

SPARTACUS

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ELECTION EVE. There's a wind, rather chilly, and the dark grey clouds move swiftly. Again I understand the feeling behind Bradbury's *October Country*: winter in the air, isolation, solitude, and except for the deep growl of the wind, silence. Our street is empty, and only the far gas planets keep company in the sky. I wait in the street, watching the east. It's a relief when headlights appear there, because I know it's Rosy, home from the superstore. We'll watch *Fargo* tonight. Tomorrow ...

EARLIER. The other day I went to the post office to mail a package and conversed briefly with the woman behind me in line. She seemed intelligent, nice, compassionate, and sensible: like me, she was masked. We didn't talk politics until I mentioned the tiny needle from my recent flu shot and the terror I felt seeing the *assegai* spikes pending for the COVID vaccine.

The lady protested that *she* wasn't taking any vaccine. No way would she let Bill Gates change her DNA! An intelligent, decent woman, a home health worker, she was mouthing craziness straight out of QAnon. I couldn't be polite. "Oh, come *on!*" I said, laughing into my mask. The dear soul turned and fled. I felt bad about that, but ... oh, come *on!* If that's vox populi, then the populi is insane.



Our mail-in ballots arrived October 3. I completed mine immediately, relying I confess on a Democratic flyer for guidance in some of the obscure downballot elections. I made sure to complete the additional rigamarole, attach *two* stamps, and drove it to the main post office. “For the kids in cages!” I announced to no one at all, slipping the envelope into the slot.

We were among almost 100 million early voters – an incredible total. One can only imagine a groundswell of secret motivation surging through the American public, and the polls are right and one can only hope that surge is for Joe Biden, a decent and dedicated guy. Did I lose or gain hope after the last debate? Trump wasn’t the spaz he seemed in the first encounter, but issues I’ve always considered dominant this year came out at last – immigration, and the obscenity of kids in cages joining COVID – with Biden’s clumsiness about the oil industry mentioned hardly at all (a surprise). But then appeared on the tube an Ohio Trumpy maintaining that the Chinese were stealing our jobs, and in my head pessimism dueled with my sympathy for the dumb, desperate man.

From my Facebook page, on the debate: “The moment that got to me, that has me boiling now, was when that thug [guess] claimed that the kids he keeps in cages, kids that he has separated from their families with the stated aim of terrorizing would-be refugees, are treated well. Those are the most obscene words ever to emit from the mouth of an American President. He and his followers had better hope that there is no judgment beyond the immediate political, because this is a disgrace to the form of human beings.”

Then it came out that Trump wanted his stooge of an AG to indict his political enemies – we watched him use the White House and the Marine band in a crass political event – and time and time again, subject his cultists with COVID at crowded rallies. Militias tried to run a Biden bus off a Texas road – the winger group Proud Boys (a construct of Russia’s GRU?) were caught plotting to kidnap and possibly execute Michigan’s female governor. Lunacy ascendant. Would it triumph? The polls said no. But the polls have been wrong for years.

ELECTION DAY. Fetching the newspaper at 6, I caught a sprinkler blast across my legs. I noted with glee that Biden had swept Dixville Notch, NH, traditionally the first site in America to release its totals. Five whole votes, but I took it as a good sign.

It was a nice warm day. Out on an errand, I drove by the polls on the island off the causeway to Cocoa Beach. Trumpys were rallying by roadside, flapping flags and signs: HONK FOR TRUMP. I drove past. They chanted “Four more years!” I called out “Four more months!” (More like 2½, but who’s counting?) By both Trump and Biden tents, families cooked burgers and tossed frisbees, and there was a gratifying line leading into the voting site. I saw no sign of voter intimidation, but one lady in line had trouble with the cat she was holding.

Someone online said that America tonight was like a patient waiting for the results of a biopsy.

The question was, are Americans up for a decent guy? Or has the infection of easy totalitarianism caught the whole country? I remembered 1976, when I was the first voter in the French Quarter, when America had the choice of two good guys after the anger and paranoia of Nixon. They chose the most decent man they could. Would they go a similar route after this sick presidency, in this psychopathic year?

That evening, we ate sandwiches from Arby’s, and despaired. McConnell was reelected, a major *ick*. That unprincipled maggot Lindsey Graham was re-elected. Susan Collins was re-elected. The House remained Democratic, AOC and her comrades were victorious, Mark Kelly won in Arizona, but Florida fell to Trump thanks to the redneck counties of the Panhandle. Nationwide, the trend as midnight approached seemed to be Trump’s. Though Biden was confident in his brief TV appearance, as was James Carville – and if anyone knows politics in this country, it’s

Uncle Joe and Cuzzin James – angst still fell over us like a tarp. I took a despondent walk up and down our silent block, eying what stars poked through the swirling clouds. Betelgeuse hadn't blown yet.

ELECTION WEDNESDAY. I awoke at 5, and feeling courageous, turned on the TV. Promising news: Biden was building a strong lead in the popular vote, and was ahead in Wisconsin, one of the ugly turncoat surprises of 2016. Not much changed when I arose for good at 9. Rosy read in the living room, MSNBC on but silent. I read the latest Lisbeth Salander, worked on my P.D. book and, rather than take my third or fourth nap of the day, drove to the beach in the warm afternoon. The Atlantic Ocean, like the stars last night, was still there.

The news stuck on the cusp all day, but tidbits came out: Joe Biden's vote totals showed that he had received more votes than any other candidate in American history. Michigan went blue. Our optimism grew – but stuntedly, like a flower trapped in a jar. Nevada ... Arizona ... if they broke for Biden ... Pennsylvania, Georgia ... lots of mail-in ballots to be counted, hopefully heavily blue ...

ELECTION THURSDAY. Someone on morning TV mentioned that Trump might benefit from the uncounted ballots in Nevada, sinking me again into the quicksand of gloom. I did more work on the P.D. memoir to distract me. The Trumpy crowds assaulting the vote-counting centers – insisting they stop counting where Trump was ahead, but keep counting where he was behind -- were predictable, but still disgusting. We'd seen little *voter* intimidation on the news, but the Trumpy desperation showed. On TV that night, he pitched the usual Trump whine about unfairness – and NBC, at least, cut him off. Donald Trump, it seemed, just wasn't that important anymore.

The totals oozed in, slowly, slowly, slowly. The electoral college numbers seemed soldered in steel. Hmm ... I saw that the local movie complex had reopened. Too bad there was nothing besides *Tenet* that I wanted to see, and was an iffy Christopher Nolan flick worth risking COVID-19? Hmm ... *Mank* is supposedly about *Citizen Kane* ... for *that* I might risk *everything*. (No need: it's on a streaming service. I'll watch it here.)

ELECTION FRIDAY. One word greeted me when, at 8:20, I staggered forth from sleep. *Georgia*. In the night, Biden had caught up through mail-in ballots. Rosy rushed into my office. Biden had gone ahead in *Pennsylvania*. And was extending his lead.

If given the electoral votes from the states where he was ahead – in most cases, since Tuesday – he had won 270 plus: President-Elect. It became a waiting game.

ELECTION SATURDAY. Waiting, waiting ... waiting for Pennsylvania. Finally ... one after another, the networks made the call ... and it was done. *America* was done – with Donald Trump.

All those people dancing in the streets. At least they wore masks. Van Jones in tears. I asked Rosy to photo Pepper and me by the Biden sign in our lawn. It was tougher to stand up than to sit down. Not a bad metaphor for the state of the country. Lots now to do.





Morning Joe made a superb point. *This election is a rejection of the extremes.* Both parties have been told to find the center, and work from there. Republicans have been told to retreat from the utterly un-American idea of cultish dictatorial rule. Americans are not fascists. Democrats seemed so skewed to the left that worthless Republicans were able to defeat good progressive candidates. Americans are not socialists. A centrist path obtains.

If I may say so, I've agreed with that perspective for decades. You win from the standpoint of good sense and calm. Balance is key. It's to restore balance – and good sense, and humanity – that we fought segregation and Jim Crow, opposed the Vietnam War and the Iraqi War, killed bin Laden, struggled against Wallace and Trump and their racism and crassness and cruelty. It was all for a simple virtue: fairness.

That said, there are things Biden must do immediately to restore our equilibrium. First for me is to get those refugee kids out of those effing cages and make every effort available to the American people to restore them to their families. Tear down Trump's walls, around the White House and at the border. Rejoin the Paris Climate Accords. Reassure NATO. Of course, deal decisively with COVID, because Joe B is absolutely right: America can't recover economically if we don't beat the virus. I hope for a grant to small businesses and a ban on evictions – and certainly another relief check to the population. Deficit be damned: the people need it.

Of course, we have to remember that though Joe Biden received the most votes ever cast for a presidential candidate, Trump received the *second* most votes. His perspective will survive. He has his legacy – a deeply reactionary federal court -- and a dangerous future – leader *de facto* of the country's violent, paranoid, sexist, racist right wing. But I think Trump's point of view can be met and forced to fade. After Biden is inaugurated, we progressives have to – *have to* – reconcile with those who voted for Trump out of concern for their jobs and not from racism or lunacy or some childish desire to piss off libs. We have to rein in the prevalent impulse to punish those who think differently than the current norm. Extreme PC isn't decent, it's punitive, and hysterical, and reckless, and narrow. America is sick of stridency. America wants to recover its wits and sense of unity. Biden was born for this purpose. No Democrat alive understands politics better than he does, nor possesses the empathy his challenging life has taught him. Did you see that clip of him comforting that special kid who had lost his father to a school shooting? This country never looked better.

Thank God, in the first week of November, America gave Joe Biden his chance to fulfill his destiny.

Oh yes – we also elected a woman as Vice President of the United States. There are those who would say this is no small matter.

The painting above, after Norman Rockwell's classic, puts the historical emphasis on the racial aspect of Kamala's triumph, and there's no denying how liberating it is to see another black person raise herself to the heights. But she isn't the first African-American to see her ethnicity deemed irrelevant: Obama, of course, was there before, and his way was paved by outstanding people like Ralph Bunche and Edward Brooke. Harris also had gender pathfinders, principally Hillary but also Shirley Chisholm, Margaret Chase Smith (who came forth with the funniest line

I've ever heard from politics), RBG, Geraldine Ferraro ... even Sarah Palin. And, alas, there will be those who will credit Biden and Biden alone for her presence on the podium next January 20th.

That perspective gives no credit to the real heroes. That number includes Kamala and it includes *us*. Harris is among the nation's toughest liberals and hardest-working senators. It was her courage and her strength that drew Biden to choose her. And it was appreciation for those qualities, above and beyond the national birth defects of racism and sexism that led us voters to hold her in highest regard. She was an invaluable asset to the ticket and will be a strong veep – a credit to the nation.

ELECTION AFTERMATH. So, on January 20, 2021, America will no longer carry the weight of Donald Trump as its chief citizen, its exemplar, its face to the world. But the great orange toad won't vanish, you know. The recalcitrance he showed in avoiding reality, concession and transition made for wretched optics, and the fool inspired fear of martial law when he replaced his independent Secretary of Defense and other execs with stooges and yes-men. Easy to imagine Blackwater hoodlums arresting Joe Biden and Kamala Harris en route to their inauguration. Such paranoia has drifted away, but still, Trump has influence if not command over 70 million Americans – and the opportunity to exploit it. I suspect he'll move into media now, take on Fox as the voice of right-wing America, maybe throw himself into 2024 once the deep sting of this loss has faded. We're rid of his claim to our country now, but not rid of him.

We'll face Donald Trump and his perverse thinking again. But let's take heart. Good people faced him this terrible year. And the good people came forth, and won. That's the thing about Americans. We're an amazing people. A nation of engineers, we're competent at almost any task. Stubborn as bricks, we're focused, dedicated. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and we keep trying to realize that ideal. Very rarely, a fraud like Trump turns us from that principle. *But not for keeps.*

BOOKS READ OF RECENT

Disloyal – Michael Cohen. Trump's slimy attorney and fix-it felon issues a confessional that's fun and even enlightening to read. But the guilt-trip gets tiresome. I have a shelf full of anti-Trump books. What do I do with them now?

Bird Box/Malorie – Josh Malerman. The sequel to the very popular *Bird Box* is actually, I understand, the second half of the original novel, bringing to a close the most original horror tale of people held captive in their own homes by monsters whose very sight drives them to murder and suicide. Reading the book(s) at a time like this, with another type of monster lurking outside of every door, adds a bit of real-world dread to the theme, and a bit of extra emotion – I won't say what – to the *denouement*. Like much that I've read this pandemic, it's spare writing, fast-moving, almost impatient – but enjoyable.

The Girl Next Door – Jack Ketchum. Horror novel based on the true story of teen Sylvia Likens, held captive in a woman's basement and tortured to death by her and her kids. It's ghastly but here's that word again – quite spare. A Net piece on terrifying sentences in horror novels calls this a virtue:

“Scariest sentence: “I'm not going to tell you about this. I refuse to.”

*“That's half of chapter 42 from Jack Ketchum's *The Girl Next Door*, a novel that ... doesn't flinch. So, if the narrator is looking back to having seen something that even he can't put on the page, then ... how bad must it be, right? ... I've talked to other readers of this novel and they've told me about chapter 42 as if the narrator actually fleshes it all out for us, and they (myself as well) all flinch as if traumatized from having had to read those words. Except they never did read the words of what actually happened. But that's Jack Ketchum, for you. He*

doesn't need to actually say it on the page to get it into our head. Worse, this is a chapter that never leaves you, either. Worse than that, you kind of become complicit just for reading it." – Stephen Graham Jones author of *The Only Good Indians*.

Dancing Aztecs – Prompted by recommendations from several zinesters and fond memories of the author's pseudonymous Parker adventures, here's a comic Donald Westlake crime saga, rich with ridiculous characters and raucous humor. Every line provokes a different laugh, and the whole package is hilarious – but very likely too raw for today's touchiness. E.g., the N word is used in dialog and no group escapes the same satiric savagery as other ethnicities. That would probably upset contemporary readers too much for them to enjoy the glorious idiocy of the plot and the genius of the writing. Chain up, fellow libtards, you're missing a lot.

Broken – Don Winslow. Almost the exact opposite to Westlake's verbal cleverness and hilarity is Winslow sharp, abrupt, just-the-facts crime prose, heavily violent, suffused with anger; this latest volume is a collection of six "novellas" which effortlessly carry the reader along. (I must point out that at least one, "San Diego Zoo", is quite funny.) Compared to the last four Winslow novels, the brilliant *Cartel* trilogy and *The Force*, they're pretty minor, but they work.

TV and MOVIES WATCHED

The Walking Dead – the last show of last season was delayed by COVID; impossible for a long while to shoot crowd scenes. Once finished, the final episode brought the truly blood-curdling Whisperers saga to a fairly satisfactory end, which for *TWD* means another epic slaughter of thousands of inhumans ... and a rather neat mystery. Negan *recognizes* Beta from "the time before" ... who was he? Three episodes of this show have been among the most unforgettable TV I've ever seen. They all had one horrible aspect in common. Guess.

Fear the Walking Dead – Is cute cowgirl Virginia another Governor, another Negan, another Alpha, one of the innumerable petty fascists faced by the good guys in this increasingly successful "second series"? Rosy said it well: compared to Alpha, Virginia is a sixth grader. Still, more good characters (Morgan is superb; Strand gets better and better – and worse and worse), more disturbing situations, more "walkers" butchered, more subtextual insight into the truly profound themes at work in this triptych. We haven't had time to sample the *World Beyond* teen show, but have faith that it's more of the same. Which is fine by me.

Trapped – Seasons 1& 2, complex mysteries set in Iceland (where everyone speaks good colloquial English), and steeped in Icelandic scenery, sensibility and politics. They're well-presented tales, compelling material, refreshingly atypical – the hero is a big, bearded pro, no beauty, and he and the others waste no time on trivial wisecracks and typical cute-cop crap. The show is beautifully imaged (watch for a breathtaking shot at the end of the credits) and uses the incredible scenery of Iceland to full advantage: the island nation is an integral character in the show. It's satisfying, engrossing stuff.

Fargo – A grimmer season of *Fargo*. The racial element adds a strong seriousness to the show's trademark quirkiness. *Fargo* is strong and violent and rich with the horror/comic presence of Nurse Oraetta Mayflower, she of the expectorant pies and poisoned macaroons. Among the amazing cast Timothy Olyphant and Kid Rock are exceptional, just as David Thewlis was last year and Billy Bob Thornton before that. I haven't seen bad guys presented so powerfully and crazily since the best works of David Lynch.

Away – I understand Hilary Swank's SF melodrama has not been renewed for a second season, and as a Swank fan since *Boys Don't Cry* – one of the strongest and most painful films I've ever seen – I'm of two minds. O1H, I love to see Swank on screen, and haven't much of

recent. The FX are excellent – zero-G has never been as convincing. OTOH, the soap operatics are like bad Spielberg, treachly and trite. I keep muttering “Land on Mars, already!”

Ava – A great cast – it’s cool to see Malkovich on screen – and good direction and the divine presence of *CHASTAIN* can’t overcome an extremely tired and cliched trope, to wit: an expert assassin tries to escape her own employers who have turned against her. Phooey: D-, for disappointing.

The Queen’s Gambit – Close by the tomb of voodoo queen Marie Laveau in New Orleans’ St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 – visitable now only through a \$20 tour, a shame – is the pristine white mausoleum of Paul Morphy, “considered to have been the greatest chess master of his era and an unofficial World Chess Champion between 1858–1860.” Bobby Fischer regarded him as among the top ten chess players *ever*. Fans occasionally leave chess pieces at his gravestone, in tribute. Lon Atkins, among the ten greatest members of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, was a chess whizbang (I don’t know his ranking). When I was a boy, I loved the game, but my natural scatterbrainedness overwhelmed all thoughts of the 64-square madhouse when I started up Fool’s Hill, a.k.a. puberty.

I followed the 1972 Reykjavik tournament between Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky closely, playing out the games with my brother when the moves were posted. I enjoyed the movie made about that match. And now, tempting me once again to the greatest of boards, is *The Queen’s Gambit*.

I needn’t go into detail; word of mouth has sung its praises throughout our fandom and the rest of the culture. Awesome show. Along with *Trapped*, best thing we’ve watched. I could *bathe* in the eyes of the brilliant Anya Taylor-Joy.

Football – Chess may be all well and good, but watching my Saints put the wood to Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Bucs on November 8 ... that was *sublime*.

38-3. Worst beating ever handed to Brady, I understand. And it gave the black-and-gold a nice fat tie-breaker should the teams end up tied for first in the NFC South.

The Saints aren’t trying to prove something these years –not trying to restore the spirits of a drowned city or anything so wonderful. They’re just playing, like all the other first-rate teams. But that’s OK. We who remember the era of fans wearing grocery bags and 1-15 seasons are grateful for what we’ve got. How about Taysom Hill? As Drew Brees sidles towards retirement, he’s poised to assume the mantle of the team’s #1 player – and do wonders. **GEAUX SAINTS!**

THESE LOCs ARE MADE FOR PRINTING

Rich Lynch
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You write that: “My gal Elizabeth Warren is right. Abolish the [Electoral] College and elect the President on the basis of popular vote.” That’s already been tried, and has never worked. The closest was at the end of the 1960s, in the aftermath of the 1968 election where George Wallace and his candidacy tried to gain enough electoral votes in the Deep South so that no candidate would have a majority and the House of Representatives would be the decider. And he could then make a deal with Nixon to trade his support in order to advance his own agenda. Luckily that never came about, and it led to a groundswell of support for a Constitutional amendment that would change over to a popular vote system. But it never made it through Congress due to filibuster by several southern Senators (from both parties). There’s an interesting Wikipedia article which describes all this, but I am actually happy that attempt didn’t get very far because it would have reverted us back to the 1790s and early 1800s where the Vice President-elect could end up being a member of the opposing party of the President-

elect. A better system would be to allocate electoral votes by Congressional district, if only Gerrymandering could be eliminated in the borders of those districts. Food for thought, anyway.



Tom Feller
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Like many of us, I am in the right age group to have fond heterosexual memories of Diana Rigg as Emma Peel.

Lloyd Penney's comment that Yvonne is making masks reminded me that the sewing club here at McKendree, the "continuing care retirement community" where we live, is currently concentrating on making cloth masks for the other residents. Anita and I have each received two of them so far.

Lloyd also reminds me that our pharmacy is issuing 90 day prescriptions to minimize the number of visits we have to make.

When Anita and I visited Stonehenge in 2005, we got fairly close, but were not allowed to touch the stones or even walk among them.

*What?! Didn't they know that you'd won a **Rebel Award**??? Such foolishness will not be tolerated when I behold those mystic stones! (Besides, I understand there's a tour that takes you **inside** the Stonehenge circle ...)*

Lloyd Penney
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Ruth Bader Ginsburg was so badly needed to fight against the fascist regime in Washington, but you can only do so much with the time allotted to you. This has been such a trial of another sort to so many people, to see if all we've told ourselves is wrong, and that evil can triumph over good. The loud voices of gender and racial equality lost a member of the chorus, but they are still loud. Your election is in about two weeks, and I do not know if there is enough time for the Rethuglicans to ram through their candidacy of Amy Coney Barratt, and hijack the process of justice in the US to their own ends, but the rest of the world waits for all to happen with bated breath, in the hopes that the Orange Monster will finally be stopped before he can strip your country of any respect it ever had in the world. \

ACB is no RBG, but I hope there are many who can rise to the challenge of slowing down the process to stop this potentially new Justice who seems willing to rubber-stamp the Rethuglican agenda. Already, anti-discrimination rules are being legislated away in Texas and other jurisdictions.

The local ... Bill Wright, I'd been told you were fairly ill, but has no idea you'd endured so many bodily injuries. I hope by now, you have greatly healed, and have been able to get the further attention you need. I gather Australia's government has been very Trump-like in its handling of the pandemic. Catherine Groves, we certainly knew of Andrew Cuomo, and the fact that his brother Chris is one of the main anchors on CNN. The on-air discussion of the pandemic between the two brothers was awkward, but informative and entertaining. I also think Dr. Anthony Fauci must be given a formal apology by President Biden (I am hopefully optimistic), and so many others need that apology as well. I will need an extra-big bag of popcorn once the federal prosecution of the entire Trump family and all their enablers gets moving. I am certain that the FBI and other enforcement agencies are keeping a full list of all of Trump's crimes, and they can't wait to charge him, and prosecute him to the fullest extent of American law.

My loc... Aid from the federal government in Ottawa continues for me, and while this runs up enormous debts for the future, it allows me to bring in much-needed funds to pay basics like rent, bills and groceries. I am still job hunting because the competition for each job (real job, that is, there's an awful lot of corporate phishing going on) is huge. Close to a thousand people apply for each job out there on average. The RCMP continues their abuse, this time with standing by as lobster fishermen burn down the tiny operations of indigenous people who are just trying to make a few bucks. Already, there was been the call for the dissolution of the RCMP.

Sergeant Preston and King, take note.

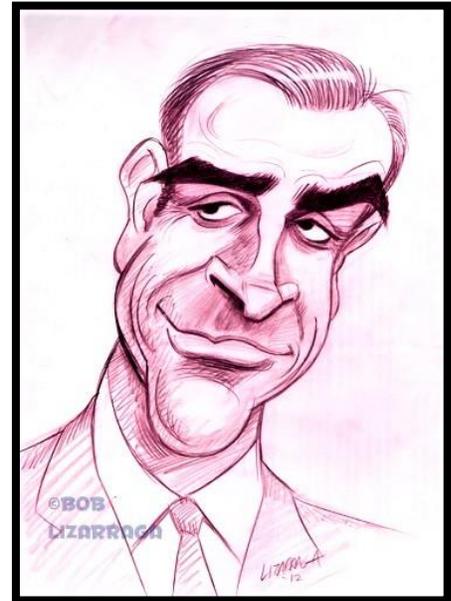
Is there anything in your Constitution on what happens in the time between Election Day and Inauguration Day? Should Trump lose (please, please, please), he could do an awful lot of damage in just two months, all in the form of a gigantic temper tantrum again the electorate who let him down, and spoiled his dreams of near-eternal rule.

*He's been glum and quiet and that's the way I like it. His people need to shift into transition mode with Biden's staffers, but just so long as they're **outta there** January 20!*

VALE

In 1968 my mother was working as a switchboard operator at a hotel in the French Quarter. In walked **Sean Connery**. "Do you mind if I hang out here? There's a party in my room and it's full of drunks!" She and the other ladies talked to him for hours. Thanks for showing us how it's done, Mr. Sean. You are the *Raisuli*. You're the man who would be king. You are Robin of Loxley. And of course, you're Bond ... James Bond. Say hi to Pussy Galore.

Alex Trebek was the class act hosting *Jeopardy* for almost as long as I can remember – though I do recall when Art Fleming was host – and always conducted himself with dignity and professionalism. Never more so when he was diagnosed with Stage Four pancreatic cancer, and nevertheless, carried on. Fearlessly.



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Our **moving** fiasco swells to new intensity and absurdity with each passing day. No, we haven't received our property, allegedly shipped from Shreveport. No, the mover hasn't contacted us, and the broker – Interstate Moving and Relocation Group – has been next to no help. Their Customer Relations desk being inaccessible time after time, I finally got through to them by calling Sales. No help. When we heard from our local storage unit – now sold to a national corporation – that our stuff had arrived, I zoomed over to find ... nothing. Our stuff is still in East Hell. Our complaints multiply. Silence reigns. Help, anyone?

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On November 14, Official Editor David Schlosser hosted a Zoom party for members of the **Southern Fandom Press Alliance**.

COVID has kept us from one another, made in-person fanac – conventions, visits – impossible or at least, extremely difficult or ill-advised. But this is the age of Zoom technology, and at 7PM Eastern time, the faces began to appear on our screens ... Dave Schlosser. Sheila Strickland. mike weber (like e.e. cummings, mike eschews – gesundheit – caps). Jeff Copeland. Rich and Nicki Lynch. Gary Robe. Rich Dengrove. Bill Plott – who as a teenager had the original

idea for SFPA some sixty years ago. Kay McCutcheon. Janice Gelb, SFPA's all-time senior female member, chiming in from Australia. Janice's and Robe spoke from virtual TARDIS sets.

Many were the topics discussed, many were the absent members slandered. We stayed there for two hours and 22 minutes. Star of the show, Sheila's cat, or should I say his bung, which he displayed close-up to the rebel apa in brave feline defiance of our antique ante. bellum mores.

The experiment was an astonishing success. *Eat it, COVID!*



With the meeting, I noted a special anniversary in SFPA: I've contributed – without a miss – to 300 bimonthly mailings in a row as a member. Add two to that total for issues of the New Orleans club newszine franked through before that. That's *fifty years*. *Gawd!* My apazine marking the occasion was 120 pages of stats, fiction, law stories, mailing comments, SFPA memories and blithering ego. I'll *never* do anything like that again.

←: Jeff Copeland. *Not* Sheila's cat.

Note for SFPAnS: Color PDFs of Comics I Love, which I also run through my 300th mailing,

are available on request. Finances forced me to print the physical copies in black and white.



The Ides of November, a moonless night, good weather, a few high, light nimbus clouds. I can make out stars but no constellations. Sunset before last, a pretty Atlas V launch had bloomed yellow, red and blue to the northeast, carrying a spy satellite about which they'd told us nothing. More precious cargo tonight: human beings.

This make four manned launches for me, two shuttles, two of the ultra-modern Dragons. The spacesuits make the four astronauts – three Americans, one Japanese guy – look like props from *I, Robot*. But that only shows that time marches on.

The *faux* sunrise rises in the north, above the dark roof of a neighbor across the canal. The light swells, grows brighter, brighter, brighter, and then there's the familiar long flame, an exquisite yellow, ascendent, faster than Friday night; they vary, you know, depending on which way they're going. This one seems to spear straight for the zenith. Straight up. Rosy hopes to see the staging through her binocs, but the Dragon is just a red dot now, the rumble is upon us – not particularly loud, for such things – and she doesn't want to miss the rebroadcast of the launch itself. I wait until the noise abates.

The last two weeks have been *really something*. They've gone a long way towards redeeming poor 2020. And since we will probably not be seeing or reading each other again until 2021, Rosy and I wish you a safe Thanksgiving and Christmas and a hopeful new year. See you at Discon? Contraflow? Perhaps at the Louvre?

GHLIII