

REVENANT #34

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Katrina and Rita Won't Go Away

Louisiana is still hurting from the impact of the two hurricanes we got hit with. The latest insult from the feds was the 3.7 billion dollars the state is supposed to re-pay (our part of the clean-up bill) within 30 days. After those 30 days, interest and penalties get tacked on. When the governor called a special session, it was estimated that the state would have a one billion dollar shortfall in revenue. Would someone like to explain how we're supposed to come up with \$3,700,000,000 in one month?

But life is trying to get back to normal. My brother will be heading back to work at Tulane for the next semester. He's found a new place to live; for those of you who know New Orleans, I think it's in the Bywater district. He had a chance to go back to his house; but salvaged nothing---the landlady had already hired a salvage crew to come in, so nothing was left.

Baton Rouge still has a lot of evacuees. Some of them were able to move into travel trailers FEMA set up in Baker in a rural area. From what I've seen of them, they're pretty small, but I suppose it beats living in a shelter. The parish transit system has set up a new bus line so they can get around. The Red Cross is also running a free bus between Baton Rouge and New Orleans seven days a week. Very helpful for those who have a job in NO, but no place to live down there. Only a few schools have opened in NO and it's still vastly under populated.

It's going to be a very long time before New Orleans is anywhere near normal. But they're trying. They've announced that Mardi Gras parades will roll, that Jazz Fest will take place (somewhere, if not in the city), and the Café du Monde is back in business.

Live Journal

I've been reading a lot of Live Journal entries of late; from the people here and others. I'm becoming tempted to get an account of my own; not so much because I think the world is awaiting my thoughts, but I'd like to reply to some of the interesting entries. I know I could reply anonymously, but I'd rather give a name or identity. So, a few questions for those of you with a web log of your own: What was your motive for getting one? Is there something you wish you had known before you started? And, as a practical question: what is the difference between "friend" and "also friend of"?

A History of Violence

When I first heard about this movie, I was thinking that I'd give it a miss. I would have liked to have seen Viggo Mortensen in it; but I don't like watching violence on the screen and this movie sounded as if it had a lot of it. As it was released, though I kept hearing good things about it and decided I would go.

It's a good movie. There is violence, but it's quick, in three or four segments. It is explicit---what I saw of it, that is; I started closing my eyes when the violence came around. But it's a movie that makes you think. Who are we really?

It could almost be titled "The Repercussions of Violence" because it's not about the acts of violence we see on the screen; but what happens as a result of them. Tom Stall kills a couple of toughs who were planning bad things to him and his employees; and he becomes the hero of the week. But that act of violence in his diner goes on to affect everything in his life.

Soon after, three sinister sorts show up in his diner, claiming that Tom is really Joey Cusak, a violent man who once tried to kill one of them. And they don't want to take no for an answer. More violence occurs, and we see how that violence is changing Tom's quiet life.

Tom's son is a non-athlete who gets pushed around by the school jocks. The first time we see the son pushed around, he deflects the threat with a joke, making himself the buffoon. It costs him self-respect, though. The next time, he explodes, and seriously hurts two of the bullies.

There are a couple of steamy sex scenes between Tom and his wife. The first one is before the toughs show up; it starts out playfully as they pretend to be teenagers. The next is after one of the violent scenes. The sex is violent, physical, with none of the innocence or tenderness shown in the first.

Serenity

The weekend after seeing "violence" I went to see "Serenity". I wasn't a fan of "Firefly", the TV series to which this is a follow-up. I think I saw part of one episode and was so turned off by the "Westerns in space" motif that I resisted watching it again. So I hadn't intended to bother with this movie. But, I heard good things about it here and there, and a lot of people had been fans of "Firefly", so I decided to give it a try. Result: fun movie. What I'd call a popcorn movie: don't think too long or hard about it; just enjoy it while it's up there on the screen. I didn't have much trouble figuring out who was who; there's an info dump early on in the movie (which may not be wholly accurate considering the source); but it's enough to know who you're supposed to be rooting for. The spaces battles and shoot'em ups bored me; but at least that's not all it was. I enjoyed it enough to want to see the series; I've placed a hold on the library's copy of the series DVD.

I was reminded of "Blake's 7" several times while I was watching it; partly for some of the relationships among the characters and partly because of one scene in a corridor on "Serenity" that looked a lot like a corridor on the "Liberator", the ship in B7. For those of you who are not familiar with "Blake's 7"; it's a British SF TV show from the 80's about a group of criminals on the run from the evil Federation. The Federation is bad enough to make this group of smugglers and thieves look good by comparison. The crew has an uneasy truce among themselves and stays together more out of expedience rather than fondness for each other.

Goodnight and Good Luck

Here's another excellent movie. On the surface it's about Edward R. Murrow and Joe McCarthy. But it's also about the role of TV news; and whether it should look for the truth or entertain the viewers and please the sponsors. CBS is willing to air the episode of "See it Now" that shows McCarthy up as a bully and blowhard; but shortly after (shortly in movie time, that is; I don't know how long it was in the real world); the network cuts them back to five episodes a year to run on Sundays nights. The movie makers don't ignore the fact that Murrow did fluff as well as more serious subjects, though they show how the people who worked on the shows felt about them. Look at the contrast between the episode of "See it Now" on Air Force man and the episode of "Person to Person" when Murrow interviews Liberace. In the first, as the show ends, the crew applauds and congratulates each other. In the second, they finish and quietly walk out.

Books

I have managed to read a few books along with all the movie and internet surfing. Mostly unmemorable, but a few good ones. Connie Willis' *Inside Job* is more of a novella than a full length novel, but a pleasant read. In it, a de-bunker of psychics and his former movie star assistant are trying to disprove a spiritualist who has become famous channeling some ancient spirit. But then the channeled spirit begins sounding like someone else all together; someone who had no use for spiritualists or hokum.

Currently I'm plowing through Fleming Rutledge's *The Battle for Middle Earth: Tolkien's Divine Design in The Lord of the Rings*. I say "plowing" because it requires concentration, not because it's a bad book. Rutledge is an Episcopal priest and uses his knowledge of theology to look at the narrative of the story. I don't always agree with him on interpretation of some ideas and I like the movie a lot better than he does; but it's an interesting book.

Mailing Comments

The New Port News/Ned Brooks: Ct OO on wonky margins: I never did figure out what was wrong with the computer or printer. I was doing the zine in Works, with an HP DeskJet printer. Of course, with a new computer and printer; I don't have to worry about wacky margins for now.

Ct Metcalf on Esther Carlson and being a one-book writer: She may well have written just the one and written it herself. Harper Lee has never written anything other than *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which is certainly a good book. You mention the possibility that Carlson was a pseudonym and I've heard the rumors that Harper Lee didn't really write her book; that Truman Capote, who was a childhood friend of hers, wrote it. Not that I believe that; I've never heard why he would do such a thing.

Ct Ackerman on not being offended by being called a WASP: I have enough non Anglo-Saxon ancestry that I don't really qualify as one; though I wouldn't be especially annoyed at the appellation. I think WASP is often used in this country for any Protestant of northern European background rather than Anglo-Saxon in its strict sense.

Ct Randy on the poison ivy in your yard surviving the Round Up treatment: I'm not a gardener by any means, but it may be due to the persistence of the poison ivy rather than the age of the Round Up. I occasionally listen to a local radio call-in garden show on Saturday mornings. As I recall, the host has said getting rid of weeds (or poison ivy) can take a while and you may have to use the weed killer more than once.

Ct me on the course: The point of the course was to learn a little something about various technologies useful in library work. We could do a web page in HTML, or Dreamweaver, or whatever it took. We learned a little about several.

The Fake Yorker/Jeff Copeland: Ct to Gary Brown on burning CD's: This came in at a good time for me; I have a new computer with a CD burner that I haven't tried out yet.

Ct Dengrove on regional accents all flattened out: I'm not so sure about that; I still hear plenty of heavy accents around here.

Ct Feller about "Lost": You might try it again; it can be a very entertaining show. It's one of those you need to watch carefully because something going on in the background on one episode will be significant in another. Last season we got a lot of back story for each of the main characters---and some of the characters showed up in other characters back stories. I just about gave it up this season, though when the second episode covered the same ground as the first; just from different viewpoints and adding a few missing scenes. Very odd, almost as if they planned it to be a two hour episode, then went back and re-cut it to be two shows. It did get better, though, so I'm back to watching faithfully.

Twydrasil and Treehouse Gazette/Richard Dengrove: Interesting reading on Paracelsus; I had heard th4e name before, but not much more than that.

I hope the appraising and dividing of your parent's estate goes well. I'm sorry to hear of the friction going on; I'm happy that we avoided that in my family after my mother's death. Of course, it helped that we were on good term with each other already and that there was little of value anyway. Most items would have been of sentimental value only; and my brother is not big on sentimental value. My sister and I are a little more so; but neither one of us were set on keeping any one thing in particular. In fact, my sister had taken my mother's engagement ring which had broken and had it repaired. She gave it to me this past Christmas and I've been wearing it since as a nice connection to both of them.

Spiritus Mundi/ Guy Lillian: I wish I could have gotten over to Houston to see the LOTR exhibit again. I was short of time and money, though when it was there; so I'll just have to remember it from Boston. Wasn't it gorgeous? I think if I could have any of the items in the show; I would have picked Elrond's telescope. Such an exquisite piece of work and I barely noticed when I first saw the movie. It's indicative of the care they put into the movie that something that no more than set dressing should be so beautifully done.

Guy, I can't say how sorry I was to hear about Cindy. It was a terrible, terrible, unnecessary thing to happen. One more death that shouldn't have been.

Tyndallite/Norm Metcalf: Ct Rich Lynch on the latest Star Wars movie and “logic and characterization leave a lot to be desired”. Oh, yes, indeed. It helped for me to think of it as a popcorn movie. That’s one where you sit down with your popcorn and soft drink, turn off your brain, and mindlessly enjoy the flash and spectacle.

Ct Rich Dengrove about stories being “desecrated” by movies: It’s a rare event when a movie made into a story doesn’t desecrate it. It happens so often I know I’m very suspicious when I hear a SF story/novel is being filmed. There is the attitude, though, of one writer I heard at some con or another, saying “The book’s still on the shelf”; meaning that no how horrible a filmed version was, the original remained. Of course, a terrible version will probably put someone off seeking out the original...

Ct mike weber on the definition of “nominee”: I suppose you could call the ones on the final ballot candidates or finalists. Neither of those sounds very good.

Variations on a Theme/Rich and Nicki Lynch: Nice to have a word or so from Nicki again. Dublin has never been a city I cared much about seeing; but being able to see the Book of Kells would make it worth the trip. The British Museum is another place I’d love to see. One of these days...

On to Rich now: Thanks for including the photo of the SFPAnS in Glasgow. We should try to do that next year. Might be harder to do, though, since there are likely to be more of us there.

“We probably have come away with more memories of people who were at the convention than of the convention itself”. Often those are the best memories to have.

I’ve been enjoying “Lost”, too, although I was about to give up on it after the second episode when the plot advanced not at all from the first episode; and the third episode didn’t go much further. Luckily, they got back to moving along and I’m back to liking it. For a real time sink though, I watch “My Name is Earl”.

Peter, Pan & Merry/David Schlosser: Ct Rich Lynch and “Rabbit of Seville”: I was listening to the radio while driving around the other day. “The Barber of Seville” overture finished and the announcer says it’s a favorite of many “including Bug Bunny”.

Cal Edonia, and his dog, Scot/Schlosser: Very nice report here. I think I may have said before, if I can’t go to a con, it’s nice to hear about it. Sounds like you and family had a wonderful time; and I loved hearing all about it. Your remark of “I miss this!” echoes my feeling about conventions and fannish gatherings; it’s part of what makes good cons so good. It’s fun to be among like-minded people for a week-end or so.

I also enjoyed reading all about the neat traveling around you and family did after the con. I’ve never been overseas, and it’s beginning to look as if I’ll never make it there; so I like to read about what it’s like.

Regarding the bamboo on the walls of the Scottish parliament building: I looked it up and apparently there is no special significance to the material used. It’s actually Scottish oak.

The Sphere/Markstein: Glad to hear your nephew Miles found a place to attend school at least until Loyola reopens. I don’t remember hearing when they’re scheduled to do so, but Tulane

will be re-opening for the spring semester; so I'll hope Miles will be able to get to where he should be. LSU took in a bunch of transfer students; I imagine they'll be losing some of them in this coming semester. I'm just as glad I wasn't trying to cope with driving out to LSU this semester; parking was hard to come by before; it could only have gotten worse. See my natter about how Katrina and Rita have hurt this state. Some of the experts I'm heard pontificating on TV about the disasters just don't have a clue.

Yngvi is a Louse/Reinhardt: Sorry I had to miss Cascadiacon. It sounds like everyone had a good time; but I just couldn't afford it. Of course, even if I had planned to attend I might not have been able to get there. I probably would have had a flight out of New Orleans---and I don't think any regular flights were traveling out of NO at that point! I saw a brief glimpse on TV of the baggage claims area of the NO airport when they were using it for triage. Very odd to see a familiar place with such a different sort of work going on.

Your panel on *Starman Jones* brought out some good discussion points as to whether rules are bendable or whether actions have consequences. Actually, I'd go for both. Max bends the rules by helping the trucker fudge his log books, as you note; and also by passing himself off as a crewman. We as readers might think he is justified, especially in the latter case, because the society is so stratified that he couldn't get onto the ship any other way. Latter on, when the ships officer refuse to bend the rules and challenge the captain's poor astrogation, the ship is lost. Should they have bent the rules, and kept the ship from being lost? Their lack of action certainly had consequences. At the end, they bend the rules and have Max serve as Captain; but the consequences are that they get home safely.

The Adventures of Bruce Beefcake at Cascadiacon: Some people were having way too much fun. And I wasn't there!

A Back and White World/Copeland: Ct Ned on Shrub and the war in Iraq vs. Johnson and the war in Vietnam: At least the war in Iraq is becoming unpopular faster than the one in Vietnam. When a 30+ year service veteran member of Congress calls for a gradual pull-out and the chicken hawks respond by calling him a coward; you know they're getting desperate.

Ct Gelb about yelling at the radio: I've been yelling at the radio and TV post Katrina/Rita when the pontificators say things like the federal government shouldn't provide flood insurance because after all "those people" decided to live in a flood zone. For one thing, they ignore that some of "those people" were born there and can't afford to move hundreds of miles away to a non-flood zone. I live in a flood zone and I'm nowhere near a river, or any body of water; it's just low.

Ct Lillian about the duffuses at FEMA: "I could do a better job than the folks who are doing it now standing on my head." Well, there's part of the problem right there. They need to get off your head and stand on their own feet.

Ct me on library catalog terminals: I haven't seen a problem in people having to wait for terminals to look up a book. Very often patrons will either go straight to the shelf for the author they're looking for or sometimes just come ask us at the desk with the big sign that says, "Information". The library has four stand-up terminals that are mainly used for card catalog;; although they can be used for internet as well; plus nine other computers on the adult side that have internet and the databases the library subscribes to, plus Excel, PowerPoint, and Access. There are five more in the Youth Services section with mostly the same capabilities. They can

all be used for card catalog functions as well. Some patrons do say they miss the old card format; and I can sympathize with them; the older format is more forgiving of spelling errors and better at the “see” and “see also” functions. But I would never want to go back to the old way. The computerized catalog lets you know if the book is in without having to walk over to the shelf and look; and lets you know if a certain book is available anywhere in the system, not just at that particular library. The staff computers also tell us when a book came back. That tells us if it’s probably on the shelf or probably still waiting to be shelved.

Home with the Armadillo/L. Copeland: Sorry to hear your knee problems; I hope it’s improving. It’s too late to ask now; but could you sit up with your leg propped up out straight? Lying around in bed is one of those things that sound great until you’re forced to do it. I’ve never been able to lie in bed and get anything done: I go to sleep, or a cat comes and sits on me, or I realize I can’t lie down and read without taking off my glasses and holding the book very close. (Time to get my prescription changed, I think.)

Glad to hear you had a good time at Cascadiacon despite the wheelchair. I’m surprised at the difficulty with the elevators: I had thought the ADA would have taken care of such matters. The issues with the art show and dealer’s room display is one that concons should hear about and brainstorm for a solution. With the aging of fandom we’re going to be seeing a lot more of us in wheelchairs.

already gone/weber: Ct me: You mentioned Jazz Fest; had you heard they’re planning on having it next year? They don’t know where or when, but it will happen. That’s nice to hear’ NO has been through so much, it needs something to get back to normal.

Oblio/Brown: Interesting cover there: I assume the setting is London (or is it? Is that Big Ben in the lower center? The double-decker bus suggests London, as well.), yet the car has a left-hand drive.

August was a “semi-scary” month? With what your sister went through, it sounds pretty scary to me! Sounds like sloppy work on someone’s part that there was a leak from the surgery. Is there some reason why the insurance company would not pay for the second round of surgery and recovery?

The cartoon on page 5 (tax breaks for the hurricane victims) is just too to reality. It hurts me to see what is happening to my home state.

Ct Southerner: Well Steve Hughes has left us; let’s hope he returns.

Ct Lynch about not living in Palm Beach County after your retirement: Have you thought about where you’d like to move? After the past few hurricane seasons, I take it you’ll avoid the Gulf Coast!

Avatar Press/Cleary: I looked at Dragon*Con’s website, wondering if I might want to go some year. I didn’t see many guests I would have been interested in this year; and the hotels rates looked higher than they were in Boston. I suppose I shouldn’t compare it to the type of cons I usually go to; if I thought of it as a trade show rather than a con, I might be better disposed toward it.

You’ve been doing a great job with the SFC; far better than I’ve done as OE. Three cheers for people like you who get in and do what needs to be done.

Trivial Pursuits/Gelb: Glad to hear you'll be staying with us in SFPA. After all, you have to fill us in on the nitty gritty details of emigrating.

On the matter of the Prospective Marriage visa and the nosy questions: did both of you have to answer the same questions or just you? If both of you; I'd guess they're not as interested in the answers as they are whether the answers match. But, yes, some of those questions are over the top. I'd be tempted to make something up, but I'm sure that would be cause for denial.

Eek on your accident, but I'm glad you weren't hurt. Sounds like everything came out about as well as could be.

20 years in SFPA? Happy anniversary!

I haven't read Laurie King's *Locked Rooms* yet, but I have read others in the series. I liked them well enough, even if they felt a little too Mary-Sueish to me. Whatever her name is may not be quite gorgeous and amazing enough to be a true Sue; but having Sherlock Holmes, of all people, falling madly in love with some young woman who comes waltzing into his peaceful retirement life put my back up. Problem is, the books are well written enough that I want to go on reading them! So, yes, I'll read this one.

Tales From The Bunker: Thanks for this look at inside Interaction. I always find it fascinating to hear how a convention ran from an inside perspective in addition to what it looked like to the average con member just attending. You seem to have run into a lot of frustrations trying to get things done this time around. Some of the con members sound like they had some peculiar ideas as well. Since when is holding up signs or running errands "degrading"? They're both vital tasks in the smooth running of a con. I suppose the Volunteer Head thinks any task that doesn't require special abilities is degrading. Using that logic, I ought to feel degraded every time I pick up a piece of paper on the floor at the library or put the magazines back in order. Good thing I don't, I'd spend a lot of time feeling bad!

Oh, great, tease us with part of a juicy story involving you and Jonathan vos Post, promise to tell us the rest over a drink at the next con we see you at; then scamper off to Australia! Well, that's one way to assure I'll be at LA Con IV.

Tennessee Trash/Robe: Nice cover. Sorry Tom missed the photo op; maybe those of us who make LA Con IV can re-create the moment. And a nice con report with nice pictures. You and your family hit a lot of the spots I'd love to see, so I doubly enjoyed reading about your trip. You mentioned going to Stonehenge: is it still roped off so that you can't go into the circle and walk around the stones? I've heard it suggested that Avebury is a good substitute for Stonehenge, since it isn't as well known and you can still (or could at the time the book was written) walk all around the circle and the stones.

And to all: Not much better this time, but at least I got a few mailing comments in. Happy whatever holidays you'll be celebrating, and see you in January!