



April 2009 Newsletter

April Events

That's Science Fiction

Tuesday April 7, 2009

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Hillsdale Public Library

This month's selection is *The Maltese Falcon* (1941).

Drawing A Crowd

Wednesday April 8, 2009

8:00 pm - 10:00 pm

New Moon Comics

This group meets on the second Wednesday of each month to discuss all things related to comic books, anime, and manga. www.newmooncomics.com.

Suspense Central

Monday April 13, 2009

8:00 pm - 10:00 pm

Borders Garden State Plaza

This month's selection is *Chinatown Death Peril: A Novel* by Paul Malmont.

Films to Come

Wednesday April 15, 2009

7:00 pm - 9:30 pm

Borders Interstate Shopping Center

Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group

This group discusses new and upcoming genre and genre-related films, TV, books and current media happenings.

Fantasy Gamers Group

Saturday April 18, 2009

2:30 pm - 7:30 pm

directions available upon request/contact **Todd**

Join us for terror, monsters, madness and more as GM BJ Pehush explores the city of Arkham MA with our monthly Call of Cthulu (Chaosium 6th edition) game.

Modern Masters

Friday April 24, 2009

8:00 pm - 10:00 pm

Borders Ramsey Interstate Shopping Center

This month we discuss *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett.

Infinite Chaos: A Temnia Campaign

Saturday April 25, 2009

2:00 pm - 10:00 pm

directions available upon request/contact **Todd**

Welcome to the Western Nations of Temnia, a brutal and vicious tyranny ruled by the Immortal Emperor, the illustrious Naram'tzin, your boss. This game explores life in the far West, where powerful Samurai serve demon-worshipping madmen, and expediency and survival are balanced by honor and horror. A new day in the Yenxhai Dominions is dawning, and the peaceful nations of the East should beware!

Face the Fiction & Themes of the Fantastic

Tuesday April 28, 2009

8:00 pm - 10:00 pm

New Moon Comics - www.newmooncomics.com

This month we welcome guest Danny Birt

(<http://www.dannybirt.com/>) for a special Face the Fiction & Themes of the Fantastic. This month we combine the two groups for a special event at New Moon Comics.

Danny has published science fiction, fantasy, and professional works in *The Raintown Review*, *Strange Worlds of Lunacy*, *Vadecast.com*, and *Musica Ficta*. His fantasy series "The Laurian Pentology" is slated to be published through Ancient Tomes Press, starting in early summer 2008 with the book *Ending an Ending*.

April Face the Fiction & Themes of the Fantastic

Tuesday, April 28, 2009 – 8p

Danny Birt at New Moon Comics –

Little Falls, NJ 07424

973.812.6642

Join us as we welcome guest Danny Birt

(www.dannybirt.com) for a special Face the Fiction.

This month we combine Face the Fiction with Themes of the Fantastic for this special event.

Danny has published science fiction, fantasy, and professional works in The Raintown Review, Strange Worlds of Lunacy, Vadercast.com, and Musica Ficta.

His fantasy series “The Laurian Pentology” is slated to be published through Ancient Tomes Press, starting in early summer

2008 with the book Ending an Ending.

In addition to literary publication, Danny composes classical and filk music, such as his nonstop hour-long piano solo, “Narcoleptic Pianist,” and the ever-peculiar album “Warped Children’s Songs.”

Visit Danny's website at www.dannybirt.com.

SFSNNJ Members on Firefox

Take a look at Peter and Aubrey's most recent reviews, or take a look back at previous reviews you may have missed.

Peter Gutierrez: <http://firefox.org/news/articlerrss/author/14>

Aubrey Ward: <http://firefox.org/news/articles/158/AubreyWard-III>

February Meeting Recaps

That's Science Fiction! – 3/3/09

The March selection for That's Science Fiction! was *Shadow of the Vampire*. Everyone who turned out to watch the movie enjoyed it. Some present had never seen the film which made it that much more enjoyable. It's always nice to get a reaction from someone who hasn't seen the film previously.

Shadow of the Vampire (2000) stars John Malkovich as director Murnau and Willem Dafoe as Max Schreck. Murnau wants to make the ultimate Dracula film. Bram Stoker's widow refuses to sell the rights to Dracula, so Murnau has to improvise using much 'creative license' - mayhem ensues, literally. The movie did a great job of blending the tortured personality of Murnau, the delightfully evil Schreck, the unwitting cast and their horrified reactions and humor. There were quite a few laugh-out-loud moments.

The film opens with F.W. Murnau telling cast members about the eccentric actor he has gotten to play the vampire Count Orlock. He explains that he has odd methods and will only appear to the cast in character. The cast is used to eccentrics in the business and thinks no big deal.

It's established early on that Murnau is a bit of a self-centered cretin. He gives these little "pep talks" to his actors individually and each actor thinks he/she is special to Murnau. They are loyal to him and think he's a genius and good friend. As the film progresses you see that Murnau's only real 'love' is this film - people are incidental to him, mere pawns to be used to get what he wants. It's chilling to watch him - he is in the end exposed for the unconscionable person he is. He is willing to sacrifice everyone and everything for the sole purpose of him getting what he wants - the perfect film.

The crew gathers and heads to the location. This will be the first time they meet the mysterious "Max Schreck" and are eager. Lead actor Gustav is in makeup, he follows Murnau's directions; he walks toward the castle, from the darkness he sees a skeletal figure emerging. He stops. The figure emerges. The look on poor Gustav's face! He's horrified and not acting when he appears scared. The count walks slowly back into the castle and Murnau tells Gustav to follow. As Gustav turns to the camera with a look on his face like, "no way, nuh uh," Gene simultaneously says, "but I don't want to go." It was funny - that was certainly the look. I would've quit and run for the hills.

Crewmembers start to disappear beginning with the photographer. Murnau, being the vain egomaniac he is, thinks he has control of the 'beast' but finds out rather quickly he's been duped. Murnau finds himself without a photographer and is mad - not because his supposed 'friend' is dead, but because he has now been inconvenienced and has to replace the photographer. Nice guy. He's yelling at Schreck explaining how he cannot eat the crew, each crewmember is needed to finish the film. He then yells, "Why did you kill the photographer? Why not the script girl?" Schreck's response is, "mmm, the script girl. I'll eat her later." Murnau then explodes, shouting, "NO! Not one more member of my crew. I need them all for this film!" Schreck, without missing a beat, comes back with, "I don't think we need a writer any more." It's at this point that Murnau realizes the vampire will do what he wants (and does) and that he may not realize his dream. He declines rapidly and is often drugged up. He confesses to his new photographer (played delightfully by Cary Elwes) and his producer Grau (played by genre actor Udo Kier) that Schreck is the real deal. They try to devise a plan to kill the vampire that goes terribly wrong.

Well done film and we enjoyed it. Recommended. Chris H particularly enjoyed how the film used color to show the 'live' parts of the movie and moved to black and white when 'filming' was taking place. It made you feel as if you were a part of the filming. He also thought Dafoe played Schreck quite brilliantly. Liz B liked the use of humor. I got a kick out of the line, "I don't think we need a writer any more." Mike P liked the setting but wasn't sure if *Shadow of the Vampire* measured up to *Dracula* overall as a film. A group continued to the diner where conversation reminisced about TV shows like Happy Days.

Join us next month for *The Maltese Falcon* (which will then be discussed at Modern masters later in the month). So, if you like noir, mysteries, classics, or just having a good time, come on out and join us.

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Suspense Central – 3/9/09

Christopher Moore's LAMB: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal, was the book discussed. Aurelia, Kathleen and I had read it (bad boy, Todd, bad boy). We discussed the humor, which was plentiful. The story is told in first person by Biff who, among other things, invented sarcasm, which Joshua (Jesus) learns and uses against him. Moore, through Biff, filled in Christ's life that the gospels didn't detail. As a tie-in, we will be discussing Christopher Moore's Bloodsucking Fiends at Modern Masters. Todd assures us he has read that one. Good thing! **(Chris H)**

As usual, Aurelia did a great job leading the discussion of the book. I unfortunately didn't get much read, just a few excerpts here and there, but from what I have read and what I heard at the discussion, this was a funny funny book...sort of reminiscent of *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. Biff is insulted that there was no mention of him in the other gospels.

We were also "treated" to the return of Scottie who apologized for missing last month's meeting. I think he was trying to get us to join him for dinner at the Grand Luxe Cafe, but we were unfortunately too tired for a late evening repast this time. **(Jo)**

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Face the Fiction – 3/14/09

A large crowd gathered Saturday, 3/14/09, for this month's Face the Fiction featuring national bestseller L.A. Banks. Those that attended were rewarded with an excellent presentation and a fantastic time! Ms. Banks must have also had a good time because she's already told us she would come back any time - she may be sorry she said that - lol.

Ms. Banks opened her presentation by telling the group about how she got her start and explained why her first book in the Huntress series ended the way it did (Todd was most relieved). We found it was a 10-year journey to finally get to write the vampire books she originally wanted to write. Before that Leslie wrote romance and suspense. When the time became right for a vampire series, she was ready to go and the series took off beyond her and her editor's dreams! In fact, Leslie informed the audience that a manga prequel is in the works, a series of graphics, a YA series (much toned down) and downloadables. When she mentioned a YA series and suggested it would be toned down a lot, Thom thought it would be a great idea to not! He told Ms. Banks that controversy would sell the books like hot cakes.

Ms. Banks talked about how she does the research for her various characters/demons and the like. She described her research as an eclectic mix. She watches much TV and incorporates aspects of what she views from the news/science channels/movies. She uses religious text and always makes sure to be accurate. In addition, she uses lore, myth, history and current events. During her description of research, we discovered that Leslie is a big fan of the TV show *Future Weapons* - she loves it! She often references the show for weapons used in her stories. Ms. Banks also told us she uses a lot of nature/animal programs to write her vampire series. She described how one inspirational moment struck her: she was watching a nature program about lions. She noticed that the male lion sat around doing nothing while the females went out for dinner. She was describing the female lions trying to take down a bison and getting the stuffing knocked out of them. She is acting out the whole scenario (it was hilarious), she's dragging her foot like an injured lioness telling us that they finally drag this big old beast back and the male, who did nothing, jumps in for first dibs. At that moment, she knew this was the perfect way to have the vampire hierarchy arranged. She added that in classic vampire stories there's always the "Hugh Hefner vampire and his stable of sex kitten vampirettes."

Up next was an explanation of her various pseudonyms. Leslie shared with us that she writes under so many different names because the fans of each of the genres she writes under want that specific genre and if they pick up a book with her name expecting vampires and got straight up romance, they'd be disappointed. It's all about the marketing.

My personal favorite was finding out that Leslie is a fan of the cheesy horror movie! Yes, vindication! She admitted to loving those cheesy SciFi Channel (oops, 'scify') movies on Saturdays! Ha ha - you may no longer mock me and my fetish. Even funnier was that she describes herself as the 'worlds biggest punk' - she's afraid of everything. She made me look positively brave ;) We even shared a fear of clowns, not dried leaves, but clowns for sure.

It was Ms. Banks love of horror that made it easy to put into reality the worlds she created and the levels and inner workings of these worlds. One inspiration for her various levels/bureaucracy in her stories was Dante's Inferno. Very cool.

Ms. Banks talked about how she often employs metaphors in her fiction to comment on societal issues that she would not otherwise be able to comment on - gangs, politics, etc. all get worked out in her writing. She told us this was cheap therapy.

We found out that Leslie Banks went to Junior High School with SFSNNJ member, past guest and upcoming guest as part of our awesome zombie encounter, Jonathan Maberry! Small world. It pays to be nice to people - you never know. Karma baby!

Leslie opened up for questions because she could tell many were eager to pounce. Mike P, Thom, Todd, Adrian, Deena, BJ, Remi, Chris, Bill and several others immediately started a bidding war for questions. Kathleen, Liz B and I sat quietly and waited. Jo was busy getting video clips, I took photos. Amir was smart and learned from past meetings to have his purchases made before Todd runs block to the table, which he did as soon as Leslie finished and began signing. I think Paul and Kate were knocked out of their seats as Todd ran up at sonic speed. Aurelia quietly walked up and pointed out to Todd that she had

knitting needles - he stepped to the side - lol. After that, the line waited until Aurelia was done - Gene didn't want to tangle with the knitting needles and suggested we do the same.

We made our purchases, got our books signed, grabbed autographed posters, some even got free swag (thank you Leslie) and wrapped up with regret. Kate Landis had such a good time that she congratulated us on yet another amazing event. You are most welcome Kate. It's that kind of gratitude that we do this for. Thanks also to Leslie for an awesome night! We look forward to seeing Leslie again (Aurelia has already invited Ms. Banks to join us for a future Suspense Central). Our group then descended upon Stateline Diner, where we had to broken up into several booths, to continue the evening.

Films to Come – 3/18/09

Our Master of All Things Entertainment led a captivating meeting of Films to Come.

Our beneficent moderator opened the meeting by providing a brief recap of Oscar winners for the benefit of Liz B (whose schedule kept her from last month's meeting).

Up next was a discussion about Big Screen Classics. BSC, formerly at Lafayette Theater in Suffern, NY has been moved to Cedar Lane in Teaneck, NJ. BSC also moves from Saturday morning to Wednesday night.

The good news though, is the Lafayette Theater in Suffern, in conjunction with the Town of Ramapo (for info about the festival go to (www.ramapo-ny.gov), will be running a Classic Film Festival. Beginning Saturday, April 11 thru June 13 at the usual time of 11:30am, the Lafayette Theater will show classic films with the theme being 'Oscar Winners'. First up on April 11 is *Marty* starring Ernest Borgnine. The line up:

4/11 - *Marty*
4/18 - *Some Like It Hot*
4/25 - *West Side Story*
5/2 - *The Thomas Crown Affair*
5/9 - *Midnight Cowboy*
5/16 - *Network*
5/23 - *Rocky*
5/30 - *Annie Hall*
6/6 - *Raging Bull*
6/13 - *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*

Right around this time, Mike P arrived, trying to make a subtle entrance only to have Barry loudly announce, "here he is!" Mike P explained he forgot the 7p start time and quickly took a seat. Lesson: never be late to Barry's meeting. Despot.

Barry moved on to the Spring 2009 list of films complete with handout. First up was *Watchmen*. This one took a big chunk of time and led to a few spin-off discussions. Barry started by asking attendees if they'd seen the movie and to offer their reviews. Mike P & Gene both chimed in. Both were satisfied with the film, but Mike P pointed out some differences between the movie and the graphic/comics.

After allowing for reviews, Barry maneuvered the talk to Alan Moore and shared a beautifully illustrated version of *Swamp Thing* with the group. He had Gene read an introduction in the book written by Moore entitled Home Again, Home Again. He then went over Moore's pedigree and the various comics, movies, etc. spawned from Moore's work. Moore is the only writer to ever win a Hugo for a comic! Who knew - now we do.

Very funny aside here - as Gene was trying to read the intro, he had some competition. It was like dueling banjos for a few minutes. A young boy was reading out-loud from a storybook - very out-loud - lol. Gene would raise his voice a bit, so would banjo-boy. Of course, I say something across the table to Jo (*in a whisper*) and get shushed! Barry shushed me! Despot. And, he called me disruptive - *Imao!* I stuck my tongue out but remained quiet after that. Disruptive maybe, but I'm no dummy. (Glad I swiped the Comedian - ha! I say from a safe distance and undisclosed location).

After the Moore topic, Barry offered up a DVD - *Watchmen: The Complete Motion Comic*. He described this as a quasi-animated work that fans may enjoy. The DVD claims "the graphic novel comes to life page by page." Good recommendation Barry.

A Films to Come moment (FTC): we learned from Barry that a movie adaptation is in the works for the comic series *Y: The Last Man*. Slated to star is Shia LeBeouf.

We continued going over the Spring 2009 list of movies and Barry had Mike P read the movie descriptions out of Entertainment Weekly. During this segment we discovered the gritty truth about shrink-wrapped books and porn pushing. You had to be there.

We finished with our favorite segment of Films to Come, First Look 2009. *Public Enemies*, *Terminator Salvation*, *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, *Up*, *Taking of Pelham 1 2 3*, *Angels and Demons*, *Land of the Lost* and *Year One* were all on the list. This segment gives a nice overview of upcoming films. It's comprehensive and offers a chance to see what people are looking

forward to and what we're surprised got made into a film. We get a preview of the films including descriptions. In short, FUN.

It was nearing closing time at Borders, so we cleaned up and got out. The entire group headed over to Stateline Diner and continued the congenial conversation. Excellent meeting, thorough, interesting, and informative - Thank you to our knowledgeable and lenient moderator Barry for a wonderful time. Great job Barry.

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Themes of the Fantastic – 3/24/09

Once again the members of SFSNNJ met at New Moon Comics to discuss Humorous Horror (and not Humorous Whores, as some gutter-minded people heard it as...lol). I began by mentioning the *Scary Movie* series created by the Wayans Bros (which I thought was a homage to the Zucker approach to comedies), then followed up by mentioning the short filler sketches used in the second & third seasons of the Night Gallery television series (which were essentially "Rim shot jokes"). We then took off from there, citing a wide variety of examples (I ended up writing four pages of notes...lol) from movies, TV, cartoons & books. AM got on the board first with *Young Frankenstein*, then Todd followed up with *Hysterical* (a movie with the Hudson Bros. of TV fame) Chuck cited gags from the classic Universal horror films (such as *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *The Black Cat*) and I claimed that *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein* was the result of all that work. Jo jumped in with *Fright Night*, followed by AM again with the *Ghostbusters* series (films and TV). Craig got in *Transylvania 6-5000*, and then Big Gene sprung on us a more modern comedy, *Shaun of the Dead*. Jo cited *Fido*, *Mad Monster Party*, and Terry Pratchett's Books. AM had *Men In Black*, *Flash Gordon* (from the 80's) and *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (the ultimate in hilarity & horror, according to Todd), while Craig noted the horrendous songs of Glenn Yarborough in the Rankin/Bass versions of *The Hobbit & Lord of the Rings*.

Chuck cited the anthology movies *Dead of Night & Tales from the Vault*, while Todd mentioned *Creep Show* & Gene got in *Tales from the Crypt* (the long-running HBO series). Craig mentioned *Bordello of Blood*, and Master Chris mentioned *Love at First Bite* on behalf of the absent Bill Wagner (which is one of his favorites). Craig then cited *Dead At Last...and Loving It* (a Leslie Nielsen comedy), *A Vampire in Brooklyn* (with Eddie Murphy), & *The Maniac Mansion*. I got in Disney's *The Haunted Mansion* (which spoils the ride forever, according to Todd), & Gene-O got in *Saturday the 14th*. *Teen Wolf 1 & 2*, *MST3K*, & *Starcrash* were mentioned, as were *The Addams Family* & *The Munsters* (Chuck, AM, & Barry). Chris H. mentioned *Bloodsucking Fiends* and other works by Chris Moore (the inspiration for this month's theme), and Craig cited *Pan's Labyrinth* & *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, followed by the *Devil's Backbone* from Todd.

Two comedies from SNL stars were mentioned: *Neighbors* (John Belushi's last film-Gene) and *Nothing But Trouble* (Todd), which is set in the fictional town of Valkenvania, New Jersey. Chris mentioned *Toxic Avenger*, AM got in The 'Burbs (with Tom Hanks), and Gene did imitations of "The Gruesomes"(an Addams family parody that appeared on The Flintstones for our amusement). Chris mentioned a *Route 66* episode entitled "Lizard Legs & Owl's Feet" that featured famous horror actors as Boris Karloff & Peter Lorre recreating their famous monster characters, while Jo got in recent animated features *Monsters Inc.*, & *Monster House*. AM mentioned *Shadow Of The Vampire* & *Scooby-Doo*, which kicked off a thread on our favorite cartoon horrors: *Water, Water Every Hare* (with Bugs Bunny & "Rudolph" the red-furred monster-AM & Barry), *The Phantom Tollbooth* (Todd), *The Piggy Bank Robbery* (Chuck), *Walt Disney's Silly Symphony* from 1929(with the skeleton dances-Chris H), *Porky & Sylvester* cartoons where the duo are terrorized by mice & leprechauns respectively- Gene & Barry, & *The Mad Doctor* (a Mickey Mouse Cartoon-Chuck).

On & On we went, citing such treasures as *Hold That Ghost*-AM, *The 3 Stooges*-Chuck, *High Anxiety* (Gene), *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* (Barry), *Day of the Dead* (AM & Barry), *Blithe Spirit* (Jim's only contribution), *Mr. Boogity* (AM), the works of Simon R. Green & Charlaire Harris, *Plop!* (A comic book cited by Barry), and even cereal box characters such as Count Chocula, Franken Berry, Boo Berry & Fruity Brute-Barry, before calling it quits at 9:45 p.m. Next month we'll have a special Face The Fiction/Themes crossover with author Danny Birt. See y'all then!!! (To anybody with anything that I missed, feel free to reply-Steve)

Addendums:

Todd - *Frankenhooker*. I had the actor and hand motions for the movie that Barry finished my thought for - *Idle Hands*. I also recalled an Our Gang episode that Barry finished for me when they're in what they believe to be a haunted house but is actually an amusement park ride (I'm glad he knows what I'm taking about because half the time I don't - lol). Jo and I added two Alvin and the Chipmunk cartoons - *Alvin and the Chipmunks Meet the Werewolf* and the other they meet *Frankenstein*. Someone tossed out *Once Bitten* with a young Jim Carrey. *Dead Alive*- Chris (AM)

The Lonesome Ghosts -- Chris

Barry also came up with *Kolchak*, *The Night Stalker* series and several episodes of *The X-Files*. Among them *Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose* (featuring Peter Boyle as an insurance salesman who can see how people will die) and 2 whose titles I can't recall. One of those is the cockroach episode (I like to call it Dana Skully's Night Off because Mulder keeps calling her at home while she's bathing her dog, washing her hair, etc). The other was filmed in black & white and sort of blends *Frankenstein* with *Mask* (as in the Peter Bogdanovich movie with Cher and Eric Stoltz as opposed to *The Mask* the comic book come to life with Jim Carrey). This episode included a scene at the end, in which the "Monster", wants to see Cher in the worst way, and has

his wish fulfilled with a Cher lookalike, which added a little extra humor to this episode. (Jo)

Modern Masters – 3/27/09

Modern Masters met on Friday, 3/27, to discuss Christopher Moore's *Bloodsucking Fiends*. Not only was the book entertaining, so was the meeting.

The meeting started with Barry being kind enough to read from a *Pokemon* book to us - loudly - lol. He dragged a chair a bit away from the group, sat down, and proceeded to read to us slowly and in a raised voice. When Todd and I realized what he was up to, we cracked up. I imagine this was pay back for the little boy who was playing dueling banjos with Gene at Barry's Films to Come meeting the week before. Quite the one-man act.

Todd then called things to order and started the meeting. He began with background on Christopher Moore. He read the bio information provided by Moore in the back of *Bloodsucking Fiends* and then from a handout provided by Chris Hasselkus. Moore is an American writer, born in Ohio, and classifies what he writes as absurdist fiction. His novels usually involve the 'everyman' character thrown into supernatural/extraordinary circumstances - with hilarious results.

Bloodsucking Fiends, set in San Francisco, finds the two main characters, Jody and C. Thomas Flood, having to deal with new circumstances in their lives. Jody, leaving work late one night is attacked by a vampire and left for dead. She wakes up to find her 'life' altered and having to navigate the waters on her own. She recruits C. Thomas Flood to be her 'eyes and ears' during the day. Poor Tommy is newly arrived from the Midwest and only wants to be a writer. His car has died; he's staying in a boarding house in one small bedroom with five (5!) Chinese immigrants who are all trying to 'court' him with flowers so he'll marry them so they won't get deported. All of the men are named Wong. Wong 1, Wong 2...you get the picture. He is stuck working the night shift in a supermarket, manager to an unruly crew called 'the Animals'. Clearly, he didn't sign up for vampire watch. The mayhem that ensues is funny, very funny.

Together, Jody and Tommy try to figure out the ins and outs of being a vampire. Their guidebook is *The Vampire Lestat* - lol. The scenes where Tommy has Jody trying to turn into a bat or a wolf or at the very least fog are vastly amusing. When she can't do any morphing, Tommy claims she must be defective.

Unfortunately for Tommy and Jody, the vampire who turned Jody plagues them with some rather devious acts. Leaving dead bodies outside their apartment building is just one of them. Tommy having to go to Sears for a large freezer for one of these bodies is hilarious. Even funnier, is that Tommy talks to the corpse when he's mad at Jody!

Tossed into the mix of characters is the Emperor (based on Emperor Norton I from San Francisco's 19th-century history). The Emperor is a 'modern monarch' down on his luck (aka homeless). He wanders the streets with his two dogs (who are dressed in battle gear). He knows all and sees all. He's been warning of the vampire attacks for some time. He's ready, and so are his dogs - he has the poor dogs dressed for battle with pie plates strapped to them as shields/armor.

Daily trials aside, Jody and Tommy are adapting to the vampire way of life. They face things with an excellent supporting cast (the Emperor, the Animals, a pair of San Francisco detective investigating the murders that always seem to be near Jody and Tommy, and even a visit from Jody's mother).

The book has a great mix of humor, horror, and drama. It was unanimously enjoyed by all who had read the book and highly recommended. Todd asked the group questions about the book and read a few favorite passages. You had to be there to hear (and watch) as Todd read the scene where the five Wongs propose to Tommy. He was three different voices (Tommy, Wong the Owner of the boarding house, and the five Wongs). Moira did a great job of filling in about the locations used in the book being familiar with San Francisco. Of course, Barry sat quietly, listened to us talking about how much we liked the book, waited until Todd wrapped things up and then asked, "so this book, any good?" We thought the book was funny?!

We then had a fun discussion about various books, movies and things of interest. One in particular was focused on the new channel Chiller and the different shows airing on that channel. OK, it was Danish! We cleaned up and headed out. Some of us hung around for a while chatting before calling it a night. Good meeting. Join us in April for *The Maltese Falcon* for 'Pulp' month.

As always, visit www.sfsnnj.com for all of the latest news.