

N'APA 239

March 2019



c 2013 Jose Sanchez
Blast Off !

The Official Organ

#239

Next deadline: May 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 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 George.

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 and the preparer has a full-time job. 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.

In this issue:

Front Cover: Blast Off - Jose Sanchez

The Official Organ #239

Contents of a Good Life 5, by Will Mayo – 6 pages

Synergy 15, by John Thiel – 8 pages

Ye Murthered Master Mage, by George Phillies – 7 pages

Archive Midwinter, by Jefferson P. Swycaffer – 3 pages

Notes from a Galaxy Far, Far Away 18, by Lorien Rivendell – 3 pages

Kevin Trainor is on a leave of absence, but hopes to return.

Super thanks to Jose Sanchez, who sent four works of art for use as covers, some really spiffing material!

THE CONTENTS OF A GOOD LIFE 5
NAPA November 2018 237th Mailing



Will S. Mayo, 750 Carroll Parkway, Frederick, Maryland
21701 wsmayo@yahoo.com note: this was supposed to be in the
November mailing. It will resume as normal in the May mailing.

FOND HOPES OF DAYS YET TO COME

I do have hope for the future, yes. In the future, great tubes will crisscross the continents and the seas, delivering passengers in compact pods at dizzying speeds around the globe. Too, humankind will take to the moon and planets like never before, both on solar sails and new technologies not now known that will cross the cosmos in days which had hitherto taken years to travel. And nations will lose their political hold as individuals begin to know one another, both near and far, better. It is only a matter of time before communities become both smaller and bigger in ways that had never before been thought possible, while the ideas of work and leisure will have to be rethought entirely. Only whether man can lose the savagery that reigns in his heart is the remaining question. We're only one step removed from the savage beasts that we once were and we haven't outgrown that yet.



Water bearer angel

BENEATH THE WAVES. Then beneath the waves, throughout the world, explorers have found fallen stones thousands of years old, remnants of civilizations beyond imagining. What came and how they came to vanish no one knows but tales still remain of the knowledge beyond our knowing now or perhaps ever. Of great temples supported by walls

hundreds of feet high and technology far beyond the knowhow of the times. And then suddenly gone, almost without a trace. Is this the fate that awaits us now? The sun and moon turn in the heavens above and no one knows.

THAT ALL-SEEING EYE. So one day a man built the most powerful telescope ever made, and this telescope, peering back through the history of light, of time, saw through to the far reaches of the universe where our time began and so did God's. He looked and looked through that instrument and what did he see but one gigantic eye looking back at him? Yes, one eye looking back, peering into the depths of him, stilling the heart and taking the life out of the man. The man was then gone for his eternity and yours and mine but the eye continued to look back. It looks still.

DEATH OF THE FIRE GODS. "Where were you when the stars came out?"

"I was out in the night, the cold, frozen night."

"Did the stars bleed then, Daddy?"

"Yes, they bled as they twinkled and they fell."

"What happened then?"

"They all sank into the deep blue sea and we looked no more. For that was the night the sky opened up and all the heavens bled."

A DISTANT PRAYER

children of the night
come forth from every alleyway
and streetwise shelter.
where nuns ring the bell
for a mass that never follows.
and hermits set up shop
on every sidewalk vending place.
hoping to make a few bucks
but much rathering being left alone.
old men walk around in a daze,
never seeing, never really daring.
simply choosing to parse their riddles
in one word or less.

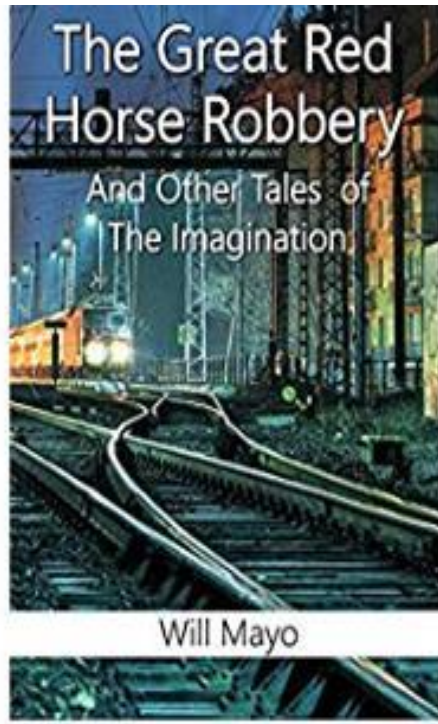


bridge on the outskirts of Frederick, MD.

I don't know what more to say about my ongoing computer difficulties except it's kind of like the old proverb about finding a needle in a haystack. Why, just today, my Facebook page gave out for three hours. I tried everything, a virus check on my computer and everything else I could think of, only to have it all come back at the end of three hours. Sometimes time's the only key and the best thing a man can do is to wait it all out.

Within These Walls

My body is a mess but my mind is a field of dreams upon which naked nymphs lay. I relax and write another line.



Tales by the Firelight on One Autumn Evening

**Give me the cool October wind.
The leaves crunching underfoot.
Children playing all around me.
Old men laughing. Young women in delight.
Give me an old friend, oh, make it two
with my cat by my side
and a hundred tales to note on the shelf.**

**Then let us begin and tell the tales of yesterday
when all the world was young
and the dead not so dead, the old not so old.
In words such as these we are reborn in one silver second.
Come, the time is now. We are alive again.**

SYNERGY 15



November 2018

Neffers Amateur Press Association (N'APA)

239th Mailing

Note: this was omitted from the November mailing and is going in this mailing instead.

This to be the apazine of John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904. Produced in strict accordance with apa standards with due credit given to Ghu in its formulation. Why tire the reader with an email address? It's on the roster, in TNFF, perhaps already in your email address book. Things are working out fine for me in the new Computer Age, I've got a swinging apazine and many another capricious thing. I'm thinking of renaming myself Claus Barenhart to have a new computer identity, but then again, that wouldn't be consistent in my line of progress. I'd be telling it to the peaceful dawn if I outlined my objectives here, but let's just say that I have the intention of doing some good fanning.

Ah, ist's gut, Mynheer, your editorial...?

I don't know how a Bavarian gets into it, but that editorial's coming right up.



***Many Years a Fan, Listen to My Rann* editorial**

No, I'm no neo, or perhaps that should be, Yes, I'm no neo, not being a nihilist either, who says "No" rather than "Yes", the great affirmative. Read on, an ye will.

You see, I try to get my pages sectioned rather than overlapping in content, so that it will look that much more like a proper publication. The computer's been known to thwart me at this, by repositioning material according to the vagaries of its programmers, but I'm crafty, and there above I have positioned an introduction to an editorial which will begin on the next page, rather than having it free-floating in isolation from its text. In other words, "read on" refers to the text being to follow, as if I wanted my heading on the opening page. The reader may hold his stomach and laugh if that gets pie'd up in some manner also, rendering it uncouth, but it will be visible how much the machine has had to do with it, in compensation to myself. If it isn't in the order I stated it, it isn't what I had planned and thought I had blocked out correctly.

The picture shows a forward-looking editorial office, with little detail because the future is uncertain, but the pic signifies my awareness of the future as it comes into being. Forward-looking editor.

Why be a fan of sf? you may ask. Well, what the literature does for me is respect the speculative outlook, and speculation keeps things lively, and I like liveliness. I like the progressive tendencies science fiction has. There are a lot of dire sf stories written about progressing into bad things—the magazines are full of just that these days. Nor has science fiction been typically very moral. But it does seek out what would be best, just because what's best is more enjoyable. It looks for things that would interest and amuse people. And that's an important thing. Interest and amusement are closer to living and the way living should be. Why should we be without music or art simply because they are not practical things? They don't help any with survival, but they make survival more worthwhile. Science fiction is always coming up with *outré* concepts that have to them an aesthetic delight. Plato couldn't find room for artists and musicians in his utopian society, but he did remark that that would be why it would not really be utopian. He wanted a better thinker than him to find a place for them.

Science fiction is progressive and apocalyptic, moving toward enlightenment. This makes it outstanding in literature, even if in other ways it is not. We don't want to stagnate in a world like we've got.

We're not successful in achieving our enlightenment? Maybe not, but we're playing around with concepts of enlightenment and that's better than others are doing, and it is no waste of time to think well and conceive of better things.

Me hope I have explained my science-fiction reading attitude.

Mailing Comments

Good front cover for this mailing. I am referring to the September mailing, mainly NAPA 236.

Kevin Trainor: University of Las Vegas—how would you rate this school academically in return for their evaluations?

I am curious about Vegas fandom. There are a lot of Facebook sf fans listed as living in Las Vegas. Do you all know one another, do you ever get together? (My new adjutant has moved to California, alas, but I appreciate your initiative about looking him up.)

That Riviera portal has a kind of haunted sound to me.

I think there would be enough material for an anthology or two in the crud which is lying around loose....let me start that over. I think there would be enough material of the type you mention for an anthology or two to be created in which mankind goes to the stars and brings war along with them. The idea there is that war is simply part of mankind.

Lorien Rivendell: Where does the time go. The time goes into a recycling unit operated by elves and sprites, as once upon it the Teenie Weenies portrayed in a comic strip of their own. I've found morning to have vanished, exactly like a character in an sf story wiggling when he wakes to find things different. (The Trouble with Water, Yesterday was Monday, *etc.*) I get up at seven and by the time I dress, freshen up and finish breakfast it's getting near noon. Being blocked by the activities of other people in the household accounts for some of this, but that still is not much of a morning. "Somebody is squeezing morning like a sponge" as a character in an sf story might say.

It seems to me like the rotunda in that house would not be a very good place for a tea party.

George Phillies: Did you and Jefferson Swycaffer ever do any of the talking he said he would do with you (in an earlier mailing) about the possibility of his doing some writing for Eldritch Science?

On F&SF, you just send your ad to their address and accompany it with advance payment for the ad. They have a price per word at their market place. I suppose you were trying to do it electronically. I don't know anything about that. But as you inquired of me what the deal was with F&SF and the Dell Mags, it seems you might be remote from reading the specifications on the advertising and the deals offered in their market place sections.

I'm getting junk mail notifications from a filtering agency I'd not asked for about communications from the electronic Amazing. There always has been a communications problem there, for me at least. I've been hearing more from Davidson *via* my SF Fandom Facebook page, SF Fandom being a group he belongs to.

I don't know what was bugging the N3F President at that time about Ionisphere; he never did

say, at least not with any clarity. I think he may have been receiving mail and material from me that I didn't actually send or write.

Will Mayo: The letters wear off my keyboard too. One keyboard I had was purloined by someone for their use and rather than getting it back, worn as it was, I bought another. After a couple of years the letters started wearing off that one, too. I think we could look for better than that in management. My "balance rewards card" was adding up to ten dollars and most of the goods I wanted were not part of the reward deal, so I asked them about electronics and heard back that those were probably okay. A keyboard was selling at just under ten dollars but it had a tax. I got the keyboard free *via* the deal and paid off the tax from my pocket. Again I have a keyboard with all the letters visible.

That all goes back to my robot typewriter...the lettering was wearing off the keys on that too. Office goods are not up to par on their lettering, and have not been for a good many years. Back when, I had a typewriter whose keys were safely under a mica-like shield and the lettering did not wear off. After many years, though, the shields started yellowing and deteriorating.

ston ton thurge

(end of comments)

The Editor's Pajamas

Around here you can't get pajamas very easily, if at all. Some of the cut-rate stores were selling pajama bottoms but no tops for a long time, a sign that the pjs came from a hijacked load and some transport demons had separated the tops from the bottoms in transport. Probably some of the aristocratic demons were commenting that if the tops were being sold people would be able to use them as shirts, and telling this to the management aspects of enterprise. I had three sets of pretty good pajamas from earlier days but they were starting to get ragged and I couldn't get new ones. Finally I found a store at a mall that sold things primarily to women but had a small men's department in which I found pajamas on racks wrapped in a transparent material, two styles/designs. At eighty dollars I only bought one, and those along with the less ragged ones helped service me for a few years. But finally they were all pretty mopish and that store had sort of changed. My brother and his family found some in Indianapolis and got them for me for Christmas. They had spared no expense. These and the least ragged of the rest lasted me for a few years and then someone stole the tops and it was like I was out again, had to wear mismatched tops. Last Christmas somebody remembered my needs and got me a full outfit of very passable pajamas indeed, and I'm taking care of these and making them last. For variety I wear the old rags sometimes so that people who see me in the morning won't always be looking at the same thing, and they don't notice the tears in them, it's me who notices that; I get a feeling of discomfort from them.

Shoes are also difficult to get around here. The price on shoes that are any good at all is up near a hundred now, and the lower-priced shoes are trash, including gym shoes, which all kinds of locals are wearing, sandals, which don't make good shoes, and clod-hoppers. There's one store devoted entirely to shoes and all their shoes are trash, and are sold at high prices. The shoes last maybe five years. I got several sets of shoes in advance of the prices going up, and wore out one pair and a pair of clodhoppers I used as work shoes. My brown shoes collapsed and I threw them out, and now I'm down to two pairs, a second pair of brown shoes and a pair of black shoes, and the brown shoes I'm currently wearing are becoming uncomfortable and I've put pads into them and looking at one starting to fray along the design. I don't wear the black shoes except to blow people's minds.



Yep, had a happy enough Halloween.



THE COMING REIGN by John Polseelli

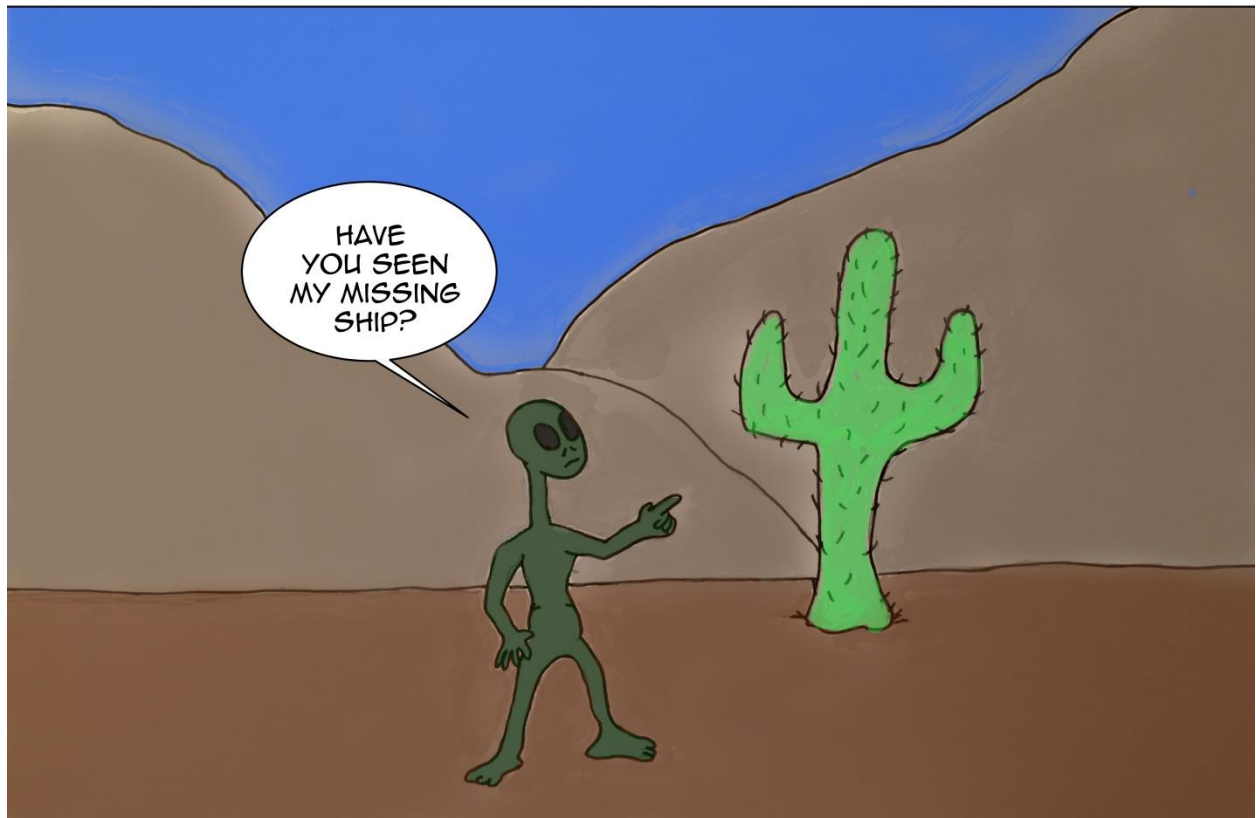
The sun came out so late today that I
Was sure the stars and moon usurped the light
That keeps the cages of the raven Sky
Tight-fastened in a never-ending night,
Whose dreams that blossom, like a waking child,
Bestir and pace about the sable cell
In longing to escape into the wild,
And cast a parting glimpse toward its hell.
A morning that is blooming in your brain
Will shift its rays against eternity,
And whether night is stable or insane,
The dawn shall mock her in futility,
For every eye shall rise and curse the day
When the soundness of the moon has gone astray.



FROM THE EARTH WE COME, TO THE EARTH WE GO by Will Mayo

Lay me down like old rocks in the earth
Let old debts settle like the sediments of the ground.
Ground me down into dust.
Remember me not.
Let all things be as one again.





Ye Murthered
Master Mage
for N'APA 239

George Phillies
48 Hancock Hill Drive
Worcester MA 01609
February 28, 2019

Comments

Cover: Another flying saucer, this one a new design that hovers at an angle. Surely we may be thankful to Jose Sanchez for the wonderful covers that he sends us.

Notes from Galaxy Far, Far Away. I have not been to a Boskone in a very long time. You certainly found some strange television series to cover. The housemaid who became a zombie?

Thank you for writing comments. It appears to me that the N3F has gradually improved over the past five years. We have a number of active bureaus that had not done anything in a very long time, but that are now active. Curiously we now have three more or less active artists, but interest in being BuHead is limited. We may be grateful to Cedar for continuing to serve.

We are now up to eight zines, namely TNFF (news), Tightbeam (longer reviews), N'APA (our APA), Ionisphere (notably, long interviews), Origin (fannish history), Mangaverse (anime, comics, manga), Films Fantastic (mostly older SF films) and Eldritch Science (fiction). That actually covers a fairly wide range of sf/fnal activities. We don't have a TV magazine, though there is a lot of science fiction on TV. It appears that cosplay was invented by a founding member of the N3F, but we do not have a Cosplay Bureau. On the other hand, we do have a Gourmet Bureau, and the series Food of Famous Writers seems to be decently well received. All of these magazines are more or less regular. TNFF 's monthly. Tightbeam is nearly monthly. N'APA does a fine job of being entirely regularly bimonthly. Origin is monthly. Mangaverse is planning to be quarterly, complicated more than slightly by the editrix's extensive travel. Films Fantastic appears to be settling down into a bimonthly or so schedule; it just began separate publication. Eldritch Science appears about twice a

year in the spring and the fall; I plan another issue in the coming month.

Ye Murthered Master Mage: I am actually selling a few copies of Eclipse. As with my past two novels, I tried the preorder scheme, which allegedly boosts sales. Preorder was less effective this time than last time for whatever reason.

Archive Midwinter: as it turned out, I did not hear from anyone who thought that the robot recharging cover was too risqué. I suppose I should be happy with that.

Sympathies on the challenge of finishing novels at a reasonable rate. We may all stand in awe of the illustrious Chris Nuttall, who writes a novel a month. His latest is Cursed, a novel in the Schooled in Magic series. I am not sure what to suggest. Cedar Sanderson has launched a new Facebook page More Odds Than Ends in which there is a daily reporting of what you wrote that day. It certainly promotes a certain level of self-discipline. Recently there have been more people reporting what they have not been able to do than what they have done. Perhaps with the change of season matters will improve.

Eclipse has a large number of opinions on many topics. To some extent, I can use her internal dialogue to provide back story without engaging in massively overlong infodumps. Eclipse's world views Marlowe is the greatest Elizabethan playwright, but on her world Marlowe had the unfair advantage of living much longer and maturing in his writing.

I would of course be grateful if you would choose to submit your stories to Eldritch Science. We can always use more material. With respect to shoes, except that they are not cheap, I call your attention to Nunn-Bush, whose shoe bottoms are in fact sneakers and whose tops are in fact professional-looking shoes.

More Airy Castles All Ablaze. I am at the moment writing the next two novels at the same time, and have bits of the third complete at this point. We start a bit beofre where I ended last time.

“Comet,” her younger brother finally asked, “would it distract you too much if we three talked?”

“That’s fine,” she answered, “it’ll keep me awake.”

“Except first,” Star said, “The Wizard gave you a lanyard on the Starcompass. He must think you’ll need it, even though you’re absolutely always supercareful not to drop anything. Well, except those letters from your dresser. I knew this was an adventure, like in *Creatures and Catacombs*, so I brought along the most important thing for an adventure.”

“The rulebook?” Aurora asked.

“Food? Water?” Comet suggested.

“No. The mile of rope. Well, a couple hundred yards of high-test twine.” Star nodded vigorously. “And a few tools. I chose those myself. I mean, we don’t need the ladder, when two of us can fly, and a raft would be way too heavy. But twine means we can tie ourselves together.” Star decided to pretend not to notice his sisters rolling their eyes. After all, bringing the rope had been his idea, and it was so obviously what they needed.

“Makes sense,” Eclipse answered. “It’s like a safety line and helmet when rock climbing. You don’t need them at all, until you really do. Do you know the Seyforth knot?”

“I tug hard on the line between us and it’s secure at your end?” he gestured, pretending to pull on a rope. “You tug on the short end and it releases all at once? Know the name, can’t tie it.”

“It’s tricky.” Eclipse agreed. “Aurora, would you please share my memory?” The younger girl passed to her siblings Eclipse’s muscle memory of tying a Seyforth knot.

“Except I wanted to talk about what’s going on,” Star said. “What are we supposed to be doing? Why fly across the universe, just to turn around and come back? What are the threats? Oh, one thing, Eclipse. You get to say I’m prying and not tell us. I know what my sisters can do -- and, no, Comet, I don’t understand that Heinlein thing but you’re still my sister. Just don’t tell Dad or Mom I said that -- but it’s hard to be a team if you don’t know what

gifts your team-mates have. Except the Wizard gave away you can fly faster-than-light, Eclipse.”

“Star likes these simple questions,” Aurora said. “Except I agree on asking every bit of that one.”

“Start with Heinlein?” Comet asked. “Let me answer. I might feel better afterward. I can hardly feel worse.”

“Sure,” Aurora answered. Her brother nodded agreement.

Eclipse could feel the aching void in Comet’s heart, the void that only time might fill. “Your choice, Comet,” she answered.

“OK, back to the beginning,” Comet said. “Heinlein was this Navy Admiral. He was wounded fighting pirates. He knew he’d be retiring, so he read law and became a divorce attorney. Divorce, like Mister and Mrs. Amico across the street.”

“One day, they weren’t married any more,” Aurora explained to Eclipse.

“This is before he started writing science fiction and won the Fiction Nobel Prize,” Comet explained. “So one day this little girl appeared in his office. She’d read the new California family divorce law. She wanted to divorce...her parents. She had real good reasons why. They were terrible people. The letter of the law said she could. He took her case. He finally reached the Supreme Judicial Court of the Republic. He won, got her a divorce. She became her own family. She did get a guardian, she being short of money. There was a big foofaraw. The Speaker, not Ming, two guys before Ming, asked Heinlein to write a law, so it would be the same for everyone. That law is the Heinlein Divorce Act. There are evidence rules. I satisfied them. So I’m not part of my old family any more, like Mr and Mrs. Amico aren’t part of each other’s family any more..”

Star’s mouth was a large ‘O’. “And Dad blamed you, Eclipse, for all this?”

“Your parents,” Eclipse explained, “were sure your sister was a wanton roundheel carrying on with a boy. To be precise, your dad thought she was

carrying on with Aurora's old City of Steel opponent Joe. After all, he'd gone cloud-diving with Comet, which for sure proved it."

"But you're Joe. And Dad thought you'd been carrying on with Trisha?" Star was baffled. "Just because you dropped from the sky? That doesn't make sense."

"It's some stupid romance novel thing," Eclipse explained. "I never heard of it until recently. Except there are romance novels where the couple goes cloud-diving, and then...oh, yuck."

"Eclipse! That's impossible!" An outraged Aurora interrupted. "You couldn't have carried on with my sister. You're a girl!"

"I was in disguise. Your Dad and Mom thought I was a boy," Eclipse said. "For that matter, they may still think I'm a boy."

"So if I go cloud-diving with a girl, I might...eeuw. That's gross. OK, I won't do that," Star observed. "Is it even true?"

"No!" Comet snapped, glowering at her younger brother. "It's total nonsense. I went cloud-diving with Eclipse, when I thought she was a boy, and that idea never entered my mind! Not ever! Not even a tiny bit! Is that clear!" Star wondered if his sister was about to take a swing at him. Perhaps several swings. Or a firm kick to the head.

"Absolutely!" Star answered. "No! Really! I believe you, Trisha. I mean, ugh!"

"Besides," Comet added, "to cloud-dive with someone you have to be able to fly. Bouncing when you hit the ground doesn't count as flying, so you can't."

"Oh, good." Brian said. "I'm safe."

"Dad and Mom dumping on me for what I didn't do, refusing to say what they thought I did, was only the last straw." Comet shrugged. "Even before that, no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get on their good side. It was terrible. Enough of that for now. Back to your question for Eclipse, Star?"

"What gifts do I have?" Eclipse asked. "I won't tell you all of them. I have too many people trying to kill me. Some of my gifts are surprises that might save my life. But there are a whole stack of events where people have watched me use gifts. Those gifts I'll describe. I fly, way slower than Comet. But I don't have your super vision, Comet, and I can't turn invisible. I sort of have mentalics, my levin bolts being way less powerful than your death glance, Aurora, and I'm a middling and clumsy telepath, not powerful and subtle like you. If I do telepathy with someone, they get a headache. My mindscreens might be better than yours, Aurora, or I've had more training. I've got several energy attacks and a strong force field. My plasma torch? I've been rigorously trained on putting power into it, for a very long time. When you've had as much practice as I have, Brian, you'll probably be stronger. How strong a force field? Last week I flew to the core of the Sun. By myself. And made it back. Barely. Oh, I teleport."

"How did you manage to teleport out of Tibet," Star asked, "when whoever dropped the lithium bombs on you and the Lama? There was no warning. You got away before you were vaporized. That was so totally frigid!"

"I didn't teleport," Eclipse answered. "The bombs went off, and my force fields cranked high enough to protect us both. That's faster than light presets, same as yours, Star, and a crash drop to power the force fields."

"But if you can always crash drop, Eclipse," Star said, "and shrug off lithium bombs, what are the rest of us doing here? I mean, you're totally invincible. Whatever these challenges are, we can just sit around and cheer you on. Oh, I get to cook for you."

"Cook for me is fantastic! I've had some of your cooking. It's great!" She paused. "That goes for your cooking, too, Comet, and yours, Aurora, the one time I had anything you baked. But me? Invincible? Not hardly," Eclipse answered sadly. "My gifts are like anyone else's. There are things I can't do. I may not be the key that unlocks whatever door we're looking for. Oh, yes: Rule zero. Crash drops court death. No matter how good you are, you do a crash drop and you're rolling the

dice. A bad roll means you die. Do you follow?" Star and Aurora nodded agreement. "Comet?"

"Should I care?" she asked. "Not that I can crash drop. Okay, I might care tomorrow. I'm just dropping smoothly through my levels to speed up."

Eclipse blinked to hide her tears. Poor Comet had had a totally ghastly experience, and no time to recover. Now she was down to not caring about herself. "When I flew to the core of the Sun—most people don't know that yet—I spent two weeks powering down first, ever so slowly, down to levels most people never see. On the way back to Earth, I almost died."

"You flew to the Sun?" Aurora asked. "Why?"

"That was the other Copper Book, wasn't it?" Comet interrupted, "the one Dad doesn't know I read off his desk. Did it work?"

"The True Copper Book?" Eclipse asked.

"Yes," Comet answered. "Is that thing as horrible as the book claimed?"

"Worse," Eclipse answered. "Worse."

"What are you two talking about?" Aurora asked. "Or is it a secret?"

"I promise I'll tell you later." Eclipse shook her head.

"Let's please put this off," Comet asked, "say until after we take care of the two menaces?"

"Deal," Star said. "Do you have any weaknesses? I don't know. Are you deathly allergic to mustard?"

"If I really crank down my power levels, like fighting the Lords of Death, I start to toast myself," Eclipse explained, "I really need recovery afterwards. That's days of rest, not a few minutes to catch my breath."

"OK," Star said. "And you just said you have ultravision. But wait. You fought that Aztec guy. That was you killing Popocatepetl, wasn't it? Video said it was 'Joe'. And you flew to the Sun. Are you recovered from everything?"

"As much as I will be," Eclipse answered, fatigue for once showing in her voice. "I did what I had to do. Needs must. The fellow today wasn't very good. Not as good as me, anyhow. Popocatepetl was weird. His shields were fuzzy, easy to chew up. His energy attacks were all spread out...diffuse. I don't get it. You could have beaten him, Star, if you stayed calm."

"Thanks," Star said. He decided he liked having Eclipse say good things about his gifts, that being more than his sisters or Professor Lafayette ever did. "No, really, thank you. Except, this Popcat guy, he spent his time beating up peasants. He never had to be real good, never needed strong shields or great attacks. And focused attacks, they leave the target dead, meaning the target can't be a human sacrifice, so he didn't want focused attacks."

"Hadn't thought of it that way," Eclipse said agreeably. "You're right, Star."

"Come back to menaces, Star." Aurora nodded at her twin brother. "Popocatepetl, I mean Popocatepetl, is dead."

"We don't know anything about the menaces," Star said resignedly, "except the Wizard of Mars said there are two of them. One will destroy the world and everything in it, while the other will make everyone into slaves. Unless the four of us beat them. And one or the other is strong enough to kill us, at least some of us, maybe, but not all of us."

"That's so helpful," Aurora grumbled.

"But it's true," Comet interjected. "Brian, Star, I mean, you did a super good job of summing up what the Wizard told us. But those menaces sound so silly. What can destroy a world? Why do we need this incredible long round trip? It's going to go on forever."

"I don't know, sister," Star answered. "But everyone, Dad, Mom, Speaker Ming, Professor Lafayette, they were all sure we should believe what the Wizard of Mars was saying, even if it didn't make sense. So here we are, thanks to our great sister, flying across the universe. Four times. In the middle, we get to see time travel in action. We return before we leave."

"I'm missing something," Eclipse said. "There was some clue I heard, and now I can't figure out what it was. I never, I usually don't just forget things. Not like this. I can't find the memory."

"Mind control?" Star speculated.

"Through her screens?" Aurora challenged. "Not hardly."

"Time travel?" Comet suggested. "You remember having the clue, Eclipse. Someone went back in time, just a bit, and tweaked history, so you never heard the clue? You just have a memory of learning it, but it never existed?"

"Could be," Eclipse agreed. "And I've been used as a puppet by a time traveller before, well, Spindrift didn't live in linear time, so to her some things happened in different order than what I saw? She apologized afterwards. But she rigged a whole bunch of coincidences so I'd grab the Namestone and be up to flying into the Sun."

"Different question?" Star asked. "How did you manage to take the Maze? That's just so incredible."

"This is a bit embarrassing," Eclipse said. "And I'm not sure I'm right. It was a setup, and I was the mark, the dummy being led by the nose. The Maze had all these challenges, and I was exactly prepared for each one. I could have died. If the challenges had been a teeny bit different I might well have died. I did get three ribs broken, bone bruises, internal bleeding, little unpleasant things like that. I was just a tool. Someone used me to get the Namestone out of the Maze. But I gave one hundred percent, and I had the tools I needed. Like your City of Steel move, Aurora. So I won."

The younger girl thought to herself. "You know, it's strange. I swore to myself, up and down, I'd tell no one about that move. And I didn't. Except I told you, and then almost forgot I'd done it."

"If someone was playing with time," Comet began, "they could have been playing with time for all of us, so you were set up, Aurora, to give away your move, Dad and Mom were set up to be mean to me and, what happened to you, Eclipse."

"Yes," Eclipse agreed. "Except Spindrift, when she hopped back and forth in time, she never rearranged things. I think. She just remembered what happened in a funny order, so sunrise was after mid-morning."

"Mentioning playing with time," Comet said, "this is a twenty hour flight. You're all on deep space breathing? But at least twice we stop for ten minutes, and I take a nap."

"Is ten minutes enough, sis?" Aurora asked. "You're doing all the work."

"Ten minutes for you." Comet smiled. "I'll be at max superspeed. That'll be a full night's sleep for me. And each of you is breathing for all of us, in case I forget while I'm sleeping."

"I never thought of something," Brian said, "not until now. We could share superspeed. We could do all our studying for class in ten minutes a night."

"Professor Lafayette warned me. Study at superspeed is a real bad idea." Comet shook her head. "But a full night's sleep in ten minutes, study all night, sleep again, and be fresh in the morning? I started doing that."

"Of course! That's it!" Star said. "That was how suddenly you suddenly started rolling through lesson segments like they weren't there, wasn't it?"

"Yes," Comet answered. "I was piling up near perfect scores faster than anyone else in the history of Franklin Tech, by a lot. That's twelve hours of study a day, not four, and the extra eight weren't interrupted. Except Dad and Mom didn't care. They didn't even look up what my grades meant. They thought a Q was some sort of failing grade, when it meant that I had Qualified for a grade level. When we left I was officially an eleventh grader. Oh, we just passed 500 miles per second, so we now go faster than light."

Around them the star field shimmered. More and more rapidly, near stars shifted their positions. Comet rolled up, taking her flight perpendicular to the galactic plane, soon leaving behind the dense star fields of the Milky Way. "If you look behind us, in a few minutes you'll see the whole galaxy."

Once we're in deep space, I can really turn up the speed, so after a bit everything around us will appear to be the silver sea."

"Across this silver sea of suns," Eclipse quoted the *Sacred Ode to the Holy Namestone*, "I flee on blackened, limping wings. My erstwhile foes are cosmic huns, who fondle gauche, bejewelled rings. So long I'm free, they're would-be kings. Except, Comet, your wings are anything but limping. Your flight is just so incredible."

"There's one thing the menaces could do to kill us, well, you, Eclipse. And the mean people back on earth could do, too." Brian hoped he understood things correctly.. "Keep making surprise attacks. Make you crash drop. Wait for the dice to kill you."

"Of course, first they have to find me," Eclipse said. "That's why I hide. For menaces, we find them, not the other way around, and they get taken by surprise. Anyone on Earth who tries that on me," Eclipse said, "they get traced. And then I take the war to them, like the Austro-Hungarians burning Berlin to end the Summer War."

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"Another two hours," Comet said to her companions, "and we reach the Tunnels. Those naps on the way really made a difference. Thanks for covering for me, gang."

"It was the least we could do," Star said.

"You're our sister," Aurora added, "we take care of you. No matter what all the silly grownups say."

"Eclipse, are you awake yet?" Star turned to the fourth member of their party.

"Sort of," the older girl answered. "That nap helped. A lot."

"Stop!" Aurora interrupted. "There's something following us. I can feel its ultravision scan. It's getting closer."

"We're doing a billion light years an hour," Star countered. "How can anything be gaining on us?"

"I can't go any faster," Comet answered. "I just can't. I'm trying as hard as I can."

"We could lend your our strength," Star proposed. "Then you'll go way faster. We've done that before. It's easy. All you have to do..."

"Stop!" Eclipse's peremptory mentalic shout cut Star off. "Just wait. Let me check something first. Comet? Please?" At least, she thought, this time Aurora told us we were being scanned.

"I trust you, Eclipse. I always have. Even when I didn't know you were Eclipse." Comet shuddered. "Go ahead. Whatever it is."

"I'm using my healing matrix on you. You shouldn't feel anything." Eclipse reached out with her healing gift. Her rules engine flashed glyph after glyph, bright blue with flickers of deep violet. "Comet," she said, "You really have to ease off a bit on flight. Please? You said you trust me."

"Easing off," Comet said. The glyphs shifted to blue-green. "What was that?" Comet asked quietly.

"I did a scan; it's part of my healing gift. You were pushing yourself so hard you were hurting yourself," Eclipse explained. "Hurting yourself enough that you were killing yourself. Now you aren't. I can try helping you repair some of what you did, while we're flying."

"I think they're gaining on us faster," Aurora said.

"Can you find them mentally?" Eclipse asked. "My ultravision, it's strictly a short range thing."

"Like all the way through the sun?" Star countered.

"Brian, this is intergalactic. The sun is teeny-tiny by comparison," Comet explained.

"Fair enough." Brian nodded.

"I'm trying" Aurora said. "Following ultravision back is hard. Except they aren't exactly following us. We keep dodging galaxies. Their path. It's sort of straighter."

"Yes!" Brian said. "That's how they can be gaining on us, when Comet's the fastest persona in the



world. They have some sort of a map with shortcuts. The StarCompass just gives us the straight line direction.”

“Great! All I needed,” Comet grumbled. “I’m giving one hundred ten percent, and it isn’t enough. No matter what I do at anything, it’s not good enough.”

“Comet,” Eclipse said. “Think back at your school grades. Think back at lapping the boy’s Base Ball Nines team, day after day. You’re plenty good.”

“We did volunteer for this,” Star said. “The Wizard of Mars said some of were likely going to die on this trip.”

“No,” Comet said. “You three volunteered. I named my price, and Speaker Ming paid me what I wanted. I’m a persona for hire, a, what’s the word?”

“Mercenary,” Eclipse answered. “Mercenary. Except what you asked for, you were entitled to have.” I hope, she thought, you won’t regret being paid the price you asked. Invoking the Heinlein Act and divorcing your parents is something you can’t take back. I was your champion, so I saw your facts. I could tell: It wasn’t a spur of the moment decision. For sure, what you wanted was fair. Your parents were absolutely wonderful toward Star and Aurora, and completely terrible toward you.

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Across space loomed an enormous rock wall, stretching out forever in both directions.

“How can it do that?” Star asked. “We’re in outer space. That thing must be light years across. That’s impossible. Is it an illusion?”

“It’s a symbol,” Comet said. “The Wizard of Mars told me. I think. It’s not in our universe, just close. It’s not made of rocks. In any event, that circle is the entrance. The Wizard showed me a picture. We walk in, no flying or teleporting. I haggle with the Guardian of the Tunnels. No, I don’t know why I have to haggle. We’re paid in full. Another half hour and I get to fly us back.”

Aurora peered into the heavens. “Do we have a half hour?” she asked. “Whatever it is. it’s getting way closer.”

Comet stared into the sky. “Yes, I see it. But I don’t get it. What am I looking at?”

Comet! The mentalic message appeared from the void behind them. *Turn around. Go back to Earth. That was not a suggestion. You are a child, and you will do as you are told.*

“Who’s that? Brian asked. “I hear him but I don’t see him. Where is he?”

“Aurora, please show me what you two are seeing?” Eclipse asked. Aurora did as asked, forwarding what Comet’s telescopic vision revealed. Aurora blanched at the words Eclipse used next.

You will turn around, or you will be punished as disobedient children! the voice announced.

“They’re way closer,” Aurora said. “They’ll be here before that half hour is up.”

“Who’s back there?” Comet asked.

“A bunch of folks who want us to turn around,” Eclipse said. To be precise, she thought, most of the Lords of Eternity.

Next Episode

Eclipse versus Solara the Obliterator

Archive Midwinter
a zine for N'APA 239

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20 Jan 2019



Comments:

Jose Sanchez: Cover: Yikes! I shrunk it! I don't know how that happened! It came out tiny. My fault entirely. Embarrassment! It's a lovely flying saucer picture, and makes me think of War of the Worlds. It has that magnificent 1950s tone to it, when robots were scary and aliens were dangerous invaders!

Lorien Rivendell: I've heard very mixed reviews of Hulu's "The Handmaid's Tale." Some people loved it, and some people hated it, but there didn't seem to be a lot of opinion in the middle. I've never wanted to read the book -- too depressing! (I did read Esther M. Friesner's The Psalms of Herod, plus its sequel, The Sword of Mary. These were feminist dystopia novels also, reminiscent of the "Handmaid" world, where civilization has fallen, and what replaces it, in America, anyway, is a theocracy based on twisted readings of the Bible. Very depressing, and, although I'm quite a fan of Friesner, I honestly cannot recommend these books.)

rect me, I do have full employment (and health benefits!) now; it ain't a great job. Very much a "McJob," low-level wage slavery, and, to be frank, I'm actually losing money every month. No possibility of saving for the future. But it's a place to stand!

I like a good thriller! I recently read The Protocol, the first of the "James Acton" thrillers by J. Robert Kennedy. The details lack plausibility; Kennedy pushes the boundaries of the possible, and has his characters engaging in highjinks that border on superhero fiction. But it's a good, solid bit of excitement, with a pronounced resemblance to The Da Vinci Code. Kennedy's book has a supernatural grounding, although it isn't essential to the story, and a dubious reader can pretty much ignore that bit. (The Maguffin is a Cystal Skull, of the likes of which Indiana Jones spent some time in pursuit.) I can say that much without ruining the suspense, but I can't really go into detail regarding my reservations and grudges, because that would require giving away too many plot elements. Suffice it to say it's a good read, and the initial offering in a series that, by now, has run to 23 books. I'm not going to read them all, and I'm not going to read them in proper internal order...but I am going to go back and get a few more of these puppies. They're good page-turners!

re Word Perfect, I don't know if it exists any longer or not as a published product...but one nice thing about Microsoft Word is that it will open old WP documents, something that has saved me from losing a number of stories and other work. Hooray for backward compatibility!

Fun photo of geocaching finds! I like hiking, and I love to climb hills, but I have never been much good at geocaching. I did once find a cache on a hilltop, and took some time to sign the little registry booklet therein. I didn't have any toys to leave, so I didn't figure it was right to take one. Most hilltops around here don't seem to have cache boxes, and I don't quite know why. Seems it'd be the most natural thing. Maybe stinkers come and remove them. Sigh...

George Phillies: Nice cover art for Eclipse. I like how you kept "The Girl Who Saved The World" as a subtitle. That is, in my opinion, a very good thing to have done, because "Eclipse," by itself, doesn't give enough of a hint of what the book is about. The subtitle really grips the reader's interest, and promises an exciting punch-up of a book. (Which you deliver!)

I'm sorry to learn that disinviting people to conventions on the basis of political differences has become "a thing." It's ugly and stupid! Around here, the etiquette has developed of just not mentioning politics at all, on convention discussion panels. It's just too good a way of alienating half the audience. When I find myself as the moderator of a panel, I basically enforce that, and require participants not to engage or indulge. I once got very seriously "Pournelled" by Jerry Pournelle of late memory, when he wouldn't accept this requirement, and went raving on about how Democrats are traitors. Then he lost it completely and stormed out of the room. It was not his finest hour.

(I never knew him well, but I knew him, and he knew me, and we were pretty much able to talk about topics of mutual interest which lacked divisive contention. Also, he never stayed mad. He'd lose his temper, rant and rave...and then put it behind him and go right back to being a decent person again. Of him, it can truly be said, there was never a dull moment!)

Agreement re National Novel Writing Month. It takes me about nine months to write a book, so trying to hyper-accelerate that to only one month would be uncomfortable and quite daunting. I think I could do it -- for instance if a publisher offered me a whole lot of money to meet a one-month deadline -- but it would not be pleasant.

rct me, aye, I was a board wargamer for a long time, mostly following SPI. I had a great fondness for Redmond A. Simonsen, who was, in my opinion, their best designer, and who had a true genius for the graphic-design end of the business.

(In one of my novels, the protagonist is named Tom Simonsen, in a sort of a nod to Redmond's memory.)

My old gaming group even got the gigantic mega-games, War in Europe and War in the Pacific. When we discovered that we were playing these games more slowly than in "real time", we gave up and quit. I ended up keeping the game maps, which I used in my D&D campaigns. Alas for board wargaming, as the role-playing hobby pretty much destroyed it.

You said you were going to give us a bit of the opening of your next book, a sequel to This Shining Sea, but, instead, it looks like you gave us the opening to the sequel to Eclipse instead. Which starts out well indeed, introducing the characters, and moves right on out with a smash with the set-down on Mars. Definitely catches the reader's interest! Are you, then, writing on both at the same time?

Writing Stuff

I'm in a small writing group -- only five of us -- and we've having fun. We meet once a month for dinner (Denny's) and everyone has printed a copy of their recent work, to distribute to everyone else. Then we take some time going over the last month's

distribution, on the basis of "constructive criticism," pointing out the bits we liked, and the bits we didn't.

The skill level of my group is mixed. Three are accomplished writers, of professionally publishable quality...and two are absolute raw beginners who are setting words down for the first time in their lives.

My advice to them has been to read. Read as much as possible, and study what you read. Pay close attention to how authors compose their prose. That's the best way to learn, in my opinion. The next step is to imitate what they see. Not to plagiarise, of course, but to mimic the construction. For instance, many beginning writers, when writing dialogue, write down everything the characters would say. But this is actually not good. In real life, we say a lot of very unnecessary stuff, whereas in prose fiction, dialogue needs to be streamlined, so that it conveys the sense of people really talking, without being dreary. It takes writers a lot time to get the sense of this kind of "compression," and one good way to master it is to try to write it the way Isaac Asimov, or Poul Anderson, or Jack McDevitt would have written it. In a sense, the new writers serves an "apprenticeship."

My beginning writers are fond of playing silly little games with their stories, such as jumping over events, or giving hints about details without being explicit. My advice is: don't! Just tell the story. Use as straight-forward a narrative style as you can, and follow the action without playing "artsy" ploys and gimmicks. My professional-level writers know this, and don't engage in shenanigans. That's running afoul of the "imitative fallacy," in my opinion.

And, of course, many are the professional writers whose work is...hm...not of the highest literary quality. There have been a great many books published that are sub-optimal in writing skill.

That are, to be blunt, knee-walking turkeys. This can really hurt! I paid \$7.99 for a Kindle book...and it's unreadable trash?

(At least, with Kindle books, you can get revenge by writing a review that calls attention to the book's shortcomings!)

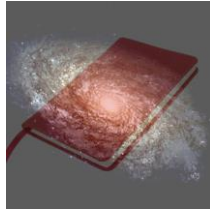


Chives and Hives

I had a little itch, a silly little wish
To have potatoes with drawn butter,
And wouldn't it be nice to add a little spice,
Green chives: one's heart goes a-flutter,

But oh how disturbing, I am allerging,
The leaves make my epidermis sputter,
Those savory oils have skinned me in boils,
And sped my old corpse to the cutter.

NOTES FROM A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY #18



March 2019
For N'APA 239
Lorien Rivendell
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BOSKONE 56

I attended Boskone for the first time in 20-something years. When I attended back in the 1990's, the con was held in Framingham, MA. It was along Route 9 and easy to get to. Parking was free. This year, it was held at the Westin Waterfront in Boston. Parking was \$35 a day at the hotel, and that was above what I would have to pay for a hotel, either there or elsewhere. Times sure have changed. In order to save money, I opted to stay in a budget motel in Watertown and take the T (Boston's public transportation system) and walk to the con and everywhere else I wanted to go. I figured if I got stranded somewhere, there was always Uber or a cab.

In the '90's, I drove out on Saturday, bought a one-day pass, and went home after the last panel. I opted for the whole weekend package this year. I arrived at the con a bit late on Friday, because check-in at the motel was 2 pm and then I had to navigate the T to find the hotel. I attended a couple of panels Friday afternoon before going back to the maze of the T. Because it was Boston in February, it got dark by 6 pm, and I was a bit nervous about using the T after dark. It turned out to be fine, by the way, just very busy.

I attended the con for most of the day on Saturday, before leaving in the daylight to search for a few geocaches. I also walked around Boston for quite a while. On Sunday, I again attended for most of the day before leaving. I did a bit more sightseeing before I headed back to the motel.

At the con, I attended panels on Star Wars, aliens, dystopias, and music in science fiction, among others. The most fun panel was on proper etiquette when meeting aliens.

REVIEWS AND RANTS

TV/streaming

“The Passage” - I read the book several years ago, when it first came out. It took me a long time to read, and I never read the other two in the trilogy. I watched the first season of this new series on Hulu (the day after it aired on Fox). The series does not follow the trilogy all that closely, but I find I like the changes. I’m hoping the series gets renewed, but I’ll have to wait nearly a year for it to happen.

Books

The Stepford Wives, Ira Levin (1972) - I read this at some point back in the 1980’s. I read this again recently. It wasn’t as creepy as it probably was when it first came out, because it’s such a part of our culture now. By now, pretty much everyone already knows what it’s about.

COMMENTS ON N’APA #238

George Phillies, Ye Murthered Master Mage - Congrats on getting Eclipse published! NaNoWriMo went okay, but I did not “win.” I made it to 22,630 (out of 50,000) words and just stopped. There’s always this November to go all the way. Meanwhile, I signed up for April’s Camp NaNoWriMo, where I can set the bar low. I opted for 1000 words, which should be doable. I can always increase it if I get ambitious. I find speech-to-text tempting, but since none of my devices understand me, I’ve got a pretty good idea how it will go.

Jefferson Swycaffer, Archive Midwinter - As mentioned above to George, I didn’t quite get halfway to the goal in NaNoWriMo. There’s always April. And November.

As far as we know, coconuts don’t intend to kill anyone. We can never be 100% sure of their motives, though, can we?



I made a digital painting of my galaxy far, far away.