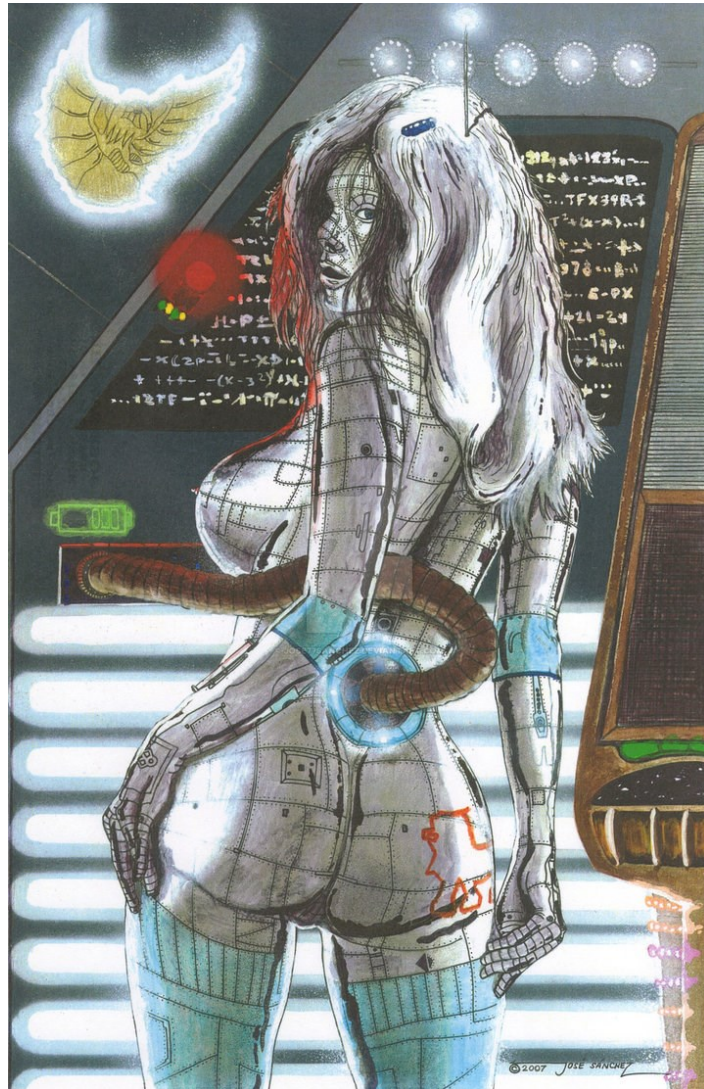


N'APPA 237



Charging Batteries
by Jose Sanchez

The Official Organ

#237

Next deadline: January 15, 2019

The official collator is George Phillies - phillies@4liberty.net.

The official preparer is Jefferson P. Swycaffer - abontides@gmail.com

Procedure Change: Please Read:

George Phillies will still be collating and mailing, but submissions should be sent to the official preparer, Jefferson Swycaffer. No harm is done if submissions get sent to George, but the process should be to send them to Jefferson.

N'APA is the Amateur Press Alliance for members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F). As it is distributed in PDF format, there are no dues or postage fees. It is open to all members of the N3F. If there are members interested in joining who have no computer access, special arrangements may be possible. People who only want to read are welcome to ask to be added to the email list. Check with the official collator, who is George Phillies, 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester MA 01609; phillies@4liberty.net; 508 754 1859; and on facebook.

To join this APA, contact is Jefferson P. Swycaffer - abontides@gmail.com. If you are a member, you publish in here a zine with new material and hopefully comments on other zines. Members are expected to submit their zines to the Preparer electronically in .doc or some similar format (not PDF); the collator will take things from there.

We occasionally send a copy of N'APA to the accessible (email address needed) N3F membership, in the hope that some of you will join N'APA. Please join now!

Currently the frequency is every other month, with the deadline being on the fifteenth day of odd-numbered months. The mailing will normally be collated in due time, as the Collator is retired. Publication is always totally regular, though some readers question my interpretations of "is", "always", "totally", and "regular". N'APA has been in existence since 1959, but has transitioned from being a paper APA to an electronic one.

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In this issue:

Front Cover: Changing Batteries...Jose Sanchez

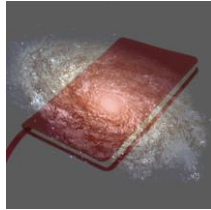
The Official Organ #237

Notes from a Galaxy Far, Far Away, by Lorien Rivendell – 3 pages

Ye Murthered Master Mage, by George Phillies – 9 pages

Archive Midwinter, by Jefferson P. Swycaffer - 3 pages

NOTES FROM A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY #16



November 2018

For N'APA 237

Lorien Rivendell

(Lauren Clough)

Lorienrivendell99@gmail.com



NATTER

Soooo...I tried to do the “smart thing” and write comments as I read along. I see that by putting off comments for 6 months (or 3 zines, if you want to look at it that way), I have made things harder for myself. I could skip comments altogether, but that seems to defeat the purpose of APA zines, since they seem to be mostly comment driven. Besides, I look forward to comments made to me, and assume at least some people like comments made to them. I got as far as finishing my comments on #234.

Instead of writing in “Notes,” I’m participating in National Novel Writing Month, as I do every November. As of today (November 15), it is halfway through the month, and I have only 13,484 words written, when I should have at least 25,000 words. The goal is 50,000 words, regardless how brilliant or dismal they may be. The words should make a story, rather than endlessly repeating “all work and no play...”

I’ll have to leave further comments and some TV, movie, and book reviews for another time.

SEPTEMBER 2018 TNFF

I read Judy Carroll’s item on Electronic Round Robins. It sounds like the gist of it is members are in a generic RR and discuss whatever they want (SF-related, I would

presume). But I wonder how that's different from N'APA, in which we discuss whatever we want (and aren't strictly limited to SF-related discussions).

COMMENTS ON N'APA #234 (what's left from Notes #14)

Kevin Trainor, Jr., The Silver State Age #10: I get that about poor time management. I can't seem to manage the time to write a 2-6 page fanzine, and you were attempting to juggle that and college course and a full time job or two. I sometimes think about going back to college (again!) and then think again about my time management skills (or lack thereof) and think again.

That's too bad about the tensions within the anime convention you helped to found. I'm glad you found another convention that might be more suitable now. It sounds like you and your son were not the only victims of the convention that you founded. It makes me wonder if it will survive much longer, if the tensions are ongoing.

I'm meeting more and more people who drive for either Uber or Lyft on the side. I haven't needed to use the service (yet), but it's good to know it's out there should I become stranded somewhere. Some of the people I work with (direct care staff) do this after hours. I totally get that, as the pay is notoriously low in my field, and driving helps them make ends meet, and they can make their own schedules, for the most part. Also, some of the staff I work with does not own cars, and they rely on ride sharing services to get to and from work when friends and family don't come through.

Balticon 2020 sounds like a fun place to meet up. Baltimore is "only" a 6-hour drive for me. I haven't been to a con in years, not since I went to Boskone several times in the 1990s. I should consider Boskone this year (though February weather is so iffy). That's about a 2 hour drive, traffic permitting, and I would likely plan to drive out and back on Saturday.

That's too bad you weren't able to go to Balticon this year. I hope things got straightened out with Uber and that you can transport actual passengers again. I didn't realize the drivers also delivered food. There's at least one food delivery company in the area (in a college town), where you can order food from one of several local restaurants directly from the delivery company, which handles ordering and delivering the food. I used them once, when I ended up working in a group home in that town and hadn't been able to plan ahead to take a meal with me.

George Phillies, Ye Murthered Master Mage: Rationale for N3F? To discuss Science Fiction and Fantasy? To meet other like minded fans?

Wow! You have - or at least had - a lot of writing projects on the burner!

What's up with fans being disinvited to cons? That sounds so *wrong*.

Will Mayo, The Contents of a Good Life #2: It looks like the old days and the new days have merged. I don't know how you passed around stories back then, but you're passing them around - in a sense - here. All seem to have dark undertones. I lost two family members last week and four this year (my aunt was 99 and *ready*). It all seems appropriate somehow.

I haven't read any of the books you recommended. I do have *Stranger in a Strange Land* on my Kindle, just waiting for someday to arrive when I do read it. Maybe I'll have time to read all I want to read when I retire. But retirement seems so far off right now.

Ye Murdered Master Mage 237
George Phillis
48 Hancock Hill Drive
Worcester MA 01609

Comments

Collator: The new Collator is Jefferson Swycaffer. Cheer him on.

Personal: Tuesday the 6th I go to the New England Science Fiction Association fellowship dinner. It seems that I have been elected a Fellow of NESFA, an honor I would never have expected. I have now moved to taking down my garden for the fall, an activity complicated by all the rain we have had recently. Last night it poured, meaning the garden is too wet for doing any work in it. Over the year I planted 1500 vinca, some hundreds of bulbs, and an attempt at a vegetable garden. The garden was a complete failure. I obtained from it several tomatoes, one tiny cucumber, and some basil plants whose leaves I am now drying. For the year, I will have finished two novels, two technical papers, and made some progress on house maintenance. Last year was having insulation blown in.

Cover: Homes that remind me of Santa Monica, a driver not looking where he is going, and an older fellow in tennis shoes appearing to be walking his dog. Well, it's sort of a dog. Mostly. If you don't look closely. Perhaps the dog is walking its human.

Silver State Age: I hope that the move was survivable and the trip to Salt Lake City did well. I did not know you were in to board wargames. I have a decently respectable collection of them. My impression is that Correia is building a small palace, which will doubtless need expansion for his miniatures. Good for him!

Notes from a Galaxy Far Far Away: Sympathies on your mother. Cataract surgery is sometimes an option, but perhaps not. Best of luck with that.

The Contents of a Good Life: Thanks for a very interesting perspective on living. There is some debate whether the Christmas tale was written by Moore or by Livingston. Your image 'Beware of Falling Coconuts' is amusing, though it refers to

a real problem for the State Department. Far more American tourists die of coconut than of terrorist. I am glad that you are happy with your outcomes.

Synergy: The issue on Amazing was that I could never get an answer out of them on where to send money or what the specifications were (sizes, file formats, resolutions) for ads. As it happens I live inside the second largest city in Massachusetts, Boston being larger. However, wild animals are willing to take chances for food, as a result of which I have seen on the street and in my back yard woodchucks, skunk, deer, and turkeys, and neighbors have seen fisher cats, a bear, and moose. There are local reservoirs, so we are actually quite close to the Appalachian forest. In the area, people have also seen eagles and a mountain lion. "Butterfly" was a fine poem.

Fan Feuds: The left vs right thing gets uglier and uglier. Fortunately, a few days forward from when I type, we will have elections and that bit of noise will go away.

And now I must advance to bringing out an issue of Eldritch Science.

Eclipse The Girl Who Saved the World

Here we have Chapter 12, which will be the final chapter I run here. Next time I will have to do something else. Note that I changed the book title. Eclipse is now the title. The Girl Who Saved the World is the strap line.

I have signed a contract with my cover artist, who is Brad Fraunfelter. His web pages are bfillustration.com. You have probably seen his work; he does Chris Nuttall's covers. He is reasonably described as the new Michael Whelan.

Eclipse runs 172,000 words. As I have forked the ms. file for the smashwords, kindle, and amazon paperback formats, which are not the same, the ms is substantially frozen. If anyone wants to read the whole thing and look for typos, please speak up instantly, as there is a drop-dead date for the final ms. to be in place with the three publishers.

I currently expect to have the book on sale on December 15 on Amazon, Smashwords and Third Millennium.

Chapter Twelve

The Invisible Fortress Morning

Unfortunately, yesterday evening was when the healing matrix decided that I should start ramping down my mind control systematically, meaning I would feel a bit more pain, so the matrix would know exactly what it had to fix. I did what I was told, but I certainly can't claim I was comfortable afterward. I allowed that if I lay in my bed I was actually falling asleep a reasonable part of the time, even though I was very aware of the interminable minutes when I was too uncomfortable to sleep.

Someplace in the middle, I had a waking dream, asking myself why Mum had tossed me out of our home. I can't understand not being told. I suppose she could've gotten involved in something really dangerous, and wanted to make sure that I stayed out of it. But she knew perfectly well that if she told me not to do something, I wouldn't have done it. What had I done?

I remembered one thing I had done. I snuck off to New York to watch a play by the second-greatest Elizabethan playwright, Shakespeare. Alone at age eleven was way safer for me than for an ungifted. Mum didn't say a word. Yes, I did pay for the ticket, even though I had to sneak-teleport into the theater and hide in the loft to watch. King Lear is said to depict acts so wicked that no small child like me should be allowed to see it. It's like the films and plays in which you have people carrying on with each other, on camera. I did watch King Lear, the whole thing, but it seemed to me that it was terribly sad, not wicked at all. Of course, many children my age would have had a very different perspective on what was happening.

But I'd made mistakes before, and all Mum asked me to do when I made a mistake was to go through my thought processes and see where I might have done something different. Certainly, after I had - not by plan - seen the entrance to the Lesser Maze, and at first didn't say why I was upset, Mum thought I might have been carrying on with a boy, even though I was way too young for that to be possible. She hadn't been at all worried that I had been.

Then my dream carried me back to what surely had to be the worst thing I'd ever done, no matter that Mum said afterwards that I'd done the

right thing and she was proud of me. At least it only almost left me dead. It was a year and a half ago. I'd gone to Boston, to the Carnegie Library, to read some of their serious history books on the Summer War of 1908. By standing up to a couple of bullies, I'd gotten into a serious fight, one that might easily have killed me, despite all of Mum's training. Fortunately I'd carefully done all the things Mum had told me to do, if it appeared there was going to be violence and I couldn't readily cut and run. She wouldn't have complained if I ran. She is not a Gowist, but she does repeat the line that a coward may avoid a thousand deaths. She also refers to brave honorable warriors as tin-plated idiots who are routinely slaughtered by competent soldiers.

Oh, yes, Boston. I was finally old enough that Mum trusted me to use a library by myself. I was entirely well-behaved. My gifts were still developing, but were more than adequate to deal with a few street thugs. I had a telepathic null link, something where I could call for help, and Mum would hear it, no matter where on earth I was, without there being any tracing. A telepathic null-link is even better than a radio telephone. No one can tell you are using it. Besides, I would be using the Carnegie Library in Boston, the City of Good Sense, where the Stars Over Boston persona league keeps a firm thumb on criminalistical elements.

Mum wanted me to read recent history, how a German Kaiser's pointless bragging as amplified by an English journal correspondent turned into the Summer War of 1908. This is modern history, history that deals in actual facts, not ancient history, filled with morally edifying tales. You would think that a descendant of Marlborough would have more political eptness, but not so, unless you believe that Winston maneuvered Wilhelm into launching his war with Bavaria. Surely Churchill knew what the Kaiser should have noticed, namely that Austria and France had both lost territory to Prussia and would cooperate to get all of it back, and then some. Mum had a list of particularly good historians to read. I found a very isolated, quiet corner of the library, one where I was unlikely to be noticed, and sat there with book, pad of paper, and mechanical pencil. Yes, I do have a photographic memory, sort of, but that's not useful for this sort of studying.

Most of the room was given over to books on games: Chess, Stones, City of Steel, Territories, and more. Books on the history of real wars were a modest section of the collection of books on games about warfare. Soon I had company, two girls close

to my age. The older one wore a crisply tailored, recently-ironed orange pantsuit, something that worked well with her bright-red hair. She was working through what looked to be a school textbook. The younger one was studying, very intently, a book on City of Steel. I wouldn't have called her dress scruffy, but her girl's blue jeans and long-sleeve white polo shirt were rumpled. Every so often the younger girl made a note on her own pad of paper. She looked to be astonishingly focused.

After a couple of hours, I had made fair progress into Weaver's history. Weaver was remarkably clear, but I'd never heard of half the people he was talking about. My pad of paper gained a longer and longer list of names I had to research. Weaver took no sides on the historical issues. A bit of noise marked the two girls getting up to leave. I went back to my reading.

Not three minutes later, I heard a strangled cry for help. No, not a cry. The call was telepathic. There was an image. It was the two girls. Rather, the older one was jumping back and forth, dodging three thugs trying to grab her. The younger one cowered behind her. The girls couldn't just run for it. One of the thugs had put up an opaque force wall trapping them. Where? I called back. Mayhaps I should have bit my tongue, but none of them could see who or where I was. The returned image, hard to see, was the back alley from the library to the subway station, a very pretty brick walk seldom used, or so it appeared.

Mum really disliked persona who picked on children. One of the thugs was a persona, but he looked to be well within the range of power levels I could handle. OK, mayhaps I was a bit overconfident. No, probably I was way overconfident. I triggered the null link, showed Mum what was happening and what I was proposing to do. If she wanted to disagree, she had all the time in the world to speak up. Drop pad and pencil into shoulder bag. Step into little boy's room, meanwhile calling my gifts. Boy's? Yes, that was my disguise. I was dressed as a boy. I'd already checked with a flash of ultravision. The room was empty. Rule One for combat: If you have a choice, go as slack as possible. Call your levels as far down as you can, don't tap all of them, and be free to be pushed into even deeper levels.

The one room I could be sure did not have a video scanner was empty. Rule Two: Surprise is good. Defenses are better. OK. Force field to max,

well, as much max as I had at age ten. Flight on and hover. My mentalic attacks were not great, but try them first--there is a library here, armored walls or not. I teleported right next to the younger girl. Her sister was now on the ground, out cold.

"Way cool!" the youngest punk shouted. "Now we've got three of them. Fun time!" I hit him as hard as I could with a levin bolt. His eyeballs rolled up into their sockets as he dropped.

<Not so fast, little girl! Try me for size!> That was another punk, from the sound a good mentalist. Mum had given me a firm warning. I was not to go mano a mano with a real mentalist, not until I was a bit better at blocking counterstrikes down through my levin bolts. For the first guy, the one on the ground, I had had surprise, but now I didn't.

"You should live so long," I answered. I started to shift over to flash and plasma attacks. When I was younger, shifting took me a bit of time, during which their mentalist tried several not very good levin bolts of his own. OK, he didn't accomplish anything, but if I'd opened myself by attacking him mentalically, his bolts would have been way more damaging. I make it sound as though I was completely calm, but I was starting to get a bit frightened. I'd expected one guy with a force wall, and some punks with no gifts. Now I was up against several personas whose gifts I did not know. I engaged the next null link. Mum still hadn't said anything. OK, she wanted me to handle this myself. Now their mentalist was trying to drive little icepicks into my mindscreens to crack them open. I was holding him, but not without putting backbone into it.

I flashed the lot of them. I couldn't tell which of them I might have blinded. It wasn't my best attack, but flash is safe in close quarters, and might make them back off. Either I missed hitting their mentalist, or their mentalist didn't need sight to target me. He kept picking away on my mentalic defenses.

Now was very definitely the time to run, and take the two girls with me. Oops. One of their guys was a teleporter. He had a tangle mesh out. If I teleported, I'd take the thugs with me. I could try straight up, say a hundred miles, but I had no idea if the girls needed to breathe. I'd practiced 'Breathe for Someone Else'. Once. For one other person. Mum would simply smash the tangle field, but I was very definitely not strong enough to do that. Not at age ten. Teleport tangle meshes are tough.

OK, Mum had me memorize a bunch of Boston terrain features, one being a deserted island in the outer harbor. I could take us all there, and take the gloves off. I could have jumped to someplace near the Stars Over Boston Headquarters, and let them come to my rescue, but the Stars were on Mum's emphatic stay-away list.

We jumped. Rather, I jumped and hauled the lot of them with me. There was a chill breeze off the early summer bay, a breeze that smelled of sea salt and iodine and seaweed washed up on the shore. The sensible city keeps its harbor scrupulously clean -- well, drinking the water by the glassful is a bit optimistic even if it weren't salty -- so the smell was close to open ocean.

Annoying! I'd dragged the two girls along. I thought I'd only be dragging the thugs, but their teleporter had snagged the two girls, not just me and their mob, in his weave. My first plasma blast took the fellow in the rear, the one not doing anything. He reflected it back at me! It bounced off my force field, hit their barrier, and bounced again. They had a tough wall around us.

I called my gifts as deeply as seemed safe. Slack! went the lesson. Keep slack! If you call absolutely everything you've got, your screens become brittle. They hold, or they don't, but they don't have reserve power to grab. Then I hit their force wall with a plasma torch. Hard! Very rapidly, it frayed and developed holes. Behind me, the younger of the two girls was dragging her sister over an edge of the dune.

"Cut this nonsense," one of them shouted. "Take him down. Now! For good." Suddenly I had two attacks coming my way, different sorts of radiation that cut into my screens, and more and more levin bolts. Yes, slack mattered, because now I was drawing hard on my levels to keep up my defenses. What had started as a couple of bullies had blown up into a high-power battle. Only later did I learn it ended as the highest-power combat in New England since Crittenden's War. I would have been delighted to teleport out, but I couldn't. Their teleporter still had his tangle field up. I could teleport, but I'd just drag them along. Flying away was not a choice, either. One of them still had a force wall trapping the three of us in place. Either I won, by myself, or ...the old Goetic line is Victory or Death. I triggered my third null link. Nothing happened. I really wished Mum was less interested in making this a learning experience for me, because at this point I was frightened.

There are ways to draw more deeply on your gifts, ways that open up additional channels into each level. Mum had little warnings on each of them, warnings like "Quite painful" and "You will be sick afterward". I ignored the warnings, and opened them up. Now I had some slack.

"Harder. Link powers." The fellow shouting had to be their boss. I reached really deeply into my gifts and hit him as hard as I could with a plasma blast. He dropped, unconscious or dead. Now they had linked, and I needed every bit of strength to block their efforts to kill me. Yes, even back then I had good shields, but holding up shields demands power. I was already as deep into my gifts as I had ever been. Lack of slack is still not good. The next set of ways to reach into power were behind neat tied knots, knots that Mum had vigorously warned me not to untie until I was older, or I would be in real trouble. With her. I untied all the knots. The power I reached echoed all around me like sharp little daggers. Little stars of light crawled across my visual field. If I drew on those resources, and Mum complained, I could always answer 'I'll move out of our house. You can pretend I died.' That was a bit of bravado, when I was that much younger. Living on deserted tropical islands sounds fun, unless you need to do it when you are short on money. Besides, there just aren't many deserted tropical islands, not in a world full of people who can fly or teleport.

I opened the knots, barely in time. Their number two man shot me with a pistol, a weapon I'd never seen before. My shields shuddered and cracked. I dropped through level after level, through The Sun, through The Fall of Crystal, very briefly seeing a level I had only read about, The Tomb. I saw its metaphor, a snow-covered barrow with a girl dressed all in black sitting on its top. She looked up and smiled at me. Dropping through levels was like having my head forced under water, deep into a glacial-cold lake. My heart pounded. I was about to die. I did what I should, drawing as hard as I could on everything I had. Number two had forced me deeper than I'd ever been into my gifts. His weapon had the blinding intensity of the starcore. My shields frayed but stayed up. The brightness vanished. His pistol had to recharge, and I didn't give him a chance to shoot me again. The phrase is 'cut them off at their knees', in this case through a really tough force field coming from his bracelet. That's what I did. Quite literally. I cut him in two at his knees. He fell over, unconscious.

He'd driven me way deep into my gifts, and I was still into them when his pistol ran out of steam.

I really did not want them chasing us. I knew which of them was their teleporter. I hit him again, making sure that he was quite dead. Mum eventually pointed out that I might have killed the only one of them who knew where their safe house was hidden. She also reminded me that if I had actually killed their teleporter, his tangle field had gone down, so at this point I could simply have escaped, taking the girls along. I forgot. Then I disarmed their number two man. Yes, disarmed. I incinerated both arms. Modern medicine and a good healer could have grown them back, except I'd killed him first.

To their credit, the Stars Over Boston were finally showing up. A half-dozen of them teleported in, out over the water. I later learned that the younger girl had been screaming for help, mentally, enough that the Stars knew exactly where to look for us. The Stars' one combat tactic is 'Leap before You Look' and that's what they had done. They were still very fast off the mark to get to me.

Then another persona appeared, not quite between me and the kidnappers. I'd never met Sunssword before. She looked to me to be a young woman, wearing a white laboratory coat over sweater and blue jeans. Very briefly, we had mental contact. I had a sense of great power, greater age, and patient sadness. The younger girl - I still didn't know her name -- sent Sunssword, lightning-fast, a description of the fight. I didn't let her finish. I did exactly what Mum had ordered, if I looked to be getting into trouble, and teleported the three of us out. I remembered to grab the funny gun and the force field bracer with my teleport field. I suppose I make the fight sound long and drawn out. Not at all. The bit on the island had lasted a couple minutes.

First we were someplace in northern Canada, a few thousand feet above the ground. My flight field held all three of us. The younger girl -- and finally I had a persona name, Aurora -- gave me a solid location near her home, someplace we almost for sure would not be seen when we appeared. I did a soft jump to get there, a bit wearing, but for sure we would appear above, not under, the ground.

I was not quite sure where I was, other than 'secluded point in local park system'. If the muggers showed up in pursuit I was in real trouble.

I'd pushed myself way deeper than I was ready to go. Little stars, blinding bright, sparkled inside my head. I was bone-achingly cold. I told myself that happened when you go too deep into your levels. The world wavered around me. I was just too tired to stand. I dropped to sit a stone wall and leaned forward, my head in my hands. If the muggers actually showed up, I would give my 100% to stop them again. I just doubted that would be enough. In retrospect, I should have realized that the muggers were not showing up, because they were all incapacitated or seriously dead, namely I had totally wrecked them up including killing several of them. Stars Over Boston would have done the rest.

I looked at the two girls I had rescued. The older was lying on her face. The younger looked paralyzed with fear. First aid, I thought. What do I do? I fell forward, crawled over, got my arms under the older girl, and rolled her sideways. "Help me," I mumbled. The younger girl, given something to do, leaped to it. Moving a limp body is hard. Now that the older girl was on her back, I could see that she was breathing. Her fingernails were pink. I remembered to pull her knees up to her chest.

"Trisha?" the little girl called. "Wake up!" The younger girl tried shaking her sister. Nothing happened. Then there was a burst of telepathy from the younger girl. She was a strong telepath. The erstwhile kidnappers must have had a heavy-duty telepathy block going, strong enough that in the library I only heard her weakly. I wasn't sure what the little girl was doing, but it didn't seem to help. OK, my turn. I reached out to the null links and reset them. I had seen Mum do that, once and again, but she made it look effortless. It made me dizzy. Then I triggered all three of them at the same time.

Mum was there almost instantly. *<What?>* came her thought. That was not an annoyed what?; it was a very concerned question.

<Triage!> I answered, pointing at the other two girls. *<I'm not dying. I think.>* For a while I was shut out of a mental conversation. At the end, the older girl was awake, and the younger girl seemed to have set aside everything that had terrified her.

<What happened?> Mum asked. It was a mark of how much she trusted me that she didn't accuse me right off of doing something wrong.

<I had to reset my null links,> I thought. *<I triggered them one at a time, didn't hear anything from you, thought silence was approval.>* It is

really rarely that I manage to surprise Mum, telling her something she didn't know. I could tell. She was surprised. She had not heard the null links trigger. She later worked out why. The bad guys had had, an aid for kidnapping people, a scheme for blocking them. I sent her my memories, what I had done, and how hard it was to reset the links. *<The guys trying to beat up on these two were way tougher than a couple of punks with knives. If they'd been thugs with pointy things I would have flattened them from one breath to the next.>*

<He saved us.> That was the little girl, entering the conversation. *<You saved us, I mean. And you're shivering.>*

"Cold," I answered. "Cold. So cold. And if those guys show up again..."

<I'm right here.> That was Mum again. Except now she was really close. *<If they appear, I'll take care of them.>* The undertone to 'take care of' was one of utter finality. But what did happen? I let the younger girl answer, a blur of images mostly faster than I could follow. She was a really good telepath, way better than I am. I can do mentalics, but mostly I am good at wrecking things. Deliberately, but I wreck things. I finally followed with my memories, not hiding that I'd done those things with my gifts that Mum had told me not to do.

<You did the right thing,> Mum interrupted. *<Slack is always right. That goes for you, too, Aurora.>* When that name was mentioned the younger girl looked at me and smiled shyly. Then Mum sent to me: *<But your shields shouldn't have overloaded, dear, not against a few street thugs.>* I dropped in the image of the strange pistol. Now Mum was seriously surprised. *<I should get the three of you home,>* Mum continued. *<And then I need a few words with the people who tried to kidnap you two. I'll be there as soon as I slip into a different persona.>* I think I hid from Aurora what Mum was going to do to the thugs to learn all their secrets. The method has several names, mindrape being the most polite, and an outcome: The targets do not have working minds afterward. They also have absolutely no secrets left.

I was too busy shivering uncontrollably to say anything. The two girls sat down on each side of me, hugging me, close enough that I started to warm up. If someone had come along, it would have been a bit of a scandal, me being disguised as a boy and hugging two girls at the same time, at our ages, but no one else was there. I took the moment

to introduce myself to Aurora and the older girl. Aurora's sister was Comet. Comet mostly just flew, but her memories... she'd flown around the world in a few minutes. Yes, she sounded to have all the gifts you needed to do that. Comet and Aurora were their persona names. I didn't ask their other names. Aurora had used her sister's name, but that was my secret now. In this disguise, I was Joe. Aurora was very polite, and tried to hide her curiosity.

Mum appeared in a few minutes. Her disguises are always excellent. She couldn't hide her height, but anyone who looked at her would think she was much older, well, older than she usually looks. She disguised herself as some sort of a businesswoman with attache case.

<Dear, I really think I should get these two home first,> Mum said. *<Someone snapped a photo of Comet and Aurora on the island, enough that their parents have figured out that their children were kidnapped>.* Aurora looked horrified. Her sister had, of course, slept through almost the whole thing, and had no idea what happened.

<I'll be OK,> I answered. *<Just so they don't show up again.>* As I said, I wasn't thinking clearly. The thugs were showing up no place, except mayhaps an operating theater in the local jail. Mum, Aurora, and Comet vanished, disappearing like a light going out. Mum's teleports are really inconspicuous. Here one moment, gone the next, and no special effect worth mentioning. I made myself stand up and walk back and forth. Then Mum was back.

She took one look at the pistol I had recovered. "Crash drop! Shields!" she shouted. "Absolute maximum power." I had no idea why, but I didn't hesitate. I did a crash drop, something I'd actually never done except in practice, calling my gifts as deeply as I could, mayhaps as deep as I'd gone when the thug shot me. I didn't black out, but I couldn't hold my shields up that high for long. I sank to my knees. Mum's shields, way stronger than mine, had gone up, too. She also had a wall around both of us. She was looking very carefully at the pistol and bracer. *<OK,>* she said. *<You can ease off. There's a particularly nasty trap involving one of those things, but it wasn't there. You relieved the villains of these?>*

<Yes.> My shields faded to zero. Now I was really dizzy. Either that or the lawn had suddenly tilted to vertical.

<Then they're yours. By the way, I was wrong. That is not an Atlanticean disruptor pistol. That's a genuine Krell weapon, worth a large fortune. It runs off an internal charge rotator. It converts matter into antimatter. The power level is way higher. The trap uses the charge rotator; it creates large amounts of antimatter so fast you can't teleport away. The only protection is really strong shields. Like yours were.>

<Mum, could we go home? Please?> I didn't usually complain, but I'd pushed well beyond my limits, well, what I'd thought my limits were.

<May I carry you?> she asked. She was very good about that. I was a bit sensitive about not being a baby any more. I could do things for myself. She was always polite about asking rather than just yanking me off my feet.

<Please?> and three jumps later we were at home. I then spent several days in bed recovering.

My stay in Boston Harbor had been way more violent than a couple of thugs with knives. My individual attacks would easily have leveled a major skyscraper, and the other side's were much the same power. That last attack? Very briefly I had had a glimpse of a starcore. It almost reduced me to ashes, but not quite. Shields, of course, shunt absorbed power to someplace not in our world, or the scattering would have wrecked up Boston. My counter? I sometimes remembered to use a plasma sword, not the showier plasma torch, so after carving a hole in my opponents my attack went off into foamspace. If I'd used the plasma torch and missed, I'd've boiled a chunk of Boston Harbor. Yes, Bostonians always boast about their municipal lightning screen, but they tend to be too slow about turning it on when it is needed. Comet and Aurora had lived through the event because I'd dropped a wall around them, and managed to hold it up. I hadn't even noticed doing it. That was Mum's very rigorous training.

When I next saw Aurora, she asked the obvious question: If a ten-year-old namely me gets into fights this high power all the time, and grownups are for sure stronger, why are there any cities left in the world? The simple answer is that fights like this don't happen all the time. In fact, the attempted kidnapping was the highest-power shootout Massachusetts had seen in the past two centuries. Yes, the list of other boys my age – I never did tell her I'm not a boy -- who could have held their own in a fight like that is real short. Not zero, but real short.

I snapped back to the present. I was still lying in bed, still trying to understand what I had done that was so terrible that Mum had thrown me out of our home. That bit with kidnappers was surely the worst mistake I'd ever made. I hadn't needed to do it. I'd been way overconfident. Those thugs really could've killed me, but that was all years ago. The few times Mum had mentioned it since, she'd always said how proud she was of me.

I finally got up and pulled all of my curtains tightly closed, so I would sleep through the sunrise into the next day. I did wake up in time for more stretching and bending exercises, hot shower and getting dressed, and finding that it was very definitely time for a late breakfast. Chopped onions, chopped green pepper, chopped portabella mushrooms, chopped sausage, all sautéed in olive oil with garlic and a nice dose of curry powder, followed by two eggs whipped up with a bit of milk, and I had a nice omelet. The supply of multigrain toasted sunflower bread was unfortunately starting to go downhill, but I was very definitely not up to assuming my old lady disguise to go shopping. Mayhaps I would have to start baking scones. They're nice and simple. Even I can make them well. And I had a quite adequate supply of components for the frosting.

I went out to the barn to check on ponies and cats. I was happy to learn that the ponies and cats thought outdoors was just fine at the moment, so I had no barn work, I still visited my ponies, hugged and curry-combed them, checked their hooves, and spent a while petting two cats. Then it was back to *Liouville's Butterflies*.

I can't claim I've had a lot of experience dealing with people who lie out of habit. Mum gave me some abstract lessons. Yes, I'm a persona. I've met a few criminals. Most of them were dead afterwards. Some were less lucky. When I skimmed the later parts of the book, it was really obvious that the people who did not want to believe the Liouville-Gibbs theorem were prepared to say almost anything in order to discredit it. I don't know if they were lying out of habit, but they were certainly working hard at lying, for no particularly obvious reason. Indeed, one of the later chapters, one that I much enjoyed reading carefully, spent its time going through the arguments against the Liouville-Gibbs theorem, and explaining exactly how the authors of the arguments had cheated in making their cases. Learning how people cheat in arguments is good.

The book really wasn't all that long, a couple-three hundred pages. The 30 pages of theorem had been really demanding. That's assuming 'really demanding' is a synonym for 'mostly incomprehensible'. I was going to have to learn a fair piece to understand them. The 250 following pages were much, much easier. No one tried to prove the math was wrong. They just argued about what the math meant. Well, except for the strange chapter on the Dagger of Time. The Dagger is not the same as time travel, but it somehow ignores cause and effect because it lives sideways to the flow of time. The chapter was imprecise about whether the Dagger was an artifact or a person, or both. On the other hand, the chapter was very clear on why the Dagger appeared. It existed to correct side effects when people used time travel. How could it be both an artifact and a person? The chapter was very obscure. It also didn't seem to have anything to do with the rest of the book. The chapter author claimed to be a Prioress of the Goetic Knights, an office that ceased to exist thousands of years before the book was written. She said she had used time travel to make what appeared to be tiny changes that actually had the desired effects. The Dagger of Time cleaned up the minor issues the Prioress had left behind. Time travel requires enormous amounts of power. It was only on rereading an obscure sentence that I realized that the Prioress appeared to have used the Ring of Fate.

OK, now I sort of understood what the book said. For sure I hadn't understood the math parts. There were a bunch of places, like almost all of them, where I had to take the word of the author that the math actually did what she said it did. It was still a marvelously strange result. One world starts out like ours, and ends up very different, but there's a matching world that starts out very different and ends up very much like ours. People living now on a very different world would see that totally different starting points could lead to almost the same present, the one they lived in. Those people are not in a special place, so our world has the same property. Some nearly-the-same presents, present times very much like ours, had very different pasts. Once I told myself that, I decided that the book's conclusions actually were kind of obvious, even if I might never have thought of them myself. The "Ambassador of the United States of America" could then have been a cross-time traveler, except cross-time travel is impossible.

That left another riddle. Why was this book on mum's forbidden list? After all, there really is only one world, two if you count Otherearth, so this image of a huge number of different worlds doesn't match anything that really exists. The book had been a big effort to read, but I can't say that I learned very much from reading it. The book matches up against the proof that I read before I accepted the Martyr's challenge, another forbidden book, the proof that you can't build a sideways time machine. The reason you can't is that the number of alternate universes is infinitely more than how many numbers there are, so to reach all the universes you would need an infinite number of dimensions into which a sideways time machine could travel, and an infinite number of control knobs to set the destination, all at the same time. I'm not sure I understand the infinite real number part. I do understand "There are as many integers as there are fractions", though I had a flash of joy when I finally saw how obvious the proof was. It was as good as understanding acceleration. There can't be an infinite number of control knobs, I think, so there must not be any, so therefore a sideways time machine can't let you cross from time line to time line, watching the universe gradually change through your window.

With that I had dinner. I finished off the cold chicken I had remembered to debone, and made fresh-boiled lima beans, spaghetti aglio e olio, and a nice pile of hand-shredded romaine with Venetian garlic dressing. That prepared me for an evening at the lessoncomp. I had dozed off a couple of times during the afternoon, no matter how interesting the reading was, but by now I was pretty much awake. There were people I would've liked to see, but it would be hard to explain how I managed to break my ribs. At least three of the people were astute enough to notice that my injuries were remarkably similar to the injuries Eclipse plausibly suffered in the Maze, and must have happened at about the same time. Also, while I could go deep into my gifts if I needed to, for example if I were jumped by a persona team, I certainly didn't want to do that if I could avoid it.

I did spend an hour in front of the video. The advantage of watching a satellite broadcast is that no one can tell which channel you are watching at least if your receiver is set to pick up a lot of different channels all the time and drop most of the signals into shielded grounds. Up came the Persona Network News, and on came the Vera Durand Hour

of Power. Durand's garb was a bit silly, but her coverage of persona news was top line. I would have been just as happy if most of her reporting was not centered on plans to capture me. She had worked vigorously to secure interviews with Great Power Ambassadors to the League of Nations. That would be a future program. Most of them knew things. Some were up to reading the speeches their governments had sent them. Computer reconstructions of my physical appearance were evolving. They were getting worse. Now the computers had concluded that I was an improbably well-endowed woman in her late 20s. Good. It was now less likely than ever that someone would look at me and think I resemble the Eclipse they had not really seen on video.

Durand turned to coverage of Medford, Massachusetts. Medford? Up on the screen came photos of Janie, Trisha, Brian, and their parents. The Wells family refused to be interviewed. Why did anyone care about Janie? It was my City of Steel move. Janie had created the original move, and showed me some of the good variants. I used one of them in the Maze. It turns out that the move was better than I thought. The move was Janie's super-secret spring-at-the-nationals surprise move, and I'd given it away. She was furious. OK, my fault. I didn't know the move was that good. The Russians had somehow decided that Janie knows Eclipse. Of course, Janie actually does know Eclipse, but she doesn't know that. I for sure didn't tell her that game-opponent Joe and Namestone-bearer Eclipse are both me. She thinks Joe is a boy. Now the Russians had threatened to kidnap Janie.

The situation was absolutely terrible. It was my fault that Janie was in danger. I couldn't do anything to help her. I knew there were books of recorded games. I'd studied some. I didn't know the Russians could find Janie's games on the datanet and, worse, trace them back to her personally.

When the gamesmasters came to Medford to talk to her, Janie had had a persona champion. Durand explained how champions worked, in case someone in the audience didn't know. Then she interviewed the champion. The champion was Morgana Lafayette, Sunssword in her public persona. She was on my 'avoid at all costs' list. She knows what Joe, the kid who rescued Janie, looks like. She'd realize that Janie's game opponent was the same Joe. She'd want to ask me a few questions, like where I live and how to contact

my mom. One question would lead to another. Then I started to wonder: Why hadn't Janie's parents asked those questions? They'd been happy to meet another Janie game opponent, but hadn't been at all curious about where I live or who my mother is. They were less curious than is reasonable. I should have noticed. If I hadn't been so busy prepping for the Maze, well, that's an excuse.

It was a standard video interview...very short. Lafayette was very good at not answering questions, in a way that sounded as though the questions had been answered. Durand was very good at noticing that she still needed an answer. Lafayette gave away nothing about Janie's persona identity. She stayed with the official position. Janie has been questioned. She never used my move in competition play. She plays with friends, but none of them is Eclipse. For starters, none of them is a tall woman in her late twenties.

Archive Midwinter
a zine for N'APA 237

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Oops

Apologies for missing lastish. I thought I'd written a sub, but learned, too late, I hadn't. So it goes...

Comments

Jose Sanchez: Cover. Pretty! I had to look quite a long time before I saw the "gotcha!"

Kevin Trainor Jr.: Severe bummer, academically and financially. I hope your recovery from all of this is as painless as may be. Not (as a friend of mine liked to say) a jolly day in Stalingrad. Very best of luck to you.

re board wargaming, I'd never heard of Red Star/White Eagle, and I'm an ol' grognard from nigh the beginning of the hobby! I also don't know jack doodly about the Russo-Polish war of 1920. Clearly, I've got some reading to do!

"Doesn't everyone name their laptops?" Grin! I don't have a laptop, but had I one, I would definitely name it. My desktop is "Saltarello," and my Kindle e-reader is "The Book of Dreams."

re comics, alas, Black Hops didn't really work for me. It was a one-joke wonder. I didn't even bother getting the second issue. I halfway agree...and halfway disagree...re DC and Marvel. The writing these days is...okay. Not great, but hey, not bad. The "Young X-Men Lost in Time" story-arc is actually pretty compelling, and I think it's close to brilliant. And the art is top-notch. Wonder Woman is...good. Not great, but pretty darn good, and, again, the art is sweet. And Sonic the Hedgehog just rebooted, and it's a true delight!

I love Antarctic Press...but I'm not buying any of their "Trump" offerings. The reality is too painful.

re Uber, I've never Ubered. I have an up-to-date smartphone. How do I start? Download the app, gotcha. But...then what? I actually have a car...but I ought to have Uber ready as a backup, in case of awful things happening.

re Christianity, you're quite right, not only is Catholicism different from Protestantism, but even within the Protestants, there's a pretty broad range of variation. My only defense is that the most visible forms of Christianity today in the U.S. are heavily dominated by neo-conservative fundamentalists. They're the ones running the

radio and TV stations, the ones making a major issue out of creationism, and the ones who selected our two most recent Supreme Court nominees. They're very bad people, and their actions flatly contradict their theology. (These guys? They would not only not give you the shirt off their back, they'd interfere and try to prevent it if a city-based charity tried to give you a shirt!) I do apologize for tarring too broadly with my brush, but the guy who spat on me at a pro-choice/pro-life public face-off called himself a Christian, and it's hard for me to remember he only represents a segment of the faith, not the whole of it.

(As I said, my praise for Christianity is for the artistic impetus, producing some of the greatest works of art, music, sculpture, and architecture on earth. Bach's B-Minor Mass repays for a lot of sins!)

Lauren Clough: Good luck to you and your Mum. Losing one's sight must be utterly devastating. Reading and geocaching seem like really good ways to relax for a bit!

George Phillis: Yes, I'd definitely add "Democracies don't go to war with each other" as a "weak" law. There are exceptions, certainly, but it's got significant modern statistical support. Someone once noted that democracies also don't suffer from massive famines, because it's something The People would absolutely refuse to accept.

This segment of "The Girl Who Saved the World" is back to the "soap opera" home-life of the protagonist, and is jolly fun. It's hard for me to wrap my head around someone with titanic top-level superpowers building bookshelves or doing homework! I think this (amazing!) contrast is the key to this book's sense-of-wonder!

Will S. Mayo: Personally, I quite agree with you. There isn't any useful evidence to me for an "afterlife," and I fear that the very concept is detrimental to civilization, as it leads people to devote resources to the afterlife, at the expense of the existing world. That

people are willing to lay down their lives, fighting fire or fighting crime, is amazing, and the sacrifice is only belittled (in my opinion) by the notion that "We'll meet again." It lets people put off until forever what they should do today, and it lets people imagine that justice will come in the hereafter, when we should be striving for justice today.

re a human skull, my uncle had a human skull on his desk. When anyone would ask, he'd say, "That's my father's skull." You see, his father was a doctor, and kept the skull on his desk. My uncle intended me to inherit the skull, so I could have said, "That's my grandfather's skull. It's also my uncle's." But, alas, one of my uncle's graduate students nabbed the skull, and it has passed out of my ken. Phooey!

(I do have a human femur, which I used to use as a gavel at board meetings. Tap it on the table. "The meeting will come to order." I called it "the bone of contention.")

John Thiel: "We have a nice little apa here, and I think more concord in our thinking would profit us well." Grin! I must disagree (and I'll be taking issue, a bit later, with something else you said.) I believe that a diversity of opinions and a series of debates is really at the heart of a good APA. We need to disagree, otherwise what can we say but, "Yep, I agree?" I believe that the existence of an "opposition" is absolutely necessary for good politics -- and good science, too. The truth is best arrived at by a process of competition of ideas, in a kind of "survival of the fittest."

(I hasten to add that it doesn't always work! But it works more often than it fails, and it works more often than any other system for discovering truth or for increasing human welfare.)

Now, I'm not actually challenging you to a duel... (Grin!)

(A good friend and I once settled our differences...with a pillow fight!)

I take issue with your description on my views regarding "weak" explanatory theories as "superstition." I think that's wholly unfair; it's quite the wrong word. The Anthropic Principle, for instance, is very widely accepted among cosmologists -- or, at least, the "weak" version is. The weak Gaia idea is very widely accepted among ecologists. And many historians accept a weak Fukuyama principle, in that the great Darwinian struggle among forms of government has shown a (weak!) superiority of representative democracy.

I'm sorry to learn that "evil triumphs" is a major current meme in SF. It's an unpleasant one! I'm far more comfortable with "cathartic" stories, where good triumphs. As so often, Oscar Wilde said it best: "The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what fiction means."

SF has always been more open than most other forms of art to "Didactic" drama, where the resolution is un-happy, the bad guys win, the evil computer takes over the world, the alien spores kill everyone, or the last remnant of human civilization is twenty seconds of a Donald Duck cartoon. But I firmly believe that these sorts of stories should remain a smallish minority, and shouldn't come to typify the genre.

I love the surrealism of the guy "painting" the light from a street-light!

Keeping Busy

Too busy, alas. I had to drop out of another APA, and missed an issue of this'n. There just aren't enough hours in the day. I'm still writing my current novel...but so slowly! It's taking me two years to

write this one, when nine months has been my usual time of completion.

I confess, I don't read much Science Fiction these days. My favorite sub-genre is "supernatural adventure," the kind that isn't "horror." I can't do heavy horror, but I can, with great care, enjoy "light" horror. The basic difference seems to be in the amount of time spent in describing death and pain, and often, the emphasis on helplessness. A good thriller will necessarily involve "helplessness" scenes -- James Bond gets captured and tied up, etc. -- but horror fiction seems to revel in it, and to make it a major focus of the drama.

Alien was a horror movie. No matter what you did, the monster was right behind you. Aliens was an adventure movie; the space marines had a fair chance to win. They were not helpless, until pretty much the end.

I'm also reading a lot of historical fiction, mostly series of novels about naval adventures in the Great Age of Sail. There is something wonderful about Sea Stories, and I never grow tired of them.

I'm backing that up by reading a lot of real History. I just finished a good book about the War of 1812, which filled me in on a lot of details I hadn't known. I picked up a book about the Wars of the Roses, a subject I'm pretty ignorant upon. And as I mentioned earlier, I need to read up on the Russo-Polish war of 1920. That's terra incognita to me!

And then there's comic books! Yay! Good solid action-packed slam-bam melodrama, where heroes in brightly colored costumes solve problems the old-fashioned way: with their fists! It may be immature...but I don't care, I love it!