



# Spartacus #21

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The *Wonder Woman* movie exploded like a sunburst over this summer, and fun though it is throughout, I think the real reason for its success is its *gravamen*. It treats its heroine and its audience with *respect*. And best of all, it gives girls across the world someone to aspire to.

Gai Gadot portrays no bimbo; you can really buy her as a warrior princess. While keeping up the action and sensawunda any superhero movie should have, the film has a terrific time presenting Princess Diana's origin; it spends lots of time on Paradise Island but wastes not a second on ponderous

explication or trivial T&A. It's inspiring without being political. It's powerful without being off-putting. It's great fun throughout but keeps its great and encompassing lesson.

That said, the big fight with the supervillain *is* standard fare – how often do we see an A-list talent in a silly costume assume a cross pose, levitate, and snarl corny threats – and David Thewlis was much nastier in this season's *Fargo*. But the action is sharp, setting the movie in World War I is different, and of course, the movie is a godsend for little ladies, everywhere, giving them a heroine of their own. After a year in which the real world dealt the feminist cause a foul betrayal, *Wonder Woman* is an affirmative and effective call to our sisters to stand tall.

Loved it.

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Off-topic for a second. It did my heart good to see how the world reacted to a superhero treated – on the screen – with anything *but* respect: the good thoughts given Adam West, TV's ludicrous Batman, on his passage from this planet. *Wonder Woman* showed class and the culture showed class – and a welcome sense of humor – throwing a Bat-signal onto that L.A. skyscraper in his honor. To Bat-Valhalla, Adam!

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Now let's get back on-topic, which is a serious one. Follows a Facebook discussion I innocently instigated – the subject, the worst of high school horrors: asking a girl to the Senior Prom. I've deleted all the names except mine, Rosy's, and Charlie Williams', since his post is happy.



**Guy Lillian**

June 10 ·

Hey, a sudden idea, a mere fifty years too late. Why don't girls who have a date already to the Senior Prom wear a flower in the hair so no poor schnook will embarrass himself asking them?

### Comments

**MALE 1.** (my cousin). That is how they control us, Sonny. They are the shot callers. We are mere pawns in this game of life. Know your role!!!

**FEMALE 1.** Not every girl got asked to Senior Prom. [*If she's talking about herself – this girl is magical! What was the matter with those guys?*]

**FEMALE 2.** Why is it an embarrassment to have a girl who already has a date inform you about that? There's no shame in not happening to be the first guy to ask a woman on a date for a specific event.

**MALE 2.** It's the throwing up noises I don't like,

**MALE 3.** Oh "Female 2" ... There is more - much more - to the neurotic life of an adolescent male than is dreamt of in your philosophy...

**FEMALE 3.** I didn't get asked.... and got mockery on top of it. [*The rat scum.*] So I don't quite get what the issue is, unless the rejection is significantly worse than "I'm sorry, I'm already going with someone."



**Guy Lillian** Hell on Earth, for everyone. Thank GOD for graduation day.

**FEMALE 3.** I don't know what's worse asking and getting laughed at .... or being asked, not even by "popular guy" and then getting not only "seriously? How could you think I was really asking? What a joke..." in front of other people, books knocked out of arms and mass laughter.... [*Someone deserves a visit from the Punisher.*]

**FEMALE 4.** Because constantly showing that no one asked you is 100x worse than being told that someone asked them first?

Because there were probably girls who thought that saying that someone else had asked them was a gentler refusal than saying they didn't like the person?

**FEMALE 4.** BTW, how on earth can anyone think that the people who have to sit and wait to be asked, and can either go with that person or stay home, have more control than the people who decide who they want to ask?



**Guy Lillian** Good question! All I know is that I'm glad I asked. Alison was a QT.

**MALE 4.** I didn't go myself. There was no one I could really talk to in high school.

**FEMALE 5.** You wanted another case of "let's mock the girls with no dates?"

Then again, there were already several other times a year in high school when the "available girls" were singled out and made to feel ashamed, so what's one more?...

**MALE 4.** I also think I was not mature enough in some areas to really fit in. High school reviews always fill me with some regrets and some anger, but cannot be directed at anyone.

Let's all admit it; if you weren't one of the popular kids - male or female - high school was a social hell. If I hadn't had my books I'd never have made it out in one piece. And at the start of my Junior year when I was just barely starting to put my...[See More](#)



**Rose-Marie Lillian** Because my school didn't have proms? But it's not a bad idea... If you have a date but are looking for a better offer, don't wear the 🌺👤. If you're gay but not out and don't want some creepy boy with plans of getting you alone later from asking, then we...[See More](#)

**FEMALE 6.** I can't imagine it going well when the boy you said yes to sees that you're waiting for a better offer. That seems much more hurtful than the current system.

**FEMALE 2.** I can't imagine any social circle at any age level that would deem it acceptable to ditch the first guy who asked you to an event and attend with someone else.



**Guy Lillian** My problem in high school is that I always fought back, even before anyone came at me.

**MALE 3.** That kind of thing is usually one of us against 20 of them. Doesn't take long to learn that you can't win that way.



**Guy Lillian** I put up walls, with cannons. No way to live -- or understand other people.

**MALE 3.** Yep. Fully understand. It took me a long time to realize that \*they\* had no real idea what affect their casual arrogance had on kids like us. We were just disposeable props to them. Well. Not all of them, but most. My books were my walls; and my smart-alec wit. That got me into plenty of fights, but it made me tougher in the end.

**MALE 3** Imagine the DSC panel we could have on this topic. We'd have to pull all the chairs in a circle and allow all evening for it.

**FEMALE 7.** Love it, I still love to wear flower wreaths in my hair, so bohemiam. You remember how Rosie used to love the way I dressed.



**Guy Lillian** I went to our Senior Prom with Alison K---, the only goil I asked, and she was delightful.

**MALE 2.** I dont think "Female 2" knows as much as some people what it means to be vulernable. She;s always struck me as competent. Which is good.



**Charles Edward Williams Jr** Our first date, married three years later...  
Feb 1970

**MALE 7.** I didn't do proms in high school, so I avoided the whole thing 😊:-)



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*Let all the poisons that lurk in the mud hatch out...*

Our long national nightmare continues unabated ...

Forget such trivial humiliations as Trump's facelift tweet against Mika Brzezinski. Don't concern yourself with Trump's attempt to obtain sacrosanct voter registration info – a transparent attempt to suppress Democratic voters in the future. Trump staffers bully and deride media, and Trump voters blame journalists for bad news as being Fake News, and show no signs of letting mere truth get in the way of their blind faith. The Comey firing and subsequent testimony are only a sign of his consistency – and a sign of what model he relies upon to create a government. It all ties together. It all shows.

Trump's true agenda when he sought the presidency is at last obvious. For reasons of his own, economic or founded in blackmail or something out of *The Manchurian Candidate* or whatever, he wanted to turn America's allegiance from countries devoted to human rights and dignity to Russia, a state devoted to one-man rule and raw tyranny. The most current of his administration's weekly scandals and embarrassments – his son's, son-in-law's and campaign manager's meeting with Russian go-betweens – proves it, beyond doubt, beyond denial. Trump's European trip and obsequious meeting with Putin only italicizes the fact. If Trump had his free rein, the American government would be a puppet regime. He has already sacrificed our place in the respect of other nations. As his reckless withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord shows, we are pulling inward from the world.

And despite the fervent resistance from people of erudition, intelligence and good will, I am worried sick that this will continue. All Presidents imprint themselves on our society. John Updike articulated that and it is obviously true: we seek in our Presidents not only a head of government but a vision of ourselves. It's probably unconscious, but we start to think like our Presidents. They don't become more like us; we become more like them.

With Trump in the White House, this does not speak well of America's future. America is in decline.

*But:* Excellence still seems more buoyant in a free society than elsewhere. This society, despite its ruptured politics, continues to forward the good of mankind. The *60 Minutes* story from June on the manipulation of DNA to cure disorders and block disease – even the cancer that is afflicting the Greenhouse – is plain miraculous. There are the gorgeous launches from Cape Canaveral I watch from my father-in-law's backyard, continuing the greatest technical adventure of my lifetime. I even found faith in Michael Bradley's astounding soccer goal against Mexico. This the tragedy of our country: we really are capable of fantastic feats. But oh God, are we ever selling ourselves short.

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*The Berlin Project* by Greg Benford is Greg's best and most heartfelt novel since *Timescape*, an alternate history which begins as *real* history – the personal story behind the Manhattan Project and the bomb

that ended World War II. Benford's love of his field and of the men who shaped it shines throughout – *Berlin Project* has been called *physics fanfic* – but his frustration with the actual Manhattan Project also burns in this vivid account. One technical decision, erasing one year's delay ... Well, read the novel.

And yes, an account is here of the baseball player sent to assassinate Walter Heisenberg, the young physicist in charge of Germany's atomic research. The story will be showing on TV soon. Beforehand, Read this. It's a thunder of a tale about great but very human minds.

*Sir Thomas "British Tommy" Armstrong and the War Between the States* by Barry Tighe ... an Amazon pb in homage to the great Flashman series by George Macdonald Fraser. In fact, this tome was originally entitled *Flashman and the War Between the States* – but lawsuits apparently put an end to that. It's still Flashy, though – hapless hero of the XIX Century's most terrible battles, a devout coward and tireless ladies' man. Fraser's 12 volumes of Flashy's adventures are masterworks of historical balderdash, wonderful throughout. Alas, the author's untimely demise – he should have lived forever – prevented us from seeing the book we American fans most wanted to see: Flashman's adventures in the Civil War. Tighe couldn't stand it; so he wrote it.

He does a fine job capturing the style of the originals – his "British Tommy" fills the role well – and the historical background of his tale is well-filled. The book seems a bit slow in the beginning and I wonder if his mention of "Shangri-La" is an anachronism – but the real-world events and characters keep on coming, and keep on landing on the luckless Hector. That's true to form.

But what is this? Shiloh and Antietam just *mentioned*? No, this isn't Fraser; he would have plopped his quivering hero smack in the middle of those horrendous bloodbaths. And to find the *faux* Flashman in New Orleans without even *thinking* of his favorite brothel from *Flash for Freedom* ... *Auughh!* It was in that splendid third book of the original series that Flashy observed, and I quote "that outside of New Orleans, fornication was still in its infancy." He would never forget that.

A noble effort, Mr. Tighe, and only the first half of "Armstrong's" Civil War adventure, so we'll buy the next when it appears. Try harder with Gettysburg.

Outstripped in audacity by insane reality, *House of Cards*' latest season is nonetheless superb. When beleaguered President Underwood breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience, saying "You elected me," Kevin Spacey isn't talking about Frank Underwood, no matter who Frank is talking about.

*Better Call Saul* is excellent, also, but inspires as much melancholy as admiration – I respect and miss lawyering.

The entire season of *Orange is the New Black* is devoted to a prisoner takeover at Litchfield, an event that takes but a few days in story life but easily fills 13 episodes of the best dramedy on television.

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## YOU WRITE'EM, WE RUN'EM ...

**Ray Palm**

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While writing about Trump you mentioned that people of a certain age remember Richard Nixon being driven from the White House over the Watergate Scandal. I'm of a certain age to remember being on edge as a young boy over the

tension caused by the Cuban Missile Crisis. There used to be a SAC base in here Plattsburgh, NY, a prime target if the missiles started flying.

The ghostwriter behind "The Art of the Deal," Tony Schwartz, says that he regrets being involved with that book because it made Trump look good. Schwartz knows what Trump is really like and he's worried about the president having the launch codes. I'm worried too. What we don't need is a loose atomic cannon setting off World War III.

*The only good thing about having a President so firmly entrenched in Russia's hip pocket is that an impulsive attack one to the other is unlikely.*

**Milt Stevens**  
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In *Spartacus* #20, I agree with your Hugo choices on short and long form dramatic presentations. Game of Thrones is about the best thing ever done on television. GRRM has managed to keep my interest for seven seasons, even though I have a strong suspicion as to how things are going to end. I voted the episode of The Expanse in second place. The series has been going along quite well, and they haven't even reached the point where the protomolecule does something really strange.

*Arrival* was really science fiction. That's quite remarkable in a science fiction movie. The alien written language looked like something that someone or something would use as a written language. There was another thing that occurred to me about the aliens. They resembled some aliens I'd encountered elsewhere in SF. I think they resembled the Tralfamadorians in some of Kurt Vonnegut's novels. They seem to be unstuck in time as are Vonnegut's aliens.

*Arrival is probably the most intelligent science fiction film I've ever seen.*

In the novel category, I voted for *A Closed and Common Orbit* by Becky Chambers in first place. This novel is set at the other end of the universe from the stories of Cixin Liu. In the Chambers universe, aliens are basically amiable creatures in spite of a few wars and such. It's specified that all sentients enjoy a party. Also, all sentients lie to dance. This even applies to one race which are gelatinous blobs with tentacles. Everything is not sweetness and light in this universe. Jane 23, a synthetic factory girl, escapes from her factory into a continental sized junkyard. She is adopted by and AI in a wrecked spaceship and learns that eating dogs is OK if they intended to eat you first.

In recent years, I've been using No Award in the fan categories quite a bit. I would be happy to vote for Taral or Marc Schirmeister in the fan artist category, but unfortunately neither of them made the ballot.

*Let's do something about that next year.*

As far as the rest of the ballot is concerned, it's pretty much don't know and don't care as far as I'm concerned.

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Very true, that was an atrocity that happened in Manchester at the Ariana Grande concert. I have seen reports on the investigation into this, and the investigating police say that the maniac who did this was not connected to any terror network, and that he acted alone in this. It shows that even an individual can concoct true feats of terror all on his own, without assistance from elsewhere. It is a shame we react to this by trying to blame others without basis, and also a shame that we become so resistant to such events that they do not merit outrage, but they become just another event, just like the number of innocent Americans gunned down every day.

DT45 [*Donald Trump 45*] is making himself look foolish again on the world's stage, this time at the G20 summit in Germany. He is sucking up to Vladimir Putin, and the Polish First Lady made him look like a petulant boy by snubbing him to shake hands with Melania Trump. He has once again warned Mexico of his grand Wall, and Mexico rolls its collective eyeballs at him yet again. Defend your democracy, America, your president has other plans, many of which will line his pockets before he does anything that might remotely benefit you.

John Purcell, do not wish for an asteroid hit. Just because DT45 is a monster, you want to take out the whole planet? DT45 is not my fault, I'm not paying for his presence. I think all we can hope for is a Democratic surge in the Senate, and hope that a strong Senate can make Trump a lame duck until the next presidential election, which cannot come soon enough.

Re: my LOC ... Coming soon near the end of August is Gabrielle Robert-Klein's actual burial, in Cache Bay, Ontario, up north on the shore of Lake Nipissing, close to Lake Huron. Both Yvonne and I will be attending that. No more on Trump, the television reports are condemnation enough. We can only take some solace in that even some of his original supporters are seeing how monstrous he can be.

In the near future, we will be attending a steampunk convention in Romulus, Michigan, and our greatest fear is that we will be crossing the border. Recently, at an event at our local airport, a US Customs officer admitted that anyone such as himself will interpret the rules of entry based on whether he enjoyed his dinner, or woke up grumpy that morning. How do you prepare for this? The rule of law seems out the window. Anyway, take care, and I have a Challenger to work on soon. See you then.

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The North was quicker in developing a sense of continent-wide nationhood than the South, I think. Settlers moving over the Alleghenies and Mid-West moved quickly, and were less apt to settle down in some mountain crick or hollow, but instead continued on over the Ohio, over the Missouri and into the Northwest and finally the California coast. As a result, the people from the North tended to feel as though they were filling out a nation, not merely putting down roots. It was not only a social movement, it was reinforced by the rapid growth of the railroads and industry. Agricultural products traveled east, and manufactured goods traveled west, quickly filling intervening the space with new towns and prosperous farms. Banks and capital followed.

In the south, people grew corn and made whisky. Once they had the basics, they were apt to be content with the forgiving climate and few needs. One relied on oneself rather than work together ... boy, *did* they not did work together! Working for others smacked of subservience, and worse ... conduct unbefitting a White Man.

In was no accident that the Confederacy self-destructed over the issue of States Rights. Whereas the North was already moving into a modern understanding of the nation as early as the 1830s, the Confederacy was in denial as late as 1865. In fact, the South continued in denial much through of the modern era – well into the 1960s – at the cost of in poverty and backwardness for much of the South. Indeed, even at this late date, the modern Diaspora of the South into Middle America is an indication of it's fundamental resistance to change!

Of course, it's entirely not that simple... it never is.

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I don't usually chatter about myself in these pages, usually breaking such wind all over *Spiritus Mundi* in the Southern Fandom Press Alliance. This time, though, I restricted my SFPazine to mailing comments on the rebel apa's last mailing, so I will allow myself to broadcast some personal news.

And there is **Big News**. It looks very likely that I will be employed as a teacher at Eastern Florida State College in September.

Credit raw nepotism. For even as Donald Trump finagled his gorgeous but unqualified daughter to sit in at the vital G-20 Conference in Germany, Rose-Marie Lillian – adjunct professor at EFSC – convinced her supervisor to consider her gorgeous but semi-qualified husband to teach a basic Communications class in expository writing. A couple of on-line classes to show that I know better than to show up in a gorilla suit, and with any luck, I start on that luckiest of all days: September 11.

Hey, that *was* a lucky day in some quarters. In 1947, it was my parents' wedding day.

Am I nervous? Oh *Hell* yes! I haven't taught since the late eighties and then I was guiding an adult ed class in creative writing which morphed into a party klatsch. This will be different. Rosy warns me that most of the students I'll be facing will have never heard of dial telephones, three-network television, or paper books. I only hope they're patient with an aged teacher who has a lot to learn himself.

A happy moment transpired here at the Greenhouse the other day, as father-in-law Joe received the proof copy of his novel, *Spies of Nyscandia*. Everyone was fully ecstatic until Patty Green noticed that



the cover was misplaced and the moon-encased cross, focal point of the cover and clue to its theme, was chopped off the edge of the page. Book designer Rose-Marie vowed to get it fixed, which delighted me, since emphasizing the cross with Luna was *my* idea. You'll find an ad for the book in *Challenger*.

I made a layman's mistake involving Rosy's lawsuit in July. Faced with a deadline to respond to a particularly vile slander by her stepsister, and thinking our attorney had withdrawn his representation, I helped *la belle* write a letter to her judge – an *ex parte* communication, and forbidden! Still, all is well at this stage. Our lawyer had not yet pulled away, and on that very aforementioned deadline filed the answer we needed. So now we're hoping for an actual hearing, in court, where Rosy can make her case to a real live judge. Maybe, maybe, maybe we can bring this horrid matter to a just end, at last.

On eFanzines, along with this *Spartacus*, you will find *Challenger* no. 41, my "demonic" issue, a project that ate up far too much time but came out – if I do opine so – pretty well. Its tribute goes to Patrice Green, Rosy's stepmother; *la belle* wrote the piece and doesn't mention Patty's gutsy tussle with life's nastiest real-life physical demon, which she is handling beautifully, thank you. Anyway, the issue had its unique challenges. Stealing Patrice's Kelly Freas portrait from her bedroom wall long enough to make a color copy was only the most enjoyable. Pasting on page numbers when I couldn't get Word to work, the printing EXPENSE even at my 2 ½ cent/shot rate, the two "many" typos (truthfully; I typed "many" as "man" and "Mary" in the text ... well, I still like the issue.

My next major fanzine project will likely be a tribute to Lon Atkins, the dominant member of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance for the first 50 years of its existence. The rebel apa is what brought me into fanzining – I joined in 1971, and have never missed a bimonthly mailing with my *Spiritus Mundi* – and Atkins was among my models. His *Melikaphkaz* is still the best apazine I've ever seen, with witty fan fiction, strong mailing comments, impeccable mimeography – no, we don't do that anymore, either – and deathless commitment to the community that grew up within the group. Inspired by Larry Montgomery, another one of Southern Fandom's founders, I've gotten permission from Lon's wife and daughter to memorialize him as he would have liked. So I will.

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I've always admired this portrait of "Red Tom" Jefferson from the special 1776 edition of *Time*. He really looks like a young revolutionary, challenging us to meet his ideas and live up to them. One time Rosy and I visited Monticello and walked down the hill to the family cemetery. The pylon over Jefferson's bones lists the three accomplishments for which he wanted to be remembered: founding the University of Virginia, writing the Virginia Statutes of Religious Liberty, and authoring the Declaration of Independence. : Lincoln believed the document to be a statement of the American mind. I recited some of its opening sentences as best I could. It's July 4<sup>th</sup> today, and as the fireworks flare and their pops and booms freak my dogs, I like to remember that they're what we're celebrating. A self-evident idea that changed civilization – and continues to challenge us. Has it taken permanent root? *It's too soon to*

*tell.*

Yes, I'm well-aware that Jefferson owned slaves – we walked past their reconstructed cabins returning to the main house. *All men are created equal* was and is an idea that goads Americans on. Our strength and quality as a nation is that we are never satisfied with ourselves, that we keep aspiring to goodness, working towards it, intolerant of anything that holds us back. If Jefferson himself did not awaken at midnight in that funny bed suspended between two rooms, realizing the true impact of his own words, I'd be astonished.

It's well past the Fourth now. But I think I'll go watch the fireworks as I write this – and remember them as I read this. Just neighbors, just Americans, but *awesome*.

