



February 2011 Newsletter

Smells like team Spirit: Team Building & Leagues of Extraordinary Gentle-beings: From the Justice League to the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, from the Hellfire Club to the Hippocras Club, the genres are liberally sprinkled with gatherings of heroes and villains, super or otherwise. Join us we explore the dynamics of the Team with fun events that show us how a group becomes more than just a gathering!

Please note we have an extra Drawing A Crowd this month on Wednesday, February 2, 2011. This meeting was rescheduled from January due to inclement weather. There are two Drawing A Crowd's this month – the extra on the 2nd and the regular meeting on the 9th.

That's Science Fiction

Tuesday February 8, 2011 – 7p
Hillsdale Public Library
Gidorah, the Three-Headed Monster (1964)
*Please note date change for February

Drawing A Crowd

Wednesday February 9, 2011 – 7p
Fantasy Games & Hobbies
9 Miller Rd - Mahwah

Justice League & Other Teams

For additional information click
www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com

Face the Fiction

Saturday February 12, 2011 – TBA
Sue Lange
*Full details on p. 2

Suspense Central

Monday February 14, 2011, 2010 – 8p
***Note location change**
Panera Bread Restaurant
165 Rt. 64 West
Paramus, NJ – 201.368.0752
Devil's Cape by Rob Rogers

Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group

Wednesday February 16, 2011 – 7p
Borders Books & Music
235 Interstate Shopping Center Shopping/Rt. 17
Ramsey, NJ 07446
This group discusses the world of cinema and entertainment. If it deals with entertainment, our Master of Entertainment Moderator will cover it.

*Dining follows this event.

Rogue Trader: Wolves in the Fold

Saturday February 19, 2011 – time TBA
Fantasy Games & Hobbies
9 Miller Road, Mahwah, NJ
Rogue Trader is a game of space adventure, set in the grim darkness of Games Workshop's Warhammer 40000 universe. Are we the wolves in the fold, or merely the sheep?

Themes of the Fantastic

Tuesday February 22, 2011 – 8p
Wayne Public Library
Build A Dream Team!
www.waynepubliclibrary.org

Modern Masters

Tuesday February 25, 2011 – 8p
Panera Restaurant
1300 Rt. 17 North, Ramsey, NJ
The Spy Who Haunted Me by Simon Green

Medium Screen Classics

Saturday, 2011 – TBA
Seasonal Movie Viewing Group – line-up TBA soon!! Get ready for another fun day of films.

please visit www.sfsnj.com for full details

SFSNNJ Face the Fiction presents:

Sue Lange

When: Saturday, February 12, 2011

Where: Well Read Bookstore - www.thewellreadbookstore.com

425 Lafayette Avenue

Hawthorne, NJ 07506

973.949.3440

Time: 7:00pm

Ms. Lange (www.suelangetheauthor.com) is the author of *Tritcheon Hash*, *We, Robots*, *The Textile Planet*, and the ebook, "Uncategorized".

Bio info: "Awright, here it is: Graduated Western Michigan University sometime last century. Worked at Palisades Nuke Plant in Southwestern Michigan for six years. Moved to New York City. Started a blues/rock band. Quit that. Began writing. Two works of science fiction satire published: *Tritcheon Hash* and *We, Robots*. Pick them up at Amazon or Powells. Borders in Wyomissing, PA has them as well as the Book Depot. Bunches of short stories publisher here and there. Joined BookViewCafe.com. Visit her bookshelf there for some free fiction, ebooks, that sort of thing."

The owner of Well Read Books has agreed to stay open late for us! New venue, fun guest - be there!

***Face the Fiction: Where imagination lives!
Only at the SFSNNJ***



December Meeting Recaps

That's Science Fiction! – *Duel* - Tuesday January 4, 2011

To begin our month of "firsts"/Freshman Efforts, we screened Stephen Spielberg's directorial debut "Duel" starring Dennis Weaver. The film has always been an intense experience and was once again. I'm the only one who had previously seen it. In fact, Barry thanked me for showing it in that he's wanted to see it since it came out in 1971. The festive evening continued at the Ridge Diner, where topics such as television shows and award shows (i.e. Golden Globes, Oscars) were discussed. A great time was had by all! **Chris H**

Face the Fiction: Mahwah Bar & Grill Social – Saturday, January 8, 2011

Lots of people braved the cold to attend Face the Fiction's Mahwah Bar & Grill social. Those that did had a *great* time. The entire night was one silly event after another - from Todd and Amir's, "I lift things up and put them down" to Bill using his fingers to count the movies he had recently seen kindergarten-style - we had fun.

The night began at 6:30p. MB&G had the backroom ready and waiting for us. It looked inviting and was warm! Bonus on such a cold night. People trickled in throughout the night, which added to the fun. It was a nice, relaxed evening. The food was delicious. The conversation was hysterical and all over the place. Jo and Gene were "acting innocent" - no one was fooled.

Bill talked about the movies he had seen and gave his reviews as well as his recommendations - or avoid at all costs in some cases. Gene agreed with Bill about some of the films and gave some reviews of his own. Chris gave a strong recommend to *The King's Speech* (which seemed to be 'the' film to see).

We talked about TV, the holidays, the weather, and a truly hilarious discussion about commercials - ergo Todd and Amir acting out "I lift things up and put them down" - if you have not seen this commercial: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-cpojklLO0>. Too funny! Now imagine sitting at a table with this being acted out... I believe it was right about here that Jo was quietly looking for an escape route...to no avail as she was blocked in! She tried valiantly which made it all the sadder. Hee hee. No really...hee. To add fuel to Jo's pain, BJ encouraged Todd and Amir. Enabler!

We were enjoying ourselves so much that dinner wasn't enough; we all had coffee and many ordered dessert. Todd, what's a Kentucky Derby?

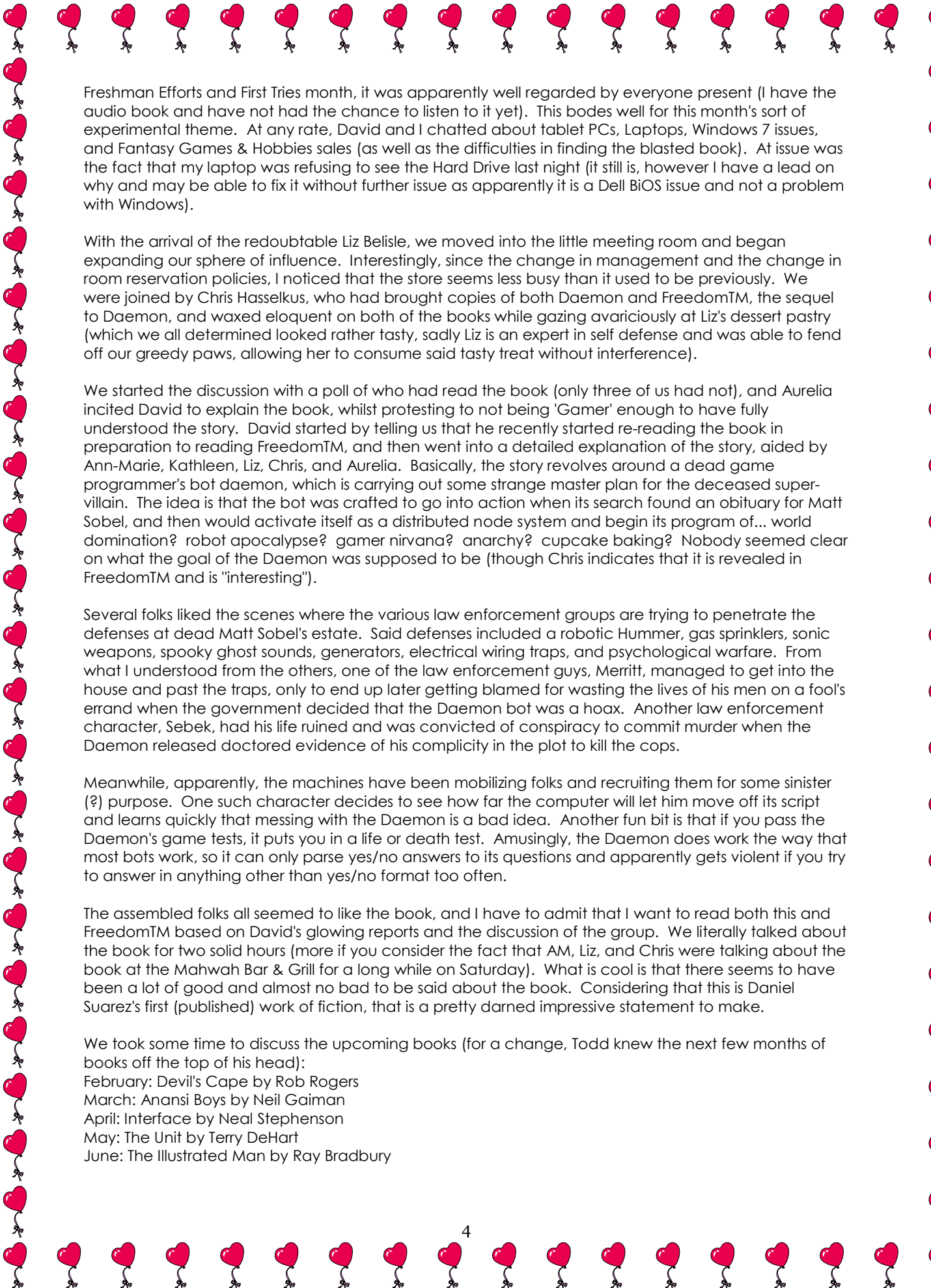
We discussed books recently read and a few for the upcoming meetings. *Daemon* by Daniel Suarez got several recommends. Chris enjoyed the book so much he is currently reading the sequel *Freedom*. Liz also talked about *The Steel Remains* from December's Modern Masters, as she wasn't able to attend the meeting. Aurelia wondered who had read *Daemon* in preparation for Suspense Central. Should be a lively chat.

Deena is still looking for John Edwards in the parking lot! Todd lectured about the dangers of daily beef - don't ask. No really, don't. Bill did not mention ERB once! A fantastic event, fun night with many too funny for words moments. Can't wait to do this again. **(AM)**

Suspense Central – *Daemon* by Daniel Suarez - Monday January 10, 2011

Oh, what a night! I have to admit that I love using the Panera on Route 4. Why? Because I literally work across the street!) Even better, I joined the gym (Blink Fitness) at the Bergen Town Center Mall (formerly the super-creepy Bergen Mall of strange basement village fame), so I can now go to the gym before Suspense Central! Now that I have thoroughly bored you with the mundane details of my paltry little life, on with the show...

I arrived first (obviously, because I work across the street) and sat back to try and set up my new E-Pad Android tablet while I ate my dinner (Vegetarian Tomato Soup and Salad in case you care), and was joined by David Bristow, at whose recommendation we selected tonight's book. As the first book in the



Freshman Efforts and First Tries month, it was apparently well regarded by everyone present (I have the audio book and have not had the chance to listen to it yet). This bodes well for this month's sort of experimental theme. At any rate, David and I chatted about tablet PCs, Laptops, Windows 7 issues, and Fantasy Games & Hobbies sales (as well as the difficulties in finding the blasted book). At issue was the fact that my laptop was refusing to see the Hard Drive last night (it still is, however I have a lead on why and may be able to fix it without further issue as apparently it is a Dell BIOS issue and not a problem with Windows).

With the arrival of the redoubtable Liz Belisle, we moved into the little meeting room and began expanding our sphere of influence. Interestingly, since the change in management and the change in room reservation policies, I noticed that the store seems less busy than it used to be previously. We were joined by Chris Hasselkus, who had brought copies of both Daemon and FreedomTM, the sequel to Daemon, and waxed eloquent on both of the books while gazing avariciously at Liz's dessert pastry (which we all determined looked rather tasty, sadly Liz is an expert in self defense and was able to fend off our greedy paws, allowing her to consume said tasty treat without interference).

We started the discussion with a poll of who had read the book (only three of us had not), and Aurelia incited David to explain the book, whilst protesting to not being 'Gamer' enough to have fully understood the story. David started by telling us that he recently started re-reading the book in preparation to reading FreedomTM, and then went into a detailed explanation of the story, aided by Ann-Marie, Kathleen, Liz, Chris, and Aurelia. Basically, the story revolves around a dead game programmer's bot daemon, which is carrying out some strange master plan for the deceased super-villain. The idea is that the bot was crafted to go into action when its search found an obituary for Matt Sobel, and then would activate itself as a distributed node system and begin its program of... world domination? robot apocalypse? gamer nirvana? anarchy? cupcake baking? Nobody seemed clear on what the goal of the Daemon was supposed to be (though Chris indicates that it is revealed in FreedomTM and is "interesting").

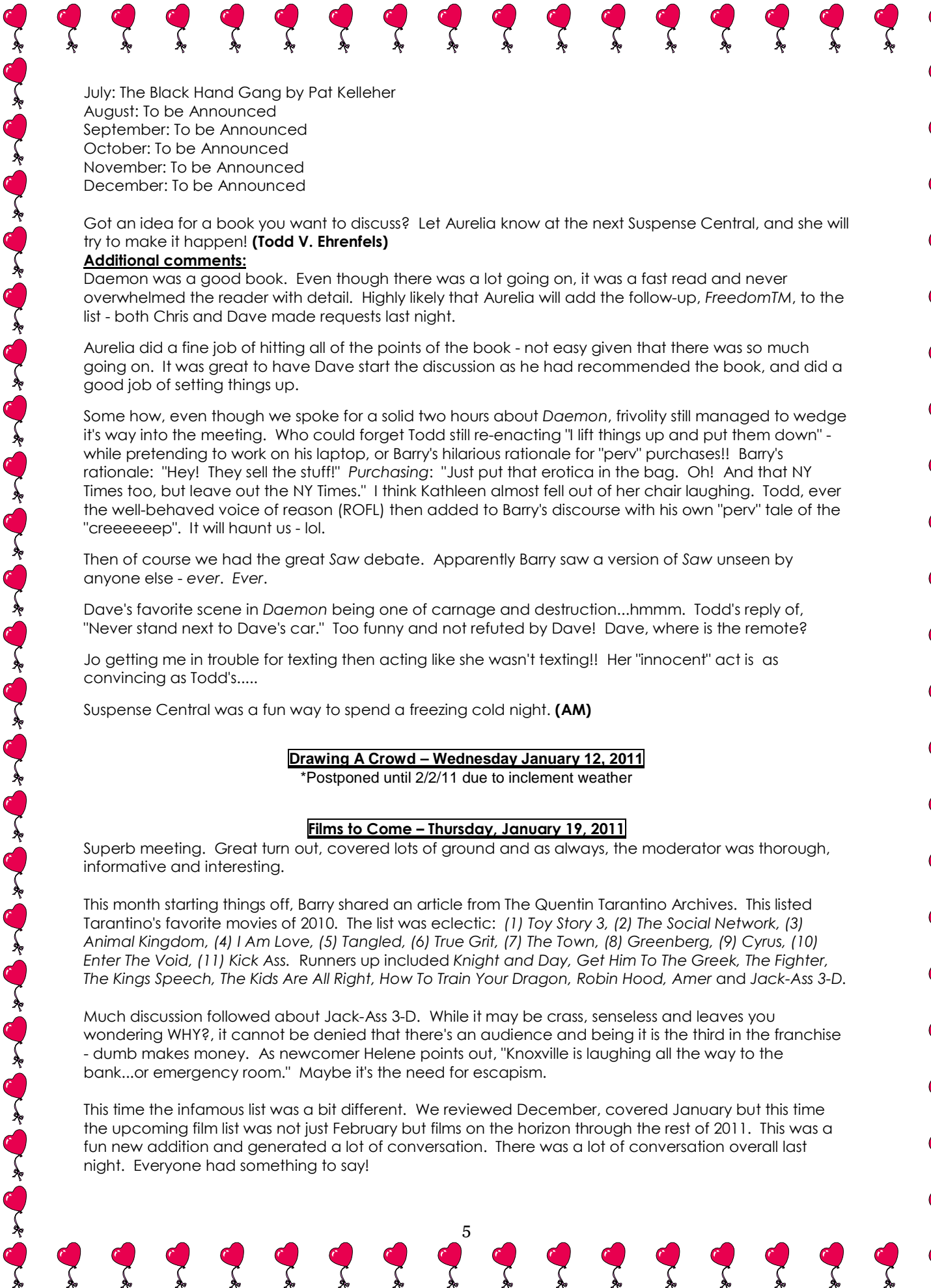
Several folks liked the scenes where the various law enforcement groups are trying to penetrate the defenses at dead Matt Sobel's estate. Said defenses included a robotic Hummer, gas sprinklers, sonic weapons, spooky ghost sounds, generators, electrical wiring traps, and psychological warfare. From what I understood from the others, one of the law enforcement guys, Merritt, managed to get into the house and past the traps, only to end up later getting blamed for wasting the lives of his men on a fool's errand when the government decided that the Daemon bot was a hoax. Another law enforcement character, Sebek, had his life ruined and was convicted of conspiracy to commit murder when the Daemon released doctored evidence of his complicity in the plot to kill the cops.

Meanwhile, apparently, the machines have been mobilizing folks and recruiting them for some sinister (?) purpose. One such character decides to see how far the computer will let him move off its script and learns quickly that messing with the Daemon is a bad idea. Another fun bit is that if you pass the Daemon's game tests, it puts you in a life or death test. Amusingly, the Daemon does work the way that most bots work, so it can only parse yes/no answers to its questions and apparently gets violent if you try to answer in anything other than yes/no format too often.

The assembled folks all seemed to like the book, and I have to admit that I want to read both this and FreedomTM based on David's glowing reports and the discussion of the group. We literally talked about the book for two solid hours (more if you consider the fact that AM, Liz, and Chris were talking about the book at the Mahwah Bar & Grill for a long while on Saturday). What is cool is that there seems to have been a lot of good and almost no bad to be said about the book. Considering that this is Daniel Suarez's first (published) work of fiction, that is a pretty darned impressive statement to make.

We took some time to discuss the upcoming books (for a change, Todd knew the next few months of books off the top of his head):

February: Devil's Cape by Rob Rogers
March: Anansi Boys by Neil Gaiman
April: Interface by Neal Stephenson
May: The Unit by Terry DeHart
June: The Illustrated Man by Ray Bradbury



July: The Black Hand Gang by Pat Kelleher
August: To be Announced
September: To be Announced
October: To be Announced
November: To be Announced
December: To be Announced

Got an idea for a book you want to discuss? Let Aurelia know at the next Suspense Central, and she will try to make it happen! **(Todd V. Ehrenfels)**

Additional comments:

Daemon was a good book. Even though there was a lot going on, it was a fast read and never overwhelmed the reader with detail. Highly likely that Aurelia will add the follow-up, *FreedomTM*, to the list - both Chris and Dave made requests last night.

Aurelia did a fine job of hitting all of the points of the book - not easy given that there was so much going on. It was great to have Dave start the discussion as he had recommended the book, and did a good job of setting things up.

Some how, even though we spoke for a solid two hours about *Daemon*, frivolity still managed to wedge it's way into the meeting. Who could forget Todd still re-enacting "I lift things up and put them down" - while pretending to work on his laptop, or Barry's hilarious rationale for "perv" purchases!! Barry's rationale: "Hey! They sell the stuff!" *Purchasing*: "Just put that erotica in the bag. Oh! And that NY Times too, but leave out the NY Times." I think Kathleen almost fell out of her chair laughing. Todd, ever the well-behaved voice of reason (ROFL) then added to Barry's discourse with his own "perv" tale of the "creeeeeeep". It will haunt us - lol.

Then of course we had the great Saw debate. Apparently Barry saw a version of Saw unseen by anyone else - ever. Ever.

Dave's favorite scene in *Daemon* being one of carnage and destruction...hmmm. Todd's reply of, "Never stand next to Dave's car." Too funny and not refuted by Dave! Dave, where is the remote?

Jo getting me in trouble for texting then acting like she wasn't texting!! Her "innocent" act is as convincing as Todd's.....

Suspense Central was a fun way to spend a freezing cold night. **(AM)**

Drawing A Crowd – Wednesday January 12, 2011

*Postponed until 2/2/11 due to inclement weather

Films to Come – Thursday, January 19, 2011

Superb meeting. Great turn out, covered lots of ground and as always, the moderator was thorough, informative and interesting.

This month starting things off, Barry shared an article from The Quentin Tarantino Archives. This listed Tarantino's favorite movies of 2010. The list was eclectic: (1) *Toy Story 3*, (2) *The Social Network*, (3) *Animal Kingdom*, (4) *I Am Love*, (5) *Tangled*, (6) *True Grit*, (7) *The Town*, (8) *Greenberg*, (9) *Cyrus*, (10) *Enter The Void*, (11) *Kick Ass*. Runners up included *Knight and Day*, *Get Him To The Greek*, *The Fighter*, *The Kings Speech*, *The Kids Are All Right*, *How To Train Your Dragon*, *Robin Hood*, *Amer* and *Jack-Ass 3-D*.

Much discussion followed about Jack-Ass 3-D. While it may be crass, senseless and leaves you wondering WHY?, it cannot be denied that there's an audience and being it is the third in the franchise - dumb makes money. As newcomer Helene points out, "Knoxville is laughing all the way to the bank...or emergency room." Maybe it's the need for escapism.

This time the infamous list was a bit different. We reviewed December, covered January but this time the upcoming film list was not just February but films on the horizon through the rest of 2011. This was a fun new addition and generated a lot of conversation. There was a lot of conversation overall last night. Everyone had something to say!

First up, December highlights - **True Grit** garnered some debate. Some weren't sure if they liked a classic like *True Grit* being tampered with, but overall, it got thumb's up from people who had seen it.

The Tempest was of interest to several people. Todd had seen the film and newcomer Helene wanted to see it but its limited release prevented her from doing so. Todd enjoyed the film but felt "something missing." He chalks it up to "Taymor is serious. Taymor with comedy doesn't carry over well." He did say the film was visually stunning.

Somewhere: Barry would not recommend this one, as it is "not big on plot."

Black Swan: Mark called this the "best movie about a crazy ballerina." Chris read a review from an LA reviewer that labeled *Black Swan* a BOMB. The reviewer called it pulpy and pretentious.

The Fighter: Chris liked the film but thought Christian Bale was better than star Wahlberg.

Tron: Legacy: Mark felt this film was not getting the credit it deserved. He thought the characters had clear story arcs, was well done, visually impressive and the sound track evocative. Barry was lukewarm and gave it an OK and acquiesced to 'visually interesting'.

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader: Barry wasn't crazy about it but feels it will pass the 100 million mark. Todd explained part of the problem is that it would be better off as a mini-series due to the book's extensive content.

Barry gave recommends to both ***I Love You Phillip Morris*** and ***Rabbit Hole***. He 'kinda' liked *Phillip Morris* calling it "an interesting hybrid" and although *Rabbit Hole* is an intense drama, not for everyone, it is well done.

During the December review, Mike waited patiently, hand raised. When finally called upon, he referred back to the *Tron: Legacy* movie. He brought up the black hole concept that was used in the new *Star Trek* film. Let it be known that Mark hated that movie...a lot...lol. Barry quipped, "I didn't know you were gonna invoke the new *Star Trek*!" Todd added an interesting tidbit about red blobs. It's Todd ;-)

January moved along fairly quickly. ***The Green Hornet*** - no one saw it - did get much talk. Barry brought several beautifully illustrated hardcovers about the Green Hornet. Some talk about the series with Bruce Lee and the graphics. Todd filled in some history about the dynamics of the Green Hornet & Kato. Interesting aside.

After flying through January, we moved onto the newly revamped upcoming list (courtesy of Entertainment Weekly). Johnny Depp has been busy - *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*, *Rango* and *The Rum Diary* are all upcoming Depp films. When someone asked what *Justin Bieber: Never Say Never* was, Todd replied, "it's a Bond film." Representing comic book adaptations will be *X-Men First Class*, *Captain America: The First Avenger*, *Thor*, *Green Lantern*, and *The Adventures of TinTin: Secret of the Unicorn*.

There are some 'prequels' - *Rise of the Apes* and some sequels - *Sherlock Holmes II*. However, the most anticipated is certainly *The Smurfs*. As Mark so eloquently put it, "it looks like deep hurting."

Luckily for us, Films to Come was not deep hurting but in fact great fun. In between reading descriptions we quoted movie scenes (there's a penguin on the telly), got tons of films confused, put actors in movies they were never in, and just had fun with it all. Barry took it all in...probably taking names for retribution at a later date...Todd's in trouble ;-)...and led a great meeting. (AM)

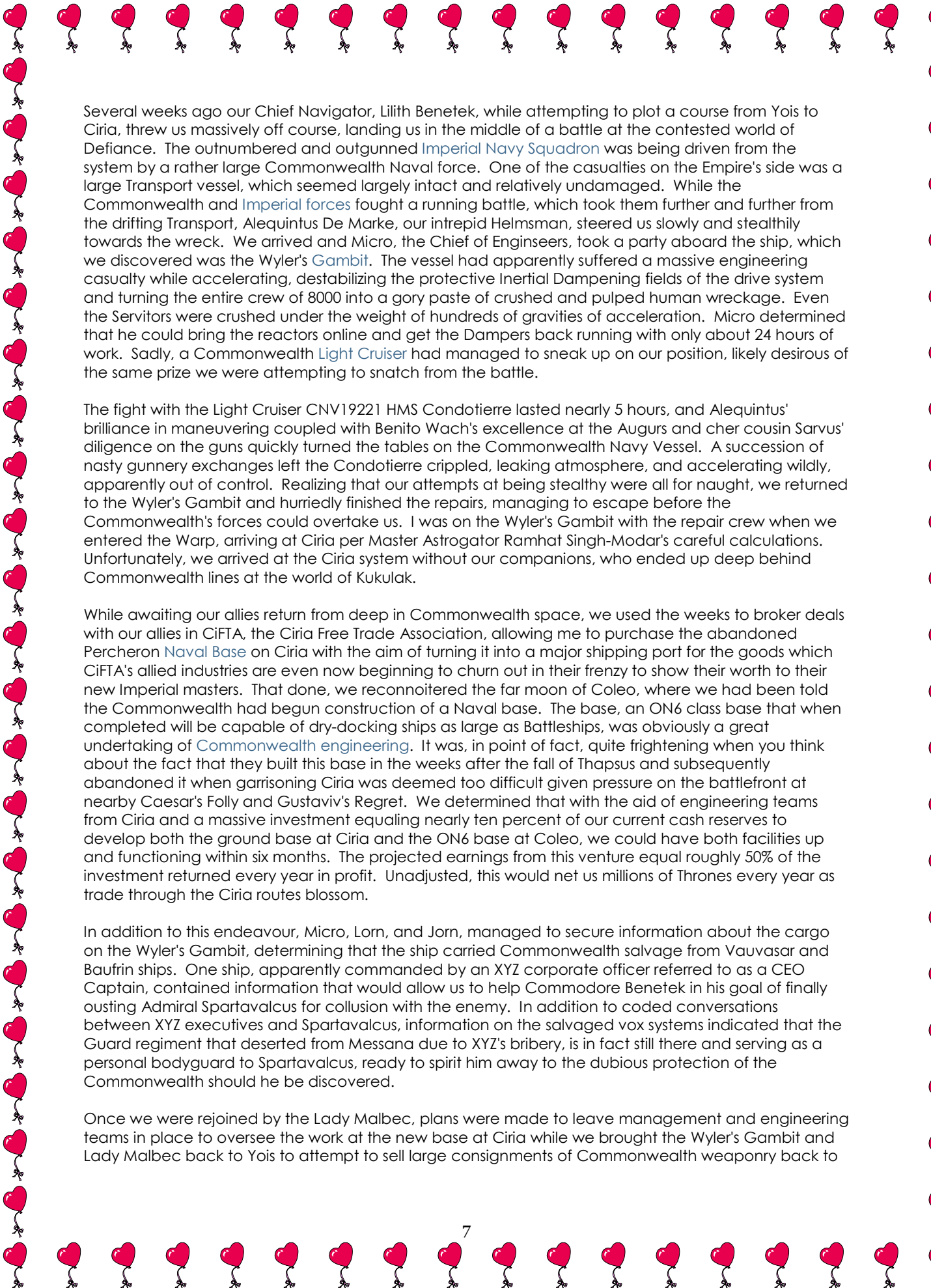
Heroes & Rogues: Rogue Trader Session 1/22/2011 Recap

Chapter 9: A Darkness Upon the Deep

Year 168.860,M38

...excerpt from the journal of Wencisia Tremnar...

When I first arrived in this grubby little region of misbegotten space, I had to wonder why the Empire was devoting so much in the way of manpower and materiel into this Crusade. The populace, though somewhat misguided, seemed peaceful and cooperative... well, as cooperative as any conquered people can be, and I thought to myself that this war was a massive waste of resources. That line of thinking no longer is foremost in my mind, though, with the events of recent weeks.



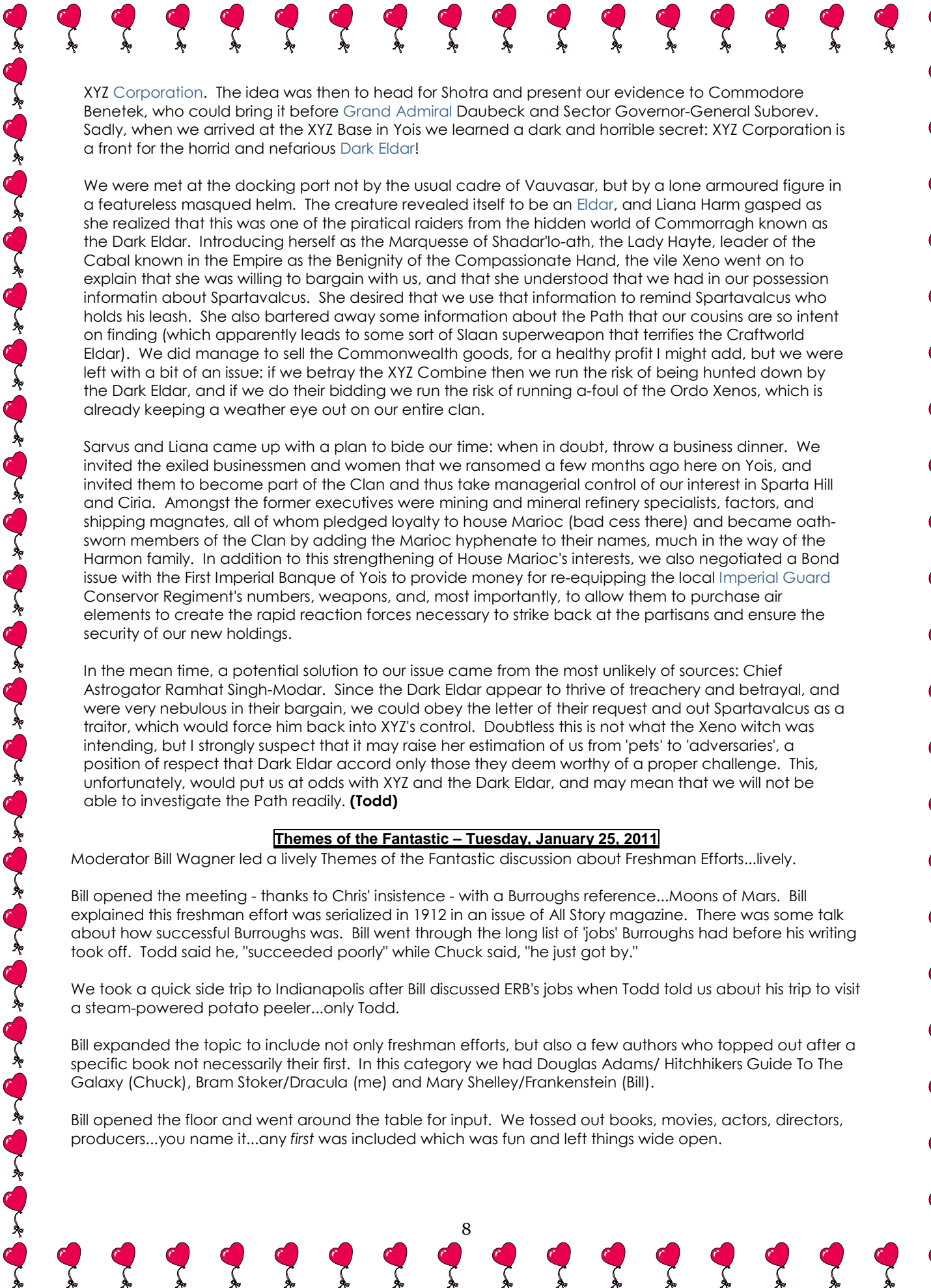
Several weeks ago our Chief Navigator, Liliith Benetek, while attempting to plot a course from Yois to Ciria, threw us massively off course, landing us in the middle of a battle at the contested world of Defiance. The outnumbered and outgunned [Imperial Navy Squadron](#) was being driven from the system by a rather large Commonwealth Naval force. One of the casualties on the Empire's side was a large Transport vessel, which seemed largely intact and relatively undamaged. While the Commonwealth and [Imperial forces](#) fought a running battle, which took them further and further from the drifting Transport, Alequintus De Marke, our intrepid Helmsman, steered us slowly and stealthily towards the wreck. We arrived and Micro, the Chief of Engineers, took a party aboard the ship, which we discovered was the Wyler's [Gambit](#). The vessel had apparently suffered a massive engineering casualty while accelerating, destabilizing the protective Inertial Dampening fields of the drive system and turning the entire crew of 8000 into a gory paste of crushed and pulped human wreckage. Even the Servitors were crushed under the weight of hundreds of gravities of acceleration. Micro determined that he could bring the reactors online and get the Dampers back running with only about 24 hours of work. Sadly, a Commonwealth [Light Cruiser](#) had managed to sneak up on our position, likely desirous of the same prize we were attempting to snatch from the battle.

The fight with the Light Cruiser CNV19221 HMS Condotierre lasted nearly 5 hours, and Alequintus' brilliance in maneuvering coupled with Benito Wach's excellence at the Augurs and her cousin Sarvus' diligence on the guns quickly turned the tables on the Commonwealth Navy Vessel. A succession of nasty gunnery exchanges left the Condotierre crippled, leaking atmosphere, and accelerating wildly, apparently out of control. Realizing that our attempts at being stealthy were all for naught, we returned to the Wyler's Gambit and hurriedly finished the repairs, managing to escape before the Commonwealth's forces could overtake us. I was on the Wyler's Gambit with the repair crew when we entered the Warp, arriving at Ciria per Master Astrogator Ramhat Singh-Modar's careful calculations. Unfortunately, we arrived at the Ciria system without our companions, who ended up deep behind Commonwealth lines at the world of Kukulak.

While awaiting our allies return from deep in Commonwealth space, we used the weeks to broker deals with our allies in CiFTA, the Ciria Free Trade Association, allowing me to purchase the abandoned Percheron [Naval Base](#) on Ciria with the aim of turning it into a major shipping port for the goods which CiFTA's allied industries are even now beginning to churn out in their frenzy to show their worth to their new Imperial masters. That done, we reconnoitered the far moon of Coleo, where we had been told the Commonwealth had begun construction of a Naval base. The base, an ON6 class base that when completed will be capable of dry-docking ships as large as Battleships, was obviously a great undertaking of [Commonwealth engineering](#). It was, in point of fact, quite frightening when you think about the fact that they built this base in the weeks after the fall of Thapsus and subsequently abandoned it when garrisoning Ciria was deemed too difficult given pressure on the battlefield at nearby Caesar's Folly and Gustaviv's Regret. We determined that with the aid of engineering teams from Ciria and a massive investment equaling nearly ten percent of our current cash reserves to develop both the ground base at Ciria and the ON6 base at Coleo, we could have both facilities up and functioning within six months. The projected earnings from this venture equal roughly 50% of the investment returned every year in profit. Unadjusted, this would net us millions of Thrones every year as trade through the Ciria routes blossom.

In addition to this endeavour, Micro, Lorn, and Jorn, managed to secure information about the cargo on the Wyler's Gambit, determining that the ship carried Commonwealth salvage from Vauvasar and Baufrin ships. One ship, apparently commanded by an XYZ corporate officer referred to as a CEO Captain, contained information that would allow us to help Commodore Benetek in his goal of finally ousting Admiral Spartavalcus for collusion with the enemy. In addition to coded conversations between XYZ executives and Spartavalcus, information on the salvaged vox systems indicated that the Guard regiment that deserted from Messana due to XYZ's bribery, is in fact still there and serving as a personal bodyguard to Spartavalcus, ready to spirit him away to the dubious protection of the Commonwealth should he be discovered.

Once we were rejoined by the Lady Malbec, plans were made to leave management and engineering teams in place to oversee the work at the new base at Ciria while we brought the Wyler's Gambit and Lady Malbec back to Yois to attempt to sell large consignments of Commonwealth weaponry back to



XYZ Corporation. The idea was then to head for Shotra and present our evidence to Commodore Benetek, who could bring it before Grand Admiral Daubeck and Sector Governor-General Suborev. Sadly, when we arrived at the XYZ Base in Yois we learned a dark and horrible secret: XYZ Corporation is a front for the horrid and nefarious Dark Eldar!

We were met at the docking port not by the usual cadre of Vauvasar, but by a lone armoured figure in a featureless masqued helm. The creature revealed itself to be an Eldar, and Liana Harm gasped as she realized that this was one of the piratical raiders from the hidden world of Commorragh known as the Dark Eldar. Introducing herself as the Marquesse of Shadar'lo-ath, the Lady Hayte, leader of the Cabal known in the Empire as the Benignity of the Compassionate Hand, the vile Xeno went on to explain that she was willing to bargain with us, and that she understood that we had in our possession informatin about Spartavalcus. She desired that we use that information to remind Spartavalcus who holds his leash. She also bartered away some information about the Path that our cousins are so intent on finding (which apparently leads to some sort of Slaan superweapon that terrifies the Craftworld Eldar). We did manage to sell the Commonwealth goods, for a healthy profit I might add, but we were left with a bit of an issue: if we betray the XYZ Combine then we run the risk of being hunted down by the Dark Eldar, and if we do their bidding we run the risk of running a-foul of the Ordo Xenos, which is already keeping a weather eye out on our entire clan.

Sarvus and Liana came up with a plan to bide our time: when in doubt, throw a business dinner. We invited the exiled businessmen and women that we ransomed a few months ago here on Yois, and invited them to become part of the Clan and thus take managerial control of our interest in Sparta Hill and Ciria. Amongst the former executives were mining and mineral refinery specialists, factors, and shipping magnates, all of whom pledged loyalty to house Marioc (bad cess there) and became oath-sworn members of the Clan by adding the Marioc hyphenate to their names, much in the way of the Harmon family. In addition to this strengthening of House Marioc's interests, we also negotiated a Bond issue with the First Imperial Banque of Yois to provide money for re-equipping the local Imperial Guard Conservor Regiment's numbers, weapons, and, most importantly, to allow them to purchase air elements to create the rapid reaction forces necessary to strike back at the partisans and ensure the security of our new holdings.

In the mean time, a potential solution to our issue came from the most unlikely of sources: Chief Astrogator Ramhat Singh-Modar. Since the Dark Eldar appear to thrive of treachery and betrayal, and were very nebulous in their bargain, we could obey the letter of their request and out Spartavalcus as a traitor, which would force him back into XYZ's control. Doubtless this is not what the Xeno witch was intending, but I strongly suspect that it may raise her estimation of us from 'pets' to 'adversaries', a position of respect that Dark Eldar accord only those they deem worthy of a proper challenge. This, unfortunately, would put us at odds with XYZ and the Dark Eldar, and may mean that we will not be able to investigate the Path readily. (Todd)

Themes of the Fantastic – Tuesday, January 25, 2011

Moderator Bill Wagner led a lively Themes of the Fantastic discussion about Freshman Efforts...lively.

Bill opened the meeting - thanks to Chris' insistence - with a Burroughs reference...Moons of Mars. Bill explained this freshman effort was serialized in 1912 in an issue of All Story magazine. There was some talk about how successful Burroughs was. Bill went through the long list of 'jobs' Burroughs had before his writing took off. Todd said he, "succeeded poorly" while Chuck said, "he just got by."

We took a quick side trip to Indianapolis after Bill discussed ERB's jobs when Todd told us about his trip to visit a steam-powered potato peeler...only Todd.

Bill expanded the topic to include not only freshman efforts, but also a few authors who topped out after a specific book not necessarily their first. In this category we had Douglas Adams/ Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy (Chuck), Bram Stoker/Dracula (me) and Mary Shelley/Frankenstein (Bill).

Bill opened the floor and went around the table for input. We tossed out books, movies, actors, directors, producers...you name it...any first was included which was fun and left things wide open.



Movies/Actors/Producers/Directors:

- George Lucas - THX 1138 (Craig)
- Peter Jackson - as producer: Bad Taste, as director: The Valley (1976 short) (me & Jo)
- Johnny Depp - acting debut: Nightmare on Elm Street (me)
- Disney - full-length feature Snow White, short Steam Boat Willie (me, Jo)
- Mel Brooks - as producer: High Anxiety, as director: The Producers, as actor: The New Steve Allen Show (group effort)
- Seth Rogan - as producer: 40 Year Old Virgin

Books:

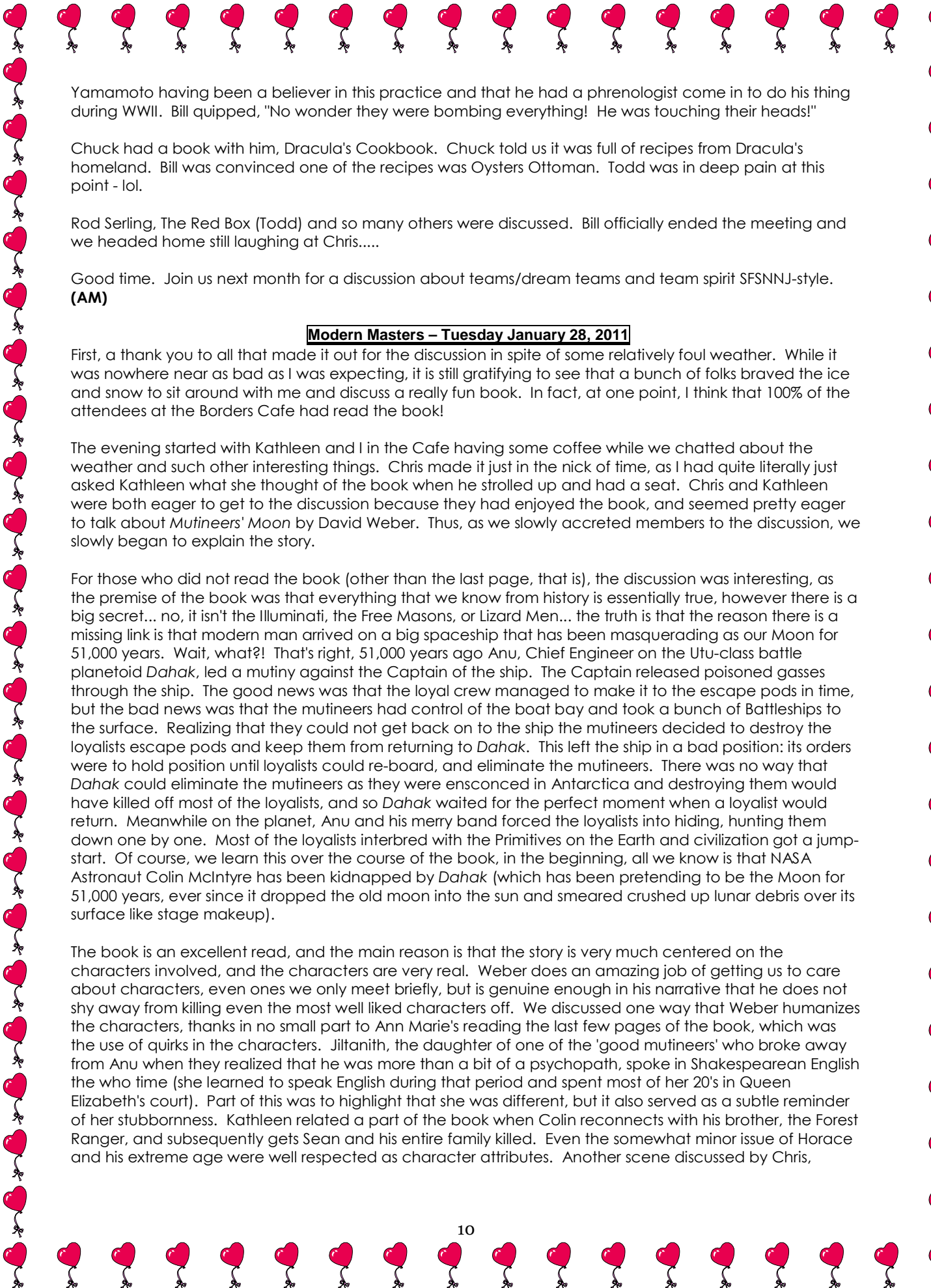
- The Shadow - The Living Shadow by Walter Gibson written as Maxwell Graham (Chris & Chuck)

This led to a fact-filled aside about The Shadow, The Punisher and The Spider who as Chuck puts it, "The Shadow & The Punisher at their worst...yeah, you have The Spider aka Richard Wentworth." Todd and Chuck regaled us with background info, trivia and stories.

- Paul Malmont - Chinatown Death Cloud Peril (Craig)
- Stephen King - Carrie (me) as Richard Bachman - Rage (Jo)
- JK Rowling - Sorcerer's Stone (Chris)
- Forsythe - The Day of the Jackal (Chris)
- Richard Adams - Watership Down (Chris - this is Chris' ERB!)
- HP Lovecraft - The Beast in the Cave (Chuck)
- Tolkien - The Hobbit (first full-length novel - Craig)
- Edgar Allen Poe - Tamerlane and other Poems (me) and Chuck added Poe's first short story was Manuscript Found in the Bottle
- Robert Bloch - The Lillie (Chuck)
- Lloyd Alexander - And Let The Credit Go (Todd couldn't help himself and burst out with, "that book su*ked!")
- Arthur C. Clark - Against the Fall of Night
- Heinlein - Lifeline (Chris asked and Bill had the answer at the ready knowing someone would ask)

* Bill then went on to give a summary of Lifeline. He told us it was about the ability to predict the longevity of someone by using a machine and shady insurance companies would then use this data to their benefits. Chris, for some bizarre reason, asked, "For real?" He thought insurance companies in real life actually used this technology from the book. Bill, sat quietly at first, took a few seconds, then responded with, "Oh that one is going in the write-up. Put it in." We all laughed uproariously at Chris' expense while he protested. We are still laughing.

We had a chat about phrenology...yes, the science which studies the relationships between a person's character and the morphology of the skull. Basically head touching. Todd was lecturing about General



Yamamoto having been a believer in this practice and that he had a phrenologist come in to do his thing during WWII. Bill quipped, "No wonder they were bombing everything! He was touching their heads!"

Chuck had a book with him, Dracula's Cookbook. Chuck told us it was full of recipes from Dracula's homeland. Bill was convinced one of the recipes was Oysters Ottoman. Todd was in deep pain at this point - lol.

Rod Serling, The Red Box (Todd) and so many others were discussed. Bill officially ended the meeting and we headed home still laughing at Chris.....

Good time. Join us next month for a discussion about teams/dream teams and team spirit SFSNNJ-style.
(AM)

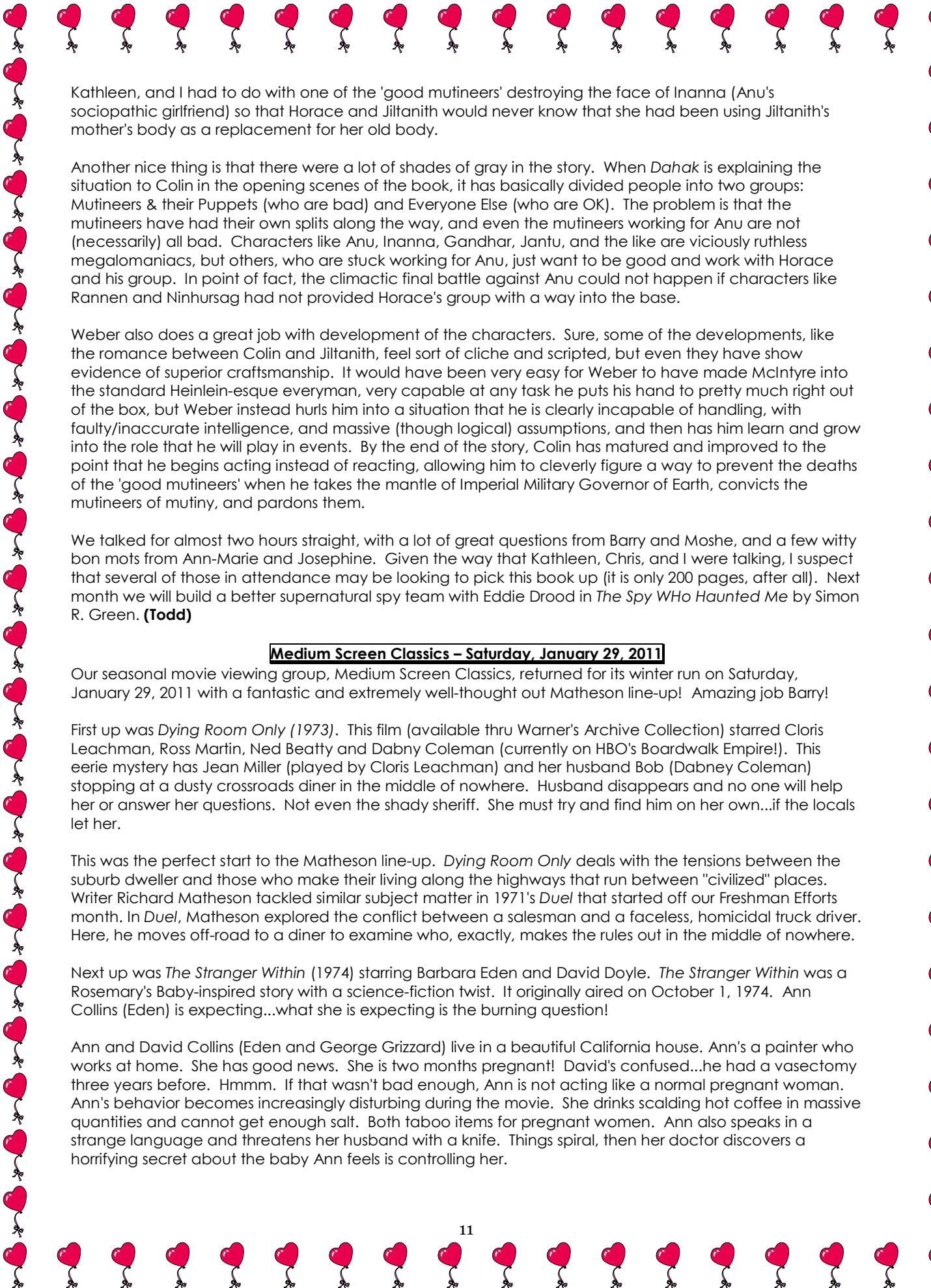
Modern Masters – Tuesday January 28, 2011

First, a thank you to all that made it out for the discussion in spite of some relatively foul weather. While it was nowhere near as bad as I was expecting, it is still gratifying to see that a bunch of folks braved the ice and snow to sit around with me and discuss a really fun book. In fact, at one point, I think that 100% of the attendees at the Borders Cafe had read the book!

The evening started with Kathleen and I in the Cafe having some coffee while we chatted about the weather and such other interesting things. Chris made it just in the nick of time, as I had quite literally just asked Kathleen what she thought of the book when he strolled up and had a seat. Chris and Kathleen were both eager to get to the discussion because they had enjoyed the book, and seemed pretty eager to talk about *Mutineers' Moon* by David Weber. Thus, as we slowly accreted members to the discussion, we slowly began to explain the story.

For those who did not read the book (other than the last page, that is), the discussion was interesting, as the premise of the book was that everything that we know from history is essentially true, however there is a big secret... no, it isn't the Illuminati, the Free Masons, or Lizard Men... the truth is that the reason there is a missing link is that modern man arrived on a big spaceship that has been masquerading as our Moon for 51,000 years. Wait, what?! That's right, 51,000 years ago Anu, Chief Engineer on the Utu-class battle planetoid *Dahak*, led a mutiny against the Captain of the ship. The Captain released poisoned gasses through the ship. The good news was that the loyal crew managed to make it to the escape pods in time, but the bad news was that the mutineers had control of the boat bay and took a bunch of Battleships to the surface. Realizing that they could not get back on to the ship the mutineers decided to destroy the loyalists escape pods and keep them from returning to *Dahak*. This left the ship in a bad position: its orders were to hold position until loyalists could re-board, and eliminate the mutineers. There was no way that *Dahak* could eliminate the mutineers as they were ensconced in Antarctica and destroying them would have killed off most of the loyalists, and so *Dahak* waited for the perfect moment when a loyalist would return. Meanwhile on the planet, Anu and his merry band forced the loyalists into hiding, hunting them down one by one. Most of the loyalists interbred with the Primitives on the Earth and civilization got a jump-start. Of course, we learn this over the course of the book, in the beginning, all we know is that NASA Astronaut Colin McIntyre has been kidnapped by *Dahak* (which has been pretending to be the Moon for 51,000 years, ever since it dropped the old moon into the sun and smeared crushed up lunar debris over its surface like stage makeup).

The book is an excellent read, and the main reason is that the story is very much centered on the characters involved, and the characters are very real. Weber does an amazing job of getting us to care about characters, even ones we only meet briefly, but is genuine enough in his narrative that he does not shy away from killing even the most well liked characters off. We discussed one way that Weber humanizes the characters, thanks in no small part to Ann Marie's reading the last few pages of the book, which was the use of quirks in the characters. Jiltaniith, the daughter of one of the 'good mutineers' who broke away from Anu when they realized that he was more than a bit of a psychopath, spoke in Shakespearean English the who time (she learned to speak English during that period and spent most of her 20's in Queen Elizabeth's court). Part of this was to highlight that she was different, but it also served as a subtle reminder of her stubbornness. Kathleen related a part of the book when Colin reconnects with his brother, the Forest Ranger, and subsequently gets Sean and his entire family killed. Even the somewhat minor issue of Horace and his extreme age were well respected as character attributes. Another scene discussed by Chris,



Kathleen, and I had to do with one of the 'good mutineers' destroying the face of Inanna (Anu's sociopathic girlfriend) so that Horace and Jiltanith would never know that she had been using Jiltanith's mother's body as a replacement for her old body.

Another nice thing is that there were a lot of shades of gray in the story. When *Dahak* is explaining the situation to Colin in the opening scenes of the book, it has basically divided people into two groups: Mutineers & their Puppets (who are bad) and Everyone Else (who are OK). The problem is that the mutineers have had their own splits along the way, and even the mutineers working for Anu are not (necessarily) all bad. Characters like Anu, Inanna, Gandhar, Jantu, and the like are viciously ruthless megalomaniacs, but others, who are stuck working for Anu, just want to be good and work with Horace and his group. In point of fact, the climactic final battle against Anu could not happen if characters like Rannen and Ninhursag had not provided Horace's group with a way into the base.

Weber also does a great job with development of the characters. Sure, some of the developments, like the romance between Colin and Jiltanith, feel sort of cliché and scripted, but even they have show evidence of superior craftsmanship. It would have been very easy for Weber to have made McIntyre into the standard Heinlein-esque everyman, very capable at any task he puts his hand to pretty much right out of the box, but Weber instead hurls him into a situation that he is clearly incapable of handling, with faulty/inaccurate intelligence, and massive (though logical) assumptions, and then has him learn and grow into the role that he will play in events. By the end of the story, Colin has matured and improved to the point that he begins acting instead of reacting, allowing him to cleverly figure a way to prevent the deaths of the 'good mutineers' when he takes the mantle of Imperial Military Governor of Earth, convicts the mutineers of mutiny, and pardons them.

We talked for almost two hours straight, with a lot of great questions from Barry and Moshe, and a few witty bon mots from Ann-Marie and Josephine. Given the way that Kathleen, Chris, and I were talking, I suspect that several of those in attendance may be looking to pick this book up (it is only 200 pages, after all). Next month we will build a better supernatural spy team with Eddie Drood in *The Spy Who Haunted Me* by Simon R. Green. **(Todd)**

Medium Screen Classics – Saturday, January 29, 2011

Our seasonal movie viewing group, Medium Screen Classics, returned for its winter run on Saturday, January 29, 2011 with a fantastic and extremely well-thought out Matheson line-up! Amazing job Barry!

First up was *Dying Room Only* (1973). This film (available thru Warner's Archive Collection) starred Cloris Leachman, Ross Martin, Ned Beatty and Dabny Coleman (currently on HBO's Boardwalk Empire!). This eerie mystery has Jean Miller (played by Cloris Leachman) and her husband Bob (Dabney Coleman) stopping at a dusty crossroads diner in the middle of nowhere. Husband disappears and no one will help her or answer her questions. Not even the shady sheriff. She must try and find him on her own...if the locals let her.

This was the perfect start to the Matheson line-up. *Dying Room Only* deals with the tensions between the suburb dweller and those who make their living along the highways that run between "civilized" places. Writer Richard Matheson tackled similar subject matter in 1971's *Duel* that started off our Freshman Efforts month. In *Duel*, Matheson explored the conflict between a salesman and a faceless, homicidal truck driver. Here, he moves off-road to a diner to examine who, exactly, makes the rules out in the middle of nowhere.

Next up was *The Stranger Within* (1974) starring Barbara Eden and David Doyle. *The Stranger Within* was a Rosemary's Baby-inspired story with a science-fiction twist. It originally aired on October 1, 1974. Ann Collins (Eden) is expecting...what she is expecting is the burning question!

Ann and David Collins (Eden and George Grizzard) live in a beautiful California house. Ann's a painter who works at home. She has good news. She is two months pregnant! David's confused...he had a vasectomy three years before. Hmmm. If that wasn't bad enough, Ann is not acting like a normal pregnant woman. Ann's behavior becomes increasingly disturbing during the movie. She drinks scalding hot coffee in massive quantities and cannot get enough salt. Both taboo items for pregnant women. Ann also speaks in a strange language and threatens her husband with a knife. Things spiral, then her doctor discovers a horrifying secret about the baby Ann feels is controlling her.

Number three was *The Night Strangler* (1973). This was the favorite of the line-up for most of us. *The Night Strangler* was the follow-up to the very successful *The Night Stalker* (1972). The two movies spawned a TV series the next year, *Kolchak: the Night Stalker*. Watching *The Night Strangler*, it's easy to see why Kolchak still has a cult following to this day.

In *The Night Strangler*, Kolchak (Darren McGavin) stalks a seemingly immortal serial killer targeting dancers in the Seattle area who pops up every twenty-one years for over 120 years. Reporter Carl Kolchak hasn't learned his lesson from his run in with a vampire in Vegas. He sees the signs: all of the victims had some of their spinal fluid drained, rotting flesh is found around the victims necks, their windpipes are crushed, and necks broken. Kolchak learns that similar killings have been occurring in the Seattle area every twenty-one years for over 100 years. He has to investigate even though he is told not to. Returning as Kolchak's beleaguered boss is Simon Oakland as Tony Vincenzo who warns Kolchak repeatedly to stop trying to pursue this story or it's both of their jobs. The trail leads to Seattle's underground city, which provides some great scenes! Kolchak winds up meeting the killer who is using the spinal fluid for an elixir, which has been keeping him alive. Can a trapped Kolchak stop the killer before he kills his final victim and disappears for another 21 years?! The creepy scenes, the creepy killer, the hilarious interplay between Kolchak and Vincenzo - perfect.

Rounding out the day was *Trilogy of Terror* (1975) starring Karen Black. This one has its own website: <http://www.trilogyofterror.com/>! From the website: "On Tuesday March 04 1975, ABC television premiered what was to become a very popular, iconic film in the annals of horror and suspense, "Trilogy Of Terror". Presented by famed director and producer Dan Curtis, "Trilogy Of Terror", was one of the few films on network television to carry the warning, "Due to mature subject matter, parental discretion advised". For it's time, "Trilogy Of Terror" was a very daring and graphic film."

Trilogy of Terror had Karen Black starring in three short stories, each with a different theme. Blackmail, revenge, split personalities, and evil demon dolls all find a place in one the stories. We found the film quite humorous and the once terrifying doll...really funny. We had a good time with this one, laughing and struck by the fact that Black got a beat down from a foot tall doll.

This was truly a fantastic Medium Screen Classics. All of the made-for-TV films were entertaining and showcased the creativity of Richard Matheson. **(AM)**

SFSNNJ Member Reviews Books, Movies, TV

The Mechanic - Gene McGrath

The below link gives the perfect summary of the new film "The Mechanic" - I found the film (and this clip) a fun, if implausible, super-violent, action-filled romp. What you see is what you get - Jason Statham, hmmm... being Jason Statham.

The Mechanic - Throwback Trailer <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stv1-po7mBw>

The Fighter – Chris Hasselkus

I just saw *The Fighter* earlier today. Mark Wahlberg's persona seemed a little too intelligent for the role of a boxer, but with that said he was still good. The supporting cast were great, especially Christain Bale as his brother / trainer. Grade: B+

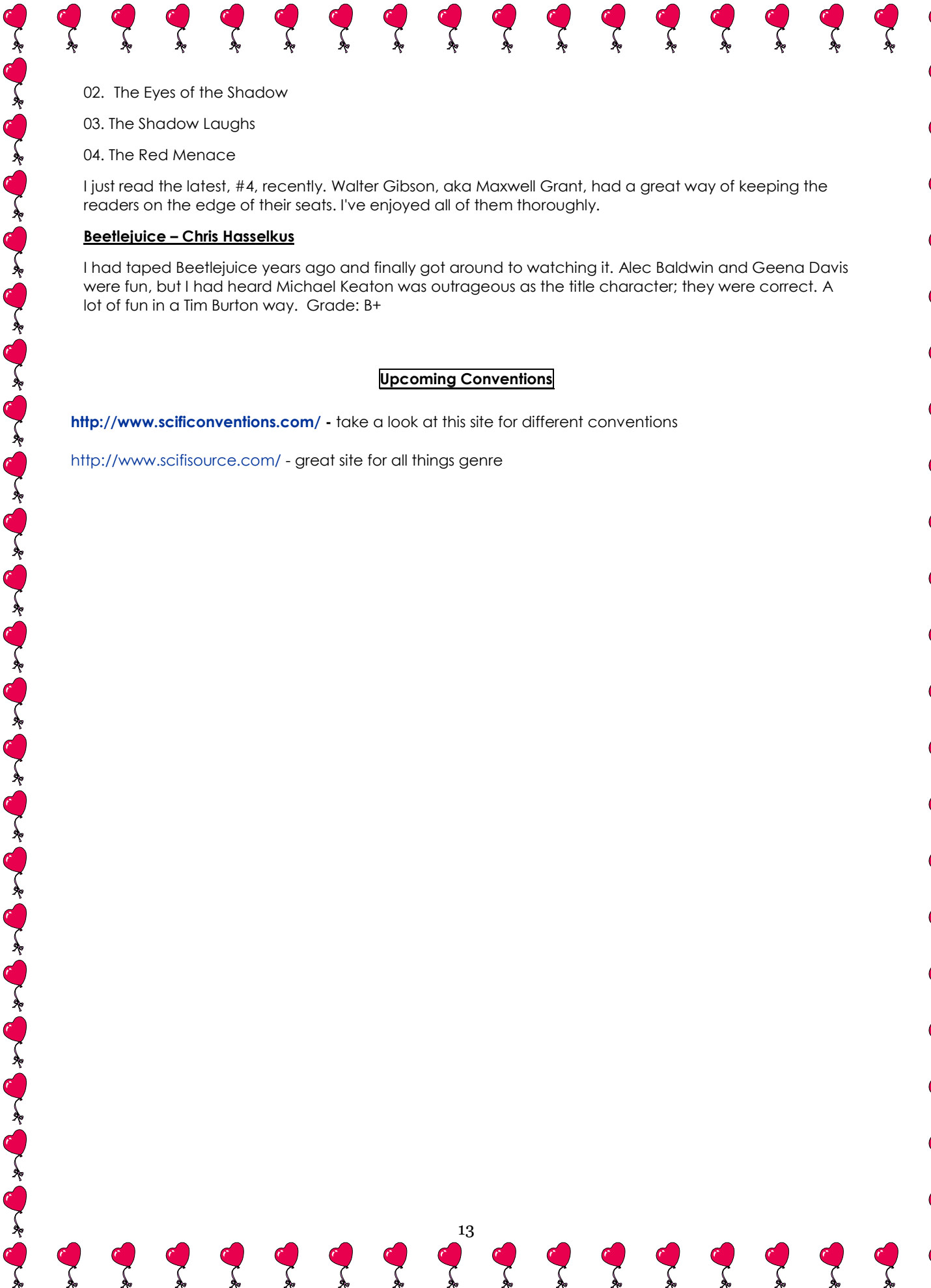
True Grit – Chris Hasselkus

When my brother and his wife came up from Virginia to visit recently, they picked the Coen Brothers *True Grit* to see. I was pleasantly surprised how good it was. The young actress Hailee Steinfeld in the Kim Darby role was great. It was interesting to see a Coen Brother film that wasn't weird. Grade: A

The Shadow #4 – Chris Hasselkus

I had been reading *The Shadow* paperbacks I have in order:

01. *The Living Shadow*



02. The Eyes of the Shadow

03. The Shadow Laughs

04. The Red Menace

I just read the latest, #4, recently. Walter Gibson, aka Maxwell Grant, had a great way of keeping the readers on the edge of their seats. I've enjoyed all of them thoroughly.

Beetlejuice – Chris Hasselkus

I had taped Beetlejuice years ago and finally got around to watching it. Alec Baldwin and Geena Davis were fun, but I had heard Michael Keaton was outrageous as the title character; they were correct. A lot of fun in a Tim Burton way. Grade: B+

Upcoming Conventions

<http://www.scificonventions.com/> - take a look at this site for different conventions

<http://www.scifisource.com/> - great site for all things genre