

Issue 27 - September 1997

Fandom is fun, but at times it can turn ugly. Many readers will have been members of fan clubs, university SF societies or conventions which have been torn apart by politics. By "politics" I mean the antagonism, rivalry, smear campaigns and personal agendas that inevitably emerge when a group of heterogenous individuals join together to administer a club, society or convention. Politics is no less prevalent in fan groups - indeed, it often seems more prevalent - than in other voluntary or professional societies, such as Mensa (which has had its own share of troubles at local, national and international levels).

Unpleasant as such conflicts may be, it would be simplistic to assert that the issues about which political squabbles develop are always unimportant, or that those who engage in such disputes and rivalries are simply trouble-makers. Therefore in my own associations as a fan, I always try to remember that like myself, those involved in fan politics are volunteers who have given their time and energy for a love of the genre. By keeping this in mind, it ought to be possible to raise our tolerances and moderate our expectations, to ensure that fandom remains fun despite the occasional and inevitable argument.

This issue's contents include short stories by Ken Goldman and Tony Chandler, who make their debuts in this issue of *Ibn Qirtaiba*. Keep an eye out for their return to these pages before too long. We also have three regular features in the form of two more *Dear Sis* letters, the *Sci-Fi Corner* and a poem. *W* Gregory Stewart takes a break this issue as we feature the poetry of Keith Allen Daniels, who has been lauded as "one of the foremost science fiction poets of our time" by David Kopaska-Merkel of *Dreams & Nightmares* magazine.

As a bonus this issue, there is a short quiz on media SF, which you can complete on-line and have marked automatically. If you like this idea, let me know and I'll make sure it returns in the future. Finally, our featured artist for issue 27 is Dawid Michalczyk, a computer graphician from Denmark who specialises in fantasy and science fiction. He is a member of a computer game company named AuroraWorks and intends to become a computer based freelance artist. You may visit his gallery by clicking on any of his 3D images in this issue.

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Short Story: The Cleansing @ 1996 Ken Goldman

*Cleanse thou me from secret faults.
The King James Bible
Psalms XIX, 12*

Abner looked from his pillow over his shoulder through the half opened window to see if he might catch the first purple streaks of the sun spreading across the early morning sky. The familiar colors of the morning were not there yet and that made the old man uneasy. Things were no longer as certain as they once were, and a man who had accumulated the years Abner had never was comfortable when events regarded as consistently predictable proved otherwise.

His wife awoke and sat upright in the bed, her back too stiff against the headboard to appear entirely comfortable. She stared at the faded rose-strewn wallpaper, hesitating before she spoke as if trying to assess her thoughts. The withered flesh that framed the woman's quivering lips suggested that tears would not be very difficult to coax from her.

"A family should not be apart at a time like this. I know Ben and Mary Beth have their own families now, but I just can't seem to get past the disappointment of not having them here at home. Their place is here with us!" The words poured from her like floodwater spilling over a dam too weak to contain it.

Abner reached for his dentures. "Let it rest, Flora. Their place is where they are just like our place is here. This is the way it ought to be."

"Nothing is the way it ought to be!"

The husband nodded in agreement but could no longer look at his wife. When he spoke again it had come his turn to study the wallpaper.

"You ever consider what His purpose might be, Flora? Would the Almighty wager so many of his chips 'less he's got some sort of plan?"

The woman looked hard at her husband. Abner rarely was very lucid so early in the morning, especially following the first painful minutes after he had inserted his store bought ivories. Although she never doubted the man's faith she had not been able once in the last forty years to rouse his God-fearing soul from bed for church on a Sunday morning.

"The Lord's plan isn't always for us to know," she offered, paraphrasing Scripture for want of a more original response that might indicate she had any idea of what he was talking

from the couple's kitchen window, a speck of light appeared.

Exactly twenty-four thousand two hundred and fifteen miles from Earth the fiery comet raced toward their back yard.

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Short Story: *What Will Never Be @ 1997* Tony Chandler

Changra held the words he had carefully prepared these last weeks, now putting off the event even as Renal now did with his somber gaze over the ocean beside them. Long they walked, silent, feeling the cool salty breeze buffeting them amid the calming sound of the breakers.

But time does not stand still, not even for the Krangok.

The coastline they walked was like many others, on many other worlds. Sugar white sand met the never-ending march of waves. Like time itself. And yet it was different.

Under the star filled sky these coastal waters glowed with a purplish sheen from the billions of tiny creatures who lived and died just under the surface.

If not so completely alone, the way they had planned it, the two solitary figures would have presented a picture most unique in this coastal setting. Two graying warriors of the Krangok dressed in old and faded uniforms, as if ready for some ancient ship-board inspection, except for the missing footwear they had left behind where their walk began. So they continued, side by side in an easy familiar gait.

"I never thought this day would come, Changra." Renal's voice faded on the wind as he stared over the dark waters that met the universe somewhere on the distant horizon, kissing the sky. His weathered eyes narrowed, making pronounced his deeply etched wrinkles.

A wave, bigger than the rest, sent the thickly foaming remnants of its strength up around their ankles. Their feet and ankles engulfed, they felt the strong tugging force as the water returned quickly from where it came. Standing still in the swirling foam laced waters, they felt the tingling sensation as the sand under their feet eroded and gave way to the tide's irresistible power. But they stood fast, as if fighting the force of time itself.

Changra laughed silently.

"Share your humor," Renal asked, he too wanting to avoid the reason for their really being there.

"Imagine... my building a house within sight of an ocean like this." Changra smiled. "And I would walk on its edge every evening. And swim in it every day."

"And what a grand day that will be." Renal said smiling.

On that twilight beach they walked together again, one last time, side by side in an easy familiar gait.

Renal and Changra, lifelong friends, never saw each other again.

Far, far away their separate journeys led. Wild, wonderful things awaited each; worlds of exquisite beauty, worlds of haunting, fantastic sites.

But despite their lasting separation, their friendship never ended. For in each, their heart and memory, they carried that friendship with them.

Always.

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Sci-Fi Corner @ 1997 Fred Noweck

Hi campers! It's that time of month again, and time again to bring you this month's four books for your edification.

The books this month are:

- *The Ayes of Texas*, by Daniel da Cruz, DelRey Books
- *Wishing Season*, by Esther Friesner, Baen Books
- *The Crafters*, edited by Christopher Stasheff and Bill Fawcett
- *The Far Edge of Darkness*, by Linda Evans, Baen Books

The Ayes of Texas takes place in the near future (well, the near future when it was written, it's a little out of date now) in which the main character, Gwillem Forte, an immensely rich paraplegic, comes up with a scheme to get a friend of his elected president of Texas. (Yes, Texas becomes its own country.) He buys the battleship that he served aboard during WWII, and with the help of other disabled vets and his scientific experts, turns it into an ultra-modern atomic-powered craft the equal of anything afloat. What he didn't count on was the Russians attacking and having only the rebuilt USS Texas being the only thing standing between annihilation and freedom.

This is a very fast read and I thoroughly enjoyed it. This is the first of a series of three (I won't call it a trilogy as each of the books can stand alone).

in the sci-fi sections of the major bookstores. I have enjoyed your reviews, wanting to read the books reviewed. Short of taking them from your personal library, I sadly find that I am not able to purchase or obtain the books mentioned in your reviews. I, and I guess your other readers would find it most helpful if your reviews centered on those books readily obtainable. Thanks for your consideration.

Jay W.

Well, Jay, I can only say that you haven't been looking very hard. I go into a book store and take apart those book shelves so that I see what's behind every one of the front books. You find all sorts of gems that way. Of course, you have to put the rejects back on the shelves or the proprietor will get a little peeved with you....

OK, that's it for this month. Keep sending in letters to this column and I'll keep answering them. Remember, this column can't exist without your support! See ya!

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Serial: Dear Sis, part 4 @ 1997 Leann Arndt

06-14-2005

Dear Sis:

Ah Lucy, by the way, calling Lucifer by your name, well, it has nothing to do with my feelings for you or mom. Who'd have thought that mom's obsession with Bram Stoker's Dracula would lead to naming her daughters Lucy and Mina. It doesn't matter. I just wanted you to know that I never have and never will regard you as satanic.

Sis, I thought I had this dang blurned thing figured out. Right now, I'm standing right back in front of my house. This time I hit on the morning before my Zartosian abduction.

I don't know what in tarnation is going on. Besides, I got here and there was old plug ugly Beezle, or a bad ugly substitute, watching my earlier self take a bath. You know, since he is going on Lucy transport and I'm using this thing, well, he can no more see me than the earlier me can. I know, I know, he saw me back on Zartos. Well, back on Zartos my messing around had shut down part of it.

You know, if I figured this out right, I can shut down the invisibility part and have a little fun with old Beezle. I'll leave my Zartosian gadget on and you'll be able to listen in via letter.

"Beezle, Beez snoogie oogums, are you looking for me?"

"Woman where are you? Our master requires you now."

take care of that for you."

"What are you doing woman?"

"Smack!"

"Oh Good God In Heaven! Save me from this infernal woman!"

(BANG)

Well sis, apparently my plan worked. I think asking for help of someone other than Lucy was the big no-no. From the loudness of that sound I suspect that Beezle went from the proverbial frying pan right back into that proverbial fire.

This last time I think I just happened to twist the wrong knob. I should be seeing you soon sis. At least, no matter what, Beez'll be out of my hair. Bye.

Mina

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Poem: *The Houri and the Hoplites* @ 1996 Keith Allen Daniels

As curvy as the space
around collapsars, a starlord
of a high albedo strain,
she is lounging with the languor
of iguanas, she is squamous
in her crystalline domain.

For long and long
she's drifted here in darkness,
pariah for the violence of her will,
conjecturing stochastic, strange
encounters, and dreaming
of another chance to kill.

Some scales have broken loose
and float around her, a torus
of detritus -- a tiara
bejewelled like the diadems
of yore. In time invaders come

to mine her surface, to pry
encrusted prisms from within --
a race of armored hoplites,
avaricious, enamored
of her lapidary skin.

By slow degrees she sheds
her wonted torpor, the interlopers
wither in her gaze -- a gaze
like that of some affronted Gorgon,

a relict of the vaunted glory days.

The hoplites cease their hopping,
stand there frozen
in postures nearly comic or obscene,
like pieces in a pixilated
chess game, a game whose only
winner is the Queen.

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Media SF Quiz

Try your luck at Ibn Qirtaiba's second-ever quiz! This time, the quiz is automatically marked for you, so there's no temptation to cheat. Be sure to enter all answers precisely, including words such as "The" where appropriate (eg. *The Day The Earth Stood Still*).

General SF television

1. Which science fiction TV series required a "bear" in each episode?

2. What is Chris Carter's mother's maiden name?

3. With whom did the Terrians first establish a bond?

☐

Devon Adair

☐

Julia Heller

☐

Alonzo Solace

☐

John Danziger

Star Trek

4. Which episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was inspired by the British series *The Prisoner*?

5. Which episode shares its title with an episode of *The Prisoner*?

6. How many five year missions had the original USS Enterprise flown before Kirk became its captain?

1 2 3 4

Movies

7. What was John Carpenter's first film?

8. On what other film was *Twelve Monkeys* based?

Doctor Who

9. Which Doctor from the original BBC series never met the

Cybermen?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7

10. Which Doctor from the original BBC series had only two stories which were studio-bound?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7

Submit your answers

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