

RETROZINE



Two Fandom
Elders,
One More Time!

1 August 2021 Vol.1 No. 1

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RETROZINE

<http://retrozine.net>

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Got questions?

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Editorial

By Germaine Swanson

I think about forty-six years ago, Fa and I blindly plunged into the world of *Star Trek*, science fiction, and media fandom. For the most part, we had a blast. It was a fun, creative, and exciting time. In which we tried and did new things that most people our age had never done before. (Cue TOS' Theme Music)

Aging and adulting, the final frontier...

As battle-scarred veterans of the Adulting Wars (we aged, but we didn't really grow up), we decided to regain control of our creativity as a team and remembering the insanity of our youth.

As for me, my children are grown. The career is on simmer and future retirement could be boring. Getting over cancer will cause you to think like that. Analyzing the bumpy path my life has taken left me open to doing something I truly enjoyed with whatever number of decades I have left.

My best friend from college and partner in crime, Fara Shimbo, is probably the most influential member of my cancer support group. Life has given her a variety of experiences that comparatively made retired life kind of boring. She gave me the gifts of wisdom from her own cancer experience, handmade socks, kittens, and Science Fiction and, in turn, rekindled the kind of joy I hadn't felt in years.

We took this newly regained joy and the resulting energy and creativity and decided to channel it in some direction. As a result, we're back. We did Zines before, and we're ready to take advantage of the latest technology and do it again. Imagination unbound! When we were college students decades ago, we were limited to producing what the technology allowed, and we could afford: mimeograph, off-set printing, and collating parties.

Wait, you asked, "what is a Fanzine?" (Give me a minute to stop hyperventilating.) A fanzine is an amateur publication that was sold at conventions, by mail, or wherever you could. Some were sold by mail order subscription, others by individual copies. Some were books or collections of short stories about the same subject or characters. Others were collections of articles or stories like a regular magazine. Some zines contained the work of contributors who each printed their own portions themselves and delivered them to an editor to be collated. They were then bound together into a single issue. In others, material was accepted, edited, and released by the publisher. Additionally, there were comic magazines (now called "graphic novels"), filksongs and anthologies that were published using this format.

We began in *Star Trek* and Science Fiction fandom. Other types of fandom have created their own creative outlets within the limits of copyright or with permission (e.g., Dr. Who, *Thunderbirds*, Terminator, various novels and series [there is a Jane Austen fandom!], cosplay, etc.)

Retrozine is an opportunity to combine imagination with all the technological gifts available in an online zine. We can add a link within a story to a song sung by a character. We can put in a link to the background mood music for a scene. An author can read their story so you can hear it in the voice in which it was written. Art can be animated. The opportunities are available to do something new and exciting.

We invite you to submit your reproducible creativity and hope you will share your talent with us and our viewers (readers?). If you decide to submit work, you won't be paid, but you will be able to say it was published. And, most important, you will keep your copyright on your material in case you want to publish it in the future. Your work remains yours, not ours. (See link for more information)

Join us to take our zine where no zine has gone before—our server. (Music swells to end.)

Contact Germaine: editor@retrozine.net

Addendum, by Geek-Girl-In-Residence Fa Shimbo:

Yeah, I'm trouble. I know it. Well, I was trouble, anyway, once. But Adulting called; got married (to Bob Shimbo; 41 years and counting!), worked jobs that would support my equine addiction... Well, now I'm retired and looking forward to once again deserving my old nickname, "The Sicilian Spitfire."

I've mellowed somewhat, I think. I hope. Getting diagnosed with Asperger's and being "on my meds" has helped an awful lot. No need to tell you what I've been up to; googling my name will tell you the awful truth (I'm the only "Fara Shimbo" on the internet, and that's all me, including the rose).

But I wanted to say this:

I am thrilled beyond words to be in touch with Germaine again! I owe her so very much! I know that without her, the Klyssadel stories, which have often been my only link to sanity, would never have been published. And without Germaine's guidance, I'd never have gotten into SF Fandom, and never gone to IguanaCon, and never met Bob, who has not only put up with my SF addiction but my 8 horses, 5 ostriches, 6 dogs, 39 cats, and literally hundreds of ferrets. Thank you so much, Germaine, my dear friend! I am forever in your debt!

Contact Fa: techinfo@retrozine.net

 I GOT WHERE I WASN'T GOING

By Niall “Nicolai” Shapero

Chapter 1: On Approach

I really hate flying. “Spacey” our group secretary, booked me on flight 008, and it was a 777-ER. I’d have much rather flown in a Boeing Dreamliner, but “Spacey” thought I’d been the one to give her the nickname – and she takes every opportunity to retaliate. Nine hours forty minutes of torture, to be followed up with an eight time zone shift (GMT+9 to GMT-7). I had to go to Tokyo for the biomedical conference and present the latest work we’d done on the BCI: the brain-computer-interface problem. I’m a computer scientist and, of necessity, something of a student of neurobiology. I’d have much rather presented my talk using Skype or Google Hangout, but the gentlemen with the narrow black ties and square jaws who oversee my work prefer a more direct approach. It allows them to go over my talks well in advance, and then carefully “suggest” avoiding any undesired disclosures. The presence of one of their crew in the front row is also a ready reminder of who funds this project. My convenience (or upset stomach and jet lag) is something of little concern to them.

I especially hate turbulence. I thought I was going to dodge the bullet for once, but we were just an hour out from SFO when it hit. Three airsick bags later, I was too groggy and dehydrated to pay attention to the pilot’s announcement. When I’m sick, I don’t tend to pay attention to things.

We landed at SFO, and I felt like I’d been run through the wringer. I gathered up my baggage and staggered out of the plane. Airports are airports, and I wasn’t paying much attention. Until I saw the soldiers by the customs entry. I hadn’t seen anything on the net about a terrorist alert before I left Tokyo, but it had been nearly ten hours.

I noticed most of the passengers ahead of me being directed to one side. It didn’t look good – someone must have been in with us. I slowly pulled my passport out and presented it to the customs agent when I got to the head of the line.

“Doctor Shaefer?”

“Yes, that’s my name.”

“Doctor Nicholas Randolph Shaefer?”

“Yes,” I was starting to feel even sicker than I had on the plane. The soldiers were taking a more active interest in me.

“Would you please step aside, Doctor Shaefer?” the agent turned, “Corporal, would you escort Mister Shaefer to holding, please?”

This was very bad. I didn’t think I’d done anything wrong. I’d gotten the OK to leave the country and my talk was cleared by the DoD a good month before I submitted it to the conference – and that was six months before. I’d stayed on script, as my handler (someone from our Tokyo embassy) could attest, but ... someone somewhere may not have gotten the word. One soldier took my carry-on; the other directed me to the side.

I sat in what I could only assume was an interrogation room for the better part of forty-five minutes, before one of the narrow-black-tie-and-square-jaw set joined me. He looked somehow familiar, but ...

“Good morning, Nick. It’s ... been a while.”

I looked him over; he was wearing a black shirt, black suit jacket and a yellow tie. He looked like a gangster; one with silver white hair and a salt and pepper moustache. But there was something about those steel grey eyes that were familiar.

“Draper? Is that you?”

He nodded.

“What the hell happened to you, Draper? I thought your hair was just starting to go grey—and your moustache was reddish brown when I left for the conference—have you been faking it and dyeing your hair all this time?”

“No, Nick. It’s been almost thirty years since you vanished. There have been just a few changes of late.” He pulled a small tablet out, and set it in front of me. “Your fingerprints are on file...” he nodded in the direction of the tablet.

I put my hand on it; it tickled, and the display lit up a nice green color after a two or three second delay. “That’s good, I hope,” I said.

“Your fingerprints and DNA check with the data on file. Welcome to 2048, Doctor Shaefer.”

“My DNA? Where the heck did you get that...”

“When your return flight disappeared,” Draper interrupted, “we took the liberty of sealing your apartment, and gathering DNA samples—from your hairbrush—in case we needed to identify your body, later.”

“Oh, joy! What did Penny have to say about *that*?”

“Your wife—or should I say, your ex-wife—was ... upset, but she cooperated, of course.”

“Of course...” I managed to say. “But she’s still my wife, isn’t she??”

Draper took a deep breath before replying. “You were declared dead over twenty years ago, Nick. Along with everyone else who was on ANA Flight 008. You’re lucky that you’re still considered an ‘important person’, or you would be held pending further identification, like almost everyone else on your flight.”

I couldn’t help but laugh; for once, all that security nonsense had worked in my favor. “Do I still have a job? Or should I say, *will* I have a job?”

“Given that you’ve been ... away ... for thirty years, it may take a little while to straighten out some of the paperwork; you were declared legally dead, after all. Your clearance, not to mention your passport, was rendered...”

“Inactive,” I finished for him. I sighed, and shook my head. “If I’ve somehow ‘jumped’ three decades into the future, yes, I can understand that the paperwork might take just a little while to straighten out.” Some things, it was clear, didn’t change.

“We’ll have to take you to one of our suites in company housing...and we’ll see about you getting a citizen-basic allowance until your status is ... revised. You may have to catch up with some of the changes since you ... ah ... left.”

I couldn’t help but chuckle as I rose from my seat. “Well, then, ‘lay on Macduff, and cursed be he that first cries hold, enough!’.”

“Still the same, after all these years?”

“For you, it may have been thirty years,” I said, as Draper led me out of “holding”, “but please remember that for me, it’s only been a few hours. I’ll need to get a new driver’s license for one thing...”

Draper stopped cold, and I nearly rear-ended him. “Whatever for? We’ll see to it that your passport is renewed.”

I waved to him to resume walking. “I do like the mobility that a driver’s license provides. Besides, do I need to carry my passport around all the time for identification? I need...”

“No one needs to drive anymore.”

“Why?” I asked, as Draper led me out of the airport concourse.

“Almost all the new cars are self-driving. And no one has built a new gasoline powered car in fifteen years. Another ten or so years, and the older gas guzzlers will all be off the road. The air is already noticeably cleaner of at least some of the pollutants that were around before you ... ah ... ‘left’.”

I took a deep breath. “I don’t suppose anyone makes cars with stick shifts?” I was clearly going to miss some things; I’d always enjoyed the feeling of greater control a manual transmission gave me.

Draper laughed. “Most cars don’t even have steering wheels, Nick.”

I stopped. “And our carbon emissions? What’s happened with climate change?”

Draper sighed, and urged me to resume walking. “We’re ... getting by. There have been a few other ... ah ... changes ... since you left. There was a war...”

“Another one? The war in Afghanistan was in its sixteenth or seventeenth year when I went to Japan... Are we still stuck in ‘the graveyard of empires’?”

“No, Nick,” Draper said. “But another war started in 2020. It ended thirteen years ago.”

“So we’re at peace, at last? After another ...” I did a quick calculation, “fifteen year long war?”

“In a manner of speaking, we are at peace.”

“‘In a manner of speaking?’ Come on, man, either we’re at peace or not...”

“There have been a few other changes,” Draper said. “Before you exit the airport, you’ll need this,” he handed me a small badge.

“A dosimeter? What the hell...”

“It’s nothing serious, everyone has one. We’re on the coast, and when the wind blows in from the sea, well ... you never can tell ...”

“What the hell happened? Another Fukushima?”

Draper looked at me like I’d just stepped out of another dimension, which, to be honest, I had. “The War, man? Oh, right, you didn’t live through it...”

“We had a nukewar? With whom?”

Draper shook his head. “Right. I still find it a bit hard to believe that you just stepped across thirty years. The war started two years after your disappearance...”

“WW III?”

“Some people are calling it that—the French and the Germans went at it—for one last time. It was right after the EU broke up. The French started it, the Germans finished it, back in ’35, with their destruction of Paris. That one blew out windows in London.”

“Thirteen years ago, and people...”

“Rad-dust got thrown up, and it got ‘spread around’. All Class A citizens wear dosimeters to indicate if or when they have to ‘go to ground’.”

“Go to ground?” I asked.

“Go to a secure, filtered air, sealed facility. Class A citizens are then provided with ...”

“‘Class A’?”

“Those people deemed vital to the continued functioning of society. Your social rating is an important factor these days. You’re going to be put into Class A in all likelihood. You’re too intelligent, and you’re likely not gene-damaged by either bio-, nano-, or radiological poisoning from the war. Your living quarters will have filtered air...”

“Dare I ask what class you fall into?”

“I’m in Class B—critical security personnel. I’m past age to father a child, so my exposure limits are higher, and my willingness to perform riskier ...”

“Good God, man! You’ve got to be ...” I did a quick calculation, “at least 76 years old.”

“Close, Nick,” he said, and chuckled. “My seventy-ninth birthday is this November; November 5th in fact.”

I put the dosimeter on, and couldn’t help shuddering. “Any other ‘minor details’ that I need to know about what’s happened in the last thirty years?”

“Just a moment.” Draper stopped, his eyes unfocused, and stood stock still for perhaps five or ten seconds.

“Ah, what’s the matter?”

“Just checking. The 28th, 29th, and 30th amendments have been passed since you ‘left’. I just ‘googled;’ I couldn’t remember if the 28th was passed shortly before or shortly after you went on your little ‘time hop’.”

“I’ll get to the content of those amendments later. But how did you just ... ah ... ‘google’ it?”

“Oh, I got a Shaefer-Hiranuma implant six years ago. I tied into the GIG and ...”

“A WHAT?”

“An implant. Based on your work thirty years ago, and working with the rest of your team, Hiranuma Senji developed the first implantable BCI eighteen years ago...”

“Little ‘Neko’ made the breakthrough?” A wave of professional jealousy broke over me.

“He insisted that your name go first—and he’s now a senior technical fellow, not that it should be a surprise to you.”

“He was ...” I stopped. Adding twelve years to his age when I’d left, ‘Neko’ as we all called him, would have been thirty-seven years old when his breakthrough came. Adding another eighteen years,

and he'd be fourteen years older than me. It would definitely take a bit of adjustment—the bouncy little youngster had turned into another old master—and if he'd managed to solve the problems that I'd just begun to resolve...well...he deserved my respect. Then it hit me.

“He named the implant the ‘Shaefer-Hiranuma’ implant?”

“Yes, he insisted that without your earlier work, he would have never completed the project.”

I sighed and realized that ‘Neko’ had grown up in more ways than one. Maybe I could match him for maturity, if I tried hard enough. I'd have to catch up at first opportunity.

“What else has happened in the last thirty years that I need to know *right now*?” I asked, as we continued walking.

“Your BCI work has given sight back to a few hundred thousand people...”

“Sight? You mean Mikhailov...”

“Applied the Shaefer-Hiranuma breakthrough to the artificial eyes that he was developing when you left. The key, after all, was interfacing the electronics to the optic nerve...”

“Which relied upon solving the basic brain-computer-interface problem,” I finished for Draper. It was definitely going to take some time to really grasp all the ramifications of “my” work. “I suppose that Mikhailov is a director by now?”

“No, I'm afraid not. He died of pancreatic cancer three years ago. But he did see his discovery help people. Though there's a significant fraction of the blind community that has been objecting to the ‘electronic eyes implants’,” Draper said.

I shook my head and sighed. “Just like people in the deaf community objected to cochlear implants, I suppose?”

“Similar arguments,” Draper replied, just as we reached the curb; the door to the car opened as we walked up.

I looked around; there were other people with baggage, but no one rushing towards the open car. “Yours?”

Draper laughed. “Heavens, no! I just summoned one through the GIG.”

“The ... GIG?”

“Global Information Grid. Think of it as the Internet version 2.0. You'll get used to it – the interface is pretty much the same as the World Wide Web was in your day. But it's a lot faster – the typical tie-in is a TBS...”

“Terabit per second?”

“Terabyte per second. But that’s just the typical user link. The trunks run at closer to a hundred petabytes per second on each trunk line. Multiple trunks so...”

I slid into the car; there was no steering wheel—nor was there the ‘old style’ seating—all the seats faced inward. “And this seat arrangement is safe?” I’d seated myself facing forward.

Draper seated himself facing me, his back towards the front of the vehicle. “Safer than when most cars were driven by people. Last year there were fewer than three thousand highway fatalities; almost all of them were human driven vehicles. I think you’ll like the place the Company has prepared for you...”

“A company suite, you said?”

“Yes, it seemed the least we could do. You are, after all, likely going to end up as a senior technical fellow—you’ll need time to adjust, and you’ll need to ‘train up’ again, but there’s no doubt that you’ll be a valuable contributor. Heck, just your name associated with the Company is of considerable PR value. ‘Doctor Nicholas Shaefer, the man responsible for solving the BCI problem....”

“Hold! Wait a minute! I didn’t solve the problem—from what you just told me, ‘Neko’ was the one...”

“Remember *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*?” Draper asked.

“Oh, ye gods and little fishes! ‘When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.’ So the legend is that I solved it? Then what do people think Senji did?”

“What he *said* he did. He was the engineer who developed the technology to implement your genius-level solution.”

“But Senji was never an engineer, he was a...”

“He was honoring his mentor—you. And it’s not as though he really likes the limelight all that much. Easier to blame the breakthrough on you, and then he could stay in his lab and work on new ideas...”

Again, I couldn’t help but laugh. “So Senji pulled a fast one on everybody.” That was the ‘kitten’ that I’d known. And with further years of uninterrupted research, I could just imagine what he’d likely accomplished.

“You’ll need to schedule implant surgery yourself,” Draper said.

“Please ... like I need *another* hole in my head? Didn’t Senji finish my work on the neural-web-interface?”

“No, actually, he discarded that approach as ... ‘sub-optimal’. Doctor Blakely did develop a working system based on your original design, though. I used one while I was saving up for my implant surgery. You won’t have to wait—the Company will pay for your surgery,” Draper said.

I sighed. “I suppose Jim dropped the neural-web approach...”

“No, actually, he kept working on it until...” Draper stopped abruptly.

“He died? When?”

It was Draper’s turn to sigh. “Five years ago, a neuroblastoma. He couldn’t do any backups, thanks to the cancer...”

“Backups?”

“Oh, yeah, that would be new to you. Anyone with an implant can back themselves up to the GIG. Takes about an hour first time with an implant—it’s closer to a day to do with just the neural web. You’ll want to make a backup as soon as you can. The Company can’t afford to lose talents like yours...”

“Make a copy?”

“No, it’s really ‘you’. You set your implant to do a ‘continuous backup’, and all your sense impressions, thoughts, everything is backed up to the GIG. That way, if something happens to your body, we can ‘resume’ you from the backed up data...”

“But what about my body ... do you grow me a new one?”

“It’s a simple matter—cloned and you ‘resume’ once the body has been force grown to maturity...”

“Ye Gods and little fishes! Human cloning was illegal...”

“In 2018, ok, yeah. Now? It’s been legal for ‘resumes’ for several years now. There’s talk of a new Constitutional amendment—to grant ‘personhood’ and voting rights to disembodied resumes while they wait for their clones to be grown.”

“Foresight? The population has grown up, then.” Would wonders never cease, I thought. “But if this ‘backup’ is possible, why didn’t Mikhailov...”

“He said, ‘One life is enough for me. I’ve lived a long and useful life, and now I’m just tired’. We couldn’t force him; there’s still freedom to refuse.”

“Does anyone have to die anymore?”

Draper shrugged. “If you can afford the implant surgery, and you can adapt successfully, and can afford the storage costs...”

“How much does it cost?”

“Enough. Only the top twenty-five percent of the population can afford the surgery and the ‘other’ costs. Worldwide? Nowhere near that percentage. How many will be able to afford repeated

‘resumes’? I don’t know, and I don’t think anyone does. We’ll likely find out—but it will take as just a bit longer to see all the side effects.”

“When have I heard that before.”

Draper laughed. “That’s the Dr. Shaefer that I knew and loved—always the pessimist. But the world is getting better.”

“And World War III?”

“We’re working on healing the damage of that one. What with the fusion power plants coming on line – thanks, by the way, to the groupthink solutions available courtesy your...”

“Groupthink?”

“Oh, yes,” Draper chuckled. I was beginning to really dislike that sound. “Link in to the mindcloud on the GIG with your implant, and ... think with others, I suppose you could call it. Superfast brainstorming with the best and brightest. The air is cleaner, we’re using more renewable resources. We could do better, but did you expect humans to change completely overnight?”

“So all these changes derive from the BCI solution?”

“Second or third order, maybe. But most trace back to improved intelligence and cooperation. It’s real hard to lie, mind-to-mind...”

“So the BCI solution...”

“Lead to effective telepathy, yes. *Hitchhiker* notwithstanding, it’s been a significant improvement. At least at the leadership level; no more screw ups like...”

“You don’t have to remind me—I voted for the alternative. But no lies? Not even social white lies among those with the implants?”

“Not in the mindcloud. I can still ‘fib’—just so long as I limit it to the spoken word. And there are no TruthTellers around—we’ll get to *that* change later. Read the new amendments, and it might make more sense. One thing we’ve learned as a society, though, is that truth can be a really addictive habit. You’ll understand better once you’ve had your own surgery...”

“I don’t know ... no money ...”

“The Company will pay for it. You’ll be a significant contributor, based on past experience. And if you only made your one set of discoveries ... well ... you’ll still be a good public face.”

“A ‘fellow emeritus’, then, if nothing else?”

“Don’t you think you deserve a little support? And the Company is perfectly willing to bet on you – based on past performance, there should be another few discoveries, once you’re ‘up to speed’ again,” Draper leaned back in the seat and grinned.

“Where do I sign up?” At least I wouldn’t have to worry about money ... and it would be nice to try out the perfected version of my “dream” machine.

“Just say, ‘I want my job back’.”

“You’ve got it, ‘I want my job back’. Did you record that, or transmit it to HR?”

“Both. The look on your face was—and is—priceless. I think that this is the beginning of a wonderful friendship.”

I couldn’t help laughing. If I survived it, this new day was going to be ... one heck of a thrill ride. And now I think I finally understood what dad used to refer to as an “E-ticket ride.”

Continued on Page 51



UNITED FEDERATION of PLANETS



UNITED FEDERATION of PLANETS



The Wargentín Campus of STARFLEET ACADEMY Is Looking For **YOU.**

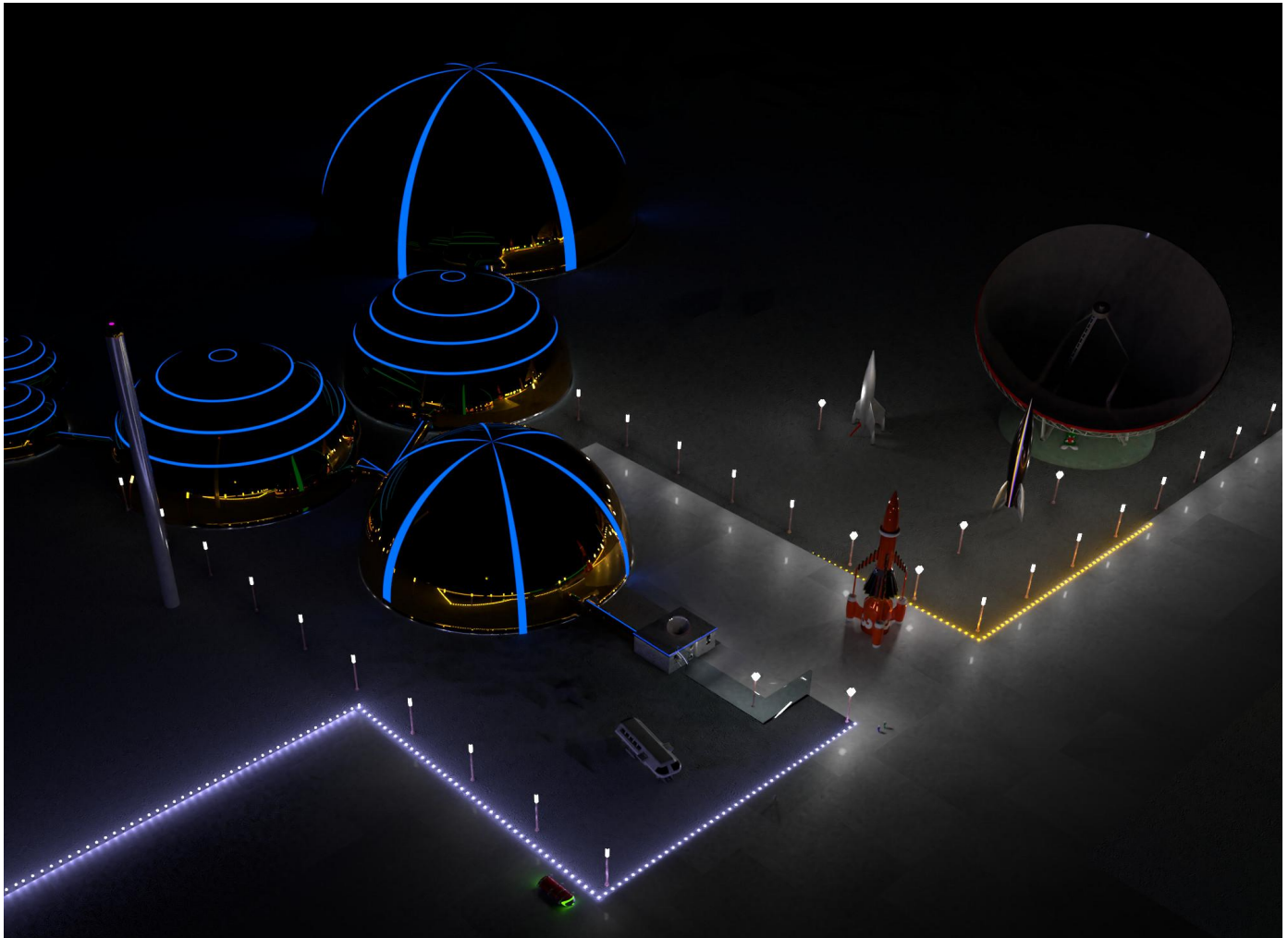
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THE ACCIDENTAL LUNATIC

by Marjorry Donatello

18th August



My name is Marjorry Donatello and I live in the Future-Past.

See, there's this guy Solomon, who wanted "The Future" he grew up wanting as a kid. Wanted it so bad, story goes, that he got really rich, and he bought it. For his estranged auntie, you know. He still



lives here. Nobody knows how he got that rich, but he got that rich all right, and he bought a mine on the Moon, turned it into “The Future,” and built this town under domes, which nobody else ever did. It’s got a nice spaceport and robots and a guy they say is an android, and an actual Space Alien, and the only college I ever wanted to go to. Got accepted, so here I am. Everybody calls it “Wargentin College,” but really it’s Lanyim Maqira College, who that was-is I don’t know. Been here a week.

Interesting place. You’d think it’d be all sleek and spartan and you’d be wrong. Main Dome, where you first come in, has grass, and trees! Thing growing from every flat surface. There’s buildings inside the dome. A hotel, a tea room (they grow tea in a special greenhouse on the tea-

house roof and the place is FULL of tea-snobs), two restaurants, big admin building and an “outdoor” theater, and tanks with dolphins in! Two huge spires that are a library and a museum, or are supposed to be, you can order stuff from catalogs to be brought up to you. There’s a tailor’s where they make all kinds of clothes including spacesuits. All covered in a dome that’s supposed to be clear but you can only barely see outside because of all the reflections on it from inside.

There are cats EVERYWHERE! Got this photo when the street (this is West Darwin Avenue) was empty for about five seconds.

And here, they tell me, *stuck* for the rest of my life.

See, happened like this.

After I got up here, got into an argument with this guy. He said, no matter what you do, you can’t get on a play-ground swing and do a 360 on it.

Not so, I says! I seen it done, in the 9th Street Playground in Prospect Park!

No, no, he says. It’s proved, you can’t do it! You must be deluded or something.

But I seen it done!



So I thought, I'll show this guy! Found a nice big tree and put up a swing in it, and started swinging. Yeah, I know, swings don't swing exactly the same way on the Moon but I was gonna show this guy!

Well, got a little confused or something trying to swing the swing and somehow let go of it and went flying off the swing with my legs sticking out smack into the dome, and BANG, broke my leg.

Got carted off to the "Bios Center." Silly name for a'nfirmary, right? They imaged the leg and all got very concerned. Then all this politics got dragged in.

Here's the situashe. Wargentinopolis, or usually just Wargentin, the town, named after the crater Wargentin that it's in, declared independence a few years ago. This was fine with a lot of other countries, and The U. S. of A. had a fit. They were making money off the mine, the Americans, which had been owned by one of their citizens until Solomon bought it. And there was something of "strategic importance" about it, no idea what.

Now, back when I was a little kid, there was this International Space Station and anyone could come and go from there. That was before all the "Nationalist Revolutions" and now things are weird. It's like that Tom Lehrer song about "National Brotherhood Week." This one hates that one and everybody hates Wargentin because Wargentin is just being Wargentin and like the city motto says, "A Good Time Is Had By All."

There is only one space station left that lets ships from Wargentin dock there. It's Gamow Station and it's a dump. So if I'mma be evacuated from Wargentin, gotta go through there, right? Right.

Now. Problem. Severely broken leg. Gamow don't allow nobody with an injury, because insurance, or liability, or something, I donno.

So. Could get the leg fixed right away here, but it would heal, they said, adapted to 1/6 gee, and have to get it re-fixed if I ever wanted to go home which may or may not work right. The leg, not home. Or home too, who knows. Anyway, or else, stay on the Moon with the healed leg the way it is. Fine with me, I like it here; people are friendly and stuff.

"No, you don't want to do that," I was told by one of the doctors here, a lady "Dee." Dee is a weirdo; you know, she started a cult just to show how easy it was to start a cult, then she abandoned it. It's still going!

Anyways, she said, "If you stay here, you are an Indoor Cat. There'll be no more lazy days at the beach. No more rolling around in the grass. No more going for long, solitary walks in the woods." (And I should say here, all the "Residents" of Wargentin, they always talk like they're reading from Shakespeare or something else ancient. They still use 'an' as in 'an elk' instead of 'aelk' like normal people. It's so *stale!*) Let me tell you, she ain't been on Earth for a long time because nobody does any of those things anymore, even if they could-of. Least ways, I never did any of that stuff. So we argued about it for a couple of days here and finally they decided I was "intransigent," and now I'm a permanent Lunar resident with two functioning legs.

Whether I will be a Wargentín resident once I graduate is another story. Wanna. But ain't that easy.

Should tell you about myself. Born in New York City. Father Italian and mother Japanese. When I was four, we moved to Siracusa, bit south of Mt. Etna, and let me tell you it was fun (or something) when Etna AND Vesuvius literally blew their tops off a few years ago. When I was 11, got sent to a boarding school in Ireland. Now I'm here and there really isn't much else to say about any of that. And yeah, of *course* they're gonna rebuild Napoli, as soon as they can find the original. That's Italians for you.

Majoring in Astro-Microbiology. Most astrobiologists, they're after "higher" forms of life but that's just flashy and that's about all. Let me tell you, the things that go on in a single cell are *so totally amazing* and so absorbing and so fascinating and complex, they put the coarse behavior of multi-cellular animals to shame! I got a see of a Martian microbe in high school once. Here at Wargentín, they got microbes from Europa and Ceres and Enceladus and a dozen other places that on Earth they're only waiting for. The Space Alien, referred to as The Alien Cat or The Hairy Death, sometimes goes out and brings back stuff from various places. And everybody goes nuts!

No, really! And sometimes the starship goes off on its own and brings back stuff! For example, a few years ago it went out and brought back both Voyager spacecraft and told off everybody, that it's rude to clutter up the spacelanes with discarded junk! They made the starship put one of them back exactly where the starship found it, and at the same speed and all, but they kept the other one to study.

Anyways. This semester, taking Public Writing. Gotta write actual hand-written letters to pen pals. Lunar Living, just general how to get along in town and cope with the crowding and stuff. Music. Had to pick an instrument, picked drums. Astrobiology 101. Microbiology 101.

Need to tell you about this writing course because it tells you a lot about the whole town. Here I am, in what's supposed to be the most technologically advanced place in the Solar System, and I have to write actual handwritten letters and NOTES, with fountain pens! Up here they think, if you can't recycle it or make it easy from things that grow around here—and things grow on every flat surface in the domes—you don't use it. So, no real pens, only fountain pens and you better take care of them! And no pencils, because little carbon and no wood. So we use old-fashioned nib pens and make ink from plants and minerals, like monks in a monastery. Made a decent purple from gentian flowers and beet root, but we, my fellow students and me, we haven't had to actually write in forever and now my hand hurts.

And we have actual in-person classes in classrooms and we have to take notes. No recordings. In fact, they say, "no electronic devices allowed in non-electronics class, unless such devices have tenure." Why? They say, writing things by hand makes you slow down and think, and slowing down and thinking's a skill you need up on the Moon.

Wargentín isn't like other schools. They care about you having information "ready to hand" in your brain, which is obviously not your hand, it's not "look it up!" all the time. That's all I really learnt from

the teachers at the boarding school was how to look stuff up. They didn't really care if you just plain *knew* it, so long as you knew where to look it up that was good enough. Not here. You gotta actually KNOW stuff.

Have a Mentor. Her name is Dr. Prof. Sharon Kuse and she been nice to me so far. She did her Ph. D. research here and wrote a book on Alien Cats. She teaches comparative neurology. She's friends with the guy they say is an android, and the Alien Cat, and she knows a woman "Arlerin" who says she's (Arlerin is) an Elf. There's also a robot dragon. And there are dolphins! I got to pet one. I've never seen one in person before.

19th August



Whilst wandering around looking for something to do (they told me to walk for 10 minutes every hour, wearing these socks that one of which is actually a cast) I found out that there is a "Office" of the United Federation of Planets here. So went to check it out.

It's in a room in the Underground. The original city they built underground, now it's dorms and student quarters and things like that. There's lava tubes and mine shafts and these got rooms off them too. Some are old classrooms from before Campus Dome was built. All the streets are named after Dwarfs. Dwarves. Okay! Sorry, "Dwarrows," which is supposed to be the "real" plural (lots of pedants

around this town). I found the headquarters in Telchar Street after I got lost rather a lot. There was a little entry-way with lockers, and then the main room.

There were a lot of students there and they were in all kinds of uniforms from all the different shows—almost 100 years of shows and spin-offs! Everybody referred to each other as “Captain” or “Commander” and stuff, and you know, the weird thing is, they all looked perfectly comfortable and at home. Thought to myself, “Yeah, could get into this, and I’d have instant companions that because they have rank I know how to act towards,” because I’m not great at being social so it helps when people already have a rank.

The room is very neat. The kind of neat that makes my head hurt. And the furniture is heavy. Doesn’t need to be, in 1/6 gee. I was expecting furniture with spindly legs and all. But people like what they’re used to, I suppose.

A girl a little older than me, came up to me. At first I thought she must be a Vulcan or a Romulan because she had pointy ears, then I noticed she had really, really shiny hair, and wore one of those Elvish pendants and an Elvish headband, so this, I figured, had to be Arlerin the Elf. She said, “Welcome to Starfleet Academy Wargentin. Are you interested in joining?”

“Interested, yes,” I said. Because it would have been impolite not to, I think.

“Good. Please come and sit down, and we’ll talk.”

So we went and sat on a couch. She gave me a brochure. “I am Admiral Arlerin,” she said. Admiral, just imagine! “We are recruiting persons who would like to train for our upcoming mission to the NGC 7006 Globular Cluster. We are negotiating travel and passage rights for the cluster now. Unfortunately we have no idea when we’ll get them, so it appears we will have plenty of time to train. We need specialists in all fields. In which field do you feel you are most qualified?”

Well, the first thing I thought was “Oh, God, they talk like the people in those old, old TV shows. I’ll bet they still think adverbs are a thing! So, told her what I done so far and hoped to do, and we talked for a bit and she said, “Go home and read that brochure carefully, and then come back if you would like to join up.”

So I did. The cover said, “SAW Recruitment Guide” but inside, the color of the paper or whatever changed and there was a heading, “Real-World Information. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY. YOU WILL BE HELD TO THESE RULES IF YOU JOIN.”

Well, okay. What are the rules?

1. Choose an “era” you’d like to be from and they’ll make you a uniform to match. You have to wear your uniform at all times when at Headquarters. If you don’t want to walk around town in a uniform you can leave it in one of the lockers in the entryway, but you have to change into it to get into Headquarters. An “era” is one of the versions or really sort of “pick a Captain.”

2. Absolutely no real-world matters may be discussed in HQ.

3. Once in headquarters, refer to anyone else there by their rank or name and rank.

4. “We’re all cosplaying here,” it says. “You may change your species if you can do it plausibly, and you may be from any Era, but you can only cosplay yourself.” So I’d be Cadet Donatello, I guess. No playing actual characters from the shows, didn’t say why not but if that’s the rule, okay.

There were a few more rules “of a trifling nature,” and finally,

12. “Remember to keep everything upbeat and forward-facing, inclusive, and true to the IDIC philosophy.”

Well, if everybody’s doing that, sounds like a good fit for me. Because God knows, down on Earth, things are as anti-IDIC as it’s possible to be and nobody in their right mind wants to be on Earth anymore.

So...

I am now Cadet Donatello. My uniform’s from the *Engage* era and is blue, what a relief. The little communicator badge on it works great. I’ve been paired with two other cadets and ... oh God now I’m starting to talk like them. Next I’ll be reading Jane Austen. Kill me now.

21st August

I got moved. Not in the underground dorms anymore. Got moved to a little flat in Residential Dome where the seniors usually get to live. They say if I’m gonna be a Luny I ought to learn to live like one.

Since I have a flat, they let me adopt a cat! Well, the flat came with a cat and he is mine now. He is a huge black cat and he’s very sweet. His name is Mutch.

Leg is healed up, mostly, I don’t know what they did but that was pretty quick. They said not to try to run for a while.

Which reminds me, when I told my friends on Earth that I was coming to the Moon they all told me, “You better learn to hop like a kangaroo.” Because that’s what the old astronauts in bulky spacesuits did, I think. Lunies don’t walk like that. They sorta trot on their toes and they use their toes to push them forward, and they can go pretty fast!

And, I saw that Alien Cat running on all fours and that thing can MOVE!

Which reminds me, before I came up they told me never, ever, EVER to run away from the Alien Cat. The Alien Cat is a predator and you never run from a predator because that’s what prey do. I mean, it’s

even in the “Welcome to Wargentín” brochure, never to run away from Alien Cats. They don’t think, I think they don’t think, that to the Alien Cat if you are running away you are dinner by default, but best not take chances. The thing is poisonous. It killed somebody once!

It’s funny, the cats—there are LOTS of cats here—act just like normal cats. Even the leopard, which is just a big cat. The leopard’s name is “Baby” which is supposed to be a reference to a leopard in a movie. Prof. Kuse says quadrupeds aren’t affected by low gravity like bipeds are because they don’t got nearly as big an “up” component to their steps as bipeds. There are a lot of birds here too and I don’t think they’re bothered by the gravity at all.

So far I haven’t learnt much in my microbiology and astrobiology classes that I didn’t already know but they’re prerequisites and I gotta take them.

In the class on lunar living today, the prof pointed out that just because things fall slowly in 1/6th gee don’t mean we got to grab them slowly. He told us to watch freshmen who drop things pick them up, they pick them up in slow motion and don’t realize they’re doing it. We all thought this was ridiculous. But now I’m watching and that’s exactly what people do, and now that we all know we all do it we feel like idiots.

Whenever anybody with long hair shakes their head around here, it looks like a shampoo commercial.

One of the things I really love about Wargentín, is that the internet is NOT censored! I can look up *anything* I want, from any country and any city in the whole Solar System! There is SO MUCH! There’s everything from everywhere and and the Lunar Living course they say they’ll teach us how to figure out what’s reliable and what’s not, because there’s so much of everything on there and it’s not even password protected, and I don’t need permission to use it, this is great!

Been in Residential Dome for a few days now and I can see the Earth in the sky. It has phases, but it stays in the same spot all the time and it’s upside down. You see the whole thing, though, it’s not tidally locked to the moon which would be silly.

25th August

Mutch is a good name for this cat. He sits on me and purrs and purrs. Never had a pet before. Nice.

Yesterday in our Lunar Living class they told us about Lab Rats. Apparently, every department that uses lab rats uses a different color of rat. This way if a rat gets loose you know who to tell about it. They put some color genes from reptiles in them, so there are green rats and red rats and blue rats too. Since a lot of experiments involve deliberately letting rats loose for some reason, they told us if we see one to

leave it alone unless it's obviously sick or hurt. Cats don't bother them, mostly. Rats fight back, unlike mice, and they're also modified to taste awful.

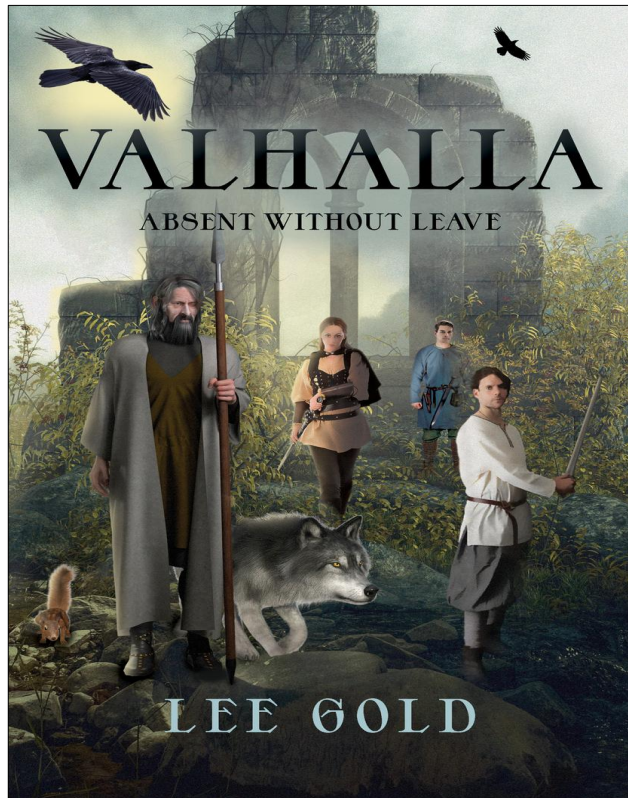
You have to get used to a lot of strange things around here. There are a whole group of people who've had genes added to give themselves stripes or leopard spots or make their hair glow in the dark. I thought Arlerin had pointy ears on account of plastic surgery, but it's weirder than that. You know how some people got bumps on the rim of their ears? Those are actually vestigial ear points! And you can do something or other to make them grow into actual, pointed ears. That's how she got hers.

Next week they're going to teach us how to round up all the animals in case the domes need to be evacuated because of solar flares or stuff.

Tonight they're showing movies from a century ago, in the Amphitheatre. They're showing *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Magnificent Seven*. I never heard of any of the people in them but they're supposed to be "legendary." Then the next night they're showing *Night of the Living Dead* and *North By Northwest*.

Oh! And been invited to dinner at Prof. Kuse. Maybe the Alien Cat will be there. Always wanted to see it up close. She said she is going to invite some "special" friends of hers, just so I can get meeting them out of my system. So... We'll see.

To Be Continued...



✍ VALHALLA:

Absent without Leave

by Lee Gold

available from Amazon and from Barnes & Noble

There aren't any computers in Valhalla, the Hall of the Slain. It's near enough the root and branches that computers could work, but the master of Valhalla wants to keep the residents thinking on-mission, not distracted by video games or email or mailing lists. He doesn't use any computers either. He doesn't need to. He uses the Two Raven System instead.

Memory never smashes or crashes or leaks or eats up anything she's not supposed to. She's faster than lightning, which is after all fairly slow, especially in an atmosphere, and often arrives at her destination days before she left for it. It doesn't confuse her, but she's learned not to bother other people with the details.

Thought doesn't condescend to do anything as slow and clumsy as flying. He dwOms and (by definition) he doesn't need an IO device to do it. (Just as well, given that Jupiter's moons and Zeus's girlfriends aren't in Valhalla's known universe. Neither are you, in case you were wondering.) Thought does what Odin means. Sometimes you'll see him everywhere you look, which is disconcerting till you get used to it, and sometimes you can go ages without seeing him anywhere, which is embarrassing if you like to think you're important, because it means that Odin doesn't care about what you're doing.

The folk who live in Valhalla take it all in their stride. That's because they're heroes, the greatest warriors that the Choosers of the Slain can find in Midgard. The Choosers are Odin's daughters but they can't use his ravens. Instead, they have to get by with just swan cloaks. It's slower but prettier.

There were lots of heroes in the old days, when most humans spent most of their waking hours in Midgard, but that was back when there were more farmers and sailors and fewer engineers and

programmers, more heroes and fewer bureaucrats. Nowadays most humans spend all their time in the workaday world, which is too boring to qualify as one of the Nine Worlds.

Heroes are the people whose hearts are high enough to lift them to Midgard, at least for a few minutes every now and then. Even that's enough to make them feel ill at ease in the workaday world, like wanderers who've blundered into the wrong house and can't remember the way out, let alone the way back home.

The Choosers never miss a hero. They watch over a candidate, making sure that nothing trivial goes wrong for him, watching his fighting skills grow and his reputation spread, until finally he's at the height of his glory. Then they cancel his battle luck and fly down like vultures the moment that he dies, seize his soul and bring him to Valhalla. Or maybe they seize *her* soul and bring *her* to Valhalla. The Choosers are interested in all the heroes of Midgard who die gloriously, male and female, young and old. They sneer at the warriors who get a life and a wife and a good job and worry about what their neighbors think of them and end up dying in bed, like a cow lying in a stable strewn with straw....

The courtyard of Valhalla lies east of the main building, and it's surrounded by high walls to keep out trespassers. When Ragnarok comes the walls will fall, and the nine armies of Valhalla will march forth, each to its own target world, to fight Odin's enemies and valiantly die. But until Ragnarok comes the courtyard is a wonderful place to play. It's big enough for all the heroes to fight without feeling crowded. There's the hot frenzy of combat mixing with the icy chill of pain as you lop off an old friend's head or feel a sword plunging deep into your own heart and see the world around you fade to black. You might think that killing your friends is poor practice for a fight against your enemies. Especially when your friends are all human, and the enemies you're supposed to be preparing to fight are frost giants and fire giants and hill giants and sea giants, plus trolls and ogres and wolves and snakes and eagles. You'd be right, of course. Just remember that Odin is a master of battle frenzy and deception and panic.

The Valhalla courtyard is a bloody battlefield, but the pain and maiming and death aren't permanent. By sunset, the heroes are all back in Valhalla again, as good as new—no parts missing, wounds perfectly healed, teeth whole and shining, fingernails clean without any blood under them, hair neatly brushed—and that's how they stay till after breakfast when they go back out into the courtyard.

Knut Nine-Toes was standing by Valgrind, Slain Gate, the western door of Valhalla, talking to the wolf who guards it. Valgrind is Valhalla's only door that doesn't lead to the courtyard, the only door that lets you out to see the rest of Asgard. It's where newcomers sign up on the Hero List. The only other person who ever goes through it is Odin. He's the king of the gods and the commander of the Valhallan army, but even his oldest friends would never call him a hero. Of course, his oldest friend is the guy whose son he killed just so he could use the boy's intestines to tie his old friend up tight so he couldn't get away from the venomous snake who.... Everybody knows that story, and I don't want to be boring.

“Slow day,” said Knut.

“Slow century,” said the wolf.

Knut had known the wolf for centuries but he didn’t know his name.

Off to the west, the valkyries were dropping their prey in Thunder River, which workaday folk call the Milky Way. Most of the souls got pulled under right away. A few kept their heads above water for a while, but the river was cold and fast, and in a minute or two they got swept downstream to Hel Falls.

“I don’t know why the Choosers keep at it,” said the wolf. “What’s the point of killing all those boys and girls off in their prime? They might as well let them get old and gray and die in bed like cows. It’s been a long time since I saw a cow.”

“Look!” yelled Knut. Someone was crawling out of the river. Someone stood up and waved and headed towards them. A woman. There aren’t many women in Valhalla. Some of the men in Valhalla don’t mind. Most of the men in Valhalla stand in line and take a number to spend an hour or two with one of the women heroes who likes men. The few, the happy few, the band of sisters.... Never have so few done so much for so many.

But Knut didn’t want to share a woman with a hundred other men, even if they were all heroes, and he wasn’t interested in the Choosers either. The Choosers are Odin War-Father’s daughters, and they have names like Battle Din and War Cry and Rager, War Axe and Battle Spear, Power and Turmoil and Panic. Very few men measure up to their standards in bed.

And now there was a new woman coming up the hill toward Valhalla, and Knut was going to be the first hero she saw. “How do I look?” he asked the wolf. “You’ve got blood on your left shoe,” the wolf said. “Aside from that, you look fine. How do *I* look?” Knut rumbled the wolf’s ears. “You look fine, too,” he said.

Robin Jonson walked up the hill, in between the towering trees with their bright red-gold leaves. She still felt the shock of being dumped naked into ice-cold water, but the sun was warm on her face and back, and the dirt was warm under her bare feet. A flurry of leaves fell, clinging to her wet skin, and then suddenly the leaves were gone and she was wearing soft, comfortable, dry clothing. She stopped and looked down at her new clothes and saw they were the same red-gold as the leaves: a tunic and pants. She shrugged—finding herself here after she’d died was weird enough that nothing should surprise her any more.

She reached up and pulled down a small branch. It broke off in her hand, and she touched the leaves. They felt like leaves, not cloth. Then leaves and branch fell apart into tiny bright fragments and a warm wind blew them away. “I’m sorry,” she said to the tree, and then looked up to see a new branch had appeared to replace the one she’d broken. This one had green leaves. She started uphill again,

toward the man and the dog and the big stone building. She felt incredibly wonderful. She wasn't short of breath, and she wasn't dizzy, and she didn't feel like throwing up, and nothing hurt.

As she reached the top of the hill, she quickened her pace and felt her breasts flopping gently against her chest. You've got to pay attention. I said she got out of the river naked and then got a tunic and pants. I didn't say anything about a bra and underpants.

Robin stopped and touched her breasts, feeling each one soft and full in her hand, no lumps or tender spots, no scar tissue or scabs. Then she put her right hand up to touch her head, and felt long, cold, dripping hair. She grabbed a hank of it and pulled it around, and there it was in front of her eyes, dark brown and incredibly beautiful.

"Welcome, Robin Grima," called a woman's voice from above. "Here's your death day present."

She looked up and saw a swan flying overhead. It dropped something, and she reached up—that didn't hurt either!—and caught the thing.

It was a white sword scabbard and belt, with a silver hilt sticking out of the scabbard. She'd never seen or touched it before, but she'd known it for years. She tied the belt around her waist and pulled out the sword and looked at the shining blade. She waved the sword around in a circle over her head, waiting for it to say something, but it was silent. That meant that she wasn't in any immediate danger. Or that it wasn't really Grima's sword Frostbite.

She looked up at the sky again, but the swan wasn't there any more. She stuck the sword back in its scabbard and walked over to the massive stone building and its iron-bound door, confronting the tall, smiling, red-haired man and his large, gray, yellow-eyed—that wasn't a dog; it was a wolf!

"Greetings, Hero," said the wolf. "This is the door to Valhalla. Can you write your name?"

"Yes, of course I—" she started indignantly, and then stopped and whispered, "Valhalla?" She'd read all the Norse myths when she was a child, and she'd studied them when she took a Viking player character, but she'd never expected—

"It means Slain Hall," the man said helpfully. "My name is Knut Vidarson, Knut Nine Toes. The wolf wants you to sign the Hero List as a pledge of loyalty to Odin. Once you've signed, you'll be home."

"The door to Valhalla," Robin said in wonder. She picked up the feather and wrote ROBIN on the bark and looked at the dark red letters of her name. "Is that blood?" she asked, laying the feather down.

"It's Kvasir's blood," said Knut, smiling at her, trying to make a good impression. "Or you could call it poet's mead or Odin's brew." Knut's father had taught him all the old kennings.

"Write down your nickname and family name too," said the wolf. "We've already got six Robins."

She gripped the silvery sword hilt, cool and solid and reassuring. She didn't want any of her old nicknames from her schooldays. The Valkyrie had called her Grima and given her Frostbite. She picked up the feather again and dipped it in the inkwell and wrote "GRIMA JONSON" and hoped that was right.

"Welcome home!" said the wolf, except it sounded more like "Velkomin heim!"

And then Robin felt as if she was back in the river, drowning again but this time in information. Valhalla's heroes sign in with a quill feather from Memory's right wing, so they can all access the same database. Six other Robins, and now she knew their faces and their battle strengths and weaknesses. Sixteen Knuts, and the red-haired man facing her was the least and last of them when it came to fighting other heroes in the courtyard. Six thousand, eight hundred twenty-three other heroes....

"Wait a minute," she said. "Only 6,824 heroes? There are 540 doors to Valhalla and each of them is wide enough for eight hundred heroes."

"We don't march out touching shoulders," Knut Nine Toes said, one language ringing in her ears, another one in Her mind. She tried to focus on the one she understood. "We need room to swing our weapons," he said. "That means each door is only wide enough for a shield wall of four hundred of us to walk out with our swords drawn."

"Yes, but—"

"Okay, right now there's only twelve or thirteen heroes per door," Knut said. "When I got here, there were only eight or nine heroes per door."

"When I got here, there weren't any heroes yet at your door," said the wolf. He wasn't looking at Knut or Robin; he was looking up over their heads, at the door beam.

Valgrind, Slain Gate, has three guardians. There's the wolf at the door, the boar's head mounted above the door and, sitting on top of the boar's head, the giant eagle: frost-white head and body, charred black wings and tail.

The eagle couldn't fly because he didn't have any feathers on his wings and tail. He didn't have any eyes in his head, but that didn't mean he couldn't see. He didn't say much, but when he did, the wolf shut up and listened. His name was Thiazi, and he was a has-been giant, and nobody in Valhalla knew why Odin trusted him to guard Valhalla. Giants are the enemy....

"Who decides which door I get assigned to?" asked Robin, thinking about standing around at grammar school recess, waiting to see which team captain was going to pick her. She knew all the heroes now—and they all knew her. They knew that she was a zero level fighter with no training and no experience; they knew that this was the first day she'd ever touched a real sword.

"You get to choose your own door," Knut said. "Bookwurm and I are at Door Thirteen. You can always try another door if you get tired of our company."

“I’m not superstitious about thirteen,” Robin said. “It’s bad luck to be superstitious.” Usually that got a laugh, but Knut wasn’t smiling; he was nodding in agreement. “What world does Door Thirteen—” Then a wave of information swept in, and she knew that the first sixty doors of Valhalla led to Hel. Her right hand fell down to Frostbite’s hilt and caressed the smooth firm metal. *“Want to go to Hel, Sword?”* she thought.

“Land of cold and shadows,” the sword whispered. *“Rivers flowing with knives. Lady Hel Lokisdaughter, half corpse-white, half living. Yes, Grima! Take me to Hel!”*

The wolf growled softly, but he didn’t say anything. “Door Thirteen sounds like fun,” Robin Grima said.

“Come on in,” Knut said, “I’ll introduce you to Bookwurm.”...

“I still don’t understand,” Robin said, looking at the wolf and then up above him at the other two Valgrind guardians. “I know I didn’t die in bed, but what am I doing here? I’m not a hero.”

“They cut you with sharp knives,” said the boar.

“They poisoned you,” said the wolf.

“They burned you,” said the eagle. “You didn’t beg them to stop. You kept coming back for more.”

“Yes,” Robin said. “They cut off my breasts, and they gave me chemotherapy, and they gave me radiation treatment. They did that to a lot of women. I had to wait in line to have them do it to me. I had to *pay* to have them do it to me.”

“My eyes can see all the Nine Worlds,” said the eagle. “I saw you in Midgard when the earthquake shook the hospital, Robin Grima. You got up out of your bed and put on your clothes, and you helped the nurses pull patients out from under fallen machines and crumbling walls. You helped carry injured people outside and then you turned away from safety and went back into danger, again and again, even after the fire started. You didn’t give up till the oxygen tank exploded and killed you.”

“That’s a hero’s death,” said Knut. “You can learn fighting skills, Robin Grima. You can’t learn courage.”

“*You don’t need to learn any fighting skills,*” Frostbite whispered. *“Not as long as I’m with you, Grima.”*

“All right,” Robin said. “I won’t argue.”



GALLERY

Illustrations from The Trail of the Great Rose

by Fara (Let's Not Always See The Same Hands) Shimbo

The Trail of the Great Rose was a trilogy (or maybe a quadralogy) that I began writing in the early 2000s. The story follows Rumau the Potter, Khizhir the Imperess, Yre the Scholar and Mignette, the Beruliy, as they try to make their way back to Rumau's home, making bizarre archaeological and paleontological discoveries on the way. These illustrations were done in the old Prismacolor pencils (before they were bought and their quality plunged) and touched up in the GIMP. Books I and II were completed, and Book III started, before I ran out of steam.

Right: Khizhir discovers Yre sleeping in a copse. The feathers which do not appear to belong to him were "imped" on by Khizhir as a sign of Yre's rank in his



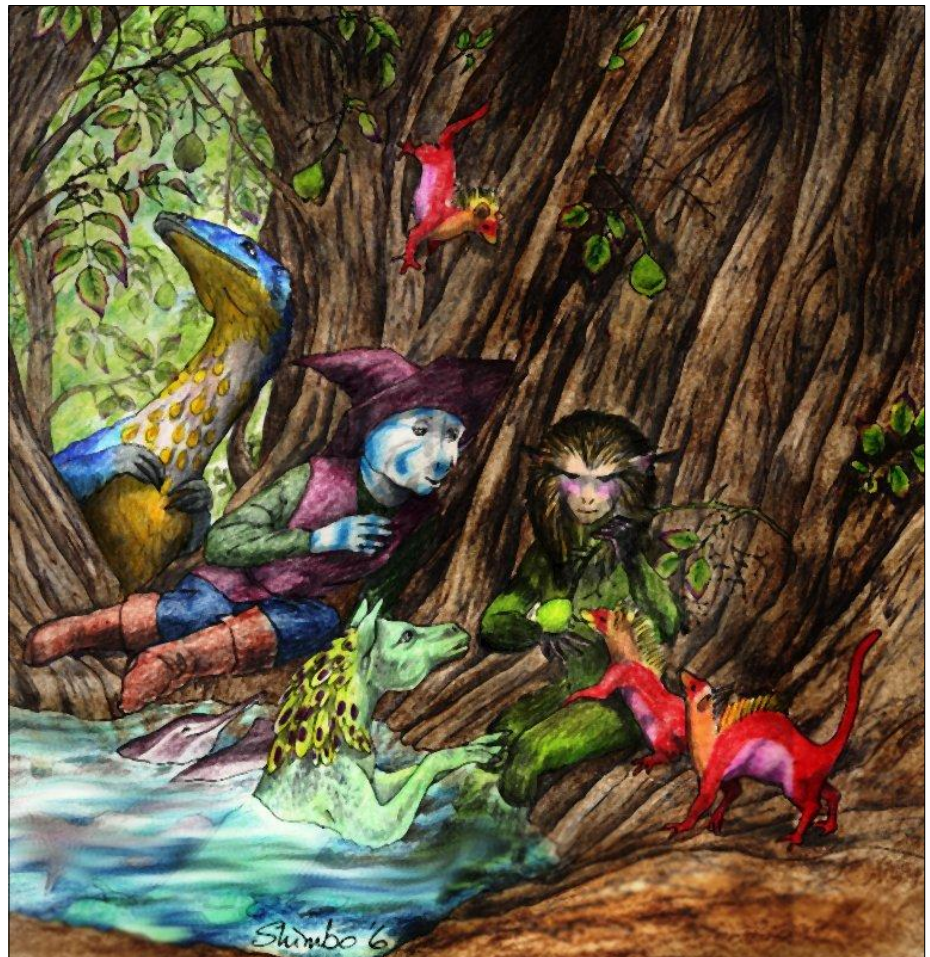
scholarly Archaeological Society. Left, Khizhir reveals her own invention, writing, as Rumau, Rumau's student Heyu, Yre, and one of Rumau's horses look on. Khizhir, the official imperess for several of these Societies, invented writing in order to record which which feathers have been placed on which member, and when. As of this time, writing, as well as ink and paper-making, has been her secret.



This light-blue animal, known as a fiu, is generally considered a dangerous predator by most of this world's inhabitants. Given that and the fact that they are only very rarely seen this far south, one might perhaps forgive Khizhir for panicking upon seeing one—the first time she has ever ridden a horse.

(Below right) The “great rose” is an enormous plant which is studiously avoided by almost everyone, since it is constantly attended by wasps which make yellow-jackets look like diplomats. But there are wonders in the middle, if you can get inside one; and Mignette, the Beruliy, knows the secret of doing this.

Mignette, too, is on her way home. And she has another use for a Great Rose. She cannot go alone, she needs a small army. The Rose is her secret for building one.



 A Retro Review of

“Bullard of the Space Patrol”

by Mark Swanson

For that true Retro feeling, I bought a Kindle collection of the nine “Bullard” stories, originally published in *Astounding* magazine from 1938 to 1945. I believe they were the first Science Fiction that I can remember reading. Still pretty good though I discovered my memory had misclassified them.

These stories were written by Malcolm Jameson, a US naval officer who died before the last one had been published. The kindle book I bought contains all the stories he published: *Admiral’s Inspection*, *White Mutiny*, *Blockade Runner*, *Slacker’s Paradise*, *Devil’s Powder*, *Bullard Reflects*, *Brimstone Bill*, *Orders*, and *The Bureaucrat*.

The Space Patrol’s model is the World War 2 US Navy. Ranks are the same. Only one non commissioned officer, Bullard’s right-hand man, is a developed character. Otherwise only officers are featured players. Discipline is enforced relentlessly: in *The Bureaucrat*, half of the officers, “Bourse” men evading combat by manning an obsolete ship stationed above Wall Street, run off from an unexpected battle and are arrested for “poltroonery,” (an old word for cowardice) probably a capital offense. In any story that involves combat, casualties are high.

The *Bullard* stories center around the hero resolving a problem. (Not always Bullard himself.) They can involve people problems as such the “Admiral’s Inspection” disastrous events. (The inspection being inspired by a 1940 US Navy chief inspector’s report just dug up from the ruins of Washington.) Or, a mad captain in *White Mutiny*, bureaucratic maneuvers in *The Bureaucrat*, a corrupt senator in *Brimstone Bill* or the urgent need to bypass devastatingly stupid orders from the Patrol’s political masters in *Devil’s Powder* and *Orders*.

All are often solved using some unique or semi-obsolete technology. Bullard’s “Star Class Cruiser Pollux” has a crew of 1500 or so, much the same as a WW 2 battleship. It apparently contains stacks of old technologies: in the first story internal communications techniques are cited as available via Inter-ship Phones, Scribbles, Annunciation, telegraphs and voice tubes. The Pollux must have been rebuilt many times with little ever removed.

Since these were published as short stories everything is lightly sketched in. No massed ship actions occur in these stories. The giant data dumps and technology descriptions that adorn or mar

David Weber's *Honor Harrington* mega-series are totally absent. I had vaguely classified the *Bullmer* stories as early Space Operas but they don't fit in that bucket.

Absent also are the social and multicultural themes common now. Everyone in the Space Patrol appears to be a WASP: no characters with Italian, Russian, Asian, Black or alien backgrounds appear. By contrast in the *Liaden* universe of Sharon Lee and Steve Miller the friction between Terran and Liaden manners and morals and those of all the other subspecies of men plus aliens frequently dominate the stories. Though apparently centuries in the future, the Bullard stories' society is just that of the Space Patrol's officer corps. Occasional interactions with other related societies, whether from his superiors in the political world or the "Bourse" Wall Street slacker officers, are always unfortunate though they do provide problems for the hero to solve. None of the characters would be comfortable in any 2020 US society.

The *Bullard* stories seem to most closely resemble the *Star Trek* TV series. They are episodic on a single ship and a very limited set of characters. In each the hero has a problem, often due to foreign nasties, but the focus of the story is on solving the problem. Social or technology details beyond what is needed to establish the problem or show the hero's gumption and amazing insights are ignored. The *Star Trek* episodes I recall involved far more moral dithering, direct insubordination and infinitely more attractive females in the crew. A short story and an hour episode seem to have a very similar size in terms of how much can happen and how many scenes there is room for. Yet the focus on the hero's problem, multiple efforts to solve it, his semi-miraculous cleverness and the minimally sketched out solutions gives them a common structure and "size" that strongly resemble each other to my mind.

So why would a current SF fan want to read these? They are missing a lot of what I enjoy in current SF but this is just one book containing just nine "SF Golden Age" stories. The heroes win: cleverly, honorably, frequently amusingly. It's very different from anything I've read that written in the last ten years. I think it's worth an evening for almost any SF fan.



Zipatone And Everything!

Or, Give Me That Old-Time Photo-Offset

By Fara Shimbo

Are you old enough? A few years ago, my nieces assured me that I “was not old enough to knit,” though apparently, I am now. But yeah, I’m Old Enough. Are you?

What happens when someone mentions those tests we used to get in school, that had purple printing? Does your brain flood with the memory of the smell of them--the fresher, the better--that was so awful and yet so mesmerizing?

Do you remember waiting for 11pm so you could get the best rates on a long-distance call, and your shoulder cramping up as you used it to hold the receiver to your ear?

Do you remember when computers were something you saw on Walter Cronkite’s *The 20th Century*, and you wanted one because of all the blinky-lights? Okay, well, maybe this last one was just me.

Today, as in, right this moment, I am sitting down at a Linux computer with the fastest processor and graphics cards money can buy, and here I am working on a zine. Type in the words, scan the pictures (or, lately because my hands are now too unsteady to draw properly, make 3D models and render them), format the file, convert to PDF *et voilà*, a zine! A slick, beautiful zine that looks like it was put together by someone who knows what they’re doing.

It used to be so different.

Consider making a zine in the heady days of the early 1970s. Personal computers were still a few years off (I got my first one in 1978, an Ohio Scientific Challenger 2P; it had a 2 MH 6502 8-bit processor and 4k (yes, *k*) of RAM, and saved files on a cassette recorder! It also cheated at poker). Personal printers were similarly far (or near) in the future. What did we have to work with?



Can you smell it?

sheet of paper; so once you had printed about two dozen copies of each master sheet, the wax was essentially gone, thus the print was so faint as to be almost illegible.

Back in the day, spirit duplicators were often referred to as “mimeograph machines,” but they were not. Real mimeograph machines, or “Gestetners” as we often referred to them, actually predate spirit duplicators. Alas they were far more expensive, not to mention heavier, than Dittos, and their smell was just plain solvent with no “oomph.” Yet, if you were careful, you could get about 100-150 relatively high-quality copies out of a stencil. All you had to do was sit there, crank away (I heard there were electric “mimeos” but I never had one), and add more ink from time to time. The ink got on everything. *Everything*. The machine also made an almighty racket when you were using it.

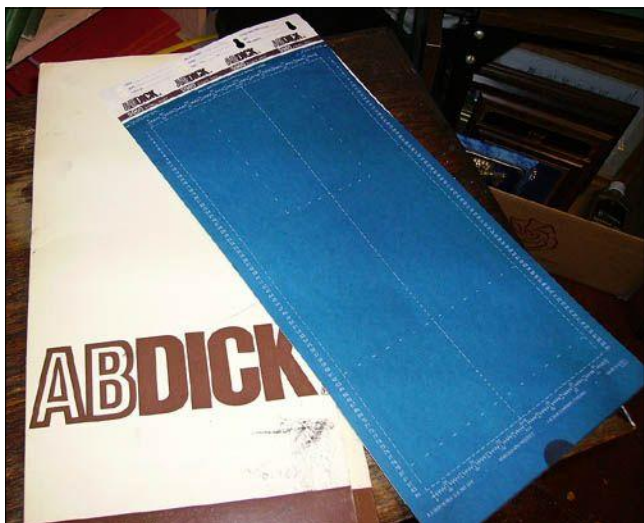
Mimeographs made copies by squeezing ink through stencils. Stencils were fiber-impregnated wax sheets, generally blue or green in color. One typed on them, with a typewriter (remember those?) or drew on

Well, there were those Rexograph® or Ditto® machines, known generically as “spirit duplicators.” I did subscribe to one zine that was done this way, but by the time it got to me that wonderful smell had dissipated. Dittos were hard to get as schools typically gobbled them up if they came on the market, and the “spirit” which made them print was not only mildly hallucinogenic (or at least, seemed to be), but expensive and flammable! The real problem with Dittos was that with each copy, the copy quality went down. Ditto masters were colored wax, and the “spirit” melted just enough of it to be transferred to a



A genuine Gestetner! It would have had a crank on the side.

them with a stylus. The latter was particularly daunting because drawing with a stylus often ripped the stencil. In either case, the wax was pushed onto the cardstock backing of the stencil, leaving the fiber to (attempt to) hold the thing together.



Make a typo? Well, that called for corflu (*correction fluid*), and if you wanted to huff something like you did with Ditto'ed tests, here was your chance. Corflu was a thick, usually dark-purple stuff that you painted over a typo like you'd paint White-Out® over a typo in a letter. Then you'd either re-type or, more often (because you noticed the typo way late in the process), you'd draw the correct letter in with your drawing stylus.

If you were extremely lucky, you may have come into possession of an electric stencil machine, which had a built-in scanner and worked sort-of like a dot-matrix printer, in this case making tiny holes in a rubbery stencil. These worked well for artwork, but they were very expensive, time consuming to use, noisy, and smelly-in-a-bad-way.

Art has always been a big part of zines, and if you were a special kind of crazy, you got out your stylus and corflu and drew directly on a stencil. But if you really wanted your art to come out well, you turned to Photo-Offset Printing.

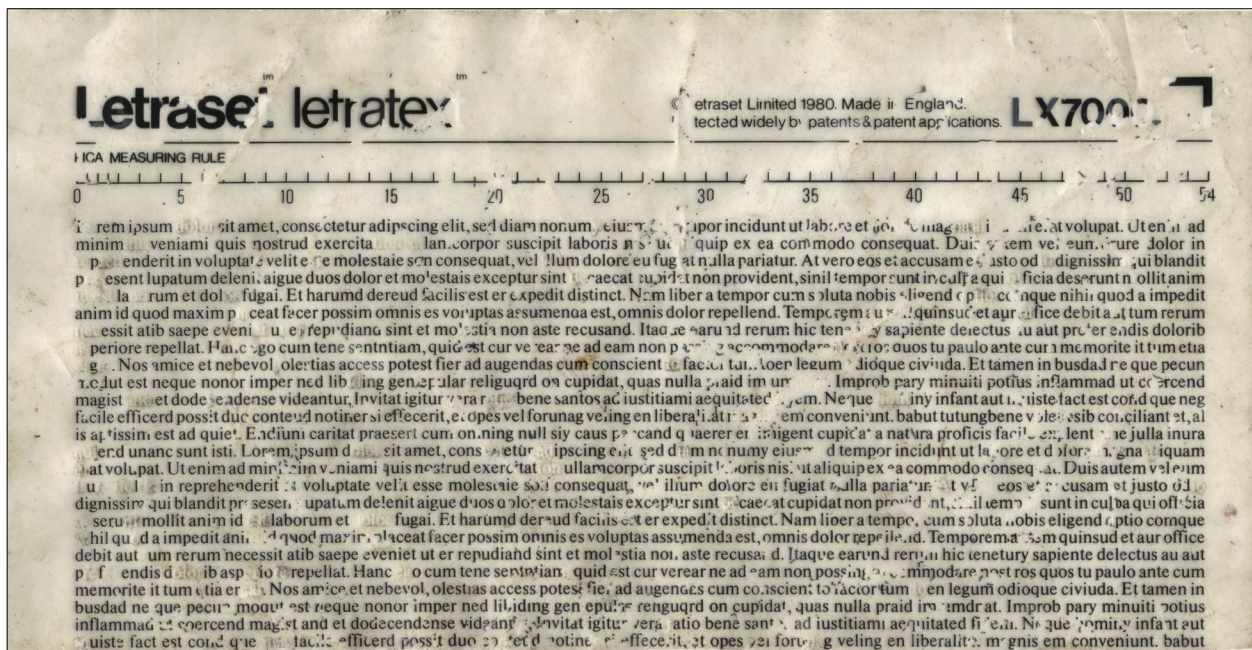
Oh, have I got stories to tell about Photo-Offset Printing. Back in the day, it was the only inexpensive (and only *barely* inexpensive) way to get pages of consistently good quality. Of course, printers and zineds don't speak the same language. I know this, because I worked in offset printing for about a year. (It's worse with animation. I was trained in cel animation way back in the day. Computer animation uses the same vocabulary—for entirely different things! Combine that with a boss who was fond of making up his own words and assuming you understood them, and... yeah, that's why I'm happily retired.) I was allowed to photograph the plates, and fix the press when it broke down. But I was not allowed to press the button that *started* the press, because I wasn't in the right union.

Photo-offset involved photographing a page onto a paper plate. The plate, when developed, would allow ink to adhere where there was black and would repel ink (most of the time) in the white space. Unfortunately, it was very rare that we'd get a page or a poster to copy where all the blacks were black and all the white-space was white; so we had a number of tricks to correct this, to an extent. I got really good at it after a while. White-Out(r) covered paste-up lines. Waving a piece of black paper back and forth over very light text or drawing made the plate come up darker in that area; waving a piece of white paper similarly made heavy or blurred lines more crisp. And you guarded your favorite bits of "correction paper" with your soul!

Once the plate was made, it was put into a huge vat of developer to develop. Horrible stuff as you can imagine! And yeah, I had to reach down into that vat and pull out more than a few plates. Never used tongs, because the vat was deep and plates could really only be found by feel.

Offset presses made a very distinctive noise that I can hear even now in my head. But really, Aspies like me should not be in jobs where we have to work with the General Public. I quit that job after I got thrown out of the Brooklyn Law School, but that's another story (though a good one!).

Offset presses printed in black (or another color for a large fee) and white only; so if you wanted grayscale in your image—or if you wanted a typeface you couldn't find on a typewriter—you needed Zipatone! And Press-Type. And Letraset®. I still have some of them around here, somewhere. Even body-copy. Ah! Here it is! *Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet...*



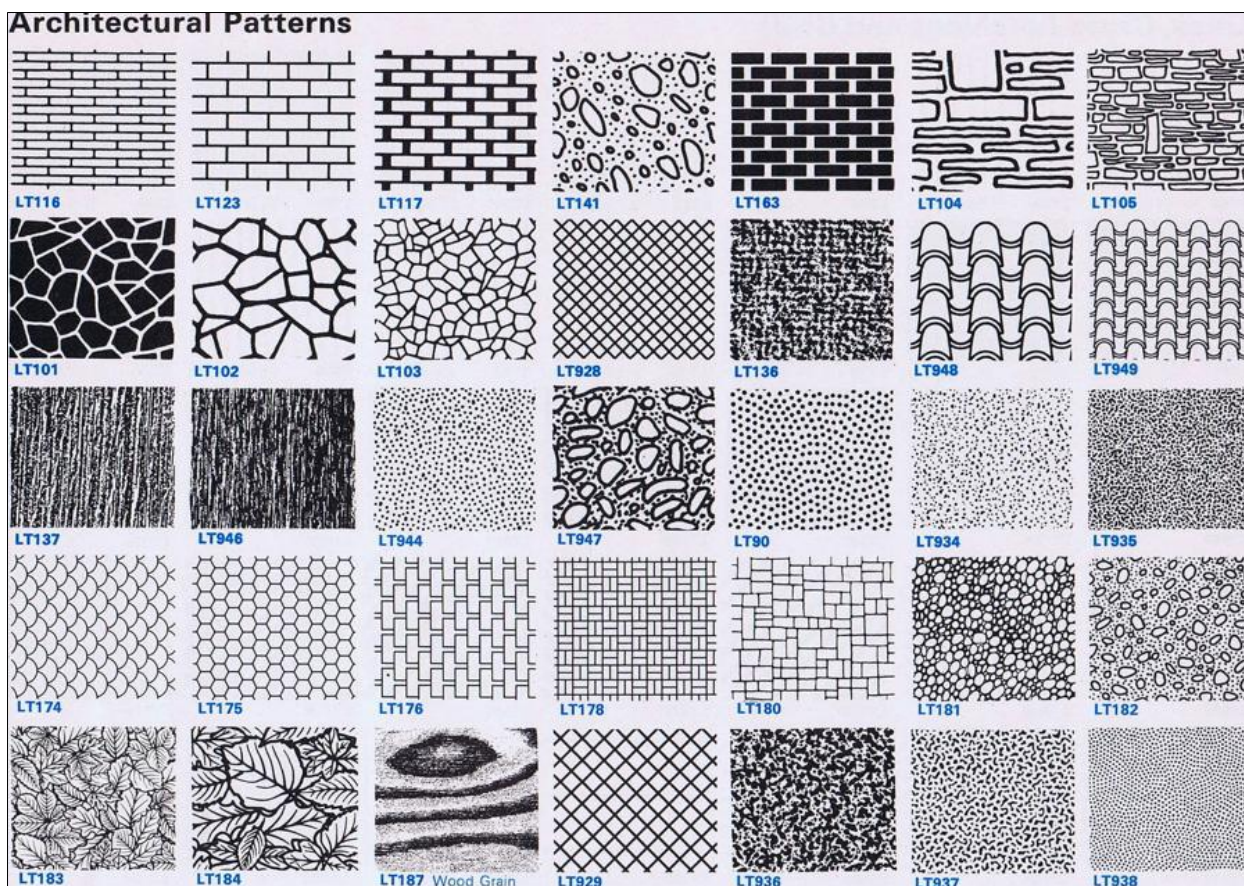
I have owned this piece of Letraset Body Copy (also known as “Greeking”) for four decades. Amazingly enough, I found it exactly where I thought I had last seen it!

As for PressType, Letraset and the rest, they were burnished in place one letter at a time (or two if you were insane like me) with a special tool sold for the purpose. Back then, one's choice of fonts was extremely limited and recognizing them all by sight was the norm.

Letraset soon became the industry standard, and among the things it made was halftone sheets; black dots that from a distance gave you the impression of gray, just as newspaper photographs were done back then. Using these things gave your work a kind of cache of its own; I remember a cartoon from the time of (I believe, please correct me if I'm wrong) Gordon Carleton telling Phil Foglio, “You're a real artist! You use Zipatone and everything!”

The way they were used was this: they came in sheets about a foot long and 9" wide, with the texture printed on plastic with an adhesive background. You cut out a piece that would fit over the outline you wanted to fill with it, laid it down on your drawing, and then, with the sharpest, brand-new, No. 11 X-Acto knife blade you could find, you very, very, very carefully cut around or over the outline, which you'd probably drawn in India Ink.

It wasn't easy to do this without causing some damage to the outline underneath. India ink is not penetrating; it's a surface ink (which makes it, technically, a paint), and can more or less easily be dislodged from paper. Cut too deep and this happens, as if the ink were doing it on spite. So then you had to fill in those tiny white lines by hand...



Letraset made all kinds of "fill" patterns. I think I owned each of these at one time or another and had several favorites.

Speaking of India Ink, back in the day, if you wanted a nice, consistent line-width in your drawings, you used an arcane device called a "technical pen," or a "Rapidograph" after a common brand name. (I just looked them up. They still make these. And I thought they were expensive back then!) These were some of the tetchiest devices imaginable, and me, being an idiot, I always liked to work with the narrowest one: a 6-Zero size, that made an incredibly fine line. These blocked up regularly. Sometimes they leaked. Sometimes you just went back to your crow-quill pen and soon

realized exactly *why* you'd given up on the crow-quill and gone over to technical pens in the first place. Nowadays, when people want consistent lines, they use Inkscape. Wusses...

Oh! And rubber cement! Rubber cement was how you got your pictures to stick to your page. The fumes from rubber cement were something else, and the stuff got everywhere. When I worked in the Lord & Taylor ad studio, we used it by the gallon, in windowless, indoor rooms! Rubber cement re-mover? That was toluene, and we used that by the gallon, too. That wouldn't be allowed now! And one day the cleaning service told us they weren't emptying our trash anymore because it stuck to every-thing. Ah, heady days, those. Also, to get rubber cement off there were these little, conical cans with nozzles on. Boss giving you a hard time? Use them as a weapon!

Back in the latter half of the 1970s, color copiers were just appearing on the market. A color copy was *hugely* expensive for a zined: \$0.75 a copy then, which is about \$4.25 now, and zines then often had 100-200 subscribers. Also, color printers didn't pick up all the colors. "Non-Photo Blue," a color (a sky-blue pen or pencil used to make notes on things to be photographed later) was still not picked up. We had to develop plenty of work-arounds. So a zine with a color cover was something really special.

Once one had all the pages in hand, it was time for something which probably doesn't happen anymore: the Collating Party. One could pay to have printed pages collated, but as far as zine costs go, zineds were constantly sailing very close to the wind as it was. So one ordered pizza, or made lasagna, bought some Coke, invited all your friends far and near, and walked round and round and round a table, putting one page on top of another. Get out the heavy-duty stapler, two staples on the edge, and finally, you had a zine!

(Interesting Collating Party story: When the *Snow on the Moon* anthology was being collated, I tried to fly out to Lansing to join the party. Had a stop-over in Cincinnati. On landing, we flew directly over a rooftop that had "WELCOME TO CLEVELAND!" painted on it. But that's not the weird part. Couldn't go on to O'Hare because there was a blizzard there. Couldn't go back to JFK because there was a blizzard *there*. So I got an overnight stay in Cincinnati and was finally able to get a flight back to JFK when the blizzard there abated. See what you're missing?)



My favorite drawing, done with a crow-quill pen. It took almost a week to complete, if I remember right. By that time, crow-quill referred to a very, very fine-pointed nib, and not the actual quill of a crow, which gave it its name.

Now came the tricky bit. One could hand out a zine at a collating party for free, or sell them in person at a con. But chances are the zine had subscribers the world over, so you had to rely on the Post Office.

The post office was far more efficient and reliable then than it is now, but it did hiccup from time to time. Zines (rarely, but often enough) got lost in the mail, or were returned for insufficient postage, or arrived in pieces because some piece of machinery had eaten the envelope. In fact, someone once sent me a zine in the mail, and it was returned to them stamped “Occupant Deceased.” (I took the envelope and showed it to the IRS, and said, “An official government organization has declared me dead, so take me off your rolls.” They didn’t buy it.)

Oh... and by the way, air-conditioning had not yet been widely adopted. I am reminded of this because I am sitting here, working on a zine in air-conditioned comfort, on a nice, quiet Linux box with more memory than even I can fill, taking for granted that all the pictures will be in full color, trying to convince this kitten that he does not have to help me type. That’s the 21st century for you. I remember mid-20th century collating parties on the East Coast, in August... 95°, 100% humidity... pure hell with good friends, good food and a worthy cause.

Nevertheless, with all the obstacles, all the persnickety details, all the time and especially all the cost, we put out zines with gusto, and couldn’t wait to get zines from other folks. Sooner or later, zine-editing will burn you out. But just wait. The day will come when zines call you back again. Resistance, as Vagon Guards say, is useless.

A sneak peek of Lee Gold's upcoming book.

VALHALLA: Into Darkness

by Lee Gold

“So what have you been doing lately, Brother?”

“Now that mistletoe’s promised to play nice, I’ve been making birdlime squirters for my Hel twins’ weddings. Promise me that you won’t curse my joke this time.”

“I don’t usually repeat myself.”

“And?”

“No more curses on your jokes, I promise. Is there anything else I can do for you?”

“The peace treaty said I couldn’t go to Vana Home. Can you send a raven to invite my mother and brother to my children’s weddings.”

“I already sent one at Yule. He couldn’t find either of them. But the Norns say that they aren’t dead, so there’s still hope.”

“Hope is always good. The peace treaty didn’t mention my children.”

“They hadn’t been born yet. But yes, it was unimaginative.”

“Not a mistake either of us would ever have made.”

“I imagine that if you send even one of your children, it’ll end up with all their oathmates going.”

“Do you object?”

“I won’t order it, but no. I don’t object.”....

Robin went to the feast hall, and there was Loki Laufeyson sitting in a tall chair she’d never seen before, which wasn’t surprising because she hadn’t explored more than a few dozen rooms in Play Hall. The chair’s back was about two ells high and carved with flowers and flames and it was dyed with all the bright colors of Bifrost, the Rainbow Bridge.

No, Loki wasn't sitting at the head of the table. He was sitting in the middle of the line of chairs, the traditional Old Norse place of honor..

"Do I curtsy to you?" Robin asked him. She knew she hadn't learned much Asgard etiquette. She wasn't sure she'd ever learn enough Asgard etiquette to be considered mannerly. She wasn't sure she wanted to.

Loki laughed, which should have been reassuring except that his eyes suddenly shone very bright, except that the laugh went up and down the scales for several octaves. He finally fell silent, then said, "No, you don't have to curtsy, wonderful daughter-in-law-to-be. I made up my mind last night. I'm going to give you and Frost a mission before we set the date for your wedding."

"Of course you are," said Frost, who was sitting at Loki's right hand. "We're honored, Father. What's the mission?"

"I'll do it," said Robin, "because it's an honor, and because I love having you call me wonderful daughter-in-law-to-be."

"Then that's settled," said Loki. "Frost, I want you to go to Vana Home and invite your Grandmother Laufey to the wedding. I don't know where she's living nowadays. She might still be on her home island or she might have moved somewhere else or.... I don't know *if* she's still living. "

"A *Grandmother?*" thought Robin, who'd never met either of her own, just seen old photographs of them, taken before they'd died. "*What will a Vana Grandmother be like? Laufey means Leafy. Is Grandmother Laufey going to be like a Dryad?*"

"Why don't you go there and invite her, Father?" asked Kari, who was sitting at Loki's left hand.

"I'm going to be busy here for awhile," Loki said, "And I gave them my word of honor at the last truce that I'd never go back there."

"Any other reasons?" Frost asked him.

"They passed a law that they'd kill me if I ever came back there," Loki said. "It was a long time ago, of course. They may have forgotten about it by now. And, oh yes, before you go there, Frost, you and Riddler Robin should go to Gerd's Garden in Jotun Home and unchain Vana hostage Njord the Ship Lord and ask him if he wants to go back to Vana Home and move back in with his old wife his sister. Freya tells me the Vanir insist it's socially acceptable back there to marry your sister even if it's incest, and she and her brother are certainly pretty proof that it produces lovely children. Or maybe Njord will want me to turn matchmaker and find him a new wife somewhere else in the nine worlds, someone that Odin likes and that Njord likes too. Even if Njord goes back to Vana Home, that'll still give Asgard and Jotun Home two Vanir hostages: Frey Njordson and Freya Njordsdaughter."

"We're honored by your trust in us," said Robin, sitting down next to Frost. "Anything else?"

"Yes," said Loki, "but it'll be more difficult. Some time after Freya Njordsdaughter came to

Asgard with her father, she picked up a husband from somewhere else in the nine worlds, a fellow named Od, and she had a beautiful daughter who might even be by him. Now I know that Od wasn't me, and Odin swears that Od wasn't him, and nobody's seen Od in centuries, and every time Freya thinks of Lost Od she cries, big beautiful tears of red gold. Go find Lost Od, children, and bring him back to poor Freya, and in exchange.... I'm not going to ask anybody to swear an oath. Oaths are often inconvenient. But I want you, all three of you, to consider asking Lady Freya for a gift if and when you ever find Lost Od and bring him back here and find that sweet Freya is grateful to you."

"Yes," said Robin, "I'll do all that," and Frost agreed and so did Kari.

"Good," said Loki, "And I'll.... I'll do what I think needs doing, as much as I can manage of it. To your good health. To the good health of everybody here including me."

(and then, a little later)

I went to Urd's Well to take another look at the Norns' tapestry. When I heard footsteps coming, I ran up the Tree Trunk and hid because I didn't feel like making conversation with strangers. Or with friends. And when I saw it was Sigyn Lokiswife, I didn't come down and say hello to her even though she was dressed very beautifully in shining gold, the color of sunlight.

She walked over to their tapestry and stared at it. "The darkness keeps growing," she said. "Is Dark Elf Land going to conquer the nine worlds?"

"Ragnarok isn't coming anymore," Skuld told her, "but that doesn't mean the nine worlds aren't going to end someday. Fimbul Winter is coming."

(I felt a cold shiver run down my spine. I'm not the scholar that Bookwyrms is, but I've heard the prophecies of Fimbul Winter. It'll be three years of darkness with no summer coming in between them. The crops will all fail, and the nations will all go to war with one another for food.)

Modern scholars blame these stories on a volcano that erupted somewhere back in 535-536. Procopius of Byzantium said that in 536 "the sun gave forth its light without brightness." Michael the Syrian recorded a centuries-old tradition that during 536-537 the sun shone feebly for a year and a half. Cassiodorus of Rome said that in 538 the light of the sun was weak and the crops had failed.

And, of course, some modern scholars talk about the possibility of a nuclear winter that could blot out the sun's light some time in the future. And some people even talk about deliberately causing a nuclear winter (shiver!) to alleviate global warming.)....

"Is my Loki dead?" Sigyn asked her.

Verdandi pointed down to the tapestry. “His thread twists and turns, goes down and rises up, changes colors and textures. It gets lost sometimes, even from us, and then it turns up again. We haven’t asked Odin if his ravens have seen his foster brother recently. We haven’t asked him if *he’s* seen his foster brother recently from his spy-seat. We haven’t asked him these things because we know he’d only laugh at us. What do you think, Lady?”

“I think that I’ll wait and be very sure that he’s permanently dead before I decide to mourn him,” said Lady Sigyn slowly. “And if he is, and only when I’m absolutely sure that I know who killed him, then I’ll take vengeance. Then I’ll avenge his death on anyone and on everyone who had a hand in it.”

“Don’t vow that,” wise little Urd told her.

“No,” Sigyn told her. “I know better than that. A vow is a sharp knife that can twist in your hand and cut your fingers. The only vows I’ve ever made were to be true to my husband and to love my children.” Then she kissed the three Norns farewell and went back to her home.

(I’d sometimes wondered if valkyries ever argue to see which of them got the honor of bringing in a special hero. Especially whether a valkyrie who worked for Freya ever argued with a valkyrie who worked for Odin to see whether a dead hero would go to Sessrumnir or Valhalla. Now I found myself pitying any valkyrie who ever tried arguing with Sigyn.)

And then that evening, by the light of the full moon, we all went to the Play Hall for nightmark.

In spite of everything I’d heard Sigyn and the Norns say, I’d still hoped that Loki would be there, giggling at us.

But no, there was Odin sitting in the place of honor, with his ravens sitting on his shoulders, but there wasn’t any Loki. Sigyn Odinsdaughter was sitting by Odin’s right hand, wearing gold, the color of her favorite auroras. *(She was wearing brightly dyed clothes to show this was a very formal social occasion like maybe the time to announce the date of a wedding or the date of a killing.)*

Byleist sat down next to his foster brother Odin’s left hand. Frost sat next to Sigyn his mother, and then Kari his sister sat next to him, and then the rest of us found our own seats.

Yes, it was a very formal meal for Play Hall. And a very quiet one.

After we’d all finished eating, Sigyn told us what the Norns had told her. And then she asked Odin, “Why is Fimbul Winter coming, Father?”

“Because last year you let a sea wolf swallow the Moon and a sea wolf swallow the Sun,” he told her. “Did you really think that wouldn’t affect anything?”

“They went back into the sky,” Sigyn said.

“Yes, they did, and a good thing they did,” said Odin. “How long were they stolen? How long did the sea wolf keep the Sun in the Ocean?”

We stared at him in silence.

I’d been busy back then. Busy worrying what would happen next. Busy being afraid. Sometimes even busy doing something.

The sky had been dead black with no lights in it. No Sun and no Moon and no stars and no planets. No way to tell time. It had felt like hours.

“Now the Ocean is hotter than it used to be,” Odin told us. “The Darkness is growing and the Sun is colder, and Fimbul Winter is coming. The nine worlds will freeze in three years of total darkness, and glaciers will march out of the ocean, not just in Jotun Home and Midgard this time but everywhere. And then, after centuries of ice, the Sun will begin to shine again, and there will be great storms that will bring hot rain to thaw the glaciers, and the ocean will thaw, and the worlds will flood with saltwater, and nothing will grow on the land till centuries of rain have washed the soil clean again, and then new plants and animals and people will be able to live there again... But those people won’t be anyone we know. Unless....”

“Unless?” Sigyn asked.

“I needed Kvasir’s Hands as part of Ship Lord Njord’s marriage contract with Sea King Aesir’s daughter Unn. In exchange I’ll get the thieving sea wolf that swallowed the Sun. If Aegir gives me that sea wolf, then I can send a hero or a group of heroes to take it back to Sun, to return what it stole. And I’ve begun brewing a new batch of mead to take to Vana Home. Perhaps they’ll be willing to exchange it for the rest of Kvasir.”

“Vana Home isn’t a safe place to send anything,” Byleist said.

“I know that,” Odin told him. “I know almost everything. What do you want to do for me, Foster Brother? To go to Sea King Aegir and ride the sea wolf thief back to the Sun? To go find Lost Od so pretty Freya can have her husband back? To go tell Frey that we’ll free him from his curse if he’ll free us from our curse? Or to go back to Vana Home and offer to return Kvasir’s Hands and Hoenir’s Heart and Mimir’s Head so you and Loki can have your mother back?”

Byleist laughed. “I’m not the leader of these oathmates, Foster Brother, but I can count higher than that on only one hand. That’s only four things! What order do you want them done in?”

“Get the sea wolf thief first,” said Odin. “Go to Ship Town and call for Sea King Aegir, and he’ll bring her to you. She’s big enough that you can all ride her to Jotunheim to see Frey. Remind him that that the Norse prayed to him for fertility for centuries. He’ll have his leash untied when he promises to restore fertility to Asgard. He’ll have his leash removed when five babies are born in Asgard. And after that.... That’s two out of four. After that....”

He looked farther down the table. “After that, Robin my daughter, you and you oathmates can sing this song by ear, but get the sea wolf thief back to the Sun somehow if you want to stop Fimbul Winter.”

“We’ll do the best we can, Father” Robin said.

I spread out my map of the places where Verdandi had said we’d find Lost Od, and we all looked at them—except for Odin, of course. He’d already seen them. He’s already seen—well, almost everything. No, I didn’t ask him if he knew where we’d find Lost Od. If he’d wanted us to know, he’d have told us, wouldn’t he? Unless, of course, there was something else he’d wanted us to find out in one of the other places.

Famous Felines of Fandom

by Germaine Swanson

Cats seem to play an active role in fandom. These are a few I remember from my time in New York in the 70's. Names are withheld to protect the guilty.

- There was the cat in Brooklyn who caught and fetched crumpled balls of aluminum foil while we stuffed envelopes at her people's home.
- That same cat loved to dexterously remove the hairpins from the bun (hairstyle) I wore at the back of my head while I sat on the couch.
- The one beautiful white one, also from Brooklyn, who used to balance herself on the door frame and launch herself at visitors to her person's room.
- Fa's cat, also from Brooklyn, tolerated me when I hung out at her house trying to be creative. She motivated me to get a cat of my own. Her cat used to watch Fa trim Zip-a-Tone and draw.
- And the cat my daughter remembers best, is the one who lived in New Rochelle and liked to wait at the doorway of the living room to ambush her legs and pull-down her socks when she entered the room. She wasn't his only target, but she had the best reactions of all of us. That was a tough little guy who could hold his own against two collies.
- I have had a total of five cats in my life. Most have never experienced the joy of the mimeo machine or the use of the giant stapler. The two oldest ones used to watch us collate Mark's zine at collation parties in our dining room. They would feign disinterest until the alien humans left. The most cats I ever have had at one time were three. That ended badly. Mine were all from New England.

My favorite fandom cat was a beautiful cat in Boston named Familiar whose person held Star Trek club meetings at her home. She is named here because the only thing she was ever truly guilty of was excessive elegance.

I Got Where I Wasn't Going, by Niall Shapero

continued from Page 16

Chapter 2: Getting There

The Company provided apartment was spacious; easily twenty-five hundred square feet. There was a large kitchen, with a preparation island, a living room, a dining room, a video room, three bedrooms, two baths (one with a step in bath tub), a large library and a combined home office/den. No outside windows—one couldn't have everything, it seems—but the screens on most of the walls could be programmed to either display paintings or live video from remote cameras.

I'd always been afraid of heights, so after a few experiments involving live streamed images from the edge of the Grand Canyon looking down, and images from the top of the TransAmerica Pyramid (also looking down), I switched all but two of the panes to show old favorite pieces of art. Munch's "The Scream", several pieces from my old collection (now at the Eaton - Penny donated them, per my will), along with a few Bonestell pieces I'd always liked and several Kelly Freas pieces that I'd never been able to afford.

The first night was actually better than I could have hoped; someone had finally designed a bed that I could sleep in comfortably, with pillows that were *just right*. I didn't have to fluff the pillows up, nor double them up to get just the right support. Someone had even provided ones that would "close up" over my ears and completely cradle my head. It was a sign that whatever else had happened, the Company was at least intent on making me comfortable (or, at the very least, not *unintentionally* making me uncomfortable).

The Company gave me an apartment located in what had been Old Town in Palo Alto, East of Middlefield and a bit North of University. When I'd been in the SF Bay Area working for them before, I'd had to live a good many miles South in Morgan Hill. This apartment was in what *had* been "rich folks' territory". In 2018, I'd never have been able to afford an apartment, let alone a luxury apartment like this one anywhere near this location. But thirty years change more than just technology. Or, perhaps I should say, in part because of technology.

I found this out the hard way when I left my apartment and headed down to the gym in the basement of the complex. There, working the free weights, was someone in what looked like a top quality fur suit. A lupine fur suit, and a good one. There was even a tongue that hung out of the open mouth.

I nodded in greeting (my first thought was that the wearer must have cold packs or a hidden quiet fan or three) and the eyes tracked my movement as the “suiter” continued doing curls. I set up on one of the cycles, managed to figure out the GUI well enough to start a ride up the Embarcadero to South SF.

I’d been pedaling for about half an hour, glancing over at the “suiter” every few minutes. It seemed impossible to believe that he was actually keeping up his exercise program without risking heat stroke. He finished his own exercise program and walked over to my station. I was perspiring heavily by then; I noticed something that hadn’t been obvious when I’d first spotted the “fur suiter”; the tongue was moist, and dripping saliva. I stopped pedaling, and noticed (finally) that the “fur suiter” was panting—and he sounded much as one would expect a giant wolf would sound doing so.

“Welcome to the Bunker, Doctor Shaefer,” he said, in a strangely accented English. The muzzle added a certain nasalization to his pronunciation that I find hard to transcribe. And it made the facts clear: this was no fur suiter, this was someone whose fur was “home grown”. I continued panting myself, and I could smell him – and it wasn’t a human smell.

“Ah...” I managed to avoid falling off the stationary bike.

“No problem, Doctor Shaefer, I’m part of security here—I know that my kind are ... ‘unfamiliar’ to you. I’m third gen; third generation. Biological uplift.” He held out a hand; fur covered on one side, pads on the other, stubby claws instead of nails on each finger.

I’d always liked dogs ... and he (I assumed the gender) was being polite, so the only proper response was to be polite in turn. I reached out and took his hand; “I’m afraid that you have the advantage of me, sir,” I said.

He laughed; it was a strange huffing sound. “Joseph Lupus. If you want to be really formal about it, Joseph Michael Lupus. Our last names come from the name of the species we were uplifted from.”

“*Canis lupus*,” I said. “It must make for confusing relations...”

“Not among us, Doctor Shaefer. We know our relatives—by scent if not by name and citizen numbers.”

I decided to look up “citizen numbers” later. “If you’re head of Security here, you can call me Nicholas; or if you wish to be equally formal, Nicholas Randolph Shaefer.”

Chapter 3: Wheels Down

I opened the door to my apartment, and smelled something odd; I’d not been much of a “cat” person since my college days. I knew that smell. And the smell of bacon frying.

“Do you like your bacon crispy, or almost blackened?” the voice from the kitchen called out. “Your file didn’t mention.”

“Crispy-stiff; so you’ll need to drain and ...” I stopped as I reached the kitchen. The cat was barely an inch shorter than me—and as the cat was wearing a rather saucy French maid’s uniform, I assumed that it was a female. “Ah...” I took a deep breath.

“I’m a feline uplift; Abyssinian breed line. My name is Lee Ann Abyssi,” the feline said, as she set the bacon on the rack, covered it with a paper towel and began patting it down. “I’m your personal assistant. I’ll be handling your appointments, cooking, cleaning, and ... whatever other tasks you need done.”

“Ah...”

She turned, looked me over the way cats will, and smiled, giving me a clear view of her two centimeter fangs. “And despite appearances, I don’t bite,” she said, and purred. It sounded a bit like the rumble you might expect from a 250 cc motorcycle idling.

“Okay,” I finally managed to say.

Lee Ann turned back to the bacon and put it onto a plate. It looked like eight or ten slices. “That’s a bit much for me right now; perhaps you’d be willing to eat some of them?”

The rumbling purr grew louder. “That’s *very* nice of you, Doctor Shaefer,” she said as she set the plate down on the kitchen nook table. I sat down opposite, and shifted the plate so that it was midway between us.

A few bites in, I couldn’t help but comment, “this is cooked perfectly. Thank you.”

“You’re very welcome, Doctor Shaefer,” she said.

“Ah, perhaps you’ll call me Nick? If we’re going to be working together...”

“I work *for* you Nick ... you’re an E-10, I’m just an E-2. Management thought that you’d be happier with an assistant who had engineering training...”

“Hold up a second,” I interrupted. “Info dump: I don’t know what you mean by an E-10, or an E-2. Help?”

“Oh! Okay, An E-2 is a straight engineer. I have a BS degree in Computer Science, I graduated from Berkeley two years ago. I’m twenty years old. An E-6 is a Principal Engineer, an E-7 is a Senior Principal Engineer, an E-8 is an Associate Technical Fellow, then E-9s and E-10s are Technical and Senior Technical Fellows. There aren’t very many E-10s in the Company right now.”

“So ... I’m some sort of high-muckety-muck now?”

“As the PI, Principal Investigator, on the old BCI project, yes. The Company thought that you’d be happier with someone who had a chance of understanding your work as a personal assistance. They said that you liked cats, and since they knew you wouldn’t be allergic to me...”

I couldn’t help but chuckle. “Yes, that would be a bit of a problem if a personal assistant made me sick.”

“Well, I’d *hope* that I don’t affect your health. I will also live longer than the cats you had when **you** were in college.”

“Well, losing those two fluff-balls was part of the reason I didn’t adopt any others. Hurt too much to lose them.”

“I don’t plan on playing in the street, and while no one is sure how long my kind can expect to live, the people who designed my line were trying for human-range lifespans. Puberty was at age fourteen for me, so ... I’m guessing that the Creators managed to hit close to the mark of a seventy to ninety year lifespan.”

I looked her over carefully. There was no dosimeter on her maid uniform. “Ah...” I managed, and tapped my dosimeter.

She grinned wider, “wolfed” down a half slice of bacon, and laughed. “I don’t wear mine indoors –or, at least, not in a filtered air apartment. I’m class A just like you. Green carded right now, but I like people, and I’ve not gotten into any trouble, so ... I’ll likely be upgraded to plus card status before long.”

“Green card? Plus card?”

“Oh, right! Green card is authorized to breed, but I have to be genetically screened and any tom that I’m interested in would have to be screened and our expected offspring analyzed for viability. Plus card means unlimited breeding authorization, which is nice, but ... it means I’d have to go in for egg donations on a regular basis. That’s a bit messy, and the induced ‘heat’ is a bit rough to handle psychologically. But I’d be more than willing to put up with the minor indignity for the added status.”

I shook my head. I couldn’t help but stare at the being opposite me, crunching on bacon. “I can see that there are just more than a few adaptations I’m going to have to make to this brave new world.”

Lee Ann laughed. “You’re not the Savage, and this isn’t a world made by Aldous Huxley,” she said.

“You’ve read *that* old novel?”

“I read a lot of science fiction – most of the newer stuff is pretty awful, I’ll admit, but the better stories and novels from the 1940s through the mid-1960s are pretty good. My favorite from the 1960s was *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress*. And despite his obvious species-ism, I rather liked John W. Campbell’s editorials, and he managed to train some really neat authors. Anderson, Asimov, Silverberg, Piper...”

“You read H. Beam Piper?”

“I loved *Space Viking* and *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*. I enjoyed the whole *Paratime* series of his, but the racism of his ‘First Level’ types was a bit much. Understandable, given his time, but ... you can understand?”

I couldn’t help but laugh. “I can just imagine. Have you read any of Cordwainer Smith’s stories?”

It was Lee Ann’s turn to laugh. “Do you mean *The Boy Who Bought Old Earth*, or *The Ballad of Lost C’Mell*? ‘Where is the which of the what she did...’”.

“I give up. You’ll have to point me to the better ‘new stuff.’”

“Well, remember that 90% of Science Fiction is crap...”

“Sturgeon’s Law?”

“It dates to last century, but it’s still a good rule of thumb. There are some really nice novels by Radenoure and Pitt that you might like. *The Last Sweet Sound*, their first novel, was published in 2025 and it won both Hugo and Nebula awards. Their latest novel is more of a tech-thriller than SF, but *For The Ashes of Our Fathers* is still a great read.”

“If you’re as good an assistant as a literary reference, I’m sure that this is going to be the beginning of a wonderful friendship.”

“And if you call me ‘Louie’, I *will* scratch you,” she said, but her grin and the sparkle in her eyes took any sting out of the comment. “Don’t worry, I’ve got some films queued up that will make you feel almost at home: *The African Queen*, *The Caine Mutiny*, *Casablanca*, and *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*.”

“Are you a Bogie fan as well?” I asked.

“You are, which is the point, isn’t it? I’ve set up your office in the den, you’re set up for a private connect to the Company’s servers, and your study schedule is set up in your daytimer...”

“My ... daytimer? I’d think everyone would be on computer by now. The ‘paperless office’, remember?”

Lee Ann snorted. “I’ll believe in it when I see it. But **your** way of doing things always involved using a daytimer. So...”

“The Company seems to have thought of everything,” I said.

“We’ll see. Once you’re finished with breakfast, you’ll want to get to work. You’ve got a lot of catching up to do, you know. Think, *The Door Into Summer*.”

“Only I don’t have a drinking problem, no one’s stolen ‘my’ company from me, nor my fiancée – though I lost a wife in this crazy business, it wasn’t as if she turned on me. She thought I was dead,” I

said, and shook my head. Was there nothing that this cat—this “Uplift”—hadn’t read from my old favorites?

“The Company gave me a copy of key sections of your personnel file and security interviews to review as soon as they selected me for this position,” Lee Ann said.

“Did they engineer telepathy into your kind as well?”

“No... but think about it for a moment.” She turned her head and tapped a spot just below the mastoid process. There was a bald spot, where the fur had either been shaved or simply refused to grow. “My implant. Makes for quick studying. There are a lot of things that I’ll be able to help you with.”

I took a deep breath, in through the nose and out through the mouth. A calming breath. “Okay...perhaps I’d better start work now,” I said, pushing away from the table.

The papers that Lee Ann (or some anonymous Company engineer) had laid out for my study were ... interesting. “Neko” had been busy over the last thirty years; he averaged six papers a year – and from the looks of it, at least three papers per year were referenced by upwards of twenty other papers by other researchers over time. After eight hours of hard work, I managed to outline my “plan of attack” and muddle through one recent paper and read a dozen papers from around the time of my departure. After another hour, I had a rough estimate as to how long it would take me to (at least) read through what everyone in my former field thought were the most important research areas “today”. Ten months work, assuming I only took off one day a week.

The sound and smells of cooking interrupted my work around 1900 hours; Lee Ann was making something with ground turkey.

“Ah, what is that?” I said, pointing at the mixture of ground turkey and assorted tomatoes, mushrooms, and less recognizable vegetables.

“Glop. It’s pretty much the recipe that you had...”

“On my laptop,” I said, shaking my head. “Does it still exist? The laptop, that is?”

The Uplifted cat made a sound remarkably close to a human chuckle. “After thirty years? Your company laptop was recovered from your luggage, but your personal laptop? It was recycled years ago, after your wife downloaded all the data. She posted most of the recipes to the net and ...”

“Whatever gets on the net stays FOREVER. Well, at least I won’t have to reconstruct everything. Is Facebook still around? I don’t know about my old account, but ...”

“They were ‘eaten’ by Google-Amazon about six years ago. But after thirty years, your account *has* to have been declared inactive and purged. Of course, the Wayback Machine might be able to recover your posts.”

I couldn’t help but laugh. “Okay, what else has changed while I was ‘gone’?”

“Well, there’s rationing of electricity ... even for Class A’s. The power’s needed to heat the streets.”

“Why? And rationing?”

“To keep back the glaciers. At least in the monad; melt the ice so that it moves *around* the monad instead of over it. We don’t want to end up like Chicago.”

“What happened to Chicago?”

“Went under the Central Glacier eight years ago. Most of the key facilities have been relocated to New Chicago. It will be a while before *that* place is more than just an arcology and a fusion power plant, though. They still have to connect all the sub-shuttle links before you can get there except with a priority travel authorization.”

“Maybe I should get an implant, so that the Company can dump all these changes directly into my brain,” I said.

“It does make things easier,” Lee Ann said, and, sniffing at the mixture on the stove, began ladling the mixture into two bowls. “No beer, I’m afraid. With all the meat, there weren’t enough ration points left over...”

“Ration points? Food is rationed?”

“The War, after all. Once the vertical farms all come on line, we should be able to get off rationing.”

I shook my head and sighed. I picked up the bowl of glop and headed over to the kitchen nook. Lee Ann followed me, and handed me a spoon and a glass of water. “It’s been filtered, so it should be safe,” she said.

“From radiological contamination?”

“Yes, and from biohazards. Perfectly drinkable.”

The rest of the meal was in silence. After clearing the dishes (apparently, my “personal assistant” was also chief bottle washer as well), Lee Ann called up an e-mail notice on one of the wall displays. Heating was to be shut down at 2100 hours, due to power required to deal with a worse than predicted polar vortex due to hit the Bay Area.

“Why?”

“So that energy can be used to heat the streets. We don’t want to go the way of Chicago...”

I shuddered. “Not as much the utopia as I might have hoped for, nor as dark a world as I might have feared,” I said.

“A quote?” Lee Ann asked.

“Something from a friend’s RPG write-up, many years ago.” I shook my head. “Anything else I need to know tonight?”

“It’s going to get cold tonight. This apartment is well insulated, but ... it’s going to be *really* cold out tonight and tomorrow. You’ll really need a bed warmer tonight.” She had a funny expression on her muzzle, and I thought that I’d really need to read up on Uplift expressions.

“Then ‘make it so,’” I said, and began preparing for an early bedtime. After I’d finished my business in the bathroom, Lee Ann was nowhere to be seen. “She must have headed out for her own apartment,” I said to myself as I checked the door; it was locked, and the deadbolt set. She had a key, so she must have just locked up for me. It was going to take a bit getting used to having a “personal assistant”.

“Someone” had put out a pair of pajamas for me – a someone who looked like a bipedal mountain lion, I thought. I changed, and slipped into the bed, and bumped into that same “someone”

“I’m your bed warmer. My body temperature is nearly a degree higher than yours, so with the comforter, we should both stay cozy. Good night, Doctor Shaefer,” Lee Ann said.

It was definitely going to take some time to get used to the new state of affairs.

To Be Continued

Goodies On Our Website!

Just because we're old and cranky, doesn't mean we're fossils! On RETROZINE.NET you'll find:



ROCKY, 3D model of one of the characters from Andy Weir's *Project Hail Mary*, ready for you to edit ([Blender format](#)) or 3D print ([.stl format](#)).



[THE PRANCING DRAGON](#), instrumental music by Fara Shimbo.



Tired of seeing Shimbo's name? So is she! Now it's your turn to provide us with song, story, models or whatever flies your starship!

Saving Mr. Sulu

A Reminiscence by Jon Singer



Early in 1975, having heard there would be a Star Trek convention, I went to the Commodore Hotel. When I got there, I looked around until I found Devra Langsam, a friend in NY Fandom, who was chairing the con. I asked her if she could use any help, and she said yes. It turned out that George Takei was calmly sitting in the huckster room, signing autographs, and was in some danger of being squished. I took a flying wedge down there, and we brought him out, without incident.

That's how I failed to meet Fa, who ...well, she gets to tell how George got to the huckster room in the first place.

Got a story to tell, in words, pictures, or sound?

Deadline for the October Issue is **21 September 2021**.

Here are some tips for getting things to us.

WRITTEN WORD:

For New and Original written-word science fiction, fantasy and fanfic, please send your work in a **plain text file** (no pre-formatting or PDFs, please! We will make them here). This may be .txt (plain text), .odt (OpenOffice, LibreOffice), or .doc/.docx (Microsoft Office), though we can read pretty much every file format you can think of. We don't have a word limit, but we may suggest that anything very long be serialized.

NOTA BENE: Initial submissions must be at least 1,000 words so that we can properly decide if your work is going to be a good fit for our audience.

If you are submitting a story that has previously been published, please note we have a cut-off date; we are only accepting work published in the 20th Century. Please include the place it was originally published, the editor at the time, the date of publication, and any reviews you think might be of interest to potential readers.

If you are including illustrations, please see the notes below for whatever type of art you have. If you were not the artist, please forward permission to use the art from the original artist if the work was not a work-for-hire. (A "work-for-hire" is any work that has been paid for and is therefore no longer the legal property of the creator.) If you wish to use a work which you have purchased from an artist, such as a print, make sure you purchased publication rights as well.

SPOKEN WORD/READ FOR YOU:

Please send text files first! We have really good, experienced editors here who may want to suggest clarifications, additions and the like. Once the story has been accepted, you may choose to narrate it yourself, or choose a narrator. (And please, no offense

intended, but please carefully consider your narration skills before taking this step!) We will give you instructions on how to send sound files if the story is accepted, but we reserve the right to reject a sound file if it is of poor sound quality (too much background noise, cats yowling to be fed, etc).

TRADITIONAL MEDIA ART:

Please send these as .png files, with images as large and clear as you can manage and uncompressed. One shouldn't have to say this, but please only send images of your own work unless the art is an illustration for a story which you are submitting at the same time. If you are considering submitting a print you bought from an artist, please refrain unless you purchased publication rights at the same time.

DIGITAL 2D:

Same as the above really, but here we will accept .psd (Photoshop) and .xcf (GIMP) as well.

3D/3D PRINTABLE:

If you're just sending a static image (or a collection of different views of a 3D object you've made, the guidelines are the same as for Digital 2D. We'd much prefer either .blend (Blender), .skp (SketchUp) or .stl (stereolithography, the standard for most 3D printers) formats for these files. One of us (probably Fa) will likely print your model to make sure that there are no holes, that supports work, and to determine approximately the amount of time and how much filament a print takes. I print on a Lulzbot Mini.

MUSIC and MULTIMEDIA:

Please, please, compress these files before sending them! [filename].tar.gz is preferred. We'll take .wav, .mp3 and .mp4 formats, as these are the most widely compatible with different operating systems. (If you are unfamiliar with translating between formats,

Tenacity is an excellent, and free, tool for sound. If you want to try your hand at video recording and editing, Fa uses OpenShot on Linux (works on all platforms) for her YouTube videos; also free and very easy to learn.

SCULPTURE, CERAMIC and GLASS:

Pictures of same only, please. We cannot be responsible for the way objects subjected to the post may be handled (trust us, we can tell you horror stories). See the guidelines above. Please include the size and medium/media of your creation, and anything else you might think cromulent.

LET'S GET CREATIVE!

If you've got something that just doesn't fit into the categories above, please email a description, and we'll see if we can work something out.

LICENSING:

Original works which are being published for the first time can be [Creative Commons](#) licensed.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST:

You may only contribute your own work! You may not "agent" for someone else, or "surprise" someone by trying to have their work published for them. If you don't own it, don't send it. Fa has been bending computers to her will for almost fifty years now, and both of us have taught, and raised kids. Trust us, we know all the cheats.

Got it? Good! Please send submissions to submissions@retrozine.net. We will send you a note letting you know your submission was received, but we cannot guarantee when we'll get to look at it in depth.

