore holes in British ships, and also to attach explosives to the hulls that could quickly sink them. Unfortunately his efforts were thwarted when his drill was

unable to penetrate the metal sheathed British warships used to protect against sea worms that would otherwise infest wood hulled ships and cause lots of damage, and he couldn't find a way to attach the explosives either. Submarine technology progressed by fits and spurts after that, but by the turn of the 20th century, submarines that could be used as weapons of war were a reality. This is a nice overview, well told.

John also discusses several books by one of his regular readers, historian Albert A. Nofi, including his history of Elizabeth van Lew and her freed slave friend Mary Bowser who, tho living in Richmond during the Civil War, worked to free and smuggle captured Union officers back to the north, and relayed much useful military information to the federal troops garrisoned while operating as a nurse in a Rebel hospital.

He also briefly discusses Nofi's history of the Spanish-American War, which he notes was the shortest, least consequential, and most incompetently fought war in US history. Luckily the other side was even more incompetent and disorganized. European military observers during that conflict wrote back very derogatory reports about the fighting ability and military strategy employed by the Americans.

There are also the usual comments about the antics of President Trump and what John regards as his reckless disregard for law, tradition, and propriety. He points again to the widespread low ratings the Prez is enjoying, but for all the accusations and problems, Trump remains quite popular with his core of supporters and his political party is still firmly in control of both houses of Congress, so things are unlikely to change in the near future.

Most issues of *Dagon* make for lively reading. Most issues carry a mixture of John Boardman's views on the world and they are almost always interesting. *Dagon* is fanzine that is well worth sending for.

FLAG #20 8-1/2x11", 24 pages; originally published monthly, but that schedule has been mostly abandoned; by Andy Hooper; 11032 30th Ave. NE; Seattle, WA 98125; sample issue sent on receipt of a long SSAE, after that The Usual

This is another one-person fanzine. Issues of *Flag* used to appear primarily in the printed format, but keeping with the new trends of fandom, issues also go out electronically and are posted on the efanzone.com website. This is technically a perzine, since except for the letter column, (and a short reprint article by Ray Nelson this time round) every issue is written by editor Hooper himself.



This issue Andy covers a variety of different subjects, but the main focus is a write-up about a visit he and several other fans made to an exhibition about Octavia Butler, held last summer at the Huntington Mansion in San Marino California. Octavia Butler was the first female, African-American author to achieve name recognition in the science fiction field. She was also a woman Andy had encountered and spoken with at a few science fiction conventions, as well as in later years when she moved to the Seattle area. This is an excellent piece of writing; part memoir, part personal evaluation of Ms Butler and her varied novels, also a carefully researched history of a woman who overcame great personal difficulties as well as an almost debilitating shyness to achieve considerable success as a writer. As Andy notes, she is also one of the very few authors connected with SF/fantasy who happens to be more widely recognized

and honored outside the field and within the genre. This may be because many of her books do not follow the traditional norms of science fiction. They deal with flawed characters, often female, in difficult situations, in stories that sometimes develop with the aid of the heroine, but just as often things happen despite the efforts of the protagonist to influence the ongoing plot flow. Anybody with even a minor interest in Ms Butler or her groundbreaking work should read this article.

There are also comments about some northwest located pros who may have sexually harassed women, in particular comments about those accusations as relating to Wiscon and the abrupt turnover of almost everybody associated with the running of that convention.

There is also a long review of William Beeding's highly personal biography, "Rose Motel", as related thru a long series of articles published in various fanzines over the years. Anyone familiar with Mr. Beeding's highly readable and deeply personal articles should consider obtaining a copy of this book, which collects them all along with some new material. The volume is available on many book selling web sites as well as from William Beeding direct.

The letter column this time round is considerably expanded and primarily deals with the focus of last issue, which was the history of the Los Angeles fanzine Shangra-La (-Affairs). There are some other subjects covered as well, providing entertaining, often insightful comments about fandom, science fiction, and the world around us. The issue finishes with two pages of Andy's brief reviews about current fanzines he has received.

Flag has always been an entertaining read, well worth checking out.



NICE DISTINCTIONS #32 8-1/2x11"; 6 pages; Arthur D. Hiavaty; 206 Valentine St.; Yonkers, NY 10704-1814; twice yearly; \$1 for a sample issue, after that The Usual; one free copy by email to anyone who specifically asks for the e-version.

When he sets his mind to it, Arthur Hiavaty is one of the finest writers and thinkers in fandom. He consistently produces some of the most quotable writing in the hobby, but these twice-yearly issues of his perzine are increasingly devoted to obituary notices, sometimes taking up half the issue. Luckily this time the obituary section is down to a page and a half.

This issue he natters about Hugh Hefner, a person who profoundly affected American culture, and whose death has allowed a whole flock of retro-reactionaries to creep out of the shadows and try to dance on his grave.

Charges of Pornography & Rudeness & Daring to Openly Discuss Sexual Pleasure are somehow seen by these people as completely trumping other issues Hefner worked for, including women's rights, civil rights, freedom of speech, and the unjustness of regional wars with non-specific or unattainable aims, among others things. Arthur notes that the shrill ravings of the Hefner critics sound especially phony in a society that has permanently changed; and changed for the better. I certainly agree with that sentiment.

There is a longer article on literary criticism which is rambling and disjointed. I think the point he was trying to make, at least what I get from the very end of it, is that he doesn't much care for pop culture or pop culture books that feature lots of action and suspense. OK, that's his opinion, but he sure took the long way

around to make that point, and he then leaves it without any real explanation or mentioning why he doesn't care for stories that feature action and suspense.

There are also comments about Ezra Pound's poetry, his treasonous public support for the fascists during WWII, his insanity, and his influence on a generation of younger poets. Then there are comments about the New Math and the New-New Math. As he notes, the old, original math got results, and a big plus was that almost anybody could teach the old style math to any child, whereas with the New Math the teacher had to thoroughly understand the concepts and the execution before that person could impact the New Math to anyone else, and, unfortunately, a lot of people who wound up teaching the New Math did not understand either the concepts or how to pass on their knowledge to a new generation of students. Maybe that's why God, or some other guardian spirit looking over the welfare of the human race, invented hand-held electronic calculators---so that the younger generation of students could still get real mathematical results even if they never understand the New Math, or now, the New-New Math.

There's more here, including a very brief letter column from a couple of people who disagreed with a couple of Arthur's opinions in the last issue. Some of his short-short commentaries seem abruptly curt to me. The addition of another paragraph, or at least a couple of additional sentences would have solidified those subjects and made his opinions a lot clearer.

Still, I'll say it again; Arthur Hiavaty is one of the best writers in fandom. Almost all of his comments are sharp, precise, and well worth reading, whether you happen to agree with his viewpoint or not. I only wish he would write more, as in longer essays, or full fledged articles even, and that he would turn out more material than these twice-a-year *Nice Distinctions* issues.



RADIO RECALL December 2017 8-1/2x11"; 16 pages; published monthly by the Metro Washington Old Time Radio Club---access thru their website: <http://www.eotrc.com/> Available thru club membership, or \$2.00 per issue, or selected trades (contact the club secretary first); or, occasionally, by pure editorial whim

This is the latest of the new, revamped and reformatted club newsletter of the Washington, D.C. Old Time Radio club. The new editor is Martin Grams, a recognized researcher in the hobby who has published a fair number of well written books about old time radio.

The new format includes a much larger type-font. Readers no longer have to squint or drag out a magnifying glass to read the issue. There are also lots more photos and illustrations. Missing is the regular letter column, but the loss is more than compensated for by the depth and variety of the articles offered each issue.

This time round editor Grams looks at the classic, perennial OTRadio children's Christmas serial "The Cinnamon Bear" and notes a large number of similarities between the radio series and the 1935 animated cartoon "The Calico Dragon". He raises some interesting points, well illustrated by scenes from the cartoon, and promo ads for the syndicated Cinnamon Bear serial. He also notes that there is an ongoing annual Cinnamon Bear holiday cruise in Portland Oregon that runs on selected clear weather days during November and December. The people putting on the cruises also offer a full range of Cinnamon Bear stuffed animals and toys. I'll have to pick up one of those bears and a dragon next year, they look very cute.

There are a few brief obituary write-ups, and a short article devoted to OTRadio in the comics. Radio-to-comic book crossovers were around almost from the beginning of comic book publishing, often comprising an important part of a comic company's offerings. During the late 1940s thru the late 1950s, for example, one fourth of DC Comics total output was related to characters and programs that originated on radio. This time the article examines the Johnny Dollar detective show as filtered thru the humorous satire of *Whack Magazine*. Unusual, to say the least.

There is a department related to recently discovered OTRadio programs, with dates, plus in-depth reviews of brand new or recently republished books about OTRadio.

The feature article of the issue is a look at radio's long involvement with Charles Dicken's classic story "A Christmas Carol", and specifically, Lionel Barrymore's decades long involvement with the radio production and the film that was inspired by his annual portrayal on radio of Ebenezer Scrooge. This is a solid examination with lots of background information, including notations of every single time "A Christmas Carol" was broadcast on network radio, plus plenty of photographs and quotations from Barrymore himself over the years discussing his role and his relationship with Scrooge. Excellent reading, and thoroughly researched.

The issue finishes up with comments about amateur players from the club who give recreations of OTRadio shows live before auditorium audiences, along with a list of upcoming events and conventions that either feature OTRadio material or are of interest to fans of OTRadio.

This is a very nice package. Anyone who is interested in OTRadio will find this interesting and informative. The Metro Washington club also offers selective articles from many past issues on their website as part of their club offerings, and those are also well worth exploring.



THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE
IS MARCH 20, 2018