

GUILTY PLEASURES 22

for SFPA 225, January 2001

I got an interesting phone call this week. A lady I know from the political scene called to ask me if I knew any women who might be interested in running for the Gainesville city commission, 'cause the only woman on the commission was about to finish her term.

I had to bite my tongue to keep from blurting out "so the main qualification for candidacy is a vagina?"

But this is an older lady, so instead I said "I can't think of anyone off hand, but I'll call you if I think of someone."

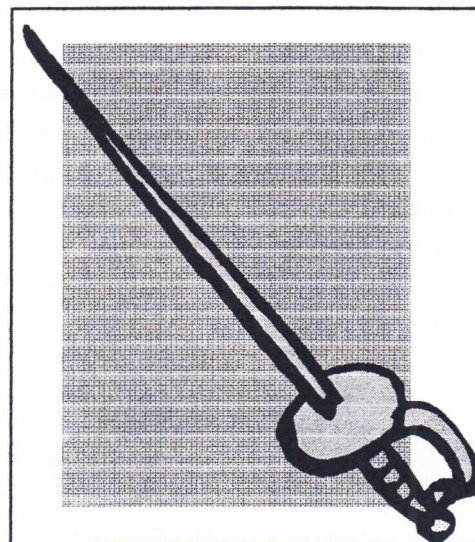
"What about you, Eve, would you like to run?"

For about two seconds I was tempted to say yes. Then I thought about it. Aside from all the other down points (like Howard trying to run the campaign, and my actually having to serve as city commissioner if I win) I realized I didn't have a lot to offer in the way of civic savvy and involvement. Sure, I've been chair of the library board, but I haven't served on any neighborhood associations or city beautification boards or anything like that. Plus, I can't campaign on the Sabbath. And then I had visions of the more salacious sections of *PIRATE'S PRICE* being quoted in the Gainesville Sun. Although the publicity would be nice...

But I said no. I'd be exactly the kind of candidate I most despise, one who's running because of narrow, parochial interests.

Yo ho!

Since we were last together there have been some minor flurries on the publishing front. I've been sending off letters to agents and one's



asked to see the entire manuscript of *PIRATE'S SONG*, which is a very good sign, so I'm waiting to hear from him.

And I got a rejection from another agent who passed along some constructive criticism. I took it with a grain of salt, especially when I got to "...I'm not sure when Father Christmas was first introduced, but I have the feeling it's a Victorian culturalism."

I wrote back thanking her for taking the time to read my first chapter and added, "The Oxford English Dictionary has a first reference for Father Christmas in 1658 CE. The second reference is from the English publication 'Popular Antiquities' in 1813. It was in common use well before the 1820's, the setting for my novel, and would have been known to two privateers who hail from London, ~~you ignorant twit~~."

OK, I didn't add the last part. I was very polite. But I feel better about the rejection since I don't have a lot of faith in someone who rejects my work based on a faulty assumption and doesn't bother to check her facts.

I got a phone call from the brother of a friend. The brother happens to write reviews for

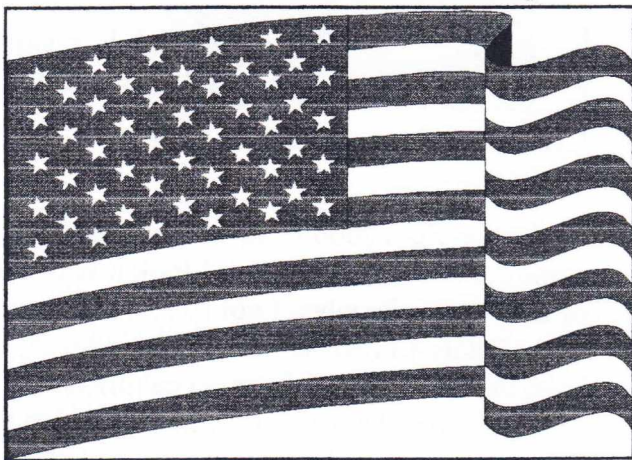
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Affaire de Coeur, a magazine read by Romance fans, and he asked to see a copy of PIRATE'S PRICE. This is nice, because another major romance publication doesn't do reviews unless you buy an ad from them, something I refuse to do on principle. If my publisher wants to do it I won't say no, but I'm not going to pay to play. In radio that's illegal and unethical, and I don't feel any better about it in the romance industry.

Home Alone--

All of Raphi's college applications have been sent, so now it's a waiting game to see which, if any, of the top tier schools he's applied to will accept him.

There has been one interesting development. Raphi's message on his answering machine says: "Hi, you've reached Raphi's



answering machine. I'm sorry I can't take your call, but I'm probably out clubbing or something like that. As soon as it's too dark to see the baby seals, I'll get back to you. So please leave your name and number at the sound of the tone."

Which appeared to have mildly startled the caller who left this message:

"Um, this is Dr. _____. I'm the representative for Harvard in this community and I need to set up an interview with Raphi Rosenblatt."

I swear, I nearly fell down on my butt I was laughing so hard when I heard that one.

"Raphi, with your luck this guy's going to

turn out to be a founding member of PETA!"

But Dr. _____ set up his interview with Raphi for next week so we'll see how it goes.

The boys were in Washington DC over Christmas, where they had a "kick ass" time according to Micah ("Moose") Rosenblatt at the International United Synagogue Youth conference. Raphi, you may recall, is the president of HaNegev (Southern) region and Micah is there representing Gainesville USY and as moral support for his brother, though Raphi may not see it that way. Micah did take his banjo with him so I expect some wonderful stories about how Southern culture held its own against the more powerful chapters from the Northeast, Chicago and the West Coast.

Security was very tight this year, but unlike the Israel trips we didn't see much change in numbers for International. One change we did see is not allowing unsupervised visits away from the group, and barring visitors to the USY kids. I can't argue with the changes, but it's sad that they have to be implemented.

The group did some touring. Raphi said they went to the Air and Space Museum but didn't spend nearly enough time visiting the exhibits, and they went to see "the big penis", which I correctly interpreted as the Washington Monument.

In some ways it was a bit like WorldCon. Raphi attended programming, Micah saw it as an opportunity to party and hang out in the Marriott sauna with his buds. I did tell Micah that I wouldn't shell out *beaucoup* bucks next year so that he could spend a week vacationing when he should be in sessions, but we'll see how it goes between now and then.

Micah's banjo lessons progress. Last night he was picking out "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desire" which sounds pretty cool on a banjo. I'm hoping we'll be able to attend the annual Florida Folk Festival on Memorial Day weekend, but Gov. Jeb has that one slated for some hefty budget cuts (despite this year being the Festival's 50th anniversary) so I'm not sure what will be going on then.

As I type this, Micah is doing Raphi's hair. Kind of makes up for not having daughters. Raphi's going out clubbing (yes, I asked him to

bring me a baby seal) and always has Micah gel his hair for him. Which is really funny, 'cause I feel good if I can beat Micah into showering twice a week and washing his hair once a month.

While Raphi's out, Micah's here with some members of the board of the USY chapter. They're having a meeting in his playroom, the large room next to his bedroom. Micah and five luscious teenage babes. Who brought their sleeping bags and are spending the night.

Raphi needs to re-examine his priorities.

REVIEWS!

BOOKS FIRST....

CARTER BEATS THE DEVIL-

-Glen David Gold-- First it was THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF KAVALIER AND CLAY last year. Then this year I discover CARTER BEATS THE DEVIL. If I keep finding books like this I'm going to have to develop a whole new attitude about literary fiction. These books are entertaining! How come we never see Chabon or Gold on Oprah's list?

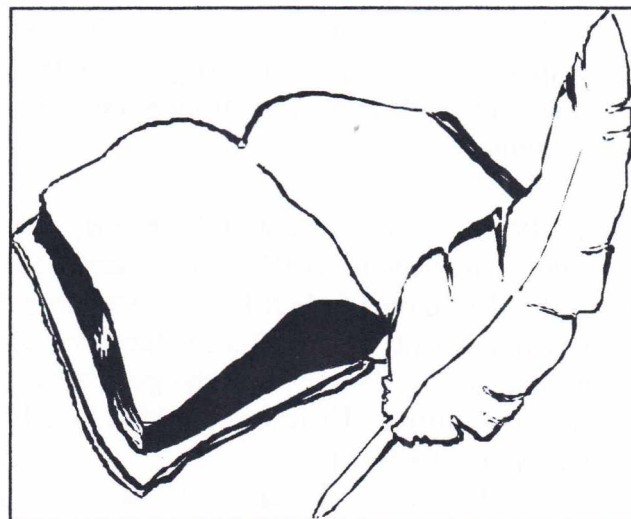
Anyway, CARTER BEATS THE DEVIL is an delightful look at magic, love, great escapes, dead presidents and the golden age of vaudeville and live shows. In the 1920's Charles Carter, aka Carter the Great, is an illusionist who dazzles audiences with his legerdemain. He's compared to the great Houdini. But when President Warren G. Harding dies shortly after attending and participating in Carter's show, suspicions arise about the talented young magician, and a chain of events begins that will impact Carter and maybe the entire nation.

This is apparently Gold's first novel and I hope he's not one of those folks who only has one great novel in him. CARTER is vastly entertaining and full of surprises, just as a good magic act should be. I highly recommend it.////###

SHARPE'S TRAFALGER--

Bernard Cornwell--Richard Sharpe and a rousing sea saga? It doesn't get much better than this!

Cornwell returns, as he has in recent



Sharpe books, to early years in Sharpe's career. Where the first book, SHARPE'S RIFLES, begins with Richard Sharpe's first command of a rifle company, this one explores Sharpe's life shortly after he's made an officer for saving Sir Arthur Wellesley's life.

It's a mixed blessing. Ensign Sharpe, barely literate and a child of the streets, knows he's neither fish nor fowl. He may be an officer, but no one believes he's a gentleman. In SHARPE'S TRAFALGER Sharpe is returning home from India in 1805 when he gets caught up with events at sea and, as the title implies, sees action with Nelson at Trafalger.

Cornwell does a good job going backwards and showing us a younger, more callow hero than in the later books. He also does a credible job detailing the blood, gore and action of a sea battle while giving the landsman's impression of what it's like to fight at sea. A must read for all Sharpe fans.////###

MOVIES!

I'm catching up on films with the boys away and Howard gone often enough for me to enjoy my foreign flicks without disturbance. So

here's what I've seen this past month, nutshell reviews:

Croupier--Excellent, quirky British flick about a young man who wants to make a name for himself as a writer and takes a job in a casino as a stopgap 'til he makes it. But the job becomes his life, despite his efforts not to be dragged into the corruption and betrayal of the casino world. Recommended.

St. Ives--I'd never heard of this movie, apparently made for BBC. But I'm glad I rented it. It's based on a Robert Louis Stevenson story I've never read, about a French Hussar officer during the Napoleonic wars who gets captured and sent to Scotland. There he finds love, long lost family and friendship.

The film is silly, spoofy, illogical and just plain fun. I've seen worse come out of major studios and this one's worth renting on video for the dialogue alone. And it's got a decent cast--Richard E. Grant, Jean Marc Barr, Miranda Richardson. Fun stuff.////###

Focus--Oscar should look favorably on this one. William Macy turns in another incredible performance, Laura Dern has a very juicy role and the entire film is powerful and timely.

FOCUS is taken from an Arthur Miller play, the story of Lawrence Newman, an everyman who lives in a quiet WWII New York neighborhood with his mother and commutes to a job in the city. His life begins to unravel in a series of incidents, beginning with an assault on a Puerto Rican woman outside his house, his refusal to hire a woman whom he thinks is Jewish, and his getting glasses. The last is the key event because with glasses people begin telling Lawrence he "looks Jewish" and his life changes for the worse. Or does it?

Again, it's the performances that make this movie memorable and it's well worth seeing if it comes to a theater near you.////###

Monsters, Inc.--What a fun movie! I just loved it, especially the credits at the end. Pixar does it

again, a good story with good animation, although the door sequence was reminiscent of much of the action in Toy Story. Nevertheless, it's a wonderful film for the entire family.

Bridget Jones's Diary--It was entertaining, but anyone who couldn't see the "Mr. Darcy" link probably didn't pay enough attention in school. The film was entertaining and Renee Zellwiger (sp?) looked the part, so it worked. I had a hard time seeing what he found attractive about her, and I don't mean the physical part--for all her bitching and moaning about being fat, I thought she looked attractively *zafstig*. But when Howard and I discussed it, Howard said her attraction to Darcy was her willingness to make changes in her life, her taking risks and not being afraid to act foolish on occasion and then bravely muddle through. So that makes sense.

Lord of the Rings--I've been vaguely following the nitpicking going on in the SF Lit forum over on CompuServe and all I can say is I don't care if Arwen's role gets beefed up, I still think it's a damn fine movie. Elijah Wood is an excellent Frodo and in fact I thought the entire movie was very well cast. I'm looking forward to more.

A Beautiful Mind--I've read that one shouldn't watch this film thinking it's a true biography of John Nash, Jr. but frankly, I don't care. The movie stands on its own merits as a moving portrayal of one man's descent into and out of madness. I remember a psychologist telling me many years ago, his job wasn't to convince delusional patients there weren't dragons at the gate. His job was to help them learn how to get around the dragons so they could go to work each day and lead a fairly normal life.

Russell Crowe's performance is Oscar worthy and the entire cast shines. It's well worth seeing.

Amelie--As frothy and fun as fine French champagne, as richly layered as pastry, this movie is *the* date movie of the year. It's the tale of a shy

young waitress in Paris who one day is motivated to do a good deed--return a box of toys to a man who'd hidden his cache of goodies in her apartment when he was a lad. This event changes Amelie's life and leads her into a world of showing how one person can dramatically affect the lives of those around her. It has touches of magic realism, romance, and lots of laughs even with subtitles. Don't miss it!

MAILING COMMENTS

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Brooks--ct. weber--maybe ordinary rhinos can't climb stairs but I wouldn't put anything past the coked up ones.////###

Lynch--I'm looking forward to seeing the new *Mimosa*, especially the article by Sharon Farber. I've missed her writing!// ct. Toni re: WTC collapse: I heard a piece on NPR saying the urban architecture of America may be forever changed by the events of September 11. Insurance companies are going to be less likely to insure skyscrapers and other "trophy" buildings that could become targets. On the other hand, with the price of real estate in Manhattan something's got to give, whether it's companies relocating to Jersey or landlords being forced to lower rent or large buildings going up with insurance exclusions in case of terrorist attacks. And that latter point isn't all bad. Howard sold a disability policy to an



attorney who complained bitterly when he saw the insurance company was adding an exclusion for his back problems. He stopped complaining when he developed cancer and the disability policy paid off in full. Sometimes exclusions allow some reasonable coverage, where otherwise one would have nothing at all.////###

Lillian--Your account of the ghost tour was amusing. //re: Louisiana and the death penalty, you may have read that Florida just freed another death row inmate. As I was reading the account of what looked like to this layperson was a complete travesty of justice (numerous people swore he was miles from the murder site, there was no physical evidence linking him to the crime, his accuser was known to have a grudge against him, etc.) I said to Howard, as I've said before, "It's not that I don't believe in the death penalty, 'cause I do. What I don't have faith in is our current judicial system being able to guarantee an innocent person won't be put to death."

It's even more upsetting when you know this man was on death row for 17 years, and conservative lawmakers are still pushing to shorten the appeals process so we can execute 'em faster.////###

Strickland--Thank you for your kind words about PIRATE'S PRICE. I'm glad you enjoyed it and I hope PIRATE'S SONG will be sold and available soon. // re: Print on demand: this will only work too, in my opinion, if the books are price competitively with mass market or trade paperback books. The problem I've seen is POD books that would retail for \$6.00 if published mass market have to sell for around \$14.00 and unless you really want the book in question, that's an iffy proposition. I don't spend that kind of money on a book unless it's an author I know or one that comes highly recommended.// Your ct. on making tea in coffeemakers at hotels has given me an idea. I can carry a packet of coffee maker cleaner if I want and clean out all the coffee oils before using it. It wouldn't be perfect, but it would be better than no tea at all.// ct. Me: Maybe my perception of the Dealer's Room was wrong, but in the past I

recall more varied vendors. / Raphi insists that no matter what he studies, he will *not* become a professional rabbi. But we'll see.////##

Hughes--I envy your being able to see the Northern Lights. We were just a little too far south to catch them, but I heard it was quite a show and from your photos I can see how nice it was. Thanks for sharing. ////##

Gelb-- Re: Eye problems: So your day was not better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick? I'm wincing just thinking about what they did to your tear duct. But you were right to insist on an ophthalmologist. // re: KEEPING THE FAITH: I had big problems with it too, for all the points you raise but also this--no serious consideration was given to the priest's feelings about his friend rejecting her faith. If she becomes Jewish it's more than a nice gesture (one hopes), it's a rejection of baptism, the sacraments, belief in Jesus as Savior and could seriously compromise one's chances of getting into Christian heaven. But again, it was more of "what's really important here is that she loves him." //

I found a typo in your zine! "I went back to my room to grab my coat and meet a dinner expedition in the lobby." Hehehe. I feel much better now about that "shoe-in" nonsense. The Orycon report was substantial--thanks! //

Speaking of sports, you know how little attention I pay to such things, but I was walking through the family room one Sunday when the Dolphins were playing, and stopped cold.

"Is that the Dolphins head coach?" I asked Howard. "Wow, he looks just like a Susan Elizabeth Phillips hero!" (For the rest of you, SEP writes humorous romances about football coaches and players for a fictional team called the Chicago Stars). I was very impressed. ////##

Copeland, L.--Good luck with your quilting endeavors. Sounds like you've found a new calling. The 9-11 quilt was very moving.// Thanks for the article on the Boulder Library art fracas. It's one of those issues where I may not like the library's choice of art, but I defend their right to

display it.////##

Copeland, J--Your comments on the evils of secret military trials are appropriate and well stated. All kinds of abuses can occur under the mantle of national security, and this one would be a mistake at many levels. We either have faith in our judicial system or we fix its perceived problems, but bypassing it for the sake of expediency hardly seems like the right answer.//

Ct. Me: Wow, there I was grinning along with your reviews of Penn & Teller and Vegas showgirls when I read "PIRATE'S PRICE...a rollicking, great adventure." Thank you so much! And I hope to bring news of my next pirate adventure/romance to you real soon now.

I don't use Word so I've been spared the obnoxious paperclip but I still enjoyed the cartoon you passed along. ////##

weber--I'd seen the FOXTROT cartoons and appreciated them. It's nice to point out what makes everyday people heroes. Raphi has put off donating again, not because he's scared but just 'cause he's at that age when he puts off lots of things that don't seem urgent (to him). But I gave him a flyer from the blood bank saying their next drive would be at the multi-plex with free passes for donors, and that seems to be motivating him. He's even trying to round up some friends to go with him and attend the movies afterwards.//

The "Strunkenwhite Virus" gag was fun and appreciated. I've got my college copy of the writer's friend next to SIN AND SYNTAX and THE DELUXE TRANSITIVE VAMPIRE. Someone asked me the other day what reference books I use the most and glancing at the shelf, I found myself pulling out WEBSTER'S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY (my copy is about 40 years old), CASSELL DICTIONARY OF SLANG, DESCRIBER'S DICTIONARY, OXFORD DICTIONARY OF PHRASES, SAYINGS AND QUOTES, and a book Janice gave to me, SISSONS WORD AND EXPRESSIONS LOCATOR. ////##

That's all folks. Eve