

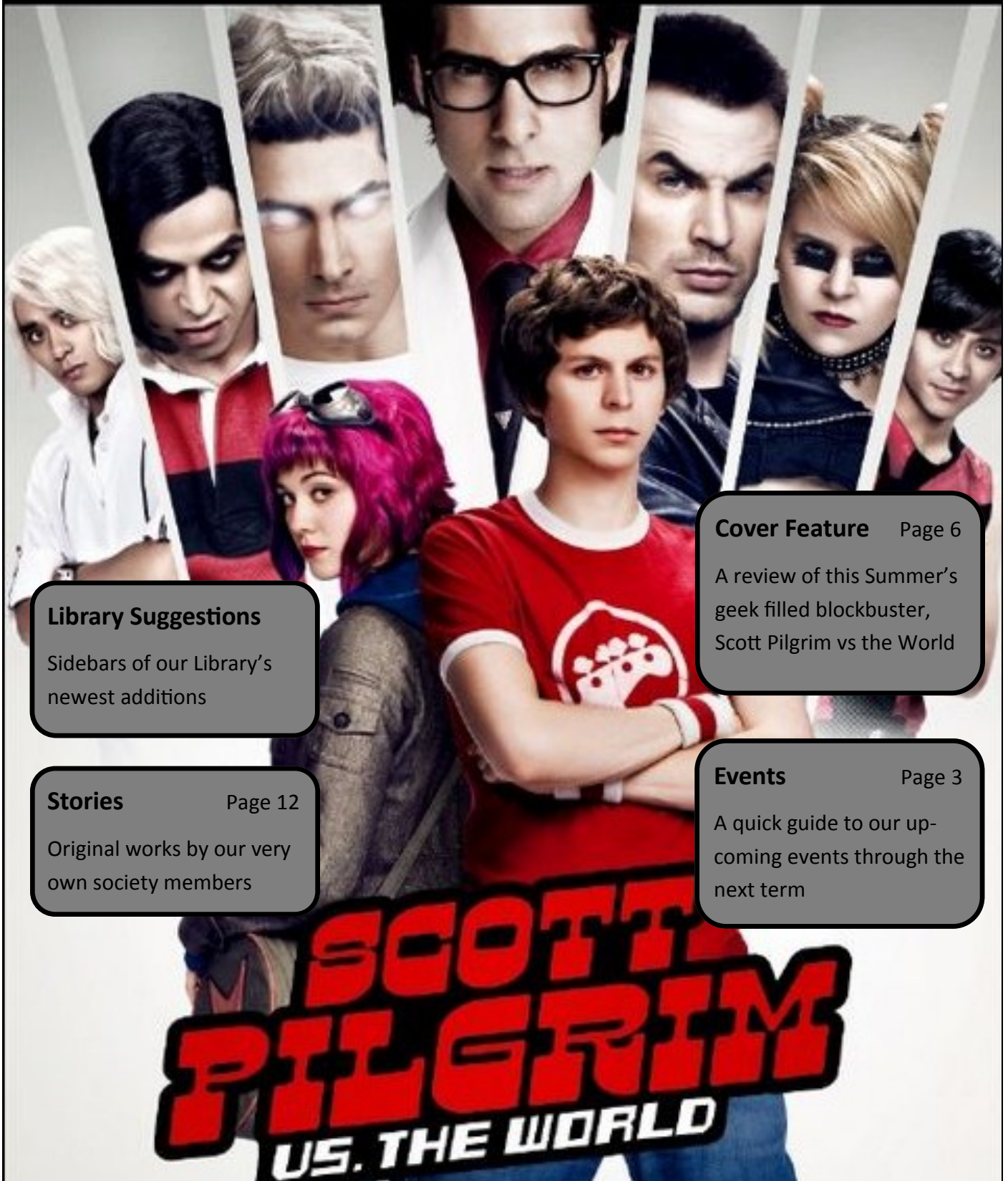


UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM SCIENCE

FICTION & FANTASY SOCIETY

# The 'Zine

Issue #2: 20/10/2010



## Library Suggestions

Sidebars of our Library's newest additions

## Stories

Page 12

Original works by our very own society members

## Cover Feature

Page 6

A review of this Summer's geek filled blockbuster, Scott Pilgrim vs the World

## Events

Page 3

A quick guide to our upcoming events through the next term

Remember to join our forums at: <http://su-web.nottingham.ac.uk/~scifi/>

## Contents

Captain's Log	2
Regular Events	3
Upcoming Events	4
Caption Competition	5
Scott Pilgrim Review	6
Retro-Reviews	7
Harry Potter Preview	10
Poetry Corner	11
Story #1	12
Story #2	15
Story #3	17

## Captain's Log

Stardate... damn, I lost my space calendar.

Well, welcome to another issue of our fabulous zine, fairly packed with stories, poetry, artwork and many other wonderful things, and best of all, it's all done by you, yes, I'm looking at you, you in the back with arms. If it's not by you, I encourage you strongly to get something in the next issue, even if you think it's no good, we'll publish it, I mean look, we're publishing this tripe, who would write this kind of rubbish? Oh, right..., moving on.

As the newly elected president, I'm proud to be writing here as the head of a society filled with great people, people who I've had the pleasure to get to know over the last year and who now might not mind too much if I call them my friends and, hopefully, a whole lot of new faces for the new year. Yes, a whole lot of people to rule over with my iron fist, at least until you all figure out I have no real power and depose me. In all seriousness though, I really do hope I do a good job for all of you in this society, I know that my committee and I have big shoes to fill, stepping onto the scene after a committee which started a lot of new things and did them very well indeed. I'm confident though, that we can continue to build on our achievements and become an even better society.

Phil Friedel  
SFFS President

# Regular Events

## **Weekly Sci-Fi Film nights:**

**Starting Wednesday 29th September. 7pm for a 7.30 start. Venue: Portland E126**

On Wednesdays we watch a Sci-Fi or Fantasy Film. Anyone is free to bring their own DVDs, then we choose what to watch via the sometimes confusing system known as “all stick up your hands and we’ll attempt to count”. Afterwards the same insanity is repeated for TV shows, and then it’s off to find a quiet place to sit and discuss all things geeky.

## **Weekly Anime nights:**

**Starting Monday 27th September. 7pm for 7.30 start. Venue: Portland C27**

Monday Night is Anime Night! We begin with a episode or two of a series chosen to watch throughout the term (after auditioning series for the first couple of weeks), and then follow with a film, more series, or whatever you like. As always, feel free to bring anything you think we would enjoy watching!

## **Fortnightly Geeky Crafts nights:**

**Starting Friday 1st October. Venue: Portland C27**

Geeky Crafts Night is a chance for you to try out whatever crazy project has been plaguing your mind, or just to help others with their plans for world domination! Either bring your own materials, or use the society’s Lego to craft your insane creations.

# Upcoming Events

As well as our weekly get-togethers, we are also putting on some extra events throughout the next term.

**Week One's introductory events:** For both new and returning ~~minions~~ members

**Wed 22nd Sept** - (7pm for a 7.30 start, Portland E126) Escape from WeekOne with our first film of the year. We will be watching the Sci-Fi Classic film Time Bandits, and then retreating to our favourite local pub, just 5 minutes off campus, The Johnson Arms. Cupcakes provided!

**Sat 25th Sept** - (7pm for a 7.30 start, Portland C27) A meet and greet to get to know us all, at one of our regular haunts. Don't be scared, we only want to steal some of your sanity! Meet 7:45pm at the University South Entrance if you want a guide.

**Mon 27th Sept** - (7pm for 7:30 start, C27 Portland) Anime Intro Night: Many series enter, only one may win! As an intro to our anime night join us to choose which series we will watch at the start of every week this term! Bring your most loved DVDs, and we will watch as many episodes as we can before choosing the champion.

**Wed 29th Sept** - (7pm for 7:30 start, E126 Portland) Join us for the obligatory Welcome Meeting, complete with such traditional clichés as The Quiz and associated confectionery prizes! Meet the Committee and be introduced to our mad little world.

**Autumn Term Events:** Venues will be announced closer to the events

**Sat 2nd Oct** - Shopping Social - A guide to all the geekiest shops in town.

**Sat 16th Oct** - Eye of Argon Social - Can you keep a straight face reading this awful prose?

**Sat 23rd Oct** - Quasar Social - Geeks with guns!

**Wed 27th Oct** - Halloween Themed pre-selected film

**Sat 30th Oct** - Halloween Party - Dress up in your best costume, or just see what everyone else comes up with!

**Fri 5th Nov** - Pit n Pendulum Social (Provisional Date)

**Sat 20th Nov** - Debate - Who shot first? What defines a Geek? Do you care? The society decides!

**Sat 27th Nov** - JA Social

**Sat 4th Dec** - Christmas Meal (Provisional Date)

**Wed 8th Dec** - Christmas Themed pre-selected film

Remember, you can find up to date event information on our website and forums!

<http://su-web.nottingham.ac.uk/~scifi/>



## Caption Competition



Our winning entry this time is:

"If you have any of the symptoms shown above, please call the NHS Zombie Flu Hotline....."

By Graham Moore

And remember, you must destroy the brain!

**Your next challenge is ~~Cthulhu with his Sam puppet~~  
Sam with his Cthulhu puppet:**



Submit your captions via the forum!

# Scott Pilgrim vs the World: Review

by Sam Kurd

When I took my seat in the cinema and prepared to watch 'Scott Pilgrim vs. The World', I didn't know what to expect. I confess that I hadn't actually read the graphic novels beforehand (and I still haven't gotten round to it), so all I had to go on were the trailers, which made the film out to be a massive shiny spectacle of video-game style graphics and not a lot else. On this front, it doesn't disappoint.

'Scott Pilgrim' is the story of the titular character's literal battle to date the girl of his dreams; upon wooing the lovely (if a little vacant) Ramona Flowers, he finds himself accosted by her 9 Evil Ex-Boyfriends (no, Evil Exes) and challenged to battle after battle. That's pretty much it, in terms of plot. There are sub-stories involving Scott's own exes and the struggle faced by his (frankly pants) band Sex Bob-Omb to win a Battle of the Bands competition, but the meat of the film once it gets going is Scott's obsession with Ramona and the fights he endures to win her heart.

These fight scenes are ... wow. They're VERY shiny. Nicely executed, with a real sense of peril at times (though not at the expense of the 'cool' factor), and with graphics that made me long for a videogame version (which there is ... an 8Bit side-scrolling beat-em-up ala Double Dragon. Not quite what I had in mind!). The Evil Exes are great villains, mostly superbly acted.

Which brings me to the cast. Let me make one thing clear: I HATE Michael Cera. I can't stand him. He always seems to play whiny, awkward, gormless characters. I'm all for more geeks in film, but every time he's on screen I want to smack him in the face with a plank of wood. It made me want to go out with Ramona and get her to dump me so I could join the League of Evil Exes and get the chance to punch him in his gormless whiny awkward face. This feeling lessened halfway through the film, but never entirely went away. Michael Cera. Ugh.



That said, he DOES do a decent enough job, and the rest of the cast is mostly superb. Mary Elizabeth Winstead is almost unrecognisable from past roles with Ramona's blue hair and with her disaffected hipster attitude, and she comes across as both strong and vulnerable (which I would imagine is pretty difficult). Kieran Culkin is brilliant as Scott's snarky gay roommate Wallace, and though most of Scott's bandmates are fairly forgettable, Alison Pill's quietly hostile drummer Kim certainly leaves a lasting impression! The Exes are also well represented, with Brandon Routh, Chris Evans and Jason Schwartzman especially standing out.

Director Edgar Wright has crafted a very enjoyable film that's well worth seeing on the big screen should you still have the chance. It's not perfect, of course, and it's these imperfections that may have contributed to its box office failure. The trailers were a bit all over the place, seemingly unsure of how to market the film, because the film itself doesn't fit into any single established category – is it a romantic comedy with several action scenes? An action film with relationship angst? A snarky hipster culture film with love and fistfights? Also, the 'meh' and 'whatever' attitude of several characters really starts to grate (although there's an amusing scene at the end that almost makes up for it).

In all, Scott Pilgrim is a damned good film, well worth watching. Here's hoping that it's unfair lack of success at the box office doesn't signal the first nail in the coffin for geek chic's recent surge in popularity.

# Retro-Review

by Imogene 'Tonks' Hill

## An Enjoyable Adventure Game

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (PS2)

Advantages: Great gameplay, challenging puzzles, graphics still stand up well

Disadvantages: Combat can be frustrating and some puzzles can drive you nuts



I recently picked up a copy of Prince of Persia: Sands of Time, and I've really been enjoying playing it. It has a good mix of brain teasing puzzles and challenging combat which means the game rarely (if ever) becomes repetitive.

The plot of the game can more or less be summed up as: Prince make big mess, Prince try to fix big mess. Fortunately (or unfortunately, for him) it's not quite as simple as that, and there are lots of rooms to puzzle and fight your way through before that can happen.

Personally I enjoy the puzzles the most. They are engaging and challenging, almost to the point of frustration at times. Some of them are extremely brain teasing, and you can run around in circles for ages before being able to spot what you have to do. Other times it is blindingly obvious what you have to do but through various circumstances you can't get there/do what you need to. When you do complete a puzzle and move on to the next section there is a great sense of satisfaction to be had.

Combat for me is my least favourite part of the game. Early on it is very simple and you can rely on having lots of water around to restore your health, but as the game progresses the enemies get harder and you really have to master various combos and wall attacks in order to beat them. This is something I haven't managed to do yet, so I find combat a hard slog and not too enjoyable.

Through much of the game you are paired with the non player character Farrah as your assistant of sorts. I found her annoying and more bother than she was of use. She gets in your way during combat and dies at inappropriate moments because she can't defend herself when you're bogged down fighting five big brutes with massive hammers. She's armed with a bow, but seems to not use it to help you out a lot of the time.

The most notable feature of this game is the Dagger of Time, which you acquire early in the game. With this you can slow down time, see the future, freeze the present, and most importantly, reverse time is

you mess up. This feature is particularly useful during the puzzles if you miss a ledge or jump at the wrong moment. I don't tend to use it during combat because if I do, I find myself rewinding time eight times only to meet the same end every time.

One of the things I was most surprised at was the quality of the graphics. Considering it is a Playstation 2 game released in 2003 I feel they've aged really well. At times they look and feel almost comparable to the graphics in some Xbox 360 games. They have a realistic feel to them, without compromising the fantasy element.

Sound wise I have found that you don't really lose much of the storyline aspect if you play on silent. The prince's voice can get annoying, especially when/if you die and he goes 'no no silly me, the story doesn't happen like that'.

Generally speaking I have found this a very enjoyable game to play, with its best selling points being the puzzle aspect of gameplay and the ability to rewind time.

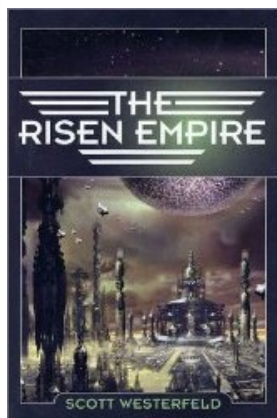
Summary: Very enjoyable. Would recommend to most gamers

Originally posted at [dooyoo.com](http://dooyoo.com)

<http://members.dooyoo.co.uk/playstation-2-game/prince-of-persia-the-sands-of-time-1/1305590/>

*(Therefore all spelling and grammar mistakes belong to DooYoo and Tonks. I can't correct them! - Editor)*

## The Risen Empire - Scott Westerfeld



The undead Emperor has ruled the Eighty Worlds for sixteen hundred years. His is the power to grant immortality to those he deems worthy, creating an elite class known as the Risen. Along with his sister, the eternally young Child Empress, his power within the empire has been absolute. Until now. The empire's great enemies, the Rix, hold the Child Empress hostage. Charged with her rescue is Captain Laurent Zai. But when Imperial politics are involved the stakes are unimaginably high, and Zai may yet find the Rix the least of his problems. On the homeworld, Zai's lover, Senator Nara Oxham, newly appointed to the Emperor's War Council, must prosecute the war with the Rix while holding the inhuman impulses of the Risen councillors in check. If she fails at either task, millions will die. And at the centre of everything is the Emperor's great lie: a revelation so shattering that he is willing to sanction the death of entire worlds to keep it secret...

**Comment from someone who is not a scientist:** This has one of the best, most twisted plots of any book I've ever read. It has SCIENCE! (that would actually WORK according to the scientists I've asked), fantastic characters, death, danger, mystery, intrigue, romance, and a sentient house. What's not to love?



# Retro-Review

by Mabel 'Tonks' Hill

## My personal favourite Trek

Star Trek - Voyager

Advantages: Fun, amusing and entertaining

Disadvantages: Some hammy acting and plot holes



Voyager is often the most maligned of Star Trek series' even by Trekkies themselves. Myself I've always had a soft spot for Voyager, having enjoyed it as a kid.

I recently re-watched the series from episode one season one, to the finale in season 7, and I must say I enjoyed it immensely.

At times the acting is hammy, the storylines ridiculous and the plot holes numerous. But then, isn't that part of what Star Trek is about? Even when it is completely ridiculous it is funny, and still retains a kind of charm.

Alongside this, Voyager has great characters, who really develop as the series progresses. It is often philosophical, and the crew often face ethical dilemmas, particularly with breaking their Federation's own Prime Directive.

One of the things I remain very impressed with is the special effects. On occasion they are extremely nineties, but on the whole they stand up well today. They certainly don't detract from the impression that they really are in deep space.

Above all else, Star Trek: Voyager is entertaining, it's fun. And at the end of the day, isn't that the whole point of TV?

Summary: It's TV, it's entertaining. Isn't that enough?

Originally posted at [dooyoo.com](http://members.dooyoo.com)

<http://members.dooyoo.co.uk/tv-programs/star-trek-voyager/1290009/>

*(Therefore all spelling and grammar mistakes belong to DooYoo and Tonks. I can't correct them! - Editor)*

## Harry Potter and the Deathly Movie Franchise by Cassie Brummitt

This November heralds the beginning of the end for Warner Bros' multi-billion-dollar motion picture series, but, more importantly for fans of the franchise, it marks the end of a journey. After ten years of waiting impatiently for spoilers, of exasperation over various abuses of 'creative licence' with our beloved books, of watching celebrities grow from the success, anticipation will turn to memories for the Harry Potter generation.

When I first read that Tom Felton (actor, Draco Malfoy) had reportedly witnessed Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint and Emma Watson, the Golden Trio of actors, crying on set after they had finished filming their last scene of *Deathly Hallows*; that was when I began to understand that it was over. But I'm not altogether unhappy about it, because it will bring a satisfying sense of closure that has been left dangling since the publication of the seventh book over two years ago.

Now, I'm not one of those Harry Potter fans who violently dislike the movies. Nor am I under any illusions about their cinematic brilliance (just try asking someone who's never read the books what on Earth was going on in the sixth film, for instance). I do enjoy them, though, as an almost separate entity from the books, since they have developed their own distinct style and following. Because of this, I'm optimistic that the movie franchise will go out on a high when the second half comes out next summer – despite the fact that director David Yates has described the first movie as primarily a 'road movie', we can only hope there aren't too many yawn-inducing camping scenes within various forests. But with such a ridiculous budget and a legacy to solidify, I imagine there will be considerably fewer, and much better-paced, travelling set-pieces than in the seventh book as a whole (affectionately labelled by some as *Harry Potter and the Deathly Boring Final Instalment*).

The only trailer currently available on the internet approaches the film from an interesting angle, partly by featuring some scenes that I can't recall ever happening in the book. I'm not sure when Voldemort ever man-handled Harry, but it looks like it'll be pretty funny to watch. Also, this trailer focuses fairly extensively on Voldemort, which isn't entirely faithful to the book's style (as we know, it's mostly from Harry's perspective), but I have felt that remaining so fixed on Harry often worked to the detriment of good story-telling anyhow. Aside from that, the trailer features a multitude of scenes from both the first and second half – but there are still many scenes that a future trailer might cover, such as Shell Cottage, Dumbledore's backstory, Snape's history, and the infiltration of the Ministry of Magic. Typically as with the preceding Harry Potter films, the trailer manages to whip up a sense of anticipation for the film's release by revealing only tantalising glimpses of eagerly-awaited scenes.

Undeniably, though, it sets the turbulent scene for what claims to be the climax of a 'phenomenon'. Judging from the shots of Hogwarts wreckage we can be assured of a mountain of special effects and hectic action sequences (well, in the second film at least). This sort of cinematic style seems also to have permeated other areas of the Harry Potter franchise; the upcoming *Deathly Hallows* video game, released in correlation with the movie, looks from its spoilers remarkably like a third-person-shooter. What happened to never using *Unforgivables*?!

## Poetry Corner

## Cthulhu Fhtagn, Baby and Other Cosmic Insolence - Will Ludwigsen

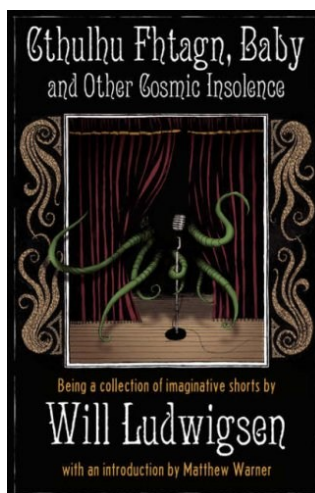
**Haikus** by Edwina 'Tonks' Hill

Somebody mentioned  
There's no poems for the 'Zine  
Here have some haikus

One Ring is shiny  
And kinda dangerous too  
Throw it in a fire

Star Wars v Star Trek  
Who can decide what's better?  
Come to our debate

Come watch anime  
Have your mind completely warped  
Burple burble buh



Oscar Wilde wrote that "the real tragedies of life occur in such an in-artistic manner that they hurt us by their entire lack of style." Not satisfied with that, Will Ludwigsen chooses instead to add humour and flair to the horrors that surround us. Why settle for the lesser of evils in your newspaper

when you can read an entire book of stories about zombie-exploiting, plesiosaur-chopping, alien-dissecting, robotically-enhanced, lunatics instead? This premiere collection by Will Ludwigsen brings together thirteen of his best horror, mystery, and science fiction stories from magazines such as *Weird Tales*, Alfred Hitchcock's *Mystery Magazine*, and *Cemetery Dance*, plus three originals. Though the work of a single deranged author, these varied tales share a flippant disdain for common decency, courtesy, and sense. Witty and irreverent, they remind us that we have more hope than we think -if only because we have wit and irreverence.

**Comment from a completely sane and non-cultist member of the society:** A collection of darkly comic stories of eldritch horrors and tentacle goodness. It's Lovecraftalicious!

A lazy sun wallowed in the noon day sky, beating down on the quaint sea side town of Ansolita. It hazed the air and imbued the place with a lingering, listless mood. A thin, wiry man, clad in nothing more than a sweat drenched vest and a pair of trousers so worn that they shone, sat upon a stool smoking a limp cigarette; Drinking in the blazing sun and the cleansing tang of fresh sea air in a uniquely deferential way. Tall grass waved in a faint breeze coming down the coast and taking from the heat the oppressive edge that would otherwise have so sapped the energy of any a man. As far as the eye could see water stretched across the horizon, sparkling like a thin sheet of burnished sapphire. It was for want of a better word: beauty. Beauty was something that so often escaped the man, something his line of work frequently insulated him from. True, there was beauty in his work, but it was so esoteric, only a connoisseur could ever really appreciate its nuances. This however was pure beauty, something that even the untrained or unappreciative eye could not ignore. And because of this, for the briefest of moments, he was no longer Mr. Callis.

The vista before him was made even more delightful by the fact that Don Jermai had almost stopped screaming. He had been screaming for so long, it was a testament to the man's strength of will if nothing else. His was not to be a pleasant death. Callis very really meted out *pleasant* deaths, but even by the grim and macabre standards of his world, it was not even remotely pleasant. It was slow, agonizing and vindictive. It was the only real way for any true lord of the underworld to die. The setting added a certain poetic flair to the affair and, rather conveniently placed the blame at the door of someone else. With one last muffled thump, the screaming abated and the late Don Jermai slumped to the floor of his own kipper house; smoked alive.

Callis sat alone with the sun for a while. Too fleeting were the moments like this. Beauty and death side by side, neither beauty in death nor the beauty of death, but the two individual entities together and separate. There was also the chance that the Great Don may have second thoughts about dying. Some people, especially important people, quite often did not have the common decency to just die. Perhaps that was part of what made them special; both in life and the strange sense of satisfaction that it left in the pit of Callis' gut. With the dying embers of his cigarette winking out and being carried off by the errant breeze Callis rose wearily from his stool and began to stretch out the stiffness in his idle limbs. From a peg by the door of the smokehouse he took his wide brimmed straw hat and placed it upon his head. With this he jammed his hands into his trouser pockets and resolutely set off at a casual pace towards the cliffs.

It was in Callis' nature to whistle after a job well done, once all the ill intent and foul chicanery had passed. It made him feel slightly less like an instrument and more like a man. The idea of being an instrument, he found, instilled one with a sense of mechanical immortality; that come what may from whatever parts hitherto unseen, nothing truly had the power to wound or destroy you. It made you feel invincible. This is all well and good till you consider one very simple fact that many folk such as he often neglected to consider; the fact that they were only just men. They were *not* immortal, they were *not* indestructible, they were *not* gods, they were only men. And all men bleed. And all men die. To view oneself again as nothing more than a man, with all the flesh and blood, all the frail imperfections that it entailed ensured that Callis would hopefully never fall into this self constructed trap. The problem that always faced Callis in this situation was exactly what to whistle? There were such a myriad of



tunes in the world, each with its own unique message, subtext and tone. To whistle the wrong tune was to make yourself obvious, to make yourself exposed when you were otherwise concealed and most importantly of all it was to mar an otherwise brilliant masterpiece. One's extrication from the scene, even if no one ever saw you was as much a part of the art of what you had done as the crime itself. So few people realised that these days. Or maybe Callis was just beginning to feel old. He was certainly older than a man in his profession had any right to be. He should really have had the common decency to die by now, or was this just what made him special? His face took on a cruel smile at this thought. How could a man in his late twenties feel so much older than he was? It must have been all the blood and all the flames in which he had been so ungently tempered. Flames were after all vampiric by their very nature, they consumed so that they might live, perhaps they had consumed some of him too? Callis found these thoughts to be far too bleak for such a splendid day. He decided that something vital was needed, a tune with a spring in its step, possibly even a little folksy twang. There was a jig he rather liked, from the steppes at the feet of the great city of Centillis. And with that the jaunty and uplifting notes issued forth from the pursed lips of Callis. Once more beauty and death stood side by side. Callis felt the inklings of something that might possibly have been joy, not the joy he was used to either. His own personal joy was far divorced from that of the ordinary man, so much so it should be called perverse. This was a simple joy, the one of the sun on your face and the wind in your hair. It appealed to something primal in the dark and forgotten recesses of Callis' mind. Today was a good day.

While Callis sauntered jovially towards the cliff edge and the small boat he had left there earlier that day his thoughts took a rare turn. For the first time he began to wonder why? Not why he did what he did, he knew the answer to that; it was because he enjoyed it. But the why of the crime? For him it had always been more about the act than the reasons for it or its consequences. Her Ladyship was a strange woman, but this seemed particularly far from her usual field of vision. It had always been buildings, cities, lords, kings and emperors on which she had unleashed Mr. Callis. The reasons for these targets in hindsight were quite clear, it was all about moulding the political and economical landscape to suit her myriad of plans and schemes. This turn towards someone so murky concerned Callis. There was no denying that Don Jermai was a powerful man, but his name was not a byword in the halls of power. Not the reputable ones at least. It meant her ladyship was planning something particularly large and particularly devious. The thought sent a shiver down Callis' spine. A cornucopia of evils and misdeeds had inured Callis to a great many things but her Ladyship terrified him. They had thus far only ever met once and it had been the first time Callis had known fear for over a decade. For all her beauty and poise, for all that grace and majesty, below it lay something so cold and malevolent it chilled the marrow. Looking into her eyes was like looking through stained glass windows into hell. This could however have been a perfectly normal way to react; It had been the first time Callis had been in the presence of nobility, perhaps such an impression was what allowed them to keep their iron gloved fist clenched tightly around the world. There was also a slightly more disturbing prospect. A life of vice and fire had left Callis somewhat of a stranger to the concept of normal human emotion, there was always the lingering thought that what he felt might have been love.

With another shudder Callis began his descent down a flight of stairs cut into the cliff face towards the small stone jetty at their base. He spat over the edge into the sea. It left his mouth feeling dry and he fished out another battered cigarette from his pocket. As he settled into his small row boat he lit it and allowed himself a small quiet moment of peace before he set off. The stump withered into nothingness and he cast it into the sea. From beneath the small bench on which he perched he retrieved the

## Story: **Smoking the Kipper (cont.)** By John Steele

oars jamming them into the locks and casually casting off the rope that tethered the boat. With a sigh Callis began to row, his shoulders bunching and heaving as he scudded out into the bay.

As the wind gently rocked the boat something above him in the sky caught his wandering eyes. A gull was circling over head. Callis' mood soured within a heartbeat.

"That bitch never gives me a moments peace does she?" He cursed under his breath.

The Crone was coming to check on him. Just how her Ladyship had managed to tame such a foul witch was a mystery to Callis, and yet another thing that made her seem so terrifying. Slowly rising Callis removed one of the oars from the locks and hefted it in his hands, testing its not inconsiderable weight. The gull began to spiral downwards with wearisome inevitability. It beat its wings as it slowed to land on the prow, its beak opening to emit a cry. Before the bird even had a chance to land Callis swung, his arms snapping like an uncoiling spring that had been straining under too much tension. The blade of the oar slammed into the side of the gull with a noise like a hammer hitting a pile of wet cake. The body of the gull arced gracefully through the air and its limp formed vanished beneath the rolling waves without so much as a splash. The swing had unbalanced Callis, he fell backwards, landing on his rear in a manner without dignity or grace. Scrabbling and flailing about like a landed fish he regained his seat on the small bench and spat into the water. Raising the oar and brandishing it like a sabre he screamed.

"How do like them apples you toothless whore?!"

The delight Callis took in tormenting the Crone had become a ritualistic habit. As dangerous as it might be to provoke her, the satisfaction was more than worth it. Callis replaced the oar and began to row away. Callis smiled a smile of happiness and mirth, not savage intent or cruel sarcasm. It was such a rare beast to prowl across the arid planes of his face that any who saw it would have been struck with a slight sense of disbelief, unsure that it had in fact, actually occurred. He chuckled to himself; it really was a wonderful day.

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## Buso Renkin #1



Buso Renkin is the story of teenager Kazuki Muto who dies trying to save a girl who was being attacked by an eerie monster. The following morning, Kazuki wakes wondering whether it was all a dream. But the girl, the monster, and his death are all real!

**Comment from a not-at-all fangirl:** Buso Renkin is a really fun action series. Take all the best parts of Bleach - including inventive fight scenes, a brilliant variety of characters, and improbable weapons - mix in a large amount of school life and references to other manga, and stir. The result is this! (It's also drawn by the creator of *Rorouni Kenshin*!)

Fernan stormed onto the bridge, grumbling. She stopped suddenly when she spotted Natten. "Oh, err, sorry sir, I didn't see you there."

"Oh, no problem pilot." He pushed himself to his feet, brushing himself down slightly. After a quick look at her face he inquired "You seem a little... annoyed."

"You could say that." She replied, trying not to snap and sank into her hookup chair.

Natten leaned on a console, waiting for the pilot to calm down enough to meet his gaze again. "Alright, tell me about it."

Fernan looked a little confused "Shouldn't I... I mean it's procedure to file a report."

Natten let out a slight laugh "With what exactly? Just tell me what's going on."

She rolled her eyes "Good point." She took a deep breath, settled her arms onto the rests and composed herself. Her eyes were focused not on Natten, but straight ahead of her, as if she was looking at something only she could see. She spoke in an oddly detached voice. "Incident with Officer Gis. Discovered him in the hold searching the delivery containers. Removed him from area. Then received verbal abuse."

Natten nodded "Please elaborate on his activities and the nature of the abuse."

"Reason to believe he was attempting to steal from the delivery. He was searching container FY3872C. Abuse was in response to his removal from the hold. It was anti-bionic in nature."

Natten nodded again, noting the pilot tensing up.

Fernan wrenched her eyes from her invisible focus point and finally fixed her gaze to Natten's. "He called me a damn filthy drone, Captain." Her look was unflinchingly steely.

The captain sighed and lowered his head slightly. "I should have seen this coming." He muttered. He straightened up "I better deal with him."

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Gis was sitting on the med bench with a smug, self-satisfied smirk plastered on his face. He'd been talking for 5 minutes.

"...and a vein was popping out of its neck" he chuckled "apparently that only happens when people get riled up."

Salme was bent over his desk, fiddling with some vials and a medpop. "Please stop talking." he mumbled quietly.

## Story: **Mind Games: Chapter 2 (Cont.)** by Jen 'Amarok' Frye

Gis rambled on, regardless "Why do you think that is? You're a med tech, you should know, right? But then it is a 'facer'" He spat as he said the word "And we all know they're not like us normal bio folks. I don't know why the captain even keeps it on the ship."

"Please stop talking." Salme said a little louder, dropping the med supplies on the metal desk with a clatter.

"I mean, it's just taking a job from a decent upstanding —"

He was cut off as Salme jumped up, grabbed him by his jacket and slammed him against the wall; a few small jars and test tubes fell off the nearby shelves.

"Will you please, for the love of Harotha's almighty fist, stop talking!" Salme's voice gradually rose from a loud voice to him screaming the last phrase.

Gis' eyes bugged out slightly, Salme dropped him and turned back to his desk. Gis steadied himself slightly, and then brushed off his jacket. As he turned to go out of the door he saw Salme grab the medpop he'd dropped on his desk.

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Gis sauntered up the habitation corridor. He stopped by the one open door and lent on the door frame. "Hey Shem, have you seen the captain? I have a complaint to lodge."

Shem was standing next to her bunk, facing the wall. Her lips moving slightly and her fingertips were brushing patterns on the metal hull.

"Shem!"

She didn't respond, but her fingertips moved more decisively against the metal.

I swear, I am the only sane person on this boat!" exclaimed Gis as he rolled his eyes and spun away from the doorframe. He stamped back down the corridor, cursing loudly as he went.

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Natten finally located Gis when he heard the clatter of an access panel in the habitation corridor. The short man was just reaching for a handful of bundled wires, when the captain cleared his throat loudly.

"Err, hi there Sir, I was just um... checking the emergency lighting wiring. They haven't been used for a while, and I wanted to—", upon seeing Natten's highly unimpressed expression, Gis hurriedly stepped away from the panel. "But that can wait of course, it's not like we don't have plenty of spare time, right?" He tried to let out a small, companionable laugh, but it came out as a nervous hiccup.

"I think you and I need to have talk, and I think you know what this is about. Put that panel back and meet me in the hold." Natten turned and walked away, leaving the now highly nervous man to press the panel back into place.



I am tired. I have been alone now for so many years. Since she left. It was the summer of a time long since passed. Even then, though, I had already lost all hope for the world which I had been forced to inhabit due to the express inability of the human creature to find himself in the period and place which he would otherwise chose to be, were the decision his to endure. I was living alone at the time, though had I possessed company I would scarcely expect my situation to be addressed as anything ever more than alone even then. For it seemed no matter how surrounded I became with those who cared for my well being, I was destined to remain in intolerable solitude, as it seems now my destiny has returned. My accommodation was bleak and desolate to match my mood in this period of woe. The windows were all boarded up, though not all broken. The whole house had not been dusted for as long as I had lived in it, and it was apparent it had not for a long time previous to this. It was small and dark, there was just barely enough light to read by, not that I was often in the mood to read. Every floor board creaked with a sound that reminded me somewhat of the stories one tells children of the grotesque curiosities that dwell in the dark and mysterious corners of the rooms that make up ones assumed safe abode. Were I to find love I would shun it, for I believed it thoroughly impossible for any one to love a hateful creature as I was and have now become again. Were I to find friendship I would scorn it, for it seemed as a fallacy on the part of those who claimed to be my friends. But were I to find hate I would nurture it and grow it inside of me as a mother may grow life, loving it had I not hated it so, needing it. Hate became an addiction and solitude a way of life. The very thought of companionship began to disgust me as might the horrific images of the operating table in the times before modern medicine. I became so wrapped up in my own solitude that fear began to absorb my very being.

These fears developed in some of the most unusual of forms. The first and most obvious to appear was agoraphobia which had a sort of logic to it, considering my mental condition, which intrigued my mind to the point that I obsessed about it, testing the limits of my nerves at any given opportunity. I would stroll outside, my eyes forced wide open by sheer will, and time myself to great accuracy as to how long I could remain in this state before I was so overwhelmed by fright that I had to speed away into my less than humble home. I became almost obsessive compulsive to extremes that I wouldn't have thought a previously logical man such as myself would be capable of. I kept extensive charts and records of my progress, as I saw it as progress rather than descent, into complete lunacy. Slowly, as time passed by me, outside the infinitesimal world I had made myself, my mind began to create new fears for itself. I became insecure around my own shadow; I saw it as separate from me, another entity from my own. My times outside grew gradually less and less until I was barely able to hold the handle of my front door without feeling terrified of what might lie beyond it. Finally my insanity peaked at perhaps the most bizarre manifestation of fear.

It had been a very cold night and the dark that permeated my entire world made the chill seem all the more intense. I had finally decided to give in to my desire for rest and had started to prepare myself for bed. This preparation had become none too laboured in recent days as I had developed a complete apathy to the menial chores of dressing or cleaning. Beyond the necessity of personal hygiene I had no one to please with my appearance and so such rituals of the modern society seemed pointless and devoid of any enjoyment. One ceremony I had not forsaken altogether though was the washing of my face. The sole purpose of continuing this ridiculous activity, or at least it seemed ridiculous to me, was

the necessity I found in staring at my own reflection. I found such amusement in mocking the image of a madman that stared intently at me and laughed with me, as if he never realised he was the joke. And this very fact would cause my hysterics to only increase. Indeed, many nights went by when I would catch myself guffawing uncontrollably long after my reflection had vanished from view. But this night it was not to be this way. The cold water splashed my face and stung my eyes. This I was used to and it had never bothered me, it had only ever served to make the image even more ridiculous to me as it stared toward me with red, bloodshot eyes. But when I looked into the mirror on this fateful night it was not my reflection that stared back at me, it was not an image of my face I saw. It WAS my face. And suddenly I was the reflection, the joke was on me. The image I saw began to laugh, but I was not laughing. I pointed at myself, or the image pointed at me, but I was not pointing. The colour rushed away from my face as if a plug had been removed from my neck and my life force, my blood, had drained away. Instantly I grabbed the nearest cloth to hand and threw it over the mirror so as to obscure the horrific sight from view. I raced around the house and found the image in every mirror of the house, I was almost incapacitated with fear but managed to keep composure enough to cover every mirror I owned. This was not a monumental task but still I found great difficulty in approaching each and every one. Finally, when any reflective surface was out of sight, I collapsed upon my hard, cold bed and cried.

I awoke the next day with the memory of the preceding night's misadventures freshly in my mind. I was greatly agitated and found myself covering all the mirrors in the house for a second, third and fourth time. I no longer found myself performing any task other than the constant checking and re-checking of the covers. Time after time after time, all my obsessive compulsion was being channelled into this one task. There could not be any hint of reflection, no edge of mirror or frame was to be seen, and on top of that each new cover I placed must have completely covered the one before so that none of the covers save the very last showed through. And so life went on like this, such as it was though could not truly be labelled as a life. I became malnourished and weak, my eyes began to fail me in the dim light, from which all perception of colour had been lost long ago.

It appears necessary at this point in the narrative to further explain the house in which I resided. I lived at the time in the smallest of houses that stood solitarily and backed onto a cliff face. As such, there were no doors on the back end of the house. The windows had been boarded up long before I began residence in the house and I had never felt the need or even had the thought of removing the boarding and looking out upon whatever view might befall my vision beyond the borders of my home. So it came as the greatest of shocks to me when I found myself at the mercy of an uncontrollable urge that had never before befallen my mind. I had never seen, had never needed to see, what lay beyond the latter wall of my abode, and now, after who could say how long of staring at wooden planks and mortar, I NEEDED to know. I was possessed with a strength that was singularly unnatural; perhaps even impossible for a person in my physical condition as such I was in then. Within two minutes I had removed every board from every window on the far side of the house. Starting from the very bottom and working rapidly to the highest point on the tallest, highest window in the house I denuded them all of their oppressive coverings. And before me was a vision such that I had never dreamed of.

At the foot of the cliff on which my house was situated ran a long meandering yet strangely slow moving river of the clearest turquoise water imaginable. This river went through a most unusual course curving back on itself many times while still within sight of my view and ran eventually into a small lake. On this lake swam a myriad of grey Canada Geese along with their goslings. At the far side of this lake lay a tall brickwork wall whose vast proportions stretched far out of view both to the east and west. What was behind the wall was completely out of view save a few dozen tree tops and what could be seen through the minute gaps in the gate to which entrance to this mysterious kingdom could be obtained. The gate was situated such that it was directly along my line of sight from my view point and was at the end of a long intrusion perpendicular to the main line of the wall, however the wall ran along either of this inlet also so the only view into this other world, so alien to me, was through the iron portal. On either side of the gate was a pillar which conjoined the gate to the wall atop of each sat the statuette of a swan or possibly a goose, of shining, white marble. Yet amongst this most beautiful of scenes was something of much greater pleasure to the ocular senses. Her eyes were deep and soulful, her hair appeared to float upon her head, light as a feather yet dark as the night and she moved with a grace unnatural for any human being to possess. Her face was the very vision of beauty and carried an expression that seemed to be both of joy and sorrow and love and concern all rolled into one glorious display of total affection. As she walked toward the threshold of the lake she seemed to glide as if slightly above the surface of the earth and as she approached the waters edge, so too did the biggest and grandest of the geese in sight. The lake was edged on the far side too me with a short wall and stone bollards at all points but one, in the centre in line with the gate, where a set of stone steps led down into the lake. The goose slid out of the water and up the small stairway as if it was the most natural of things for him to do. She knelt and turned so as to be side on to my view and the goose approached her and allowed her to touch him. Her soft and gentle hands touched his head and placed upon his neck a tiny wreath of the most beautiful blood red flowers. This ceremony complete, the goose glided back into his natural habitat and she fled quickly but softly back through the large iron gate to hers.

So enthralled was I by the scene that had played out before me, so captivated by her beauty and grace and so intrigued by her command over such a natural beast as the goose that I barely noticed that I had not been afraid. I stared for a good long while at the gate through which she had made her astounding entrance and exit not ever wishing to move from this spot. I was free; I could see the world again in all its glory, in all Her glory. Many days in a row I returned to this window hoping to catch a glimpse of the angel who had rid me off my prison cell, of my tomb and on no occasion was I disappointed, for every day at almost precisely the same hour as the one before (I later noticed the variation not to be variation at all,

but that she would arrive precisely when the sun was at its highest peak in the sky) she would appear to me and the geese, and the ceremony would take place all over again. I was astounded by the whole spectacle and after a month of returning to the window I resolved to meet her the very next day. And so for the first time in what seemed like a life time to me, I left my abode and set about to find a way down the cliff face. This was to be found to be an easy task as not half a mile from my home there led a small path down the cliff side to the foot of the descent. I made my way soundly and without fear toward the lake but when I arrived there I found I had not the power to confront her. I saw her emerge from her hidden kingdom and watched as she performed the ritual with the goose and turned as she left never saying a word. This went on for a week, then two, I would watch, but could not interfere

## Story:

## Arrianne (Cont.)

By Michael Staniforth

with her so perfect world. But I was resolved, I WOULD meet her, however difficult, no man could ever live with himself had he let such perfection drift by him without even the slightest effort to engage it. Finally, though, the depressing pattern was broken, but it was so not by any action on my part, but by her. She had bewreathed the goose, and turned to leave and so, as per usual, did I. But I was halted in my exit by her voice, the first words I had heard her speak, and they were quite obviously directed at me.

"Do you not speak?" she inquired of me. And I almost fainted with absolute and overwhelming joy. Her voice rang like crystal and echoed around the deep valley, across the lake and back again so many times that I lost count, and each time those words reached my ears the voice that spoke them, so softly and lovingly, was just as beautiful and as perfect as the time before. I could not move for want of all the trying I could possibly muster. I was dumbfounded and for a moment, if I could have answered, I would have had to have answered 'no'. Finally I managed to force breath out of my paralysed body and replied with as much honesty as I could, for I felt such perfection deserved nothing else. "Not for a long time now." I said in reply and I felt her gentle touch on my shoulder. I shuddered at it and let it guide me round to face her. For just the briefest of seconds I could not look at her, then my eyes, of their own free will moved to look into hers and my heart almost stopped there and then. She looked sad or disturbed at my reply and I half considered striking myself for causing such a look of anguish on such a beautiful face.

"But why?" she continued with all the grace of a bird on the wing. "Have you nothing you wish to say?"

"Oh yes," I was as nervous as a school boy confronting a fancy and it showed through quite obviously in my voice. She touched my hand to calm me, and I felt my nervousness instantly replaced by intense excitement. "Or rather, I have something to ask; a question which has been preying on my mind now for quite some time." She looked astounded that I might not ask before now and now that it was present in my mind, I too wondered why I had never ventured to enquire.

"Well, if it is permission to ask it you seek, then it is given, though you should know now that you need no such courtesy from me. My council is open to all."

"It is not your council I seek," said I "But rather, your name." I almost blushed at forwarding such trivialities to such an obviously wise and fair maiden as she, but I simply could not go on any longer without knowing.

"Why that is a question I can answer without hesitation. And so I shall. They," and as she spoke she indicated the geese with her soft pale hand, "know me, as all do, as

Arrianne."

Arrianne. The name rang through my mind like the bells of Nostra Dame. For a full five minutes we stood in complete silence, her hand still placed on mine, and all thought of grief fled away as I gazed into the eyes of Arrianne. Presently she moved to speak again, but I was in two minds as to whether or not to stop, for the serenity of the shared silence was intoxicating, but her voice was enchanting. I found inaction easier and so she spoke.



"Now I am at the disadvantage, for your name is still unknown to me." She made the statement with only the slightest hint of expectation of a reply while showing a greater aura of apathy to the subject as unimportant in present circumstances, and possibly as she truly did not expect a response. Still a reply was warranted, even if one was not immediately forthcoming. Eventually I spoke, and again with complete honesty.

"But Arrianne," I began, the name rolling so easily of my imperfect tongue "Having heard your name I fear that mine pales in comparison and to utter its imperfect syllables would only serve to dampen the highness of your own." Immediately she moved to reassure me.

"Fear not," she explained "I shall not judge on a name alone, as no name, not matter how horrific could do justice to the anguish and pain that surrounds you, which I am saddened to see. And to know this, I realise that whatever name you give, it can only help alleviate my sorrow of your despair in knowing there is still a small ray of hope in a good strong name as that of which I am certain you own." And with this, I told her my name and she smiled so greatly I could not resist the temptation to smile myself, and presently we were both laughing softly together. And with this she slid her hand from mine and leaning forward, gently landed the softest of kisses upon my forehead, and she left, back to her world as I did back to mine without another word being said between us.

I fell quietly and quickly to sleep that night, much more quickly than I had done for many months before, yet my sleep was disturbed by the most terrifying of dreams. Images of the mirror raced through my mind, the laughing, the endless, piercing screams of laughter that escaped from the reflection's mouth going around over and over in my mind. Images of my own face mocking me, pointing at me, with a grin as evil as a Cheshire cats. I awoke with a start, soaked in my own sweat, tears streaming down my hot, flustered cheeks and my heart pounding as hard and fast as the bass drum of a band on the quickest of marches that might ever be achieved. I ran to my window, looking for some kind of comfort, but none was forthcoming. The sun was barely beginning to peek over the horizon, and not even the geese were yet in sight from the safe and secure hiding places where they chose to sleep. Oh what untormented dreams they must have slept that night, I thought, and I envied them their uncomplicated existences, where each brief visit from Arrianne was enough to satisfy them for almost an eternity. I moved not from the window for the hours that remained before her appearance and as the sun began to reach its peak in the sky, I ran with all the speed and power in my soul to the lake. Yet upon reaching it, some force, or perhaps instinct inside of me prevented me from approaching any further than the edges of its extent. I watched and waited as the ceremony of the wreath was carried out one more time and once it was over I approached Arrianne, and as I did she approach me. Once again, a look of concern spread over her bright face as she inspected my appearance and once again, it filled me with self hatred to see that I affected her so. As this expression encroached across her visage she quickened her approach toward me.

"What troubles you so?" Her enquiry filled me with sorrow that I could not hide a single of my dreadful thoughts from her. "Was not our meeting yesterday sufficient to calm your torrid soul?" I knew not how to answer her. Arrianne did not deserve to be lumbered with my cares and concerns, she should not have been oppressed by the images that so oppressed me. I panicked, not wanting to cause her any worry or grief, I made a request in unwise haste.

Story:

## Arrianne (Cont.)

By Michael Staniforth

"I want to come back with you." I exclaimed with passion and deliberation. "I can not go back to that place, I need to get out, I need to be with you." With these words the expression on sweet Arrianne's face became profoundly apologetic and I knew what her reply would be.

"You can not come back with me, those gates are sacred. Not even my children," once again she indicated the geese, "My lovely children, may pass over the threshold. You would be wholly unwelcome by all but myself."

"Then come back with me, leave this jail of a kingdom behind." I said in a moment of utmost haste and necessity.

"Ah but if I could, I most surely would take my place by your side, if only to see such a sad creature gain the joy he so richly deserves, but I can not leave my children. They rely on my presence. Without me, they may wither and die as autumn leaves, blown away and forgotten. I could not allow that to pass."

"Then it is useless," I spoke, my words full of the anguish of a thousand dying souls "I am doomed to my despair, as you are to your children." Arrianne did not speak a word after my statement. She smiled sweetly, but I could still see the sorrow behind her oh so beautiful eyes and she leaned over and once again as before softly kissed my forehead and left the lake, and me, behind. This was the first and only time I left the company of the beloved Arrianne unsatisfied. I stayed by the lake for some time before heading back up the ghastly cliff face behind me and while I lingered the geese gathered round as if to give some little consolation or indication that Arrianne had spoken the truth, that they needed her. I was amazed at the sudden change that had come over me. I had feared the outside world with all the passion of a wrathful god and now, I feared to leave it for my rickety old home.

**To Be Continued...**

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And that's all for this edition!

It's been a lot of fun putting this 'Zine together! And an adventure in wrestling text into boxes, pictures into spaces and our insanity into a readable format.

Cookies will be duly distributed to contributors and ~~gruesome, untimely maiming~~ stern looks to those who didn't.

Stay tuned for another instalment, same batplace, same batchannel.

Jen 'Amarok'