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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
10/15/21 -- Vol. 40, No. 16, Whole Number 2193

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Bond Songs (Part 5) (OCTOPUSSY ("All Time High"), A VIEW TO A KILL ("Dance into the Fire"), THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS) (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

OCTOPUSSY is another James Bond film not generally likely to engender warm feelings from the series fans. It starts with a spy made up as a circus clown. Oddly, John LeCarre also refers to his agent's section as The Circus. He does it without vulgar references in his stories. Interesting that each should use the same metaphor. In any case, the songwriter apparently did not feel he could get away working the film title into the song. The song goes thus...

```
All I wanted was a sweet distraction for an hour or two
    {Buy yourself a cake.}

Had no intention to do the things we've done
    {I wish I was a fly on the wall.}

Funny how it always goes with love, when you don't look, you find
But then we're two of a kind, we move as one

    {Didn't I see this in a Marx Brothers film with a mirror?}

We're an all time high.
    {That is a bad habit. You will end up ODing.}

We'll change all that's gone before
Doing so much more than falling in love
```

{You will end up in the gutter. Offering a high that will be all-consuming sounds pretty creepy to me.}

On an all time high
We'll take on the world and win
So hold on tight, let the flight begin
I don't want to waste a waking moment; I don't want to sleep

{You'll end dead in an alley someplace.}

I'm in so strong and so deep, and so are you.

{Leave me out of this.}

In my time I've said these words before, but now I realize
My heart was telling me lies, for you they're true

{That's called projection.}

We're an all time high
We'll change all that's gone before
Doing so much more than falling in love

{Like what? No, wait. Leave me out.}

On an all time high
We'll take on the world and win
So hold on tight, let the flight begin
So hold on tight, let the flight begin
We're an all time high.

A VIEW TO A KILL is the next Bond film. The song is also known as "Dance into the Fire".

{Did he say "Dance into the Fire?" Kiddies, do NOT try this at home. STAY OUT of fires!}

Meeting you with a view to a kill

{Other than that, the opening is product of a schizophrenic mind.}

Face to faces, secret places, feel the chill
Night fall covers me

{I can't poke fun at the song. It is very bad taste. Schizophrenia is such a sad disease.}

But you know the plans I'm making
Still overseas,
Could it be the whole lot opening wide
A sacred why
A mystery gaping inside
A week is why
Until we dance into the fire
That fatal kiss is all we need
Dance into the fire
To fatal sounds of broken dreams
Dance into the fire
That fatal kiss is all we need
Dance into the fire
The choice for you is the view to a kill
Between the shades assassination standing still
First crystal tears,
Fallen of snowflakes on your body
First time in years
To drench you skin of lover's rosy stain
A chance to find the phoenix for the flame
A chance to die
But can we dance into the fire
That fatal kiss is all we need
Dance into the fire
To fatal sounds of broken dreams
Dance into the fire
That fatal kiss is all we need
Dance into the fire
When all we see is the view to a kill.

{I can't do much with this song. The lyrics sound like the song was written on the planet Tzork...}

THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS is next, and what can I say? Again not one word of the lyrics makes any coherent sense. At least in A VIEW TO A KILL an occasional line made sense. In the song "The Living Daylights" not even the phrases make sense. This song's lyric is verbal fruit cocktail:

Hey driver, where we going?
I swear my nerves are showing
Set your hopes up way too high
The living's in the way we die
Comes the morning and the headlights fade away
Hundred thousand people, I'm the one they blame
I've been waiting long for one of us to say
"Save the darkness, let it never fade away"
Oh, the living daylights
Oh, the living daylights
All right, hold on tight now
It's down, down to the wire
Set your hopes up way too high
The living's in the way we die
Comes the morning and the headlights fade away
Hundred thousand changes, everything's the same
I've been waiting long for one of us to say
"Save the darkness, let it never fade away"
Oh, the living daylights
Oh, the living daylights
Oh, the living daylights
Get away
Comes the morning and the headlights fade away
Hundred thousand people, I'm the one they frame
Oh, the living daylights
Oh, the living daylights
Oh, the living daylights
You may run
Set your hopes up way too high
The living's in the way we die
Set your hopes up way too high
The living's in the way we die
Set your hopes up way too high
The living's in the way we die
Set your hopes up way too high
The living's in the way we die
Set your hopes up way too high
The living's in the way we die.

[-mrl]

BLACK SUN by **Rebecca Roanhorse** (copyright 2020, Simon and Schuster Audio, 12 hours and 47 minutes, ASIN B084HN579M, narrated by Cara Gee, Nicole Lewis, Kaipo Schwab, and Shaun Taylor-Corbett) (audio book review by Joe Karpierz):

BLACK SUN, Rebecca Roanhorse's latest novel and a Hugo finalist, is for me a mixed bag. It is a very well-written novel, intricately weaving four point of view characters to tell the tale of the return of the Crow god to the city of Tova to exact revenge on the Watchers, the people who slaughtered the Crow clan in the Night of Knives many years prior to the story. The four POV characters are well-written and developed, and their stories come together to contribute nicely to the novel as a whole. It is a diverse cast of characters, which has been one of the main topics of conversation about the novel in the speculative fiction community.

And yet, to me the story is uneven. Maybe that's the nature of the beast when you have four POV characters to deal with. To me, the most interesting is Xiala, a member of the Teek, whose Song is a form of sea magic, and who is more powerful in the magic than she realizes. I found myself being more interested in the novel when her chapters were being read. Serapio, the vessel of the Crow god, is nearly as interesting as a character as Xiala but whose back story is more fascinating, beginning with the (admittedly disturbing) opening chapter. The politics that Naranapa the Sun Priest is involved in slow the story down for me, and I really wasn't very interested in her story at all. Finally, I can't help but think that Okoa, a young member of the Crow clan, will have a bigger part to play in the next book in the series, **FEVERED STAR**, which will be out in April of 2022.

The thirty thousand foot summary of the story is that a group of people - the Crow clan--have been wronged by the Watchers--a group of priests in Tova, and are thirsting for revenge. Revenge will be aided by the return of the Crow god, which will occur at a very rare confluence of an eclipse and the winter solstice. The novel tells the story of the four characters leading up to that event, and then, of course, the event doesn't quite go as it's supposed to.

Of course, the story is more intricate than that, with politics, betrayal, and traitorous events all the way around. Xiala is commissioned to take a cargo to Tova, for example, and her crew turns mutinous after a particularly rough storm and some magic they were unhappy with. Naranapa, being the Sun Priest, is in the middle of a couple of different conflicts. All fairly standard stuff.

And that's the point, I guess. This is fairly standard stuff. As I wrote earlier, the characters are really well done, but the story is lacking. A wronged people seeking revenge and aided by a god whose return on a particular date in nature is nothing new. The way Roanhorse gets there may be new, and the vessels of the story may be different, but we've been here before in fantasy before.

The narration for this book was nothing short of outstanding, and it had to be with the story jumping back and forth in time to get where we are by the end of the novel. All the narrators were outstanding in the portrayal of the characters they were assigned. Especially good was Cara Gee, and in retrospect it should have not been a surprise. While television acting is different from voice narration (Gee portrays Drummer on the TV series THE EXPANSE), it is clear that she is just as good at this job as she is at television acting.

I'm not saying this is a bad book. It's not. But it's not my cup of tea. It may be yours. Take a sip and find out. [-jak]

"The Boscombe Valley Mystery" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Continuing my occasional comments on Sherlock Holmes stories:

1. If McCarthy was killed by "repeated blows" of his son's gun, wouldn't the gun have blood all over it?
2. Holmes says that in Watson's bedroom "the window is upon the right-hand side." The right-hand side of what? If he means to the right of the door, he seems to be assuming the washstand and mirror are on the wall opposite the door. But couldn't they be on the same wall as the door?
3. Does everyone who has been in Australia use "Cooee" as a call-out? (We see someone in Agatha Christie's PERIL AT END HOUSE do so in what turns out to be over-acting.)
4. For that matter Doyle re-uses the idea of transportees returning from transport to Australia in at least one other story, "The Adventure of the Gloria Scott." And Australia is also the origin of characters (not all criminals) in several other stories.
5. Watson may be married but that doesn't stop him from describing the loveliness of all the women in need of help. (Apparently plain women do not consult Sherlock Holmes.)
6. It seems more likely that the beginning syllables of "Ballarat" would be audible than the ending ones.
7. How convenient it is that McCarthy finds out he is not really married after all.
8. If Watson is publishing the details of this case, one has to assume that Alice Turner will hear of it and thus find out her father's secret, even though Holmes had promised not to reveal it.

[-ecl]

THE FLY (1958) (letters of comment by Art Stadlin and Gary McGath):

In response to [Mark's comments on THE FLY](#) in the 10/08/21 issue of the MT VOID, Art Stadlin writes:

[Mark writes,] "Helene, ever the optimist, pulls the cloth from his head and finds herself looking at a human-sized fly head. ... Andre sees Helene's screaming face through compound eyes in one of the most horrific scenes of any film ever." [-mrl]

Have to agree, that was one world-class horrific scene! I'd also include seeing the "human" fly caught in the spider web, so positively helpless. Thankfully, that scene is cut short by the mercy killing of both spider and fly.

[Mark writes,] "It is interesting to note that this is a film with no human--or even non-human--villains. Essentially, everybody wants the best for everybody else. It is basically people after a disastrous mistake struggling to put things right again." [-mrl]

How civil! Couldn't help but reflect on our modern-day situation with the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of civility and unity in fighting the virus, the scientists are turned into the villains! [-as]

Gary McGath writes:

As far as I can remember, "The Fly" was the first horror movie I ever saw. What was creepiest to me and stuck most in my mind was the fly with the human head calling "Help me!" and then getting killed. [-gmg]

This Week's Reading (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

This week I'll talk about the finalists for the "Lodestar Award for Best Young Adult Book (presented by the World Science Fiction Society)". This is specifically *not* a Hugo Award, but is voted on and given by the same people and in the same fashion.

CEMETERY BOYS by Aiden Thomas: This is a fantasy based on the indigenous beliefs and magic of Latin America, primarily of Mexico, and is set in the Latinx community of Los Angeles. I get the use of "Latinx" as gender-neutral, but I really wish whoever coined it had used "Latini" instead, because there is *no* good way to pronounce the parallel construction "brujx". I get the name thing. And I can even get that there is a Puerto Rican/Haitian family that plays a major role (though only 1% of Latinx population in Los Angeles is Puerto Rican, and Haiti). But having the Puerto Rican aunt's signature dish being tamales is just "off". (I would say that Dia de Muertos was not observed by Puerto Ricans, but apparently it has been somewhat adopted throughout Latin America from Mexico.) In addition, I have to say that subtlety is not this book's strong suit, there is a lot of infodump, and I often had the feeling that Thomas was working to make sure they checked all the diversity boxes. Even with all that, and with the caveat that for many readers, a Spanish-English dictionary might be helpful, I still recommend this book. (Thomas uses a few Spanish words in narrative, e.g., "bruj[aox]", and has the occasional sentence or two of dialogue in Spanish.)

A DEADLY EDUCATION by Naomi Novik: This is the first of a series and any resemblance to Harry Potter is purely intentional. But this is the darker side of Harry Potter--which many would claim was already dark enough. While in Harry Potter, the school was designed to train wizards how to protect themselves, and how to use their powers for good, in A DEADLY EDUCATION the school's

motto seems to be "what does not kill you makes you stronger," and if that means killing a quarter of the students, well, it's a wizard-eat-wizard world out these. Students have only two goals: survive the school, and get chosen for an enclave (think of it as a wizardly version of a big financial institution). It's engaging enough, if a bit dark and depressing.

ELATSOE by Darcie Little Badger: This is another one (see LEGENDBORN) that makes the tropes of fairy tales/folk tales more obvious. Maybe it's Hugo/Lodestar fatigue (this was the last of the Lodestar finalists I read), but I could not get invested in the characters.

LEGENDBORN by Tracy Deonn: This was the first of this category I read, and it made me think that one thing that may help distinguish young adult novels is a more obvious use of the standard tropes of fairy tales/folk tales. We have the loss of a parent, the journey away from home, the discovery of powers, the hidden king, and so on. (See also Vladimir Propp's thirty-one functions of folk tales.) Maybe I'm completely wrong here; I'll see what the other young adult books are like. Deonn sets this at the University of North Carolina in the present, complete with current issues about race and gender, but they are integrated into the novel, not looking as if they were slapped on to make the novel more "relevant".

RAYBEARER by Jordan Ifueko: I read the first quarter of this and skimmed the last three-quarters. It just seemed the same-old, same-old palace intrigue in a fantasy world. The world seemed like a copy of ours, shrunk to a smaller landmass and with the names of the countries changed a bit (Mexico is now Quetzala, for example). Maybe I'm not the target audience--I'm not a young adult, and I am not a big fan of this sort of fantasy. Obviously, *someone* liked it enough to make it a Hugo finalist, so if you do like this sort of thing, it is probably worth a shot.

A WIZARD'S GUIDE TO DEFENSIVE BAKING by T. Kingfisher: I definitely liked this one. The first-person narration was engaging, the concepts of the different kinds of magic seemed new (at least to me), and the other characters are not the standard fantasy characters that I have seen all too often. Okay, Spindle may be your standard street urchin, but Knackering Molly is certainly different. Highly recommended.

Ranking: A WIZARD'S GUIDE TO DEFENSIVE BAKING, LEGENDBORN, CEMETERY BOYS, A DEADLY EDUCATION, no award, ELATSOE, RAYBEARER [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

There are only two phases of a weapons program:
"Too early to tell" and "Too late to stop".
--USAF Financial Analyst
A. Ernest Fitzgerald

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