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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society  
Club Notice - 08/03/90 -- Vol. 9, No. 5

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.  
LZ meetings are in LZ 2R-158. MT meetings are in the cafeteria.

  D  A  T  E                T  O  P  I  C

- 08/22 LZ: RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA by Arthur C. Clarke
- 09/12 LZ: STAR MAKER by Olaf Stapledon (Formative Influences)
- 10/03 LZ: MICROMEGAS by Voltaire (Philosophy)
- 10/24 LZ: THE WORM OUROBOROS by E. R. Eddison (Classic Horror)
- 11/14 LZ: WAR WITH THE NEWTS by Karel Capek (Foreign SF)

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- 08/11 NJSFS: New Jersey Science Fiction Society: Susan Shwartz  
(phone 201-432-5965 for details) (Saturday)
- 08/18 SFABC: Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: TBA  
(phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 hocpa!jetzt  
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrrt  
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 957-5619 mtgzx!leeper  
HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3E-301 949-4488 hotld!tps  
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-3346 mtunq!lfl  
MT Librarian: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl  
Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl  
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1. I had a crisis of faith the other day, one of those incidents  
that make you look inside yourself and see beyond all the sham to  
what is real, what is true. I hope that this sort of thing happens  
to you and I hope, gentle reader, that when it does you take full  
advantage of it. Crises of faith are really opportunities to grow.

What sparked all this was that I went to an Indian restaurant.

There lying on my dish was an innocent-looking green pepper. It was long and narrow, almost like a green bean that had been polished to a high gloss. Now, it may have looked innocent but I knew these green peppers were a deadly, hot variety, the kind that burn your mouth and that you can track through your entire

THE MT VOID

Page 2

digestive track as if they have a homing beacon. Now I know that you should treat these deadly greens with respect, so I did. I introduced myself before taking a big bite out of it.

The pepper gave a sensory impression much like the one I imagine one would get by biting a nest of hornets. My whole mouth was a sheet on flame. My throat felt as if I'd gotten a double dose of strep. Flames came from my nose and smoked my glasses. Every gland in my head began secreting all at once. With superhuman strength I managed a half-smile and my lips, which felt as if the skin had been flayed off, framed the words "Not bad."

But to myself I said, "Never again. If I survive the next five minutes without dying, I will never again eat another hot pepper. Not another sip of Tabasco as long as I live." My eyes watering profusely stretched out the bright light over my head so it looked like pulled bubble gum. But, no, that wasn't it. My eyes dried but the long bright shape was still there. As my eyes cleared, it looked like a glowing angel standing there. "Now I did it. I've killed myself."

"No, my son." The angel spoke in a Cajun accent I won't attempt to phoneticize. "I am the Angel of Hot Food sent to help you through this crisis."

"Just let me survive and I will never eat hot food again."

"That would be a mistake, my son. The poor Earth can provide only so much food to be eaten. Some is bland, some is not. Most people can eat only the bland food and there is not enough dull, bland food to go around. If you eat a head of lettuce, no rabbit can eat it. And the rabbit needs to eat. That pepper you just ate no rabbit would ever eat; very few people could eat it. But you can. Think how much more food there is for us all because you can eat

hot food and you can take it." With that the Angel of Hot Food vanished but was not truly gone. He left a lump in my throat and a tear in my eye.

And now I know, and you know, just how much we all owe to people who eat their food spicy. Next time you see someone pouring Tabasco over his scrambled eggs, dumping loads of horseradish on his corned beef sandwich, eating those shriveled red peppers in the Kung Pao Squid, or covering his taco chips with the green "killer" sauce, walk up to him and thank him for sacrificing his tastebuds and for putting up with a fire in his belly so that the innocent creatures of the earth might have more to eat. Tell him that you know the world is a better place because he refuses to take the easy path of pallid, bland food. And tell him an angel sent you.

2. I would like to take this opportunity to update some information that appeared in the last notice. Item number 1: The claim was

THE MT VOID

Page 3

made that the film HIGH NOON was made in 1943. That piece of information is no longer operative. I am investigating the reason for the misprint and right now I can tell you it was almost definitely the result of a faulty O-ring.

Item number 2: I said that "a fair number of live spiders were also sued" in the production of ARACHNOPHOBIA. This one was indeed a typo. The proper word was that the spiders were "used." A little common sense would tell you that no lawyer would ever bring suit against a spider. There is, of course, a matter of professional courtesy between the two.

Item number 3: Dale Skran's review said that the story "Boobs" by Suzy McKee Charnes was not worthy of a Hugo when, in fact, it is a better story than he claimed and is worthy of a Hugo.

Mark Leeper  
MT 3D-441 957-5619  
...mtgzx!leeper

You cannot put a rope around the neck of an idea;  
you cannot put an idea up against the barrack-square  
wall and riddle it with bullets; you cannot confine  
it in the strongest prison cell your slaves could  
ever build.

-- Sean O'Casey

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STAR TREK: The Next Generation  
The Third Season: The First 16 Episodes  
by Dale L. Skran, Jr.  
Copyright 1990 Dale L. Skran, Jr.

I watched the first few episodes of the first season of ST:TNG with great expectations that were immediately dashed. Although there were some interesting ideas and characters, they were buried beneath sophomoric scripting and a tide of silly plots, including the classic "naked joggers" episode, and a large number of thinly veiled re-makes of earlier Star Trek episodes. Recently, I have obtained tapes of all the 3rd season episodes, and have been watching them back-to-back. The entire effect is completely different. Characters are handled better, the scripting is almost adult, and there are more, and more interesting SF ideas.

### EVOLUTION

In this episode, Wesley mixes together some "nanites" -- nanotechnological medical devices that begin to mutate, escape, evolve and ultimately take over the Enterprise. This is one of the weaker stories in the 3rd season, mainly since the "nanites" are so much more advanced than most other "Star Trek" technology. Still, the show deserves credit for at least introducing the idea of nanotechnology to the audience.

### ENSIGNS OF COMMAND

One of the major flaws of the third season is the use of reasonable plots based on weak devices or assumptions. Here, "bayronic" radiation prevents any crew member except Data from beaming down to rescue a lost colony. This allows Data to have a major and somewhat interesting role, but is obviously contrived. The radiation "just happens" to prevent phasers from working, piling ever more obstacles in Data's path. A good element in this story are the legalistic aliens who claim ownership of the colony, and who will destroy the inhabitants like ants if they cannot be removed by a particular deadline. Eventually Picard outwits them by invoking obscure clauses in a 500 page treaty they have with the Federation. Overall, the Star Trek universe seems to have become much more interesting since the first season, with many more, and more unusual alien races.

### SURVIVORS

One complaint fans have had with ST over the years lies in the over-use of GLAs[God-Like Aliens]. This is one of the more thoughtful episodes to deal with the topic. The Enterprise encounters a Federation colony that has been wiped out completely except for a patch of a few acres, which contains an old couple and a house. Mystery is piled on mystery as an alien ship appears and then flees. Eventually Picard deduces that there is a lot more to the situation than meets the eye.

The final dialog in which the pacifistic GLA says, "You don't understand. I didn't just destroy their ship[that destroyed the colony and killed the GLA's human wife]. I reached out into the universe and killed them ALL, all 50 billion of them," is especially chilling. For once the GLA is not a child-god like the Q, but a mature adult troubled by the implications of near-omnipotence. The viewer is left with the realization that for both ourselves and the enigmatic GLA, power alone provides no escape from moral dilemmas.

### WATCHERS

In this episode, an accident among an anthropological team threatens to re-introduce superstition to a rational, Vulcan-like matriarchal race. Picard convinces the aliens he is not a God by bringing the leader to the Enterprise, where conveniently one of the anthropological team dies, demonstrating Picard's limits. Although overall the plot and script are reasonable, I have a major problem with the death of the anthropologist. I doubt he would have died in any modern 1990 hospital, and surely he could have been kept going on the Enterprise. This is just another instance where Federation medical tech seems to be vastly behind all their other tech, which is extremely powerful. Is it really plausible that they have warp drive, transporters, phasers, androids, AI, replicators, force screens, tractor beams, and the holodeck, but not immortality and essentially perfect medicine? At the risk of becoming a ST:TNG apologist, it is at least plausible that the "Eugenics Wars" of the 90s resulted in bans on advanced medical technology and genetic engineering, although these are never mentioned.

### BONDING

This GLA episode is interesting since the GLAs are both well-meaning, and somewhat less than omnipotent. Nevertheless, their efforts to make a small boy happy whose mother has been killed by an ancient booby trap lead to a conflict over the boy's future. In this case, since the mother was killed by a weapon (a "sub-space mine") designed to kill people, it seems more plausible that she could not be saved. This episode uses both Worf and Wesley to good effect.

### BOOBY TRAP

The Enterprise is trapped in an ancient weapon while investigating a derelict ship. The episodes focuses on Picard's interest in bottled ships and naval history, among other things. This is not a bad episode, but I found it inconsistent that an enemy so much less advanced than the Federation could create such a novel and large-scale trap.

## ENEMY

Geordi is marooned on a planet in the neutral zone on which a mysterious Romulan ship has gone down. Blinded by magnetic storms, he

- 3 -

must team up with the wounded Romulan survivor to find a neutrino beacon left by the Enterprise before they are both killed by the hostile environment. Once again, we have a fair plot with a huge hole. It is unlikely that Geordi's goggles could be used as a neutrino detector. Neutrinos just don't interact with anything that small, but the idea sounds plausible to the scientifically illiterate.

An interesting sub-plot has Worf refusing to supply a ribosome transfusion to a wounded Romulan (his parents were killed by Romulans). I was really surprised by this -- it was a very realistic touch.

## PRICE

In this episode, a number of races meet on the enterprise to bargain over a "White Hole" which may provide instantaneous transportation to distant parts of the universe. One of the races is represented by a negotiator who is a secret empath. He uses his powers to seduce counselor Troi and contrive to out-negotiate the Federation. This plot was relatively more complex than some of the previous ones, and proved to be a harbinger of better stories to come.

## THE VENGEANCE FACTOR

By Sam Rolfe

The Enterprise attempts to make peace between a race and the "Gatherers," a break-away group that lives in space, raiding isolated Federation (and other) outposts. This episode introduces the idea of vicious inter-clan warfare carried out using a virus that only kills



people in a particular clan. In the end, Riker kills a beautiful woman who, as the last survivor of her clan, seeks a revenge that will prevent peace from ever being established. This last bit really surprised me, since it appeared that it could be avoided. Surely Riker could have had her transported out of the room. As it was, he acted as Judge, Jury, and Executioner.

### THE DEFECTOR By Ronald D. Moore

This is perhaps the best-written episode I've seen yet. Picard must decide whether a Romulan defector who brings word of an impending attack is genuine or a fake. Although the plot could be retold as a cold-war spy story, it represents a major advance in subtlety and realism for ST:TNG

### THE HUNTED By Robin Bernheim

A planet seeking entrance to the Federation asks the Enterprise to apprehend an escaped criminal. They try, and discover the "criminal" is a bio-engineered super-soldier that the planet was unable -- or unwilling to re-integrate into society after a recent war. For once,

- 4 -

the crew of the Enterprise is out-witted by an intelligent, clever opponent, and Worf gets his butt kicked, in one of the more suspenseful and tightly written episodes. The super-soldier is well characterized and portrayed.

### HIGH GROUND

Dr. Crusher is kidnapped by a group of separatist terrorists who wish to involve the Federation in their revolution. The terrorists use an advanced form of teleportation that the Enterprise cannot track or block, giving a frightening lesson in the bloody efficiency of war via teleportation. The terrorists are led by an intelligent, articulate, and charismatic leader who makes a good case for his revolution. Generally well written, the script makes a serious attempt to address some of the issues involved in terrorism. Unfortunately, the plot ends on a weak note, with a few pious words about putting down guns that ring hollow.

## DEJA Q

Definitely the best "Q" episode -- although that's not saying much. The "Q" returns to the Enterprise having been stripped of his powers, and seeks asylum. This proves to be a major problem as the Enterprise is immediately beset by races seeking revenge on the Q. There is some good dialog between the "Q" and Data, who both seek the mantle of humanity. Eventually, to everyone's surprise the Q performs a selfless act, and the continuum restores his powers, meaning we may see him in still MORE episodes.

## MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

This episode is more interesting in the telling than in the actual plot ideas. Riker beams aboard the Enterprise, and immediately the space station he left explodes. The locals accuse him of deliberately using his phasor to destroy the station. Picard holds court on the Enterprise before releasing Riker to the natives, using the Holodeck to re-create each witness's version of the story.

## YESTERDAY'S ENTERPRISE

This episode looked terrible in the previews, but was excellent. The Enterprise is investigating an unusual rift in space when they detect a ship -- the Enterprise C, an earlier version destroyed by the Romulans over 20 years before. Suddenly, the time-continuum shifts, Yar replaces Worf, and the Enterprise is a dark battleship with no families on board. Only Guinan can tell that anything has changed. Apparently, the sudden escape of the Enterprise C into the future has altered history in a major way, and the Federation has been fighting the Klingons for more than 22 years.

Yar eventually worms it out of Guinan that she is dead in the "real" universe, and volunteers to return with the Enterprise C to a

"fight to the death" with the four Romulan warbirds 22 years earlier. As they enter the portal, the Enterprise D must hold off three Klingon Warships. In this one, everybody dies! The scene of Picard on the burning bridge, taking over the weapons station from a fallen Riker,

muttering "Fat chance of that" in response to the Klingon demand for surrender is great!

Suddenly, the previous reality is restored, and only Guinan knows the difference. The final scene has Guinan sitting down with Geordi in the bar, asking, "Tell me about Tasha Yar." Overall, an excellent episode.

## OFFSPRING

Data surprises Picard with the news that he has created "Lal" ("Beloved" in Hindi), his own daughter and the second Sung-type android in existence. This episode deals with the desire of Data to reproduce, and the consequences of his actions. The attempts of the head of Star Fleet Research to remove Lal from the ship are merely a sideshow; the interesting part is Data attempting to cope with his child.

PRESUMED INNOCENT  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1990 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: A tightly plotted mystery that often threatens to leave loose ends and then very cleverly ties them all together. Harrison Ford again plays a cipher the audience is not intended to understand (but how many more such roles can he find?). Recommended for Agatha Christie fans. Rating: high +2.

At the risk of starting this review with a (very mild) spoiler, I will say that not until the final seconds of this film does one recognize what a clever and well-constructed plot this film really has. In the tradition of the best of Agatha Christie a tight and complex knot comes apart with one deceptively simple tug. The story of P\_r\_e\_s\_u\_m\_e\_d I\_n\_n\_o\_c\_e\_n\_t is not told in an Agatha Christie storybook style at all. Instead it is told with a harder and more realistic edge. The backdrop is the highly politicized office of the Prosecuting Attorney. Harrison Ford plays Rusty Sabich, an assistant to the Prosecuting Attorney investigating the rape-murder of an attractive and ambitious co-worker. But his investigation is cut short by a political reversal that not only leaves the investigation in another Prosecutor's hands, but also leaves Rusty the prime suspect for the crime.

The one dramatic problem with the film is that the audience is intentionally placed outside the action. Through the whole film, much more than is necessary or even realistic, Rusty Sabich is an enigma. The audience is desperate to hear his side of the accusation, but frustratingly it is kept from us. We get details about Sabich about as frequently and easily as the rival prosecutor does. And matters are not helped by having Harrison Ford in the role. Ford plays the role extremely blandly and woodenly. Even as a man going through some serious crises, it is very hard to believe Ford as a successful attorney and assistant to the Prosecutor.

Alan Pakula directed P\_r\_e\_s\_u\_m\_e\_d I\_n\_n\_o\_c\_e\_n\_t from a script that is very tightly written by Frank Pierson and Pakula. It builds its view of what actually happened a bit at a time, with a very slow, painstaking introduction of clues, much like Pakula's A\_l\_l\_t\_h\_e\_P\_r\_e\_s\_i\_d\_e\_n\_t's M\_e\_n. Brian Dennehy plays the Chief Prosecutor Raymond Horgan and honkers down in his role with his usual apparent ease. Raul Julia plays Sabich's

attorney as just a bit dishonest. Bonnie Bedelia plays Rusty's wife and Greta Scaachi plays the victim whom we see a lot considering her short screen time.

and     P    r    e    s    u    m    e    d    I    n    n    o    c    e    n    t is a real attention-holder that is solid plot no filler. I rate it a high +2 on the -4 to +4 scale.