

ASTOUNDING STORIES OF WARPed SCIENCE

WARP 62 * AUTUMN 2005 * VOLUME 19 * 04

Weapons of the Future

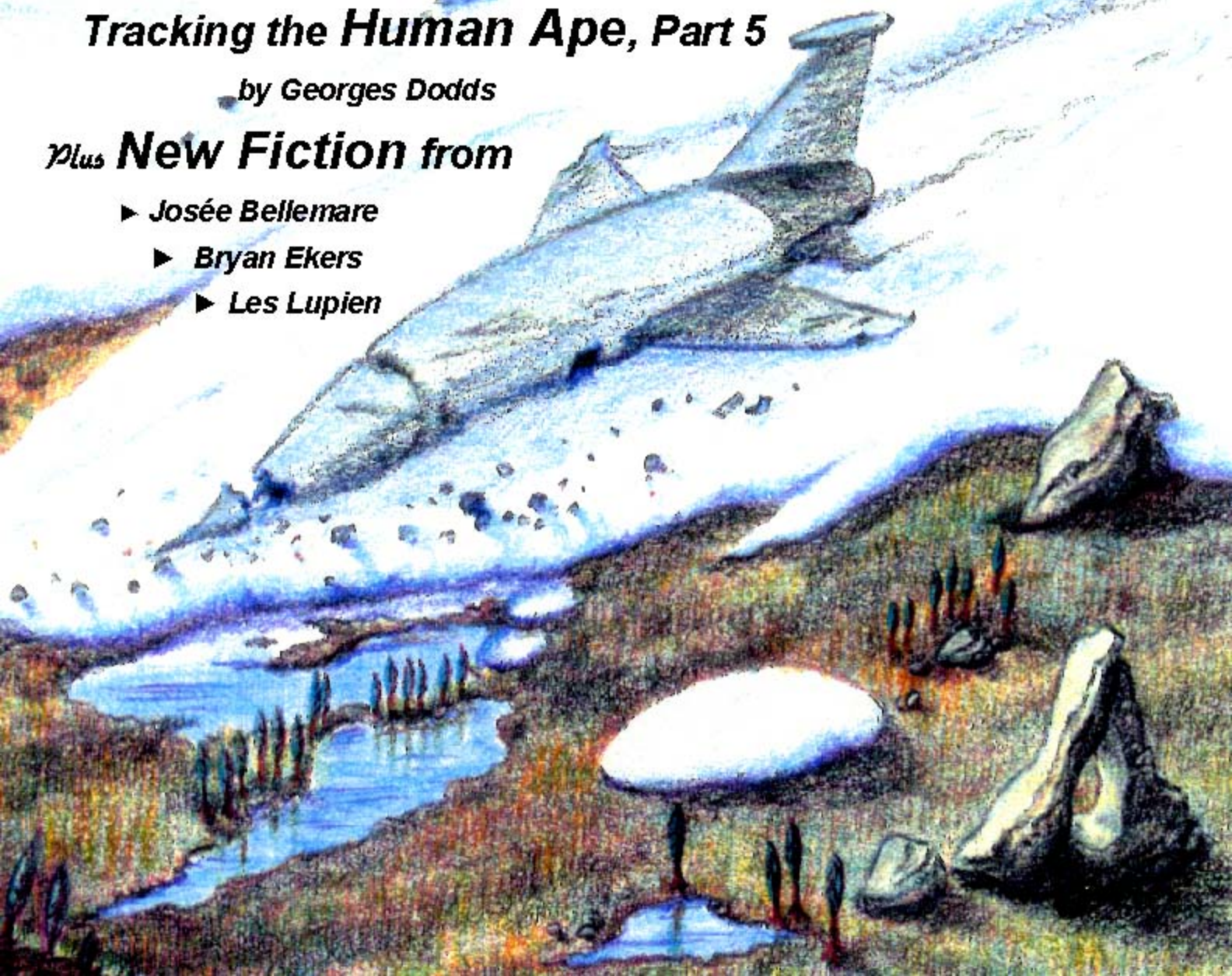
A new series by Sylvain St-Pierre

Tracking the Human Ape, Part 5

by Georges Dodds

Plus New Fiction from

- ▶ *Josée Bellemare*
- ▶ *Bryan Ekers*
- ▶ *Les Lupien*



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

On the Cover

Scene illustrating events from *When Worlds Collide*, by Keith Braithwaite 1994.

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MonSFFA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Except where noted, all MonSFFA meetings are held
Sundays at 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM
at the Days Inn, St-François Room,
1005 Guy Street, corner René Lévesque.



Programming is subject to change.

December 3, 2005

MonSFFA Xmas Dinner and Party
See page 12 for details



January 22, 2006

Dave Shuman & Paul Simard of the RASC: Montreal Centre
Present: *A Journey to Mars*, a 3-D multi-media presentation

MonSFFA Election of Executive ● BOA: Planning for 2006.



February 19, 2006

Hit or Miss: The State of SF Television
Urban Legends: True or False Game



March 26, 2006

Ray Harryhausen & Stop Motion Retrospective



April 23, 2006

Superman Returns: A look into the entire mythos
of the Man of Steel
from the comics origin to television and the movies.



May 28, 2006

Hot Rods in Science Fiction



You are Not Alone! A Primer to Fandor..

The Real Fine Print: WARP is published quarterly by the Montreal Science Fiction and Fantasy Association (MonSFFA), a non-profit 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, your tolerance is appreciated by your fans.

TABLE of CONTENTS

Autumn 2005 • Vol. 19 • 04



FEATURE ARTICLES

- Part 5 of Tracking the Human Ape / 7
- Things that Go Bang in the Night / 9
- The Cloud / 13
- Doctor Who: New York Vacation / 14
- Free Will (PG) / 18

REVIEWS

Movies:

Chicken Little / 23 ● *Serenity* / 23

Events

Boréal 2005 / 24 ● Mike Johnson at Concordia / 25
Montreal Browncoats Shindig / 25

DEPARTMENTS

You've Got Mail / 4 ● MonSFFA Bulletin Board / 12 & 31
SFF Sightings! / 13 ● Conventions & Events / 23
MonSFFA Discount Programme / 31

MONSFANDOM

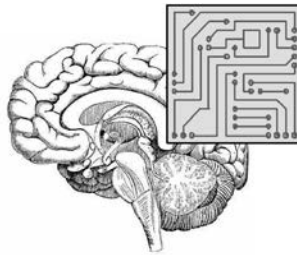
MonSFFandom September to October / 26



Things that Go Bang in the Night! Part One of a series on Weapons of the Future
Page 9



Tracking the Human Ape: **The Missing Link**
Page 7



Free Will: New Fiction from Les Lupien, PG,
Page 18



The Doctor goes shopping, and calls in a debt
Page 14



Living in the Shadow of **The Cloud**, Page 13



Michael Sheard at Con*Cept 2003. Photo by Charles Mohapel

Michael Sheard 1940 – 2005

Michael Sheard, a GoH at Con*Cept 2003, passed away August 31st at his home on the Isle of Wight. He was 65. His most famous role was that of Bronson in the TV drama Grange Hill, but we fans remember him best as Admiral Ozzel in The Empire Strikes Back. He also appeared in episodes of Doctor Who and Blake's 7. His other films included Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade, one of several appearances as Hitler. He wrote three memoirs of his life on stage and screen.

At Con*Cept, he was a warm and friendly guest. Always cheerful, he lit up any room he entered, and left his fans with a lot of happy memories. We will miss him!

Cathy Palmer-Lister



You've Got Mail!

Dear MonSFFen:

Issue 61 of Warp is here, and it's good to hear from you all. Wish we'd been able to come up to Montréal to visit with you; perhaps next year will do it. Some comments on the issue at hand...

Missed a lot of you folks at Toronto Trek. (I was looking for Tamu...hugs!) It wasn't a very good con for me personally, since once again, we worked a lot more than we agreed to because of others failing to do as they promised in staging parties. We left early Sunday morning, and didn't go back. We have relayed our concerns and problems to the convention, and while we have no doubts they will try to solve those problems, we have doubts that we'll be coming back next year. If we do, it'll be a Saturday only membership.

My letter re a medieval fair...such an event, to our relief, seems to have restarted here. Not long after my previous letter, a one-day renaissance faire was held at Casa Loma, and it was

well-attended, and a lot of fun. It was at that event that it was announced that a new regular renaissance faire would be held, at the Royal Botanical Gardens in the Hamilton area. In fact, the first Royal Abingdon Faire just finished up for the season, and it seemed to be a popular success, with the usual first-try bugs to iron out. Yvonne went for a visit (I was ill that weekend), and seemed to enjoy it, but made some observations to the faire management on their website, and I look forward to going next year, and seeing how they do.

The translation of part of Hemo is quite interesting. I think most of us haven't read jungle fiction since any attempt at ERB's Tarzan novels, but I also think that most of us might be a little squeamish at the suggestion of a bestial relationship here. Georges, do you do translations professionally?

I have heard word of a Doctor Who convention coming up next month called Bad Wolf. Probably something to do with the new series, which I still have not seen. It is connected with the Doctor Who Information Network, but there is still nothing on their website about it. I'll keep looking. (By the way, speaking of websites, I tried to access the Anticipation website, and it is not available. Hope there's no problems there, but that website has to be up and running to keep people interested, and to keep the bid competitive.) Our next convention will be Astronomicon in Rochester, where Yvonne and I will be running their con suite.

Ray Harryhausen made quite an impact on Montreal animators, by the looks of it, and upon

Montreal fandom as a whole. I sure hope you'll all come to Ad Astra to see him again.

Great pictures of summer events, and it would have been great to have captions with a little smartass content as only Berny Reischl can do. (Memories of your Klingon fanzine, Berny...)

Greetings to Alice Nova, who is learning the joys and heartbreaks of conventions. There is never enough time and money to do and buy all the nifty things you want, but as you go to more and more cons, there'll be less you want to buy, and perhaps more time to simply socialize and enjoy the company of friends. I think we all learn that eventually.

It does no good to set the blame for the cancelled (Con*Celled?) Con*Cept, but I hope there will be a meeting soon to get that 2006 edition on the go. Montreal fandom has always been wise when it comes to getting a con going, starting with a one-day event, and slowing growing up to a 2- or 3-day con. I hope you will do the same here, and do as much advertising as possible for it.

Time to go and fire it off. Take care, all, and see you sometime, probably next issue.

Yours,

Lloyd Penney

Hi, Lloyd!

Glad to hear from you! And thanks again for sending me the convention listings.

The Anticipation site was down for quite a while, but is up and running as I write. It's at <http://www.anticipationsf.ca>

Con*Cept had a BarCon

consolation party on the 4th at the Days Inn which was quite successful. Con*Cept 2006 will be October 13-15 next year, but the board has not yet appointed a chair.

Your letter to certain fans about starting a national newsletter sparked off a round of very interesting conversations. Garth Spencer's comments appear below.

I do hope you and Yvonne are at Toronto Trek next year. It would be very strange not to see you there.

Yours in fandom,

Cathy

Dear MonSFFen:

The following is an off-the-top-of-my-head article, following up some topics raised by Lloyd Penney, Cathy Palmer-Lister, myself, and perhaps some other correspondents. The online conversation started because Lloyd advanced the proposition of starting a new Canadian SF fan newszine; it has been quite a few years since Canadian fans had one. Maybe this could stand reprinting in Impulse, or Warp, and in the Ottawa SF Statement, and in Voyageur, and in any newsletter the Fredericton club may be producing; I plan to print this article in BCSFAzine.

A few problems for Lloyd's initiative arose right away, one being that some fans – myself and Lloyd included – think of fan activity in terms of things to *participate* in, such as producing and trading fan publications, but the vast majority of fans mainly know of fan activity in any other

terms *except* something to take an active part in. Lloyd and Cathy and I are among the several fans across Canada who try to support the Aurora Awards, which are hosted by a different Canadian convention each year (hence titled "Canvention"). Since the Auroras, other awards have been established, notably the Sunburst Awards. Many of us have also supported the Canadian Unity Fan Fund by raising funds and standing for the fan travel fund.

A lot of contemporary fans don't have a connection to that kind of fandom, or any stake in Canadian SF publishing – *and there's no compelling reason why they should*. Anime and comics and costuming and gaming are the most prominent fandoms now, followed by fan groups for specific SF and fantasy media series.

Cathy Palmer-Lister wrote most recently:

"What is the right message and who is the right audience?"

*That's a good question. MonSFFA is multi-interest, but in fact tends to be more media than anything else these days. Since Con*Cept was founded by MonSFFA, it reflects the philosophy that there is only one fandom for SF & F. In theory, people are enjoying the THEMES of SF, regardless of medium used to convey the ideas, but in practice people show up for meetings that say Star Wars, or Stargate, or LOTR.*

We have had an interesting panel on why people no longer read books, and the debate was so vigorous we are going to have a sequel to it in the coming year. I was talking with a friend who is

president of an astronomy group I belong to, and he is worried about falling attendance even though the club has made very interesting investments in equipment and has moved to a campus in a part of Montreal that is heavily Anglophone. We know interest in astronomy is very high, so where is everyone? Long-time members are saying they don't have time anymore, they work so much overtime, they're too tired...Have we become an antisocial society? What is eating the heart out of our clubs, conventions, and other social events?

Fans have been philosophizing about this at least since Star Trek fans started outnumbering fanzine fans, usually resorting to arguments about demographics and television. It isn't a waning of interest in reading, not really. I recently obtained a catalogue of fall book releases to appear at a local specialty bookstore – a good half of them media and game tie-ins. I think a friend of mine came close to the point, observing that the generation before mine relied on a lot of *participatory* entertainment, parlour games and amateur musical performance and so on, while Baby Boomers and succeeding cohorts mostly experience *passive*, broadcast entertainment.

For anyone who has been around a few years, the questions we have been grappling with in our correspondence are very interesting. What is fandom, who is a fan? Does watching Stargate religiously make one a fan of SF, or a fan of Stargate? To me the answer is obvious, but others have different perspectives.

There was allegedly a time - up to the mid-1960s, perhaps as late as the mid-1970s - when fandom appeared to be a geographically-dispersed subculture, fairly unified in its focus of interest (written SF) and points of reference (fanzines and conventions). The high motivation of fannish fans to publish their own fanzines, to read them or contribute to them, is pretty remarkable compared to the much reduced motivation among contemporary fans. (It's also remarkable that current zine publishers repudiate any relationship to SF fanzines, but that seems to be another story.)

If fandom used to be unified, that ceased to be the case after Star Trek and other media series immensely expanded the fan population. The end result was a wide range of fandoms, each with their own terms of reference, in imperfect contact with each other even in the same city. They're all fans, just in different fandoms. We lump together SF, and fanzine, and comics, and media fans mostly for historical reasons. Some days I think we might just as well lump in salsa, roller-skating and hockey fans.

All the foregoing is pretty much common knowledge. To go a step further, I have heard a suggestion that people only relate to a limited number of direct acquaintances, no more than 30 or even 100; conceivably, contemporary fans satisfy their need for other fans more easily, in their own area and in a local club, than fans did twenty or thirty years ago. So it would actually make sense for them to show less motivation to participate in anything outside.

So where does that leave me and Lloyd? I think we have to accept a reality that I was slow to accept in the mid-1980s when I edited *The Maple Leaf Rag*. There are only a few fans in any given area who relate to the more general, less local issues in fandom; who have a stake in Canadian SF, its writers and publishers, the awards and the Convention and the Canadian Unity Fan Fund.

Everybody's in a minority here. Even within fandom.

Yours,
Garth

HI, Garth!

This has been such an interesting conversation! I look forward to hearing from other fan editors on the subject of the changing face of fandom.

And getting back to the spark that started it off: Do fans need or want a national newszine? A followup question was: Should there be some central storage place where fans can access fan-produced 'zines from across Canada?

Our own Keith Braithwaite has had a long-time interest in 'zines and has promised an article on the subject for an upcoming WARP.

Yours in fandom,
Cathy

Sad news from the Ottawa Science Fiction Society (OSFS):

It is with a very sad heart that I send this email today.

Sometime on Friday,

November 4, 2005, **Sansoucy Walker**, a long-time member of the Ottawa Science Fiction Society, passed away quietly in her sleep. The exact cause of her demise is yet to be determined but she had been suffering from Atrial Fibrillation for the last few years and was constantly in and out of hospital as doctors adjusted the fibrillator zapper which had been installed to regulate her atrial heart rhythm.

OSFS and Lyngarde member Madonna Skaff had been her closest support over the years and will let us know when more information is available and any funeral or memorial services are scheduled.

Her friendship, her sharp wit and her challenging nature (bidding us one and all to always try again) will be sorely missed.

Sahn may you find happiness and many challenges to stoke your curiosity wherever you find yourself.

Sandi Marie, President
OSFS

Dear Sandi Mari,

Thank you for letting us know.

On behalf of MonSFFA, let me extend our sincere condolences to you and members of OSFS.

Yours in fandom,

Cathy

***The Missing Link: A Mysterious Encounter
on the Island of Borneo, by Marcel Roland***

Journal des Voyages, 2e Série, No. 909 (May 3, 1914), p. 374-375.

A short story by the author of the intelligent ape amongst humans novel, Gulluliou, ou le Presqu'homme (1905), as translated by MonSFFan, Georges Dodds.

From the village where they had set up the centre of their explorations, they had left with the rising sun and had already been walking for three hours.

The part of Borneo through which they made their way was mountainous, and divided by deep, dark valleys. Rocky peaks alternated with high-impenetrable jungles. Accompanied by a native guide and carrying their plant presses, the two naturalists had just climbed half-way up a precipitous outcropping. After stopping in the shade of one of the rare trees growing on this gravelly slope, they went on their way. Suddenly, they found themselves in a natural hollow, carved out of the rock.

"A cave!" cried out Mounier.

"No, a tunnel!" answered the other.

In saying these words, the second European, Steiner, pushed aside a curtain of dried lianas which half covered the opening. A narrow circle of pale daylight appeared at the other end. It was indeed a passageway which extended at both ends into open air.

"Let's go in!" Mounier offered resolutely. "I'll go first!"

They silently made their way down the passage, their rifle at the ready, followed by the native whose supple tread barely brought a crackle from the granitic debris strewn across the floor. They could walk upright, but sometimes the ceiling would abruptly drop or bristle with sharp spikes, forcing them to bend over. Large bats, hanging upside-down from the roof, their serenity disturbed, took wing with cries that spun through the oppressive air. They finally reached the end of the straight passageway.

Steiner, who had taken the lead, lifted a sort of blind of twigs such as hung at the other end, but suddenly stepped back.

"Just in time," he grumbled, "I was going to take quite a tumble."

Indeed, the ground dropped off abruptly in front of the cave floor, sloping down sharply, almost perpendicularly to heaps of boulders. The three companions stopped and took in the scene which presented itself to them. They saw an extremely deep, funnel-shaped cirque, at the bottom of which, amongst fearful shadows, one could hear the roar of an invisible

torrent. The edges of this deep granite basin were lost at a dizzying height, far above their heads, and the light from the sky, falling on the chaotic assemblage of irregularly-shaped boulders, contrasted areas of light with black pits.

The corridor from which the explorers were emerging continued on the other side of the cirque, but to reach it one had to follow an extremely narrow platform, created by a freak of Nature, which ran all along the wall.

"It's dangerous!" pointed out Steiner, "but if we want to know where this underground passage leads, there's no hesitating!"

"Let's go!... You don't suffer from vertigo, do you, Sikoula?" said Mounier.

The native smiled Vertigo, pah! He was well acquainted with heights, experienced in the most awkward of balancing acts!

They continued their perilous hike. Here and there the suspended walkway widened and the piles of boulders beneath made any possible fall much shorter.

But Steiner burst out happily. There, mere metres away, he had made out, upon a crag, a bunch of pale mauve flowers.

"Velamina Sigillata!" he cried out triumphantly, his face glowing with happiness.. "Finally! I knew I would succeed in finding it!"

This Velamina Sigillata, an extremely rare plant, a genuine jewel of Botany, of which only one living example existed in cultivation and which he had searched for in vain for years! He had come to Borneo with the hope of perhaps finding, in the midst of its abundant vegetation, the coveted specimen, which he counted upon to cement his professional reputation. This expectation had not been disappointed! On the edge of the walkway, his eyes asparkle, he contemplated the object of his dreams.

He extended a finger.

"There, Sikoula... Ten dollars for you if you bring me back that plant with its roots!"

In a flash, the native had slipped down a granite rib to a spot a few feet below the walkway, and began to leap from boulder to boulder to where the Velamina

opened it mauve corollas.

Suddenly, there was a stifled cry and his arms flailed out: he had lost his footing. The Europeans, who had been following him, saw him waver and drop, head first, over the precipice. But at the very moment he was to disappear, from behind a rocky outcropping emerged a huge, muscular black arm, bearing a crooked hand. This hand grabbed the man as he fell, and held him still, suspended over the abyss like a gesticulating puppet. Slowly, something fearful, a gigantic, hideous creature, was revealed before the explorers' eyes.

They had enough time to make him out clearly, to notice his body's long fawn-coloured hair, his spindly legs, bending under the weight of the torso, the head's flattened skull, the sunken brow, the prominent cheeks and forward-jutting jaws that made up its features. Buried beneath the beetling brow, gleamed furtive yellow eyes. Still holding Sikoula at arm's length, the marvellous creature had turned towards the strangers and was looking them over. They too looked him over, frozen in fear and amazement. This was no orang, for it was much bigger, better proportioned and missing the pair of lateral cranial protrusions characteristic of the Asian anthropoid. There was, all told, over his features a singular, indefinable expression, less bestial than human. The features of this creature would not allow it being assigned to any species of apes. The two naturalists, accustomed to all forms of the simian race, of which the island had supplied them numerous examples, had no doubt whatsoever of this. What they were seeing was a new, unknown life-form.

Struck by a sudden thought, Mounier leaned over and whispered:

"Steiner! Could it be it...It...the ape-man?...You know of course, the Original pithecanthrope, the missing rung in the ecological ladder between the gorilla and us! There are claims it is not extinct. Travellers have met it in certain old-growth forests. I myself didn't believe it, however..."

But already, his partner, driven by his haste to save the native had shouldered his rifle. Before his partner

could stop him he had shot at the monster without further thought.

It jerked, threw down its stick and put its free hand to its chest, over its heart. With its other arm it still held Sikoula, suspended motionless over the abyss. It had but to open its fingers and the poor wretch would have been splattered over the bottom. At this thought the two explorers shuddered. Furious at his own thoughtlessness, Steiner muttered, "What an idiot I am!"

But, rather than perpetrate the act of vengeance they feared, to their amazement the creature put the native softly down on a boulder from which he could easily regain the platform. Then in a look which gave away its suffering it seemed to say: "Go back to your own kind, go...You are safe now!"

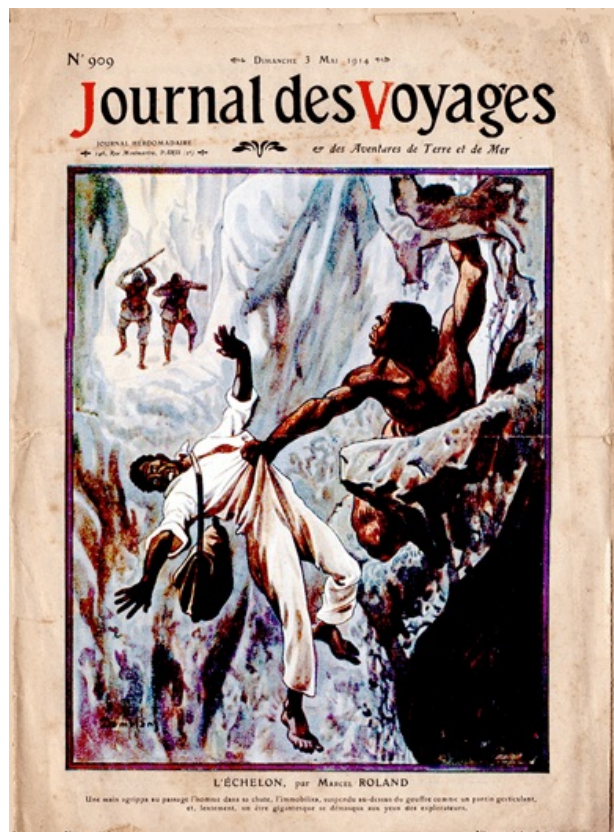
And while Sikoula, still trembling, returned to his companions, the mysterious creature leaned tottering against a boulder. His hairy hand pressed against the thorax from which a red stream flowed. It moaned, and turning its head several times towards the men, towards those who have just struck

him unto death, he moved off towards the underground passage. Helping himself up by way of great masses of stone, he climbed the fairly steep slope leading to it. Having reached the tunnel's entrance, he called feebly. The travellers immediately saw a long-haired female and her agile children emerge and busy themselves around him...One last look back and the creature disappeared.

"I feel I've committed murder," Steiner admitted.

Perplexed, almost anguished, they turned back. A few days later, they returned to this spot with a large escort. The tunnel, the cirque, the neighbouring areas were searched, but no trace was found of the family of anthropoids.

Had they come face to face with a human ancestor, which remained the matter of legends, or had they simply encountered an orang-outang of superior instincts? None was ever able to solve this enigma. ●



*Original cover art for Journal des Voyages,
May 3, 1914*

Things That Go Bang in the Night

With a pulsating appendage wrapped around the Galactic Doomsday Device controls and a grin on his warty face, the evil tentacled alien raised his protonic disruptor and aimed it at the scantily clad and voluptuous Earth girl. Quicker than lightning, Zap Smith pulled out his disintegratobulator and pressed the firing stud. A bolt of purple force tore through the air and the villainous creature, as well as his devilish machine, both vanished in a shower of luminous sparks, leaving the woman untouched...

Sounds familiar? It used to be that such prose was quite popular in the golden age of pulps. They had such wonderful weapons (and girls) in those days! But how serious was it? Those few lines above are not very, for sure, but are all SciFi weapons necessarily ludicrous? Let us journey through the Museum of Not Quite Real Weaponry, starting with...

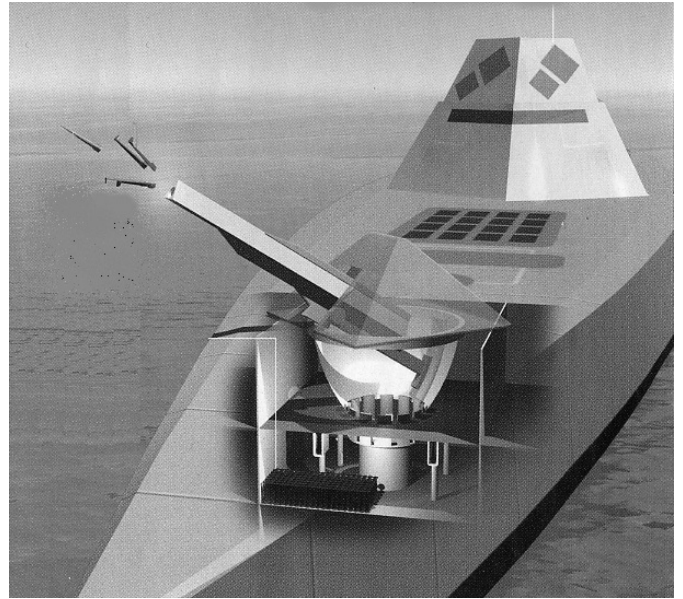
I - The Serious (and Rather Grim) Stuff

The following weapons either already exist in experimental form, are quite advanced in their development stage or are very seriously being researched.

High Powered Lasers are the perfect embodiment of the classical death ray. Its principles were discovered almost by accident, but it did not take long to come up with the concept of using **Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation** as a weapon. The actual engineering required considerable work before a version powerful enough to do real damage at a distance was produced, but it seems that it is now possible to shoot down an incoming missile.

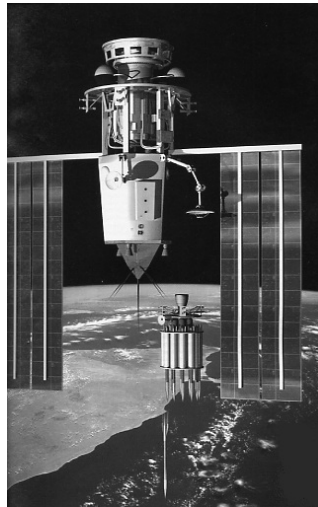
Still being developed, but perfectly plausible, is the **X-Ray Laser**. It works on the same general principle as the normal lasers, which coax light to flow in parallel rather than spreading patterns, but at a much higher wavelength and power level. So far, the only workable source of X-rays is a small nuclear explosion, so it is expected that an X-ray laser gun would be a one-shot affair.

The **Electro-Magnetic Railgun** will certainly be more convenient in many ways. By encasing a strong and heavy projectile in a conductive sabot, it is possible to use magnetic fields to eject it at tremendous



Electromagnetic Railgun, illustration by John McNeill for Popular Science, June 2004.

speeds, sending it many kilometres away. Such a shell would come down so fast that kinetic energy alone would be enough to vaporise the target. The idea is to do away with explosives altogether, making this weapon safer (for the user, that is...). The electricity required by this weapon could be drawn from the same source as the one used to power the ship, which is another attractive feature.



Rods from God, illustration by John McNeill for Popular Science, June 2004

One way of gaining high devastating speed is to drop something from high enough, from orbit, for instance. **Kinetic Weapons** rely on very hard rods of metal ejected from orbit towards ground targets. Current problems include the difficulty in hitting even unmoving targets and making a projectile that can survive re-entry.

While expendable grunts still form the core of most armies, specialists are becoming increasingly important. Because it takes a lot of time to train them properly, it is worthwhile to protect such people from harm if you can. Enter the **Remote Controlled War Machines**. Since they do not have to shelter actual humans, drones can be made smaller and/or with thicker armour. If such a tank or plane gets hit, it is much easier to repair or replace than a skilled pilot, who can remain safe and sound far from the battlefield. Such devices are already used extensively for reconnaissance and are getting smaller and more independent all the time.



“No Pilot Required”,
Popular Science, June
2001

Remote controlled machines will require a lot of computer processing power. With a bit more, you can get the device to operate on its own, effectively creating a **Robotic Warrior**. Several Unmanned Combat Air Vehicles of this type are currently far into the prototype stage, including Northrop Grumman’s Pegasus, Boeing’s X-45 and Dassault’s star-shaped AVE.

Experts predict thatUCAVs will dominate air warfare by 2030 (*Popular Science*, June 2001).

Self-aware war machines turning on their creators is one of the great themes in science fiction, and countless stories have been written about it. Most



Boris, 1979



Russ Manning, 1964

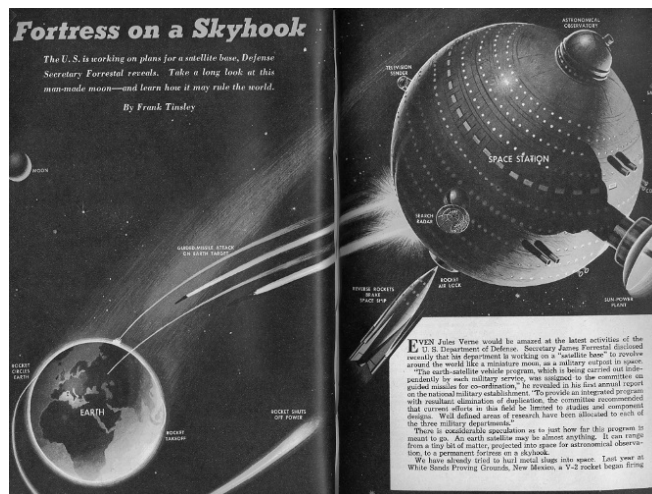
famous amongst them are the Berserker novels, by

Fred Saberhagen, and the Terminator movies.

II - The Forbidden (We Hope) Weapons

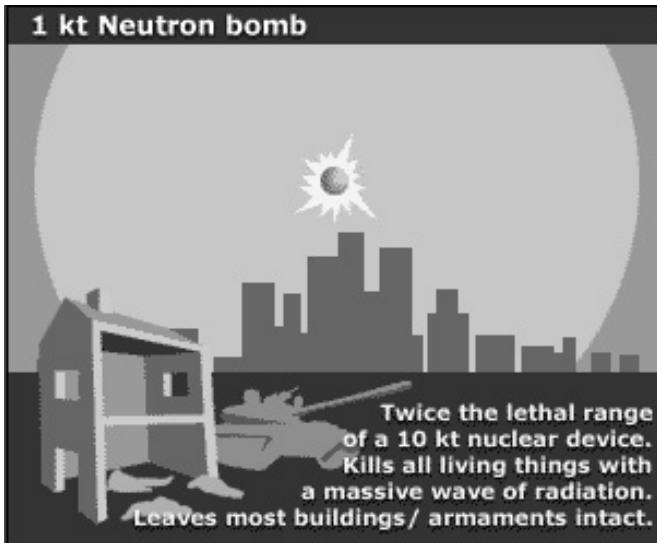
Every once in a while, somebody comes up with a weapon so horrible that all sides agree that it would be a bad idea to use it. At least, that is the official line. Since I like to sleep at night, I prefer not to dwell too much on the possibility that some of those things are actually waiting in a bunker somewhere, primed and ready to go...

The idea of **Orbital Weapons** came to mind almost immediately as soon as it was realised that it was possible to make objects circle the Earth like artificial moons. While the concept is still seriously considered as a platform for such things as lasers and kinetic weapons, current treaties forbid putting nuclear weapons in space. While it would be a costly undertaking, there is, however, no insurmountable technical problem involved, hence the nagging suspicion that some of the many spy satellites circling the globe may in fact already house atomic warheads.

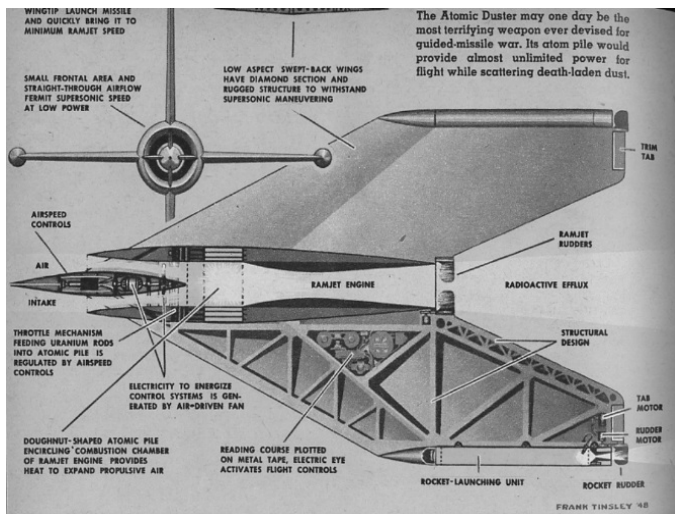


“Fortress on a Skyhook” Illustration by Frank Tinsley for
Mechanix Illustrated, April 1949.

Even the puniest laser pointer bears a warning about the danger to sight, so it is not very surprising that a few years ago some ingenious mind came up with the idea of building one specifically for that purpose. A **Blinding Laser** could spray a battlefield and effectively damage the optical nerve of anybody looking at it unprotected. This would require much less power than an armour-piercing weapon and would be nearly as effective as killing the enemy outright. Officially, development of this system has been halted on humanitarian grounds.



The idea of getting rid of the population without destroying the buildings had a certain appeal to it. You can save a bundle in reconstruction costs! In the 1970's, the **Neutron Bomb** seemed to offer the perfect solution. It was intended to deliver a relatively small blast in terms of heat and shockwave, but very heavy in hard radiations. There is a considerable amount of speculation surrounding this device. According to some, Israel alone has already several hundreds in stock, while others maintain that this is an impractical weapon because it requires a constant supply of expensive and short-lived tritium to function. In theory, there would be no long term contamination and it would kill people in merely hours.



"The Atomic Duster" Illustration by Frank Tinsley for *Mechanix Illustrated*, December 1948.

As horrible as it sound, the previous device pales

in comparison to the **Atomic Duster**. The early atomic bombs of the 1950's were very large and heavy, so atomic powered rockets were once seriously considered to deliver them. The engineers quickly ran into a problem: while it was possible to produce a powerful enough exhaust, the weight of the radiation shielding prevented the craft from taking off. Somebody then got a bright idea. Why bother to shield at all? We want to obliterate the bastards anyway! Thus was born the concept of a device designed to spread lethal radioactive fallout over populated areas. It was estimated that it would take several days for the people to bleed to death. But, hey, they were just commies, right?

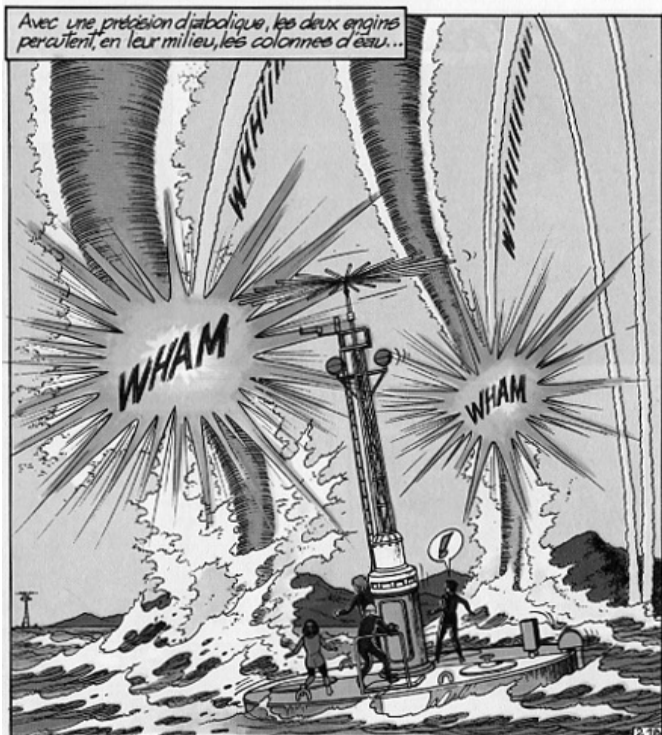


Dr. Strangelove movie poster, Stanley Kubrick, 1964.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was revealed that the U.S.S.R. had very seriously considered the production of a **Doomsday Device**, something that had only been suspected previously. This would have been a ship carrying an enormously powerful nuclear bomb – something like a hundred megatons – seeded with cobalt. The radioactive cloud produced by the explosion would have been enough to render the entire Earth unliveable by humans for about a century. The justification was

pretty much as explained in *Dr. Strangelove* (1964): the cost of this device would have been only a fraction of the nation's defence budget and nobody would dare attack a country that could kill the entire population of the globe out of spite! It seems that the only reason why this device was not actually built is because Premier Khrushchev was afraid that some of his subordinates might gain control of it.

Incidentally, the main plot in the *Dr. Strangelove* movie revolves around the idea that a crazed US officer might start a nuclear war because he is convinced that the Russians want to poison the Free World water supply with fluoridation (something that



Artificial twisters: La fille vent, from the adventures of Yoko Tsuno y Roger Leloup, 1979

was really suspected by some). If this was actually harmful, it would admittedly be safer and more efficient than **Germ Warfare**, which is also officially banned because it might get out of hand. Of course, we always have those disturbing rumours that things like AIDS and the Ebola and Nile Viruses are precisely manufactured diseases that escaped from the confines of various military laboratories. Movies like

the *Andromeda Strain* (1970), *Virus* (Japan, 1980) and *Outbreak* (1995) do nothing to dispel those notions.

Less than a week after Katrina flooded New Orleans, there were already several conspiracy Websites claiming that this hurricane had been artificially enhanced and directed by either aliens or George W. Bush. While the former are just malevolent, the latter apparently wanted to use the emergency to impose a totalitarian state. Without going to this extreme, which involves pumping fermion particles out of other dimensions, **Weather Control** is taken seriously enough by a number of scientists. There are some techniques, like seeding, blast dispersal and localized warming, that actually work and can influence climates to some extent.

In fiction, this is a popular theme for graphic novels, as it provides a good excuse to depict things such as snow covered palm trees and desiccated lake beds. Given that there is currently not much knowledge about how global weather works; there is a tacit agreement not to use what little we do know for warfare, lest we end up screwing up the whole planet. A good example of this would be the *Transperceneige* series (1983-2000), by Rochette and Lob, where the entire Earth ends up at a balmy minus 80 degrees Centigrade...

In our next instalment, we shall cover the topic of the *really* imaginative W.M.D. (Weapons of the Mad and Demented). ●



MonSFFA Bulletin Board

Christmas Dinner will be at:

Reubens Deli

888 St. Catherine Street West (Corner McGill College)

6:00 PM, Saturday, December 3, 2005

861-1255

Reservations are in the name of **Mark Burakoff**



A table for 24 has been reserved. All those who are planning to join us for dinner should confirm their attendance with Bernard Reischl by calling 363-6454 or emailing me at: reischl@videotron.ca. I must receive their confirmation by Monday, November 28th before 11:00 PM as I have to confirm seating by mid-week. No exceptions! If there is no space at the dinner table because they only decided to show up at the last minute, sorry, but they will be s*** out of luck as Christmas dinners have to confirmed well in advance. – Beryn Reischl

The Cloud

Bryan Ekers

Many, many moons ago, this story won a MonSFFA short, short story contest. We reprint it here, with permission from its author, in the hopes of inspiring more members to contribute original fiction.

Jim lay on his back in the grassy field. The sun warmed his face, calmed his spirit. A slow easterly wind blew a small cloud into his range of vision. He watched it lazily, seeing shapes within its cottony form. A castle, a spaceship, a woman, a lion. Jim's attention drifted away. He closed his eyes and thought of nothing.

Behind his eyelids was a soft orange, the penetrating light of the sun.

Very suddenly the orange faded to black. The change took several seconds to register to Jim. He opened his eyes.

The cloud had drifted between him and the sun, putting Jim in its shadow. Deprived of the direct sunlight, Jim began to shiver. Annoyed, he waited for the cloud to move on.

A long time seemed to have passed, impossible to tell exactly because Jim had no watch, and the cloud had not moved. Jim glared at it. It no longer seemed so cute and harmless.

With a great effort, Jim hauled himself to his feet and walked into the sunlight. Selecting a good spot to lie down again, not difficult in the uniform field, he relaxed and in a few minutes was half-asleep.

The coldness awoke him, however. The cloud was again blocking the sun. The sleepiness was gone from Jim's eyes as he glared at the interfering cloud.

He jerked himself upright and walked a hundred

metres across the field. He was about to lie down again when he noticed the cloud's shadow moving across the grass directly at him. He looked up at the cloud and watched it obscure the sun from him.

Jim ran, sprinting until his lungs forced him to stop. This time the cloud was directly over him before he could catch his breath. He ran a figure-eight on the field, a zigzag, a wildly unpredictable course. He was never quite able to get out from under the cloud.

"All right!" he yelled. "You win!"

The cloud descended until it was at Jim's eye-level. The camouflaging ry-ice effect faded, revealing an automated class six ultraviolet monitor.

"Apologies, sir," said the monitor's onboard computer. "But you have passed safe ultraviolet limits. The function of this unit is to –"

"I know," interrupted Jim. "...to prevent potentially damaging levels of ultraviolet radiation from reaching humans." He glared at the device.

"Well, you've ruined a perfectly good day. I may as well go home."

Angrily, Jim turned and stalked across the field, back to the house. The monitor rose to a level of five metres and followed him.

Jim fretted. Humans had conceived this machine, designed and built it.

And here he was in its shadow. ●

SFF Sightings!



This fearsome beast guarded the approach to Cathy's home town of Ste-Julie during the Hallowe'en season.





in
NEW YORK VACATION

Josée Bellemare

This is the TARDIS requesting landing clearance,” said the Doctor.

Rose looked confused. “Since when do you ask for clearance before we land and who are you asking?”

“TARDIS, you are clear to land in docking bay 4, coordinates to follow.”

“Coordinates received, thank you,” replied the Doctor. “Can you tell me if Zed is still working at MIB?”

“Zed is now in charge of this office.”

“Do me a favour, tell him the Doctor is coming for a visit.”

“As you wish, MIB out.”

“What was that about, and who is MIB?” asked Rose.

“MIB is the immigration office for extra terrestrials. I’m requesting clearance because I’m not the only ship landing and I’m here to renew my tourist visa,” he explained.

“Tourist visa? Just how many aliens are there on Earth?”

“Thousands, most of them in disguise of course. Somebody has to keep track of them.”

The TARDIS whirred and came to a full stop. “Here we are, Saturday June 4th 2005, New York city.” the Doctor announced.

“New York? Really? That’s great!”

They opened the TARDIS door and stepped out into a large room. Waiting for them was a man and a woman, both dressed in black.

“Welcome, back Doctor. It’s been a long time since your last visit. Zed said he’d see you later.”

“Wonderful,” said the Doctor. “This is my companion, Rose Tyler.”

“Miss Tyler, welcome to MIB. We can arrange a tour if you like. You’d be surprise how many species of aliens travel through this place on a daily basis.”

“As long as they’re not trying to kill me or invade

the planet, I’ve got no problem with that,” responded Rose.

Just then an Andorian rushed in. He was wearing coveralls and had a tool belt around his waist. “Is it true? I heard there was a working TARDIS here! What model is it?”

“Type 40, actually.” Turning to the Men In Black, the Doctor asked, “Who is this?”

“He calls himself Max. He’s an engineer.”

“Can I take a look inside?” asked Max. “How old is she?”

“Sure, Rose show him around would you? I’ll be with you in a minute.”

“Don’t worry, Doctor,” advised the MIB. “Max is a highly qualified engineer. The TARDIS is in good hands.”

“Alright then. I’ll see you in a little while.”

When the Doctor returned to the TARDIS, Max was caressing the control console. “How dare you abuse this beauty?” he thundered, turning his attention to the Doctor.

“Hold on, I never hurt Rose,” the Doctor answered.

“Not the human, the TARDIS!” exclaimed the Andorian. “Hitting her with tools when she isn’t working right! Barbarian! Sounds like something a human would do. Give me a few days and I’ll have her humming like new.”

“Go ahead then. Take good care of her.” The Doctor turned to Rose. “Would you like to see some Broadway shows?” he asked.

“Could we? That would be great.”

“I’m sure someone here could set us up with some tickets. Besides, I want to collect on a promise from and old acquaintance.” The Doctor grinned and held out his hand. “Shall we?”

As they left the hanger, Rose was amazed. The place looked like an airport terminal but with so many different species of aliens you could forget you were

on Earth.

“Quite something isn’t it?” the Doctor chuckled.

“Are you sure we’re in New York?”

“Absolutely. MIB has been in operation for several decades, keeping track of alien traffic on Earth. It’s changed a lot since the last time I was here, 30 something years ago – I think.”

The female agent from the hanger walked up to them.

“Doctor, if you’re ready, we’ll go up to the VIA lounge and get all the formalities taken care of. By the way, I’m called R, and if you need anything while you’re in New York don’t hesitate to ask.”

She led them to an elevator.

“Why are there so many initials around here?” asked Rose. “What do they all mean?”

“MIB stands for Men In Black, VIA stands for Very Important Alien and all the field agents in MIB have a letter designation. When we are recruited, usually from a law enforcement or military background, proof of our identity is erased from all databanks, computers or filing systems. It’s as if we never existed. We are then given our black suits and standard gear.”

“Wow!” responded Rose.

“Agent R,” interrupted the Doctor. “You said if there was anything you could do we should just ask. Would it be possible to get us some theatre tickets?”

The elevator doors opened to a spacious area overlooking the terminal. The room had seats shaped to accommodate all forms of aliens, computer terminals with Internet access, a bar stocked with all sorts of drinks and at the far end, a large computer console.

“Let me see what we can do.” R went to the console and started pushing keys on the terminal. “I’m afraid there’s nothing available for tonight, but I can get you tickets for the Tony Awards tomorrow night, transportation included, and invitations to a couple of parties afterward.”

“That sounds posh,” said Rose.

“What about a show?” asked the Doctor. “Rose, would you prefer a play or a musical?”

“I’d like a musical.”

“Let me see... yes we have tickets for Spamalot for Tuesday night,” said R.

“Fantastic!” said the Doctor.

“Glad I could help, and all formalities are done: your tourist visa is good for another 30 years.”

“Thank you,” said the Doctor. “So Rose, how ’bout you and I do a little sightseeing tonight? Maybe a ride in a horse drawn carriage around Central Park?”

“Let’s go! Maybe we can grab some hot dogs from a side-walk vendor?”

“Whatever you like.”

“If you’ll follow me,” said R, “I’ll show you the way out.”

As they were walking through the terminal agent R spoke quietly into her headpiece, too low for Rose and the Doctor to hear. When they got to the exit a horse drawn carriage was waiting for them.

“There you go, Doctor, this is Luigi,” said R. “He knows the city better than most natives. He can show you all the sights.”

“Is he an alien?” asked Rose.

“From Omicron 5,” smiled the agent. He wears a body suit to hide the blue scales, but the shape is the same as a human.”

“Thank you for all your help,” said the Doctor, “and please remind Zed I’d like to speak with him.”

R nodded.

“Alright Rose, let’s be on our way!”

Luigi indeed proved to be an excellent tour guide. He showed the Doctor and Rose all around the city and even stopped for a while so they could get some hot dogs. “The best in the city!” he claimed.

It was almost midnight when they got back to the TARDIS and when they walked in, Max was deep under the console working on some circuits. The strange thing was, he was singing, “Fly me to the moon”.

“Everything alright down there, Max?”

“Fine, Doctor, just fine. I’ve almost finished for tonight... There, done. Could you give me a hand up, please?”

Rose and the Doctor helped the Andorian crawl out from under the console.

“Thank you,” he said. “I have an appointment tomorrow morning, but I’ll be back in the afternoon. Good night.”

“Good night,” they answered at the same time.

As he was leaving Max was again singing “Fly Me to the Moon”.

“Well, time for bed!” said the Doctor. “Good night, Rose.”

“Good night Doctor.”

The next morning, Rose and the Doctor were given a guided tour of MIB facilities and met several different species. After lunch, a large white haired man came up to the Doctor.

“Hello, old friend! You’ve change since the last time. No more velvet suits?”

“And your hair’s no longer red!”

Both men shook hands and hugged each other.

“Excuse me, velvet suits?” asked Rose.

“He had curly, blond hair and wore velvet suits with white ruffled shirts when I first met him,” replied Zed.

Rose started laughing hysterically.

“I didn’t always have the best fashion sense. Not like today..” The Doctor smoothed over his leather jacket.

“So, I understand you’ve been asking for me. What can I do for you?”

“Remember what you said 30 years ago, when I asked for a ride in one of your special cars?”

Zed thought for a moment, then suddenly remembering, clapped a hand over his face.

“What’s this about cars?” asked Rose.

“Back then, I had a great interest in cars and asked if I could ride in one of them and Zed here said, ‘Yeah, sure, when the Red Sox win the World Series.’”

“But they did win, in October 2004.”

“Exactly, and now Zed here owes me a ride.”

“I don’t believe this!” exclaimed Rose. “You’re 900 years old, you can go anywhere, anytime, in the universe and you want to ride in a car? What’s so special about it?”

“For one thing, our cars can drive up walls and on ceilings,” replied Zed, with evident pride.

“Boys and their toys!” said Rose “I’m going to pick out what to wear for the Tonys tonight. See you later!”

She walked away towards the TARDIS, still shaking her head.

After hours of trying on dresses, Rose finally decided on a midnight blue silk dress with silver and gold beading with a matching shawl. It looked like a starry night sky.

Around seven o’clock she was waiting outside the TARDIS when the Doctor came out.

“Why aren’t you ready?” asked Rose.

“I am ready!” the Doctor responded.

“You’re not going dressed like that, are you?”

“What’s wrong with what I’m wearing?”

Just then agent R walked up with an envelope. “Here you are, tickets to the Tonys, invitations to a couple of parties, and there’s a limo at your service all night. Rose, you look beautiful. Doctor, why aren’t you dressed?”

“Not you, too? What’s wrong with my jacket?”

“Nothing,” answered Rose, “but I’ve been travelling with you for a while now and you wear the

same thing day in and day out, no matter where we go! Most of the time you make it work, but this is the Tony Awards and that jacket just isn’t going to cut it.

“You need a tuxedo, or at least a nice suit and you’re going to wear one tonight even if I have to grab you by your oversized ears, drag you into the TARDIS and dress you myself!”

“Oi, that’s a low blow.”

“The ears or the jacket?” asked Rose.

“Both” Turning to agent R, the Doctor said, “Help me out here, please.”

“Don’t look at me for help!” she answered. “I agree with Rose. That jacket is not good enough for the Tony Awards.”

“Fine then,” the Doctor shrugged. “I’ll go change.”

A few minutes later he came back looking very elegant in a tuxedo.

“Better?”

“Wow!” both ladies responded at the same time.

“Since I pass inspection, can we get going now?” He held out his arm for Rose, and together they got into the limo and drove off.

The evening went wonderfully. Rose and the Doctor had good seats at the theatre, the show was very entertaining, and they enjoyed themselves greatly at the parties afterwards.

It was well past two when they got back. They ran into agent R on their way in. “So, how was your evening? Did you enjoy yourselves?”

“Very much thank you,” said Rose. “The whole thing was so posh! I even got to meet Hugh Jackman. He was such a gentleman! If you’ll excuse me, I’m going to bed, we have a big day tomorrow. Good night.”

The Doctor went pale and followed her into the TARDIS.

The next morning Rose was bright and cheerful while she was talking to R. “Thanks for all your help since we’ve been in New York. Everything’s been great so far, she told her. “I’m curious – does Max always sing when he works? On Saturday it was, “Fly Me to the Moon.” Yesterday, I heard him sing the theme song from Fireball XL5, and this morning it was “Tears of Jupiter.”

“Max loves to sing, and he has a great voice, but he only sings songs with planets and stars in the lyrics,” R explained. “You should hear him sing ‘Moon River’. It’s beautiful.”

“Ah, Doctor,” said Rose. “There you are. Ready to go?”

“Ready as I’ll ever be.”

“Let’s be off then. Agent R, could you call us a cab?”

“I can have one at the door in five minutes, and at your disposal for the entire day,” answered R.

“Thank you,” said Rose, as she and the Doctor left in the cab.

Just then Max came out of the TARDIS and walked towards Agent R.

“Max, do you have any idea why the Doctor looked so scared? This is a man who’s faced one invasion after another without blinking, but this morning he looked terrified.”

“You don’t get it do you?” grinned Max. “He’s going to spend the day shopping with a nineteen-year-old girl. It’s her first trip to New York and she has a no limit credit card!”

“You should have seen his face this morning at breakfast! He was getting more and more pale with each place she wanted to see: Macy’s, Bloomingdale’s, 5th Avenue, but he went absolutely ghastly when Rose said she wanted to find the right souvenir for her mum.”

They both laughed for a couple of seconds and each went back to work, Max humming, “Blue Moon”.

During the day, Rose and the Doctor went from one store to another. Rose was having a ball, buying stuff by the bagful and the Doctor just followed, carefully giving his opinion when asked, carrying the bags to their cab and occasionally making a few purchases of his own.

It was shortly after dinner when they made it back to the TARDIS with armfuls of shopping bags. This evening they would stay in and take it easy. After all, tomorrow it was the Doctor’s turn to choose their destination.

Rose spent most of the evening putting away her new clothes and then went looking for Agent R. She found her in the terminal.

“R, I need your help. I want to send something to my mum in London.”

“What did you get her?”

“A large handbag with the New York skyline on it,” answered Rose.

“No problem,” said the agent. “We can send it by courier and she’ll get it in a couple of days. So, where are you and the Doctor going tomorrow?”

“I don’t know, he won’t tell me. Thanks for your help with the package. See you around!”

Tuesday morning, Rose and the Doctor left for their destination, and for most of the trip the Doctor wouldn’t tell Rose a thing about where they were going. When they were almost there, Rose saw a road sign for The Cloisters. “What’s that?” she asked the Doctor.

“It’s a museum,” he answered. “It has one of the most impressive collections of medieval art in America. It spans several centuries and includes tapestries, stained glass, and architecture. Trust me, you’ll love it.”

“So, that’s what we’re going to do today? Museums?”

“Don’t knock it. New York has many museums with some amazing collections. Consider, I went shopping with you yesterday.”

“Fair enough,” answered Rose. “Besides, you probably know more about history than the tour guides!”

“True, but we don’t need to tell them that!”

So Rose gave the museums a chance. First the Cloisters, and in the afternoon they went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Doctor was able to explain all the different collections and time periods and even threw in a few anecdotes about some famous people in history.

They came back to the TARDIS for a quick dinner and got ready to go see Spamalot. This time the Doctor got to keep his jacket. Again, R provided transportation.

After the show they went for a bite and the cab driver recommended a small Italian restaurant that he said made the best pizza in town. When they finally made it back, they went straight to bed.

Wednesday morning Rose stayed with the TARDIS and kept Max company. He even sang, “Moon River” for her.

“I understand that the two of you will be leaving later today. I’m sorry I won’t be able to say goodbye to the Doctor, but I have other ships to take care of. Please give him my best. Where is he anyway?”

“Zed made arrangements to give the Doctor a ride in one of MIB’s special cars.”

Agent R was driving with the Doctor strapped in the passenger seat. In the Lincoln tunnel the car went up the wall and on the ceiling.

“FANTASTIC!!!”



FREE WILL

Les Lupien

**Editor's Note: This story contains coarse language and mature subject matter.
Reader discretion is advised.**

Specialist One Chris Nelson stepped out of the air conditioned palace into hell. The malignant sun brooded halfway up the sky over the desert to the east where the oil pipeline lay. Far to the west the personnel carrier laden with compliant women from Al Badir crawled across the sand like a toy car.

Specialist Three "Doc" Fernandez came out next, laughing. "Here comes the whore special."

Staff Sergeant Joe Johnson, the black soldier from Los Angeles, jostled Fernandez on his way out. "Don't call them whores. They've got hungry kids."

"If they fuck for money or fuck for food, they're still –"

"Shut up, Doc," Johnson said. He peered through his sunglasses in the direction of the oil pipeline. "It's going to be in the fifties C again. Hope we don't need to do a foot recon."

"Me, too," Nelson said. He was already sweating in his body armour. The helmet weighed on his head. He yearned to get inside the air-conditioned hummer in which they would ride along the oil pipeline checking for any signs of sabotage.

When Johnson got a few steps ahead, Fernandez said to Nelson, "I still say they're whores. The Army pays them real money to clean, wash and cook for us. So why do they fuck for some chow we let them take home? Maybe it's just to spend more time in our prefab. It must seem like a palace, no joke, to them after Al Badir."

Nelson did not answer.. He felt sorry for the women from Al Badir, that dirt-poor village wrapped around a well in the desert. Some of the soldiers asked them for sex. They agreed because they needed their jobs desperately. And, like Johnson said, they also needed the food handouts for hungry kids.

"What do you think?" Fernandez asked.

This was Nelson's first patrol with Fernandez. But he disliked him already for his nasty tongue, and feared him for his muscular six feet. "I don't know, Doc."

Fernandez nudged him in the ribs. "I saw you last week talking to the new one, the tiny, angel-faced tart. What's her name?"

"Something like Lulu. She pronounces funny."

"This is her day to come. Gonna fuck her tonight?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

The thought of spending the afternoon cooped up with Fernandez in the hummer depressed Nelson almost as much as the thought of doing a foot patrol in the heat. Most men in the unit would probably feel the same way. They called Fernandez "Doc" ironically because he bragged about spending a year in medical school.

"Because she told me she's only fifteen," Nelson said.

Fernandez scowled. "So?"

Johnson stopped beside the hummer door, turned and glared at Fernandez. "Doc, get in first. I want you to drive."

Nelson never felt safe in the hummer while it moved along the pipeline. The Army claimed this new 2020s version provided maximum visibility, firepower and safety. But if it hit one of the new flex mines... He had seen body parts from one hummer that did. So he was relieved when Johnson yelled, "Stop right here, Doc."

Nelson saw the problem: deep tracks in the sand running from far off in the desert up to the oil pipeline and then back.

Fernandez stopped the hummer. "No big deal," he said. "Probably just scavengers from Al Badir trying to bleed a little oil from a check valve."

"Probably." Johnson stood up from his seat beside Nelson. "But we gotta make sure they closed the valve tight. Junior will go take a look."

A nerve twitched in Nelson's belly. "Now?"

Johnson glanced at him, then grinned. "Changed my mind. Junior's too eager. Anyway, I need some exercise." He pulled his Steyr assault rifle from its rack. "If the recon helicopter comes over, tell them what we've stopped for. And watch my ass."

Johnson went out quickly, letting a single blast of hot air into the hummer. Nelson watched him through the bullet-proof pylex window as he started down the truck tracks toward the pipeline.

Fernandez turned in the driver's swivel seat. "Junior, you better take Lulu. If you don't, somebody else will. Not me. Too skinny for my taste."

Nelson took down his Steyr and slid off the safety. He wouldn't hesitate to get out and help Johnson if the need arose. "Doc, what did you study in medical school?"

"EEG."

"What's that?"

"The science of brain waves. Including how to reprogram things in here." Fernandez tapped his head.

"Yeah, I've heard about that," Nelson said. "Maybe I'll look into it when I get to be a civilian again."

"You'll need big money. No health plan covers it," Fernandez told him. "Of course, if you're a dangerous criminal, the state may pay." "Since I'm not a criminal, what can it do for me?"

"Make you happy, man, or smarter. Wipe out any bad memories or guilt. In an EEG clinic they can use electrotherapy to alter your thought patterns or mnemotherapy to give you new, better memories."

"Sounds interesting."

"More than you think. Makes you see all this religious crap about free will is just that. Your mind is programmed like a computer's. And it can be reprogrammed. Know what thoughts are? Just tiny electrical signals between cells."

Nelson watched Johnson kneel beside the pipeline. "Yeah?"

"And I'll bet you're running a program about Lulu right now."

"Too young, Doc."

"Worried about age of consent? A technicality. Know what the age of consent is in Canada? Fourteen. Nobody here would blow the whistle on you anyway. Do it, man. You have to get some kicks in this place just to keep you sane."

"She's just a child."

"Play with yourself then."

Johnson came running back and climbed into the hummer when Nelson slid the door open. Sweat glistened on his face and neck and trickled under his body armour. "Valve's closed," he said. "Go, Doc."

The sun had passed zenith when they reached the southern limit of their recon zone and stopped. The anxiety knots in Nelson's belly unravelled. When the recon hummer from the adjoining zone appeared, Johnson said, "Take us home, Doc."

Home? The word jolted Nelson. Home was half a world away. How could Johnson use it for a prefab

you shared with twenty-four homesick men pissed off by their shit assignment? Home? Palace was less ironic.

Fernandez turned to grin at Nelson before he headed the hummer away from the pipeline. "Think it over, Junior."

"No," Nelson said. But what else did he have to look forward to tonight? A shower with five other men in a stall. A filling but unexciting meal. Maybe a game of pool or chess. A soft porn holovision if he could stand it. And tomorrow and all the tomorrows? Heat and fear. And always, the anger he could never show. Johnson and Doc were volunteers. They had asked for what they were getting. But he was an innocent victim, scooped up by the government for lack of more volunteers.

Nelson watched the women who had come from Al Badir that day line up for the personnel carrier to go home. All wore not-too-clean dresses that reached from neck to toe and shrouds that covered their hair and ears except when they worked. The older women were all there as usual. But some of the younger ones were missing.

Lulu walked by to line up and flashed a smile at Nelson. She had a sweet face, relatively fair, with neat, small features and no blemishes.

Nelson wanted to move, but his feet seemed glued to the floor.

Past experience inhibited Nelson. He had a few disastrous dates during his one year at university. The memory of his inept behaviour always made him wince. He had never got laid of course. That had to wait until he put himself in the hands of the whores outside the Army base where he did his basic training. Those do-it-and-get-off women made him think of how it could be with someone he liked and who liked him.

Nelson freed one foot, then the other, and sidled up to Lulu. His voice sounded so feeble he wondered if she could hear. "Lulu, want to stay with me tonight?"

She stopped without looking at him. Her face betrayed nothing. Then she turned, smiled a wisp of a smile, and said so low he could hardly hear, "Yes."

Nelson's knees shook when he put a hand on her shoulder.

The Army had given all the enlisted men in the palace individual sleeping cubicles with the doors removed. "To make you more comfortable," their commanding officer said with a grin. To let us take a woman to bed without leaving the palace, the men

believed and scoffed at the Army's official line forbidding "fraternization" with local women.

Nelson had furnished his cubicle with a small cabinet from the division PX. After turning on the bare overhead light, he pulled out two bottles of Coca Cola from the cabinet and offered one to Lulu. He would have liked to buy her a real drink, as he had for his university dates, then sit and talk. This was the best he could do. "Want a glass?" he asked.

Lulu shook her head. Then she peeled off her clothes and climbed under the covers on his bunk.

Nelson turned off the overhead bulb, undressed with his back to Lulu in the dim light from the corridor, put on a condom, and slipped in beside her. She must have done this before. He had less reason to feel guilty.

"What's your name?" Lulu asked.

"Chris." He moved until his hip touched hers. "Can I kiss you?"

Lulu did not answer, so Nelson bent over and kissed her. Her lips were soft, cool and faintly moist.

"Sliced turkey," Lulu said.

"Sure. All I can get." Nelson put his arms around Lulu and pulled her to him. She wore no perfume, but smelled clean and fresh. He loved the way she nestled against his shoulder, their cheeks touching. This was the way he had often imagined it would be with his bride on their wedding night.

"Bread, Chris," Lulu said. "We need lots of bread."

"Sure Lulu." Nelson was happy. He didn't need to fuck Lulu. That would be wrong anyway.

"A bag of sugar and lots of fruit," Lulu said.

"Sure, Lulu." She had to know she was arousing him. Maybe she wanted him to take her. Maybe she would be hurt if he didn't. He rolled her over, gently, on her back. "I'll be careful, Lulu," he whispered.

Lulu did not answer, but her small hand touched his groin. He raised himself to mount her. Then he suddenly became aware of a pain in his lower chest that had only nagged dully at the edge of his consciousness before. That pain could soften his erection. He lowered himself to the bunk and gently pushed Lulu's hand away. "Not just now," he whispered.

Nelson intended to try again when the chest pain went away. He heard noises from the other cubicles. A bunk squeaking. A woman's strained laughter. A man's raised voice, swearing. The pain faded quickly. But, in the silence, the weariness developed during a day of anxiety inside a jolting hummer overwhelmed Nelson. He slept.

Or maybe he dozed, woke up, dozed. Mom took

off her glasses to wipe away tears. "How could you, Chris? A fifteen-year-old, a baby. Same age as your sister, Eileen." Dad did not look at Nelson. In profile he seemed old and tired. "Statutory rape, Chris. Could get you fifteen years here."

Nelson woke up yelling. Lulu's breath tickled his face. "Chris, you sick?" Somewhere outside a man yelled, "What the fuck's the matter with him?"

"I'm all right," Nelson said, though he felt drained. He had no erection. When Lulu touched his groin, he again gently pushed her hand away. "Not just now."

Lulu lay back. Within seconds the sound of her heavier breathing told Nelson she was asleep. The sound soothed him. He leaned toward her. In the dim light from the corridor she looked so soft and cuddly. Just as he imagined his bride would be. "I love you," he whispered.

Lulu stirred, but did not awaken.

After a while Nelson dozed on and off. He came wide awake only when he heard Lulu say, "I go now, Chris." She was leaning over him. In the morning light he could see she wore a worried expression.

"Turkey. Bread. Sugar. Fruit. You will? You promised, Chris."

"Sure. All I can get."

When Lulu started to get out of bed, Nelson said, "Wait. There's something else." He opened the door of his cabinet and pulled out his many-function Swiss wristwatch with the genuine silver band. A present for his eighteenth birthday last year from his parents. "I want you to have this."

She examined the watch, then smiled. "Lulu, could you love me?" he asked.

Lulu slipped the watch on her wrist until it fit snug. "I go now, Chris," she said. When Nelson reached for her, she eluded him and jumped out of bed. With her back turned, she dressed quickly.

"Lulu, I'll go to the kitchen and tell the cooks what to save for you," Nelson said. "Oh, and they'll put it in a composition freezer."

She turned at the door and smiled at him. "Goodbye, Chris."

When Nelson climbed into the hummer, he wished he hadn't. Fernandez was there alone, his feet propped up on an ammunition box.

"Johnson got a call from division," Fernandez said. "He'll be along."

Nelson looked outside. Another blistering day. Maybe he could stand it outside for a few minutes. But what excuse could he give for getting out that wouldn't piss off Fernandez

“Saw you in the kitchen. Getting chow for Lulu?” Fernandez asked.

“That’s right.”

“Bet she was a juicy piece, huh?”

“Yeah.” Fernandez’s proximity in a closed space reminded Nelson harshly of his own physical inferiority. A stringy one thirty against the other man’s solid maybe two hundred. Fernandez could cold cock him with one half-hearted blow.

“Fucked – up with guilt this morning, Junior?”

Nelson gritted his teeth.

“Don’t be. Someone programmed you to feel that way. You got so horny you ran a stronger program. You’re no more responsible for what you do than that artificial intelligence at division. Brain science, man. Read up on it.”

Desperate, Nelson dared to ask, “Why did you leave medical school, Doc?”

Fernandez couldn’t show a flush under his heavy sunburn, but his jaws clenched. “Ran out of money.”

Nelson peered out the window. Thank God, Johnson was loping toward the hummer.

“Gonna fuck Lulu again tonight?” Fernandez asked.

“No.”

“Then, since you say she’s so hot, I’ll get a piece.”

Nelson turned. Words popped out of his mouth. “No, Doc, you don’t want to do that.”

Fernandez snickered. “Oh, shit. Don’t tell me you’ve fallen in love with the little whore.”

“Doc, she’s too -“

A blast of hot air followed Johnson into the hummer. He glanced from Fernandez to Nelson. “You guys getting along?” Without waiting for an answer, he said, “Doc, you’re such a good driver, you do it again. If we find anything, Junior will check it out.”

Fernandez muttered an obscenity and swung himself into the driver’s swivel seat. Nelson, stewing in hatred and impotence, stared at the untidy bush of black hair at the back of his enemy’s head.

Nelson wasn’t sure what he saw stretched out in the sand next to the pipeline until Johnson said, “That’s a body. Stop, Doc.”

Fernandez stopped the hummer with the motor running. “Gonna send Junior to investigate?”

“Yeah, I guess,” Johnson said. He turned to Nelson. “Cover it all the way. If it moves, kill it. If it doesn’t, kick it hard. If it still doesn’t move, and smells like hell, get down and take a look. If you’re sure it’s dead, give us a wave. Got it?”

Nelson’s heart began to hammer. “Got it.”

Johnson scowled at him. “Sure I can trust you?”

Fernandez snickered.

Nelson wanted to say, “I’m not sure, sarge.” But he feared Fernandez’s tongue more than danger and the heat. “Sure.”

The heat struck Nelson so hard when he jumped outside that nausea stirred under his belt. He slipped the safety off his Steyr, pointed the assault rifle at the body, and started to walk. He had to look confident. Otherwise Doc would make nasty cracks. Two sounds competed for his attention: the pounding of his heart and the crunch of his boots in the soft sand.

Nelson’s nose rebelled some distance from the body. He stopped in his tracks. The foul smell of decomposition stirred his nausea again, more strongly. Still, Johnson had told him to kick the body, and he had better obey. He held his breath and took a few more steps until he could plainly see through his sunglasses that the corpse was that of a man in jeans and a torn T-shirt lying on his face. Nelson’s gorge rose. He shuffled close to the corpse and kicked it in the ribs. But damned if he would get down and touch that thing. He backed away until the stench became bearable, turned and waved an arm.

The hummer lurched forward. Nelson saw Johnson crouching to look over Fernandez’s shoulder. Then his world exploded.

Nelson opened his eyes, closed them immediately against the blinding glare. His sunglasses had blown away. His ears still rang from the blast. Flat on his back, he groped in the sand, found his sunglasses and put them on. Tentatively he pushed himself up on his elbows, then rose on his knees. No pain. He ran both hands over his head, neck, torso and legs down to his knees. No blood. No feel of anything broken

Reassured, Nelson stood on shaky legs and peered about. His head was afire under the helmet. His Steyr lay in the sand a few feet away. The hummer – what was left of it – stood silent where he had last seen it. He ignored his weapon and limped toward the hummer. The vomit came in a flood when he got close enough to see what the landmine had done.

The explosion had torn loose the hummer’s side door and left only a few shards of glass in the “unbreakable” pylex in the window frame. It had also blown out the two occupants. Johnson lay on his back with one leg curled under him. The other leg lay some distance away, as did a fragment of an arm. Johnson’s eyes stared blankly from a gray, lifeless

face. Fernandez, apparently in one piece, lay on his back with blood seeping steadily into the sand from a wound under his body.

When he stopped retching, Nelson knelt and gingerly touched Fernandez's cheek. "Doc?"

Fernandez's bloodshot eyes focussed on Nelson for a moment. He coughed and croaked, "Call the copter, boy." Then his eyes closed and his jaw went slack.

A patch of shade thrown by the wrecked hummer beckoned. Nelson crawled over to the shade on his knees, sat down, removed his helmet and wiped the stinging sweat from his forehead. He felt weak, but could think clearly. And his thoughts – just tiny electrical signals, Doc had said – troubled him.

One of Fernandez's legs twitched. An image popped into Nelson's mind: Doc on his feet, face contorted, yelling, "Why the fuck aren't you calling the copter? Can't you see I'm bleeding to death?" He wanted to yell back, "Tough shit, Doc!" But he could not, dared not.

Nelson felt behind his right ear for the micro radio, transmitter and receiver in a single unit small as the bowl of a teaspoon. But he felt too weak at the moment for coherent speech. Besides, the heat would be almost bearable here in the shade for a little while.

Nelson pulled his hand from behind his ear, closed his eyes and let his head drop on his chest. He wanted to doze, but his mind remained restless.. And very soon a dull ache started hi his lower chest, the same annoying sensation that had stopped him from mounting Lulu. Damn! Would he have to put up with that on top of the heat? He gritted his teeth, hoping the ache would fade away as stomach pains usually did.

But the ache grew stronger.

The cheery medic never stopped talking. Nelson didn't listen. He slumped deeper into the bucket seat inside the recon helicopter.

"Hey, soldier, did you hear what I said? Roll up your sleeve." The medic smiled, but his tone signalled a command.

"What for?" Nelson just wanted to be left alone to enjoy the comfort and coolness. One of the crew thrust his Steyr into his arms, but he let it drop to the

floor.

The medic produced a small but wicked-looking needle. "You had a hell of a shock, soldier. Shows in your eyes. I'm going to give you a shot of vivadium. It'll make you sharp to answer questions at division."

Nelson reluctantly rolled up his sleeve.

The medic prattled on as he felt below Nelson's elbow for a vein. "Damn lucky for you that your radio worked after the blast. We heard the explosion, but couldn't tell which direction to look. Luckier for your buddy – maybe."

Fernandez? Nelson had not thought about Doc while the medic and a crewman helped him into the helicopter and gave him a quick hands-on examination. "My buddy? He's–"

"Alive, just, when we got to him. If you'd called five minutes later, he'd have been gone. I slapped on a quickclot and Jeff started a transfusion while I helped you." He yelled toward the back of the helicopter. "Jeff, how's the Spec 3 doing? His buddy wants to know."

Nelson turned to see Fernandez stretched out on the floor of the helicopter with the other medic hovering over him.

"He's gonna live, Ray," Jeff shouted back.

Ray chuckled. "Real lucky bastard. He'll be shipped home to convalesce."

The vivadium had acted fast. Nelson felt keyed up, eager to talk. "Thanks. Now I know I'm not a computer."

Ray frowned. "What the fuck does that mean?"

Nelson did not fully understand what he meant. He was more than a thinking machine. He had a body that told him not to fuck Lulu and not to let Fernandez die. But how the body could do that, what switched it on to send messages he did not know. He grinned and said, "Nothing."

"Yeah?" The medic was still frowning. "You OK, soldier? Vivadium can rattle your brains."

"I'm OK."

"When you get to division, go see your buddy. He'll want to thank you." Nelson did not believe that Fernandez would thank him. But he had something to say to Fernandez: *You're full of shit, Doc.* "Yeah, I'll go see him." ●

Chicken Little

Reviewed by Sylvain St-Pierre



For some reason, reviewers seem to have descended upon this movie like a ton of brick! I will grant them that this is not the best Pixar film ever, but I hardly see why they should be nasty about it.

Chicken Little is a nice little take on the classical tale, and it uses 3-D animation precisely the way I think it should be: to render colourful and whimsical scenes that are difficult or impossible to do live or with old fashioned stop motion. The story is certainly not deep, but it is cute and there are zillion of amusing details spread all over the place. I especially liked the way the various species retain their specific animal identities and how furniture is adapted to the various physiologies.

You may find this movie dull if you are a lover of sex, death and carnage; but it is otherwise a pleasant way to spend eighty minutes, especially if going out with kids



Serenity – The Movie

Reviewed by the Fernster

Original story by Joss Whedon & Brett Matthews

The Cast

Morena Baccarin	- Inara Serra	Adam Baldwin	- Jayne Cobb
Chiwetal Ejiofor	- The Operative	Nathan Fillion	- Mal Reynolds
Ron Glass	- Shepherd Book	Summer Glau	- River Tam
Sean Maher	- Dr. Simon Tam	Jewel Straite	- Kaylee Frye
Gina Torres	- Zoe Warren	Alan Tudyk	- Wash

Director:	Joss Whedon	Produced by:	Barry Mendel
Music:	David Newman	Writer:	Joss Whedon
Dir. Photography:	Jack Green	Costume Design:	Ruth Carter

Based on the excellent TV series created by Joss Whedon (Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and Angel), this movie takes up the storyline left hanging by the shows unfortunate cancellation. The mysterious River Tam is still being hunted by the Alliance, who has sent The Operative to collect her. For Captain Mal Reynolds and the crew of the Firefly class cargo ship “Serenity” – this mean Trouble with a capital “T”.



The crew of Serenity, website publicity shot,
<http://www.serenitymovie.com/>

Having personally seen this movie three times so far – you can guess that I rather enjoyed the movie.

It helps that I was a fan of the TV series to begin with. Yes, while the movie was structured to introduce the “verse” to those unaware of the TV series Firefly – it really helped to have seen a few episodes of the TV series. Joss Whedon’s ’verse is a complex mixture of

Upcoming Conventions & Events!

November 25-27 - Con No Baka 1,

Doubletree International Plaza
Hotel, Toronto, ON.

Anime/gaming convention.

Guests: Derwin Mak, more

TBA. Memberships:

C\$30/US\$24 until May 31,

C\$37.50/US\$30 until

September 30, C\$45 at the

door. www.connobaka.com



January 28 & 29 - Comunicon,

University

of New Brunswick,

Fredericton, NB.

Gaming convention.

memberships: 3\$,

Free for volunteers & GMs

www.wallscrawls.com/comunicon

February 24-26 - Animaritime 2006,

Mount Allison

University,

Sackville, NB.

Anime

convention. Guests: TBA. Memberships: \$20

until January 30, 2006, \$25 at the door.

www.animaritime.mtaanime.org

March 31 - April 2 - Ad Astra 2006,

Crowne Plaza Toronto Don Valley Hotel,

Toronto, ON. SF convention. Guests: Ray

Harryhausen, Terry

Brooks, Peter David,

Betsy Mitchell, David

Warren, plus satellite

linkup with Ray

Bradbury, more.

Membership: C\$40 until

November 30, C\$50 until February 28, 2006,

\$60 at the door. www.ad-astra.org



March 31 - April 2 - FilKONtario 16,

Delta Toronto Aripport West,

Mississauga, Ontario SF

filking convention. Guests:

Chris Conway, Tanya Huff,

Judi Miller. Memberships:

55\$ to March 11, 2006.



different cultural backgrounds which can be quite confusing for someone unfamiliar to it. Some background information was given in the beginning of the movie which helps place the unfamiliar person into the context of this universe and introduced the storyline from the TV series. River Tam is someone special, and whose capture is badly wanted by the Alliance. River Tam who happens to be a “crew member”/passenger on the Serenity owned by Mal Reynolds, a troubled ex-soldier (a Browncoat) from the losing side of the recent war. The Operative is send by the Alliance either to capture or kill River, whatever the cost. The Reavers are also revealed for the first time, and they certainly have the most scaring looking spaceships ever. The mixture of technology in this 'verse makes for an interesting twist of mechanical devices. So when, Serenity and its crew is caught between both the Alliance and the Reaver Fleets, this makes for a Great Mother of a Space battle which is really exciting to see. The special effects were great. The plot twists exciting. The acting was acceptable and in character with their TV series characters. The storyline was fine and at times unexpected and surprising. I highly recommend you catch this movie before it disappears from the big screen.

PS – The DVD edition of the movie is expected to be issued in early December (in time for Christmas) according to the rumour mill on the Web.



Boréal 2005 October 21 - 23, 2005

Reviewed by Charles Mohapel

Having enjoyed being the Official Convention Photographer for Boréal 2004, which was also last year's Convention, I was very happy to return for Boréal 2005.

I have to agree with René Walling who told me that Boréal is somewhat reminiscent of many cons of the 1940s and 1950s, particularly Worldcons of that era, in that many of the authors present began as fans and even success has not taken that fannish love away.

For me, the personal highlight of the weekend was once again Master Raconteur, Eric Gauthier, and his storytelling on the Sunday afternoon of the con. For the second year running, he made me laugh so hard, my sides hurt. I would love to see him attend Con*Cept where I think he would give Larry Stewart good competition among the Francophones.

I've already registered for Boréal 2006.



Mike Johnson at Concordia, October 26, 2005

Reviewed by Charles Mohapel

Montréal's animation fans turned out in great numbers to listen to Animation Director Mike Johnson speak and show us samples of his Stop Motion work. Beginning with his 1997 short "The Devil Went Down To Georgia", used by Primus (the band, NOT the Canadian telecommunications company), he ended by showing the work of his unit on Tim Burton's, "Corpse Bride".

My favourite was most definitely "The Devil Went Down To Georgia".

Montreal Browncoats Hold a Shindig!

Reviewed by Fernster

Photo by Charles Mohapel

On November 12th in St-Lazare, about twenty Browncoats from the Greater Montreal area showed up to enjoy this shindig event. A great Hot Chili (also Veggie Chili) and few other side dishes were available for the Browncoats to feast upon, and the hosts Steve & Marie-Josée made sure that their guests were quite comfortable and welcomed.

There were many discussions on the up-coming DVD release of the Serenity movie and about the DVD cover art for this movie. Much discussion was also held on the future of the Firefly 'verse and on Joss Whedon's upcoming new project such as "Wonder Woman". A drawing was also held for a Jayne style knitted Hat – The Winner was Steve our host for the shindig.

Shindig indeed! – Members of the Montreal Browncoats stand proudly for a group picture. Check the super big screen in the background. Marie-Josée & Steve (far right) were the hosts of this Shindig. Thanks Again!

During the Shindig, the Browncoats enjoyed watching the showing on a big screen of three episodes of the Firefly series, the Firefly Gag reel, and Pre-Firefly promotional interviews with the cast members. Also a really great Canadian fan film named "Mosquito" – a real funny but very high quality parody of Firefly – with a Canadian sly sense of humour.

All in all, the evening shindig when just fine, and everyone enjoyed themselves.

For more information on the Montreal Browncoats go to the following websites:

Montreal Browncoats :

<http://tv.groups.yahoo.com/group/montrealbrowncoats/>

Canadian Browncoats :

<http://movies.groups.yahoo.com/group/canadianbrowncoats>



Montreal's Brown coats: MonSFFA's own Fernster is third from the left, back row.



Appearing in each issue of Warp, "MonSFFAndom" collects those news and activities reports published over the last few months in Impulse, MonSFFA's monthly news bulletin.

As is our practise, we'll save the individual monthly meeting reviews until the end and deal first with the club's other news and activities reports.

Note that the September issue of Impulse departed from the news bulletin's usual focus on MonSFFActivities to offer a preview of the new SF/F television series premiering that month. The October issue caught up on the news that MonSFFA's long-serving vice-president, Sébastien Mineau, had resigned, announcing his decision at the club's September meeting:



Sébastien, photo by Charles Mohapel

MonSFFA VP RESIGNS

MonSFFA vice-president Sébastien Mineau has tendered his resignation after a half-decade of service to the club in that capacity. Rising to announce to the membership at MonSFFA's September 18 meeting that he was stepping down, Sébastien cited increasing demands on his time at work and in other fannish pursuits

as inhibiting his ability to give the job the attention he believes it merits.

In a letter to club president Berny Reischl explaining his decision, Sébastien wrote: "I feel I

don't give enough time to MonSFFA....I lack (the) time to put the right amount of effort into the club...." MonSFFA's VP, he stated, "should be organising events and helping out (with) organising the monthly meetings. I, sadly, don't have time to do that anymore...." Adding that he's lately felt "overwhelmed" and "tired," Sébastien does not rule out a return to the executive ranks at some future date, but for the time being intends to enjoy the status of regular MonSFFA member.

President Reischl thanked his departing VP for his many years of enthusiastic service to MonSFFA, noting that Sébastien's contributions to the club are greatly appreciated. During his time in office, Sébastien was actively involved in the planning and running of our monthly meetings, the organising of special events, the securing of movie premiere passes, and the promotion of the club. He worked, as well, on



Some MonSFen met for supper at the Cage aux Sports before joining Con*Cept's BarCon at the Days Inn. Photos by Wayne Glover & Sylvain St-Pierre

the club's discount program and often stepped up as a meeting panellist (particularly when the topic involved *Star Wars*!).

Sébastien received a well-deserved round of applause as humble thanks from the membership present at the September meeting. As an official instrument of the club, *Impulse* reiterates that sentiment.

Also covered, briefly, in October's Impulse was news that Con•Cept's executive had met to "assess the status of the con, and to review the events which led to its cancellation this year...." A review of the organisation's bylaws was deemed necessary, as was the undertaking of strategies to improve communication among concom members in future. In addition, Con•Cept announced that it had changed dates, moving to the weekend of October 13-15 for 2006.

A newsworthy notation on Boréal, meanwhile, reported that the Québécois con had won its bid to host the "Convention nationale française de S-F" in 2007, an event described as a smaller-scale WorldCon conducted in French.

The news bulletin included a list of local movie premieres recently co-sponsored by MonSFFA: The Cave, A Sound of Thunder, Red Eye, The Exorcism of Emily Rose, Corpse Bride, and Serenity. Club members had benefited from complimentary passes to these film screenings, readers were informed.

November's Impulse covered the wake held for Con•Cept 2005; news writer Keith Braithwaite took the opportunity to editorialise a little on the subject of

Con•Cept's recurrent manpower problems and what must be done to insure the con remain a going concern:

"BARCON" HELD IN LIEU OF CON•CEPT

About 20 supporters of Con•Cept, Montreal's only annual fan-run science fiction and fantasy convention, gathered Friday evening, November 4, to toast the con, the troubled 2005 edition of which was officially cancelled a few months earlier. The group, occupying a room adjacent the downtown Days Inn Hotel's bar, included out-of-town patrons, long-time volunteers, former guests, and current and ex-concom members. Con•Cept 2005 was to have opened registration on this evening in this hotel, and the people assembled to honour the fallen event expressed regret that the con had failed to get off the ground this year. The hopeful sentiment was for a return to form in 2006.

In the 16 years since its founding, Con•Cept has been scrubbed three times, in 1994, 2000, and now, 2005. The con has long suffered from a perennial lack of needed volunteers and the reason for these periodic cancellations has to do, in substantial part, with the burn-out and sudden departure due to exhaustion of those volunteers who have been carrying the load for too many years. Certainly, a dearth of concom personnel, in particular experienced members, was among the problems that plagued the convention this year, eventually compelling the overburdened team to throw in the towel. It would be naïve to suggest that there were not other debilitating issues at play, for indeed, marked differences of opinion rose regarding a new organisational structure and decision-making



Party-goers included author, Donald Kingsbury and William Petit from Atlanta. Seven lucky people won raffle prizes. Photos by Wayne Glover & Sylvain St-Pierre.

process this year, no doubt a factor. But, at least in the opinion of the editor of this publication, it *really* does boil down to a lack of the people needed to properly organise and run an SF/F convention, all other difficulties flowing from that fundamental deficiency.

The irony of Con•Cept 2005 was that, having posted a considerable accumulated start-up fund following several years of success, the con was probably better positioned, financially, in this year than in any previous, to dynamically expand its profile.

Expressions of hope for a reinvigorated Con•Cept next year were repeated as “BarCon” closed and the party dispersed. But more than optimistic words are needed. The reality is that such a resurrection will require a concerted effort by not only the few Con•Cept veterans on hand for BarCon, but by *all* of Montreal fandom. Con•Cept has proved a popular sci-fi celebration with locals and out-of-town friends, particularly in recent years, and a sizeable hole would be left in Montreal’s fannish calendar should the con expire. We’d all miss Con•Cept a lot if this year’s cancellation were to become permanent. Not to get all Vulcan about it, but the simple truth is that the needs of the many cannot be adequately fulfilled by the efforts of the few. If Con•Cept is to live long and prosper, we have all got to put in the time and effort required to make it so.

And that does it for this edition of “MonSFFAandom,” save for the following, the MonSFFA meeting reports, August through October, as published in Impulse:

AUGUST CLUB MEETING

With the summer break behind us, we returned to our monthly meeting schedule on August 21. Representatives of Anticipation, Montreal’s bid for the 2009 WorldCon, were our welcome guests in the lead slot. The second half of the afternoon was reserved for screenings and a brief discussion of Web-available fan films. Attendance stood at about 25.

Wearing his Anticipation hat on this day, MonSFFAn René Walling held court, accompanied by Eugene Heller, a veteran staffer on numerous WorldCons and early Con•Cepts. While fielding questions as to what fans may expect should the Montreal bid prove successful, the two outlined the latest news regarding Anticipation. Discussed among many aspects of the bid were ongoing promotional activities and the drive to recruit needed volunteers,

from pools local, national, and international. A number of con-running fans of repute have joined the team and reaction to the bid within the general fannish community has been largely positive. An update on site negotiations revealed that a Place Bonaventure/Queen Elizabeth Hotel combo is the preferred main-site option.

To support Anticipation, and for general information on Montreal’s bid for the 2009 WorldCon, surf to: www.anticipationsf.ca

Berny Reischl and Keith Braithwaite took the podium following the mid-meeting break to screen a number of fan films, from slick, semi-professional shorts like *Batman: Dead End*, *Grayson*, and *World’s Finest*—the superhero genre seems, currently, quite popular—to various *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* parodies of the amateur, fannish variety.

It was noted that budgets on some of the higher-end fan productions climb, not infrequently, into the thousands-of-dollars range, substantially more than expenditures on most fan films. And cast and crew members are often aspiring film professionals looking to advance their Hollywood careers. Filmmakers playing in this league know their way around a movie set and almost always succeed in delivering top-notch entertainment. Fan films at this level, in fact, are sometimes hailed by enthusiastic audiences as just the kind of movie Hollywood *should* be making!

At the opposite end of the scale are the many novice efforts that make up the bulk of the fan film catalogue available on the Web. Performances are on par with high school drama productions, cinematography,

of home-movie quality, and production values, rudimentary. This class of fan film positively screams “no-budget!” But despite their shortcomings, a few of these efforts manage to shine, the best of them delighting audiences by employing to the *absolute* fullest what little in the way of resources they have. And a sense of humour doesn’t hurt, either; clever parodies of popular mainstream film and television properties almost always win over an audience. Too many productions at this level, however, are clumsy, pedestrian undertakings and quickly become tedious viewing, script, direction, or acting—and often *all* of the above—failing to rise above a categorically amateur grade. Home-made CGI effects, in particular, while sometimes fairly good, or at least competent, are too often overused, the filmmaker milking a space battle or some such to the point of losing audience interest (not that Hollywood isn’t repeatedly guilty of the very same offence!).

Between these two poles of fan-film quality are many well-made productions, such as the numerous Web-based *Star Trek* series. The rather impressive *Star Trek: New Voyages* is considered the best of this lot. *Starship: Exeter* is another solid example. Eschewing the desktop CGI so popular with today's fan film producer, *Exeter* is charmingly cheesy, not altogether unlike the original *Star Trek* TV series from which it draws its inspiration.

A wealth of imaginative, entertaining, fan-made fun is but a mouse click away; to sample, surf to, among others:

- www.theforce.net/fanfilms
- www.fanfilmxchange.com/ffx/index.htm
- www.newvoyages.com
- www.starshipexeter.com

Our thanks to this month's programming participants, René Walling, Eugene Heller, Berny Reischl, and Keith Braithwaite.

FUND-RAISER AT SEPTEMBER MonSFFA MEETING

September's club meeting, held on the 18th, was taken up with a fund-raising event to benefit MonSFFA. The meeting included, however, an hour-long presentation on science fiction B-movies that have transcended said classification, becoming gems, even classics, of sci-fi cinema.

Keith Braithwaite began by engaging the room in determining exactly what constitutes a B-movie, offering his own definition—a low budget, for example, is a reliable indicator of “B” status, as is a dearth of marquee names among the cast. Screening clips from the Golden Age of sci-fi B-movies, the 1950s, he put forth a few examples of films he considers to have risen above their “B” designation, including *The Thing* (1951), *It Came From Outer Space* (1953), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), and *It! The Terror From Beyond Space* (1958). Other titles mentioned: *The Creature From the Black Lagoon*, *Them!* (both 1954), *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957), the three Hammer Studios-produced Quatermass films (1955, '57, and '67), *The Valley of Gwangi* (1969), *Silent Running* (1971), and *The Omen* (1978). Above-average script, direction, cinematography; a novel take on familiar SF clichés; inventive and adept special effects despite budget limitations—any one or more of these were among the reasons Keith judged such fare as the best of the

“B”'s, *better*, in fact, than the “B” label suggests.

We thank Keith for a most interesting presentation.

The rest of the afternoon was given over to the aforementioned fund-raiser, a small auction to benefit MonSFFA. SF/F books, comics, posters, videos and DVDs, toys, and miscellaneous collectibles were bundled into 50 or so lots and by the end of the day, \$215.75 was added to the club's coffers. An additional \$24.75 was raised via three-for-a-dollar sales of various genre paperbacks and movie posters. MonSFFen in attendance enjoyed *outstanding* bargains!

Our thanks to those club members and friends who donated items to the cause, and to those who bid on or bought same. Thanks, as well, to Berny Reischl, Keith Braithwaite, and Cathy Palmer-Lister, who set up and ran the auction and sale.

“UNCANNY CANADA” EXPLORED AT OCTOBER MonSFFA MEETING

Our October 16 gathering provided the opportunity for MonSFFA's meeting planners to schedule a little Halloweenesque programming. MonSFFen Keith Braithwaite and Cindy Hodge were invited to give a presentation on the paranormal in Canada. Dubbing their slideshow “Uncanny Canada,” the two explored some of the many spooky legends and reports of strange incidents recorded over the years in this country.

Dividing their lecture into five parts, Keith and Cindy shared duties covering the fabled Sasquatch,



The Big Ewok's secret identity is revealed!

ghosts and hauntings, phantom ships, lake and sea monsters, and finally, UFOs. Each “chapter” of their presentation was prefaced with a brief outline of the definitive cases from around the world which best illustrated the particular paranormal phenomenon to be examined, this serving to introduce the Canadian instances. The segment on lake and sea monsters began with the story of the world famous Loch Ness Monster, for example, before moving to an investigation of such enigmatic Canadian lake serpents as British Columbia’s Ogoogo, New Brunswick’s Lake Utopia Monster, and local legend Champ, of Lake Champlain.

Relating to their audience the views of both believers and sceptics, Keith and Cindy, for the purposes of their presentation, took a neutral position. Not so their audience. Understanding as they do that the “fiction” in “science fiction” is just that, it comes as no surprise to discover that SF fans are more sceptical than most on such topics, which, indeed, were the MonSFFen assembled for this meeting. Every otherworldly explanation presented was challenged and the group took particular delight in debunking the so-called photographic evidence of the various phenomena discussed, of which Keith and Cindy had collected a considerable sampling.

The second half of the afternoon was devoted to a “story workshop,” in which MonSFFA members were challenged to collectively develop a tale of the supernatural. Offering that SF/F novelists and screenwriters often tap into traditional accounts of the uncanny for inspiration, such as those explored during the first part of the meeting, Keith guided an enthusiastic group through the story-building process.

Opting for a science fiction setting, the workshop decided to tell a ghost story. After some discussion, the notion of an outer space version of the *Marie Celeste* mystery emerged as the opening premise. (The puzzling saga of the Nova Scotia-built brigantine *Marie Celeste*, found drifting in the mid-Atlantic on December 4, 1872, having ten days and some 800 miles earlier been suddenly and inexplicably abandoned by her crew, endures as one the most



Cindy & Keith get some unexpected help with their panel!

famous mysteries of the sea.)

The teaser, or first chapter of the group’s story saw a spaceship come upon the derelict star cruiser *Mare Celestia* in response to an interstellar distress call. Boarding the drifting craft, a rescue party discovers evidence of some kind of lethal virus having decimated the crew.

As the plot thickened, the group ran a number of ideas up the flag pole, working out details, and then reworking them as they constructed the core story. The first suggestion had the *Celestia* haunted by the ghosts of her dead crew. In this scenario, the ship’s A.I. continues to respond to their faint ectoplasmic signatures,

“believing” the crew to still be alive. Another take proposed that the deceased crew had yet to realise they are ghosts, seeing the rescue party, seemingly rifling through their ship, as pirate-like interlopers, perplexingly mute to the crew’s attempts at communication. Yet another angle focused exclusively on the ship’s A.I., left alone on an empty ship after the crew had abandoned the vessel to escape lethal infection. The computer has slowly gone the machine equivalent of insane. Or maybe it had found a way to preserve the individual life force of each crewmember, effectively keeping its human companions alive long after their bodies were consumed by disease.

Unfortunately, meeting time ran out and the workshop had to be cut short. Members were encouraged to continue building the story on their own.

MonSFFA conveys its appreciation for their contributions to Keith Braithwaite and Cindy Hodge, the meeting’s panellists. A nod is given, as well, to Fran Quesnel, who, along with Cindy, provided the Halloween decorations that adorned our podium. And lastly, we extend our thanks to Berny Reischl and Wayne Glover, who supplied the A/V equipment needed for the day.

The Land Unknown was screened during the morning session, offering our early-bird members an opportunity to mock this atrociously bad sci-fi movie in the style of *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*. ●

USE YOUR MONSFFA MEMBERSHIP CARD TO OBTAIN DISCOUNTS AT THESE FINE STORES!

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<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 Marriane-est)
<http://libmillenium.com>

TRADE 'ZINES RECEIVED

Trade 'zines are available for your reading pleasure at all MonSFFA meetings!

BCSFA, Vancouver, BC

De Profundis, North Hollywood, CA

Opuntia, Calgary, BC

Under the Ozone Hole, Victoria, BC

? Found it in my Mailbox...

From Josée Bellemare:

Chocolate-Flavoured Mathematics!

Be sure you don't read the bottom until you've worked it out:

1. First of all, pick the number of times a week that you would like to have chocolate. (try for more than once but less than 10)
2. Multiply this number by 2 (Just to be bold)
3. Add 5. (for Sunday)
4. Multiply it by 50 I'll wait while you get the calculator.....
5. If you have already had your birthday this year add 1755.... If you haven't, add 1754 ...
6. Now subtract the four-digit year that you were born.

You should have a three-digit number



WARP Editor: Cathyp!

The first digit of this was your original number (i.e., how many times you want to have chocolate each week).

The next two numbers are
This is the only year it will ever work, so spread it YOUR AGE! ~ (OH YES, #ISIIII)

around while it lasts.

From Berny Reischl:

This you may enjoy:
<http://www.grand-illusions.com/dragon.htm>

I can't say no to a dragon, so I clicked the link, printed the pattern, did some cutting & pasting, and WOW! It works! The dragon's head moves to follow your head movements! Cool! Creepy! Try it!

Another Warp Magazine edition, and another Last Words. Try your hand on the following movie last words. Name the character who spoke these last words and the movie's name.

PS – Again for this 2nd challenge we'll start with a fairly easy last words.

The Last Words # 2

- 1) "Sam, I'm glad you're with me." (2 pts)
- 2) "I'm at peace. It's finally over." (5 pts)
- 3) "Hail to the King, Baby." (3 pts)
- 4) "Until at last he found his own kingdom and wore his crown upon a troubled brow." (5 pts)
- 5) "Aye, aye, Sir! Setting course for the Trinity Moons!" (5 Pts)

Answers at the bottom of this page.



MonSFFA Bulletin Board

WANTED: old video of Toronto Trek – basically anything from news segments to video people may have recorded themselves.



I'm hoping to put together a bit of an archive. Plus, I'm hoping I may have enough material (public) to be able to have play on a loop on the Hotel's internal channel as a TT TV. (T3V) So PLEASE pass this along to anyone you may know with stuff.

I'm also hoping to maybe make up a few bumps (I expect mostly stills and text) but there is clearly a lot more talent for this in the Montreal area. So I would love to hear people's thoughts there and maybe get some involvement. Basically, I want to try and do a Canadian version of Dragon*Con TV. (www.dragoncontv.com) mixed with stuff from past TT's. – Stephen Christian <schrist@vex.net>
–<http://www.tcon.ca/tt20/>

- 0 – 2 You're really in trouble...go back to bed...
- 3 – 5 You're still not ready for the big time...
- 6 – 10 You'd better start going to the movies...
- 11 – 15 Average movie goer...
- 16 – 20 Top notch movie freak! You scare me...
- 21+ Hey, you cheated!

Score Card:

- 1) Frodo Baggins – The Fellowship of the Ring – LOTR
- 2) Connor MacLeod – Highlander III – The Sorcerer
- 3) Nash – Army of Darkness (US Version)
- 4) The Wizard (Mako) – Conan the Destroyer
- 5) Corporal Riley – Soldier

Answers to Last Words #2:

Are you reading somebody else's WARP? Join MonSFFA today! Send cheque or money order in the amount of 25\$ to: MonSFFA, PO Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montréal, QC, H2X 4A7