

WARP 75

Josée Bellemare

Keith Braithwaite

Nikolai Krimp

Leslie Lupien



MAX
789

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All members in good standing!
Please help us plan our activities!

On the Cover

Art by Marquise Boies: Gallifreyan inspired picture, AlphalephDanLuxlumen, teaching aspiring timelords most of the time and chosen to pilot a TARDIS on a field trip.

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MonSFFA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Except where noted, all MonSFFA meetings are held
Sundays at 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Espresso Hotel, St-François Room, 1005 Guy Street, corner René Lévesque.

Programming is subject to change, check our website for latest developments.

August 15, 2010



Fancraft Workshops: Members try their hand at a variety of sci-fi-themed crafts in a series of workshops

September 19, 2010

Guest Speaker: Olivier Xavier *speaks on professional career, the modern visual effects industry, and the techniques employed by low-budget independent filmmakers.*

Introduction to Computer Gaming: A primer on popular computer gaming (*François Ménard*)



October 17, 2010

Future's History: The evolution of the Captain Future character over a variety of media. (*Marquise Boies*)

Weird Sci-Fi Technologies: A review of some of the more bizarre technologies to be found in the annals of science fiction. (*Sylvain St-Pierre*)



Commercial Advertising: A look at advertising's use of SF to sell products and services. (*Alice Novo, Berny Reischl*)

November 21, 2010

Signs and Symbols, Legends and Mythologies: An examination of their origins and connections. (*Lindsay Brown, Marc Durocher*)



Star Trek Remastered: An appreciation of the remastered versions of the original Star Trek episodes, in which the visual effects have been updated. (*Wayne Glover*)

Fan Film Theatre: Screenings of some of the most interesting and recent examples of SF/F fan films available on the Web. (*Berny Reischl*)

December 4, 2010

MonSFFA's Annual Christmas Dinner & Party
Details to be announced.



As is our tradition, we will be collecting toys and items of non-perishable food for donation to Sun Youth's Christmas Basket Drive. In the spirit of the season, please give to benefit those less fortunate in our community.

The Really Fine Print: WARP is published quarterly by the Montreal Science Fiction and Fantasy Association (MonSFFA), a nonprofit organization of fans interested in sharing their love of science fiction and fantasy. The opinions expressed in WARP are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect those of MonSFFA or the editor. To reprint any article, please contact the writer, or ask the editor to pass on your request. The use of copyrighted material is generally discouraged, but it's hard to talk about Star Wars without stepping on toes; our apologies to the copyright holders, no serious infringement is intended. This is an amateur production, and your tolerance is appreciated by your fans.



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You've Got Mail!

Hi, Fern!

How nice to get a letter from a MonSFFan!

I've always enjoyed your contributions to the MonSFFun page; indeed, you are the reason we have a MonSFFun page!

The movie reviews are much appreciated as well, and I was pleasantly surprised when I received your article on the classic SF films of 50 years ago! I enjoyed cruising the Internet in search of vintage posters. How wonderfully tacky they seem now!

I've received your new batch of "Faces", I must remember to thank Guy as well for re-inspiring your creative juices!

And, you'll be glad to see that Josée has not been idle either; the second part of Stargate Enterprise appears on page 16.

Yours in fandom,
Cathy



Dear MonSFFen, and Cathy, too

Thank you for the newest Warp, issue 74. Another big issue, I see... I will contribute to the even bigger 75th issue with a letter of comment.

My letter... the Hugo voting period has a week to go, and I am still hopeful and confident. I think I shall do well, perhaps well enough to win the silver

rocket? I am finally finding some good jobs to apply to; the summer is not the best time to go job hunting, and the one word I see most of all is 'intern'. I prefer a job with a pay cheque, thank you.

Polaris 24 was a good time, and it started a week ago today. We had a sales table in the hallway, as you saw, and our sales were actually fairly good, good enough for us to take two tables next year. The highlight of the weekend for us was the Dr. Who/steampunk party... a good time, and prizes for our steampunk costumes, probably the first prizes we've won for our costumes in more than 20 years. Our next convention here will be the Fan eXpo, but only because we will be participating in Liana K.'s steampunk fashion show on the Saturday. Our finances are still shaky, so I can't see us going to Con*Cept this year, sorry to say.

There are some mighty large beings in the sea, and the oarfish is just one of them. Did you see the article about a whale breaching and landing on a fishing boat? Broke the mast right off it, and the boat limped back to shore.

Looks like Sylvain St-Pierre is enjoying Phil and Kaja Foglio's Girl Genius webcomic. I do, too, and I would love the grand tour of Castle Heterodyne, with all the traps deactivated, of course.

Next year's Convention will be in Toronto, hosted by SFContario II. It will be good to have the Convention here; I

Cathy,

First, I just finished reading Josée Bellemare's Stargate Enterprise in Warp74 and loved it. Now that's the beginning of a really nice storyline and I expect Josée to get very creative with it. Way to go Josée brilliant idea... Can't wait for the next chapter of Stargate Enterprise coming up in WARP 75.

Second, I just wanted to say that I was overjoyed and tickled pink to see that someone (finally!) appreciated The Face behind the Mask quiz from Warp 72. In Guy Lillian's Zine Dump # 25 - his comments and review of Warp 72 included and I quote "a cool quiz involving alien women from the movies and the actresses who play them." Now that really made my day! Thanks Guy!

The Fernster, The Man behind
"The Face behind the Mask"!

can't usually get to the host convention. The Auroras will be here, too, and I have offered the convention some help. Thanks for publishing the Aurora winners...the Constellation winners were revealed in an e-mail from Polaris earlier today. If you didn't get it, let me know, and I can relay them to you. And, of course, there's the Hugo nominees.

It's beginning to look like it will be a busy summer and fall, and we're looking forward to it. There won't be much travelling, but I hope there will be something new as far as work goes. Found an ad for a company just south of me, and the resume will go this afternoon, I hope.

Anyway, that's all for now. Have a

great time at the club BBQ tomorrow...there's a fannish BBQ in Toronto on the Sunday! See you with the next issue.

Yours,
Lloyd Penney

Hi, Lloyd!

I'm glad I got to see you at Polaris, especially since it looks like you won't be able to make it to Con*Cept. We'll miss you and Yvonne!

Thanks for the convention listings which I will incorporate into the list begun by Dom and Lynda. The next conventions in Montreal will be Otakuthon and Comic-Con.

I was sent the list of Constellation winners, and will publish them in this issue. I'm curious about the Hugos, and wondering if World Con being in Australia will make a difference. I would have loved to go, but neither my back nor my bank account can take that kind of abuse.

Since I hope to make it to World Con next year, I suspect I will have to give Convention a miss even if it's only as far as Toronto. So many good cons, so little disposable income!

Good luck with the job hunting, and say Hi to Yvonne for me!

Yours in fandom,
Cathy



Upcoming Events

Compiled by Dom Durocher, Lynda Pelley, Lloyd Penny

July 31 - Aug. 2 - The Pirate Festival,
Country Heritage Park, Milton, ON.
www.thepiratefestival.com

Aug 4-7 IPMS USA National Convention (model competition)
Phoenix, AZ
<http://ipmsusa2010.org/index.html>

Aug 12-15 Star Wars Celebration V
Orlando, FL
<http://www.starwarscelebration.com/>

Aug 13-15 Otakuthon Montreal, QC
<http://www.otakuthon.com/>

August 20-22 Can*Con 2010, Ottawa, ON. Theme: steampunk. Guests: Marie Bilodeau, Lean-Louis Trudel Hayden Trenholm, more. www.can-con.org

Aug 27-29 Fan Expo (SF multi-media); Toronto, ON, guests: Many! Steampunk fashion show August 28, 10pm
www.fanexpocanada.com

September 2-6 AussieCon IV, the 68th World Con, Melbourne, Australia
<http://www.aussiecon4.org.au/>

Sept 3-6 Dragon*Con (SF multi-media) Atlanta, GA <http://www.dragoncon.org/>

Sept 11-12 Comic-Con (Comics, media) Montreal, QC
<http://www.montrealcomiccon.com/>

September 11 SF/Anime Flea Market, Toronto Reference Library,
<http://www.blogto.com/events/25987>

September 26 - Word on the Street, Queen's Park, Toronto.
<http://www.thewordonthestreet.ca/wots/toronto>

Oct 1-3 Con*Cept Montreal, QC, Tad Williams, Nicki Clyne, Lar de Souza, Deborah Beale, Veronique Dumas, Denise Gendron <http://www.conceptsf.ca>

October 1-3 Whedon Fest, Sheraton Toronto Airport Hotel. Convention for shows created by Joss Whedon. Guests: Amy Acker, Nicholas Brendon.
www.starrynightevents.com

October 10 The Bazaar of the Bizarre, Toronto, ON. A dealers' room full of unique items.
<http://thebazaarofthebizarre.org/>

Oct 28-31 World Fantasy Con 34, Columbus OH
<http://www.contextsf.org/WFC/>

Oct 2 London Scale Model Show (model competition); London, ON
<http://londonmodelshow.ca/>

October 17 - Buffalo Comicon, Amherst, NY www.queencitycomics.com

Oct 28-31 World Fantasy Con 34, Columbus OH
<http://www.contextsf.org/WFC/>

Nov 19-21 SFContario Toronto, ON
Guests: Michael Swanwick Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Robert J. Sawyer
<http://sfcontario.ca/>

February 19 & 20, 2011 Con-G, Guelph, ON. Anime www.con-g.com

April 1-3, 2011 - FilKONtario 21, Mississauga, ON
Guests: Wild Mercy, Ghost of a Rose, Karen Linsley.
www.filkontario.ca

April 8 - 10, 2011 Ad Astra, 30th year!
www.ad-astra.org

April 29 - May 1, 2011 The Canadian National Steampunk Exhibition, Toronto, ON
<http://www.steampunkcanada.ca/steampunkexhibition.htm>

April 29 - May 1, 2011 Eeriecon 13th, Niagara Falls, NY. Guests include Larry Niven, Derwin Mak www.eeriecon.org

May 20-23, 2011 Gaia Gathering Pagan convention www.gaiagathering.ca

May 27-29, 2011 Anime North, Toronto, ON www.animenorth.com

July 15-17 Polaris 25, Richmond Hill, ON www.tcon.ca



For Love of Lois

Leslie Lupien

I used leading edge science to spend some time with the woman I loved. Now I'm told that the cosmos is punishing me for violating one of its laws. Absurd. The cosmos is not God. It can't judge. . . or can it?

My older brother Max and his wife Carol gave me the idea. They are dedicated physicists. One evening when I was their dinner guest in their Glendale home, they fell into jargon, talking shop. One term they kept using aroused my curiosity. "What's a parallel universe?" I asked.

"Can't tell you," Max said. "You're not a physicist."

"Max, you can describe the theory," Carol said. "Danny's intelligent and well read."

Max sighed. "Danny, a parallel universe is one that could be entirely different from ours or could include an Earth with all its people exactly, or almost exactly, like ours."

"That's sensational," I said. "How do you know they exist?"

"Max can't tell you that," Carol said. "The answer involves lots of abstruse math. The theory's been around for a long time. We couldn't prove it was true until we got quantum computers."

I was on my third glass of wine and couldn't let the matter drop. "Could one of these universes really include an Earth like ours with, say, a Carol, Max and me?"

"Yes, it could," Carol said.

"Have you found one like that?"

Carol and Max exchanged glances, and Max said, "Let's drop it."

"I'm really interested," I said. "And whatever you tell me won't go any further."

"Max, why not," Carol told him. "You're dying to tell someone. And Danny's trustworthy."

Max sighed again. "Maybe we have. That's all I'll say."

But I had the bit in my teeth. "If you have, is there any way to get there?"

"If we find out, I'll let you know," Max said. "Now, how's the new job going?"

I dared not press Max further. The conversation drifted away from science and did not return.

That night I dreamed that Lois Underwood appeared suddenly in my bed. When I groped for her, I woke up. That scared me. I had to get that woman out of my subconscious. Lois had a Mrs. in front of her name. Her husband Sydney was a senior partner for the law firm for which I worked as a probationer specializing in taxes.

I came to worship Lois while we worked together, at Sydney's request, organizing a Christmas party for the office staff. She gave me reason discretely – or so I thought – to believe that she felt some reciprocal attraction. Was she unhappy in her marriage? Office gossip was silent on that question, but it

portrayed Sydney as jealous and violent. I would have risked my life for a tryst with Lois, but not hers.

In my sleep-befuddled condition, I remembered Max's parallel universe. "Wouldn't it hold a Lois Underwood? And if so, could I get there? That's crazy, forget it, I told myself. But I couldn't. The image of a parallel Lois kept popping into my mind day and night.

Max and Carol invited me for dinner to celebrate my twenty-ninth birthday about two weeks after I first heard about parallel universes. For once they confined themselves to small talk. I was the one who brought up science. "So how are you doing with your big project?"

Max blinked. "What?"

"Getting to the other universe."

"Oh, yes, I did mention that." Max looked unhappy. "Well, we found a universe that's like ours, or almost, we think."

"How about getting there?"

"Can't tell you," Max said. "It's top secret."

"Oh, come on," I pleaded. "You've got me excited about your project. And you're going to tell the world eventually. Why not tell me now?"

"Max, he's right," Carol said.

Max glared at his wife, then said, "We sent a cyborg and brought it back. From what it told us we believe the Earth in the universe we picked is very much like ours. If this leaks out, my reputation will be shot to hell."

"Nothing will leak." I had finished my fourth glass of wine and held out my glass to Carol for a fifth. "When are you going to send a person?"

Max smiled his sardonic smile. "Don't know. Want to volunteer?"

Remember I had finished four glasses of wine. I leapt at what I took for a real opening.

"Yes, I do, Max."

"That's enough wine for him," Max said.

Carol filled my glass only half full. "Yes, it is, Danny. Finish this. Then I'll take your car keys and drive you home."

The next day, common sense set in. What Max had told me about a parallel Earth was hard to believe. And my hope of finding a parallel Lois Underwood? What a cockamamie idea. I would shunt it out of my mind.

But I couldn't shunt Lois out of my mind. Circumstances conspired against me. She appeared often in the law office, smiling

Last-minute doubts began to oppress me. I should have listened to Max more carefully when he explained how the technicians would transport me to the other universe.

at the staff and disappearing into Sydney's office. Scuttlebutt had it that Sydney was using her to do confidential secretarial work. A nastier version held that his real motive was to show her off as a trophy wife. Plausible since she was much younger and more attractive than Sydney with his gray hair, lined face and lack of charm.

My obsession with Lois Underwood kept growing. I could think of only two ways to end it. Leave the Underwood-Nguyen law firm. A very bad idea careerwise. Or find a way to possess Lois and end the obsession. Very difficult and dangerous to do considering the personality of her husband.

Two almost simultaneous developments revived my fantasy about the parallel Lois. Several prestigious physicists, not including my brother, gave interviews in which they expressed their conviction that our universe was just one bubble among an infinite number of bubbles in a "multiuniverse." Then Carol called me at the office to ask if I would come over that evening to help Max and her with their tax return.

I spent two hours with Max and Carol explaining the arcane features of the latest income tax schedule. After they offered thanks and a glass of Chablis, I said, "Now I want your professional help. I want to get to your parallel Earth. I'm sober and quite serious."

Max scowled. "Yeah? Why?"

"For adventure, excitement. I'm dying of boredom as a tax lawyer. Let me share your fun. And maybe I can do something for science."

"We are looking for a volunteer," Max said. "But I couldn't consider you."

"Why not? Does the volunteer have to know physics?"

Max shook his head. "It could be dangerous."

I had become more ready every day to risk my life for a tryst with Lois. So I said, "I still want to go, Max. Really."

Max shook his head again. "No, Danny."

"Max, don't be so hasty to reject him," Carol said. "We need someone trustworthy. Who's more trustworthy than Danny? And the rewards could be greater than the risk. Fame, money...."

That began a screening process that involved several more meetings with Max and Carol, an interview by a committee of physicists, and another interview with government officials who could approve funding for the project. It all ended one midnight in an isolated wood-frame house off a dirt road in the Santa Monica Mountains.

I walked between Max and Carol down a dirty corridor lit only by a single feeble overhead bulb. The house with its dark, shuttered windows, spectral in the light from a full moon, had not inspired confidence. Max and Carol told me the government had selected it for security reasons. But I began to have second thoughts.

Things got better when we entered a small, spic-and-span, freshly painted white-walled room bathed in fluorescence. A dozen or so men and women in business suits stood at one end and about as many men and women in white jackets stood at the other

end. I took the suits to be government employees and the white jackets to be technical staff from Max's university. Formidable looking machines nestled in shadows through a half-open door.

A young woman in a white jacket approached Max. "Good evening, Dr. Deibert." She glanced at me. "Is this our volunteer?"

"Yes," Max told her. "My brother, Danny Deibert. Don't worry. He's been vetted."

"Great." The woman technician smiled at me and pointed to a cot stationed just outside the half-open door. "Please lie down, Mr. Deibert." When I obeyed, she put a pillow under my head and asked, "Comfortable?"

The mattress on the cot was soft and seemed to fit to my body. "Yes," I murmured.

But last-minute doubts began to oppress me. I should have listened to Max more carefully when he explained how the technicians would transport me to the other universe. I hadn't because of my excitement at the prospect of soon making contact with a Lois Underwood I could approach without fear. Max had told me the parallel universe was less than a millimetre away. I would enter a "Kip Thorne wormhole" that would serve as a bridge to the parallel universe and return the same way. There was some risk, but the physicists and government sponsors considered it acceptable. Now questions bedevilled me. How big was that "wormhole?" What would hold it open? What if it collapsed?

Max and Carol stood next to the cot and looked down at me. "You all right, Danny?" Carol asked.

No, I wasn't all right. I was terrified. But how could I back out now or even start plying them with questions I should have asked before? They would lose respect for me. "Yes," I said. But surely Max and Carol could hear the thumping of my heart.

The woman technician smiled and held out a syringe. "This will put you in a state of stasis, like dreamless sleep, Mr. Deibert. When you wake up in a house like this it will be tomorrow morning."

"That's great," I told her. "But who gives me a shot before you bring me back?"

She smiled broadly. "A well-programmed cyborg."

"I told you that," Max said. "Don't forget your mission. So much depends on you."

I looked longingly at the syringe. I did not feel the needle.

I woke up in shadows on a cot and mattress similar to the ones on which I had lain down. I pushed myself up on my elbows and glanced around. I was alone. There were no machines, just the one bare room. A little sunlight came in through a high window.

Panic gripped me. I ran out of the room, down the dirty corridor I remembered and out of the house. But once outside, breathing hard, I calmed quickly. The air was warm and clear, the sky a cloudless blue. I recognized a typical Southern California summer day. And even the house with its faded yellow paint looked innocuous.

I walked briskly up a short dirt road to reach an intersection with a paved road where a sign read "Elysian Drive." Just as

planned. A sprinkling of freshly painted California-style stucco houses with cars parked in some driveways stretched in both directions. Familiar and reassuring.

I used my cell phone to call a robotaxi. It arrived within minutes. I spoke into the console on the hood, giving my account number to verify payment. A green flash signalled acceptance. I had passed the first hurdle. I entered the address of the Glendale post office, climbed inside and relaxed on the comfortable leather seat. The ride was lengthy due to the traffic, and I had plenty of time to look around. Max had warned me that I might notice some differences in the scenery, but I did not detect any. That was more reassuring.

I instructed the robotaxi to wait while I went into the Glendale post office. It was not crowded. I reserved a post office box within ten minutes. Mission accomplished. I would give Max a security widget for the combination of the box. Then he and his colleagues would have a channel to contact physicists in the parallel universe. Max had told me to look around as much as I liked, but to get back to the yellow house no later than seven in the evening. I had plenty of time to accomplish my purpose.

I used my cell phone to call the Underwood-Nguyen law office. "Mr. Underwood will be in Long Beach all day," his secretary said. Great! Lois should be home alone. "Give me Mr. Deibert then, please," I said.

A click, a buzz, then "Deibert here." The voice sent a chill up my spine.

"I represent a cosmetics company that needs a tax counsellor, Mr. Deibert," I said. "Can I meet with you today?"

"Yes. I'll be in the rest of the day," the spooky voice said. "May I have your name?"

"Cordwainer. I'll drop by this afternoon. Thank you." I dared not say more.

Then I placed a call to the Underwood residence. "Hello," the soft female voice that I loved so much said at once.

"Lois, it's Danny. Did Sydney tell you he would be in Long Beach all day?"

"Yes. Why are you calling, Danny?"

"I would like . . ." I almost hung up. What if she said no. I would have to crawl back to where I belonged with my tail between my legs. "I would like to come out and talk to you."

I heard heavy breathing, then, "Oh, Danny, I don't know. . . . Well, all right. But park your car on another street and come to the kitchen door like you're here for a sales pitch. We have nosy neighbours."

"I'm coming in a robotaxi," I told her. "Don't worry."

I told the robotaxi to wait around the corner from the Underwood home. I walked fast until I reached Sydney's driveway. The door in the fence leading to the backyard was open. What I saw made me stop. During a previous visit I had noticed two magnificent trees – one lemon, one plum – in the backyard. The trees had vanished, replaced by a swimming pool full of clear, blue-green water. A real surprise. How many more would this universe offer?

I knocked on the kitchen door. Lois opened the door and smiled. "Nice of you to drop by." She wore blue slacks, a matching pullover and slightly scuffed red mules. Her dark hair was cut short. I could detect no makeup. She smelled of lavender

from her garden. I had never found her so attractive.

Lois offered me coffee. I sat at the small table in the shining, immaculate kitchen and watched her pour it. She was so slight. Her movements, slow and tentative, conveyed a sense of vulnerability that added to her appeal. She put two full coffee cups on the table and sat opposite me.

"Danny, do you think it's wise for us to do this?" she asked.

I felt myself in the grip of an attraction stronger than physical desire. "Don't worry. I just want to be with you. Even if we do no more than sit here."

Lois leaned toward me. "Funny. I don't want to, but I feel something like that."

I noticed at close view a discolouration above Lois's right eye, reached up and touched it gingerly. "Sydney?"

Lois dropped her eyes. "Yes. But don't make too much of it. He didn't hit hard. And he was so contrite."

I felt a twinge of irritation. About Lois's behaviour, not Sydney's. *To put up with abuse so supinely. Just like Mom.* "Did it happen when you went in his office yesterday?"

Lois frowned. "No. I wasn't in his office yesterday."

I laughed to cover my confusion. "Must have dreamed it last night." I leaned forward to kiss her, but she pushed me gently away. "Not here, Danny."

"Would you prefer I leave?"

"You know I don't." She started for the inside kitchen door. "Come along."

Afterward, we lay silently on the giant four-poster bed. The closed California shutters would have left us in total darkness were it not for two strands of light sifting through the sliver of opening beside the bathroom door. Traffic noises were shut out, no doubt by the excellent insulation in Sydney's multimillion dollar home. We were as totally isolated as I could have wished. I felt fulfilled and at peace for the first time in months.

"This sounds corny," I said. "But you remind me of my mother." What I meant, but would not say: *You are passive like Mom was. Except she tolerated infidelity and verbal abuse instead of violence.* Maybe that was the secret of Lois's fascination for me. If so, possessing her had stilled it. I could go back to my real life without regret or frustration.

Lois peered at the illuminated digital clock on the bedside table. "Danny, the cleaning lady will be here within an hour. Thank you for coming. But please go now."

When we finished dressing, Lois said, "It was wonderful. But we must never do this again."

"We will never do this again," I told her. Then, to make conversation, I added, "I saw your new swimming pool. Do Sydney and you like it better than the fruit trees?"

Lois had become a dim shape in the shadows. "I don't know what you mean. We never had fruit trees. . . . Goodbye, Danny."

I ordered the robotaxi to drive me out to Santa Monica and wait. Then I lunched on the beach in a coffee shop, noting how similar the menu was to one in our world, and strolled around. All was familiar. I could tell Max that the next visitor he sent could feel right at home except for a few quirks.

The feel of early evening alerted me to head for the yellow house. I told the robotaxi to take me to Elysian Boulevard, intending to give more specific directions when I got there. I half

dozed on the way, confident that the cyborg would send me home without difficulty. When I realized we were on Elysian Boulevard I began watching eagerly for the turnoff to the yellow house.

The robotaxi startled me by speaking: "It is getting warm, sir. Shall I turn on the air conditioning?"

I put a hand to my forehead and felt sweat. "Yes," I said, wondering what could cause that unusual warmth. When I glanced to the left a red glare made me close my eyes. I had never believed in premonitions. But at that moment a premonition of trouble struck me.

The robotaxi tipped over a rise and reached the turnoff. I realized that the premonition had not misled me. Except that what I saw was not trouble, but disaster. The warmth and glare came from the yellow house. It was on fire. "Oh, shit!" I yelled.

"Sir?" The robotaxi said.

"Stop. Let me out and wait." I jumped out and ran down the dirt road. I couldn't go far. A police car parked sideways blocked my way. More police cars and two fire trucks sat just beyond. Firemen sprayed water on the crumbling ruin of the yellow house with no apparent effect. A policeman walked up to me. "Turn around," he said. "The air is full of hot ashes."

"What caught the house on fire?" I asked.

"Don't know," the policeman said.

I struggled with panic. My mind wouldn't function. I felt numb from the waist down. The policeman peered at me. "You look sick. That your house?"

"Yeah."

"Need help? Shall I call an ambulance?"

"No, thanks." I dared not wait for more questions, and I did not like the policeman's searching glance. A gentle breeze and a new fear started to clear my mind. "Give me a minute. I have a taxi up there." When strength seeped into my legs, I managed to start up the hill. What should I do now?

The robotaxi sat waiting for instructions. I limped over to the hood and spoke into its console. "Glendale."

I dismissed the robotaxi and walked slowly up the path to Max and Carol's home.

Everything looked familiar at first: the thick, green hedge bordering the path, the flower beds, the manicured lawn, the freshly painted green porch. Ah, but there was a difference: California shutters instead of the Venetian blinds that I had helped Max install. As if I needed a reminder that this was not my Earth.

The button for the doorbell confronted me like a challenge. I had left my universe on Saturday night, so Max and Carol should be home. But what should I say? Not "I'm not your Danny; I'm Danny from another universe." Their reaction to that was unpredictable.

I must have pressed the button unknowingly while I wrestled with my dilemma. The door swung open and Max and Carol confronted me. The grim expressions they both wore shocked me.

I cleared my throat. "I may look like your brother, Mr. Deibert, but please allow me to explain."

"Don't say anything more," Max said. "Come in."

"We know who you are," Carol said.

I lurched inside and saw the familiar parlour, lit by fluorescent lights because the shutters were closed. I headed automatically toward the long, high-backed, well-cushioned sofa upon which I

had lounged on so many friendly evenings.

"Okay, sit there," Max snapped. "And don't you say a word until I show you something."

The moment I sat down Max picked up a folded document from a table behind the sofa and dropped it in my lap. I recognized it as one of the hourly news bulletins that the Los Angeles Times distributed to subscribers through home terminals.

"Never mind the war news," Max said. "Get to the third story."

I obeyed. The headline and the first paragraph slapped me in the face with more violence than a physical blow.

"PROMINENT TAX ATTORNEY SLAYS WIFE"

"Police today arrested Sydney Underwood, senior partner in the tax law firm Underwood-Nguyen, for the shooting death of his wife Lois. Mr. Underwood confessed that he killed his wife because of her infidelity with a member of his law firm. Mrs. Underwood's body was found . . ."

I watched the bulletin fall to the floor from nerveless fingers. I could not look up.

"Now talk," Max demanded.

"That can't be!" I shouted.

"Why not, *Danny*?" Max did not raise his voice, but the anger in his tone shook me more. Without looking up, I sensed that he hovered over me.

"Because...because I made sure it couldn't. Underwood's secretary told me he was in Long Beach for the day. Your brother told me he would be in the office all afternoon. He had plenty of witnesses."

"You didn't finish the story," Max told me. "Never mind. I'll tell you. Underwood was insanely jealous. He had placed his home under professional surveillance. There was a hidden recorder in every room. When he got home from Long Beach, he turned on the recorders. They carried Lois's voice talking to a Danny and a voice he thought was my brother's."

"Max's brother came here an hour ago and told us he was innocent," Carol said. "But he still blamed himself and was hysterical with grief and guilt. He's in our guest room now under sedation."

"I'm sorry," I said. "I meant to harm nobody."

Carol went on like she hadn't heard me. "We were baffled about what had happened. But when I saw you walk up the path, I knew and told Max."

I opened and closed my mouth a few times before the words came. "You're into parallel universes too."

"Of course," Max said. "We expected to hear from your physicists soon. But not this way, damn you! You must have planned it. Did you tell your brother you intended to seduce Lois Underwood?"

I shook my head. I still couldn't meet Max's eyes. My belly churned, threatening vomit. I wanted to get up and run, but my legs were numb.

Max sat on the sofa beside me. His tone softened. "Did your brother tell you to come and see us?"

"No."

"Why did you do it then? Why didn't you just run home?"

I finally faced Max. "I can't go home."

***“Bullshit! You’re saying God will punish me? You’re an atheist.
You can’t believe what you just said!”***

“Why not? Can’t locate your contact point?”

“My contact point was a yellow house in the Santa Monica Mountains. It burned down.”

“Burned down.” Max let out a long breath through his teeth.

“So you’re stranded. Well, what do you expect us to do?”

“I don’t know. I came here because I thought you were the only ones who would believe me.”

Carol sat beside her husband. “Don’t expect any sympathy from us. You deceived your brother. You deceived poor Lois Underwood. You brought death and misery into our world. . . . Max, what in hell shall we do with *him*?”

“I’m thinking.” Frowning, Max rested his head on both fists. “I have to talk to my colleagues.”

“I’ll leave, Mr. Deibert,” I said.

“No, you won’t leave. You could do more damage.” Max sprang to his feet. “Get up. I have to get you out of here before my brother wakes up.”

Max unlocked the door of the house in Huntington Beach. “Do you know this place?”

“Sure,” I told him. “I know it’s yours. I’ve been in one like it many times.”

“Good,” Max said. “Make yourself comfortable. There’s food in the fridge.” His face hardened. “But don’t you dare go out or try to call anyone. If my brother found out about you, your life would not be safe. And if the police or media found out . . . I don’t want to think about that.”

“Okay,” I said.

“I’ll be back sometime tomorrow.” Max handed me the keys to the house and turned his back.

My agitated stomach had no desire for food. I found a sleeping potion in the bathroom drawer where I expected it to be. A double dose put me out on Max’s bed until daylight. Next morning, I pulled down all the shades in the house. Then I showered, used Max’s extra electric shaver and forced down cold cereal and fruit I found in the fridge.

The torment in my mind – a mixture of grief, guilt and fear – became intolerable. Holographs and books in the library couldn’t help. I took another sleeping potion and passed out on the contour chair in the parlour.

When the doorbell rang, it was pitch dark. I knew where the nearest light switch was and turned it on. The digital wall clock read seven forty-five. I ran for the front door, eager for any human contact.

It was Max. He looked grim, but not angry. “Let’s talk, Danny,” he said.

I was languid from the effects of the sleeping potion. I waved Max to the contour chair and sprawled on the floor with my back to the holograph stand. “How’s your brother?” I asked.

“Better,” Max said. “He’ll stay with us. The police will

probably come to question tomorrow.” Max sighed. “I talked to my colleagues at the university. They agreed unanimously that they don’t want to see you, not now anyway. You’re toxic, Danny.”

“What’s that mean?”

“We checked with contacts at the Times. They told us the authorities can’t explain the burning of your yellow house. No electricity, nothing flammable inside.”

“What does that matter?”

“It matters because what you did to Lois Underwood was a violation of causality as well as a despicable act. We suspect the cosmos destroyed your yellow house in retaliation. And it may take further action against you.”

A burst of adrenaline aroused me. “Bullshit! You’re saying God will punish me? You’re an atheist. You can’t believe what you just said.”

Max flushed. “I didn’t invoke God. I said the cosmos. We know a violation of causality is a damn serious thing. We don’t know what it could cause. Anyway you’re in deep shit. You can’t go home. You’re a nonperson here.”

“I’ll manage.”

“Shut up. We’re willing to keep you until we get in touch with your physicists. Then you’ll become their problem. But we have to keep you out of contact with people. Our world is not ready for you yet. And then there’s my brother.”

“You want me to stay here?”

“No. We’re renting an unused cruise ship. You’ll live alone but in style, with all the ship’s facilities and even a medical cyborg on board. We can even arrange for a female cyborg if you’re interested.”

I could not help smiling at Max. How desperate he and his colleagues were to isolate me. Like a dangerous bacillus..

“You should be grateful,” Max said.

“Yeah. Thanks a lot. Good night, Mr. Deibert.”

I used Max’s computer to write this account. That calmed me so I can think rationally.

The physicists in this world will be glad to work with Max and his colleagues to get rid of me. I can return to my old life. But is that what I want? How can I face my Max and Carol after I lied to them and caused so much trouble in this world? How can I face Lois or her husband? For that matter, how can I face anyone who knew and believed in me?

The answer is that I can’t.

I can survive here. I have an electrician’s skill that I acquired working my way through law school. As a lawyer I know how to create a new identity. I will disappear by morning.

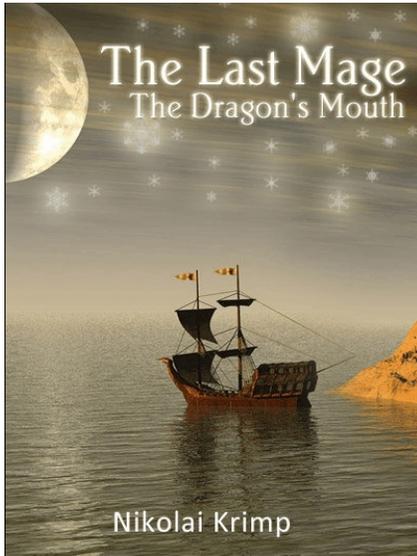
And if the cosmos – or God – wants to punish me? It, or He, needn’t bother. I will punish myself for the rest of my life.



The Last Mage: The Dragon's Mouth

Nikolai Krimp

The story so far: Jennifer Wells worked for a bio-hazard lab located deep inside a mountain just south of Seattle, Washington. Following a car accident during a mysterious storm, she awoke in the body of a young elf named Shannon. In the company of Shannon's friend, Roma, and a hobbit, Treymane, she finds herself caught up in events resulting from the finding of a box in the ruins of the "Cave of the Ancients" – Jenny's former laboratory.



When the companions reached the safety of Shannon's home, they learned that they must now journey on to find Teagan, Shannon's aunt, and the only one likely to be able to explain what's been going on. A forced detour through the Shadow Forest results in their being captured by elves. Jenny convinces the council that she is indeed Shannon, but Kirin who has volunteered to be their escort demands the truth, and Jenny tells him who she really is and what she suspects is in the Demon Box – a biological weapon. The village comes under attack, the companions are given magical gifts and make their escape through a secret passage.

When they finally reach their destination, Teagan informs them she has lost contact with Shannon, leaving her to conclude that Jenny will never be able to return to her own time. However, because Jenny is in Shannon's body, and Shannon was a mage, she is capable of magic. Teagan begins teaching her the skills she will need in the world which must now be her home.

The companions set off to the Dragon's Mouth, hoping to destroy the Demon Box before it falls into the hands of Malodor. We pick up the story again just as the travellers arrive at the village of Maryton. Though safe for the moment, they know they have been spotted by Malodor's spies.

The concluding chapter begins as the party travels by boat to the Dragon's Mouth.

Chapter 1

Come ... come to me," whispered Malodor as he gazed into his water-filled stone cauldron. He knew that the party was on its way to the island. "You'll be lucky to set foot here, let alone destroy what's rightfully mine. You will never leave here alive. Without your mother's magic, you are lost. Teagan is still alive, so her powers you don't have. Come ... come and meet death."

The dark druid had placed his men all over the shoreline, wherever the party could land. This time he wasn't taking any chances. He remembered that Shannon and her friends destroyed the demon in the caves. Weak they are not, he concluded, so he had taken extra precautions and placed all of his men on the shore around the island. Only on the western side of the island that had no beach or any landing areas did he put a smaller contingent of men. Since the volcano rose straight out from the sea, putting many men there would be a waste. They could be of more use where they could fight out in the open. Besides, the patrols would spot the friends climbing up the side of the volcano and deal with them.

He sat back in his large comfortable chair and smiled as he sipped some fine wine from his jewelled goblet. Yes, soon the box would be in his hands and the people of this world would do his bidding or they would die.

His captain entered and reported that the craft had not been sighted yet.

"Maybe the storm sank their vessel," stated the large orc

captain.

"Don't be too sure," warned the druid. "Remember, they survived everything I threw at them so far. Besides, I need that box. It is of no value to me at the bottom of the sea."

"Yes sir!" snapped the captain as he turned and left the room to check on his troops. "They wouldn't dare come ashore with so many soldiers around," he thought. "It would be suicide."

The captain left the cavern, which had been left over from a previous eruption of the Dragon's Mouth and returned to the banks of the inland sea, where his men waited patiently. Still, no sign of the ship.

The rocking of the boat and the slapping of water against its hull woke Shannon. She carefully stepped over the sleeping bodies of her friends and reached for the curtains covering the little portholes. As she pushed them aside, the bright light of the sun flooded the tiny quarters in which they were staying. They were far out to sea, for Shannon couldn't see any land about. Slowly everyone else stirred and sat up.

"Where are we?" asked Duncan.

"It seems that we have put out to sea," replied the elf girl.

Making her way past the now-awake dwarfs, Shannon climbed the stairs, opened the hatch and was about to step out.

"Stay below!" came a harsh whisper from above. "We are not clear of Shoe Island yet. There are many other fishing vessels about."

Closing the hatch, the elf girl retreated back down the steep steps and returned to where she had been sleeping.

"It seems that we can't go up on deck just yet," she explained. "First we have to clear Shoe Island before we can get some fresh air."

They stayed below for most of the day amusing themselves by telling stories of past adventures. Each had their very own story to tell. Kirin spoke of his days in the Home Guard and how he helped defend Misty Falls from an orc attack.

"That was the only time they nearly breached the city walls, because the trees had grown so close to them that one could climb the trees and step onto the top of the stone walls," he explained. "After that, the city council ordered that the trees be cut back some two to three hundred yards. They never attacked the city again until the time when we were ready to leave the city. I have never had much time for adventuring. I was always busy training others, or myself."

They continued talking back and forth until past midday, when the hatch opened and the tiny bearded face of Biddle peered in and said, "It's safe to come up on deck now. We passed the island long ago and are well out of sight of any other fishing boats."

Roma was the first to stick her head out of the tiny hatch. With some urging, she managed to climb the steep stairs and step out onto the main deck. Right behind her was Kirin followed by Shannon and Treymane. The two dwarfs elected to remain below. They, like most other dwarfs, had no liking for the sea. They feared great bodies of water. Down below, Blick and Duncan amused themselves by playing a game of cards and drinking ale.

Kirin and the hobbit listened to Biddle as he explained to them how to steer the ship by keeping it at such an angle to the waves so not to capsize it. When he was confident enough in the two to leave them alone to their task, he disappeared below and in the tiny galley prepared the midday's meal. Here he set the two dwarfs to work at peeling potatoes and preparing the fresh vegetables he had brought along for the group. Everyone except the dwarfs ate their meal up on deck where the warm breezes blew.

"Isn't the weather beautiful," Shannon said to Biddle as she ate heartily.

"There's a storm brewing out there," said the fisherman, as he pointed toward the west, "and it's heading our way."

Everyone looked and sure enough, the sky on the western horizon had turned an angry, dark bluish-gray and was heading right toward the boat and its occupants.

"How much time before it gets here?" asked Shannon.

Rubbing his beard and squinting up at the sky, he said. "Ooh... about one or two hours. After we've eaten, we'd better batten everything down good and tight. This is going to be a real blow."

"I will stay with you on deck during the storm and keep an eye on things" Kirin spoke. "I have some experience in sailing."

"Good," answered Biddle. "The rest, after they have tied everything down, will go below and ride out the storm there."

The skies grew angry and the wind began to howl and the little boat was tossed around in the churning sea. Kirin and Biddle had secured themselves with strong ropes tied around their waists, to keep from falling overboard and being swept out to sea. They

had taken in the main sail and only used a small sail, which Biddle called his storm sail, to keep control of the boat. The storm grew in intensity as lightning exploded all around them.

The tiny craft was fairly dry down below, as the girls and Treymane had tied everything down tight. Even the hatch was watertight. Only when a huge wave swept over the deck of the boat did some water trickle down from the ceiling.

Shannon saw that the dwarfs were terrified as the tiny craft was buffeted from wave to wave. Wanting to take their minds off the raging storm, she suggested that Duncan tell them about some of his encounters and adventures. Sitting back and thinking, the old dwarf held out his flagon to the hobbit and asked him to refill it. Then with a shaky voice he began.

"I remember Teagan, Braggen, Ruffus, Olin and I were almost caught by a horde of orcs. We thought we would breathe our last that day when Teagan stepped forth and saved us all. You should have seen that fight. First we fought for what seemed like an eternity, felling one orc after another. It seemed that every time one of those hideous creatures died, two more would take their place. Ruffus was the first to go down, hit on the side of his head by a stone that knocked him out cold. Olin, a tall and very strong man, was cut and bleeding from numerous wounds but he wouldn't give up. Braggen and I were almost out of strength, when Teagan stepped forward and with her staff, the same one that you, Shannon, now possess, cut down the first two rows of orcs before they even knew what hit them. By the time they realized what was going on, more than half of their ranks lay dead in front of us. They retreated and regrouped. Then they made one last and final charge at us. Again, Teagan reduced their numbers with her magic. Finally, when they realized that soon they would all be dead, they turned and retreated into the forest and we continued on our way, after Ruffus woke from his imposed sleep."

The old dwarf's story seemed to take everybody's mind off the storm raging outside, as they all laughed at the way Duncan told his story.

"Shannon, what about you?" the hobbit asked. "Tell us about your world and what was it like."

"Well it certainly was nothing like this one," Shannon explained. "Imagine a world where people live in houses so tall that they reach almost to the sky. People light their homes with electricity instead of candles, ..."

"What's eelectricity?" asked the hobbit.

"That's electricity," corrected Shannon. "It is a form of energy." Seeing the puzzled looks on their faces, she quickly thought of another route of explanation. "Think of harnessing a bolt of lightning. Imagine how many homes one could light up or heat with such vast amounts of energy. Since the cost of fossil fuels was at an all-time high, many homes converted to this form of energy."

"But wouldn't such a bolt burn down the buildings?" asked Roma.

"Yes," answered the elf girl, "but the people of my time found a way to create vast amounts of this energy through hydro power. That is, they would dam a river and use the water to turn huge machines called turbines, which created an electric current, but in smaller amounts, so it was safe to use. We also moved around the country in automobiles. Those were like horseless carriages. A motor controlled by the driver was used to move the

They sang all afternoon and all of the next day.

By the time darkness fell, the sky had cleared and the Dragon's mouth came into view.

carriage. We also flew through the air in I think best explained, in metal birds. With motors similar to that of the autos, but much more powerful. The airplanes left the ground and flew across the country from coast to coast in a matter of a few hours."

The party sat frozen in their seats as Shannon tried to explain her world to them. They couldn't imagine what she was trying to tell them. Flying through the air in a metal bird, or riding in a carriage with nothing to pull it. No one could fathom what an engine could be, since such progress was outlawed in this world long ago. Two thousand years ago, some of the first people to emerge from their protective caves swore that such chaos, which befell the ancients, would never be allowed to happen again. So all books and references to such items of mass destruction, or polluting ways of life, were destroyed. Never again would the world know about guns and cannons, or missiles and bombs. But some people retained the knowledge by passing it down through word of mouth from one generation to the next.

"I have an idea," Treymane said. "Let's sing a song. That should take our minds off the weather for a while."

So they began to sing one song after another. Soon with more of the ale consumed, the singing grew louder and more unintelligible. Up on deck Kirin smiled as he hung onto the rope, which held up the tiny sail. They were being tossed around like a spinning top, but the little boat held together. Then, as quickly as it came, the tempest departed leaving a clear, starry sky.

"I don't think that there is anyone down below who can relieve us tonight," Biddle said to the elf. "You go and fetch something to eat and when you've finished, come back and relieve me for a spell."

Nodding his agreement, Kirin untied himself and went below. Glad to change into some dry clothes and get something to eat, he sat down beside Shannon. She was showing signs of having had too much ale and was getting sleepy.

With a full stomach and his thirst quenched, he went back on deck and relieved Biddle. By the time the fisherman got below, the dwarfs were fast asleep with Shannon not far behind. Only Roma and the hobbit were still engulfed in deep conversation.

"How does it look out there?" she asked Biddle, as he went to the closet and withdrew some dry clothing.

"It has become a clear night with many stars out," he answered. "The moon hasn't risen yet and when it does, it won't be a very bright one. Tomorrow night there will be none at all and that is when we should reach the island. Hopefully we can land somewhere on or near the beach."

After he had eaten, he and those that were still awake went topside. The storm had cooled the air and now the breeze that pushed them along had a cold chill in it.

The four remained on deck for most of the night, helping each other to trim the sail and just keep each other company. They stayed up and watched the sun rise over the eastern horizon. Kirin, who had slept for a few hours, was awakened by the excitement in Roma's voice as she sighted land off their port side.

Shaking his head in disgust, Biddle said. "I should have known that we are off-course. The stars just didn't seem right.

The last time I was this far south, it was in the early summer and the constellations were different. We are too far east and a day and a half away from the Dragon's Mouth."

Now they would not arrive under the cover of darkness.

"There is one thing we can do," Biddle said, "and that is to go to that island and wait until midday, before we continue. Then we'll set a new course for the island. I still would like to arrive during the night."

With no other choice, the little boat sailed for the small island. Once docked, the dwarfs were the first to jump ashore and kiss the ground. They explored the small island and found some edible fruit growing at its center. They brought the fruit onboard and stashed it below. The party invited Biddle to a warm meal, which they cooked on the shore before climbing back onto the boat and putting out to sea.

Toward afternoon, the sky clouded up again. Soon it was raining so hard that Biddle in the stern, steering the boat, couldn't see the bow. This kept up all afternoon and only in the early evening did the rain stop. Down below the dwarfs had begun to sing loudly. They sang all afternoon and all of the next day. By the time darkness fell, the sky had cleared and the Dragon's mouth came into view.

Biddle steered the boat toward the northern shore, but changed his mind when he saw all the campfires lighting up the shoreline.

"Kirin," Biddle whispered, "go below and tell them to be as quiet as possible, for water carries noise a long way. And no banging on the hull. That too will be heard by those on shore. We will sail around the island and find a safe place to come ashore."

Quietly Kirin crept over to the hatch and disappeared down into it.

Blowing out the lamp which lit up the tiny cabin and making as little noise as possible, Shannon, Roma and the hobbit followed Kirin back up on deck to help with the sail, or any rowing that would have to be done. The two dwarfs remained below, where they felt safer.

It was now quite dark, and more and more campfires dotted the banks of the island. It was obvious to all on deck that Malodor expected their arrival and was not going to make it easy for them to reach the island without being seen.

It was just as Biddle had said. There was no moon this night and only the stars lit their way as they sailed around to the southern side of the island. Here too, the sandy beach was studded with campfires.

They continued around the island toward the western side and found that the campfires were few.

"It stands to reason that they would have only a few watchdogs waiting for us," said Biddle in a hushed whisper. "No one in his right mind would try to land a boat on these rocky shores, especially on a dark night like this."

"What are we to do?" asked Roma. "We can't fight an army of orcs and hope to win."

Smiling at the dark-haired beauty, Biddle whispered. "We won't have to. I know of a tiny cove and if we don't sail my craft

onto the sharp, jagged rocks that protect it, we might have a chance in putting ourselves ashore.”

He steered his boat toward the shore and dropped the sail. Each member of the party grabbed an oar and quietly paddled, while Biddle manoeuvred the craft into a tiny, hidden inlet where the trees had grown right down to the shoreline and into the sea. As they neared the trees, Roma and Kirin quietly slipped into the water with ropes that guided the tiny craft in amongst the trees, where it would remain hidden from view. The water was only knee-deep when the two secured the boat.

Now the dwarfs came up on deck and quickly climbed over the side, where they waded ashore. As soon as everyone was on shore, plans were made to find the quickest route to the top of Dragon’s Mouth, deposit the box into its bubbling cauldron and escape before they were even noticed. That was the plan.

“It is just past the middle of the night and we have plenty of time to make the climb and hopefully get back down again before the sun comes up,” Duncan whispered. “Biddle will remain here with the ship and will sail it away from the shore should a patrol happen to get too close.”

Not waiting for the fisherman to respond, the old dwarf and the rest of the group left the area and began their arduous climb up the rocky side of the volcano. They had left most of their gear in the boat and carried only their weapons, not wanting the noise of clanging armour to give them away.

Shannon had tied the tiny box in a wide scarf and then secured it around her waist. Slung over her shoulder were her bow and a dozen arrows including the remaining magical ones. Kirin had wrapped his sword in a cloth and slid the blade into his belt. The dwarfs had done the same, leaving their shields back in the tiny ship. Roma and the hobbit only carried their bows and daggers. Treymane also had his slingshot tucked into his belt with a small selection of smooth stones. He also carried the special stones, just in case.

The climb was taking more time than anyone had thought and if they didn’t hurry, come sun up they would be exposed on the side of the mountain.

Moving like cats in the night, the party made their way upward. There wasn’t much to grab on to except for a few bushes and even some of them were not deeply rooted. Some came loose when tugged upon, sending loose stones down the steep side. From their right came a patrol of orcs. The orcs were about twenty to thirty feet below them when they stopped. One of them sniffed the air.

“Wait!” shouted one of the orcs. “I smell something!”

A moment later another said. “You smell the humans everywhere. Come let’s join the rest and have some more of that dwarf ale, before they drink it all.”

Shaking his head, the orc sniffed the air once more before joining the rest. The party held their position until the orcs were out of sight and hearing range, before continuing their climb.

It was close to sunrise when they neared the top and to their surprise they found a party of orcs camped on the other side of the rim. Crouching just below the rim, they made their final plans on how to dispose of the box that Shannon revealed to all for the first time. Only Treymane and Roma knew what it looked like. Such a beautifully carved box. It seemed a shame to destroy such workmanship but everyone knew it had to be done for its deadly

contents could not fall into the wrong hands.

“I will climb as close to the edge of the rim as possible and hurl it as far as I can,” Shannon said in a low voice.

Duncan touched the elf girl’s arm ever so gently and urged, “Let it be me who rids the world of that menace. I can throw farther than any of you and you all know that,” he whispered, reminding them of the hammer-throwing event back in Bellow’s Falls.

Looking at each other, they agreed to let Duncan throw the box into the bubbling lava, boiling and churning below. After Shannon handed him the box, the old dwarf stood and slowly made his way to the edge of the volcano. The smell of sulfur and other obnoxious odours hung heavily in the air making the dwarf cough. Suddenly a shout came from the other side of the rim.

“THEY’RE OVER THERE!” came shouts from everywhere. There had been more than one patrol on the mountainside. The clanging of armour was heard as the orcs ascended the mountainside toward the group. Everyone in the party readied their weapons. This night was going to be their final fight and they were not going to let the box fall into the hands of the orcs.

Duncan looked around as he readied himself and drew back his arm to throw. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, a red flame shot forth hitting the old dwarf. Dropping the box, he screamed as he flung himself to the ground trying to douse the flames.

Shannon, seeing what just happened, jumped up and screamed. “NOOOOoooooo!” Jamming the staff into the ground as hard as she could, she launched her own lightning bolt at the evil druid, engulfing him with her blue flame. Screaming, the druid lifted up into the air and disappeared.

Running as fast as his little legs could carry him, Treymane was up and at Duncan’s side as the magical flames died out. Without thinking or worrying about his own personal safety, the hobbit grabbed the box and hurled it out as far as he could. It sailed high into the air

By this time the rest of the party had reached the spot where Duncan lay. Blick knelt down and examined his friend. Looking up at the party, there were tears in his eyes as he shook his head in sorrow. Duncan was dead.

Suddenly a tremor shook the ground violently beneath their feet. All activity stopped on the mountainside. The side of the rim where the orcs were camped suddenly gave way and slid into the cauldron, taking all of the orcs with it. The orcs that were climbing up the side to get at the party had also turned and now were making their way down to the beaches in hopes that one of their ships would pick them up. Left alone on the volcano, the remaining friends grabbed their dead companion and half ran and dragged him down the side of the mountain. They dared not look back out of fear that the lava was close behind them. Ash and hot rocks rained down on them. Determined not to leave their friend behind, they didn’t stop until they reached the bottom. They only hoped that Biddle would still be there waiting for them.

Again the ground shook, making the hobbit lose his footing and roll down the side. Blick tried to grab him as he rolled by, but would have had to let go of Duncan. It was Kirin who leapt after Treymane to keep the hobbit from being killed.

Some fifty feet farther down the hobbit had stopped rolling and came to a sliding stop. Kirin almost collided with him as he slid by. Looking back up to see if his companions were near, he

saw the early morning sky light up as the volcano blew.

The explosion was so great that it catapulted the party the last fifty feet through the air landing them at the water's edge. Bruised and battered, they picked themselves up and began looking frantically around for Biddle and the boat. The party realized that the hobbit fisherman probably thought them dead and had set sail, hopefully saving his own life. Luckily for them, it had been the other side of the volcano that blew. This had saved their lives in the initial explosion, but now, from the top, they saw a glowing stream of molten rock slowly creeping its way down the side toward them. This was the end, they thought. Even if they could swim fast, dragging their friend with them, they would not get far enough out before the white-hot rocks would boil the sea, killing them.

The lava flow was now halfway down the side and was gaining momentum. Anytime now they would begin to feel its tremendous heat. More and more flows were now beginning to make their way down engulfing any tiny shrub or tree that grew on the side of the mountain. Some of the torrents had already reached the tree line, setting small groves on fire. A decision was made. To save their own lives, they would have to let go of Duncan and swim as hard as they could. Letting go was the hardest decision that Blick had ever had to make, but to save the rest, he was sure his old friend would understand. Fighting back the tears, he turned and watched the old dwarf sink beneath the water and out of sight. Turning back, he swam away from the island. He would never forget this night.

Just as all hope was lost, a voice rang out from the water. There, some hundred feet offshore, was Biddle and his boat. Working as fast as he could, he brought the tiny craft as close as he dared. The party swam out the rest of the way to meet the boat. By now the lava flow had reached the shore and began to boil the water, as the hot molten rock spilled into the sea. The hissing of the steam sounded like a pit full of vipers.

They swam as fast as they could, but the water was quickly warming. Finally, they reached the boat and hoisted themselves up onto the deck. Lying there exhausted; they panted heavily while Biddle turned the craft into the wind.

"I'm afraid that we'll not outrun the volcano," he shouted over the roar of the erupting volcano.

Hearing him, the others grabbed the oars and rowed as hard as they could. It was now they realized that hot stones were raining down on top of them, starting small fires on the deck of the boat. Treymane was relegated to dousing the flames every time a stone hit the ship and started a new one.

Feverishly they rowed for many hours and it was well into midmorning when they finally escaped the rain of hot ash that spewed from the volcano. Now Shannon knew why it was called the Dragon's Mouth.

Biddle sailed around to the north of the island and headed for home. Looking back, they saw that the entire island was on fire. The entire forest that grew around the base of the volcano was gone. Red-hot debris was being thrown out of what was left of the giant crater that had stood quiet and proud for hundreds of years.

"I didn't see any other ship come or leave the island," said the fisherman. "It looks like none of the orcs made it out alive."

Shannon didn't know whether to be happy or sad, for the

orcs. She only grieved for her friend who lay back there in the shallow depth probably now encased in lava. Blick kept looking back to see if Duncan would stretch out his arm and call for them to help him, but no such hand reached out from the sea and no voice called to him.

As they sailed farther away from the volcano, Kirin hauled some water on board so that they all could wash off the gray ash that had settled on everything and everyone. Once they were clean more buckets were drawn from the sea and poured over the deck to wash away the nightmare they had endured.

The days passed quietly and the sun shone brightly as they sailed into the tiny harbor in Haggleville. By now everyone had heard that the Dragon's Mouth had blown its top and Biddle's family, the only ones who knew of his real mission, were watching anxiously for his return. As the boat was secured at the dock, more folks from the Shire began to arrive. Though the party had washed the boat, there were still spots here and there which told of their flight from the angry mountain.

That night a huge dinner was given to Biddle and his friends. There was lots of singing, dancing and just plain frolicking by the folks from the Shire, but the friends didn't seem to be in the mood. To avoid insulting anyone they came to the event but their hearts just weren't in it to enjoy themselves. Every time someone lifted a flagon of ale, their thoughts went to their fallen friend.

Then Shannon stood and lifted her goblet of wine and spoke. "To a good friend. May he never be forgotten."

Everyone stopped what they were doing and stared at the elf girl who was still standing, holding her glass out in front of her and crying. Blick stood and placed his hand on her shoulder and said. "No one will ever forget him. I promise."

Then slowly the music began again and then the dancing, until the entire Shire was celebrating again.

"If they only knew what they were celebrating," murmured the hobbit, "they might not be so cheerful."

Later that night, close to midnight the party excused themselves and followed Biddle and his family back to their home. There Mildred, his mother showed them to their sleeping quarters. No one spoke and soon all that was heard was the gentle snoring coming from Blick and the hobbit family.

The celebrating continued for days without let up. These people loved to party and if given any reason for a get-together, the celebrating continued on until there was no more food and drink left. Sometimes, these celebrations would last for a week or more.

One afternoon, a merchant ship arrived and docked without an armed escort. It brought news that the navies of Enderby and Rogalandt had the orc raiders and pirates on the run. A warship had gone to the Dragon's Mouth and found the burnt out shells of three ships. They had been burned to the waterline and one of them had been made out of black ebony. This gave the Shire another reason to celebrate and more food and wine were consumed while the hobbits danced. "Now maybe we'll receive more caravans," one said in a boisterous voice.

The ship offloaded its cargo destined for the Shire and took on goods bound for Caldor and Enderby. Roma spoke to the captain and booked passage for three. It seemed that Blick would rather wait and accompany a patrol of dwarfs who had arrived that morning and were preparing an overland trip back to Caldor.

Chancing another sea voyage was out of the question for him. Treymane decided to stay in the Shire for the winter but promised that, in the spring, he would meet up with Shannon at Teagan's house.

That night they celebrated some more and early the next morning they all met at the pier and waved goodbye as the ship slowly slipped away from the dock where it had been moored. The three; Shannon, Roma and Kirin, stood on the deck and waved until the entire harbor was out of sight. Changing vessels at Shoe Island, the three boarded a larger boat and as soon as the cargo was on board, it weighed anchor and put out to sea.

Over the next week and a half, the ship encountered nothing but warm sunshine and blue skies. The nights were cold and the mornings were crisp, with a little frost settling on the rails and decks every now and then but once the sun shone, it quickly disappeared. This was the last run for the captain and his ship before winter set in and the only chance the friends had to get home without having to hike through waist-high snow in the oncoming winter. Roma would sail all the way to Water's Edge and sign onto the last overland caravan bound for Storr.

The news of the defeat of the orcs had travelled quickly, even to the farthest regions of Maitland, where seldom any news

reached the scattered tribes of the elves. When Shannon and Kirin disembarked, there were throngs of people on the shore cheering. It looked like all of Aan was celebrating. Waving goodbye to their friend still aboard, Shannon and Kirin left the harbour. Stopping only to eat and hire two steeds, the two left Sweet Wood and headed for Teagan's house.

They rode along in silence, just admiring the colourful patterns of the different trees which dotted the countryside. Stopping only to rest the horses and their sore butts from the long day in the saddle, Kirin broke the silence.

"As soon as I get you safely to your aunt's, I will have to leave for Maitland," he said, "but I promise to see you again as soon as I can."

Smiling, Shannon knew exactly what he meant and eagerly accepted his promise to return. She told him that she hoped it would be sooner than the coming of spring.

"I will be back before the first great snowfall," he assured her.

The rest of the day Shannon spent daydreaming of her new life, as the two rode along. Here she had found love and peace. She couldn't wait for Kirin's return.

Epilogue

By early evening, a familiar meadow with a large, old, and gnarly oak tree came into view. As they approached the centre of the clearing, Shannon spotted the house off to one side, almost hidden from sight. The vegetable garden had gone to weed and the pesky plants had overgrown the spring's planting. Shannon and Kirin stopped and dismounted. The young elf girl drew her weapon and cautiously approached the house, while Kirin remained outside to keep an eye out for danger.

Opening the door slowly, Shannon entered the kitchen. There was no one there. She then entered the family or great room. It too was empty. Then she opened the bedroom door and saw her aunt lying fully dressed on her bed. For a moment Shannon thought she was dead, but a hand slowly rose and beckoned her to approach. Putting her weapon down on the dresser, Shannon walked over to the old woman and knelt down beside the bed.

"You must listen to me," the old woman began. "I haven't much time left on this world and I must give to you what is necessary for you to continue protecting the races of Aan. I'm sorry that I didn't have a chance to get to know you better, but

I know that we chose wisely, when we brought you here."

With her other hand, Teagan pulled from around her neck a beautiful jewel-studded pendant and pressed it into Shannon's hand.

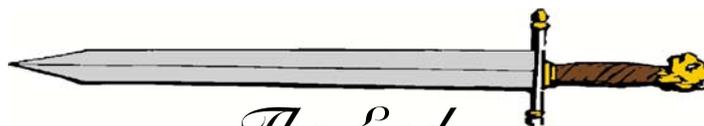
"With this hanging around your neck, you will be allowed to read my Book of Spells," she continued. "It is written in a language that only a few can read and you will be one of those

few. You must spend the winter studying the pages, so that come spring you will rejuvenate the spell that protects this house and surrounding meadow. You must also continue your studies of other spells, for the staff cannot always help you. Some spells require different methods and ingredients to make them work. But for now, come closer and give me your hand."

Taking the old woman's hand in hers, Shannon felt a warm tingling sensation run up her arm, until her entire body was flushed in a warm bluish haze. She had never felt this sensation before. It felt as if another life was crawling into her body. Suddenly her mind was filled with all kinds of knowledge. Questions that she wanted to ask about this new world of hers were being answered as if an entire encyclopedia were downloaded into her brain.

Then the feeling began to subside except for the knowledge, which she retained. As she looked down at Teagan, she saw the life in the old woman's eyes grow dim. Shannon knew that soon she would breathe her last. A soft whisper escaped the old elf's mouth. "I will always be with you and will be there to guide you along."

Shannon knew the old woman understood her silence, as Shannon's eyes filled with tears once more. She had seen too many die before her eyes during the short time that she had been here. Trying to help her rid the world of the vial had taken its toll. Now she vowed to help all those in need of help. She also knew that soon she would be called upon when another crisis befell the world. This was her destiny, to be the last mage.



The End



Stargate Enterprise

Part II

Josée Bellemare

After years of waiting, the SGC was going to have a Starship Enterprise, and requests to be assigned to the Enterprise are pouring in! The project is supposed to be secret, but even General Rostov is swamped with applicants for the job of "Chekov".

On Friday morning, O'Neill got a call from General Rostov.

"O'Neill, I believe I have found the perfect candidate. She is Lt Natalia Pavlova. She has an excellent record and speaks several languages."

"Good, can she be ready by this afternoon? The rest of the new crew members will be reporting for duty then. She can get the orientation lecture with everybody else."

"She can hardly wait."

"Oh General, want to tag along for a visit? We can beam the two of you directly from your office."

"Thank you, O'Neill, it would be my pleasure."

"See you then, General."

In the afternoon Colonel Kramer was waiting for the latest crew members. He had been aboard ship for a couple of days, getting settled in. The first one to arrive was General O'Neill.

"Colonel Kramer, good news, we found a Chekov. Her name is Natalia Pavlova. She and General Rostov will be beaming up this afternoon."

"General Rostov, sir?"

"Consider a gesture of good will. He wanted to see the Enterprise."

"Fair enough. Lord knows there will be many more goodwill visits before we launch. I've been told the president is coming on Monday."

"What do you expect? People have been waiting 40 years for this."

"Peterson tells us that everyone is ready sir."

"Beam them up"

The room became very bright and when the light faded half a dozen people were standing there.

"If you could stand aside please, we have more passengers coming. Ensign Rogers, if you could contact the Russians to see if they're ready."

"They're ready and eager to come aboard sir."

"Energize"

"All right, since everyone is here, we can start the tour. My name is Colonel Kramer. I'm in command and let me welcome you aboard the Starship Enterprise. I'll let that sink in for a moment..."

"This ship is a 304, also known as a Daedalus class battle cruiser. It's almost identical to the 303 except for the addition

of all the Asgard technology. This makes us a match for anything out there. Those of you that have served on 303 should have no problem finding your way around the ship. As for the new recruits, there are maps of the ship available.

"Follow me please."

As they were making their way to the bridge, Kramer was pointing out certain features of the ship such as sick bay, the engine room and the armoury. Finally they got to the bridge.

"So, any questions?"

Malcolm Stuart raised his hand. "I have one sir. Where's our Sulu?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"While we were at Peterson's we were talking, comparing notes, and we figured it out. We are all highly qualified at what we do but we all know that we got this assignment because our

names and background closely match the characters from the original Star Trek TV show. You're Kirk, I'm Scotty, (pointing to the various individuals) Uhura, Spock, Dr McCoy, nurse Chapel and

Chekov. So, where is our Sulu?"

"We haven't found one yet but I'm sure someone will show up soon. We're thinking the Chinese might want to send someone.

Now if there's nothing else, why don't you all get settled in your quarters. Dinner starts at 18:00 in the mess hall."

The crew members each went their own way. A couple stayed on the bridge to familiarize themselves with their workstations while the others went off in search of their quarters.

General Rostov stayed with General O'Neill and just looked around, amazed. Finally his eyes locked on the command chair. O'Neill smiled.

"Go ahead General, try it out."

General Rostov sat down in the chair.

"The Starship Enterprise... I have dreamed of this since I was a boy. To travel among the stars. Colonel Kramer, I envy you."

He got out of the chair, stroked the armrest and walked away.

"I must get back to my office. If I stay here much longer my government will think I have defected. Gentlemen, it has been a pleasure."

"I'll walk back with you general."

As the two generals walked off back to the transporter

"Tell me honestly, O'Neill, weren't you tempted to take this command yourself?"

room, they started talking.

“Tell me honestly, O’Neill, weren’t you tempted to take this command yourself?”

“I have to admit, the thought did cross my mind a few times. But space exploration is for the young. I was out there saving the universe for years and I have the scars to prove it. It’s someone else’s turn.”



“I envy you as well O’Neill: you have seen things most of us can only dream of. Someday you and I must get together with a bottle of vodka and you must tell me all about it.”

“Add a few bottles of beer and maybe we can do this at my cabin.”

“I look forward to it, O’Neill. Until then.”

General Rostov was beamed down back to his office and General O’Neill back to Washington.

In the past he had been called Mal by family and friends but as the chief engineer of the Enterprise, Malcolm Stuart was going to have to get used to people calling him Scotty.

He walked into the engineering department and just stood there for a moment, looking at the people who would be working with him.

“Your attention please! Thank you. I’m Major Malcolm Stuart and I’ve been named chief engineer on this fine ship. In the days to come I’ll be getting to know all of you better. I should mention (switching to a Scottish accent) I will tolerate Scotty jokes but don’t overdo it. (switching back to American) As you were.”

Scotty then went from one control panel to the next, inspecting everything. The technicians just looked at each other in surprise.

Without turning around to look he said:

“The accent isn’t fake. (switching to Scottish) I have family in Glasgow and have spent quite a lot of time visiting them. I’ve even gone fishing in the Loch Ness but I have never seen Nessie. (switching back to American) Now, I’m sure you all have something to do.”

They all went back to work. Scotty just smiled and

continued his inspection.

The two doctors made their way to the sick bay.

“Doctor Michaels, what’s it like out there?”

“It’s big and there’s so much we haven’t seen yet. When I first went through the Stargate it sank in that earthlings are just a small part of the universe.”

“Do you think we’ll meet any aliens? I find xenobiology fascinating. I’ve studied everything we have on file.”

“Who knows what we’ll find. In the meantime, we should familiarize ourselves with the sickbay, that way we’ll know where everything is when we need it.”

Lieutenant Harris was getting settled in his quarters, unpacking his gear. The final item he took out was an electronic frame with several pictures in the memory. Some of his family and friends but the final picture was one he prized: a picture of him with Nichelle Nichols taken at a convention.

Lieutenant Pavlova was also unpacking her gear, putting everything away but her prize possession was a stuffed dog, an exact likeness, including the name tag, of Laika, the first dog the Russians ever sent in space.

It was shortly after 6 when Colonel Kramer walked in the mess hall. He hadn’t eaten anything since lunch and his stomach was making noises louder than the engines. He took a tray and got in line with the rest of the crew, made his selections and looked around for a place to sit.

“Colonel, over here. We’d be honoured if you’d join us” Waving him over were doctors Michaels and Church and Lt Harris.

“I’d be happy to. So, how are you settling in?”

“Just fine so far. Only one thing wrong with the situation: I’ll never be able to brag to family and friends that I served on the Starship Enterprise.”

“You’ll know, that’s the important part.”

Lt Harris was waving again and Colonel Kramer turned around to see Major Stuart and Lt Pavlova.

“Look like this is turning out to be the Star Trek table.”

“Nothing wrong with that.”

Colonel Kramer lifted his glass, “To the Enterprise” and they all joined the toast.



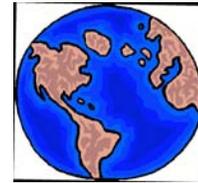
To be continued in WARP 76

Answers to The Face Behind the Mask, Page 32:

A = 5 B=1 C=2 D=3 E=4

A Planet to Plunder

A Silly Radio Play by Keith Braithwaite



Reformatted for publication in *Warp*, the following is MonSFFA's Keith Braithwaite's script for a brief radio-play segment, one of several conceived of and written by MonSFFA members for a group project, the production of an old-fashioned sci-fi radio show. In consideration of running time constraints, Keith produced a short and long draft; this is the long version.

With club members voicing the characters, Keith's and the other short pieces were recorded over several sessions earlier this year. Once edited, sound effects and music will be added and the completed project will be released in digital format. (Refer to *Warp 74*'s cover art for the visual of the Emperor's weapons-festooned flagship!)

Introductory music

01 Aboard the Emperor's Warship, in Orbit Around the Planet Betelgeuse.

Background Sound: A low-pitched hum of the gigantic spaceship's engines punctuated occasionally by the buzz of the vessel's many electronic components.

Sound Effect: a door slides open with a pneumatic hiss.

Lieutenant (Tentatively): Excuse the interruption, oh evil one. The Betelguesian prime minister requests an audience.

Emperor (Awaking): Switch on the lights, Lieutenant. Put the prime minister on screen.

Lieutenant: Immediately, your most abhorrent.

Sound Effect: Switches are activated, videoscreen buzzes to life.

Emperor: Why do you disturb my repose, Prime Minister?

Prime Minister (Speaking on the videoscreen): Emperor, you have pillaged our world of snedbots. You have taken every last one! Why? Why do leave our people without their snedbots?

Emperor: I take what I want, Prime Minister. Be thankful I want nothing more.

Prime Minister: But every snedbot on Betelgeuse? How will we glorm our ventroons? I implore you! Leave us some of our snedbots!

Emperor (Angrily, menacing): Enough of this unseemly begging! I have neutralized your armed forces, Prime Minister. Your snedbots are mine! I will entertain no further discussion. Now leave me to my nappy lest I also neutralize your civilian population by reducing your cities to mounds of blackened cinder!

Prime Minister: My apologies, Emperor. I didn't mean to –

Emperor (Interrupting): This communication ends now. Lieutenant, close the circuit.

Sound Effect: Videoscreen is switched off.

Lieutenant: Circuit closed, your malevolence.

Emperor (With disgust): "How will we glorm our ventroons?" he asks. Pathetic Betelguesians. Who will glorm them, now?

Lieutenant: Indeed, your vileness. The unmitigated gall! Imagine. Asking for consideration on the part of your most high and exalted nefariousness.

Emperor: I tire of these Betelguesians, Lieutenant. On what planet shall we next prey?

Lieutenant: Well, fiendish one, the boys down in astro-navigation have identified several possibilities. The most promising is an obscure world in the Milky Way galaxy. The inhabitants call it... Earth.

Emperor (Contemplatively, then decisively): Earth, you say. Hmm... Advise the fleet. We break orbit for this Earth in the morning. (Yawning) Dismissed, Lieutenant.

Lieutenant: Yes sir.

Sound Effect: The Lieutenant's footsteps as he moves to the exit.

Emperor: Lieutenant?

Lieutenant: Something else, oh heinous and twisted one?

Emperor: That light isn't going to switch itself off.

Sound Effect: The Lieutenant's footsteps as he scampers to the light switch.

Lieutenant: It most certainly is not your baleful and iniquitous depravity. Forgive my momentary lapse of servitude. I'll just switch off your light...

Sound Effect: Switching off of light.

...and leave you to your much deserved rest. Big day tomorrow; nighty-night.

Sound Effect: His footsteps as he hastens to exit the room, then the door hissing closed.

Scene Bridge – Music

02 Aboard the Emperor's Warship, in Orbit Around Earth.

Background Sound: Low-pitched hum of the gigantic spaceship's engines punctuated occasionally by the buzz of the

vessel's many electronic components.

Lieutenant: We've just entered orbit around planet Earth, your contemptibleness.

Emperor: Excellent. You know what I want from these Earth people, Lieutenant. You may give the command to deploy the fleet and begin collection.

Lieutenant: (*His voice welling with emotion at first, then resolutely*) I... I am humbled, your foulness. May I say that I am the most beholden recipient of your privilege... I am profoundly honoured that you have entrusted to me, your ignoble peon, the vital task of communicating this important order to the crew. I pledge to exercise my utmost proficiency so that your bidding shall be made known with all due authority. I will not falter in seeing that your wishes are carried out! Rest assured that the confidence you have placed in me --

Emperor (*Interrupting, with impatience*) Are you planning to see my wishes carried out today, Lieutenant?

Lieutenant: Of course, your meanness. I'll get right to that. (*Quickly clearing his throat, barking his Emperor's wishes to the crew*) Ahem. Attention crew! Deploy the fleet! Begin collection!

Crewman: (*Responding from the back of the room*) Aye, aye. Deploying the fleet. Activating collectors.

Sound Effect: Whirring motor-like noise of collectors powering up.

Scene Bridge – Music

03 Kitchen, Suburban Bungalow.

Background Sound: Cacophony of the breakfast table.

Daughter: Is Dad driving me to school?

Mother: Yes he is, Sweetie. What do you want on your toast?

Daughter: Chocolate, please.

Mother: (*In a tone signalling the rejection of her daughter's request*) Strawberry jam or blueberry jam, Pumpkin?

Daughter: (*Contemplating her choices, then decisively*) Ummm. Ice cream!

Mother: (*With a hint of impatience*) Strawberry jam or blueberry jam?

Daughter: (*Resignedly*) Strawberry.

Mother: (*As she prepares the toast*) Strawberry. (*Serving the toast, with a side order of motherly instruction*) Here you are. Now after you're finished, hurry and brush your teeth and go get your school bag. Your father will be down in a minute. (*Calling upstairs to her husband*) Honey! We're almost finished breakfast down here.

Father: (*From upstairs*) I'll be down in a minute.

04 Bathroom, Suburban Bungalow.

Sound Effect: Running water, then faucet turned off.

Father: (*Calling down to his wife*) I've just got to shave!

Sound Effect: Electric shaver.

Father: (*As he feels the shaver suddenly pulling away from his face, upwards, as if acted upon by some weird, invisible anti-gravitational force like in a science fiction movie*) What the... What's wrong with this thing?... What's doing this? Can't...hold...on... (*As his Ronson is powerfully tugged from his grip*) Whoa!

Sound Effect: Breaking glass as shaver flies out bathroom window; rapidly diminishing sound of the buzzing device as it rockets away, skyward.

05 Kitchen, Suburban Bungalow.

Background Sound: Radio news broadcast.

Sound Effect: Rapid footsteps as father races down stairs

Father: (*Breathlessly, rapid-paced*) Muffin, you won't believe what just happened! I was shaving and suddenly something pulled my Ronson right out of my hand! Some kind of...I don't know...weird, invisible anti-gravitational force, like in a science fiction movie! And it just flew out the window and shot up into the sky, like a rocket!

Mother: I know, I know! It's on the news!

Newscaster: (*Over radio*) We are awaiting a statement from the White House at this hour. We understand the President will speak to the nation in about ten minutes. Again, to reiterate this morning's bizarre breaking news: reports have been coming in from across the country of razors, electric trimmers, all manner of shaving devices suddenly and inexplicably pulled skyward by what scientists are describing at this time as some "weird, invisible anti-gravitational force, like in a science fiction movie".

Father: Yes! Exactly! Just like I said. That's exactly what happened to me, Buttercup.

Mother: Shhhh! I want to hear...

Newscaster: (*Continuing*) We are still awaiting word from the White House and will take you to there just as soon as the President begins his address to the nation. I'm handed a bulletin... There appears to be some delay. The President was expected to speak momentarily, but we are now receiving indications that his address to the American people will be delayed by about 30 minutes. Apparently he remains in consultation with the Secretary of Defence and the Joint Chiefs at this hour. Stay tuned to this station for the President's address, live, in approximately half an hour. In the meantime, we have further news: all air traffic has been grounded as a safety measure. As we reported earlier, several commercial airliners were brought down after being struck by what were described as tornado-like columns of shaving devices rising rapidly into the clouds. Reports are flooding in from overseas. Nations

around the world are experiencing the same mysterious occurrences as are we. We go now to one of our reporters in the field...calling in, I'm told, from a downtown barbershop. Are you there?

Reporter: I am. I'm standing outside the Mainstreet Barbershop in the downtown area. With me is the proprietor of this establishment. Tell me, sir. What did you find when you opened your shop for business this morning?

Proprietor: Well, the first thing I noticed was that the front window was smashed.

Reporter: And what did you notice after that?

Proprietor: Everything we use to shave the customers was missing! The drawers where we keep everything had been pulled open and every last razor, clipper, even the shaving cream – gone! I don't know what I'm going to do. I'll have to close my shop.

Reporter: Thank you for your time, sir. Well, there you have it. A barbershop shut down by this odd, widespread event.

Newscaster: Yes. And, of course, other barbershops in the city, indeed, across the nation, have been similarly affected.

Reporter: I've visited several just in the past hour and it's the same story. I'm afraid there are dire implications not just for barbers, but for pet groomers, sheep farmers, the pornographic film industry – we haven't yet begun to tally the impact this strange episode will have on our society.

Newscaster: Thank you for that report. We're going to cut away, now, to another of our field reporters, live at a warehouse in an industrial park east of the city, where we understand shaving apparatus are, at this very moment, being lifted skyward by this unexplainable power. Can you tell us what's happening?

Background Sound: Police sirens, crowd, glass breaking and the sharp retort of razors punching through the building's roof.

Second Reporter: (*Excitedly*) I'm about 500 feet from a large depot containing hundreds of shipping crates filled with Lady Schick razors. There must be tens of thousands of razors in the building. Broken glass litters the area as copious numbers of these tiny Lady Schick's fly out from the shattered windows. Others are punching through the roof of the building like bullets, all of them converging above the warehouse in a great, twisting mass... Oh, the humanity! They're spiralling upwards, now, into the heavens. Ladies and gentlemen, this is one of the most astounding things I've ever witnessed. A crowd has gathered; police are pushing people back, trying to keep everyone out of harm's way. I'm being told to move away, now. I'll have to end here. Back to you.

Newscaster: Thank you. A dramatic scene unfolding as we speak. We take you now to the White House, where the President is ascending the podium.

Press Secretary: Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.

Sound Effect: Subdued applause, many press cameras snapping photographs.

President: My fellow Americans, I am speaking to you tonight on a matter of grim consequence. As you are no doubt aware, shaving devices of all descriptions are being taken from our world by a method our top scientific minds have, as yet, been unable to fathom. Our best guess is that we are dealing with some weird, invisible anti-gravitational force, like in a science fiction movie. I have been in consultation not only with our scientists, but with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the leaders of other nations. Regrettably, I must inform you that our best efforts have failed to unlock the mystery of this frightful global phenomenon, nor have we been able to prevent it from transpiring or discern the purpose behind it. I can tell you now that the agents of this dreadful event are a brigade of alien beings, of origins unknown, who have travelled to our planet in a fleet of gigantic spaceships that are, at this moment, in orbit above us. I assure you that your government is, to the utmost of our capabilities, working to establish meaningful dialogue with the alien leader with the goal of bringing to a mutually satisfactory conclusion this incident. The alien "Emperor" has communicated to us his intention to address the people of Earth in approximately one hour. We await his words and can only pray that he has designs on nothing more than our shaving implements.

Scene Bridge --Music over sound effect of a ticking clock

06 Aboard the Emperor's Warship, in Orbit Around Earth.

Background Sound: Low-pitched hum of the gigantic spaceship's engines punctuated occasionally by the buzz of the vessel's many electronic components.

Emperor: It is time, Lieutenant. Switch on communicator.

Lieutenant: Promptly, your nastiness.

Sound Effect: Switching on of communicator.

Emperor: People of Earth. You are, as of this day forward, minions of the Galactic Empire over which I rule. Your governments have been warned that any military action taken against my fleet would be futile. The slightest resistance will be met with immediate and overwhelming retaliatory force. I have taken from you all of your shaving accoutrements. These will not be returned. You are powerless to oppose me. (*Beginning to laugh*) Pathetic Earthlings. Who will shave you, now? (*His laughter building, becoming loud, long, and maniacal*)

Musical finale plays over echoing laughter

THE END



From Cathy's Library

Speak to the Devil
Dave Duncan
TOR, 2010

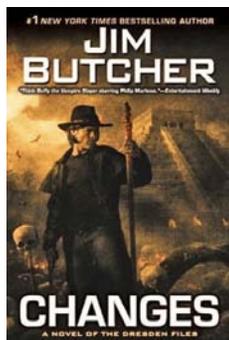


Once upon a time, as the Age of Chivalry was ending, there lived in a little-known kingdom in Central Europe five brothers...

One is married and running the Magnus estate, one is a prisoner in Bavaria, one was forced into a monastery, one is a penniless esquire newly enlisted in the royal hussars, and the youngest is his servant.

The story begins with Anton Magnus, currently being pulled out of a warm bed (not his own, of course) and dragged into the presence of the king's first minister, Cardinal Zdenek, also known as the Spider. He's being assigned to an impossible mission – totally impossible as opposed to just suicidal – unless he can “speak to devils” and the Cardinal would hardly advocate that, now, would he? But Anton, trying to impress the court, has already done one very nearly impossible thing, in front of witnesses at the hunt. Does the Cardinal suspect *him* of being a Speaker? Is the Cardinal in some roundabout way asking him to call on the Voices? Speakers are burned alive, their ashes gathered up and burned again, and then again. Marek was spared – they just locked him up in a monastery cell for the rest of his life, beaten and brainwashed, isolated from family and friends. The awkward thing is that Anton is not a Speaker, and cannot perform miracles. His “servant”, the young Wulfgang, just turned eighteen can, but Anton along with the other brothers is sworn to protect his secret, a life-threatening secret Anton may already have spilled with his foolish antics at the hunt. A catch-22 situation: Anton and Wulfgang are damned by the church if they succeed, and damned if they don't, by the state. Since state and church are, in practice anyway, represented by Cardinal Zdenek, the brothers are in for Interesting Times.

A return to the swashbuckling adventures Duncan became known for in his *Chronicles of the King's Blades*, this is an exciting first book of a new series: *The Brothers Magnus*. I'll be reading this one again, as I wait for the next in the series.



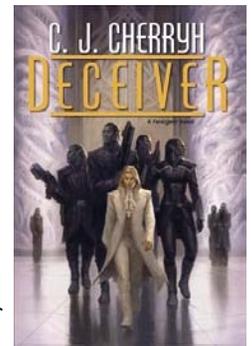
Changes
Jim Butcher
ROC, 2010

Susan was Harry Dresden's lover many years ago, but she was attacked by the Vampires of the Red Court and now is half vampire herself. So, she exiled herself to South America where she continues to fight the vampires but doesn't have to worry about dragging her loved ones into

her messy life. There's one small problem: the child she never told Harry about. The first that Harry knows about Maggie is when Susan calls him and says, “They've taken our daughter.” Harry's first reaction to this shocking revelation is to drive over to Mac's bar for beer and sympathy. Then he goes home and prepares a number of things in his lab that he thinks might come in handy. Susan's coming: he cleans the apartment, washes the dog, and even contemplates cleaning Mister, his ferocious semi-feral cat. Susan hopes, but really knows better, that Harry can call in some markers and work through channels to get Maggie back.

Mac told Harry he's headed for the badlands, but even Mac can't foresee just how bad things can be. There's a picture of Chichén Itzá on the cover...

Deceiver
C.J. Cherryh
DAW 2010



The second book of the fourth Foreigner trilogy, *Deceiver* follows immediately on the heels of *Conspirator* which I reviewed in WARP 72. The events of *Conspirator* made a mess of Bren Cameron's estate on the coast where he was supposed to be taking a break from the hothouse politics of the capital and preparing a dissertation on why the Atevi should not adopt cell phone technology. Ironically, if the young heir had been permitted a cell phone, *Conspirator* could have been reduced to a short story!

Bren and his staff have not only the bullet holes in the walls to patch, they now have a house full of guests: Tabini, Cajeri and two new guild bodyguards who think they know everything, Great-grandmother Ilisidi, Bren's brother and his partner (awkward, Barb is Bren's former lover), and of course the Atevi guests have brought all their attendants and security. Baiji is a different sort of house guest – he's a prisoner in Bren's basement, and Lord Geigi will likely have to be recalled from the space station to deal with his errant nephew. Bren might as well have painted a target on his front door!

The plot is thin, but it doesn't matter as the real joy of reading this series is in learning more about the people of this world, human and atevi alike. When the series started, the only POV character was Bren himself. Everything we learned about the atevi was filtered through the perceptions of a young, inexperienced paidhi, haunted by fear of making a mistake that might end the hard-earned peace between the human and native atevi populations. We've watched him grow in confidence, and even power, as Tabini rewards him with land and titles. Now, in the latest installments, we have another POV, that of young Cajeri, a most unusual atevi who's been perhaps too long with humans, but is now coming of age, and learning to be an atevi lord.



Prince of Persia – the Sands of Time Josée Bellemare



Based on the video game of the same name, *Prince of Persia* is an action filled fantasy movie.

Some have said that the story is full of clichés: young man on a quest that will save the world, a beautiful princess with a fiery temper along for the ride, colourful characters like noble warriors or sneaky con artists and a villain who turns out to be a once trusted family member.

Maybe these themes are cliché but properly mixed they make an exciting movie.

Never having played the video game I can't say how faithful

the movie is, but in a television interview, Jake Gyllenhaal admitted playing the game during filming and, once in a while, when he saw a cool move, would ask the stunt crew if they could put it in the movie. Gyllenhaal said he did most of his own stunts and had the bruises to prove it.

As for the romance between Prince Dastan and Princess Tamina, their constant bickering brings a light-hearted comedy element to the story.

In my opinion, the movie has everything for a great summer blockbuster: great action, romance special effects and colourful characters. What more could you want?



MOVIE REVIEWS Keith Braithwaite

It seems to me there's no standout sci-fi summer blockbuster this season, or perhaps it's that, after so many of these big movies over the years, we've plainly seen one too many to really get all that excited anymore. We've become apathetic as an audience.

Or maybe it's that the blockbuster just ain't what it used to be. Lots of razzle-dazzle CGI – and that just may be the problem – but nothing much more. Little or no originality. No gripping storyline. No soul.

But it's more likely that I've simply become a grumpy old curmudgeon longing for the excitement I felt as a teenager sitting in a dark theatre, popcorn in hand, rapt at the latest astounding screen adventure unfolding before me.

Nah! It's that the movies today mostly suck!

That said, here are my brief reviews of the few Genre flicks I've caught this spring and summer.

Iron Man 2



While entertaining enough, this second *Iron Men's* installment wasn't as much fun as the first. The whole thing felt like one of the less interesting chapters in a larger story, which of course, it is – all the Marvel character-based films these days are

interconnected and leading up to the promised *Avengers* epic, coming soon. I found myself more intrigued by the side stories in this one than the main plot. And Scarcest Johansson was overdressed and underused.

Clash of the Titans

A remake of Ray Harryhausen's swan song was sure to draw me to the theatre, if only to compare. I was expecting a lot of computer-generated monsters wreaking havoc and that's



what I got. The cast, meanwhile, did a very good job of it against all the flashy effects, better than I anticipated, and for what it was, this movie was stylish and kinda fun.

Kick-ass



Probably my favourite of the year, this movie, well, kicked ass! Flipping back and forth from teen comedy to ultra-violent action flick à la Tarentino, the film slips in some serious social commentary in the process. The cast was brilliant. Nicolas Cage channelling Batman – complete with his inspired feigning of Adam West's voice – is outstanding. And don't mess with Hit Girl, portrayed with merciless enthusiasm by Chloe Grace Moritz, whose kinetic fight sequences, well, again, kicked ass! All the more because she's, like, nine! If you missed this one, pick it up on Blu-Ray or DVD – it was just recently released.

Predators

While the human characters are this time transported to the Predators' home turf, the story unfolds as essentially a remake of the original 1987 Schwarzenegger vehicle, with better acting. A well-crafted, sufficiently entertaining movie the saving grace of which is that it's not one of those absolutely awful *Aliens-versus-Predators* flicks.



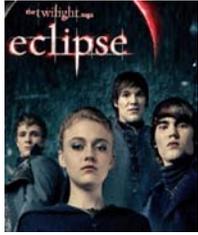
Inception

I give this one high marks for originality in that it's not a prequel, sequel, remake, or based on a video game. It does run a bit longer than was needed to tell the story, though. And be warned that the twists and turns of entering someone else's dreams and



mucking about require that you pay close attention. Which in my view is perfectly fine. How long has it been since you've seen a movie that demands that an audience pay close attention?

The Twilight Saga: Eclipse



I took my young daughter to see this one, the third chapter of the popular teen-girl-falls-in-love-with-a-dreamy-vampire film franchise based on the bestselling books by Stephanie Meyer. Not really my cup of tea but I did enjoy the climactic action sequence involving a no-holds-barred battle between good and evil vampires, the former assisted by a pack of werewolves, to protect

from harm the teenaged girl at the centre of all this drama. Now while werewolves and vampires don't normally get along, one of

the lycanthropes, here, happens to be in love with said girl despite her devotion to her pale-and-glittery-skinned boyfriend, who is one of the good vampires. Got all that? Luckily, my daughter was there to fill me in on who was who and what the heck was going on. Anyway, there was way too much overwrought emoting on the part of the lead characters for my tastes, but I suppose that was to be expected, considering the target audience, who seemed to like it.

I have yet to see *Toy Story 3*, and neither *The Last Airbender* nor *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* particularly interest me. As I write this, trailers for *Piranha 3-D* suggest two dominant themes: stupid and bloody. The movie opens in about two weeks. Can't wait!



REVIEWS: Events

Wayne's Pool Party An annual MonSFFA Event Text & photos by Charles Mohapel

While the water was not exactly warm on first contact, it was temperate enough that Montreal fandom frolicked merrily in the pool in front of the camera and off camera, or relaxed in the shadow under one of two beach umbrellas. After that we took

advantage of Wayne's BBQ, then went in and viewed "Avatar" and "Doctor Who: The Time Monster" featuring Jon Pertwee (the 3rd Doctor) and Roger Delgado (the original Master").



The Constellation Awards were presented in a ceremony organized by Andrew Gurudata at Polaris 24. The MC was comedian Gavin Stephens. Star of Nerdgasm, and Comedy Inc on CTV, Gavin has also appeared in Montreal own Just for Laughs Festival.

It's become a hallmark of the Constellations Awards that some running gags should run through the presentations, and this year was no exception. Characters from video sketches took over the stage from time to time, the most eye-catching one being the "naked blue man."

Clips from film and TV shows were shown for each of the nominees. Results of the voting, broken down by percentages, were projected after each announcement. The graphs, showing how very, very close the results were can be viewed on the Constellation website: <http://constellations.tcon.ca/>

It was a particular pleasure to see Karen Cliche again, GoH at Con*Cept last year, and now a happy mother. Also among the presenters were Derwin Mak, Liana K & Ed the Sock. Robert J. Sawyer, a special guest this year at Polaris, accepted the award for FlashForward, the winner for best script.

The Constellation Awards were beautiful. My photos were taken from too far away to do them justice, but hopefully Andrew will bring one along to Con*Cept for our trophy display. The design in the centre, which changes every year, featured the Polaris polar bear.

I love the lighthearted fun of the Constellations. It's not easy creating and sustaining credibility for a new award, especially in Canada, while still reflecting fandom's penchant for laughing at itself. The Constellation ceremonies seem to achieve the perfect balance.



Andrew Gurudata



Gavin Stephens

THE CONSTELLATION AWARDS WINNERS FOR 2010

TV CATEGORIES:

1. Best Male Performance: **David Tennant**, Doctor Who ("The Waters of Mars")
2. Best Female Performance: **Lena Headey**, The Sarah Connor Chronicles ("Some Must Watch While Some Must Sleep")
3. Best Series: **Supernatural**

MOVIE CATEGORIES

4. Best Male Performance: **Karl Urban**, "Star Trek"
5. Best Female Performance: **Zoe Saldana**, "Avatar"
6. Best Movie: "Star Trek"

OTHER CATEGORIES

7. Best Technical Accomplishment: Visual Effects, "Avatar" (Weta Digital)
8. Best Script: **FlashForward**, "No More Good Days" (David S. Goyer & Brannon Braga)
9. Outstanding Canadian Contribution: **Bruce Greenwood** (Actor, "Star Trek")



The Constellation Awards



JANUARY

Club Meeting, January 17, 2010

MonSFFA has its first “emperor”! Bernard Reischl, the club’s longtime president, had announced last year that he would not run for the leadership post come 2010. But he appears to have had a change of heart, perhaps triggered by the “heart attack” he suffered as he made his farewell remarks at the top of MonSFFA’s January meeting in advance of the election of a new Executive Committee. Collapsing to the floor, he was fortunate to benefit from the presence of a quick-thinking, short-skirted nurse who happened to be nearby and managed to revive our chief with a sagacious jolt to the nads. In light of his miraculous revival, he was ceremonially dubbed “Reischl the First, MonSFFA’s Emperor for Life” by a knight of the First Fannish Order, conveniently on hand and decked out for enthronement duties.

For so many years, MonSFFen having jokingly spoken of elevating Berny to a lifetime position as club boss, given that he has already served in that capacity for eight years,

twice the time of any of his predecessors. Be careful what you wish for, the new emperor stated with an impish grin, reminding his fellow MonSFFen of the old adage.

And so does Emperor Reischl I take the reins of the club, joined by VPs Keith Braithwaite and Lindsay Brown, and long-serving Treasurer Sylvain St-Pierre, all enthusiastically returned to office for another year by the membership. Stating, tongue firmly in cheek, that he’ll be around forever, or until someone else steps up to take the job, which ever comes first, Berny was applauded for his many years of service to MonSFFA, and for his decision to stay on as president at a moment in the club’s history when viable candidates were, uncharacteristically, absent the scene.

Long live the Emperor!

MonSFFen will note that Warp 73 celebrates Emperor Resichl’s ascent to the throne with a special, not-at-all-gaudily-designed dedicatory cover.

Joe Aspler led off the meeting’s programming, offering a



brief primer on the famous Bulwer-Lytton writing contest, named for Victorian author Edward George Bulwer-Lytton and sponsored annually by the English Department of California’s San José State University. Bulwer-Lytton, a contemporary of Charles Dickens, is remembered for his singularly appalling prose, including the definitive run-on sentence that opened one of his novels and began “It was a dark and stormy night”.

The idea of the contest is to pen the opening sentence of a really badly written novel. Florid language is encouraged in an effort to come up with a prime example of the exceedingly awful. Joe read aloud a few award-winning entries from years past, including a couple of his own, before challenging the group to compose their own potential submissions to the 2010 competition. After about an hour of scribbling, a good number of the MonSFFen present had honed their wretched writing to perfection and club fanzine editor Cathy Palmer-Lister collected the results for publication in Warp 73.

Following the mid-meeting break, MonSFFA’s freshly minted 2010 Executive...convened a Board of Advisors (BoA) session to finish working out the details of meeting programming for the coming year. All present participated, offering suggestions and volunteering to host panels or help with projects. By day’s end, the club had finalized the coming

year’s worth of meeting programming and other activities.

Among the proposals put forth was the introduction of a suggestion box as a handy depot for the ideas and comments of

MonSFFA’s membership. As member input can sometimes become lost, regrettably, amid the hubbub of the often time-limited general discussion at club meetings, we expect that having folk put their thoughts in writing – anonymously, if they prefer – will insure that everyone’s remarks reach the Executive and are addressed. The suggestion box will be in place at each meeting in order that MonSFFen may deposit opinion on recent meeting programming; proposals for changes to, or additional programming, as well as ideas for special projects, events, fund-raisers and such; or comment on any aspect of the club’s operations.

MonSFFA is experimenting a little with meeting formats in 2010. The club has several one-topic meetings planned this year, as well as a few programmed with more than the two presentations/panels to which members are accustomed. The thinking is this:

On the one hand, we want to allow all the time necessary to

fully explore a particularly hot topic or carry out an interesting group project. Devoting an entire meeting to a given undertaking allows us as much time as is needed to finish, rather than having to cut it short and leave things incomplete because we've got another programming item scheduled that afternoon.

On the other mitt, we hope to keep most presentations/panels to an hour or less apiece, which will allow three and perhaps four program items per meeting. MonSFFen will benefit from more content and variety, and, we hope as a result, meeting attendance will get a boost.

The Executive will observe response to these new formats and determine if they are more to the liking of our membership. If so, we'll adopt them as much as possible in future.

As a means of promoting the club, we want to put together a calendar showcasing the finest examples of our members' creative talents. This idea was originally put forth by long-time MonSFFan **Josée Bellemare**. We have in mind a 2011 calendar, to be made available for sale later this year, thus serving, too, as a fund-raising vehicle. Artwork, costumes and props, and scale models produced by our members will be scanned or photographed during a session scheduled as part of our planned fancraft workshops in August.

Should this calendar project prove successful, we envision carrying it forward in subsequent years.

We thank Joe Aspler for his presentation on the Bulwer-Lytton contest, as well as those MonSFFen who participated in our BoA. A nod is given, also, to those folk who stocked our snack table, and to those who helped with meeting set-up and clean-up.

FEBRUARY

Club Meeting, February 21, 2010

Having opted to postpone the originally scheduled one-hour brainstorming session on outside-of-meeting fund-raising ideas, the February 21 club meeting was thus entirely devoted to the scripting of an old-fashioned radio play. About 20 folk were present.

First, **Keith Braithwaite** laid out two possible approaches. One: collectively, the group could consider sci-fi story ideas suggested by individuals, then having selected a favourite, bash out an outline and by afternoon's end, produce a finished script. Or two: select a number of suggestions then break into small working groups to come up with a series of short snippets—a scene or two, just a brief part of a larger piece, or perhaps an advertisement for some imaginary product. The concept, here, was of someone flipping through channels, sampling what's on the air as they search for something to listen to.

The room opted for the second approach as this allowed for the suggestions of not just one but several participants to be employed.

The next step was to generate ideas and pitch these to the room. Folk were supplied with pen and paper and given about 45 minutes to scribble down in brief as many ideas as they could muster. Some 25-odd were handed in to Keith at the conclusion of the allotted time period. He went through the submissions, reading aloud the titles and calling upon the persons who'd come up with each to pitch their skit to the room. There were UFO pieces, superhero scenarios, talk shows, dramatic scenes, parodies, and more. The group narrowed their favourites down to about 15 but were unable to decide on which four or five would make the final cut. It was ultimately decided to offer it all to chance; the ideas to be scripted were selected by random draw.

These were: **Danny Sichel's** untitled phone-in advice show for B-list superheroes with essentially useless super powers; **"Interludes"**, **Sean Peatman's** series of unrelated newscasts and advertising fragments edited together for comedic effect; "Guess What's Coming to Dinner", the opening acts of a Roswell story by **Marc Durocher**; "MooseMan Revisited", **C h r i s t o p h e r**



Hammock's interview program on which is lambasted a proposed American remake of the very Canadian MooseMan movie; and **Keith Braithwaite's** "A Planet to Plunder", in which an evil alien overlord robs Earth of all of its shaving devices in order to set up one groaner of a pun.

Following the mid-meeting break, MonSFFen got back to work on their radio play. The author of each of the selected pieces was joined by a few fellow club members to form a writing group. Under the encouragement of club VP **Lindsay Brown**, these groups spent the rest of the afternoon penning their segments. There remained some writing to be completed as the meeting neared an end. This was to be done within a week and the final drafts e-mailed to club president Berny Reischl, who would print out several copies of each for the March meeting, at which time the radio play is to be cast, performed, and recorded.

The meeting wrapped up with a brief primer and planner regarding the recording of our radio play.

MonSFFA thanks everyone who took part in this, our February club meeting. There was considerable enthusiasm expressed for future such old-fashioned radio projects and we think it's fair to say that the group quite enjoyed the creative challenge.

MARCH

Club Meeting, March 28, 2010



MonSFFA devoted much of its March 28 meeting to the production of the old-fashioned radio play the group had written the previous month. Six loosely connected segments had been scripted and a makeshift recording studio was set up to capture the performance of these. But meeting attendance was a little lighter than had been expected and we found ourselves short of actors, particularly for the female roles. Thus were some of the actors on hand obliged to voice two or

three characters.

Bernard Reischl handled the tasks of recording engineer and after a few tests of his software and microphone, production began. Each segment was directed by the writer of that segment,



who provided the actors with guidance as to the delivery of their lines. The actors had fun developing voices to suit their

characters. After a brief rehearsal, each cast member committed his or her lines to "tape." The process went quite smoothly, often with but a few takes necessary. A bit of on-the-fly rewriting got around any minor script errors discovered as recording proceeded.



By afternoon's close, about half the project remained, regrettably, incomplete. We plan to finish the job over the next few MonSFFA meetings. The simplicity of the recording rig, fortunately, allows for a quick set-up and short sessions. And, we hope to have a few more actors present in the weeks to come to fill some of those uncast roles.



The editor will later, in post-production, assemble all of these snippets of dialogue in accordance with the script, then add sound effects and music.

The meeting also included a brief brainstorming session on outside-of-meeting fund-raising ideas. A **casino night** of some kind was floated, perhaps in association with **Con*Cept's** planned fund-raising efforts. Or, a MonSFFA-staffed **carnival midway**, similar to the club's Sci-Fi Fair might be set up in the dealers' room at Con*Cept in October. MonSFFA would pocket the proceeds, minus a cut for

Con*Cept.

A **summer garage sale** was suggested, to be held either at a willing MonSFFAn's residence or as part of a church or community-sponsored rummage sale. We would feature not only genre items but all manner of second-hand stuff. Items would be catalogued and priced in advance. A staff of club members would see to the transportation of the stock to the designated location and run the sale throughout the day. All monies raised would go to the club, minus, perhaps, a modest percentage paid to those who donated stock of a certain value.

A **themed dance, TransWarp-like mini-con, SF/F play or improv event, bake sale, craft sale, service auction, "slave" auction, and car wash** were also proffered via the club's suggestion box.

The production for sale of a children's **sci-fi colouring book** and of **SF/F-themed greeting cards** were also among the notions put forth.

The pros and cons of all of these will have to be weighed and logistics considered, of course, but we see potential, here. We will certainly discuss these ideas further with the goal of arriving at a workable plan of action as soon as possible.

MonSFFA thanks our recording engineer, actors, and everyone else who took part in our March club meeting.

APRIL

Club Meeting, April 18, 2010

MonSFFA's April 18 meeting programme was revised on the fly to accommodate a very special last-minute guest: Claude Gauthier, who worked on the just-released, locally



Claude at the Wild Hunt wrap party.

produced film *The Wild Hunt*, about a group of live-action role-players who take their outdoor medieval fantasy game a little too far. Lord of the Flies-too far, in fact! Without giving anything away, an enthusiastic Claude spoke at length about the film, offering that it was a fascinating exploration of the modern human psyche by way of the LARPing community. The story is both humorous and dramatic, peopled by characters that readily engage an audience.

He spoke, too, of the challenges of producing a film in Canada, notably that one must do so with rather less money that would be available for even a low-budget Hollywood production. Filmed at a sprawling LARPing site –

Duché de Bicolline – outside of Shawinigan, *The Wild Hunt* was made for about \$400,000 and has garnered considerable praise and several film-festival honours. Claude credited the many talented people involved, in particular Alexandre Franchi, directing his first feature, and an outstanding cast, including lead Mark A. Krupa, who co-wrote the script with Franchi. Some of the cast members have since furthered their careers in Hollywood.

Claude himself did duty as a stunt coordinator and had a small

role in the film, though his best scenes ended up on the cutting room floor for reasons of pacing. His principal job, however, was casting director.

Before making his exit, Claude invited MonSFFen to a special screening/wrap party for the film in off-island St-Eustache the following weekend.

Prior to Claude's arrival, Berny Reischl gave a quick presentation on SF/F blogs, showcasing some of his favourites and offering a cross-section of the countless number of Genre-related blogs currently online.

The meeting also found time to record a few more pages of script for the club's ongoing old-fashioned radio project, and introduce a period of open, free-form discussion that allowed folk to expound upon any Genre-related subject. The group spoke of numerous things but latched on to the topic of recent and rather frustrating network programming practices involving the launching of new series.

Cathy Palmer-Lister was to have given a treatise on fandom and online social networking, but graciously bowed out to allow time for our special guest.

We thank our guest, Claude Gauthier, for dropping in. Thanks, also, to everyone who put together and ran this one.

MonSFFen Attend Wild Hunt Wrap Party

MonSFFAn **Josée Bellemare** reports that she and about a half-dozen of her fellow club members trekked up to St-Eustache in April for a special party at the invitation of **Claude Gauthier**, who was one of the production crew on the recently released feature film *The Wild Hunt*. "It was a lot of fun," reports Josée of the soiree. With the "Bicolline" LARPing event near Shawinigan serving as a setting in the movie, many folk were in costume for the party. A fighting demonstration was staged and Josée and company enjoyed the food and drink on offer, and a special screening of the film.

(Josée's review and accompanying photos appeared in WARP 74.)



Wayne, Josée, Marquise, Alice, & Marc



More photos of the model workshop appear on p.31 & 32

MAY

Club Meeting: May 16, 2010

Following a brief planning discussion regarding the planned neighbourhood garage sale, Mark Burakoff and Dominique Durocher took a moment to outline the basics of their hobby before opening their kit boxes to demonstrate the how-to's of both plastic and paper modelling. Several small kits were made available to the novices in the group who wanted to try their hand while Mark and Dominique circulated, providing helpful tips on a variety of techniques to those MonSFFen who had brought in kits on which to work. This popular workshop will return as part of the fancraft event we're organizing for August.

The latter part of the afternoon was devoted to the club's Sci-Fi Fair, a fund-raiser with the emphasis on fun, featuring several SF/F-themed carnival midway-like games. MonSFFen enjoyed the challenge of taking out Jar Jar Binks from across the room with a Nerf sniper rifle. There was a line-up pretty much the whole time! A second game had folk racing against the clock to "beam" tribbles from the Enterprise to a Klingon battlecruiser. The tribbles, here, were tiny arts-and-crafts



puff-balls and the transporter a pair of chopsticks! Finally, using but a drinking straw to gently coax a miniature sailing vessel across a Lilliputian sea, players had to navigate around treacherous islands to bring their ship safely across the ocean without shipwrecking her against the rocks.



Participants earned points for playing the games, and bonus points for each success. The fun went on for a good hour and at the end of that time, the players who had accumulated the most points got their pick of several premium prizes of DVDs, books, and decorative Genre figurines.



A bake sale also ran throughout the meeting, serving up a variety of tasty cookies, cupcakes, and other snacks.

Total income from fund-raising at our May meeting exceeded \$130, which will help buttress club finances. We hope to add still more cash to the pile with our neighbourhood garage sale.

The club thanks our programme participants this meeting, as well as all who helped to plan and run the event. Special nods to Keith Braithwaite, Bernard Reischl, Mark Burakoff, Alice Novo, Cathy Palmer-Lister, Marquise Boies, and Julia Sinclair, who contributed time and effort to the meeting's fund-raising ventures.

Discount for MonSFFen at Fringe Festival Play

MonSFFA members will enjoy a discount on admission to *Shades of Grey*, a stage play to be presented as part of the upcoming Montreal Fringe Festival. The Festival runs from June 1 through 20 in the Plateau. *Shades of Grey* is scheduled for six shows during this time, the first on Saturday, June 12.

Inspired by *The Twilight Zone*, Rod Serling's acclaimed SF/F anthology, the production is mounted entirely in black and white! Sets, costumes, props and make-up have all been designed to capture the stark palette of the classic Serling television series.

Club members carrying a valid MonSFFA membership card will save \$2 off the \$12 ticket price.

Con*Cept's new co-chair, **Liz Cano**, is one of the people behind *Shades of Grey* and arranged for the discount for our folk. Thanks, Liz! (Ed's note: Liz has had to resign for health reasons, Jean-Philippe Cardin is now co-Chair of Con*Cept.)

JUNE

Bowling for Serenity, June 13, 2010



In place of the usual June MonSFFA meeting – scrubbed this year to avoid conflicting with the busy downtown party surrounding the return of Grand Prix auto racing to Montreal – the club organized a bowling sortie. MonSFFen were invited to an afternoon of tenpins, food, drink,

camaraderie and conversation on Sunday, June 13. The selected locale was the AMC Forum Sports Bar/Bowling Alley in the AMC Pepsi Forum (the old Forum) on Atwater, conveniently on major bus and Metro routes and judged sufficiently distant of the downtown core to steer clear of all the Grand Prix hubbub.

About 10 club members met in the Forum's street-level lobby at 11:45AM before proceeding upstairs to the bar/restaurant/bowling alley. MonSFFA's party secured two lanes and bowled a couple of games while enjoying various libations, servings of chips-and-dip, chicken wings, and such.

The MonSFFen were beleaguered at several junctures, however by problems with the ball return mechanism on their particular lanes, delaying play and eventually prompting a change of lanes. It was without doubt these interruptions that upset the group's collective concentration enough to throw off everyone's bowling proficiency. Despite a number of strikes and spares rolled, many of the scores were not pretty, but Dominique Durocher recorded the afternoon's highest and collected the promised reward for so doing, a finely crafted Serenity key chain.



A good time was had by all! Our thanks are extended club President/Emperor Berny Reischl for making all the arrangements.

Garage Sale Fund-Raiser Adds Coin to Club's Coffers

MonSFFA's neighbourhood garage sale was all set to go on the morning of Saturday, June 12, when persistent drizzle and a gloomy forecast prompted a postponement of the fund-raiser until the following Saturday, June 19. The weather cooperated this time, allowing our team to run the sale for much of the day and raise \$128.75 for the club. With this and the Sci-Fi Fair/Bake Sale fund-raiser held at our May meeting, over \$250 extra has been added to MonSFFA's bank balance in a little over a month.

This garage sale fund-raising effort came about as the result of a suggestion received from **club co-VP Lindsay Brown** in March. Of the numerous suggestions proposed by MonSFFen for an outside-of-meeting fund-raiser, the club chose to try Lindsay's notion of a neighbourhood garage sale first. The idea was to collect donations of secondhand items from club members and put on a sale at a willing MonSFFAn's home. All proceeds would benefit the club.

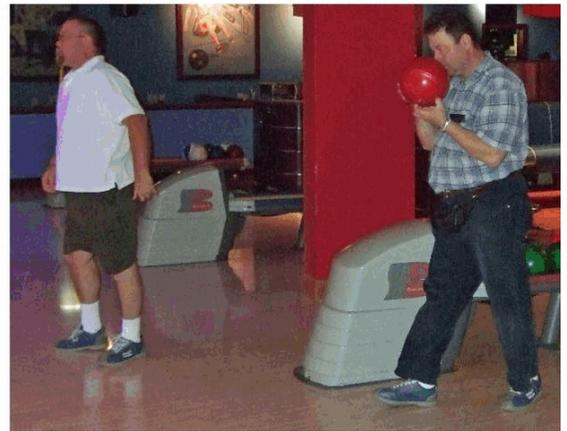
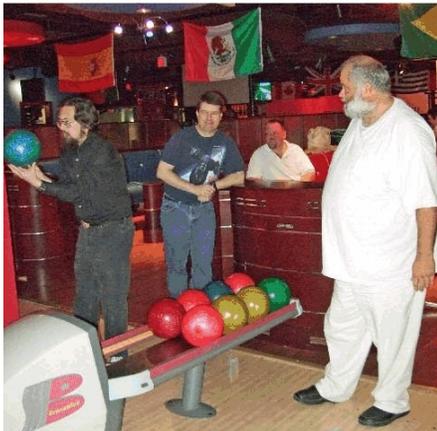
South-Shore resident **Theresa Penalba** got things off the ground by volunteering her driveway and at MonSFFA's May meeting, folk responded to the club's request for donations to the cause by bringing in several boxes and bags worth of both SF/F-themed merchandise and ordinary household and garden items. A handful of her fellow MonSFFen were recruited to join Theresa in setting up and staffing the event: **Keith Braithwaite, Alice and Alex Novo, and Cathy Palmer-Lister.**

We thank our garage sale team for their time and effort and reiterate our appreciation for the many donations of merchandise provided by MonSFFen.

There remains a goodly quantity of unsold stock and so we are looking at perhaps holding another such garage sale later in the summer. Stay tuned.

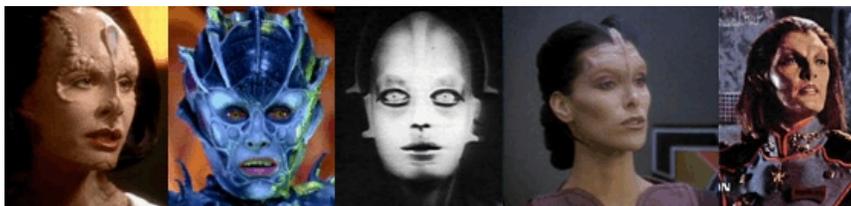


← LES						▶ FRANCOIS					
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BERNARD	08	X	81	9-	5-	WAYNE	16	11-	9-	X	9/
	52	71	80	89	94		25	26	35	55	
SYLVAIN	6/	8/	81	9-	5-	JOSEE	06	05	54	1/	33
	52	70	79	88	93		13	18	27	40	46
KEITH	3-	14	71	X	9-	THERESA	01	18	8-	X	X
	46	51	59	78	87		11	20	28		
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						FRANCOIS	3-	07	0-	0-	0-
							17	24	24	24	



**The Faces Behind the Mask # 10
The Fernster**

More Alien Women – Guess who’s behind the makeup!



- A – Natima Lang
- B – Natira
- C – Metropolis Robot
- D – Ty Kajada
- E – DeathWalker

- 1 – Claudia Karvan _____
- 2 – Brigitte Helm _____
- 3 – Julie Catlin Brown _____
- 4 – Sarah Douglas _____
- 5 – Mary Crosby _____



Answers on Page 17



Did you know?

**MonSFFA members benefit from
Con*Cept’s Group membership plan!**

**Purchase your membership to Con*Cept 2010
at the August or September meeting
and SAVE 10\$ off the door price!**

Use your MonSFFA membership card and save at these fine stores!

LEGENDS ACTION FIGURES: 10% off all merchandise (7104 St-Hubert)
<http://www.legendSACTIONfigures.com>

MÉLANGE MAGIQUE: 15% off all merchandise (1928 St-Catherine West)
<http://www.themagicalblend.com/>

MILLENNIUM COMICS: 15% off all merchandise (451 Marie-Anne East)
<http://www.millenniumcomics.com>

