



The *Illuminata*

Delving Deep Into The Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

Writing Three Dimensional Characters (1 of 4)

By Bret Funk

Characters form the backbone of any good story. When properly written, characters draw readers into their world, making the fantastic real, the impossible possible, and the ordinary extraordinary. Through them, readers experience life, relive their own pasts, and learn valuable lessons. A mediocre story with great characters still appeals, while any story – even one with an exceptional premise – quickly grows stale if the characters do not seem real.

But what makes a good character? Why are some flat and lifeless, while others stir something deep within our souls?

The answer lies in dimension. Characters with no dimension are boring; they should exist only as filler, if at all. One-dimensional characters are appropriate in jokes, fables, or other forms of writing where a single event is told. In such writings, the character is not important except as a vessel through which the lesson (or punchline) is related. In these literary forms, one character can easily be substituted for another; they are not important. Characters of two dimensions are appropriate to short stories, where

character growth is not essential. Here again, the characters are more a means to an end than true creations. Their purpose is to relate a story or prove a point, their personal struggles, internal growth, and reactions are not as important as the *story*.

In novel-length works, the characters *are the story*, and it is through them that authors attempt to hold a reader's attention. To achieve this goal, characters must seem real; and to seem real, they must remind us of ourselves. They need to struggle, learn, and grow. They need to feel – love, fear, regret... the entire spectrum of

emotions. They need to have a past and a future, and they must learn from watching others as much as from their own experiences. Most importantly, they must be unique, something that dimensionless characters never seem to be.

As an example, take Superman and Batman. Superman's popular appeal has lessened since his first appearance, while Batman's has grown. The explanation for this lies in dimension. In recent years, Superman's character has undergone significant changes, but the Superman of old was a flat character. He was never tempted, never conflicted, and nigh on impossible to defeat. He had only one weakness and a host of amazing powers. After a while, readers could not stomach his holier-than-thou attitude and smug perfection, not because they disagreed with the morality he espoused, but because Superman was an unbelievable character; no real person could be that good.

On the other hand, the character of Batman, while still pushing the bounds of the impossible, carries far more dimension. A soul tormented by the murder of his parents, he stalks the night, seeking to bring justice to a world without it. He is mortal, far from indestructible, and his thoughts are often plagued by doubt, regret, and worry, especially in regard to the young side-kicks who he draws into his life of vigilante crime-fighting. Readers have an easier time understanding Batman's motivations and relating to his plight, his past is clearer and more readily defined, and his suffering is shared by those who follow his tale.

When writing, it is tempting to create dimensionless characters, if for no other reason than expediency. Especially when the role is a minor one, investing significant time and effort may seem counterintuitive. These are the characters whose names are never known, whose deaths evoke little emotion, and whose lives we know nothing about. Such characters can, and often do, serve a purpose, but it is rarely an essential one, except, perhaps, in their effect on more major players. Their history is unimportant, their future is irrelevant, and their thoughts would probably be mundane. Moreover, even if the time is taken to flesh out these characters, their lives will rarely grace the pages of a completed manuscript.

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Part II: The Combatant

Last month, we looked at why characters may resort to fisticuffs and how combat could and should be handled if one wants lots of fun-type fighting, or rare and deadly engagements. This month, and in the two to follow, there is little philosophy to be had in my little corner, as we turn our attention to the nitty-gritty basics of how people fight in role-playing games.

The mechanics of combat and fighting involve two areas, the man and the materials. There are related miscellaneous considerations, such as unarmed combat, fighting specifically to subdue, and using magic; but at its most basic, combat will involve men (or women!) with weapons attacking one another. To start, let's look at the only prerequisite for combat, the combatant.

As was discussed in the character creation columns, each character has a list of physical Attributes (Strength, Intelligence, Charisma, etc.), and using these Attributes we can create what is called initiative. **Initiative** is a method of determining who may act first in a combat situation – because of natural quickness, combat savvy, or whatever. The person with the best initiative score will have the first turn in a combat situation. To determine initiative I intend to add the Dexterity and Perception Attributes (so that watchful and naturally nimble people will have better initiative scores than slower or less observant ones), but I will also subtract the Weapon Speed (to be discussed in **Part III: Tools of War**) to determine the final number. Easy enough, eh? Now I need to complicate things. Initiative is a number that reflects the innate quickness of a character, but it does not mean that the character with the lowest initiative goes first. Initiative can be lost in lots of ways while people are fighting. Being knocked to the ground, stunned, being incapacitated by chemicals or magic, or just about anything you can imagine can result in initiative penalties, or to the loss of initiative entirely.

Next, the characters themselves have to learn how to wield and care for their weapons. Usage and maintenance can be lumped into one Skill, and that Skill is learned just like any other. The Game Master must decide under which Attribute the Weapon Skill belongs, whether it be Strength or Dexterity, or whether it can be in either. I feel that Weapon Skills should fall under Dexterity, because so much of wielding swords and whatnot is a matter of technique, not Strength. However I do admit that without sufficient strength, a character will not be able to use a heavy weapon (a

mace) with the same proficiency as a lighter one (a short sword). The problem of a weapon's weight is addressed later, in the **Materials** section.

As before, a base Skill of 15% is what any character begins with (at least in my system). The base skill may be as broad as you like. For example, if the Game Master likes for players to be able to grab any weapon at hand and use it relatively well, the basic Skill can be set to include all swords. This means that the character's knowledge of swordplay is not limited to a particular kind of sword, and he can use a shortsword as well as he can use a broadsword. On the other hand, if the Game Master wants more specific Skills, he may decide that the character will need a separate Skill for daggers, shortswords and longswords. For example, a character with a Longsword Skill of 45% loses his weapon, but picks up a rapier. His proficiency skill with the new weapon would be the base score of 15%, not 45%, whereas with a broad Base Skill, the character's odds of success are at 45% no matter what kind of sword he has.

I chose both versions for my system (I can too do that, I'm the Game Master). The Weapon Skills will work just like the Skills under an Attribute. If you will recall, a character may have any number of skills under an Attribute up to 50%. He may only have Skills in excess of 50% equal to or less than his rating in that Attribute. The Weapons Skills behave the same way. All characters will have a **Base Weapon Skill** (BWS), which begins at 15%, and a **Specific Weapons Skill** (SWS) that also begins at 15%. The Specific Weapons Skill cannot exceed the Base Weapons Skill. Additionally, once the BWS exceeds 20%, the character may begin learning a second SWS, which begins at 15%. For every ten percentiles on the BWS, the character is permitted to study another weapon. Conceivably, a character with a 99% BWS may study and operate with proficiency up to eight different weapons!

Another rule I'm attracted to and use is this: if a character picks up a weapon he is not familiar with, he will use his BWS divided by four and rounded up, meaning that once the character's BWS reaches 64%, he is naturally better with any weapon he comes across than an untrained character. A master swordsman (99%) who picks up a mace will have a Base Skill of 25% with that weapon, whereas a novice will begin at 15% in the same circumstances. Remember, no SWS may exceed the BWS, so the character must always strive to improve the Basic Skill, or he will hit a ceiling with all of his other weapons. The process of mastering 8 different

Companions: Ballast and Balance for the Protagonist:

Epictetus, the influential Stoic philosopher who was born a slave about A.D. 55 in Phrygia, part of the eastern outreaches of the Roman Empire, proffered thoughts on companionship. He warned individuals to be selective about whom they took on as friends, colleagues and neighbors, saying all of these can have an effect on one's destiny. He went on to say that it is key to keep company only with those who prove uplifting, whose presence calls forth one's best.

Epictetus's words can be taken to heart by the writer when applying our fifth archetype of fantasy (and other good) writing: *Companionship*. The characters with whom we surround our protagonist not only serve a very important role but have the power to break or make the story. First, let's discuss what useful functions companions can provide.

Well-established, carefully considered companions will offset the protagonist so as to illuminate *her* character – both her heroic traits and those personal traits that prove a liability on their journey together. Certainly, members of the supporting cast, so to speak, must take on a full and rich life of their own to be convincing – indeed they often are protagonists in their own right if (depending on the depth and length of the work) they are woven centrally into subplots – yet it is how they reflect the main character in which they serve their most essential and necessary purpose.

Companions are frequently a study in contrasts, a literary device which not only allows the reader to distinguish each character early on and fix them firmly in mind, but which achieves – at least in part -- precisely the purpose stated above. Think Huck to Tom (Twain's *Tom Sawyer*), Dahr to Jeran (Funk's *Path of Glory*), or Diana Barry to Anne Shirley (Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*). Still, what binds companions is at least as important as what sets them apart and it is in the believability and strength of such friendships that the most memorable of literary companionships are forged.

Companions are the sounding boards against which a protagonist can bounce thought and weigh actions. They are often the playing fields, upon which are made manifest the inner conflicts of the main character. Typically there will be a severing between the protagonist and her closest companion at some point in the story, sometimes by choice while at other times by force, and such partings become part and parcel in some way to the mounting tension inherent in the tale. The reunion, which inevitably comes, usually signals a

cynosure wrought by a greater level of understanding – a maturing of the relationship – which then deepens the bond that has already been established. In other words, when enduring crisis, what doesn't destroy, strengthens.

What, then, of protagonists who seem to be companionless? Indeed, there are strikingly few, for even as we in life, those who dwell in the lands of fiction rarely dwell alone. Some characters – such as Ayla in *Clan of the Cave Bears* – may spend a considerable portion of their journey without a companion, yet rarely are they alone. This truth is borne up even when examining a truly single-character-driven tale such as *Island of the Blue Dolphins*.

I say this because, in these instances, the role of companion archetype is taken on by animals -- perhaps even by the protagonist's interaction with the environment itself. This same, necessary dynamic of relationship can be orchestrated by a gifted writer whether the 'companion' speaks or not. So intrinsic is the drive to interact that a protagonist might even manufacture a companion for this very purpose, as in – for example – the tale *Castaway*, which finds the main character (Tom Hanks) personifying a soccer ball. The connection is so vital that the protagonist is willing to risk his life to 'save' this companion, thus the demonstrated ability of even an inanimate object to serve the reflective role of this archetype and to illuminate for the audience the strengths and weaknesses of the protagonist's character.

In some tales a protagonist will have, in place of a single companion, an entourage. A group of subordinate characters can certainly serve to fulfill the fifth archetype. In fact, multiple companions can frequently serve the needs of this archetype more interestingly than can a single sidekick, each functioning to reflect different aspects of the main character's development throughout the story.

Finally, there may be a more transient approach to companionship -- especially in longer or episodic works. In the transient handling of this archetype, the role and function of companion is passed from character to character, these being individuals with whom the protagonist comes into contact during the tale, rather than being one or more companions who accompany her all along.

In keeping with the pattern we've established in earlier installments of this series, let's divide assignments. Readers, using the story or stories you've selected, identify the companion or companions used by the author. Is there one who remains faithfully

Whatever Happened To The Starship Enterprise? (3 of 5)

by Erin Branham

A five-part look at the history of Star Trek and its fandom through the eyes of a lifelong Trekkie.

Part Three: To Boldly Stay in One Place

"Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war!"

- Julius Caesar, Act III

Taking its cues from other successful TV spin-offs, Paramount premiered *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* before TNG's final season. From the start DS9 was radically different from what had come before. There was to be no starship, just an alien space station. There was to be no intrepid captain, only an embittered commander. For the first time, Gene Roddenberry, who was very ill, had no involvement in the conception of the series, though he did give it his approval before he died. The leading man was an African-American, his executive officer was a woman. All of these factors created a show that was superficially unrecognizable as Trek.

Fan reaction was lukewarm. The premiere episode was a complicated meditation on the nature of time and humanity's perception of it, told in terms of the intensely personal struggle of Benjamin Sisko. It was strange and powerful and cerebral and confusing. In retrospect, "Emissary" can be seen as one of the high points of Trek. The producers really gambled, floating the greatest ideals of Trek, equality and infinite diversity in infinite combinations – an African-American man, an Irishman, two alien women, an Arab, a short, frog-faced conman, and a liquid played by a Frenchman – saying to us, "Pony up, boys and girls. Here's your chance to prove you mean it." In a touching essay concluding his novelization of the DS9 episode "Far Beyond the Stars", author Steve Barnes talks about growing up as an SF fan who was also black. Black characters were never the leaders in science fiction stories, just side-kicks. And they tended to die. He tells how his friends would greet him returning from an SF flick with, "How did they kill the brother this time?" He also tells how DS9's success impressed him. He said that by supporting and loving DS9, Trekkies proved they could walk the walk as well as talk the talk.

On top of that little reality check, "Emissary" was Science Fiction (<< note capital letters). It was smart and philosophical. It didn't play down to its audience. It expected you to work your understanding of what it is to be human – and love doing it. It's one of those stories that grows each time you revisit it. But on first viewing, the story was so mind-bending it didn't make a huge impact. Following it were two seasons

that were almost unrelentingly staid. The anti-formula of DS9's conception meant all the characters were touchy and uncomfortable with each other. They weren't always easy to like. Kira, the first officer, wasn't even Starfleet – and she was an ex-terrorist to boot – not a character designed to inspire identification in a time when reality was haunted by terrorism. Until "Duet", the compelling story of a file clerk who took the identity of the former commander of a concentration camp in order to martyr himself for his race's crimes. Suddenly it was clear that there was much more here than it seemed at first glance. Whatever that was, it didn't really start to emerge until late in the second season, and DS9 began a slow, step-wise ascent that would only get better and better.

It was plain the audience was not ever going to get exactly what Trek had usually delivered. Prior to this, Trek had been about explorers. Avery Brooks, who played Ben Sisko, described the major difference in the storytelling concisely – Sisko was a builder, the settler who came in, took the frontier opened by trailblazers and turned it into civilization. The universe of DS9 was more complicated than that of either *Star Trek* or *The Next Generation*. Instead of presenting humans as an enlightened species that breezed in with solutions and left both more "primitive" and more "advanced" races better for the encounter, DS9 was a melting pot of diverse cultures trying to work out boundaries and create something completely new. Beginning with the embittered race of the planet Bajor recovering from a dictatorial occupation, ex-Federation colonists called the Maquis – the name of the French underground during World War II – cast as terrorists who had been abandoned in an demilitarized zone, and the vicious Cardassians, a race of conquest oriented baddies, it evolved into a connected years-long story where no single species was completely good, and none completely evil. It questioned the bastion of fictional Trekkdom, the United Federation of Planets, through a few of the outsider characters, most memorably in a hilarious exchange that compared the Federation to root beer. A new enemy was introduced, the Founders, a race which created a fascist state to protect themselves from the persecution that had been visited upon them by "solids". They were strange, but often sympathetic, cruel slavers whose slaves worshipped them as gods. And if all of that wasn't enough to differentiate DS9, the bulk of the series dealt with something supposedly counter to Trek's utopian viewpoint – war.

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Inner Views: An Interview With Don Pedro Colley (3 of 3)

by Terry Crotinger/montanasing

Continuing my interview with actor, Don Pedro Colley, we talk about missing-in-action sci-fi actors. I have also included a behind the scenes *Planet of the Apes* story Don Pedro emailed me!

Terry: Is it luck? Is it talent? Who you know? Is it a combination of all of them?

Don Pedro: Every day it's phone calls, letters, talking to people, trying to make those combinations come together and some things happen for a year or two or three and then fall by the wayside. Like the people we've been talking about from this show we're working on, right?

Terry: Absolutely. I've tried to get hold of cast members [for Space Academy] and many have disappeared. I have three that I have a physical number to call. The others are out there, somewhere.

Don Pedro: Because they had it for a minute and then somebody says, 'Well, the audience is not going to buy you as anything else'.

Terry: The one that I was really concerned with, the other black actor, is Ty Henderson.

Don Pedro: I remember Ty!

Terry: He had had such a good beginning in a series with Room 222 and did guest appearances; lots of bit parts here and there. And he did *The Competition* with Amy Irving and Dreyfus and then disappeared for the most part. He was one of my favorite actors. And I wish to this day I could get in contact with him.

Don Pedro: See, they are all people that have run the gamut and can't go any further. It's like you've got a curse on your head. I don't know what it is. Somebody along the way decides that you change from being a child actor to an adult, or you run the course with this one little show. So you wait a few years and you try it again. And they look at your resume ... "Well, you've only done this. Why is that? You haven't worked. Why is that? You must not be very good." It's worse than trying to make a living in Las Vegas as a gambler.

Terry: And at least in Las Vegas you've got 97% odds!

Don Pedro: Yeah. [Laughs] Here, you've got over 90% rejection notices on a day-to-day basis. And no matter how hard you keep your spirits up and looking ahead, it chips away year after year.

Terry: You'd have to have great self-esteem or a great therapist!

Don Pedro: That's why we have a high rate of alcoholism and drug use in this business. The high is high. It's wonderful. Next morning you wake up and nobody knows your name.

Terry: That's gotta be tough. You said you remember Ty — had you ever worked with any of the other actors before?

Don Pedro: No, unfortunately, I don't think I worked with any of the others.

Terry: Do you remember the little robot and the little boy on the show? His name was Eric Greene and he was a big *Planet of the Apes* fan. In fact, he wrote a social commentary comparing the symbolism between that show and American society.

Don Pedro: No. I'm very sorry.

Terry: You are only the second, of all the people in the cast, who I've been able to contact to interview. They are either too busy or not available.

Don Pedro: Busy!?

Terry: Pamelyn Ferdin, cute little one, she's into animal rights and just dabbles in acting. Brian Tochi [Revenge of the Nerds/Police Academy/Ninja Turtles] is a producer and writer; he's really busy. The little guy, Loki, Eric Greene, has a law degree from Stanford and works, last I knew, as a policy analyst.

Don Pedro: You mean they don't have time to sit down and answer a few questions?

Terry: Eric did. Eric [Greene] gave me a great interview. Brian and I can't seem to get hold of each other long enough for an interview; though, to his credit, he has tried several times. And then, well, Jonathan Harris just died recently.

Don Pedro: Oh, Yeah. I'm sorry I gave you such negative information (laughs).

Terry: I'm not! This is the stuff you never hear about. Us non-actors know there is a down side. We don't know how much down side there is. On the upside, Don Pedro, what are other roles that were memorable?

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The Writer's Block: Writing With Confidence

by Charles Gramlich

Having confidence in your own abilities is crucial to writing for publication, and there is absolutely no way to gain confidence without trying and succeeding. You may have to modify your idea of success, though, at least at first. Don't expect agents to trip over each other to sign you up on the basis of a few short stories, and don't expect publishers to call and beg for the rights to your first novel. Don't expect national book tours and stays at five-star hotels. Don't even expect to sit down and write a perfect novel or short story the first time you try, or the second or third times either. It almost certainly won't work out that way. With practice, you may start getting closer to a good draft on the first try, but it will take a while to get to that point, as it has for everyone who writes.

It's also highly unlikely that your first polished efforts will be sold for enough money to retire on (unless you're already famous or infamous for some other reason). If you sell your first story for *any* money, I'll be surprised. Even if you earned "A's" on your college papers, there probably won't be many magazines willing to pay for the privilege of publishing you until you've honed your skills to a professional level.

Instead, start your writing career with modest goals that can be more easily met, like finishing your story, proofreading it, and improving your grammar and punctuation. (You'd be surprised how many people who say they want to write never actually finish any of the stories or novels they start.) Once you know that you can meet *these* goals, then select tougher goals and either apply them to the same story or to a new one. Don't try to take huge leaps forward and don't try to improve everything at once. Newly hatched confidence can easily be hunted down and killed by failure or by predatory critics. Mine was, and it took me years to get it back.

In addition, though, remember that we often get a skewed impression about how competent other people are. We hear a good lecture from a teacher and we think, "Wow, this lady really knows her stuff." We pick up a novel by James Lee Burke and admire how superbly written it is. We see Shaquille O'Neil slam dunk a basketball and we just stare. In each case we think how lucky some people are to be born with those kinds of skills. And in each case we are wrong.

Sure, Shaq probably would be better at basketball than most of us even if he had never practiced it. But

each of us could be better than we are if we worked hard enough at it. People are not born experts. They may have innate talents, like size, speed or coordination, but most people have to work hard to make their jobs look easy. Writing is the same. Being a good writer is probably both a gift and a learned skill. Some people *may* just be better than others. But almost everyone can learn to write publishable stories and books that will earn them both money and respect.

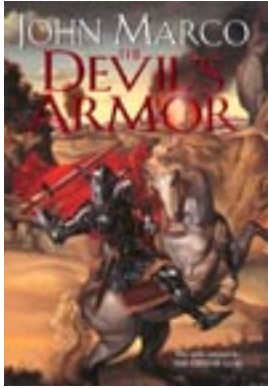
One key to gaining confidence is knowing, without a shadow of a doubt, that you understand what you are writing about. Try penning a short essay about something you know how to do very well. It might be how to change a flat tire, or how to barbecue, or how to work your VCR. This kind of exercise can be difficult because you have to put into words the things that you normally do automatically. However, it should also illustrate one effect of knowing your subject. You don't have to worry about getting the details wrong. This is what that old adage of "write what you know," means. It doesn't mean that you can only write of things you have personally experienced; it means that you should write about things you have learned enough about, things that you have made an effort to study and understand.

Remember, also, that not even best selling novelists know everything about the art and craft of writing. Published and unpublished writers are both involved in the process of *learning* to write. The writer with fifteen novels under her belt might be a little further along the curve than you are, but she's also been working at it a lot longer. You can master the basics of writing and then tell your own stories in ways readers will want to hear. It may require a considerable amount of hard work, but it is not beyond your talents.

Finally, though, there is one last point to consider. Avoid the trap of trying to make your writing perfect. This doesn't mean that you should let laziness keep you from correcting errors that you know exist, but it does mean that there comes a time when a story or novel is as good as it is going to get with your current level of skill. At some point you have to let that puppy out into the world. You have to send it off to editors and publishers. And you have to write something new, something that will take you a bit further along the road toward writing success.

Reviews

The Devil's Armor John Marco



Daw, Nov 2003
\$24.95, Hardcover, 832 pp.
ISBN 07564015550
Review by Harriet Klausner

It has been over two decades since the diamond queen Jazana Carr and King Lorn of Norvor have been at war, and the city of Carlion is almost run by mercenaries.

The queen bought the barons that were loyal to the king in a stunning act of betrayal that leaves Lorn fleeing with his blind and deaf infant daughter Poppy.

Lorn and Poppy join a group of people traveling south to Grimhold, a magical fortress in the country of Jador. Grimhold, ruled by the elfin Miniken, can only help so many supplicants because each human must bond with an Akira. The Akira move on to a higher plane but still help as many humans as they can. Lukien, the kingdom of Liiria's greatest champion, is grieving the death of his only love and feeling guilt over the betrayal of the dead king Akeela. He guards Grimhold and Jador as if it were a holy mission. Lukien is linked to the Akara essence Amaraz that he wears around his neck in an amulet. He cannot die as long as he wears the amulet.

Also at Grimhold is Baron Thorin Glass, a patriotic citizen of the once powerful Liirian Empire. When Keen Akeela and his general were killed during the Jador massacre, he stayed on hoping to find peace from his inner demons. Once he was the lover to Jazana until he turned away from her, no longer able to stomach her true nature. He knows that she will invade his homeland of Liira and kill all his remaining family in revenge for leaving her broken hearted. An older, one armed ex-soldier, he feels that he is helpless to stop her from making war on his homeland until he finds the armor locked away in the armory of Grimhold containing the

essence of an Akira. Kahldrig entices him to put the armor on and become whole and invulnerable. After doing so he leaves the stronghold, intending to make the kingdoms in the north in his image; unless Lukien can stop him.

Except maybe for Kahldris and there are doubts about him, nobody in this novel is really evil which makes *The Devil's Armor* something of an anomaly since there are many battle scenes and good men killed. Jazanna is kind to the conquered people especially the women and children, giving them food and clothing and a chance for survival. Her love for Thorin Glass pushes her to hurt him for leaving by conquering the country he loves. Thorin loves a scorned women at the stronghold who is in love with Lukien. This makes him bitter and easy prey for Kahldris' emotional and mental seduction. The Akari seems evil but there are hints there is more to him than meets the eye. Lukien wants to die and be reunited with his love Cassandra, but, being the hero he is, he knows he must live because he is the only one that can defeat Thorin Glass. positions each character so that the reader has a hint of what the storyline will be in *The Sword of Angels*, the next book in this series without slowing down this epic tale. *The Devil's Armor* is a fantastic sword and sorcery book reminiscent of the novels of Terry Brooks. The Akaras are fascinating beings who bond with their humans crippled in mind and body making their lives easier and happier. Hopefully the author will reveal more about this ancient race in the next book because they are fascinating.

"It is difficult to produce a television documentary that is both incisive and probing when every twelve minutes one is interrupted by twelve dancing rabbits singing about toilet paper."

Rod Serling

Reviews

Another Girl, Another Planet Martin Day & Len Beech



Virgin Publishing Ltd.,

Aug 1998, 245 pages

ISBN:0-426-20528-6

Review by Terry Crotinger

Again, I'm looking in dollar stores and used bookstores to feed my reading frenzy, which is where I found *Another Girl, Another Planet*. It is definitely a British book because you can hear the accent, feel the pace. The unfortunate characters don't go to *the* hospital, they 'go to hospital'. It is the little flourishes and quirks that give it away, a Beta friend of mine informs me, and I see what she means. Ignoring the clichéd verse, there are still passages that ring of a slightly off-key dialog, with attempts at making British colloquialisms understandable and palatable for Americans; like a *Doctor Who* episode...and I suppose, it should, because *Another Girl, Another Planet*, is a *Doctor Who* spin-off with a life of her own. The 'her' is the series' protagonist, Bernice "Benny" Summerfield, an earthy archeologist that seems to know a lot about detective work and psychology reminding me of protégé from a Lunzie (*The Planet Pirates Series*—McCaffery, Nye, Moon) and *M.A.S.H.*'s Hawkeye Peirce coupling: *brash and brains*.

'Benny' has been a *Doctor Who* companion in over sixty appearances with and without the Doctor beginning in 1992 until Virgin stopped publishing the series in 1997 after losing the book rights. So, these may become future collector's bargains. Watch for audio books — several of the series books were made in this format as well. Some of the cover artwork on the other Benny books were cartoonish — I could have done as well with my stick figure scratching. But this book's cover featured a believable alien sky-scape in lime and neon greens and the shuttle/space ship design sold me on taking a chance with this book.

In, *Another Girl, Another Planet*, Benny finds herself assisting a colleague she's barely met, uncovers an unhealthy plot to dupe local and galactic citizens, and almost ending up dead along with her colleague host. There are some wonderful futuristic inventions and weapons sprinkled throughout the book. Martin Day, an author with several *Doctor Who* books to his credit, and Len Beech, horror/fantasy/sci-fi (under a pseudonym), used a narrative technique, Benny's diary, to aide the story-line and grip the reader, but at times it confuses the reader more than anything. I loved the inventive historical peeks using a back-story format and had to admit that it made more sense and kept the novel from being simply an action-packed mystery than using the woman's diary. But, as there are over sixteen (and counting) books in the "The New Adventure" series with Ms. Summerfield, no one seems to protest. (By the way, an independent film, an *Elliott 780* sailing ship, and music by The Peel Sessions, carry the same title.)

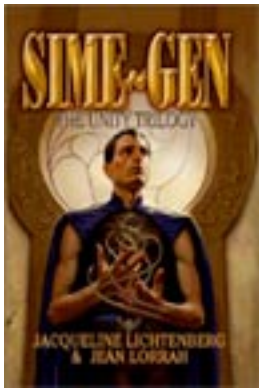
Being a moderate *Who* fan, I think I may have to begin collecting the other books in the series because at heart I'm a sucker for collecting things. But, these would not be books I'd spend my Christmas money on; the science fiction section in the local used bookstore will get my money or that eternal garage sale a few streets over. But, hey, if they end up on the shelf at the dollar store, I'll let you know!

Good Writers Wanted!

The *Illuminata* is seeking talented and aspiring writers of speculative fiction (and nonfiction.) We are interested in adding more regular contributing editors to our staff and are more than happy to accept singular or occasional pieces from interested parties. As we are a free publication, there is no compensation for inclusion other than the knowledge that your writing (and opinions) are reaching our ever-growing readership of SF fans. For more information, visit the *Illuminata* page at www.TyrannosaurusPress.com.

Reviews

Sime-Gen: The Unity Trilogy Jacqueline Lichtenberg and Jean Lorrh



Meisha Merlin

\$20.00, 744 pp.

ISBN: 1592220037

Review by Harriet Klausner

The Background. Humanity evolved into two species following the cataclysm. On the surface the only obvious physical difference is the arms of the Sime. However, in reality, the Simes were

much bigger, faster, and deadlier than the Gens. The Sime need selyn to survive while the Gens contain that energy source within their bodies. Over time, the Sime began drugging and herding the Gen into pens so that they could suck dry selyn from its source, leaving the Gen dead.

“House of Zeor”. Gen intelligence operative Hugh Valleroy is considerably distraught over his beloved Aisha being abducted by the Sime. He plans to risk his life to bring her home, but to do so he must meet with Klyd, a Sime. Klyd is a new type of Sime. He serves as a channel between the species, killing no one but providing nutrients for his race. Both are little regarded amongst their respective people. Hugh is considered a Sime lover because he speaks the language, which he learned from his Sime expatriate mother. Klyd and his House of Zeor are considered lunatics because the Gens are a source of food and death is a by-product of that feeding frenzy. Neither trusts the other. Yet if they fail to cooperate, they not only will falter on their quest to save Aisha, but they will also destroy any hope of peaceful coexistence as dreamed of by both men.

“Ambrov Keon”. Simes Morgan Tigue and his daughter Risa were sailing home on the Mizipi River when the storm suddenly hit killing the father. Risa barely survives, but to do so drains much of her internal supply of life-energy selyn. She must find herself a Gen so that she can replenish her source of life-energy. Risa meets Gen Sergi ambrov Keon, who has the uncanny ability to provide selyn yet control the Sime so as

to give enough for the feeder to live yet not die in the process. Sergi offers shelter and selyn to Risa. Having just failed to keep alive a channel, he hopes she is the one that along with him will prove they can live in harmony. Sergi believes she has that ability, but can he persuade her to stop the killing?

“Zelerod’s Doom”. The end times have arrived for both species of the human race. To survive, the life giving Gens and the feeder Simes must find a way to cooperate with channels being the obvious avenue. Failure to do so means the end of the Gens, which mathematically implies the termination of the Simes. Most Gens never heard of channels, while most Simes think these renegades are depraved lunatics. Humanity is on the brink of extinction unless the two species stop the animosity and prejudice to reunite the human race into one people. Together in harmony all live, but divided in discord all die.

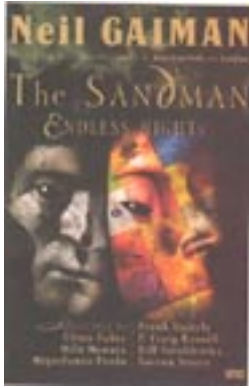
The Sime-Gen novels are some of the best post-apocalyptic books written, and to see this reprinting in one volume will bring plenty of pleasure to genre fans. The tales focus on the Gen-Sime relationship, but the key to these three books is that the two species seem real regardless of whether Jacqueline Lichtenberg or Jean Lorrh or both wrote the tale. Readers will be caught up in the action, but will appreciate the depth to the prime cast members such as Hugh and Risa. Whether the player is a Sime or a Gen they seem genuine and stay true to their people. Fans of vampire tales in a different setting than Transylvania or London will clearly want to read the great Unity Trilogy novels rolled together in one superb collection.

“You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been.”

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Reviews

Going Home Again: The Sandman: Endless Nights



Author : Neil Gaiman.

DC Comics

Hardcover, 160 pgs, Sep 2003

ISBN: 1401200893

Review by Sherri Craig

Ever the slowcoach, I found myself immersed in the world of Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* too late. I began my journey into the Dreaming at the end, *Worlds' End*, to be exact.

This was the great dénouement of the series: the foreshadowing of the end of the acclaimed Sandman series. Actually, it was Dream, a.k.a. the Sandman's, perky sister, Death, that grabbed my shirtsleeve and pulled me in, with *Death: The High Cost of Living*, but what is Dream, really, but a little slice of Death?

I went back and read the graphic novels, which collected all of the story arcs of the comic series up until *Worlds' End* with great relish, devouring each of the well-written stories as if they were the finest strawberries dipped in \$20 chocolate. I had no idea, before Mr. Gaiman woke me up, that comic books could appeal to the mind and eye, as well as the funny bone. No, I was not a comic book amateur, but I had never come across a series that appealed to me on so many levels as this one.

Well, in 1995, Gaiman, and Dream, as we knew him, bid adieu to the comic book world. There was a new incarnation of Dream to carry on, but Gaiman was off to bigger and better things. However, he left the fans with one promise: one day he would return to the Dreaming.

Finally, in September of 2003, Gaiman made good on his promise. He returned in full glory to the Dreaming with *Sandman: Endless Nights*. In this graphic novel, which consists of several short stories based on the characters from the Endless (which is the family of anthropomorphic embodiments to

which Dream and Death belong), Gaiman proves that yes, it is possible to go home again.

Now I, being a rabid fan of Gaiman, have followed his works upon leaving comicdom. I quite enjoy his collections of short stories, his novels, and his children's books. However, nothing ever seemed to live up to the magic he wove into the *The Sandman*. As a writer myself, I know how difficult it is to return to an old story. We come to it with a new perspective that the life we have lived will just not allow to be shaken off. As we have grown older, so have our characters, and it is hard to recapture them exactly as they were. But I also know that these characters never truly go away. They stay in the back of our mind nagging and poking. Stories are the same way; they, like coals in a burning pile, flicker and flame every once and a while, but never die out.

The stories that Gaiman comes up with in *Endless Nights* have obviously been glowing and flickering since Gaiman ended the Sandman series. He's kept them, blown them, and added kindling over the years. The end result is a mighty fire. Gaiman writes his stories with his artists in mind, and, just as different elements create different colors of flames, each artist renders the story he is illustrating in a unique and beautiful way.

The first story is about Death, Dream's older sister and the end to all things. It is titled "Death and Venice," and the artwork is by P. Craig Russell. This story is an example of Gaiman at his finest. He begins with a main storyline, adds an underlying story, and blends them together flawlessly at the end. The artwork is a nice, smooth somewhat cartoony, comic book-style that complements the story.

The next tale is about Desire. He/she is Dream's younger sibling, a beautiful androgynous being who is the cause of all yearnings. The artist is Milo Manara, and the title is "What I've tasted of Desire." In this story, Gaiman uses another of his best techniques, that of the storyteller within the

Con't on page 11

Reviews

Sandman (con't)

story. The artwork is erotic and reminiscent of the style of early fantasy artists.

The third chapter, called "The Heart of a Star" is about Dream, himself, and the artist is Miguelanxo Prado. In this story, readers are met with a staple of the Sandman storyline, one of Dream's ex-lovers. Comic book fans will enjoy the reference to the DC Universe. The story is an amusing little trip through the world of anthropomorphism, where fans actually get to meet Delight (who, by the time of the *Sandman* series has become Delirium) and see the original Despair (another character only alluded to in the series). The artwork is rich in color and texture, with each frame looking like a painting.

Chapter 4, "Fifteen Portraits of Despair," contains artwork by Barron Storey. The chapter does exactly as the title suggests, giving fifteen vignettes about Despair, the self-mutilating twin sister of Desire, with fifteen series of drawings to accompany. The artwork style is postmodern collage, similar to the artwork of Dave McKean, who does most of the artwork for Gaiman's children's books, as well as many of the cover art designs for the *Sandman* series.

"Going Inside" is the fifth chapter. Bill Sienkiewicz does the artwork for this section, which is dedicated to the youngest of the Endless, Delirium. The artwork, like Delirium herself, is never constant. It goes from black and white to color, from line drawing to photograph, and everything at once as the reader gets a glimpse of the world through Delirium's green and blue eyes.

Destruction's story follows Delirium's, just as, in the series, he tended to follow his sister, even though the younger brother of Dream turned his back on the rest of the Endless. The title of chapter six is "On the Peninsula," and the artwork is by Glenn Fabry. The artwork returns, in this chapter, from a hodgepodge of styles to the smooth, comic book style. Glenn Fabry is well known for his work on another of DC's Vertigo series, *Preacher*.

The final tale, "Endless Nights," is the tale of Dream's older brother, Destiny who is blind and chained to a large book in which every being's destiny is written, no matter which path he, she, or it chooses. The artwork is by Frank Quitely and is crisp and fills the whole page. There are no panels, just images in warm, neutral tones.

Just as each artist's style is different, each of Gaiman's stories sets a different mood. But there is an underlying current to the stories: A warm familiar current, like a pang of nostalgia in the back of my mind. I am ever so grateful that Mr. Gaiman has decided to drop by and visit his old home once again, even if he doesn't plan to stay. Reading *Sandman: Endless Nights* is like sitting up until endless hours of the night in deep conversation of days gone by with an old friend and a cup of coffee. It leaves the reader with brilliant new memories to add to the newly dusted off and cherished old ones.

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Original Fiction

The following story, by Diedre Rhine, won second place in the Illuminations writing contest.

No Going Back by Deidre Rhine

My head's throbbing. Where's my nightgown?

She covered her breasts with bent arms and snapped to her feet. Standing in the middle of an empty, white hallway, Tori hunched over and pushed her knees together to hide as much as possible.

Where am I? She studied her surroundings.

"You take the west corridor. I'll cover the east." Unfamiliar male voices shouted commands in the distance. Men and women flooded the hall. The women wore floral dresses and high heels, and sported 1940's retro hairdos. The men, sprinkled between the women, reminded her of her grandfather with his skinny ties and sophisticated fedoras. Their heckling stares compelled her to seek cover.

At the end of the corridor there was a door. Tori didn't know where it led, but behind the door would provide cover. With her eyes focused on the egress, she plunged through the crowd and people flew to the walls like snow thrown from a plow. With outstretched arms she thrust open the door. Tori froze mid-stride as sunlight bombarded her eyes and forced them shut. Car horns and mumbling voices pounded in her ears, the icy wind stinging her bare skin.

Out of nowhere a sizzling sound whooshed by her right ear. Across the street, a small puff of smoke rose off a building. *Are they shooting at me?* She glanced over her shoulder just as a man in a navy suit lifted a small silver tube the size of a lipstick and pointed it at her. With her eyes glued to the pursuer, she rammed into someone and fell, smacking her head on the pavement.

"Ouch!" Tori sat up immediately.

"You okay?" The man thrust a helping hand in front of her. She took it and stood.

"Help me!" She grasped his lapels and pulled him with her while leaning against the crowd, attempting to part people like a tractor dividing corn in a field.

He pulled her clenched fists off his suit jacket. "Sorry. I've got to get to work."

Suddenly a blue light bypassed her. The beam touched an adjacent young man, who crumpled to the ground face down. Smoke floated from a smoldering, black hole in his back. *Is that a laser-gun?* Tori fled, forgetting her plea for protection, and left the stranger behind.

"Wait!" the helpful stranger yelled.

Ignoring his request, she soaked in her environment. Sunlight glinted off the glass skyscrapers that lined the sidewalks. The wind smelled artificial, like the air-conditioner in her beat-up Toyota. Someone grabbed her wrist and broke her stride.

"Follow me!" the man commanded, taking the lead. He dragged her into traffic. Bullet shaped cars darted around them and taxicab-yellow machines flew overhead. She felt stones grind into her soles, but she couldn't stop to remove them. Safely across, the man stopped abruptly. She bounced off his back and covered her chest as he turned to face her. He removed his jacket, placed it over her shoulders, and they entered a high-rise, climbing the stairs to the 14th floor.

"Here we are. Home sweet home." They went in and he closed the drapes. Turning to her from his kitchen, he pointed to his sofa. "Why don't you have a seat?" he asked, flashing a large grin with slightly crooked teeth. His sable hair and kind eyes reminded Tori of her husband.

She limped to the couch and plopped down, keeping her eyes on him. *Why are these walls glass? Where are my children? How did I get here?* Tori's mind threw questions at her faster than she could comprehend them and the confusion created by her thoughts spilled out in the form of sobs. There was no preventing the emotion; it burst forth with unprecedented intensity, sending tears over her cheeks.

"Is there something I can do?"

She squeaked, "What's happening? Where are my children?"

Con't on page 13

Original Fiction

No Going Back (con't)

Through blurry eyes she watched him remove clothes from a drawer beneath his bed. His one-room apartment made efficient use of space. A table folded onto a wall in the kitchen, appliances were small, and furniture was sparse.

"Here," he said softly as he handed her a t-shirt and sweatpants. "I thought you might like to get dressed. Sorry, but I don't have undergarments that would be suitable. The bathroom's over there." He pointed to a door next to his bed. She wiped her flushed cheeks with the back of her hand and sucked in a final sniffle.

After dressing, Tori returned to the couch and noticed he now wore jeans and a fisherman's sweater. He stood by the counter, stirring a cup of coffee. She rubbed her forehead because the pain still annoyed her. "What's your name?" she asked.

"I'm Carson Edwards. And yours?" He sat on the floor across from her.

"My name's Tori Jensen. Where am I?"

"Hollidaysburg."

"Pennsylvania?" She scratched her nose.

"Yeah," he chuckled. "You know of another Hollidaysburg?" Carson sipped his drink, shutting his hazel eyes. When he opened them, he tilted his head, rose, and walked toward her. In front of the couch he knelt, slowly lowering his hands near her, but she pulled back. "I just want to make sure your head is okay." She tilted her sunny brown curls toward him and he sat back. "Well, I don't see any cuts or bumps, but maybe we should go to the hospital to be sure." He tapped her knee and stood, grabbing a remote from an end table.

"Wait."

Carson put down the remote.

"I need to figure this out. I mean –" Tori stopped, carefully choosing her words. "I remember going to bed last night." She looked in the air and spoke slowly. "I put the kids to bed, watched television, brushed my teeth, got into my nightgown, and went to sleep. The next I knew, I was lying naked in the middle of a hallway."

"What hallway?"

"That's just it. I don't know." Tori massaged her temples. The pain had worsened. "My head. Do you have any aspirin?"

"Any what?"

"Aspirin. Motrin. Something for a headache."

Carson went to his bathroom and returned with an object shaped like and about the size of an ear thermometer. "Here –"

"What are you doing? What's that? Doesn't it go in my ear?" The questions flew out of her mouth so Carson never had a chance to answer. "Wait!" Tori held up her palm.

"What's the matter? You act like you've never seen a pulsejet. Put down your hand," he requested gently. "I promise this won't hurt, and in seconds you'll feel better." Carson held the jet to her temple and Tori felt a vibration move through her head. He removed the pulsejet and watched her reaction.

"What was that?" She touched her temple. The pain was gone.

"It's a pulsejet. You haven't seen this before?" He held it up.

In her mind flashed images of the flying machines, the glass buildings, and the small laser weapons. "No." The word came out in a dead monotone. She examined his apartment. "Carson, what's the date?"

"October fourteenth."

"I mean, what's the year?"

"2067. Why?"

Men and women conversed lively around the conference table. Walt Thurmont stormed through the automatic doors, nearly bumping into them as if they didn't open fast enough. He dropped into his swivel chair at the head of the table and placed wire-rimmed glasses on his nose. The room quieted and all eyes landed on him.

Thurmont took a deep breath, lowered his chin, and inspected the managers over his old-fashioned spectacles, which

Con't on page 14

Original Fiction

No Going Back (con't)

he used as a statement of power. "For those of you who don't know, an unintended target – a 36-year-old female from the early 21st century – was brought through Sagan's Black Hole using E.T.T.'s newest technology. Not only did we miscalculate the gravity wave, but we also didn't deposit her in the containment tube!"

The managers averted their eyes and Biederman, head of the time travel project, cleared his throat before saying, "I presume that we can't send her back?" Muffled conversations erupted and the managers looked around the table at one another.

"Correct." Thurmont rose and the room hushed again. "After she appeared, the wormhole destabilized and we lost track of the female before we could reinforce the white hole. She left the premises and we don't have her coordinates. If we don't get her back to 2003, we may cause a misalignment in the space-time continuum." He removed his glasses. "Ladies and gentlemen, find and recover our target so we can return her to 2003." Thurmont returned his glases to his nose and headed to the doors. He stopped and commanded, "Send her back, or I'll find people who can!"

He left, the doors shutting behind him.

Carson returned home after work to find Tori fidgeting with the multioven, trying to reconstitute dehydrated chicken, potatoes, and peas. She was a whiz at cooking for her children using familiar appliances, but now she had to relearn everything.

Every day for four weeks she had thought about Victoria and Tommy. Tori had to find a way back to them. She wondered who was caring for them. Her husband had died two years after Victoria was born; her own parents gone, too; and her in-laws lived over 14 hours away. That only left the daycare center.

Carson hollered, "Hey, I'm back!"

"Oh! Thank goodness! I can't remember which button to press." She pointed at the multioven and moved aside. Feeling frazzled, out of place, and constantly thinking of her children, she couldn't concentrate on the simplest tasks.

"It's the steam button." He pushed it and smiled at her.

While staring at his grin she blushed and tossed her curls. "Thanks," she said, nudging him with her elbow. "Say, how come there's no Mrs. Edwards?" The oven beeped and she removed the recyclable trays, placing them on the folded down table.

"Don't know," he shrugged. "Never found a lady willing to become Mrs. Edwards." He winked at her and then quipped, "Why isn't there a man in your life?"

"Guess I never found one I wanted to marry after my husband passed on." They sat at the table and Tori continued softly, "You've been so kind, Carson, but I can't hide out here much longer. I want my life back. I feel out of place and I miss my kids."

Carson crunched down on the chicken and grimaced. Swallowing hard, he replied, "I've been thinking about contacting an old friend. Bob Marlow. He works at this place called E.T.T. Maybe he can help."

"Was that the chicken?" she asked, surprised, frowning.

"How about I give him a call tomorrow and meanwhile let's work on your hydrating skills." He stood and dumped the crusty food into the comp-can. The tray he tossed into the recycle bin.

Carson woke early to call Bob Marlow at his office. He grabbed the remote, turned on the flat screen on his wall and dialed using the remote. The monitor beeped and Bob's image flashed on the screen.

"Hey, Carson! How have you been?" Bob shoved his arm into his white lab coat and straightened the collar.

"I'm good. I know I haven't been in contact for a while, but I've a favor to ask."

"Sure." Bob nodded and his red curls bounced.

"Come over tonight and I'll explain."

"Okay," Bob agreed before ending the call.

Con't on page 15

Original Fiction

No Going Back (con't)

"Update me," Biederman demanded of his team.

"Sir, we've found the female. She's been at the Holiday Towers with Carson Edwards. We tracked a transmission originating from his apartment today. The face recognition system spotted her in the background."

"Good." Biederman looked up from his report. "I.T. have you corrected the programming errors?"

A member of I.T. responded. "The program is now able to specify the number of travelers, the location, and will materialize the subject within the tube.

"Then send her back." Biederman threw his hands in the air to wave the men and women from the room.

"But, Sir, --" A woman in a white lab coat held up a finger. "We haven't found a stable white hole yet."

"Miss Duncan?" Biederman murmured. The young woman nodded and smiled. "You're fired!" Biederman pointed to an open-mouthed man also wearing a lab coat. "You! Find a stable hole today!" Biederman exited the room, leaving the newly promoted tech and Miss Duncan speechless.

Tori and Carson sat at the small kitchen table and filled Bob in on her saga.

"Wow, they did it!" Bob slapped his knee. "I've been working on the research, but I never get to see it in action."

"It is remarkable, but I don't want to be here. I must get back to my children."

"So, ask E.T.T. to send you back."

"They shot at me!"

"Do you think you could send her back, Bob?" Carson rose, bringing mugs of coffee to the table, and passed them around.

"Nah. I'm just a computer geek. Besides, I heard they can't find a stabilized hole."

"Is there a way to find another hole so we could bring her children here?"

Tori started, "Carson, no --"

Carson interrupted. "Just listen for a sec, okay?" He looked at the floor, searching for the right words, then gazed at Tori as he continued. "You have no one other than your children to return to. I have no one I'd rather be around than you. We know they can bring people forward, but how do we know that they can send people back? Why don't we bring your kids here?"

Tori beamed the smile Carson had grown to love. "Could we, Bob?"

"They haven't sent anyone backwards -- although time as we think of it is essentially irrelevant -- so theoretically it should work just as well backwards as forwards. And when you --"

"Can we bring the kids?" Carson reiterated.

"Sure, if they brought one they can bring another. But E.T.T. isn't going to do that."

"Not E.T.T. You."

"Carson, I'd lose my job."

"Look, they screwed up, not her. They sent men after her with L20's! I won't hand her over to them."

"I know what they did stinks, but frankly, Tori, I don't know you. I can't risk my entire career. They'd blackball me. I'm sorry, Carson. I'd like to help but I can't do that."

Bob was working on a new program designed by one of his colleagues, when he overheard escalating voices outside his office.

"I'm telling you if she's not returned we'll be facing serious consequences." It was Biederman spouting off. Bob moved closer to the hall and leaned against the doorframe.

Con't on page 16

Original Fiction

No Going Back (con't)

"Sir, we can't find the black hole. We've looked for weeks and –"

"—and nothing!" Biederman cut off the I.T. manager. "The point is," he spoke quietly, "her presence here may alter the future. Thurmont doesn't want her traced to us."

Could they be talking about Tori? Bob wondered. I'll ask around and see what people know.

**** **** ****

At three a.m. Bob called Carson.

"We don't have much time." Bob spoke faintly on the vidphone. "Frankly, Carson, I know you like her, but ... well, I didn't believe her. But today I found out she's telling the truth. Meet me in front of E.T.T. in about 15 minutes."

Carson agreed, then disconnected and shook Tori awake. "Got to go. Bob's gonna give it a shot."

**** **** ****

As they entered the vacant building, Tori's heartbeat soared in anticipation. Bob used his passkey to enter the main research office, the room reminding Tori of a hospital with its walls, floor and ceiling all white. In the center of the room a clear plastic tube sat on a pedestal. No wires were visible, and considering the technical equipment in the room, Tori couldn't imagine where they were stored.

"Tori, your kids' address when you were transported?"

"4160 Greenmount Lane, Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania."

Bob typed at the keyboard. "We've got to make this fast. The cops'll be alerted, since I used my passkey."

Peeking out the window from behind the curtain, Carson said, alarmed, "Bob, the police are already downstairs!"

"This isn't easy, you know! A little less pressure would be good right now!"

A stomping echoed in the stairwell and men's voices grew louder.

"Whoa, Dillon was right; the black hole's right there! But I gotta check it myself."

"Hurry up, Bob!" Carson yelled.

Bob pressed a button and the room exploded with a clap of thunder and a burst of intense light. Lying inside the tube were two naked forms. Tori ran to them, yelling, "My babies!" She bent down, hugging and kissing them. "Victoria! Tommy!"

"Mama?" Victoria opened her brown eyes and stared inquisitively at Tori.

"Tori, we gotta go!" Carson lifted both children and they all darted out the side door and down a back hall.

"Get her!" Biederman commanded the police and three members of the E.T.T. team as he entered the room and stared at the computer screen. "Sergeant, go down the back hall quietly and find the female. Relay her coordinates to us with this headset."

"How will I know her coordinates?"

"If they haven't left the building, look on the walls. The coordinates are noted every ten feet."

Carson had stopped at the end of the corridor so Tori could hug the children. "I've missed you so much, darlings!" Tears streamed down her face.

"Mama, where are we?" Tommy asked, rubbing his eyes and holding his head.

Nearby, the sergeant was whispering into his headset. "Her coordinates are..."

"Mommy!" The children screamed in horror. "Mama!"

"My God, Tori, No!" Carson sank to the floor.

Bob dragged his hand down his face and watched helplessly.

Tori felt the pulling sensation and before she could do anything, the faces of her children faded. She awoke naked on the floor of her bedroom with a pounding headache. Sitting up, Tori curled into a ball, and wailed.

"Nooooooooo!"

Original Fiction

The following story, by eleven-year-old Alexander Rickert, won honorable mention in the Illuminations writing contest.

Ivan's Quest by Alexander Rickert

Ivan woke up with a start. Then, a familiar tapping noise started. "Great," he thought, "Jason and his bully gang."

"Hey Laserbrain," they hollered in unison. Ivan deactivated a cyber lock he had designed, and opened his window. A rock promptly hit him in the nose. "Sorry!" Jason called, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

"When pigs fly, you'll be sorry!" Ivan yelled angrily.

"Oooh, I'm supposed to be scared by a delusional midget who spends his time lamely designing pointless inventions."

Ivan hastily shut his window and reactivated the cyber lock. He wasn't going to listen to any of the jargon Jason and his gang would feed him. It was time to get busy. His mentor, Dr. Michaelo Denaro, would arrive in an hour and he wanted to finish a blueprint of a hand scanner. The device would serve as a door lock for which the key was your hand. If you put your hand on a dura-sense piece, the machine would scan your hand. You were let in only if your scan signal was programmed into the lock. Ivan worked furiously on the blueprint, hoping his invention would serve well in high security areas. He had an unusual talent of being able to block out every solitary distraction in the world and concentrate on one item: his design. All of a sudden the doorbell chimed.

"Great!" Ivan muttered. "Ding-Dong Denaro."

He got up and ignited a pair of micro-repulsor jets he had built into his sneakers. Ivan flew to the door and touched the doorknob just before his mom.

"You give me a heart attack every time you use those things," she said.

"Don't worry, Mom," he replied. "I built in backup boosters." To prove that they worked, Ivan rocketed to the high ceiling. He deactivated the jets and fell through the air, as a look of fake panic registered on his face. When he was about to hit the ground, blue fire erupted from hidden backup jets. Ivan swiftly pulled out of his dive.

Now it was his mom's turn to be panicked. When Ivan saw the look on her face, he immediately apologized. "Sorry, Mom," he said. "I forgot how much you hate those things."

"I don't mind the jets that much, but what you're doing is outrageous!" she retorted. "Now, open the door for your mentor."

"Hold on! I've got to get something," Ivan called. He flew to his room and slipped two artificial eggs into his pocket. Then he flew back to the door security panel. He pushed "OPEN" and flew to the ceiling. The door opened and Dr. Denaro walked in. CRACK, SPLAT! The fake eggs hit their target: Dr. Denaro's head.

"Hello, Ivan," he said. Ivan was doing somersaults in midair and laughing hysterically. "Ivan, if you would come down, it would be most appreciated," Michaelo said irritably. Ivan made an impressive show before landing, arms crossed, in front of his mentor. "Any new inventions, Ivan?" Denaro asked.

"A couple," Ivan answered coolly. He didn't like the way Dr. Denaro said the word, 'inventions.' He rocketed to his room and gathered up his latest blueprints to show Denaro. "Here they are," he said, thrusting them at Michaelo. Dr. Denaro unfolded the durasheets and briefly glanced at the designs. His face had a look of utmost disinterest.

"Impossible," he said to Ivan. "Science experiments by the millions have proven this impossible."

"Well, if you're going to be so critical and technical," Ivan shot back, grabbing the durasheets, "why don't you get a job as a professor instead of a mentor for an 11-year-old kid who's smarter than you!" he finished and teleported the durasheets to his room.

"Ivan!" roared Denaro. "There's one thing you must get straight and it's this. I am much brighter than you!"

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Original Fiction

Ivan's Quest (con't)

A few hours later, Denaro said, "Now, I'll go up and sign your daily proof chart." He walked swiftly up the stairs, and in a minute returned. Ivan thought he looked different, almost translucent.

"Did you sign it?" he inquired.

"Yes," Denaro said flatly. "See you tomorrow," he continued. Then he walked out the door.

"Well," Ivan said. "I might as well work on my scanner." He opened his closet door and gazed open-mouthed at empty shelves. "Denaro," he thought, "that incorrigible crook stole all my blueprints, and he didn't even sign my chart!" Ivan turned around hopelessly and saw a blue, metallic button on the wall. "A clue!" he said happily. Then everything unfolded. "He used a hologram," Ivan said under his breath. "That wasn't him walking down the stairs, it was a hologram! That's why he looked weird. Denaro, I'm on your trail." And he pushed the button.

Instantly the world swirled around him, a blend of black and blue. Then, with a slight thud, he found himself sitting in a chair surrounded by buttons and panels. He looked up and saw scenery of outer space. Then it hit him. "Oh, my gosh!" he exclaimed. "I'm in a star-fighter."

Ivan began to explore the buttons that encircled him. He noticed one labeled 'SERVICE' and pushed it. In a moment he felt a slight bump on the back of his chair. Swiveling around, he saw a small robot. It looked like a huge cylinder with a domed top. Three arms extended from it to the ground, with a wheel on each arm. These moved the robot. "Who are you?" Ivan said, surprised.

A blue view screen popped up from behind the droid's head. It read, 'X-5.'

"That's not much of a name," Ivan said.

"It is for a droid," read the screen. Ivan liked the robot's fiery manner.

"Hey, can you tell me what's going on here?" he inquired. "Where am I going?"

The droid plugged a needle-like wire into one of the panels. "Yakita," the screen read. "Not a good place for sightseeing, especially since it's a crime world."

"Excuse me, but I am not going sightseeing," Ivan retorted. "I don't even know where I am!"

"In that case, you've got a problem," X-5 typed.

Ivan felt a chill run up his spine. "W-what do you mean?" he said, unable to keep the fear out of his voice.

"Yakita-2 isn't a nice place to be," X-5's view screen read. "It's loaded with gangsters and crime lords!"

Ivan had a sudden hunch. "Is there a technology interest there?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes!" X-5 replied. "Well, there's only one company: Technology Devices, Inc., but they're huge!" the droid continued.

Ivan's spirits lifted. He had found the company that probably employed Denaro. "Tell me more about this company," he said.

"They go back a long time," X-5 typed. "I used to be an assistant there, but I left when they revealed their despicable plans. They don't care about anything other than power and money. They practically have taken over Yakita-2, and they have hidden forces on almost 200 planets. They steal, cheat, and lie. They sell devices for more than they're worth and keep deadly technology to themselves. When they feel the time is ripe, they plan to spring up and control the galaxy of Xadon! Every single planet will be bowing to their will!"

"Wow, and I thought I had a big problem!" Ivan said, surprised. "Do you know anyone in the force named Denaro?"

"Yes," X-5 typed. "He tried to dismantle me when I left, fearing my knowledge of the company's plans. I narrowly escaped."

"He stole my blueprints," Ivan said, "and he'll pay for that. I'm stopping that company in its tracks!"

"Yes, right," X-5 replied.

"I'm serious, X-5!" Ivan yelled. "I was already planning to bust Denaro, but now that you've told me about the company he works for, let's just say you should consider Denaro and T.D.I. cracked wide open."

"O.K., I just hope you know how you're going to do this," X-5 replied.

"Well, the truth is, I really don't," Ivan said, his face falling. "All I know is that I'm going to alert all the planets of T.D.I.'s hidden force. That way, if those planets are worried about being taken over, T.D.I. can't come up with power."

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Original Fiction

Ivan's Quest (con't)

"That's a pretty good start," X-5 typed. "You'll need a more intense plan than that, though."

"I was counting on your help," Ivan said.

"I'm sorry, but I'm too frightened to return to Yakita-2," X-5 answered.

"How about this?" Ivan paused, making sure he wanted to offer a deal that would be hard to refuse. "If you try and help me, I'll take you back to Earth when I return."

"You would do that?" X-5 typed in underlined print.

"Yeah," Ivan replied.

"Then consider me in," X-5 answered. "Let's get to work. You'll need to alert the planets of the hidden forces. You can do that now."

"How?" Ivan asked incredulously.

"Press that rectangular button with C printed on it."

Ivan followed the droid's instructions. For the next hour, X-5 helped him come up with a message to alert the planets with hidden forces on them. When the message had been sent by the star-fighter's micro-holoprojector, Ivan collapsed into the pilot's chair with a sigh. "Whew," he said. "What's next?"

"The hazardous part," X-5 typed. "It's time to invade T.D.I.'s turf!"

"Whoa," Ivan said. "Do you even know how you're going to do this?"

"Yes, but we'll need all the gadgets we can assemble," X-5 shot back.

"Why?" Ivan inquired.

"Because no company is ignorant enough to leave their buildings open for the world to infiltrate!" the robot said plainly. "T.D.I. is swirling in a pool of security."

"O.K., so how are we going to acquire this machinery?" Ivan asked.

"We can get it here," said X-5. "This A-9 star-fighter has a supply library."

"Awesome!" Ivan exclaimed. "How do you access it?"

"Press the button with S printed on it," X-5 replied. Ivan complied. A voice suddenly filled the star-fighter.

Which device do you wish to use? it said.

X-5 twiddled his wire, and a red ball of light appeared above a disc-like computer screen stationed on one of the control panels. When the light subsided, a glowing blue object hovered in the air where the light had been. It looked like a mini satellite dish.

"What's that?" Ivan asked.

"The one thing that will protect you from any evil you meet," said X-5. "A Z-2 cybershield. Clip it to your belt." Ivan followed the robot's instructions. "Now, press the green button." The boy did as the droid said, and a blue bubble appeared around him.

"Awesome," said Ivan under his breath. For two hours, boy and droid removed devices from the supply library. Ivan was tired when they finished, but he wearily asked, "What's next?"

"We should rest now," X-5 replied. "But in the morning it's payback time." X-5 turned Ivan's chair into a bed and Ivan lay down on it.

"Good night, X-5," Ivan said and drifted off to sleep.

Hours later, Ivan was awakened by X-5's beeping. He groaned and sat up. "Hi, X-5," he said.

"Hello," X-5 replied. "Are you ready?"

"Yeah," said Ivan.

"Okay. Let's get into shuttlepod 2." Together they walked toward the back of the star-fighter. There sat a small craft. "We'll use this to get to Yakita-2," said X-5. Ivan got inside the pod, and the droid rolled up a ramp. X-5 stuck his wire into the pod's control panel. Doors closed and ramps retracted, sealing the craft. Ivan pressed the *launch* button and the shuttle shot into space.

"Okay, so how are we going to do this?" inquired Ivan.

"Well, we obviously have to make sure that the humans in the building can't use robots or other machines to capture us if we accidentally alert them to our presence before we mean to," said X-5.

"But we've got a million gadgets!" cried Ivan.

"Okay, I'll just let about 5,000 robots that are programmed to fight capture us," said the little droid jokingly.

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Original Fiction

Ivan's Quest (con't)

"Great plan!"

"5,000 robots?" asked Ivan incredulously.

"Attack droids, every single one of them," said X-5 as the shuttlepod landed on Yakita-2. They made their way stealthily to a large building. "This is it. Are you ready?"

"Yeah," I think so," said Ivan.

They teleported themselves through the wall and activated their shields. X-5 projected a holographic map of T.D.I.'s infrastructure onto the walls. "It looks like these two rooms should be all we need to get into to shut down the mechanisms in the building," said X-5, pointing to the map. They set off at a fast pace toward the first room. They slipped inside and came face to face with an armed security guard.

"Who are you?" the guard asked in a deep voice.

"We're maintenance checkers," replied Ivan. "There appears to be a malfunction in your security program processor."

"We don't have a security program processor and no one would send a kid to fix it, if we did!" His hand reached for his laserblaster but Ivan was quicker.

He pulled a tube from his belt, pointed it at the guard, and shouted, "BRAINWIPE!"

A blue beam of light blasted from the tube and caught the man in the stomach. He looked dazed for a minute, and then said absentmindedly, "I'll just leave you to your work, then." He walked out of the room.

"That didn't hurt him, did it?" Ivan asked.

"No, he just feels a tingly sensation," replied X-5. "Let's get working." He rolled over to the panels on a wall and plugged his wire into a socket. "That should shut down the machinery that makes the droids," he said after twisting and turning his wire for a while. "Let's get to the Droid Control Room quickly before T.D.I. can protect it."

Ivan ran while X-5 rolled beside him. They burst through the door and an attack droid turned to face them. "Use your tranquilizer grenades," X-5 instructed. Ivan threw a small, metal ball toward the droid. It burst open and a lightning-like charge shot toward the robotic warrior. It stood still for a minute, and then clattered to the floor. "It's not dismantled, only stunned, so we must work quickly," X-5 said. "There will be more attack droids coming now."

At that moment, a robotic voice said, "Give up!" Boy and droid wheeled around to face twenty attack droids encircling Dr. Michaelo Denaro.

"Isn't it funny how the greatest plans can have the biggest flaws," Denaro sneered.

"I'm afraid your plans have the flaw," Denaro," retorted X-5. "Time for some fireworks!" He rocketed to the ceiling and pelted the droids with tranquilizer grenades. Twenty seconds later, all the droids were stunned. "Goodbye T.D.I.," he said. He floated to the ground, rolled over to a button labeled *shutdown* and started to push it.

"Nooooooooooooo," screamed Denaro.

"Big criminals will have big punishments," said X-5. "Denaro, we hope you enjoy your incarceration."

"Boy, am I glad to have my blueprints back," Ivan said days later. They were in shuttlepod 2. "After all this adventure, I'm ready to go home."

"I'm going to miss you," X-5 typed. "Come back and see me soon, okay?"

"Hey, aren't you forgetting something?" Ivan said.

"You mean you'll really take me to Earth?" X-5 typed.

"Of course! You held up your end of the deal. I'm not going to drop mine," he said firmly.

"Awesome!" typed X-5. "Oh, look, it's time. We'd better teleport ourselves quickly."

They walked into a glowing blue chamber. Instantly they found themselves in Ivan's room.

"X-5," said Ivan, "welcome home!"

Whatever Happened (con't)

Star Trek had flirted occasionally with war. "An Errand of Mercy" saw Captain Kirk protesting as loudly as vicious Captain Kor of the Klingons when god-like aliens interrupted their conflict and decreed a forcible peace. Kirk was in touch with his barbarian impulses. Picard, on the other hand, was a statesman and a diplomat. He barely had a sex drive much less a killer instinct. By the time the Dominion War of DS9 heated up, Trekkies had already divided. With the advent of this strange new Trek, the generally uniform front of Trek fandom had sprouted serious subsets. There were those who felt Trek had lost its way from the cool and tasteful Utopian vision of perfected humanity that was generally attached to TNG. They didn't like the loss of a starship, the lack of boldly going, or the more ambiguous tone of DS9 – and they didn't stick with the show. The ratings leveled off at a significantly lower level than TNG's best years. These folks – Generation-D (named after Picard's Enterprise 1701-D) – were mostly fans who'd become Trekkies because of the second series. They had varying opinions of *Star Trek* – some loved it, some liked it okay, some found it cheesy and some had never really paid attention to it, or even seen it at all.

And then there were the Niners. Niners tended to come into Trek via either of the first two series, but they found the saga of the Emissary to be the culmination of Trek being all Trek could be. They loved the arc-based format of the show. A new breed of popular storytelling, arcs were penetrating both movies, as more and more of them spawned sequels, and TV, where all genres were incorporating storylines that spanned first whole seasons and then whole series. The problem was that after the middle of DS9's seven years it became difficult to jump into the story and catch up on all that was happening. The advantage was a depth of character and universe development that lent itself to a grander single tale as opposed to a series of wonderful but still loosely strung together episodic adventures, which both *Star Trek* and TNG had been.

The most serious debate in Trekkdom was created with DS9 – what was Gene Roddenberry's real vision of the future? Was Trek at its heart a story of flawed humanity struggling to act out of our better natures, or a story of perfected humanity in a galaxy fraught with cultures that needed to be taught the proper ideals by example? This debate is not likely to ever be settled since *Star Trek* is a cryptic text and it supports both sides of the argument. Generation-D builds

the Trek universe by reading *Star Trek* as humanity almost, but not quite, fully evolved – so naturally it is rougher around the edges, but TNG and the 24th century represented the perfected form of human development, despite the fact that TNG often showed flawed humans in episodes like "The Drumhead" about a McCarthy-esque judge, and "The Wounded" about a Starfleet commander gone around the bend after his family was killed in a conflict with the Cardassians. Niners find little compelling in this pristine iteration of humanity's future, preferring a vision of a universe where humans don't get that kind of certainty, but the optimism is in seeing the characters caught in their dark sides, and winning through determination to do right, or at least as right as one can.

There is one DS9 episode almost universally cited because it highlights the difference in philosophy between modern Trekkies. "In the Pale Moonlight" saw Sisko making the morally ambiguous decision to lure into war through deception the Romulans, a devious race with whom the Federation had maintained a decades-long détente. He hires a spy who lived on the station, an exiled Cardassian, whose race was allied with the Founders against the Federation. The spy commits murder to accomplish the goal and confronts Sisko with the declaration that Sisko knew this is what would be required and that was why he had been hired in the first place. Sisko, in a tone at once steady and faltering states, "I would do the same thing again... I can live with it."

In the great debate, "In the Pale Moonlight" tore it. To Generation-D DS9 wasn't Trek. Captain Picard would never approve. Moral ambiguity of this caliber was not allowed. To Niners, it is one of the greatest episodes Trek ever produced. The complexities of tangled alliances balanced against battlefield deaths and one man's integrity were the makings of truly great storytelling. No, Captain Picard would never dance with the devil, but that was his problem, from the Niners perspective. While DS9 fans have not rejected TNG from their personal Trek canons, they tend to think of Picard and the crew of the Enterprise-D as somewhat smug and bourgeois. Picard was a great captain and all that, but his story wasn't nearly as interesting as Sisko's. Niners often have a great respect for *Star Trek's* tale and find DS9 much more in tune with what they see as its flawed characters and conflicted take on humanity than TNG ever was. To them, DS9 was the more authentic bearer of the Trek torch.

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Whatever Happened (con't)

By this time, TNG had jumped to the big screen. The original crew's last outing was generally satisfying to fans, as had been most of the 6 movies (except the horrendous *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* of course). But TNG's *Star Trek: Generations* was not only not a particularly good movie, it contained a terrible misstep. It brought worse than a bad end to Captain Kirk – it killed him in the single most boring way possible. There seemed to be an alien atmosphere leaking in over at Paramount. Trek, to the corporate office, was one simple thing – a cash cow to be milked. They weren't happy with DS9's ratings and they wanted to punch up the first TNG movie – so, hey, let's have the captains finally meet, and kill off the most legendary figure in this fictional universe. That'll be sure to pack them in. It took a little while to sink in to fans, but that bit of stunt storytelling did serious damage to Trek. Fans felt a vague disgust they'd never felt before – not the cringing embarrassment of an abysmal story, we were used to that from Trek every once in a while – but a sense that something subtle had changed. A fourth series premiered the fall after *Generations* was released. DS9 was in its third season – and it is strange to think it is the only Trek series that never got to be out there on its own since its first two years had been concurrent with the last seasons of TNG. Paramount was launching a cable TV network, and it wanted a Trek series to be its foundation.

KeyCOMMENTary (con't)

by the protagonist's side or is the archetype handled transiently? In what ways is the companion easily and quickly distinguished from the protagonist and what has drawn them together? What is the glue that cements their bond?

Writers, if you have not already established at least one companion for your *waif protagonist*, draw up a character profile now. How will the companion or companions be easily distinguished from the main character and what common experiences or outlooks will bind their friendship? What, too, will have the power to place them at odds? Will this companion be steadfast throughout the tale or given a transient role? In designing your companion characters, it will be helpful to already know what strengths and weaknesses you will need to reflect and illuminate in your main character.

Next month we will explore the antithesis of companionship when we delve into the sixth archetype, *Nemesis*.

Inner Views (con't)

Don Pedro: I've done sci-fi characters in films like George Lucas' *THX1138* and *Planet of the Apes*.

Terry: And *Space Academy*? You're role in that show?

Don Pedro: To make my character a memorable character. As I remember it, Damon steals the robot. The two cast members, they go to this planet and they're searching it out. Then suddenly somebody steals their robot. Oh, oh — a bad guy they have to deal with. And then the bad guy gets in trouble when the robot is frozen. And, he could turn his back and walk away but he decides to help out; he has a change of heart. And then the people get to know him, and then the story comes out of why he's there alone and then he's all sympathetic. So it's a beautiful character. You go from being one level, one dimensional to a multi-dimensional character. That's what theatre is all about: a beginning, middle and an end. So many actors and actresses get a job and they don't have the qualifications, heavy theatre background in the classics, to be able to orchestrate their character. So they do their lines, say the words, hit their mark, then they are paid and they go home and they aren't thinking about bringing the full character that is memorable, that makes a statement. Paint your picture. Show your piece of sculpture

Terry: So, is it... it's the attitude of the actor that brings... I'm here for a paycheck or I'm here to make a...

Don Pedro: I'm an artist.

Terry: Yeah. I'm here to be an artist.

Don Pedro: That's it. You hired me as an artist. It is my job and responsibility to fulfill that pledge to be an artist to bring truth, reality, warmth. All those things come out in the characters that you do. And, I thought, assuredly, that would be enough to keep me in the business forever. But, it ends up being too much. Would you believe it? I can't tell you how many times I would go in on an audition and they'd give me 3,4 lines to do. I'd put my thing together; do my shot. And the people they look at me with huge saucer eyes like, 'We didn't realize there was that much in there!' Because you bring them 4,5,6 different levels that bring life and texture and form to this basically formless character that was presented to them. And, they would tell you later, well, we can't hire you because you overshadow the stars of our show and we can't have that.

Terry: Have you considered presenting acting classes and doing some teaching? Because you've got the passion.

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Inner Views (con't)

Don Pedro: Oh, Yeah. I'll never loose that. My only problem with that is that I would be such an awful taskmaster and it's too frustrating for me when you have to deal with other people's limitations. I've conducted a couple [classes] and I get too frustrated in what I see is so obviously clear and so easy to obtain. But, people refuse to shed their skin, their protective skin, to reach for these areas. They're more comfortable in lying to themselves about how their life is than really getting down to the essence of what the art is all about and it's so frustrating when you can see it. It's so easy. 'Try this, do this...' And they can't even raise their head to make their eyes work, or express themselves in any way. What can you say? And it's frustrating. Okay, sure the guy is paying \$50 an hour. I'm not happy taking the money.

Terry: Oh. That's too bad, because sometimes that's what people need, that taskmaster to bring it out.

Don Pedro: I had a psychology professor in college that really impressed me. Southern Oregon University International, that's where the Shakespeare Festival is. And we had some pretty innovative professors. And I took a psychology class one year. And, this was a young guy. You know, wore tweed jackets and shirt, nice looking fellow. And one day we all went to his class and instead of sitting behind his desk he was sitting in a lotus position up on the table. All of us kids said, 'Okay, well whatever... really weird, I think'. We got through the class. I don't remember what he was teaching, reading, whatever. The next time the class met, sure enough, he's sitting on the tabletop. Everybody's saying, 'This guy is really weird. He's a teacher, for crying out loud. He's supposed to be behind his desk looking like a teacher, acting like a teacher. ... this guys' acting like a beatnik or whatever.' Next time the class meets... our psychology book was real big, about 2-3 inches thick, we get in the class and sit down and he gets off the table and takes his psych book and slams it on the table top. Slammmmm! Everybody jumped, the girls screamed, the guys were, 'What the hell?' He picked up his book, sat behind his desk and started class as if nothing happened. So the next time we meet in the class, sure enough, he's sitting on top of the table, gets up off the table and slams it on the tabletop again. Slam! Everybody says, 'What? This guys is...' 'Help!' And he goes on like nothing's happened. So the next time the class meets, he's not sitting on the tabletop. 'What? Oh. What's up now? What's going to happen?' And we get all set down and he raises the book in the air and he... And everybody screams and jumps. He

turns and looks at us and says, 'Now. See, that's the theory of Pavlovian Response. Conditioning. Duh!

Terry: Yeah, but they'll never forget it.

Don Pedro: Never in life. It was a wonderful moment, wonderful, wonderful moment.

Concluding my interview with actor, Don Pedro Colley, we talk about doing one of his favorite activities: Conventions!

Terry: Wow! Speaking of wonderful moments, you do conventions! I didn't know you were in Phoenix or I would've come down. I don't get a lot of those announcements.

Don Pedro: It was a year and a half. It was a hot one. It wasn't well publicized. It was a one day affair. We flew out of L.A. and late that afternoon we flew back. Couldn't have been 100 people at best came through this motel, and through this convention room so everybody was kind of twisted out of shape.

Terry: That 100 people were probably really happy they came.

Don Pedro: I've been in some where it is elbow to elbow, standing in line and standing in line.

Terry: We love it.

Don Pedro: I'm so surprised, it happens all over. When I did the first *Dukes of Hazard* convention down in a little place called Covington, Georgia, I'm thinking, 'Well, here I am from Oregon, wonder what's going to go on in Georgia, wonder how these people are going to accept me down there?' I got down there and these people say, [with a wonderful Southern accent] 'Oh, my. Looky Here!. Oh, it's Sheriff Little. Oh, Mr. Little, Mr. Little, would you please sign the dashboard of my car?' Dashboard of his car? Yeah, of course. So the guy had taken the whole dashboard out of his car and put it on the table for me. These people, they stared and they looked and they touched me and they wanted to have their pictures with me. I said, you'd think I was Catherine Bach, Daisy Duke, or something! It was absolutely astounding. And the second convention I did in Sperryvale, Virginia, Cooter, one of the two truck drivers bought a little garage, a little whistle stop of a town and turned it into a *Dukes of Hazard* museum right at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains where all that stuff went on. When I went I wondered, 'What's it going to be like? I'm here in the south... Virginia.'

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Inner Views (con't)

Man, I looked up from my table where I was signing autographs, I had 5 people wide standing at my table, 200 yards long down through this field; all standing in the hot sun waiting for my autograph or for pictures. And for three days this went on. And people would bring the hood, they'd restored their General Lee car, brought the trunk, glove box, door, brought the whole dashboard... just so they could get my autograph on it. And who else was there? That first one? Roscoe P. Coletrain, Ennis and Cleatus. They had a tent on the other side of the campground where we were. There was a country band in their own natural amphitheatre with music going, BBQ, catfish and red soda pop. It was a wonderful campground! About 40 General E. Lee cars showed up fully restored. Three days! Balloons in the air... Our security was the sheriff's department in the local area. They did traffic for us and everything. Then last year they did it, Catherine Bach was there; Daisy Duke. They came from Italy, Germany, France, Canada, Washington State, from Arizona and New Mexico. It's so huge. I just can't believe it. So this year they're got several cars and are going to do another jump, car stunt. The old dust roads there... the Convention back at Cooter's place... Now he's got a second place in Louisville, Kentucky, I think. I went back to all these places. I wondered how they'd receive me? 'Man, Sheriff Little's in town' 'What can we do for you? Anything you want. Take you someplace? Where would you like to go?', 'What can we do? Can we take you to dinner?' 'Please come with us to dinner tonight!'. I guess what I did was not lost.

Terry: No, I don't think so. More good things are going to happen. Well, Mr. Colley...

Don Pedro: Call me Don Pedro.

Terry: Don Pedro, thank you very much. This has been so much fun!

Don Pedro: Good, I hope this works well for you. God bless you. Thank you for contacting me.

Terry: And, to you, too. God bless you. You'll be hearing from me. Sunny Oregon Day to you.

Don Pedro: Same to you in Arizona.

An e-mail from Don Pedro: 7/14/03

There is one story that happened on the set of *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, with me and my friend, Victor Buono. You see, Victor was an inveterate board game

player, done to pass the time between being in front of the cameras or in your dressing room. One day he came up to me with this new and exciting game he just had to show me!! Our dressing trailers were parked outside of soundstage 25, on the Twentieth Century Fox studio lot. Ours were the standard two wheel camper type, pulled inline with the others. So, like two kids who sneak off to smoke cigarettes behind the barn, we entered his dressing room. His dressing table was too small to lay out this game, so we sat on the bench/bed in the back of the room. You must remember, I weighed in at around 250lbs. and Victor was 350 plus.

Suddenly, the room tilted. The entrance door was now up in the air! Our screams of 'Help! Help!' went unheeded! They should have heard our laughter, but NO!!!!!! The Executive decision was made that I crawl along the wall to reach the door, and our combined weight should get us back in balance. Fine decision, except the trailer righted itself with such a resounding crash, all his dressing mirrors broke, and blew out the lights!! We figured we had just forfeited our paychecks, but no. That is until all the rest of the company had heard about our dilemma, and sent the carpenters to build a portable foundation around both our trailers!

Websites relevant to this interview:

<http://www.donpedrocolley.com>

<http://www.bobbysherman.com/bshctb.htm>

http://www.geocities.com/Area51/3253/regular_lenard.html

RPG Corner (con't)

weapons is a lifetime goal and would likely never be achieved by a character. For an avid student, I would say that mastering two or three weapons is attainable.

Okay, so now we have an **Initiative** score and a **Weapons Skill**, so we need to talk about defending for a little while. A character can defend himself in three main ways: 1) Dodge the blow, 2) parry an attack with his own weapon, or 3) let the blow through and trust his armor to protect him. I have to state for the record that should a character employ the third method and expect to survive, he is either being silly or needs his head examined. Armor exists to protect a character from some of the damage associated with combat when the primary defenses fail, but one's best defense is and always has been to avoid getting hit.

The easiest way to do this is to **Dodge**, to get entirely out of the way of the attacking weapon. This is one of the basic skills under the Dexterity Attribute, and is straightforward enough. Succeed on your Dodge roll and you manage to avoid the blow. There may

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be complicating factors to dodging, such as previous wounds and a very successful or skilled attack, but those details can be added later by Game Masters to suit their tastes.

The other viable option is to use a character's own Weapon Skill against his opponent's in the form of a parry. Some Game Masters would have an adjustment to the Weapon Skill score, or even a separate category, for parrying, but I believe that when one truly learns a weapon, one learns attack and defense in equal measure. So the roll is Weapon Skill vs. Weapon Skill.

I'm out of room, so next month I'll lay down the goods on weapons and armor, and how they affect combat.

3-D Characters (con't)

Dimension is customarily reserved for the characters who, as the focus of the story, require the most page time. Their successes (and failures) are supposed to matter to readers. Thus, authors (usually) devote the greatest part of their time to them. They are given all the things that less essential characters lack: history, feelings, thoughts, strengths, and weaknesses. When this *mélange* is properly mixed, a lifelike character is born, one with whom a reader can relate, one who seems neither invincible nor immutable, and one subject to the same temptations that affect any living being.

Why, then, should extra effort be put into tertiary characters when that effort will rarely make the final edit? Because dimension does not have to be seen to be felt. If an author sees a character, no matter how insignificant, as real, then his readers will as well. By creating a history and personality for *every* character, an author has a framework upon which to frame his writing, and his attitude, word choice, and style will reflect that character and the circumstances appropriately. This history need not be as elaborate as those of the major players, but if it does not exist, the characters, and thus the story, will not seem real.

Take, for example, an unnamed character who suffers a tragic death on the battlefield. This character may be good or evil, young or old, noble or cowardly. If the author has no image of the character, then the event will mean nothing, and the writing will be generic. "The life faded from Unnamed's eyes as the sword ran him through." If this style appears every now and again, no harm is done, but each time this nonspecific writing is used, a little bit of dimension is lost.

Instead, let's imagine that the author has envisioned this character as evil but cowardly. Knowing this, and perhaps a bit more, the author will choose words that appropriately reflect the character's personality.

"Unnamed stared at the carnage with a grim smile as he pulled the sword from his enemy's back. He laughed as the body slumped forward, but his eyes widened in terror when he saw the blade descending toward his throat."

Evil and Cowardly. With only these two bits of knowledge, significantly more detail was added to the death sequence. Readers should easily be able to guess the alignment of Unnamed, and some may even feel a sort of joy that, in the end, he gets what he deserves. If Unnamed were good, the words chosen would reflect that, and readers would come away saddened by the death or emboldened by Unnamed's noble sacrifice.

In the above example, only the most cursory attempt is made to develop Unnamed. To add true dimension, more questions should be asked; the more numerous and detailed the questions, the more dimension the story will have. Where is Unnamed from? Who (or what) is he fighting for? Are his motivations the same as that of the protagonist and/or antagonist? What was his last thought? By making this insignificant character real in his mind, an author can make him real to his readers. After this process is applied to a hundred minor characters, or a thousand, the story evolves beyond mere words. It takes on a life of its own and becomes something more than a simple tale; it becomes a world. Dimension explains the success of *Lord of the Rings*, *The Wheel of Time*, and *The Sword of Truth* series, among others. It also explains why other, less well-rounded works have fallen into obscurity.

In my own writing, I have discovered that the more often I create histories for minor characters, the easier it becomes to do so. After a while, each character's story comes of its own accord; I have to do little more than select a name. In a few instances, characters who were meant to be placeholders have developed into major players, not because I necessarily wanted it to happen, but because the story demanded it. Once a story starts telling the author what must happen, it has enough dimension.

In conclusion, characters with a single facet offer little to look at. Like a colorless shape scribbled on a blank page, they may catch the eye, but they cannot hold the attention. By investing time into every character, even tertiary ones, an author can create a world of incredible depth. By creating characters who feel, act, and react like real people, an author can draw readers into his stories, hopefully deep enough that the line between fantasy and reality begins to blur.

In the coming months, I will explore in greater detail the three dimensions of a good character.