



## October 2011 Newsletter

**Battle of the Monsters...** Calling all monsters! All Monsters Great and Small. What is the most important thing in a monster story? No, it is NOT the hero, it is the MONSTER! From Frankenstein's horrible creature to the Lair of the White Wyrm, it is the beastly horrors from below that make us squinge and squirm, and scare the living snot out of us. All the great horror archetypes, their similarities and differences. This month, we've got them all. Who...or what...will emerge as the ultimate Big Bad?

**That's Science Fiction**  
**Tuesday October 4, 2011 - 7p**  
Hillsdale Public Library  
**Monster Squad (1987)**

**Face the Fiction**  
**Saturday October 8, 2011 - 7:30p**  
Well Read Books  
**Battle of the Monsters Panel**  
\*Full details on p. 2  
\*Note start time

**Suspense Central**  
**Monday October 10, 2011, 2010 - 8p**  
Panera Bread Restaurant  
165 Rt. 64 West  
Paramus, NJ - 201.368.0752  
**God's Demon by Wayne Barlowe**

**Drawing A Crowd**  
**Wednesday October 12, 2011 - 7p**  
Fantasy Games & Hobbies  
9 Miller Rd - Mahwah  
**Monsters in the Comic Universe**  
[www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com](http://www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com)

**Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group**  
**Wednesday October 19, 2011 - 7p**  
Mahwah Library - downstairs  
100 Ridge Road  
Mahwah, NJ 07460  
This group discusses the world of cinema and entertainment. If it deals with entertainment, our Master of Entertainment Moderator will cover it.

**Rogue Trader: Wolves in the Fold**  
**Saturday October 22, 2011**  
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 October 25, 2011 - 8p**  
Wayne Public Library  
**Monsters in genre**  
[www.waynepubliclibrary.org](http://www.waynepubliclibrary.org)

**Modern Masters**  
**Tuesday October 28, 2011 - 8p**  
Panera Bread Restaurant  
1300 Rt. 17 North - Ramsey Square Shopping Center Ramsey, NJ 07446  
**Sense, Sensibilities and Sea Monsters**

Please visit [www.sfsnnj.com](http://www.sfsnnj.com) for full details

**A look ahead: November's theme is Rule Britannia: The New British Invasion**  
Anglophiles rejoice, for this month we delve into the realm of a new British Empire... at least, in Genre Fiction.

- That's Science Fiction! - Dead of Night (1945)
- Suspense Central - Shades of Grey by Jasper Fforde
- Modern Masters - Changeless by Gail Carriger
- Face the Fiction - Bridge the Gap Panel with Alaya Dawn Johnson

**SFSNNJ Face the Fiction presents:  
Battle of the Monsters panel**

**When:** Saturday, October 8, 2011

**Where:** Well Read Books, 425 Lafayette Avenue, Hawthorne, NJ 07506,  
(973) 949-3440

**About our panel:** Keith DeCandido, Jonathan Maberry and Mary SanGiovani

This month we welcome a panel of 'monster' experts:

**Jonathan Maberry**(<http://jonathanmaberry.com>, <http://jonathanmaberry.com/media-2/biography>) - New York Times bestselling, multiple Bram Stoker Award-winning author, magazine feature writer, playwright, content creator and writing teacher/lecturer of more than 900 articles, sixteen nonfiction books, novels, numerous short stories, poetry, song lyrics, video scripts, and two plays.

**Keith DeCandido** (<http://www.sff.net/people/Krad>, <http://www.sff.net/people/krad/kradbio.htm>)- International best-selling author Keith R.A. DeCandido was born, raised, educated, and still lives in the Bronx. His Mom and Dad fed him a steady diet of Robert A. Heinlein, Ursula K. Le Guin, J.R.R. Tolkien, and P.G. Wodehouse, which corrupted him for life & instilling in him a great love of science fiction, fantasy, and silly British humor. Keith has published over thirty novels, most in the realm of media tie-ins, the majority in the worlds of Star Trek. Keith has written novels, novellas, comic books, short stories, and eBooks, and also edited several anthologies.

**Mary San Giovanni** ([www.marysangiovanni.com](http://www.marysangiovanni.com)): Bram Stoker Award Nominated, Lavinia Kohl Award for Excellence in Literature winner. She believes in God, the Devil, angels, demons, ghosts, fairy folk, aliens, karma, ESP, telepathy, worm holes, other dimensions, Atlantis, the Bermuda Triangle, love at first sight, Roswell, monsters, and the American Dream, because life's too short and boring without them.

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

## September's Theme: No Man's land: A Post-Apocalyptic World

### Meeting recaps

#### That's Science Fiction! Tuesday, September 6, 2011:

*Daybreakers* was the selection for the month. Because of dealing with vampires, some of the scenes were rather graphic, but it seemed to be an overall good production. Bill Wagner was the only attendee that had previously viewed the film. It was suggested that we cut short the

evening in that heavy rainfall was once again making driving hazardous. We then stopped the film and left the library, whose parking lot was beginning to flood. The safety of our members is always of utmost importance. Chris Hasselkus

#### Face the Fiction Saturday, September 10, 2011 guest Jeff Somers

Much fun was had Saturday, 9/10 at Face the Fiction with Jeff Somers. His wife, the hilarious Duchess, offered input as well (running gag of the night...."awkward").

Jeff read from the final book, *The Final Evolution*, in the awesome Avery Cates series that began with *The Electric Church*. If you haven't read this series it is highly recommended. Dark, gritty, fast-paced and just plain fun - this series explores a post-apocalyptic world where even the "good guys" aren't so good. The main character, Avery Cates, is unrepentant, unapologetic and manages to make you like him regardless. After reading his selected piece, Jeff had a Q & A session for well over an hour. Jeff even provided some details about upcoming work and new directions for possible series.

Before Todd posts his version of the event I have to get in out there that this time a certain 'have to be first in

liner'...no names...Todd!...outdid himself! He pre-purchased a STACK of books, had them waiting on a chair and as soon as the meeting was over ran up for signing!! He didn't even cut the line this time - he completely avoided it. He is wily that one. LOL. And me, I got distracted...yes, I know, easily done....Mary Ann will confirm it was the calendars...LOL...the calendars I tell you...and didn't get my books signed! Which just means of course that Jeff and the Duchess will have to come back....subtle hint...subtle hint.

Here's a blog update from our guest Jeff, complete with pictures: <http://jeffreysomers.com/blather/>

Thank you Jeff and Duchess for a wonderful event and a lot of fun. Thanks also for the great pictures and blog.

Thanks to Bill and Mary Ann Skees for a great venue, great coffee and hosting this event. (AM)

#### Suspense Central - Green Angel/Green Witch Monday, September 12, 2011

This time we're doing something a little different - rather than one recap, we have 4! Seems everyone had a great time. Take a look:

Aurelia did a good job of discussing not one but two books for Suspense Central - *Green Angel* and *Green Witch* by Alice Hoffman. Many great observations were made about the books. It was interesting to note that most preferred book one - *Green Angel* citing that the book had more direction. Alesia made the observation that the books invoked the feeling of a fairytale and was more fantasy, lore. Some parallels to 9/11 were observed as well. A fun meeting with much discussion - hopefully next month we will once again have the room to ourselves! (Ann-Marie)

The discussion was very enjoyable and I liked how some people really enjoyed these books (as I did) and some people disliked them immensely. Such diversity makes

these discussions wonderful. Personally, I saw the style of writing much like a Picasso painting -- not meant to be a slice of "real life" but rather, "stylized" to stir the emotions. :-) And I especially thought Aurelia did a wonderful job despite the difficult situation of that rather loud group sharing the room with us!!! (Alesia)

Lively discussion. Just about everyone had read the two stories, with most feeling they were worthwhile. Fun evening. (Chris Hasselkus)

Alice Hoffman would be proud. Why? Because not only did almost everyone read the book(s), but even little Timea helped in the discussion! How awesome is that?!

On a slightly more serious and less adorable note: Monday night we met at the Panera in Paramus to discuss *Green Angel* and *Green Witch* for Suspense Central. These books were chosen by Aurelia for the Post-Apocalyptic

theme partially because they were incredibly popular and partially because they are incredibly short. So short, in fact, that Barry was enticed to read the books this month! I would hazard that even Timea read the books!

We started the discussion outside in the main eating area of the Panera, but quickly removed ourselves to the Meeting Room when the Quilting group broke up. In spite of some sort of Basketball Coaching Conference going on in the background (loudly and forcefully in the background I might add). Getting ourselves situated, we quickly got down to the business of discussing the books.

Starting with *Green Angel*, we spoke at length of the style and substance of the book. This discussion was hampered by Todd's misremembering of the structure of the book, but I still maintain that I like my interpretation better than everyone else's. By any road, we eventually made our way into the structure of the story, which in the case of *Green Angel* was less a linear plot-driven story, and more a sort of dream-like half-fable told in strangely lyrical and poetic prose. The story features *Green*, a young girl who survives the destruction of the nearby city. *Green*, suffering from blindness due to the ashes from the firestorm that swept the city, is mostly blinded, but develops the ability to discern the nature of objects through touch (also, she makes things grow). Since her entire family was in the city selling vegetables from their farm, she is the lone survivor and goes about the business of survival, with the help of several animals that she rescues and her sister's pet dog Onion, as well as the assistance of the little old lady from the orchard down the lane. Neither Orchard nor Garden survived the conflagration, but *Green* makes do and slowly heals herself over the course of the book, eventually falling in love with the wounded and burned mute boy she calls Diamond.

The second book, *Green Witch*, is still written in the odd style, but has more of a plot and story as *Green*, who has made a name for herself as the person who writes everybody's stories down on her special paper, discovers that the girl that she thought had died in the previous story, Heather, is alive, and has been captured by the Horde, the group that destroyed the City. Also, Diamond may be a captive as well, or may be part of the Horde himself. *Green*, accompanied by Heather's brother, who has become the Collector, goes to visit several different

women who the locals believe to be witches and who have some odd supernatural powers, and eventually infiltrate the prison and free everyone before Heather destroys the Horde's weapons with a shot from a cannon.

On the whole, the majority of us liked the first book quite well. The style was a bit odd and it definitely was not something that most of us would have picked up normally, however we all still muddled through it. Kathleen, who read the book on September 10th, found it very evocative to read on the anniversary of the attack on the Twin Towers, and several of us found it equally hard to feel comfortable discussing in the shadow of the 9/11 anniversary. The second book, though, got somewhat more mixed plaudits, with Aurelia expressing dissatisfaction in that the story should have been longer and the style was not as well suited to the plot as the first book was. Ann Marie asked us all to grade the book and so we went around like so:

Todd gave the series a B+, and liked his interpretation of the story better.

Kathleen likewise gave the series a B+, though she admitted to thinking that *Green Angel* was an A+ and *Green Witch* was more like a B or B- so it was an aggregate B+ overall.

Chris gave the books a B, stating that the style was a bit strange but otherwise the story was lovely.

Barry felt that B- was closer to the mark because, while serviceable, the story was just too thin to make up for the overly flowery prose.

Josephine gave the books a B, though with the Basketball coaches' yammering I could not readily hear her review.

Ann Marie gave *Green Witch* a D, she had not read *Green Angel*, not realizing that both were on the menu, but stated that the book was a bit pretentious and the style was a bit too abstracted.

Aurelia felt the book were more in the solid B range, because their appeal is very narrowly focused on 15 year old girls.

Mike thought that the discussion sounded pretty cool.

Timea said Hey! a lot, and also gurgled a bit while playing with the lights and Todd's soda cup.

Tune in next month when we discuss *God's Demon* by the talented artist Wayne Barlowe! (Todd)

#### **Drawing a Crowd: No Man's Land: A Post-Apocalyptic World**

Drawing a Crowd gathered Wednesday night to discuss Post Apocalyptic Scenarios in the comic book universe. Moderators Haywood and Mike seamlessly combined to provide an entertaining and fun meeting that ranged from Planet of the Apes to War of the Worlds, from written notes to visual scenes.

The topic this month was No Man's Land: Post Apocalyptic Worlds. Mike and Haywood did an outstanding job of presenting relevant information to attendees. Newcomer Conner was treated to a very cohesive and fun time.

Mike started the meeting by reading a brief paragraph about Planet of the Apes #11, Outlines of Tomorrow: A

Chronology of the Planet of the Apes, essay by Jim Whitmore.

Barry took a moment to explain to newcomer Conner how the meeting works, what to expect and Mike added that at Barry's request, Mike added the specific comic issue, art, editor, etc to his notes.

Back to Planet of the Apes. Mike read the paragraph that set up the background of the series of films and movies people are familiar with. The time-line began in 1991 with the events of Conquest of the Planet of the Apes concluding and Caesar becoming head of the Ape rebellion and ended in 3975 where the events of the first film begin. Mike and Barry took turns reading the various issue blurbs from issues #11, #1 - 4, 6 + 8, 5.

While Mike and Barry were reading, Haywood corresponded displaying the matching comic book covers on the monitor to the paragraphs. The covers were beautifully drawn and added much to the readings.

When the Planet of the Apes concluded, Haywood took a moment to introduce the character Kamandi: the Last Boy on Earth. Kamandi rides a giant grasshopper and was introduced in the early 70's. Mike thought around 70, 71. This was a character Jack Kirby brought to fruition before jumping ship for the rival. Kamandi was relevant because Haywood had an episode from the series Batman the Brave and the Bold entitled Last Bat on Earth that had Kamandi co-starring with Batman and fighting Apes, specifically Gorilla Grod. Always fun to watch cartoons!

Next up was War of the Worlds...and Todd took over reading...enter mayhem. It started off really well. Todd read a brief paragraph, Amazing Adventures #18 featuring War of the Worlds. The paragraph introduces you to Killraven, a character fighting the Martian invaders. So far, so good...Mike read a few more paragraphs...Todd took over again...it was good while it lasted. Todd's reading about the creature Grok started it. Todd felt the character a tad creepy. The Mint Julep character really did him in and the giant anteater pushed

him headfirst over the edge into the abyss of silliness we never quite rebounded from.

Barry felt a more reverent reader was needed but decided to give Todd another go. Todd didn't even finish the next sentence. He used his best "serious" voice and everything! However, serious voice could not compete with "a sea-spawned mutant which looked as much like an owl and a pinecone as it did a lobster and a jellyfish or sea anemone." That was it for Todd as Barry lamented, "You failed in the first sentence!"

Haywood continued to brave the wilds and masterfully displayed the corresponding covers without missing a beat. Mike, ever gallant, gave a Todd a chance at redemption. Oddly, Todd felt that "monster bats assisting rodents" made sense...go figure.

Mike, Barry, Todd and Chris took turns reading. Haywood continued to show awesome covers that we would discuss. Todd did well...relatively...for several paragraphs. Then it happened...he started reading a paragraph that opened with "G'Rath was a land-crawling plesiosaur that impregnated a human"...yeah...he spent the rest of the meeting in time out while using the excuse, "Why do I always get the silly ones!"

In between reading and viewing comic covers, Mike, Haywood and Barry did an excellent job of explaining the history of the material at hand and took time to point out artists and give attendees background and other work the artists did. I always enjoy the trivia and at this meeting the trivia was plentiful and quite interesting. It's impressive to be presented with how much those three know about the topic!

Mike and Haywood wrapped things up. Chris asked Conner what he learned from the meeting. Conner responded with, "I learned that H.G. Wells is turning in his grave." Gotta love it! This turned into a brief free-form discussion about Godzilla, manga & anime and Japan getting destroyed. Lots of fun. We then reluctantly led Todd out of time-out. Join us next month for Battle of the Monsters. (AM)

### Films to Come Wednesday, September 21, 2011

Films to Come met last night to discuss all things entertainment - movies, TV, and then some. Nothing could stop our Master of Entertainment, Barry - rainy weather, being under the weather himself or even....Bill...lol!

Running gag for the night was Todd "*very thoughtfully*" interjecting bon mots...of hilarity.

Barry was back on track and had a thorough format for the evening's meeting. He managed to fit a bazillion things into the two hour time allotment while keeping the movie heathens at bay. He switched things up for an interesting blend of topics and kept things moving at a lively pace.

Barry opened the meeting with a brief run down on "What Theaters Are Showing." This wasn't just any old movie in any old theater but the various special event-

type movies being shown in local area theaters...Big Screen Classics, Loews, Paramount...and the special events each is having (i.e. the Sci Fi Spectacular of Lafayette in October).

Next up was a discussion on Ebert Presents at the Movies. This is a weekly show that covers topics similar to those Barry covers at FTC. Barry talked about Classics From the Vault - episodes on the show. Some Classics From the Vault episodes were: 1978, Movies That Changed the Movies, Mel Brooks, Movies Oscars Ignored, and the most recent episode, Women in Danger. Barry had a picture showing Jamie Lee Curtis in the movie Halloween. The episode pointed out that that movie was "women in danger" done well, but the 'slasher' trend that followed was not. Barry read a list of movies showcasing women in danger done wrong...way wrong (i.e. Hotel Hell), and the birth of the phrase "final girl" in film.

Next we moved onto the infamous list - this month Barry once again combined his list with details from the corresponding Entertainment Weekly issue. He tackled August, September and October, allowing any newcomers to add their input.

August movies were discussed briefly with the corresponding Summer Preview Entertainment Weekly:

- *The Help* - Gene saw the film and described it as "nice" and enjoyed the film without having read the book.
- *30 Minutes or Less* - While Barry found the film funny, he did think making a comedy about what was in reality a not so funny situation was distasteful.
- *Our Idiot Brother* - Gene saw this one and labeled it "kinda sweet".
- *The Debt* - Once again Gene offered input...at first not recalling what the film was about. When he did recall, he said he would recommend the film.
- *Fright Night* - Gene had seen this one and enjoyed it calling it entertaining and fun. I enjoyed the film as well particularly the way some of the situations were updated, however as much as I found the film to be entertaining I still prefer the original. Barry still thinks both versions are "meh".

September movies were reviewed with the corresponding Fall Preview EW:

Movies like *Moneyball*, *Abduction*, *Dream House*, *50/50* and a few other films not yet released, had descriptions read and members made predictions about success of the films.

- *Contagion* - Bill saw this one. He liked that the film showed the progression of the disease and that it was logical, but felt it had no big pay-off, the disease was the character. Barry saw it and explained his current state of illness as being the movies fault, "I saw it and now I'm sick!" Of course, Todd "*very thoughtfully*" told him not to worry cause he'd be dead in two days. This then did lead to a good discussion and a recommend from Todd about an HBO film, *The Colony*.
- *Dolphin Tale* - Bill asked what other films the producer had made. Barry very patiently pointed out that Bill had the list right in front of him. Bill claimed he wasn't looking at the list because he wanted to "get Barry involved." Hmmm, specious at best. Barry's rejoinder, "Finally! The truth! Bill can't read!" Once again, Todd "*very thoughtfully*" added, "No wonder you have so many books but never seemed particularly well read." Todd, Todd, Todd...he must love that time out chair.
- *Warrior* - Todd "*very thoughtfully*" told us how he had seen many topless pictures for the film but not the film. Barry had seen the film...under false pretense...he thought it was based on a true story. Duped!

Before moving onto October films, Barry took a brief detour and read the Box Office info lists. All Time USA and International movies making or not making bank. Interesting to learn Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows made #1 on both lists.

Back to the list and upcoming October films. Barry predicted *Real Steel* to be a dud because it "looks awful"...don't hold back Barry, how do feel about this one lol! Todd took umbrage to the upcoming *Johnny English Reborn*.

Barry asked if anyone had any movies they wanted to discuss and we quickly wrapped things up and got the room back in tip top shape as it was closing time.

Very fun night and enjoyed the slight variations to the format. It's always fun to switch things up and this meeting hit all the highlights.

**Modern Masters: special guest author Hank Quense, Friday, September 23, 2011**

A special Modern Masters was held at Well Read Books on Friday, 9/23/2011. Instead of discussing a book and it's author, as is usually done, we had guest Hank Quense as a speaker. He's into writing fantasy, especially taking works by Shakespeare and writing parodies of them. His main influence was Tolkien; he said he would have used hobbits as his main characters, but it was copyrighted, so he used half-pints instead. Mr. Quense really enjoyed himself and thanked us for having him. The feeling was mutual - a good time was had by all attendees. (Chris Hasselkus)

Thanks Chris  
I enjoyed myself. Good conversation is at a premium these days. Thanks for having me. I hope to see all of you in the future. (Hank Quense)

Before I get into my long and rambling account of the special guest appearance of local author Hank Qesne, I would like to take a moment to thank our gracious new hosts for Modern Masters: the wonderful folks at Well Read Books. As always, Bill Skees and the gang at the store did a great job from setup to music (see, I did not forget the music), and I hope that they had as much fun as we did!

Additionally, I would like to apologize for the delays in posting this and the write up for Rogue Trader, it was a crazy weekend, what with both the Giants and Jets playing on Sunday :)

Now, on with the show!

Many of us arrived early on this past moist and misty Friday 9/23 to our favorite purveyors of paperback addiction: Well Read Books and began to discuss the various goings on about the world while members slowly trickled in to the store. Around 7pm (the new, earlier start time for Modern Masters) we sat down with Hank and began a fun and earnest discussion of his Science Fiction and Fantasy humor work.

Hank began with, of all things, a handout. Now, I know what you are thinking: wow, this harkens back to the early days of Modern Masters when Todd would bring copious handouts and regale us with tons of printed paper that we would throw out at the end of the night. Unlike my handouts, Hank's handout was actually very cool and contained a nifty web showing the relations of all his work to one another, from his Faux News Network blog posts to his Zaftan work to Gundarland. Cool stuff indeed, and it allowed us to really drill down and ask a lot of questions. Being Moderator, I of course, led the charge on that particular front (you have to know these things when you are King, after all).

**Zaftan Entrepreneurs:** Hank started us off with his recent moves into the realm of Science Fiction, indicating that he had originally had an idea for doing a pseudo-Victorian/Steampunkish story in his Gundarland milieu. Somehow, and even he seems unsure as to how it happened, the squid-like race of Zaftans arrived on the scene to turn it on its head as they used all their guile, cunning, and vicious temperament to steal the resources they desired from the folks of Gundarland. The idea for the Zaftans and their society and 'moral' outlook occupied a good deal of time and discussion, and we all shared a number of belly laughs over the silly squiddies!

**Gundarland:** The quintessential comedic Fantasy series by Hank, it started out in short stories and eventually grew into larger formats like Novellas and even Novels. Hank took his love of Tolkien and Fantasy and injected a humorous tone because, "We get un-funny fantasy on the news all the time, I thought we needed something to differentiate it from that..." There was a lot of discussion of Pratchett included, if not endemic, to the conversation, but Hank (much like several of the others in the audience) did not find Piers Anthony's Xanth series to be all that great or noteworthy.

**Writing Guide:** Hank has a guide to new fantasy/fiction writers out there, and considering that both he and I tend to think on the same lines (though he writes to music where I prefer silence when writing fiction) I would recommend it. One thing he cautioned is to always know where the story is going to end. Allowing a story to grow organically is fine, but you really need to know what you are working towards. Also, Appendices and Universe Bibles are great tools, as are flow-charting tools. While did disagree somewhat on whether prologues were necessary, we did agree that they were only a detriment when they give away important information or reveal that characters would survive certain death/grave peril.

**Questions and Answers:** While I would totally take all the credit for never shutting up and asking all the questions, I will readily admit that some of the better questions came from the rest of the gathered gang of group members. Kathleen asked about whether Hank had thought about specifically tailoring the Gundarland stories to YA, which Hank said that he had not really thought about it, but he supposed that the stories were YA friendly enough to get by in a pinch. Aurelia asked a few questions about story structure and plotting, as well as a brace of important questions regarding Amazon and Smashwords for online publishing which led to a lengthy discussion of the ins and outs of eBooks and Amazon's inability to ever remove anything from their database, ever. Chris asked about inspirations and writers that Hank really enjoys, and this led us to a discussion of the litigiousness of the Tolkien estate (he has a race of short folk similar to Hobbits that he cannot call Hobbits lest

he risk the ire of Christopher Tolkien). Mark asked a few questions about the Faux News Networks blogs that Hank writes mocking the news. Hank and I talked sports and other topics. It was an all around great night.

We wrapped up the Q&A around 8:40p so folks could buy books and get them personalized, and then we stood around chatting. Next month will likely be a month where we do a post-event Dinerthon, but this month some of us

were dead on our feet and looking to get home lest we fall asleep at the wheel :)

Thanks again, to all the folks who made Friday a lot of fun! Join us at Well Read Books on October 28 at 7p as we discuss *Sense and Sensibility and Seamonsters!* which is available for purchase through our fantastic hosts. (Todd)

### Heroes & Rogues, Saturday, September 24, 2011 by Todd Ehrenfels

#### Chapter 17: Frozen Fears

**From the Journals of Wencisia Tremnar, Executive Officer of the *Lady Malbec*, 602.869.M38**

Yois. We have been stuck in this system more times than I dare count now, and each time it has presented new problems and new potential for disaster for our House. The frozen resort planet is seat to a luxurious manse appropriated when we confiscated the assets of Otto Ulbrexis more than a year ago, and the changes wrought on the planet and the system as it stabilizes under Imperial rule could not be more evident. Sadly that rule may be responsible for introducing a rot that would never have grown here had the Empire not returned to the Lupus Cluster.

Having gained all we could from TASU on Fortnight, Liana felt it would be better to await a calmer time to leave the system in pursuit of more profitable goals. Returning yet again to Yois itself, we undertook a series of additional investigations into the activities of our traitorous kinsmen in the system. After negotiating a rewarding proposal with the Warehouse Master of the Yolinda Port Authority, we learned that the shipment of fifty 1-Tonne containers had been routed to a number of households across Yois, with thirty of the containers destined for one family: the Victorians. Suspecting the worst from these shipments, Liana paid a call upon Governor Militant van der Brune and begged his leave to intercept the shipments and see what our vile cousins were up to. True to his word, and likely nervous at the way in which we have been shoring up his regime which could be pulled out without a second thought crippling his ability to effectively Govern his own world (mental note: Governor Militant Feradin Tremnar has a nice ring to it), van der Brune quickly provided us letters of marque to go forth and deal with the convoy.

Brigadier Shire, ever the pragmatist, was happy to oblige, but could only spare two of the Stormhawks that we had placed on loan to him. When pressed he explained that the danger in sending more than that away was that it might embolden the guerrillas, who he suspected had his camp and landing fields under constant surveillance.

With six assault shuttles at his command, he continued, he could immediately respond in force any time the Commonwealth loyalists tried to pop their heads over the snow and smash them flat with some units in reserve with which to strike at any other villains who happened to try to take advantage of the deployments of the first of his flying groups. With only four shuttles, he could try to respond, but if they hit more than two places in sufficient force, he would have to let one or more of the attacking forces disengage without being able to respond, an action that could erode all the progress that he has made over the last eight months. Alequintus and Gaspar quickly volunteered to fly some of the Aquila Landers from the *Lady Malbec* in support, if the Brigadier would provide a third squad to put in the landers. Shire assented and our small formation of Aquilas and Stormhawks struck out for where the convoy was believed to be heading.

Meanwhile back at our estate, Domenica performed a broad scan of the area and felt the presence of malign creatures in the distance. Broadcasting a warning to our flight crews, Lilith commanded that she, Ramhat, and Jacob begin scanning as aggressively as possible. Once their group was in sight of the convoy, they ordered the convoy to surrender for inspection, but when the convoy looked like they were taking too long to comply, Lilith ordered Alequintus and Gaspar to open fire with their Autocannons. The light Civilian ground vehicles were no match for the massive ordnance, and one slewed across the road, upending itself and its cargo while the other erupted in an actinic fireball! Concerned lest the creatures that Domenica had psychically espied get loose, Gaspar Vox-ed up to the *Lady Malbec* to perform a Lance strike on the convoy. No match for the anti-ship weaponry raining down from the skies, all that remained of the convoy was a crater with a glowing purple pool. Alequintus and Gaspar quickly circled around to strafe the pool, but the pool appeared to be some manner of Warp spawn itself and used malign magics to down Alequintus' Aquila. A battle erupted between the downed Aquila crew and the daemons emerging from the pool, and the scrum continued on until the second Aquila was forced to land. We pray that the threat has been annihilated, but we will be providing the location to

Inquisitor Mandragorin that he may properly purge the area of even the last hints of taint.

Proceeding to the Victarion mansion, we uncovered a number of Chaos symbols and cultists among the staff, and certain knowledge that the masters of the house were absent, but planned to return when the shipment was closer to arriving. Strangely, it seems as though the cultists had not managed to take the entire staff over, though that may not be entirely true and only the Inquisitor will be able to say for certain, it being beyond our certain knowledge in any event. We did manage to discover some friends, allies, and enemies of Walter Victarion, current head of the household, and we determined to discover as much as we could from both Victarion's townhouse and from any friends or enemies he might have in Yolinda.

We returned to Yolinda and placed the Guardsmen that had accompanied us on our foray to the Victarion estate, as well as our prisoners, under orders not to leave the Barracks area or discuss the raid with anyone, and had Brigadier Shire quarantine them just in case. Gaspar and Alequintus remained behind with the Troopers to ensure that the quarantine was observed. Meanwhile, Jacob, Domenica, Samuel, Lorn, Lilith, and I investigated the Victarion town house in Yolinda.

Having determined that nobody was in residence, we broke into the building and proceeded to investigate. Other than a few interesting books, the only item containing any useful intelligence was Walter Victarion's desk. The desk contained a sophisticated setup, and I would love to replicate the functionality, though the design was too obviously Commonwealth in origin to be appealing as a piece of proper furniture. After cracking the security protocols on the device like a thinly shelled egg (who uses D35k as a password to their own desk?!), Samuel began the process of downloading every scrap of information available onto dataslates and his servo skull. The information was divided into useful and handy parcels for us by the ingenious cogitator.

**Family** - Detailed the Victarion Family and the current progeny of Walter Victarion, who has never married. It indicates that one of Walter's children, Jonah Random, is next in line for the family fortune as he is considered by Walter to be the most promising and competent of the children, though he is one of the middle children of fifteen. Beatrix Forn is also listed, and indications exist that she may be a leader among the Yois guerrillas.

**Trade** - Detailed accounts of shipment investments between a variety of ports, but mostly focusing on Business Mission spur. The Victarions headquartered their private corporate interests on Yois, likely due to the lax banking regulations, and promoted trade and commerce, investing in Commonwealth mercantile free traders throughout the cluster. The last entries are for the time that Imperial forces cut off trade to Yois,

though there are some recent notes about doing business with a Captain August.

**Manufacturing** - Mostly deals with the family's manufacturing interests on Ope'Diar. They are major stakeholders in the Tiven-Ope'Diar-Rilus Combine with a massive commercial interest in the munitions factory on Ope'Diar.

**Pharmaceutical** - Details a large scale research operation on Kalapana, independent of the Crier Pharmaceuticals research stations. The station was apparently being used to test a vaccine for the deadly Snow Plague, though with no outbreaks in nearly 2,000 years it seems odd to research such a thing. It also would imply that an active culture of the Snow Plague may be present on Kalapana, in which case it is a good thing that travel to the surface is strictly forbidden.

**Estate** - Provided information on the management of the various properties owned by the Victarion family. Not terribly informative, but it may provide insight into the Estate itself.

**Social** - Detailed Walter Victarion's social calendar including parties and relationships. Allied families included Smithsen and Pauliton, as well as Garman, Hunter, and Ido. These families are the names of the families that took possessions of the remaining parcels from the Tremnar shipment at the spaceport. It is likely that Victarion may be visiting with one of these families as there is no evidence that he is using this town house at this time. Another important name was a family that appeared to have antagonized the Victarions: the Ralstons.

Determined to see about gaining an ally against the Victarions, we sought to contact the Ralston Family. We had invited Franz Ralston and his family to one of our prior gala events, and he seemed to have made some impression on Sarvus, though I am not entirely sure in what capacity as he did not really elaborate on his contact with the worthy. The gentleman who answered the door to the Ralston home identified himself as Jeremiah Ralston, master of the residence, and bade us enter that we might discuss things more civilly. When pressed as to why he answered the door instead of a servant, he replied, "They were doing important things, and I wasn't." A statement that elicited a bark of laughter and an admission of bonhomie from Lorn. We discussed a few matters with Jeremiah, and commented that his choice of decor, featuring Imperial Aquilas and Thunderbolt sigils from the earliest days of the Empire. This of course, brought about possibly the most stunning revelation of the night.

+++ The following passages have been redacted by order of Inquisitor Paulus Segovia of the Ordo Fidei, by his hand and seal 101.743,M41 +++

A robed and hooded figure emerged from the next room, a figure approximately three meters in height, and large

enough to dominate the room. After a signal from Jeremiah, the figure swept back his purple and gold embroidered hood to reveal a massive Tech Marine, and not just any Tech Marine, according to Samuel the man was Vildix himself, lost Primarch of the II Legion, Lord of the Golden Lions, Scion of Mars, and Left Hand of the Emperor! Vildix demanded that we cease any and all prostrations and proceeded to explain that everything that was happening was part of a great plan laid down by the Emperor and Malcador the Sigillite in the days before the Great Crusade, and that our efforts in aid of both TASU and TIII (though I am not certain of what that would be) have been most auspicious and helpful in ensuring that the Plan carries through to fruition. Finding a living saint among men was astounding enough, but learning that our actions are crucial to the survival of Humanity against a second Long Night... let us say that the conversation held all the weight of a million worlds and leave it at that.

Vildix bade us not to return to the world of Fortnight, and not to contact TASU again, and also enjoined us to have a care and help set things back on their proper order. He indicated that it was necessary that the Commonwealth should fall to the Empire, and that the

Commonwealth and the Lupus Cluster would eventually be responsible for a renewed and reinvigorated Age of Man. How he knows these things is quite beyond me, but I suspect that Samuel will be doing a great deal of research into the Scion of Mars at his earliest opportunity.

Apparently, we have already received some reward from Vildix's servants as several of us were implanted with an organ similar to those found in Space Marines that will guarantee us greater longevity. He did bid us return to Sparta as soon as practicable, which dovetails quite nicely with Liana's current plans for travel to our Mining Colony, and perhaps we will learn more there.

**+++ End of Text redacted by order of Inquisitor Paulus Segovia of the Ordo Fidei, by his hand and seal 101.743,M41 +++**

We supped with the Ralstons and eventually bade them a good evening. We are planning another party, and I suspect that this one would be best served using my Father in Law's party planning skills...

#### Themes of the Fantastic Tuesday, September 27, 2011

The theme of post-apocalyptic, and dystopian worlds seemed oddly fitting for this meeting...lol. A very detailed, animated and lively discussion that went well over two hours covered topics from movies, TV, books and even several anime series.

William (aka BJ 2) asked a good question about whether just post-apocalyptic worlds should count or if pre-post-apocalyptic and dystopian worlds should also be included. It was decided that as dystopian worlds are often viewed as the beginning of the eventual post-apocalyptic ending, they did count. Plus, the inclusion of all aspects provided for a broader range. *We covered everything.*

The meeting opened with a brief discussion of the new Spielberg series Terra Nova. Chris H had brought an article with a review. Those that had watched the premier chimed in with their take making sure not to give too much away in terms of spoilers, as several people hadn't watched yet.

I then moved things along by reading the Top 20 Dystopian Films/TV. Starting from #20 and working our way up to #1, we discussed, dissected and had fun at the expense of several of the films. We chatted about who had seen each film, what the take was and of course, other films of a similar nature. The films were:

Escape from New York (screened at Medium Screen Classics with Escape from L.A.), Zombieland, Mad Max, Shaun of the Dead, The Walking Dead (season 2 premier Sunday, October 16), Waterworld (yeah, we were surprised too), Dawn of the Dead, Planet of the Apes, The Stand, I Am Legend (it was a majority consensus the The Last Man On Earth was far superior), The Terminator, On The Beach (met with several groans), 12 Monkeys, The Book of Eli, Logan's Run, 28 Days Later, The Road, Children of Men, Mad Max: Road Warrior, and #1 A Boy and His Dog.

We did notice that zombies seemed to be the apocalypse-causer favorite, running a close second was plague.

After the films, I read a list of the top 4 books which were The Forest of Teeth and Hands by Carrie Ryan, World War Z by Max Brooks (soon to be released film starring Brad Pitt), The Hunger Game series by Suzanne Collins (soon to be released film), and #1 The Road (already released as a film).

This list led to a discussion about various films and TV series and/or shows, and books. Making the conversation were some interesting selections.

Barry pointed out the obvious we all had missed - Falling Skies. A comparison to Terra Nova was unavoidable. He also added Five by Arch Oboler.

Chuck, as always, had a long list of selections. He mentioned post-rapture novels, the works of David Drake and A.C. Bailey, Lord of the Flies, Dying Earth, Buck Rogers and Sleeper.

Todd brought up Mutant Chronicles. This began as a tabletop war game that expanded into novels and a movie.

This made me think of Resident Evil and the franchise spawned from that video game: movies, novels, CG movies, etc.

Todd also offered Pilgrim by Gordon R. Dickson, Rocket City, Solar Babies (don't ask), The updated Buck Roger series from Impact, the Post-Apocalyptic Survival Handbook that teaches you how to recognize cowpox, The Time Machine, Knowing and 2012. He begrudgingly added as he put it "god-awful 80's films" Def Con 1 and Crash and Burn.

Chris brought in The World, The Flesh and The Devil starring Harry Belafonte, and Testament.

Jo added Andromeda and Earth 2.

William BJ gave us Resistance (PS3 game), and Wolf's Rain. This led to a fun discussion on anime that came up with Death Note as a beginning to an end, Vampire Hunter D, Fist of the North Star, and Gundam.

Other movies, books and TV efforts making the list were: Night of the Comet (me), Moorlocks (me), and a Robert Silverberg book Todd couldn't recall the title of, The Day After Tomorrow, We, 1984, Monster Island series by David Wellington, A Canticle for Lebowitz (Jo).

Lots of good suggestions, lot of fun. We ended right at 10p with some reluctance. Join us next month for Battle of the Monsters. All monsters, all kinds (those of legend, of the human variety, big, small, scaled or hairy). Who or what will emerge as the ultimate Big Bad - ghosts, vampires, Godzilla, Frankenstein, Hannibal Lecter, Norman Bates, chupacabra or Bigfoot. Who is your favorite and will they win?

## SFSNNJ Member Reviews

Ann-Marie

I just finished reading *Vlad, the Last Confession* by CC Humphries. I picked it up thinking it would be another book that has Vlad Dracula having been a real vampire. It did not. The book was an interesting blend of historical facts melded with legend and fiction that created a satisfying read.

*"DRACULA. A name of horror, depravity and the darkest sensuality.*

*Yet the real Dracula was just as alluring, just as terrifying, his tale not one of a monster but of a man... and a contradiction. For the one they called 'The Devil's Son' was both tyrant and lawgiver, crusader and mass slaughterer, torturer and hero, lover and murderer.*

[http://www.cchumphreys.com/Site\\_2/Vlad\\_-\\_The\\_Last\\_Confession.html](http://www.cchumphreys.com/Site_2/Vlad_-_The_Last_Confession.html)

In the book, Vlad, the Last Confession tells the story of Vlad Dracula from the perspective of the three people closest to him - his mistress Ilona, his closest friend Ion and his priest. The story weaves throughout Vlad's past

with rich detail as each recalls events. It is interesting to see the different sides of the stories being told and what each remembers. Ion remembers a fierce warrior and trusted friend, Ilona recalls a stern yet vulnerable lover, while the priest believes there are not enough prayers to save Vlad's soul.

CC Humphries does a nice job of interspersing legend, historical fact and fiction. His descriptions are vivid and characters are well done. You feel transported into Vlad's world.

If you are looking for a good historical fiction story - this is a recommend.

**Death Valley** is a new series on MTV, Monday nights at 10pm. The series is sort of COPS meets Shaun of the Dead. At least that what the series appears to be striving for but lacks the often hysterical moments provided by the actual reality of COPS and humor of Shaun of the Dead.

The premise of the show is LAPD's Undead Task Force fight zombies, vampires, and an occasional

werewolf in the Hollywood Hills. As in *COPS*, they are accompanied by a sound guy who films events.

It has its moments...example: two of the task force members pull over a werewolf. On full moon nights werewolves are required to be home or somewhere they can be locked up as to not cause mayhem. This guy is out driving. When pulled over and questioned, werewolf's excuse is that he was at the library waiting for a computer to open up! Anyone who has ever waited at the library for a computer knows that feeling. As the officer

is telling him he's supposed to be home and should've planned better for the full moon, werewolf points in the opposite direction and when the officer looks, he takes off running. After a brief - very brief - chase, the officer declares to the camera, huffing and puffing out of breath, "We let them go when they run like that." Kinda funny - not laugh-out-loud, but...

It can be gory and the jokes are hit-or-miss. It's not horrible but I was hoping for more. Maybe it will find its footing as the series progresses.

### Stephen Spinosa

Last night the **Terra Nova** pilot aired on the Fox network and Jim and I watched parts of it. The story is set on Earth in the year 2149 and the planet is suffering from over-population and pollution so bad that people have to use mini-respirators to breathe outside, and the law limits families to two kids only. In Chicago the Shannon family gets in trouble for having three kids (two teenagers and a three-year-old) and the father Jim (who's a cop) takes the fall and is sent to jail. Two years later Elizabeth, the mother (who's also a Doctor) is selected along with two of the three kids to be part of a group of colonists that will travel back in time to Earth's Cretaceous period thru a portal (Jim said the "Time Tunnel" set was better). Jim manages to escape from prison, pick up the now five-year-old daughter, and get through the portal. The colonists find a military compound run by Commander Nate Taylor (Stephen Lang from *Avatar*) who welcomes all colonists (although Jim is temporarily detained from his family by Taylor, who after grilling him about his usefulness, assigns him to the vegetation detail). The family soon settles in to their new home and jobs (although Josh, the rebellious son blows off orientation to hang out with a girl he just met)... Jim said that this is what *Lost In Space* might have been like if they had actually made it to Alpha Centauri. Grade: C-

**Money Ball** - Jim and I saw the film "Money Ball" today at the Clearview Theatre in Parsippany. First off, there were six trailers for coming attractions before the movie. They were, in order of appearance: > a) Anonymous-Jim calls this a literary "Apollo 18" with Willie the Shake (i.e. William Shakespeare) and his alleged "ghostwriter". > b) Mission: Impossible IV: Ghost Protocol-one more go-round for Cruise & Co. > c) Tower Heist-A group of hotel employees hire a black ex-con to help them rip-off a white-collar criminal. Eddie Murphy & Alan Alda star. > d) Immortals-A mythological film about the children of the Titans being imprisoned. > e) One For The Money-A girl who's lost her job and her car becomes a Bounty Hunter to pay the rent. > f) The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo-2nd trailer I've seen for this picture. > Commercials before the movie included an ad for the film

Killer Elite as well as the next TNA Pay-Per-View "Bound For Glory" with Sting vs. Hulk Hogan as the co-main event. Now on to the main feature..."Money Ball" is the story of Billy Beane, the current General Manager of the Oakland A's baseball franchise and how he shook up the baseball world in 2001-2002 by basing his decision making exclusively on computer models (created by his new assistant Peter Brand [a pseudonym for his real life assistant Paul DePodesta]), instead of relying on the advice of his scouts and his manager Art Howe (he even fires his chief scout Grady Fuson early on). Midway through the season he trades away two of his most popular players, Jeremy Giambi & Carlos Pena, and installs an ex-catcher, Scott Hatteberg as his new first baseman, with dramatic results that nearly vindicate his theories. At the end of the year, another club makes him an offer that would make him the highest paid GM in baseball history...and all this happens while he bonds with his 12-year-old daughter by encouraging her to write and play music. This is a very interesting look at baseball from inside the front office with excellent performances from Brad Pitt as Beene & Jonah Hill as Peter. Also a great performance by Phillip Hoffman as manager Art Howe. Well done. Grade: A+

The October 2011 issue of *Popular Science* features an article about Felisa Wolfe-Simon's discovery of a bacterium that feeds on arsenic at Mono Lake, CA (on the edge of the Eastern Sierra Mountain Range) last December. Mary Voytek, the director of NASA's astrobiology program, said, "It's not life as we know it". Miss Voytek also said that the discovery was "a huge deal" and compared with the *Star Trek-TOS* episode "The Devil In The Dark" where Kirk and Spock go to the pergium mining colony on Janus VI and discover the "Horta, an alien life form that they can't detect with tricorders because it's based on silicon rather than carbon". Actually, in the episode Mr. Spock is shown adjusting his tricorder to detect silicon, so Miss Voytek gets half credit...The article also gives Fox News a positive mention (rare indeed...lol)...