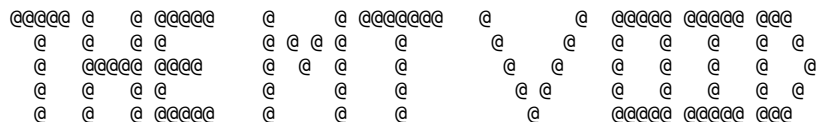


MT VOID 11/19/21 -- Vol. 40, No. 21, Whole Number 2198



Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
11/19/21 -- Vol. 40, No. 21, Whole Number 2198

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http://leepers.us/mtvoid/back_issues.htm.

"Pythy" Puzzle Solution (puzzle by Tom Russell; solution by David Goldfarb, Daniel Cox, and Evelyn C. Leeper) :

Last week we gave the puzzle:

The sides of a certain right triangle are all of integer length. The shortest side is 7. What are the other two sides? [-tlr]

This week we give the answer:

24 and 25.

The trick is realizing that the three sides are 7, x, and y, and $7^2 + x^2 = y^2$. This is the same as $49 = y^2 - x^2$.

But $y^2 - x^2$ is $(y-x)(y+x)$, and the only factors of 49 are 1 and 49. So we want two consecutive numbers (since $y-x=1$) whose sum is 49; these are 24 and 25. [-ecl]

David Goldfarb sent in a different reasoning for the same answer:

24 and 25. Since the difference between two successive squares is always odd, and every odd number is a difference between two squares (this is much easier to see by building successive squares geometrically than by proving algebraically), it can be shown that every odd number x forms a Pythagorean triple with $(x^2-1)/2$ and $(x^2+1)/2$. And no, I didn't use pencil or paper to work that out. [-dg]

And Daniel Cox sent in:

The triangle should be 7, 24, 25. Working only in my head, I think it's the only possibility.

This was how I reasoned, translated to equations:

I looked first for solutions to $7^2 + y^2 = z^2$ with $z - y = 1$.

$(y+1)^2 = y^2 + 2y + 1$, subtract y^2 from each side and you get $(y+1)^2 - y^2 = 2y + 1$.

$49 = 2y + 1$ gives $y = 24$. $7^2 + 24^2 = 49 + 576 = 625 = 25^2$.

Looking for other solutions to $7^2 + y^2 = z^2$ with $z - y = 3$ or $z - y = 5$ gives no integer solutions (if I did that correctly in my head). If $z - y = 7$, you get $y = 0$, but that's not a proper triangle. If $z - y > 7$, you get no solutions in positive real numbers, let alone integers. [-dte]

Bond Songs (Part 7) (OCTOPUSSY (THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH, DIE ANOTHER DAY, CASINO ROYALE ("You Know My Name")) (comments by Mark R. Leeper):

If you are just coming in on this, I am making comments on the title songs from the Bond films.

First this week is THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH.

I know how to hurt
I know how to heal
I know what to show
And what to conceal

{My understanding is that this song was written to be performed at a plumbers' convention as the Saturday night entertainment.}

I know when to talk
And I know when to touch
No one ever died
From wanting too much

{My plumber came close.}

The world is not enough
But it is such a perfect place to start, my love
And if you're strong enough
Together we can take the world apart, my love

{I figure starting on the tiling over the toilet.}

People like us
Know how to survive
There's no point in living
If you can't feel alive

{It's the customer we feels the pain.}

We know when to kiss

{(and what)}

And we know when to kill,
If we can't have it all
Then nobody will

The world is not enough
But it is such a perfect place to start, my love
And if you're strong enough
Together we can take the world apart, my love

{I think we are missing about 30,000 screws from when we took apart Canada alone. If you see some, hold onto them.}

I feel safe
I feel scared
I feel ready
And yet unprepared

{You don't know what you're feeling.}

The world is not enough
But it is such a perfect place to start, my love

And if you're strong enough
Together we can take the world apart, my love

The world is not enough
The world is not enough
Nowhere near enough
The world is not enough

Then comes DIE ANOTHER DAY.

I'm gonna wake up, yes and no

{Suit yourself.}

I'm gonna kiss some part of...

{Yeah, don't finish that thought, please.}

I'm gonna keep this secret
I'm gonna close my body now

I guess I die another day
I guess I die another day
I guess I die another day
I guess I die another day

{Don't keep putting it off. And let me check my calendar.}

I guess I'll die another day
I guess I'll die another day
I guess I'll die another day
I guess I'll die another day

Sigmund Freud
Analyze this
Analyze this
Analyze this...

I'm gonna break the cycle
I'm gonna shake up the system
I'm gonna destroy my ego
I'm gonna close my body now

{Would you like a cork?}

?

I think I'll find another way
There's so much more to know
I guess I'll die another day
It's not my time to go

For every sin I'll have to pay
I've come to work, I've come to play
I think I'll find another way
It's not my time to go

I'm gonna avoid the cliché
I'm gonna suspend my senses
I'm gonna delay my pleasure
I'm gonna close my body now

I guess I die another day
I guess I'll die another day
I guess I die another day
I guess I'll die another day

I think I'll find another way
There's so much more to know
I guess I'll die another day
It's not my time to go

I need to lay down

I guess I die another day
I guess I'll die another day
I guess I die another day
I guess I'll die another day

Another day
Another day

Another day
Another day
Another day
Another day
Another day

And finally this week, the first of the Daniel Craig films, along with a song not named for the film.

CASINO ROYALE ("You Know My Name")

{"But Now You Lost My Phone Number"}

If you take a life, do you know what you'll give?
Odds are you won't like what it is

{Eh, it's a living.}

When the storm arrives, would you be seen with me
By the merciless eyes of deceit?

I've seen angels fall from blinding heights
But you yourself are nothing so divine
Just next in line

Arm yourself because no one else here will save you
The odds will betray you
And I will replace you
You can't deny the prize it may never fulfill you
It longs to kill you, are you willing to die?
The coldest blood runs through my veins
You know my name

If you come inside things will not be the same
When you return to the night
If you think you've won, you never saw me change
The game that we've all been playing

I've seen diamonds cut through harder men
Than you yourself
But if you must pretend
You may meet your end

Arm yourself, because no one else here will save you
The odds will betray I've deceived?

{Not if you are gonna wear THOSE shoes.}

I've seen angels fall from blinding heights
But you yourself are nothing so divine
Just next in line

{What is a blinding height?}

Arm yourself, because no one else here will save you

{If we can see.}

The odds will betray you
And I will replace you

{I never promised you job security.}

And I will replace you
You can't deny the prize, it may never fulfill you
It longs to kill you
Are you willing to die
The coldest blood runs through my veins
You know my name.

Try to hide your hand
Forget how to feel (Forget how to feel)
Life is gone with just a spin of the wheel (Spin of the wheel)

Arm yourself, because no one else here will save you
The odds will betray you
And I will replace you
You can't deny the prize, it may never fulfill you
It longs to kill you
Are you willing to die?

The coldest blood runs through my veins
You know my name
You know my name
You know my name
You know my name
You know my name
You know my name
You know my name

{No, but the face is familiar.}

[-mrl]

WORTH (film review by Mark R. Leeper):

WORTH is a film about the September 11 Victim's Compensation Fund, and the work of Ken Feinberg in assigning compensation amounts to the victims' families.

Every year we see films released that tell of courtroom or legal drama. This goes back at least as far as films such as INHERIT THE WIND (1960) AND TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (1962), and even 12 ANGRY MEN (1957). More recently, we have seen THE VERDICT (1982), THE LINCOLN LAWYER (2011), BERNIE (2011), LOVING (2016), DENIAL (2016), MOLLY'S GAME (2017), ON THE BASIS OF SEX (2018), THE TRIAL OF THE CHICAGO 7 (2020), and THE MAURITANIAN (2021). Even if we limit this to cases involving class action suits (or possible suits) against corporations, we have A CIVIL ACTION (1998), THE INSIDER (1999), ERIN BROCKOVICH (2000), MICHAEL CLAYTON (2007), and DARK WATERS (2019).

WORTH uses two very good actors in a strong and even riveting conflict. Michael Keaton plays Ken Feinberg, chosen to head the compensation fund and Stanley Tucci plays Charles Wolf, leader of an advocacy group, "Fix the Fund", who feels the formulas being proposed are neither fair nor just. Together they strive to come to an agreement on determining damage awards from the 09/11 terrorist attacks. If they fail and a class lawsuit results, it could destroy not only the airline industry, but the entire economy. The whole problem comes down to a deep philosophical issue. When forced to name a dollar amount as the worth of a human being, how can someone actually fairly assign a monetary value on the worth of a human?

One touch that seems unrealistic, but is not, is that Feinberg initially thinks this will not be a difficult task. It is hard to believe that he would not realize from the beginning the can of worms that that he was volunteering for, but in real life he did underestimate the emotions of this event, and has said so since then. The film includes heartfelt stories of victims, survivors, and their families, and may be tough watching at times in spite of its PG-13 rating.

Released 09/03/21 on Netflix. Rating: +3 (-4 to +4), or 9/10.

Film Credits: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8009744/reference>

What others are saying: <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/worth>

[-mrl/ecl]

Gralloching (letters of comment by Kevin R, Paul Dormer, Tim Merrigan):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on "gralloching"](#) in the 11/05/21 issue of the MT VOID, Kevin R writes:

Removing the guts from an animal, something hunters do. "Field dressing" would be a less obscure term.

ObSF:

"You needed a tree to gralloch a deer properly. Hanging it up by the hind legs made it drain thoroughly and it also made it easier to gut and quarter." [<https://smstirling.com/samples/the-scourge-of-god-chapter-10/>]

I don't hunt, though I have friends that do, and the word comes up when discussing hunting or reading about it.

[Also mentioned was "nithering"]

Both [words are] more common in Scots, so, perhaps, gralloch would be more apt for a tale of Arthurian Britons than any pure Anglo-Saxonism? Nither has off-island roots: <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/nither>

[-kr]

Paul Dormer responds:

I would have thought a field dressing was what was applied to a wound on the battle field, but I see it can also refer to gralloching.

[-pd]

Tim Merrigan suggests:

Both work, depending on the definition of "dressing" one is using.

Wouldn't want to confuse them though. While a shot deer might appreciate an EMT's field dressing, I very much doubt a wounded soldier (with the possible exception of a Sontaran) would like a hunter's field dressing. [-tm]

German Language Variation (letter of comment by Gary McGath):

In response to [Fred Lerner's comments on variation in Middle English](#) in the 11/12/21 issue of the MT VOID, Gary McGath writes:

The German states (a.k.a. the Holy Roman Empire) were a patchwork of dialects until recent times, and many dialects persist today. The standardization of High German was heavily driven by Luther's translation of the Bible. It's based largely on the southern dialects, and Low German is still prevalent in much of the North as a spoken language. The term "High German" reflects the higher altitude of the southern regions as much as its claim to cultural superiority. [-gmg]

H. G. Wells Omnibus Editions (letter of comment by Paul Dormer):

In response to [Evelyn's comments on H. G. Wells](#) in the 11/12/21 issue of the MT VOID, Paul Dormer writes:

I have those seven books in an omnibus from an imprint called Heinemann Octopus. (Also have a companion edition of Kafka.) [-pd]

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

Tennessee Williams is yet another writer of the fantastic not usually recognized as such by science fiction fans (for the extended definition of "science fiction" that includes fantasy and horror). I suspect that he has more name recognition than Jose Saramago or even Jorge Luis Borges, but even those who have heard of him probably don't know about his first story, which was published in WEIRD TALES. He wrote about eight stories that are included in the isfdb.org, but even his other works reflect a type of horror.

For example, consider SUDDENLY, LAST SUMMER. ****SPOILERS**** If Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" is a horror story, then certainly this is as well. I know this only from the movie, which is an expansion of the original one-act play, but the setting of the ruined temple for the climax implies a connection with the Dionysian/Bacchic cults of ancient Greece and Rome. And Sebastian Venable's description of the evil of the world seems derived from Manichaeism and/or gnosticism, though for horror fans there also a hint of Lovecraftian horror in it. Violet Venable's description of life with him as "a world of light and shadow" also seems to reflect this duality.

And that's not even counting the real-life horrors of a mental institution in general and a frontal lobotomy in particular. If Val Lewton's BEDLAM is considered a horror film, then certainly SUDDENLY, LAST SUMMER is as well.

(Violet Venable is one of a long line of Williams's older women who have at best a tenuous grasp on reality, and seem to believe that reality is what they want it to be. Violet Venable, Big Mama, Blanche DuBois, Amanda Wingfield, ... they all live in a fantasy world.)

Oddly, the one story Williams had in WEIRD TALES, "The Vengeance of Nitocris" (1928, under the byline of Thomas Lanier Williams), has no supernatural elements. Horrific, yes, but unless one assumes the bridge collapse that triggers the events was of supernatural origin.

"Desire and the Black Masseur" (1948) (adapted into the short play "Desire Quenched by Touch" also has no supernatural elements. I suppose Williams's "speculative fiction" stories (as included in the Internet Speculative Fiction Database) as more along the lines of many of Stephen King's horror stories than of H. P. Lovecraft (or of Robert E. Howard, who had the cover story of the issue of WEIRD TALES in which "The Vengeance of Nitocris" appeared). There are several themes that show up in Williams's other works (including SUDDENLY, LAST SUMMER), and there is what at least one reviewer called a "Grand Guignol" quality to it. One suspects that Williams's use of race might make this less publishable today, and it is not clear that the story would suffer greatly were that element removed.

"The Mysteries of the Joy Rio" (1954) is a tale of an old movie palace which may or may not be haunted.

"The Knightly Quest" (1966) is definitely science fiction, with someone returning home after many years away to discover his home town has become a fascist Christian enclave, apparently with the approval of the Federal government, which seems to have been taken over by authoritarian thugs.

I will note that Williams's grammar is not perfect; he writes "less than two passengers" at one point. He is also no scientist, writing, "They're so far away now that their watches are timed by light-years." And in case the reader misses the ambiguity, he specifically speaks of "a ... reminder that night is a quest."

"The Knightly Quest" is a novella; the other four stories that fill out the book THE KNIGHTLY QUEST ("Grand", Mama's Old Stucco House", "Man Bring This Up Road", and "The Kingdom of Earth", all from 1966) are not science fiction or fantasy, though they do have that Southern Gothic" feel.

And Williams's last (?) foray into the fantastic is "A Recluse and His Guest" (1970), which reads very much like a fairy tale, though

closer to the "marchen" of Germany and the Brothers Grimm than to the lighter sort more common here.

Okay, it is nowhere near the fantasy output of a Jose Saramago, or even of a Doris Lessing (who at least acknowledged her status as a science fiction writer), but it is worth pointing out that Williams did not abandon the fantastic or weird when he became famous, or wave it away as something he "had to do" at the start of his career. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

I have the simplest tastes. I am always satisfied
with the best.

--Oscar Wilde

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