

N'APA 245

March 2020



Robot's Holiday

By Jose Sanchez

The Official Organ

#245

Next deadline: May 15, 2020

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

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

Procedure: Please Read:

George Phillies will collate and mail, 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 prepaper 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.

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Super thanks to Jose Sanchez, who sent even more (!) works of art for use as covers, some really super spiffing material!

Apologies from Jefferson for forgetting the deadline, and thanks to everyone for contributing!

Archive Midwinter
a zine for N'APA 245

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2 February 2020

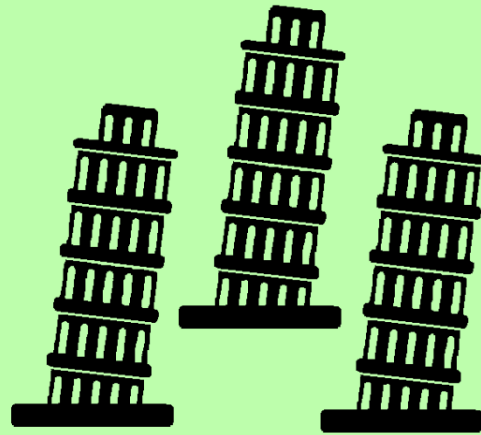
Comments:

Cover: Jose Sanchez: Lovely technical-style painting, very high-tech and futuristic. I thought it was something from Star Wars until you explained it was a specific UFO that some people have sighted. If it's real...I hope it's ours!

John Thiel: My view on human progress is that every change we make solves ten old problems...and brings us nine new problems. On the average, we come out ahead, but some of those new problems hit specific people very hard indeed. Ask the village blacksmith...

For the most part I'm a "techno-optimist." I believe that technology will be our salvation, changing our current non-sustainable way of life into something sustainable more indefinitely. I'm putting a lot of personal hope toward fusion power. Meanwhile, we have the internet, which has remarkably transformed our civilization...mostly for the better. (Ten steps forward, nine back... We're getting somwehre!)

Good point and good question re whether N'APA should have an actual roster of members, additional to the table of contents. To be honest, I don't know exactly who all our "membership" is. Some of us are dependable as heartbeats, and others like to pop in and pop out



somewhat randomly. It's all part of the great variety that we call fandom!

Jeffrey Redmond: Interesting story, in an "historical" format, as if in a textbook. Is "Zar-thus" an analogue of Zarathusthra? Is his speech Zarathusthran/Zoroastrian in tone? His lecture is quite mild, and basically upbeat, but I can see how people could interpret it to their own preferences, building upon it to found either a good place to live... or a nasty place. (Just as the inspiring words of Jesus have been the basis for love and kindness....and for burning people alive.)

Will Mayo: Two lovely images to introduce your zine, a painting in a kind of pointillistic style, nudes in a garden -- lovingly beautiful! -- and the Christmas lights on the Firehouse, a symphony of light!

Aye, I join you in dreaming of a world-wide society where people are not judged by the class they belong to, but for their own actions. All I can cling to, in the way of hope, is that things are better today than they were fifty years ago. (The gay rights revolution, in the U.S., going from homosexuality being punishable by law, to gay

couples now allowed to marry, fills me with great hope...and much wonder. It all seemed to happen so quickly!)

George Phillis: rct me, I'd never heard the term "script immunity," but that is a lovely term and exactly describes a problem with an awful lot of stories!

I had read your story, lastish, independently and sent you my comments upon it. It's a lovely entry into the field of "schools of magic," and it also continues your personal tendency to create remarkably powerful characters! Your magical creativity is extremely "high entrop!" This is not, I hasten to say, a bad thing! It makes me think of "Gold Digger," which is currently my favorite comic book. In that comic, you'll have characters juggling galaxies the way you or I might juggle tangerines! Your own characters are very powerful, but you always maintain a "common touch" for them, as in when they cook their own dinner and do their own laundry. I can relate to a vastly powerful magician who does his own laundry!

Lorien Rivendell: Alas, I'm one of those who has "dropped out" of Star Wars. I saw the first two movies of the final trilogy...and decided to just skip the third. I don't know who Rey's parents are...and I really don't care. The progress of the Star Wars "industry" has been away from story-telling and toward story-manipulation, a kind of Lego-building "assembly" of story ideas, without any actual "beginning, middle, and end." The whole Star Wars universe has become an immense and mostly random Rohrscach ink-blot, meaning anything to anyone...and, to me, meaning nothing at all any longer.

rct me, it's kind of odd, given that I'm a hard-edged atheist, but my fantasy is "Christian-themed," using motifs such as angels and demons. Jim Butcher did the same with the Harry Dresden books: the background universe depends on Christianity being "true" in a certain way, but the stories themselves are not "apologetics."

re the Society for Creative Anachronism, I never actually joined, but I "hung around" for a while -- had a character/persona, was often present at events, contributed some to the newsletter. I was "Brother Talbot," a monk. But I drifted away, never really finding a niche for myself. The only real way to make social progress, as a male, was in fighting, and that's something I was not physically able to do. It accurately reflects much of what was wrong with the original "Middle Ages." A big strong guy with a sword carried a lot of social influence!

"Every day is a holiday, every day is special." I can dig it! I'm writing this on Ground Hog's Day, also known as Candlemas. Today, the Pope blesses all our candles...and the ground hog tells us what our weather is going to be. (Punxsatawney Phil predcicts an early spring!)

How do you visualize "the year?" Is it a circle, or some other shape? Does it "move?" For me, the year is a big ferris wheel, with December 27th at the bottom and August 15th at the top. (It isn't exactly symmetrical!) I always feel autumn as if I'm "going downward," and spring as if I'm "going upward." Summer is at the top, winter at the bottom. I've "felt" this motion for the year all my life. Anyone else have a vision of the year?

Varney the Vampire

This is a nifty little book, written by James Rymer and/or Thomas Prest. There's some historical uncertainty involved. One of them? The other of them? Both together? The same authorship brought us "Sweeney Todd," a delightfully nasty little tale which, in our time, was made into a really fine musical.

Varney was written before Stoker's Dracula, and Stoker appears to have borrowed elements from it. The story is a long one, serialized in the 1840s. It goes on...and on...and on, quite a bit longer than the concepts, plot, and characterization fully justify. To be honest, it's a

bit of an ordeal. But it is clever, and the characters are, by and large, personable and engaging.

The title of the story pretty much gives away the central plot point, for, after a nice family is attacked by a vampire, they go to "Sir Francis Varney," their neighbor, for advice. The reader knows from the very beginning who the family are dealing with!

As early as Varney was, it, itself, was presaged by John Polidori's "The Vampyre," published in 1819, and presenting motifs that Rymer and/or Prest made use of. All of the above make use of folktales circulating in Europe, and the concept of the vampire was known to the Greeks and Romans. It's hard to create something that hasn't already been done!

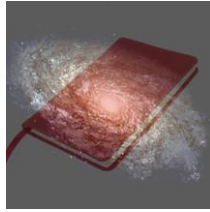
Self-Publishing on Amazon

I've put up a good many of my books as e-books on Amazon, and found the process to be easy and very friendly. Amazon's interface is the nicest I've ever used.

However.... I recently tried putting my books up on Amazon's "print on demand" catalog, their companion website to their e-book website. And the interface is nasty! Mean and rough and tough and hard-to-use and non-intuitive. I've had to look up "how to" videos on YouTube -- which haven't solved all of my problems! I've read all of Amazon's "help" files, and I've read widely in their users' forum, and, by golly, I'm still totally stuck!

So, for all ya would-be authors out there, I say, yes, go for putting your stuff up as e-books....and no, stay away from their print-on-demand physical book publishing! Jeekyll and Hyde!

NOTES FROM A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY #21



March 2020

For N'APA 245

Lorien Rivendell

(Lauren Clough)

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Natter

Whooo! Crazy times! The end times! The apocalypse! Or at least the end of the world as we know it. And I feel fine ... for now.

With so many people being told to stay home, either working from home or out of work, I am fortunate to have a job. Maybe not so fortunately, it's a job that I have to go to and be around people, and when one does personal care, one must violate the 6-foot social distancing rule. Though when doing personal care, it's not social - it's necessary.

I was handed a letter yesterday evening stating that I am essential personnel, which I can hand to the authorities should my state have a shelter in place order.

This is the stuff of dystopian fiction. This is now. Though I do realize it has been like this in some countries all along. "Show me your papers. You cannot pass without papers." This is making me wish I could wave my hand and say, "These aren't the droids you're looking for."

All of the groups I am in have canceled or postponed for now. I'm in two community bands and a flute choir, and we all decided to hiatus rather early on. The knitting group I'm in is also on hiatus, because the library we meet in has closed temporarily.

In my off work time, I am already a master of social distancing. Reading, watching Netflix, knitting - whatever - none of that requires being around other people. I have been practicing this for years. I can still geocache as well, as that is a solitary activity, though I'm mindful of using hand sanitizer both before and after touching the cache. No telling how long ago someone has touched the cache (it could have been 20 minutes before but hasn't logged it yet) or how soon the next person will come along.

Meanwhile, I've been watching movies. I saw *Outbreak* (1995) the other day. I had never seen it, despite it being 25 years old. It was currently #6 on Netflix (it could be higher now). It wasn't too bad. Basically, there was this virus that showed up in Africa in the 1960's and it managed to be contained until the 1990's. And then it ended up all over the world. So the movie is about containment and coverup. Pretty much what is going on in real life.

I also watched *The Stand* (1994). I bought this on DVD a while ago, but never got around to watching it (it's a 4-part mini-series). I read the book (by Stephen King, just in case you haven't heard of it) years ago (sometime in the 1980's) and started rereading it a few years ago (I never did finish - maybe someday). It's about this virus that wipes out most of the world, but there are some people who are immune. In the movie, the survivors get dreams about a Godly woman and an evil man, and they have to choose which one to follow. That's about it. The book takes 823 pages (1152 pages for the uncut version) and the movie 6 hours to tell us this.

I also watch a lot of other stuff that's less bleak. I recently saw *M*A*S*H* (1970), the movie that inspired the TV series. That has dark humor, but it's a nice change from post-apocalyptic movies.

That's it. I'd better wrap this up and get it sent out. I'll get to comments in the next issue. That's not a promise, but comments are what make these 'zines go 'round.

[←](#) Tweet



Stephen King 

@StephenKing

No, coronavirus is NOT like THE STAND. It's not anywhere near as serious. It's eminently survivable. Keep calm and take all reasonable precautions.

6:36 PM · 08 Mar 20 · [Twitter Web App](#)

16.2K Retweets **112K** Likes



SportyBallFan @StevieMichaelD1 · 4d 

Replying to [@StephenKing](#)

And how the hell would you know?! Did you even read that book?

 478

 142

 1,189



Actual screenshot from Twitter.

Ye Murthered Master Mage 245
George Phillies
phillies@4liberty.net

Lastish Comments: Jefferson: It takes a while to get used to the schedule. On occasion I too forgot and things ran a bit late.

Synergy: Thanks for answering my questions. Notwithstanding current disturbances, I think the world is tending to improve, not always or quickly, but tending to improve.

Freedom of Speech: Interesting historical bit. You did not follow the rule 'Show, Don't Tell', but there are famous counterexamples, e.g., Stapledon's First and Last Men. Nice Artwork.

The Contents of a Good Life: Very interesting reviews with a very different perspective. I'd love to have some of your reviews of sfnal works for Tightbeam or (if you are reviewing novels, and at some length) The N3F Review of Books. Congratulations on publishing something.

Archive Midwinter: Glad you liked the Eclipse opening. I look forward to seeing your reviews, assuming that Amazon runs them. With respect to the Navajo code speakers, the Kapanese Imperial Army had one officer who was fluent in Navajo. He was at the right place to hear everything. However, the Navajo messages were also encoded, so the remarks by the code speakers were not en clare. He did not penetrate this barrier.

Notes from Lorien: You crocheted a Baby Yoda...oh, dear. Thanks for the sculpture notes. There are other Christian writers. Declan Finn, who barely escaped from Italy in the face of the travel bans, comes to mind. I have not read his work. I gather the Christianity is less preachy than it is omnipresent.

Writing projects: To my considerable surprise, Practical Exercise (Adara Triskittenion at Dorrance Academy) has been accepted by Chris Nuttall and Jagi Lamplighter for their Fabuious Schools and Where to Find Them anthology.

I am still working on the physics text. The rough draft of the text is complete. I am now starting to march through and do the figures, which will take a while. I am using InkScape, because I need vectorized figures, which InkScape will deliver as output; the InkScape learning cliff is challenging.

I have fragments of the opening of yet another novel, in which the aliens show up in the US now with their mediocre weapons...but there are a lot of aliens. They first encounter a writing group of SF authors who are fond of guns.

Opening

"Good morning, down there," Arthur Montville's voice boomed down from the upper gallery overlooking the great room.

"Good morning, up there," Michael Lovejoy answered politely. "Good to see you sleepyheads are finally up." He smiled.

"I will have you know that my dear wife and I were up to watch the sun rise," Arthur answered.

"It's not my fault the sun is so stoned, passing over Colorado, that it shows up for work two hours late," Michael joked. "I was up to see a thin sliver of aging moon low in the sky. I was impressed by how early the local gun club's firing range was open, well before dawn, including what sounded to be autofire. As you said, the house is so soundproof that you only hear hunters when you leave the windows open, but I was out on my beautiful balcony to admire the aurora. I got three thousand more words into my new novel, looked out at dawn's early light and realized I had better shower and get dressed. By then the quaint column of smoke well to the north had thinned substantially, but I decided I might as well come down and see if any of you were up. The network news coverage is totally scrambled. I think a half-dozen passenger airliners blew up in midflight, not far from here, or perhaps not. The network news is confused. I considered that maybe I should wake you up. Then it occurred to me that you and your wife might very well be up and prefer not to be disturbed for a bit."

“You would surely have knocked,” Clarissa Montville answered, her golden curls now being visible over the upper gallery’s railing.

“Indeed, I would have,” Michael said. “I have this quaint aversion to being filled with fast-moving pieces of lead. But I decided I should wait, because you did say you got up at sunrise.”

“Ummh, getting back to what you said, column of smoke?” Arthur asked.

“That’s why considered waking you guys,” Michael responded. “It’s probably one of the crashed airliners, in which case there’s no hope of rescue, not to mention that wandering around in the woods on the ground would be unlikely to get us to the crash site.”

“Crashed airliners?” Victoria Trelawney, still in peach-and-cream heavy bathrobe, peered over the great room’s lower balcony.

“The news is very unpleasant. Would you prefer it before or after breakfast?” Michael asked.

“Before,” Arthur said. “And the next time something disastrous happens, you are entitled to pound on the door and shout Emergency! Emergency! Everyone to get from room! I assume you recognize the line.”

“I read the tale in the Saturday Evening Post. Perhaps wake our other guests?” Michael asked.

“Skip Jill and her husband,” Victoria said. “She was up late. Bruce is actually not really functional until he gets another two hours of sleep, no matter what.”

“Our English guests set their alarm for a bit ago,” Arthur added. “I know this because they looked at the wind-up alarm clock, and being young folks and computer jocks wondered what it was, let alone how it worked. The Brigadier will doubtless be up in a few minutes. He takes the back stairs down to the weight room, showers afterwards, and should be here soon.”

“Did I hear my name mentioned?” Retired Brigadier Rupert Fitzhugh-Marshall peered over the far end of the lower balcony.

“Indeed, Rupert,” Michael said. “And we have an issue for your expert advice. Though I should apologize to you, Arthur, first. I actually didn’t figure out about the airliner problem until just now. The networks are a bit incoherent.”

“So are you watching Fake News or Commie News?” Clarissa grinned.

“Both, actually,” Michael said, “once I figured out how the split screen worked.”

“You got that to work?” Arthur asked. “I knew that was in there someplace.”

“Why don’t we get everyone down here,” Michael proposed. “Of course, it’s your house, which you have generously opened up to this, the private working group of the world’s greatest science fiction writers, but it might be easier if I said everything once.”

“I believe,” Rupert Fitzhugh-Marshall said, “that it is technically my turn to poison the lot of you with my breakfast cooking, though decades of experience in the British Army allow me to cook while listening.”

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“To start at the beginning,” Michael said, “somewhat before dawn a series of airliners flying not quite over us exploded. Actually, the authorities were apparently quite quick to figure out what was happening and divert flights, but the best count is seven airliners and well over a thousand people died. I might have seen one while I was typing; there was a vertical column of fire which I thought was a meteorite. Result? We are inside an air forbidden zone outside of which is an air restricted zone. Besides the airliners, a number of private planes — I haven’t heard a count on that — and at least three search and rescue helicopters exploded in midair, rather closer to the center of the zone than where the airliners detonated. For all the babbling on the idiot box, no one has a clue what is going on.

Alternatively, anyone who has a clue is not talking.”

The assembled group spent time listening to the television, realizing that they were not learning very much.

Clarissa looked up from her laptop. “While I was listening to you, I also brought up the local news. Well inside the zone, there have been a bunch of people who tried to telephone for help. Most calls were interrupted almost immediately. State police sent toward the scene went out of radio contact much of the way in, but before they got to anyone who had called. The Governor is urging people in that zone to make haste about leaving. Of course, the place is a National Forest, so those people will be leaving on foot for a considerable time.”

“Airliners simply don’t fall out of the sky,” Victoria said. “At least, not in large numbers, not unless someone is doing something to them.”

“But mentioning smoke,” Rupert said, “breakfast is ready. After breakfast, we should determine exactly where that column of smoke is. Assuming, that is, that one of you has a good magnetic compass with sight, so we can triangulate its location.”

“Smoke is odd,” Arthur observed. “We’re in the wet season, not to mention there was recent rain. And that last TV image, those folks crashed well north of us.”

“It was a bit east of north,” Michael observed, “where that notch in the next hill is.”

Clarissa looked alarmed. “That’s Parker’s Crossing,” she said. “Right on Route 312. They could have had a house fire. Dear, may I violate the no phone at meals rule? Bring up the town’s forestcam?”

“Perhaps you’d better,” Arthur said. “Though it’s a good bet it’s in powersaver mode at this hour, and will need until we’re done eating to warm up.”

“Meanwhile,” Percival Nyquist observed, “if you will forgive an Englishman’s opinion, this is a truly fine omelet. Your American bangers are first-rate. Shall we turn to our writing efforts? You see,...”

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“My turn on the dishes,” Victoria observed, the meal finally over.

“And I should have the forestcam up in a few seconds,” Clarissa said. “Finding an open signal path was a pain. Someone’s doing arc welding or the like, right near it, to scramble its signal so badly.”

“What are we to see?” Michael asked.

“The town is surrounded by a clearing, open cattle fields,” Clarissa said, “except to the south, where there’s a sharp rise. The camera is several hundred feet up, and gives a view of a bucolic paradise. Well, bucolic unless that other church decides to preach up another crusade against the Mormons.”

“Crusade?” Percival asked. “You Americans do have some quaint ideas.”

“And here we go,” Clarissa announced. The camera view began to pan right to left across an open field.

“Why are those people lying in the grass?” Arthur asked. “I know tourists are a bit slow, but they should notice the ground is soaking wet.” The camera continued to pan, finally reaching buildings.

“They’ve burned,” Michael said.

“And they’re well spaced,” Rupert added, “well too far for fire to leap from wall to wall.” The camera continued to pan across a scene of destruction.

“That was ‘the other church’,” Arthur said. “Those were Heaven help us reinforced concrete walls, but they’ve fallen over.”

“Shouldn’t we be able to see folks wandering about?” Percival asked. “I’m judging by the size of the cars, well, what’s left of them.”

“Yes, we should,” Arthur answered. “And here’s the far end of town, and open fields, an...what’s that thing?”

“Tank,” Michael said. “Note the turret.”

“That’s no model or mark I know,” Rupert said. “And the color is weird. Lime-green? Is the color good?”

“And several more folks lying on the ground,” Arthur said. “All in lime green clothing.” The camera made its back pan, now covering a much wider area.

“Fire was contained,” Victoria said, “Just as the master of the house decreed.”

“Arthur,” Clarissa said, “The townsfolk. They must be sheltering in the trees. They for sure need food and water, blankets, and the like. I’d notify County Emergency Services, but their lines are all busy.”

“All both of them,” Arthur said. “I told Mayor Lincoln two lines was not enough, but he’s cheap. When he shouldn’t be.”

“Load up the vans,” Rupert said. “All sorts of emergency supplies. That includes your first aid and trauma kits.”

“I have a bad feeling about this,” Percival said. “Though I’m still on crutches, not able to be much of a help.”

“And I have three months to go,” Percival’s wife Jessica announced, “so I can walk. If I’m careful.”

“You two stay here,” Arthur said.

“Arthur,” Rupert asked, “Would you mind opening your gun locker? For starters, at this season the bears can be a mite grumpy.”

“Can do,” Arthur answered. “Most of you folks are comfortable with good weapons?”

“My service training was almost 60 years ago,” Michael said. “Though an M16A1 is sort of like an AR-15.”

“Can you still hit something?” Arthur asked.

“Now you’re getting picky,” Michael countered. “I’ll do better to bring my good camera and its relay base.”

“We’ll run that through my phone,” Clarissa said, “so the local cable company doesn’t get stingy with your baud rate.”

“I’m looking at the map,” Victoria said. “I get a bad feeling, too. We should perhaps take this side road, which gets us within a mile of the camera, on the far side of the hill. Can you manage that, Michael, at your age?”

“Shall I get out the hunting rifles?” Arthur suggested.

“Arthur,” Rupert said, “the more I look at this, the more I get a very bad feeling about it. Mayhaps you and your other half, if you can carry them easily that far, should get out your cannons?”

“A few miles with the Barretts? No problem,” Clarissa said, “if we’re not carrying tons of camping gear.”

“Rifles, ammunition, binoculars, and such like,” Rupert said. “Blankets we leave in the car.”

“If you don’t insist on me sprinting the mile,” Michael said. “I do more miles on less flat terrain at home. Can someone find a compass for me?”

“You afraid of getting lost?” Arthur asked.

“Just because I got lost once inside this house,” Arthur began. “No, but if we become separated I can walk south and be sure to find Pullman’s Knife Road. Unless I miss it and keep on walking.”

“Well, it’s only two lanes, paved, with a median divider and Botts Dots,” Victoria agreed. “So you could miss it.”

Chapter The White House

Lurking in the White House sub-basement, the signless door with two Marine guards in combat dress hid the Presidential Operations Center. A complete rebuild of everything down here, Horatio Bridgewater thought, courtesy of my predecessor but one. And if he’d lived another week, he’d have been able to see it. Instead, to the outrage of the left and right chattering classes, the facility was opened by me, ‘President Accident’ to my many foes.

The Marines saluted as Bridgewater passed. He acknowledged with a sharp nod. The Joint Chiefs, Bridgewater thought, were more than a bit surprised that I remembered what Ike said about the President...civilians do not salute, so he didn’t. Army Times reports that ‘I’ll stand with Ike, General Eisenhower,’ went over really well with the troops, once they heard the explanation.

The Operations Center had a row of computer wall screens, consoles for junior staff, and a very few comfortable chairs.

“The President!” the Center Director shouted. The staff members on duty began to stand.

“Carry on!” Bridgewater interrupted. “You got me up at half past dark for this, so keep your eye on this emergency.” Whatever it is, he added to himself.

“Sir?” the Center Director asked. Frank MacPherson, Bridgewater thought, the most junior of the Directors. “On screen three.”

“Yes?” Bridgewater asked. “Scenic western Wyoming, even with map labels suppressed.”

“Yes, sir. And the scarlet triangles are points where airliners went down,” MacPherson explained. “Eight of them. Two Search and

Rescue aircraft, up to localize crash sites. One Police Helicopter.”

“And the circle?” Someone had drawn a circle through six of the triangles, the other triangles being inside the circle.

“Aircraft crossing the circle, going in, explode in midair. The triangles inside the circle are aircraft that were there when all this started. They all went down at about the same time,” MacPherson explained. “All were at high altitude. A sharp air controller recognized the pattern and started routing aircraft away.”

Bridgewater nodded. “My compliments to the controller. Did any of the aircraft call for help?” MacPherson shook his head. “Pray tell, what is at the center of this circle?” Bridgewater pointed at a location on the screen.

“National Wilderness Area,” MacPherson said.

“If it is half-past dark here, it is only quarter past dark there,” Bridgewater said. No one laughed at his somewhat feeble joke. “It will be hours before anyone can make a useful ground search.”

“Sir?” one of the junior people, someone Bridgewater did not know yet, spoke up. “Report from Air Force Intelligence. Just came in. Starting about the same time in northern Canada, eastern Peru, and near the Chilean border with Argentina, aircraft dropped off the radar, transponders going silent. I’ll have it up on the main map in a moment.”

“Did anyone have any explanation for these crashes?” Bridgewater pointed at the Wyoming map.

“No, sir,” MacPherson answered. “We’re in touch with the Wyoming Highway Patrol. They lost the chopper and two men. They politely asked if we could get them some satellite reconnaissance images; otherwise, searchers would be fumbling about in the dark.”

“Do it,” Bridgewater said. “Did anyone on the ground see anything?”

“We’re looking for that,” MacPherson answered. “There aren’t many people awake at four in the morning. Someone did see the chopper go down. It exploded violently in mid-air. The description ‘flew into an incandescent searchlight beam, just as the beam turned on’ is a bit unclear.”

I got up for this? Bridgewater wondered. I suppose I had to make the show of caring. “We’ll need a press statement, ‘The White House was greatly saddened by the aerial tragedies over Wyoming this morning. Federal resources have been deployed in support of search and rescue operations.’ No need to mention if we lost any aircraft.”

MORE HERE

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“I see the camera tower,” Michael called. “At least, it’s a boxy thing on a pole, with antennae sticking out in all directions.”

“Forward!” Clarissa called to the man a distance ahead of her.

“At the overlook.” Michael finally answered. He approached an enormous oak tree, hid behind it, and cautiously looked around its side. The scene was much as the forestcam had reported. The Highway ran southeast to northwest. The town – larger than he’s expected from the forestcam, which only caught the town’s northern perimeter – was indeed burned to the ground. Burned vehicles were parked neatly next to their houses. To his count, the number of bodies on the ground, south along the highway, was larger than he’d thought. North of town the strange tank was flanked by a half-dozen bodies, men in green.

He pulled out his camera and powered it up. “Is this still working?” he asked.

“We hear you loud and clear,” Victoria answered.

“Okay, I’m going to start sending images so you see what’s going on before you get up here,” Michael said. “There are indeed bodies on the ground. The entire village, such as it is, burned. I don’t see many standing above ground basement walls. The place was pretty thoroughly leveled. And here we have the tank-thing I mentioned. Rupert, have you figured out what it is yet?”

“That’s a negative,” Fitzhugh-Marshall answered. “And I did fairly recently teach vehicle identification back across the Atlantic, so I really should be able to identify it. It just doesn’t match anything I remember.”

“We’ll be up to you in a couple of minutes,” Arthur said. “It might be better if you wait until we catch up with you.”

Michael continued to survey the ground. There was no sign of motion. He did close-up shots on a few of the buildings, and a few of cars, which appeared to have been cut in half horizontally. The rubble was still smoldering. The crunch of dead leaves underfoot alerted him to the approach of his friends. “Behold!” he said as they clustered around him. There were exclamations of dismay.

“Something is very strange here,” Rupert said. “I get a bad feeling, about the same as when I was in ’Stan just before there was an ambush.”

“Now my phone and your camera base are speaking to the Internet,” Clarissa said, “through the tower. The blue upload light is on, and the little display says we are uploading to notpermitted.net, whatever that is.”

“It’s a website,” Micheal explained. “It stores videos. It’s dispersed across the Western world and beyond. It’s like those other social media sites, except they’re entirely tolerant of nonlegal postings, even unpopular ones. Press the green button, please? We’ll hear the front end of the file, make sure that it’s what I pre-recorded.”

The group listened as the electronics repeated what Michael had prerecorded. “I don’t think we’re going learn more from up here, but as the Brigadier is concerned and all of you are



married, while I am single, I shall get to go down there and do video close-ups, that you could watch on the laptop Arthur packed. Unless there is some objection?"

"Lad," Fitzhugh-Marshall said, "no, that's silly since you're older than I am. But I was about to give you the advice I would give a trooper. Be prepared to sprint, well, walk with dispatch to the nearest cover. You'll be walking up to that tank first?"

"Notwithstanding your military curiosity," Michael said, "I am going to start at the other end of town and stay well out in the open, hoping that any surviving locals don't accidentally shoot me." He started to walk slowly down the slope. "In any event," he said "I am now live to notpermitted.net and I repeat that I am allowing maximum copyleft to anyone who wants to repeat this. To repeat my word of warning, there appear to be bodies on the ground, so folks who get upset with the notion that human beings can die should possibly look at something else rather than this report. Kitten pictures, if you don't find images of fierce carnivores to be frightening. This camera is not gyroscopically stabilized, so I will occasionally pause and cycle through a panorama of the scene, but between those pauses the view may be a bit jerky. Indeed, I may occasionally have to drop the camera into its carrying case so I have both hands free, though the slope looks to be reasonable if possibly a bit slick."

Michael continued down the slope. "I've now reached level ground on the far side of the highway and approaching the people lying on the ground. Ahoy!" He shouted. "Folks lying on the ground! You could get up!" Nothing happened. As he walked closer it became obvious that the people in front of him were dead. "We definitely have bodies here. I will abstain from capturing images of faces, so that relatives don't find out from me that someone has died. The folks I'm looking at clearly dressed hastily. The woman in front was running in bare feet." He walked up to her, looked carefully, and announced: "There are several obvious entrance wounds. They appear to have been cauterized; the hole is black. The three

children are the same way. They were all shot in the back, and landed on their stomachs. And now we come to someone who must've rolled. Dear me, that is an enormous exit wound." He paused to image. "This situation is beyond bizarre. What had happened here? I'm now walking towards the remains of Parker's Crossing. I'll keep well to one side. There still a fair amount of smoldering wood, though I don't see any flames."

"I'm now coming up on the village. It occurs to me. If anyone has picked up on this video yet, and you are in the same state that I am, would you please notify Wyoming State Emergency Services of what has happened. We tried calling 911 but couldn't get through." A gleam in the rubble attracted his eye. "I'm going to walk up to this wall, which collapsed flat at about my knee height. But the surface looks more like melted than fractured. Okay, I'm getting a tight close-up using the macro lens feature. For the curious, since there is a fair piece of wood smoke, the smell is a mixture of burning wood and roast pork. It'll take me a few minutes to finish walking around the village. I haven't actually spotted any bodies, but most of the houses have collapsed into their basements. But here I have, I'll get a close-up, it appears to be the remains of a hunting rifle, except the barrel looks to have been cut in half. I see brass lying on the ground, but I don't see obvious signs of an owner or body. Okay, I am around the village, I am walking back to the highway where the peculiar vehicle is. I'm going to approach the vehicle from the south side so that if life becomes interesting I have a shorter dash to the woods."

For a while he was quiet. Viewers could see him gradually approaching the tank on the road ahead. Every so often he stopped, doing a careful and slow panoramic view of the surrounding terrain in all directions. "Okay, I have now reached this vehicle. It has eight road wheels, a turret on top that is clearly askew, and there is writing on the side."

"Question for Rupert. When you put a big gun on top of the tank, isn't it usually the custom to have a hole running the length of the gun barrel?

This barrel looks to be solid, and I don't mean there is a plug in the end. There is also a large hole in the side of the vehicle, I'll get to that in a bit. I don't recognize the language, and it's clearly not English or Russian or Korean. Now we look inside the vehicle, something appears to have blown up, because there's a lot of scrap metal on the ground and distortion and burned area. If I look to the rear, there are large seats, metal, for I count six people. If I look the other way, there is a wall, so the turret and the front section are partitioned from the rear. And now I will very slowly approach the folks lying on the ground." He ambled down the highway toward the first of the people lying on the ground.

"Hello!" He called "Hello! I'm a civilian. Do you need first-aid?" There was no response. He closed to fifteen feet and stopped. "Okay," he announced, "it is now painfully obvious why I couldn't recognize that alphabet."

He walked up to the man on the ground, his camera pointed down the road. "The difficulty is that this dead person is not human. I am now going to give a close-up of the face. But I'm warning you first, just in case someone is delicate of heart." He walked up leaned over, and pointed the camera. "Note the prominent horns, the eyes well above the center of the head, the open mouth with the teeth of the cat or lion, and I will now get a close-up of one of the eyes." He stopped talking for a moment, focused on what he was doing.

"Notice that the eye pupil is a slit rather than a circle as it is in a human being, and the slit is horizontal rather than vertical as it would be in a cat. Also, what I would've called an iris in a human being is a bright orange, a color I don't recall ever having seen in people. I don't see any pockets on this fellow's unitard. I don't see any sign of webbing or other gear, so I'm going to advance to the other characters who are also I infer dead."

"Michael, this is Arthur." The voice on the camera intercom was perfectly clear. "Your video it has been picked up by five television networks, one of which is broadcasting

everything uncensored. And Clarissa's phone is saturated with attempted incoming calls."

"How charming," Michael said. "I am walking up to the next figure. He or perhaps she or it is visibly dead. Head shot. Ditto the next fellow. Note the bright blue blood. However, this fellow appears to have had a significant amount of outside belt that got pulled off and then dropped. Okay, my camera is going into the bag, so I can put on gloves, at which point I will transfer -- there's a lot of this stuff and it's fairly heavy -- but I will transfer it into my carryall, because it looks as though it would be interesting to recover. Now my gloves, careful not to touch their outsides with my skin, go into the carryall. Okay, that's done, I'm now going to walk by the other side of the vehicle and see if it's obvious what caused the big hole. Oh, one last thing." He paused. "You on the ground appear to have been soldiers. Go to your God like the soldiers you are."

There was bit of silence. "Okay, I'm back to the vehicle, on the far side, and roughly where the explosion was. I see holes in the side of the vehicle. If I look carefully, the holes are, oh, a bit more than 1/2 inch across. I can see the thickness of the wall, which is small. And grabbing my multitool, I pull it this piece of wall that is almost detached and I will now drop it and the multitool into my carryall. And close the carryall. Can any of you tell from all the incoming calls and other confusion if there is anything in particular people want me to photograph?"

"There's a lot of confusion at the far end," Clarissa said. "But I am sorting through incoming calls. Oh, here's the Pentagon, and here's the White House. I'll take that one."

"Break! Break!" Rupert shouted. "Michael, there's a column of smoke coming up the road, not quickly, but not very far away. The source is not in my line of sight. Perhaps you should consider..."

"Running for my life," Michael said.

“You’re headed to your right!” Arthur shouted.  
“That’s partly towards the incoming...”

“Closest cover! And don’t expect me to stop when I hit the woods,” Michael responded.

“Michael,” Clarissa said, “you couldn’t hear it, but I had a short conversation with the President. He said these characters were demonstrably hostile, so we can give you covering fire while you are running uphill.”

“And remember,” Michael said, words coming between gasps for breath, “like it says in at least five my novels, above all, friendly fire is fire. Kindly do not shoot me.” He reached the edge of the woods and began a run uphill, breathing harder and harder as he climbed.

“Michael,” Clarissa said, “Something is coming around the last bend. It’s that same lime-green color. It’s smoking at the rear.”

“OK, I’m curving into the woods a bit. Tell me when you can’t see me,” he answered. He slowed, realizing he had to pick his footholds more carefully.

“There’s another one of those tank things,” Clarissa said. “It’s parking near the wrecked tank. Folks are disembarking from its rear, a half-dozen of them, and two from the front. You’re out of sight someplace. The half-dozen are forming a perimeter, surrounding the wreck and the bodies.” Michael scrambled over a fallen tree. This hill, he thought, seemed to have grown much taller. “One of the guys in front is pointing something at the bodies. No, I can’t tell what. Now he’s pointing it at the ground. He’s pointing at the hill, roughly the direction you took.”

The slope suddenly became very steep. Was there a way around, Michael wondered? To the right, the rise became a cliff. “Have to dodge left,” he said. “Ground right looks impassable.”

“Lad,” he heard the Brigadier over his cell camera, “as you are being chased, better to make less noise, as in no talking.” Michael bit his tongue.

“Michael,” Clarissa said, “one of the folks next to the tank is pointing up the hill in your general direction. He’s waving. OK, you have pursuit, guys in greens walking briskly up the slope after you. Oh, and the tank turret is slowly turning in your direction.”

Lovejoy considered his predicament. ‘First science fiction writer to be murdered by space aliens’ was not high on his list of priorities. It was not even low on his list of priorities. He ran harder.

Loud noise to his left had to be gunfire. Bright flashes of light and warbling whistles behind him must be the aliens doing something. Shock wave and loud roar knocked him into a tree, to which he clung, trying to regain his balance. His ears rang. Four loud shots rang out, then four more. He thought the gun fire had stopped. Or was it too quiet for him to hear?

Gasping for breath, he reached the top of the hill. Clarisse Montville pointed at a tree and gestured. He circled behind it and stopped, leaning back to catch his breath.

“OK, lad, good run!” That was the Brigadier. “Those last shots were Ms. Trelawney here, making sure they all stay dead. They will. Assuming they had their brains in their heads.”

“Can we please go home now?” Michael managed. He looked at his camera, still slatched tightly in his hands. “Perhaps I should bring up live again?” he asked.

“You are live,” Arthur answered. “And the audience likely wonders what was happening behind you.”

“Oh, right.” Michael stepped out from behind the tree and point his camera down the slope. He counted eight alien bodies, most spread out across the hill, where they had been climbing toward him, and an alien tank that looked to have exploded.

“They had decent tactics,” Rupert said. “We ambushed them, so they charged our position, firing from the waist. Of course, half of them

were down already, and the rest had bad guesses about where we were hiding. And that non-armored personnel carrier? You shoot it forward of midships with a Barrett, in this case two of them, and it blows up.”

“It’s time to leave,” Clarissa said, “before their reinforcements show up.”

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“I believe it is time to decamp,” Arthur said, “and then some. So if you could pack your personal goods, swiftly? Dear, if you could go around the house and close the steel shutters on all the windows while I empty the gun locker?”

“On it.” Clarissa ran up the stairs.

“People,” Fitzhugh-Marshall said, “I think we want to be out of here quickly. Yesterday, even.” He headed for the basement.

“Clarissa and I had mostly moved to the new house,” Arthur said, “except it’s not quite ready yet. Plain furniture and dishes we can leave here; that’s the old TV that barely works. Gun locker is actually mostly empty. I thought we’d do some shooting, just for relaxation, so we still have plenty of ammo.”

“So we only brought the his and hers Barretts,” Clarissa called from the third floor balcony. “Four AR-15s. A Pre-64 Winchester Model 70 in .300 Winchester Magnum. That’s Victoria’s toy. And the Glocks.”

“We’re taking your two SUVs, Arthur?” Fitzhugh-Marshall asked. “We gassed them up yesterday. I’ll help you with your armory.”

“Car keys?” Victoria asked. “Do I load Nyquist suitcases into the blue or the camou SUV?”

“Set them by the rear of the camou SUV,” Arthur shouted from the basement. “They’re unlocked, but we made need to think a teeny bit about packing.”

“We’re packed,” Percival said. “An early departure was clearly indicated. Jill and Bruce

moved our suitcases downstairs. There’s rather little I can do while I’m on crutches, and my dear wife should do even less.”

“I’ll take my car,” Michael said. “I’ll need a bit to pack.” His friends laughed at the joke. They believed in travelling light; for a two-week stay he’d arrived with three large suitcases and a carryall. He disappeared upstairs.

Slamming noises from upstairs marked Clarissa closing window shutters.

“I feel completely useless,” Percival observed. “Wait. All those blizzard supplies in the pantry. I’ll drop them in to trash bags for the cars.” He limped off toward the kitchen.

“We’re expecting a blizzard?” Michael asked as he came down the stairs with his first suitcase.

“We’re expecting chaos on the roads, closed restaurants, and a preference to keep driving,” Percival said. “Dear, please just sit down,” he said to his wife.

“Perks, I’m not that fragile. Really,” she answered.

“Consider this would be a slightly inconvenient moment for you to go into premature labor,” he responded.

“Point well made,” she answered. “But why does this house have those shutters?”

“Hunting season,” Arthur answered, as he pounded down the stairs, Rupert following behind. “Forest fires. Outer walls are reinforced concrete. The original owner built this house to last. Windows are triple-glazed, but still.”

“Arthur!” Rupert shouted. “We have three cars. We need a passenger manifest.”

“I take the camou SUV. Clarissa takes the blue. Michael has his vehicle.” Arthur paused.

“Rupert, I would take it as an honor if you would go with my wife. Female is the deadlier

of the species, but if anything arises you look imposing. And take Percival and Jessica – you did say you’d delivered several babies in one of those unmentioned wars?”

“I’ve got three months to go,” Jessica reminded.

“Lass, Murphy gets a vote here,” Rupert observed. She nodded in agreement.

“OK, their suitcases to the blue car,” Victoria said. “Arthur? You’ll take Bruce and Jill?”

“Agreed.”

“I really need a local navigator,” Michael observed.

“You just follow Pullman’s Knife Road,” Arthur said as he came up the stairs with several crates of ammunition.

“The direction into the town that just burned?” Michael asked, “Or the direction into the National Wilderness?”

“Oh, shoot, I forgot,” Arthur grumbled. “I was just going to take trail 7 south, but that’s for four-wheel drive and all-terrain mods. Not too bumpy, but likely to be soggy. No way your car will make it.”

“County roads,” Victoria shouted as she ran back up the stairs. “I’m your navigator, Michael!”

“Thank you!” Michael said.

“Victoria, you keep your Winchester,” Arthur said.

“My favorite,” she answered.

“Coming up! Four miles, straight and flat,” Victoria said. “No other cars. Turn is at midpoint, just before the high-voltage lines.”

“Noted!” Michael hard-braked for the approaching turn, then hit the accelerator as he

pulled out of the curve onto the straightaway. “Is the road up to ignoring speed limits?”

“Within reason,” Victoria answered. “I wouldn’t take it at a hundred.”

“This is an old car. I doubt it goes that fast,” Michael answered. “Still at 75, under two minutes and we turn south. I’m just trying to spot the ro...oh, mercy me.” He floored the accelerator, ignoring the speedometer as it rose beyond 100.

“Mike! You can slow down!” Victoria said. “We have plenty of time!”

“Note color of oncoming vehicle, just came around the bend,” Michael answered calmly. The lime-green of an alien combat vehicle was unmistakable. He decided not to hear Victoria’s comments. “They are slow. We are very fast. We have perhaps a mile; they must have two. This is our only exit other than overland on foot, well, car on trail until we bog down.” He eased off on the accelerator. “We seem to be up to...I didn’t know this car went that fast.”

“I see the road sign,” she shouted. “Left! Bright red!”

“Got it.” Michael braked, gently at first, then harder. “Lean back in the seat. I might miss the turn and not a neighboring tree. He slipped into the left lane, then back. A bright flash passed to their left. “OK, we know their range. Chase the splash.” He slipped into the left lane and floored the brakes. The car’s ABS system chattered loudly. A bright flash passed, this time to the right. He slipped to the right. A bright flash passed, this time to the left. “Now we see how bright the guy is. Now we don’t chase...” Another bright flash to the left.

Wheels squealed as he released the brakes and put the wheel over. The car made the turn, began to skid on the gravel as he floored the accelerator again. The car fishtailed left and right on the gravel of the side road. Bright light and a loud roar marked something hitting trees behind them.

“That was a bit close. I hope you were taking notes,” he said not quite calmly. “We really need to put that in our next novels. Though I prefer less realistic research models. I think that’s a turn, a distance out there.”

“And then the road gets curvy. Very curvy. With dropoffs on one side or the other,” she warned.

“Noted. We’ll slow down when we get close.” “What did you mean ‘chase the splash?’” she asked.

“As a little boy I really learned to read by reading Roscoe’s Destroyer Actions in World War 2,” he answered. “In a gun duel between warships, the enemy notes where their shell landed relative to you, and corrects to hit where you are. They do not aim at the point where they missed, so you steer your ship toward that point. Except the other guy figures this out and corrects. These people figured out, but I was a step ahead of them. Mentioning figuring out, can your gadget figure out how to find the internet?”

“No bars,” she answered. “There should be...perhaps someone is jamming.”

“This car is so old fashioned it has an electronic devisement known as a ‘radio’,” Michael observed. “It’s really modern. It doesn’t use a coherer for signal detection. Perhaps try the AM bands.” They waited patiently while she searched for a station.

“...still no word from the White House,” a nameless announcer said. “Governor Billingsley has called out the National Guard. Television stations are recycling Michael Lovejoy’s spectacular footage of the alien invaders...some of it will frighten small children and easterners. No more news on the nuclear power plant failures...nuclear reactors around the world have lost twenty percent or more of their rated power output...in parts of France, the power grid buckled under the load...Oh, here’s another note from the Governor. He’s calling up the state’s unorganized militia...that’s everyone, man or woman, with a gun...if you have small children,

loading them into a car and heading away from the landing area is recommended. Otherwise, go to the nearest school gym, public library, VFW or AmVets post. You get to organize yourselves. Choose your own officers and sergeants, get in touch with neighboring towns. There’ll be more on that later...and here is my fellow announcer, the ever-lovely Cecelia White...”

“Hello, listeners,” Cecelia’s voice was that of someone’s still-vigorous grandmother, “...while Abe here is making coffee, collecting news, making coffee, and other good things, I have some background on Michael Lovejoy. He’s a science fiction writer. He and his friends were on a writing retreat near Parker’s Crossing – the former Parker’s Crossing – we know this because they did a book signing at Honest Ernie’s Entertainment Emporium in Idaho Falls, and we had Honest Ernie on the phone earlier. They went to investigate a smoke column—you’ve seen the rest on TV. They left and are headed south. No one knows where they are. Cell phones in the area aren’t working. If any of you science fiction gentleman are listening, and have the alien gadgets you grabbed, please bring them to any commercial air field – Idaho Falls may be the simplest...Michael Lovejoy’s novels include...” -- she rattled off a list of novels – “...those of you watching television at the same time, the State Police are about to put up additional videos from north and west of the National Forest. That includes more aliens. No, there’s no doubt that they’re not human beings. Farm homes – the people got out in time – being burned. These people are very much not friendly. And here’s Abe again, with my coffee...”

“Hellow, listeners,” Abe said. “It seems there was White House news...it didn’t reach us at first...For the Armed Forces. All leaves are cancelled. Return to your duty station. If you are remote, please report to your nearest Military Base of any service. The Washington Record reports that the Armed Forces have been brought to Defense Condition One, with the qualifier we are not at war with any nation on Earth...”



“Interesting,” Michael said, “Washington seems to have gotten off the mark rather quickly on this.”

“Perhaps this was not the first landing,” Victoria said.

“Excellent point,” Michael answered. “And that’s a T intersection coming up, I think. Which way?”

“Left, and expect a better road.”

“Oh, good. And as you can reach my travel kit, please break out for me a can of diet soda and a box of chocolate chip cookies,” Michael asked. “Can in the forward cupholder, please. You’re welcome to take something for yourself.”

“You know, we just ate.” Victoria shook her head.

“When there is no time to eat, then it is most important to feast,” Michael countered. “That’s from my Klangor the Barbarian series. Klangor himself said it, so it must be true. Also, look at the clock. It’s after noon.”

“We took that long?” she wondered. “Breakfast, packing for the first hike in the woods, two hikes through the woods, your television show, and packing afterwards.”

“The Brigadier was really getting antsy toward the end of packing,” Michael said, “not that I blame him.”

“That was him motivating people,” Victoria answered. “If he were actually worried, he’d turn completely calm.”

####

Those dump trucks appear to be blocking the road, Michael said. At least the ground to both sides is for once flat and open.

Michael, Dear, I believe we are driving into an ambush position. The road stops vehicles, and people with rifles, one or both sides, shoot the aliens when they dismount.

# *Synergy* March 2020



**N'APA 245<sup>th</sup> Mailing**

**A National Fantasy Fan Federation Fanzine**

This zine belong by its editor, John Thiel, residing at 30 N. 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904 (where I have lived for ages). You may email me at [kinethiel@mymetronet.net](mailto:kinethiel@mymetronet.net) and if you don't get an answer you can jiggle me.

Shine with a new light as you look at my contents this issue, short but sweet.

“Synergy” means “togetherness”, soul fusion. It's the very opposite of keeping apart from the rest. If you sit around and synergize, you're a new century person with new ways of thought and of being. Somewhat like Syzygy, it's you and me by the sea. It is easier to grasp than warfare.



# EDITORIAL



*Art from Shutterstock*

## **Do Science Fiction Fans Really Want To Achieve Unity With The Cosmos?**

This is a question that has been bothering readers for many years, perhaps as long as science fiction has existed in its printed form. First there is the concept of going to another planet in a transport vehicle. The idea precedes the first science fiction magazine, going clear back to Poe writing in the midst of the Nineteenth Century, coming up with a powered balloon vehicle in "The Unparalleled Adventure of Hans Pfall". When the sf magazines swung into view, one of the earliest writers, Edgar Rice Burroughs, had John Carter travelling to Mars by means of astral transmission in "The Gods of Mars", but when he got there, there were skyships and spaceships. Air Wonder Stories marveled at airplanes but then got into spaceships. Skylark had people who almost were not human due to their fealty to spaceships, those being the Lensmen. Captain Video brought space travel to TV and it started becoming more of a commonplace notion. Finally, Sputnik became something flying through space, and it was going to be followed by more actual space adventuring. But did SF Fans really want

to do this? I think it was Isaac Asimov who said, "You wouldn't get me up in one of those things." Nobody did, either. When NASA came along, the pilots were mostly mundanes with little consideration for science fiction—though recently Skylab had a science fiction magazine among its reading materials. Noticed after all that time.

I think basically science fiction fans are too sensible, too much the Live Coward, to want to actually get into spaceships themselves. But they do have a desire to enter into the Cosmos, if not just through reading matter then through Zen, Synergy, astral projection, something that would involve human beings rather than a machine like a spaceship.

There has been a lot of talk and much written about transcendence of our present state of existence and some curiosity has been expressed about the Cosmic All, and how it would be better than being an isolated soul or spirit. One thing about this is that it would be an avoidance of death—some say that when death occurs the individual spirit is merged into the cosmic. If life has occurred in the first place certainly it can occur again, that is, the individual spirit was an occurrence of life and came from somewhere and therefore would not actually perish but rather go back where it came from, perhaps mutating in the process. Some who are dying accustom themselves to death by looking within themselves, without the aid of these proposed mystical concepts, but those who cannot do this frequently have recourse to various mysticisms and the concepts they bring with them. When read these read out inferior to the science fiction reader's intelligence, but what they are reading is better expressed where the perceptions originated.

, There is a yen in science fiction readers to get beyond earthly and mundane conceptual thinking and to find something more liberating to the spirit. I would say that they do indeed want to achieve unity with others, as is sometimes expressed, and that synergy would be an improvement for them. So that's what came to my mind as a title for this fanzine, synergy—togetherness in spirit. We don't have much of that as we look around us, just a sort of cloying grouping that people make the best of by trying to get along with others.

Science fiction doesn't usually express much about the spirit, although we do find such expressions in fantasy fiction, though these are most often dire with examination of the problems of the kind of existence they describe. I would look for more of a spiritual nature in both fantasy and science fiction—perhaps this is what the new age science fiction should be like, the newest progress in the development of science fiction.

## MAILING COMMENTS

Jefferson Swycaffer: The human silhouette, appearing sometimes against a landscape or the cosmos, as well as via the mirror, has appeared in SF art almost obsessively for many years. It was frequently seen in the photoart of Morris Scott Dollens, and in a number of paintings by Richard Powers, and in the art of Gregg Trenderin, and this caught on among a number of other sf artists (though not fantasy artists), who would try at least one such impression. It represents man. The view on my cover references Synergy, the merging of man into the cosmic consciousness via others. Synergy itself, that is, not the zine. Man silhouetted against the cosmos is art related to nihilism, just looking at man as a naked self, isolated from all else.

That thought about consideration of oneself and others is the old discussion of the inner-directed and other-directed personality, or the introvert and the extrovert, in popularly-distributed writings which frequently tended toward the best-seller listings found in the mainstream of distribution. Books I can recall as having such considerations are THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING, HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE, GAMES PEOPLE PLAY, MODERN MAN IN SEARCH OF A SOUL, THE MAN IN THE GRAY FLANNEL SUIT, ORGANIZATION MAN, and many others, books about conformity, about feeling “like a square peg in a round hole”, and so on. Books of this sort attracted a following that constitute a literary circle. It’s somewhat SF-related as thematic material by way of Sturgeon’s MORE THAN HUMAN and TO MARRY MEDUSA and CHILDREN OF THE ATOM by Wilmar Shiras. Mankind’s accomplishments are evident in the well-known sf slogans “From the depths to the stars” and “What man can imagine man can achieve” and “Anything is possible [for man]”.

On your comment to Will Mayo, “Eat a peach” might refer to T.S. Eliot’s “Do I dare to eat a peach?”

All of these things are existential, and I think a tide is beginning to turn over to existentialism in science fiction writing, there being a great deal of interest in how science fiction relates to life and what has to be learned about life by its authors.

The mailing comments were rather sparse in this mailing except for yourself, and you say this month’s mailing isn’t turning out to be very large. I think NAPA is getting too small for an apa, not that this isn’t sort of cozy the way Will Mayo describes it. But we should pay some attention to enlarging the apa. I think someone should ask Heath Row if he would be interested in doing a NAPAzine. He’s the only one I’ve seen presently in the N3F who looks like he might want to.

We are having some fun in here and it’s a pity to see people dropping out when someone does, but it seems like at least one person has from the looks of it, making the apa even smaller. We should, perhaps, make an effort to get the ones we have to come back if they drop their membership. It’s not a very good thing to let an apa get too small—select and elite as it may appear to be from a distance.



## **THE CHAMELEON by Jeffrey Redmond**



**From the ancient Er-Dan manuscripts (Codex 1811), as translated by Ed-Mon:**

On the three-mooned planet during the era of the times of the continual tri-lunar eclipses, there was a period of relative peace on the smaller continent. In the capitol of the larger region the leaders, even though arrogant and corrupt, brought prosperity to their populations. And in the larger town of Wes Wod, along the well-traveled interior roadways, the additional wealth of the merchants was well-enjoyed. They donated to the temples and cultural centers, and especially to gifts for each other. The artisans and craftsmen were kept busy making many new and finer-quality goods for these aspiring cultured ones.

In that town there was a young male of some renown, named Ed-Mast, who had become an orphan at an earlier age. He had been raised well enough by other relatives, but had also been left at times to fend for himself. He had spent much of his time with the street vendors and entertainers of the town market places. And he had learned how to act and perform to entertain the crowds. He was taught and encouraged by the others how to dress and behave to become each of the various types of those there in the town center.

Among the beggars he had worn old and shabby clothes, and walked as a cripple. Among the entertainers he had worn colorful costumes and sang and danced about in athletic and acrobatic ways. Among the vendors he had dressed just like them and also adopted all of their methods and mannerisms for selling their wares. Ed-Mast became

known among those in the marketplace as a friendly enough one to associate with. He didn't attack or cheat or steal from anyone else, and he was never known to wish anyone else any harm, ever. So in this way, and because of this, if he never had any real friends he also never had any real enemies.

Ed-Mast himself never tried to develop any personality of his own, either because he did not have the ability to, or because he never really wanted to. His opinions were always exactly the same as anyone else's he was with, and most everyone found him to be very pleasant and always agreeable. Ed-Mast also learned that if anyone ever spoke to him about anything he did not know about, he would merely keep silent and say nothing in reply. Eventually, the other person would always either change the subject, or go away. And so it was that Ed-Mast was always thought of as being a great listener, and someone good to talk to.

As time went on, Ed-Mast began to be invited to celebrations held by important ones in the town. He would always arrive on time, washed, well dressed, and behave in a polite way. And he would smile and listen to everyone else's conversations. Since the vast majority of others always wanted to just talk about themselves, this was easy for him. He would always just agree with whatever they told him, and Ed-Mast thus became known as someone who must also be a very intelligent fellow. Others would argue amongst themselves, but Ed-Mast never argued with anyone, ever. And he would always get himself well at these celebrations.

During the times of the political elections, the two rival factions in the town would gather to plan on how to have their candidates win against the other one. Desiring every single vote, even Ed-Mast would eventually be invited to attend each group's meetings. He would always change his tunic color to reflect each rival faction's own, and he always got well-fed at these meeting too. For the political group that used the Solar Star as their symbol, he would arrive wearing his yellow tunic and large round shiny medallion. And for the political group that used the three moons as their symbol, he would attend wearing his dark blue tunic and three smaller medallions. To him it did not really matter which candidate eventually won, since everyone liked and included the always-agreeable Ed-Mast.

He would also be invited and attend the two different temples' functions. The worshippers of the deities of the winds would have him to their festivals. He would wear a white tunic and the special "Billowing Clouds" medallion they had given him, and he would always feast well with them. The worshippers of the deities of the solid ground

would invite him to their temple ceremonies, and he would likewise attend. He would wear his brown tunic, and other medallion gifts depicting mountains and hills. And he would always be accepted and well-fed afterwards.

Life went on in this way for Ed-Mast, and as he grew older he completely adapted to this permanent pattern of visiting, agreeing, and following along with whatever was happening. Since he was perfectly peaceful, the local constables always left him alone, and he was never bothered by anyone for money or donations of any items. He had very little of his own, but he always seemed to somehow get by. No one else ever remembered if they had ever heard him say where he lived, or worked, or what he did. But all agreed that he was a nicely acceptable one, because he was actually so similar in so many ways to each of them.

When Ed-Mast grew old, he was invited to live in a retirement center the town had set up. There he received a cozy enough little room of his own, and good enough meals each day. And early one morning he did not appear out of his room, and soon after others there found that he had died in his sleep. Both the winds and the grounds temples claimed him as having been one of their own, and there were some disputes about which would have his funeral ceremony. But eventually it was decided that both would have to hold a joint ceremony. This was the very first time that this had ever been done. But still it was done.

Candidates from both the Solar Star and the three moons political factions came to speak. And all were surprised that they, for once, said only nice things about the deceased, instead of arguing and criticizing each other as always before. Ones in the audience, who seldom saw one another, met and began to renew acquaintances. And there was even an instance of at least one romance blossoming between a young male and female at the ceremony. In this way Ed-Mast was given a funeral. And afterwards they all went to their homes and returned to their own lives again.

Most everyone in the town soon forgot most things about him. No one could remember anything he had ever said or done, and no one really missed him all that much. But those who somehow did remember something about Ed-Mast concluded that he had always been the very best of ones to have around to talk to, even if they could not actually remember much of what they had actually discussed with him. Perhaps this was because most of them had usually only talked AT him, instead of TO him, in actuality. Or perhaps not. No one ever really seemed to know for sure, one way or the other. And this was perhaps because no one was ever really supposed to.

That does it on this issue, which was not intended to be this short, but I had trouble getting it together involving not having received any N3F publications for a couple of months, and I only managed to get them by asking for them from members who had gotten them and were more successful at emailing them to me than had been so at the source of distribution. And now I am past the deadline on NAPA and would rather get what I have to Jefferson Swycaffer than to be still later. So that's that, no time to do any more on the issue.



# *The Contents of a Good Life*

**MARCH 2020**



**NAPA MAILING 245**

**WILL MAYO, apartment 7B, 750 Carroll Parkway, Frederick, Maryland 21702.**  
**If you want the email address you will have to search for it in past mailings.**

I think often of Emily Dickenson and the poets of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and reflect upon the fact that the reason they wrote so much about death was that death surrounded them; it hounded their every step. They learned in their own way to be comfortable at home with the dead. Perhaps we are returning to that way of life again, perhaps that part of all the news is one good thing. We 21<sup>st</sup> Century people have become too distant from our mortality. We hide it all away in hospitals and mortuaries and distant hearts. It is high time that we all come to terms with our mortality. It is as much our companion as the cat that follows me out the door. This is a basic fact of life. It is high time we stopped denying it.

**Here With the Night**  
The dead accompany me  
on nights like this,  
ghosts, memories of  
what has gone before.  
Here alone but for a cat and a book,  
I think of the dead more and more.  
Perhaps now more than ever.

When asked how the poets Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath came to kill themselves, the best the expert could say was that they opened the door to a place that was beyond all knowing. And yet a place that should never be approached in the first place.

Then he wiped a tear from his cheek and resumed his lecture. His students never missed a word.

Christian legend dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century says that every man will meet with the devil before he dies. Myself, I think it far more likely that he will meet himself. As the image repeated in the folklore of a death fetch, a man's doppelganger that can only do him harm. In such a way does a life end. Some naturally, some by foul play, some by a simple gaze. And always the man caught in the middle that is none other than himself.

## **REVIEWS**

H.P. Lovecraft's "The Music of Erich Zann". Perhaps no story of Lovecraft's making truly haunts the senses like this one about an old mute viol player in a hilltop tenement in a mysterious city who plays some strange wild melody to keep out the demons of the night. What that tune is no man can know save that it is reminiscent of worlds beyond this one and at the final stroke of the bow across the strings the listener goes running



outside, unable to ever find the home or the street on which it stands again, on which it lays but forever haunted by the music from the space beyond.

Daniel Defoe's *A JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR*. An all too important book to read in this, the plague year of our own century, this, one of the very first novels in the English language, explores the perils and pitfalls of Londoners trying to survive in the days of the bubonic plague in the early sixteen hundreds down to the very last man, an exile in the countryside, digging his own grave. I suggest that you hurry off to your bookseller or get online and read this book. It is informative in the news of today.

Clive Barker's *COLDHEART CANYON*. Another book I enjoyed reading, where old ghosts and monsters are just a dip in the road and a ride into the canyon away. Come see Rudolph Valentino and other stars come to life again along with all the nobodies of your personal past, as only Clive can do it, and he does it right here with every turn of the page. You have only to lift the cover of yonder book and begin.

Nick LaTorre's *JOE'S ODYSSEY*. Man, this is some wild ride of a book! It involves one unhappy corporate middle man who, acting on an impulse born of a sudden midlife crisis, suddenly steals a mobster's yacht packed full with suitcases of cash and, with a crew load of rowdy college frat boys, embarks on a worldwide adventure from Vegas (but just how does one sail to Vegas, a gambling town out in the middle of the desert? Well, let's just say that this is a book where the usual thorny problems of logic and navigation need not apply) to San Francisco (encountering a city patrolled by mechanical men before trashing a rich man's fancy lounge and then getting bailed out of jail by a jury full of drunken louts), winding around to Jamaica (where they have an orgy on the beach and punch out a would-be kidnapper) before setting forth all the way to Japan (narrowly avoiding a giant lizard on Hawaii) and a place off the sea routes called Phantasmic Island where none other than President Nixon grants their every wish (if your wishes included flying a pterodactyl and scaring ghosts and leprechauns with spooky tales then this is the place for you) and heading back by way of Israel (being sure to leave desires for fresh whores at the Wailing Wall) and then heading back home by way of the Horn of Africa and an encounter with pirates—all while being pursued by angry gangsters—and a trip to Hell, no less, to make the voyage complete—just in time to make peace with the boss, the wife and kids, and not to leave out any other possible adventures to come. If you have a sudden case of the blues and need to escape from it all, well then this just might be the read for you. Wild, tripping madness all the way.

Ernest Becker's *THE DENIAL OF DEATH*. This was a very moving, if at times contradictory, book to read. First, the author examines the whole of religious and psychological thought, from Kant and Homer and St. Augustine to Freud and Adler and Fromm and Jung, sees that the nature of this existence lies not in sex, as Freud would have it, but in the overwhelming horror and delight of life and death itself, sees the importance of transference and heroism within the larger picture, and then, alarmingly,

disappointingly, perhaps of the fact that he is dying of cancer as he writes this book, passes it all up a few short pages after dismissing the psychological and religious gurus of his time in favor of some immortal life within a god outside our world. When, truth be told, decades after his book hit the stands, here in the 2020s, death doulas and their associates appear to have it right in the importance of coming to terms with man's mortality head on. Say, in the spirit of the poet Lorca who refused to don a blindfold in front of a firing squad in Franco's Spain and faced his executioners head on, as if to say, "When death comes, I am ready, but in the meantime, I live, dammit!" Yes, that's the spirit. Otherwise, a very moving, delightful book.

In answer to George's question about the wide variety of books I choose to read and review, I do try to read different books than most people. After all, if you just read the same books as everyone else, you end up thinking the same kind of thoughts as them and living the same kind of life. But if you should choose to read books all your own, why, a whole new world opens up before you.