

Welcome to:

Issue #5 2011-2012

# The 'Zine!

Yup, it's that time again where your lowly 'Zine editor (me) has bribed, bugged and beaten submissions out of enough of you lovely members in order to put together the latest edition! Thanks to everyone who submitted, some form of edible goodness will be on its way to you!

So, what's in store this time?

The AGM – What happened? Who got in? What is going on??

Review land – Reviews on Anime, films, books and games

Artistic world – We have some amazing artists in this society, see their works here!

Crazy Quiz time – try your brain against another challenging quiz set by our 'Zine quizmaster Graham!

Story planet – Short stories for you all to delve into

# Meet the new committee!

Having had the wonders of the Sci fi crazy AGM, we now have a new committee! Here is a brief intro to them all, and I'm sure you'll all get to know them soon enough!

**President:** Michael Krawec (This year's Vice-president)

**Vice-President:** Harry Martin (This year's President)

**Secretary:** Helen Worrall (This year's Anime Rep)

**Social Sec:** Grace Currah

**Treasurer:** Ed Wastell (This year's Webmaster)

**Librarian:** Verity Hanson (She keeps her position from last year)

**Anime Rep:** Mike Begg

**Webmaster:** Ben May

**'Zine Editor:** Holly Pownall

**MASCOT:** James Titmuss

Photos of all these lovely people will be up on the website soon so you can point and laugh work out who is who

## Other things that occurred at the AGM:

We are now officially called:

SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY AND ANIME SOCIETY

Rather than:

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY SOCIETY

Yay for Anime! The word anime is now all over our society phrasing in order to advertise it further. See the constitution or a committee member for more info!

## Anne McCaffrey: First of Many By Dawn Hazle

Born in the USA, Irishwoman Anne McCaffrey is regarded as one of the best SF authors of all time. She was awarded the Grand Master of Science Fiction award in 2005 and was the first woman to win

the Hugo and Nebula prizes for SF. Her son Todd has helped with the later Pern novels, but I've not got round to reading those yet ;P



I first encountered McCaffrey through the Pern series, two books picked up from a charity shop leading to a teenage obsession with SFF. I was already obsessed with dragons; I suppose it comes from liking dinosaurs so much! I was lucky that the library at secondary school had some of the books, filling the gaps until I either bought the books new (back when you could get a standard-sized paperback with a £5 note) or found them in my charity shop trawls. I loved the idea: starting as straight-seeming fantasy with a slight interplanetary edge, they turned into a science-fiction romp upon the discovery of a spaceship. Extraordinary.

I never got into the rest of the series: they all had too many people and not enough dragons, and the Dinosaur Planet books were long out of print (I've since picked up a re-released copy but have been busy with other things).

One book that does deserve a mention is a one-off, *Black Horses for the King*. A quasi-historical novel that tells the story of King Arthur's search for decent horses for his knights, it was written as a young adult book but doesn't fail to impress even me, with my love of the gory fantasy and historical novel. Of course, being for young adults it leaves out the dodgiest sex scenes in my entire library (the rest verge on or are completely pornographic, McCaffrey's are just weird in my opinion!) but it's a damn good read.

McCaffrey is certainly responsible for a huge swathe of my library: the only authors who improve on her record are Bernard Cornwell and those responsible for the

*Fighting Fantasy* series. She was also responsible for a large chunk of my childhood obsession with dragons, including a long-lived writing and drawing campaign on a whole dragon planet of my own between the ages of 8 and 14. She also made me read even more: primary school was full of boring books and I remember reading the same few over and over again because the rest were awful, until I was allowed to bring in my own books. While I found some of the storylines predictable and even childish (I was reading books like the *Sharpe* series from the age of 11), it was still engaging as a series and I would recommend it to anyone. In chronological order!

# Reviews

**Redline:** by Mike Begg

OH MY GOD THIS IS THE GREATEST MOVIE I'VE EVER SEEN IN MY LIFE! IT'S GOT REALLY FAST CARS AND EXPLOSIONS AND NAKED CHICKS AND EXPLOSIONS AND A PUMPING BASSLINE!

WHAT MORE COULD YOU ASK FOR?!

But seriously, this film was awesome.

You all remember Wacky Races I trust? Well imagine if Wacky Races came out of Japan, was aimed at young adults, was far more brutal and bloody and was really really loud. Because what you've just imagined is Redline.

Going to see Redline at the cinema, courtesy of WeLoveAnime, was one of the most adrenaline-fueled experiences of my life. There are very few moments of down-time in the film, and for the rest of it it's just hard-hitting action, screeching wheels, explosions and that ever-present bassline. Let's just say it's not a film for the faint-hearted.

So I suppose we should delve right into the action. It is immense. The race sequences (i.e. most of the film) are some of the best I've ever seen, absolutely brilliant action, tense and gripping stuff. Obviously hardly anything makes any sense, but that's not what the film is about. The film is about being a manly man. Things blow up a lot. And I mean a lot. In a very satisfactory manner. Alas Redline falls into the trap of current cinema by making it nigh-on impossible to tell what's happening on-screen for a lot of the time because everything's just moving so fast, but in this case it seems appropriate as you pretty much expect to be left behind by the film.

The art's pretty interesting I have to say - definitely unique - though at first glance it's not the sort of style that I often go in for. Going into the cinema without really knowing what to expect, I must say that upon glancing at the first landscape



(featuring the vast variety of characters in the spectators at Yellow Line) I was slightly disappointed that it seemed to be yet another film trying to look quirky by inventing its own array of frankly bizarre species. But the art really grew on me as the film progressed - it matched the grimy atmosphere of the underground racing scene perfectly. Not to mention it looks really good when it's exploding, as it often is. Did I mention there are lots of explosions?

With regard to the story, it doesn't get much simpler. "Guy wants to win race". That's basically all you have to know. On the side there is "Military don't want race to be happening" as well, but you can just take that as it comes. When watching this film the last thing you're going to be doing is questioning the premise. You can sure as hell question what's going on on-screen though. It doesn't make a great deal of sense - it's just a rollercoaster ride of set-pieces and evermore ridiculous obstacles to face. But that's part of the experience! One of my favourite lines from this, or any, film is "How dare they invade our airspace using a navigational technology that's only supposed to exist in theory?!", and that's pretty much what you can expect from this.

One word that really springs to mind when trying to describe Redline is 'gratuitous'. This production doesn't do things by halves, and often it goes over and beyond the wholes. Even the nudity, although very brief, comes out of nowhere and serves absolutely no purpose, leaving you thinking "wait.....what?" Similarly a lot of the violence and explosions are completely unexplainable. The film takes a very no-holds-barred approach, and so literally anything can happen at any moment to shake up the standings of the race. Physics most definitely does not apply here, you just have to look at the protagonist's quiff.

So yeah, this was a must-buy for me when it came out on DVD, although I doubt it will be anywhere near as enthralling as it was in the cinema. After all, I don't think any PC speakers can do justice to the majority of that soundtrack. It's very possible that I'm just looking back on this film through a haze, considering how jading watching it actually was, and that it isn't as amazing as I might make it sound - but hey, you forget everything else while you're watching it and that's the sign of quality entertainment.

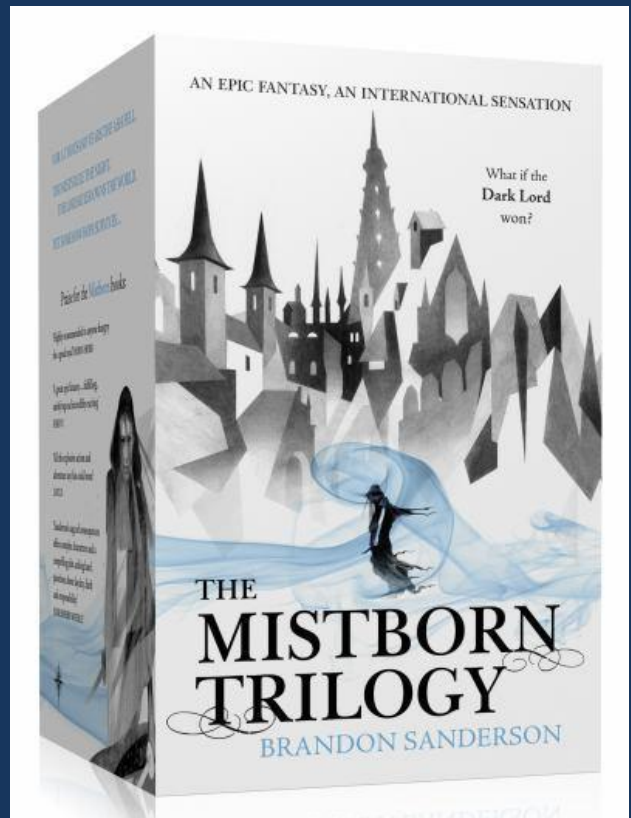
Three thumbs-up!



## The Mistborn Trilogy by Brandon Sanderson: by Nel Taylor

WARNING – MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS OF THE SERIES!!!

This is a Trilogy of books (as the review title may slightly hint at) set in the high fantasy world of Scadrial in the time of the Final Empire. You follow the character of Vin as she learns how to be a Mistborn, and how she and the crew of underground thieves plot to overthrow the empire and free the Skaa from slavery.



I have to say I rather enjoyed this series. I'm a massively avid reader, and always have at least one novel on the go and in my bag. So when I ran out of books (again), I turned to my good friend Sam to have a moan. He came to the rescue with the first of the series: Mistborn: The Final Empire. So I dived in as usual, and instantly liked it. The main character Vin is tough and intelligent, but also has flaws and makes mistakes throughout all three books, making her human instead of a god. The characters surrounding her are also likeable but human in their qualities, and the whole thing comes together very well.

The first book focuses on the gang, lead by a man named Kelsier, trying to overthrow the Final Empire, something which has been in place for well over 1000 years. Its a crazy, stupid and outlandish idea that is somehow also brilliant in its simplicity. Not only do they raise an army, they use the simple rouse of annoying people to the point of fighting. Seriously. They go along, spread rumours amongst the upper class, and make them all hate each other. Simple really!

The main basis for all three of the books however, is the Mistborn. Now, what is a Mistborn? It is a person with some lineage to the Nobility, who has the ability of Allomancy. Now, Allomancy is the ability to 'burn' a specific set of metals in order to gain the equivalent of magic powers. For example, the burning of Pewter gives a person extra strength. They all come in pairs, often doing opposites. For example:

burning Steel allows a person to 'Push' against something metal, whereas burning Iron allows a person to 'Pull' on something metal. You also get people who can only burn one metal, known as Mistings, or who can burn all the different types of metals, known as Mistborn.

So, back to the storyline. The first book is intriguing, following Vin as she develops from a nervous, jumpy street kid into a more trusting, more confident Mistborn. Now, she doesn't magically become Miss confident and perfect over the course of the book. She keeps a fair amount of her paranoia learnt from growing up on the streets, and she still makes many mistakes with her Allomancy, despite a fair amount of training. Again, the flaws in her character make her more believable, and more interesting to follow.

By the second book, she has really grown, but she still has a long way to go. I have to say I didn't enjoy the second book anywhere near as much as the first. Whilst it introduced some new concepts such as the Kandra, who are very interesting, the action and intrigue of the first book seem to die down. Both the second and the third books seem to focus more on battles and the politics behind running the city, rather than the characters and the alomancy. There just appears to be something in the first book that is missing in the second and third. Still, I persevered, and was fairly well rewarded in the end. I can see that some people would really not be so happy with the ending, but I liked it over all. I think the author went about getting there in an incredibly roundabout way, but he got there in the end.

One thing I really do respect about Brandon Sanderson, is his lack of fear regarding killing off characters. One of the main characters dies towards the end of the first book (I warned you about spoilers at the start so no complaining), and you always have this nagging doubt that he might come back. I mean, after all, it's a fantasy novel. So often in fantasy books a character 'dies' at the end of the first book, and magically comes back in the second or third, having not died by some miraculous series of event. He doesn't do that. Once a character is dead, that's. End of story. And I really respect that. So many authors are afraid of killing off character when they really shouldn't be! It can be powerful and effective, and echo throughout the rest of a series if written right. And in this series, it is.



So, overall, if you are looking for a slightly dark, clever, and occasionally funny fantasy series that will take you a while to get through, I would definitely recommend all three books. They're well written, clever, and full on fantasy – exactly what I look for in a novel.

## **Timesplitters:** by Jonathan Harper

It's hard to believe that the Timesplitters series started over a decade ago, with the most recent being released in 2005, no matter how hard the diehard fans wish or pray (or make sacrifices to their gods...seriously, I know a few who would).

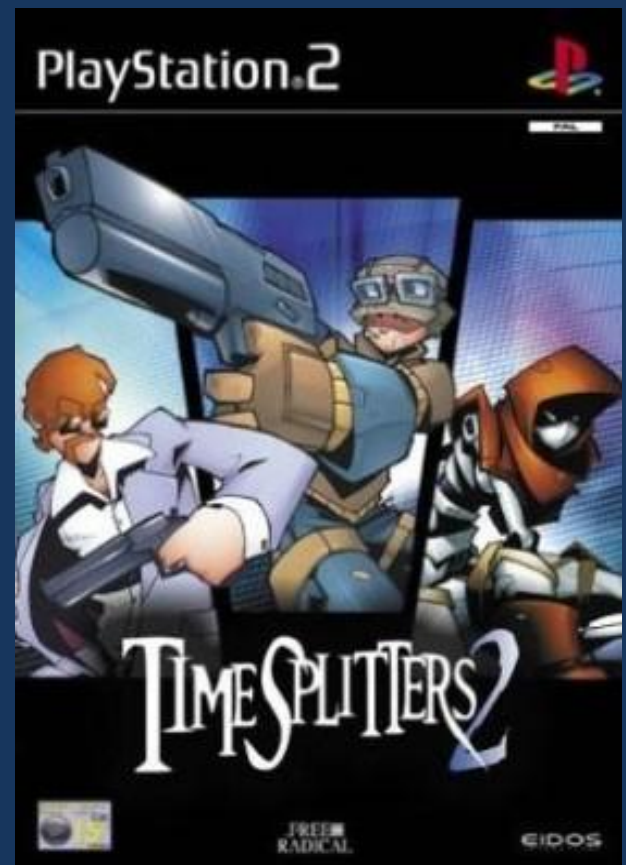
Timesplitters 2 was quite possibly the best of the three that we've seen thus far. The storyline was greatly improved on the original, the characters were crazy, but lovable, and the multiplayer...wow. It improved on Timesplitters in so many ways;

it's actually hard to believe just how much the game evolved from what it originally was.

Made by Free Radical, what was once the ever powerful Rare (the guys who made Goldeneye, although some of you were probably too young to have even played that), Timesplitters showed us exactly what multiplayer was, and just how fun it could be. If Timesplitters did that, Timesplitters 2 showed us something else. It showed us that time travel is crazy and the characters that you would meet throughout time possibly crazier.

While Timesplitters was very much about the multiplayer, the first game didn't have much in the way of a storyline. It was just a series of nine capture the flag scenarios that, while fun, didn't really serve any real purpose other than to give a slight insight to where each character came from, as well as a way of unlocking them. Timesplitters 2 greatly improved on the lacking storyline, introducing the main character of Sergeant Cortez, who you only really play as once

It may seem weird, a main character that you only play once, but believe me, it works. In each level, you take on the guise of a different character from that time



period. In the initial level, Siberia, you take on the role of Ilsa Nadir (daughter of Katje Nadir from Timesplitters), sent in to clean up Oblask Dam after a contamination leak. With Cortez taking over her body for the mission, she not only goes to clean the place up, but also acquires the time crystal that Cortez came for in the first place.

The premise of the entire story is that a race of time travelling creatures, called the timesplitters (I know, right?), have taken nine time crystals to different points in time in an attempt to change history. Cortez gives chase, arriving in each time, taking over bodies of what seem to be important characters from that timeline, locating the crystals and fixing whatever problem the timesplitters have caused.

Each time period you find yourself in will always be very different to the previous one. Initially you're in 1990 Siberia (a nod at Goldeneye's Siberian level), moving on to 1932 Chicago. Later you find yourself in a robot factory in the year 2315 until you eventually return to a space station in 2401, the game's present day.

Each level is either reminiscent of that era, or what we would expect it to be. Planet X has a very techno soundtrack, a lot of UFOs and aliens, and some very sci-fi weaponry. In fact, if you don't think it's very B-Movie-esque, there's something wrong. The Aztec ruins are very different. There, there are golems made of stone and rock, monkeys, crude crossbows, and a soundtrack that sounds like bongos were about to go out of style!

Each era just feels right, be it due to the characters, the setting or even just the music. I've listened to the soundtrack for Timesplitters 2 more than any other. That includes the Final Fantasy VII and VIII soundtracks, which is definitely saying something! The soundtrack really is that good, and if you have played the game, even just the once, you'll instantly remember what level the music is from.

The music isn't the only thing memorable. Each character is wackier than the last, with monkeys, clowns, mutants, soldiers, jesters, fairies and everything in between. While you don't get to play as that large a selection in the campaign, the multiplayer is where these characters come into their own, and it's also where Timesplitters 2 comes into its own.

Multiplayer has changed over time, but Timesplitters still manages to get a group of people around the TV, where they'll yell, laugh, cry and have a thoroughly good time. I know the current 'zine editor isn't the best at Timesplitters, but I'm sure even she will agree that the multiplayer was a pretty cool experience.

The selection of characters, weapons and levels make it a truly brilliant experience, and the game modes add so much more variety to an already wide-reaching game. You have the standard TDM FFA, capture the flag, assault, zones (similar to domination) and bag tag (hold a bag for as long as possible to win), but then we have the crazy types. In Leech, the damage you inflict to your enemies increases your health; Vampire mode has your health constantly depleting, with the only way to get it back being kill someone; Shrink has you all in varying order of size, the highest scorer being huge with the lowest scorer being minuscule; Flame Tag is basically 'It' or 'Tag', just with the person who's it being very much on fire; Virus is the next step up from Flame Tag, but this time you don't go out when you tag someone, and the last man standing wins.

The final type, Monkey Assistant, seems innocent at first, and then a clear loser emerges. How long will he stay last? Not very long as chance would have it. The last place player has a small horde of monkeys at their disposal that run around alongside them, helping them get kills. It really does even the playing field and also shows just how much Timesplitters is taking the piss.

Timesplitters 2 is a game that doesn't take itself seriously, everything about it says this. The characters are varying levels of wacky; the levels are brilliantly designed and great fun to play; there is a plethora of weaponry (including a brick), and just when you thought the game was crazy enough, you find challenge mode.

I'll just say the background behind each challenge is pure genius, and not playing them would be a travesty!

If you get the chance, play any of the Timesplitters games. Two has the best multiplayer, but Future Perfect has the best campaign. Hell, the first one is where it all began, so play that. Better yet, find someone who already has it and play with them. You'll enjoy every second! Now, if you'll excuse me, I have some spare lighter fluid and need to find some people to play Flame Tag...

## 5 CENTIMETRES PER SECOND:

by Mike Begg

Have you ever seen or heard something so depressing that you can't even cry? That, my friends, is '5 Centimetres Per Second' ('5CPS' from here on in) all over. The first Makoto Shinkai piece to receive real critical acclaim in the West, 5CPS has been one of the anime hits of the past year, and I definitely felt the magic in this one.



I'd been hearing a fair bit about 5CPS even before it was released over here, mainly to the tune of "It's a brilliant film, but really sad", so I picked it up at full price (I know!) from HMV and only got round to watching it the night before I wrote this review. My verdict is very similar, only I believe that "brilliant" is an understatement. Spoilers, of sorts, ahead.

The film, for the most part, follows the life of Takaki as he progresses from boyhood into intimidating world of adult responsibilities - all whilst trapped in the embrace of a hopeless love. In fact, hopelessness is a consistent theme throughout 5CPS. Makoto-san has said in interviews that the motivation behind 5CPS is trying to explore the effect of distance on relationships between characters. The film itself is split into three relatively short stories that follow on from one another, though with time passing in between each one. The first chapter introduces us to the characters of Takaki and Akari, who are brought close together by the fact that they're families are constantly moving. Although it goes unsaid between them they fall in love at a young age, but even in the first story we see the futility of their efforts and the inevitability of their separation. The main focus of this first part is Takaki going to meet Akari after they have been split for the first time. This results in an unexpectedly powerful sequence, in which Takaki finds himself brought up short at every hurdle as he attempts to make his way to Akari's station in appalling



weather conditions, and has to deal with unavoidable guilt as the trains get him there four hours late. When they eventually share a kiss, Takaki notes how in that moment he became aware that they could never be together.

The second story revolves around a girl named Kanae who has fallen in love with Takaki, after he has transferred away from Tokyo into an island school vastly apart from where Akari lives. Not-particularly-long-story-short, Kanae gets the impression that whilst Takaki is incredibly kind to her, he doesn't see her in the same way as his attention is focused on "something far beyond [her]". When the film enters its final chapter we rejoin Takaki himself, but as an adult. We see how he is still hung-up on the perfect love of his youth and, despite his best efforts, is slowly breaking down. In contrast we also see Akari who appears to have moved on, and this leads to an incredibly emotional, hard-hitting montage showing how Takaki goes about his lonely life and Akari meeting with her fiancé. What makes this sequence even more potent are the lyrics to Yamazaki Masayoshi's "One More Time, One More Chance" which plays over the top as the theme song for the movie. The lyrics speak of looking for the one you lost in every scene, hoping to see signs of them, but knowing that it's never going to be. The sequence comes to a head when Takaki and Akari pass each other on the train tracks, but when Takaki looks back Akari has already moved on. Needless to say the proverbial tears were indeed jerked.

Moving on from the story, this film may well have the best art that I've ever seen in an anime production, and the animation is top-notch as well. The backgrounds are beautiful, the detailing is perfect and all of it comes together to create an exquisite whole. Watching this film is an experience in itself, even aside from the storylines, as it draws you in to become engrossed in its settings; connects you to the world and the experiences of the characters. The special features on the DVD include an interview with Makoto Shinkai about various aspects of production. One of the main things that struck me from this was the amount of work and effort that went into researching the settings and recreating the places that really exist in Japan. He apparently spent weeks on end on the island that is the setting for the second chapter of the film, getting acquainted with the scenery but also with the routines of the people who live there - Makoto-san says that even the story itself

was shaped by the quirks that he saw while staying there, such as the lack of real public transport resulting in many students commuting to school on Honda mopeds, which is indeed a prominent feature in the movie. All the efforts that Makoto-san and his team put-in show clearly in the finished product, as you feel like you can identify with the everyday lives of the characters involved and are carried away to the humble, yet stunning, locations.

Perhaps the thing that struck me most though, of all the things that make 5CPS great, is how Makoto Shinkai has managed to create such a moving and utterly powerful film with next-to-no identifiable events. Movies rarely cover the happenings of everyday life or the simple theme of a long-distance relationship because it is almost impossible to make an engrossing or moving picture without a series of big dramatic events or happenstances out of the ordinary, but 5CPS manages to do just that. Whilst there are of course definitive moments in the film, and turning points in the characters' lives, there is nothing removed from what one might term an 'everyday life', and in fact the story is just playing out the lives of the characters with no trimmings or showpieces. Some may have been disappointed by the short length of the film, a mere sixty minutes long, but I think it's just the right length to capture what needs to be shown. Makoto-san said in the interview that they had initially planned out as many as ten of these stories, as opposed to three, but which didn't necessarily relate to one another. I think he made the right move by deciding just to use the ones that follow one continuous thread, as this allowed the audience to become really engaged with the characters and settings in a way that wouldn't have been possible if the movie were just to be a series of chapters connected only thematically.

Lastly I feel I have to talk about the music because that's something I'm into, and this soundtrack really hit home with me. I already touched on the inclusion of Yamazaki-san's "One More Time, One More Chance" as the theme song which works perfectly with the story, and the OST does the same. Mainly piano-based, these pieces explore some of the melodies and progressions of the theme song itself, as well as creating their own independent moods to amplify the emotion being brought out by a particular scene in the way all the best soundtracks do (though one has to bear in mind that this emotion is rarely positive).

All that remains is the wrap-up then. I guess all I can say is "Go watch this film." It's not something to just throw on late at night if you're tired, and nor is it going to raise your spirits if you're looking for that kind of film, but it doesn't require too much time for you to give it your full attention. You might want to have some tissues to hand, but as I say you might be too thoroughly moved to need them.

# Pictures



This amazing picture was drawn by Laura Beach, and it shows the character James Baxter. She has this to say about it:

His name is James Baxter (aka Jamie to his friends) and he is a character in one of my stories that I haven't got down to writing yet! He is a 19 year old, with a Kitsune mother and Human father, and he works as a part time demon slayer with his father (when he's not studying mythology at uni). He lives at home with his father, two younger brothers and his father's husband (long and tragic tale, to cut it short his mother was killed by evil demons when the youngest was just a baby). As for the father and the husband, that's a romance tale almost deep enough for it's own novel!

The plot is kinda... complicated...Basically a romance between Jamie and the leading lady of the story (her name still changes from time to time) with upheaval in demon registration laws, evil villains and big epic sword fights! Jamie himself wields two identical blades known as the eternal flame, which are two parts of one weapon – again, complicated!

It was made by me scribbling in photoshop with different transparencies etc for flame and lighting. The cursed object known as the pen tool helped for the drawing and I finished it by adding a pastels effect. All on my old xp laptop with nothing but a mouse and a little time!

As for why he's basking so serenely in flame...I'll leave it to your imagination...mwahahahah.





This beautiful piece of artwork depicts a young Simon standing next to the titular mecha. It was drawn and coloured in by Jonathan (Jonti) Levine. Very awesome!

He based it off of this image from the anime after finishing the series at the Monday night sessions:



# Alternative Movie Titles Quiz by Graham Moore

Inspired by a quiz I found on Sporcle

If all the bad jokes you got from Christmas crackers weren't enough, here's an entire quiz based on them! The game here is simple – sci-fi and fantasy films and TV series have had a single letter in the title replaced to give a new meaning. The results are described below – all you have to is work them out. For example, "Simon Pegg and Nick Frost fight off hordes of the hard-of-hearing." would be "Shaun of the Deaf".

Disclaimer: knowledge of alternate spellings of words and alternate names for films/series may be needed.

## FILMS:

1. Judy Garland enters a world over the rainbow, and seeks an all-knowing reptile to send her home.
2. The only thing protecting the Earth from the scum of the universe is a Bic biro in a suit.
3. Stanley Kubrick's epic about a spaceship crew and a rogue computer travelling to the far reaches of turmeric, coriander, paprika and other associated condiments.
4. The Rebel Alliance take on a giant skin blemish in space.
5. A group of dwarves use a cosmic map to steal citrus fruit.
6. Bruce Campbell defends medieval Europe from swarms of nerds.
7. An immortal Scottish swordsman stores food in a cool place.
8. Kurt Russell has 24 hours to rescue the US President from a 1980s text-based adventure game.
9. People climb to the top of the Devil's Tower, Wyoming, to find copies of themselves.
10. John Hurt eats too much muesli; it erupts from his stomach and kills the crew of a mining ship.
11. Instead of killing Vermithrax Pejorative, Peter MacNicol decides to neuter her instead.
12. Tom Hanks is a death row security guard and just before the electric chair is a dyed subterranean mammal.
13. A scientist studying the combined effects of hallucinogenic drugs and sensory deprivation chambers decides to go to an ice rink.
14. Steve Guttenberg creates a piece of clothing that is struck by lightning and becomes alive, intelligent and friendly.
15. Tourists go to a cowboy-themed resort filled with robots, but instead encounter mosquitoes, locusts, rats and other bothersome animals.

16. Hugh Jackman hunts down vampires, werewolves and other literary monsters, but only after you pay him 20% extra (previously 15% and 17.5%).
17. A teenage slacker and a cow travel through time to collect historical figures for a school report.
18. A former professional wrestler exterminates people who reach age thirty, but flees when his own time is up.
19. In post-apocalyptic London, Christian Bale and Gerard Butler protect survivors from killer rubber wheel covers.
20. John Carpenter horror film about Antarctic research scientists being killed by a piece of revealing underwear.
21. The caped crusader teams up with a samurai.
22. Tim Burton B-movie homage that chronicles the events of the 2003 Hong Kong virus outbreak.
23. In this Spanish-language film, a young girl explores a fantasy world with monsters and bad word-based jokes (much like the ones in this quiz).

#### **TV SERIES:**

24. Convenience stores: the final frontier. These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise.
25. Two FBI agents investigate strange cases, often involving monsters and aliens, and penalise them financially.
26. The Office of Scientific Intelligence spends a lot of money giving a critically injured pilot a slightly better skin complexion.
27. An astronaut goes through a wormhole and comes out in a universe where everyone enjoys dressing up as animals (featuring puppets by the Jim Henson company).
28. The Swiss Family Robinson deliver mail to other planets.
29. There is nothing wrong with your television. Do not attempt to adjust the picture. You are about to experience the awe and mystery of river-dwelling weasel relatives.
30. Rod Serling presents scary and whimsical stories based on those from the University of Nottingham's Science Fiction and Fantasy Society's periodical.

## **ANSWERS:**

**Did you have your phaser set to pun or was the Farce weak in this one?**

1. The Lizard of Oz
2. Pen in Black
3. 2001: A Spice Odyssey
4. Star Wart
5. Lime Bandits
6. Army of Dorkness
7. Highlarder
8. Escape From New Zork
9. Clone Encounters of the Third Kind
10. Alpen
11. Dragonspayer
12. The Green Mole
13. Altered Skates
14. Shirt Circuit [no points for Shorts Circuit – a letter has been added, not replaced]
15. Pestworld
16. VAT Helsing
17. Bull & Ted's Excellent Adventure
18. Hogan's Run
19. Reign of Tire
20. The Thong
21. Batman & Ronin
22. SARS Attacks
23. Pun's Labyrinth
24. Spar Trek
25. The X-Fines
26. The Six Million Dollar Tan
27. Furscape 2
8. Post in Space
29. The Otter Limits
30. The Twilight Zine.

**Were you Lexicon Luthor or Indiana Groans?**

0-6: Waterword

7-12: The Lost Word

13-18: The Thing From Another Word

19-24: The War of the Words

25-30: Scott Pilgrim vs. the Word



# Stories

## Dark Passion Play By Holly Pownall

### Sahara

The Aurelia juddered as she docked, sending tremors along the deck. It would have knocked any normal man flying, but her crew were well used to it from the thousands of leagues they had travelled on her. In fact, most of the men had sailed with her nearly their whole lives, having left behind their families at a very young age, and never settling down. Except the occasional whore when they docked in foreign, exotic ports, the Aurelia was the only woman for them.

Marcus Julius Natalis strolled off the ship onto the docks. The sun burned down onto his wizened skin, the heat waves rolling like the sea, and gold coins jangled in his money bag, which swung back and forth on his belt.

"Hey, Marco! Try not to get mugged by a baker, this time!" A rough looking sailor by the name of Dave called mockingly. Marcus ignored the comment and whistled a jaunty tune as he walked, happy that he was in a new port and had just been paid. Wine merchants and beautiful women awaited him, and it was all his. The glories of money! He sighed in contentment and headed off to find a cheaper, if not as high quality, wine stall than the ones on the main street. The calls of the traders rebounded around him as he passed through a noisy marketplace, full of travellers from distant lands, talking animatedly to each other in a multitude of languages. Pausing by a stall covered in papyrus sea charts, he glanced over the wares, closely watched by the eager man behind it.

"Interested in buying, aye? At one gold coin per chart, it's a bargain, I tell ye!

"Not at the moment, I'm just looking, thank you. Maybe later." Marcus wandered away from the trader, who now looked disappointed at not having sold anything. Chancing upon a small backstreet, he spied an old, wooden sign hanging outside a shop with the universal symbol of a bunch of grapes.



"At last!" He thought, as he entered the dimly lit building. Looking around him, he saw shelves and shelves filled with dusty jars and urns, all with the familiar grapes printed on them. A cough alerted him to the presence of the shopkeeper, so he asked politely, "Can I have two bottles of your finest wine, please?" The shopkeeper rubbed his hands together in glee. He knew this man's type: not the brightest, easy to fool, willing to spend, and in a hurry to get drunk. It was the perfect opportunity to extort money.

"We're having a sale at the moment, so it's only seven coins for both bottles, or three bottles for ten coins. Are you sure you still only want two?"

"Oh go on then, I'll have three, but only because I'm celebrating tonight." Marcus replied, grudgingly. The shop owner grinned to himself; the man in front of him was so stupid. Did he not know he could get a bottle of wine for a coin on the high street? He handed over the bottles and Marcus immediately pulled the plug off one and drank deeply. He'd not had a drink for quite some time now, and sailing was thirsty work. As dusk was beginning to descend, he decided to find a woman of a certain profession to share the night, and his wine with.

The next morning, Marcus awoke to find himself alone, laid in a murky alleyway. He smiled at the memory of the night before; the whore he found was a lively wench; he hadn't had sex that good in a long while. He reached down to his belt for his last flagon of wine, but sat up suddenly when he found nothing there. He moved his hands around, patting all his pockets, trying to find the whereabouts of his belongings. Jumping up, he scanned the ground around him and swore. There was nothing there. The prostitute must have stolen his wine and his money.

"Fucking bitch!" He yelled, as his stomach growled loudly, echoing his mood. Giving up on his losses, he stalked off to find some food. If all else failed, he could beg on the streets with the rest of the low life scum.

Several hours later, he had resorted to catching a stray animal. He skulked around in the slums, searching for something to sustain himself with. The rats were too fast, and all the other animals he'd seen were under the watchful eye of their owner. So when he almost trod on a feral cat sunning itself, he pounced without hesitation. His hands shot out and wrung its neck before it had a chance to react.

Without warning, the sky turned black and rain poured down. Ignoring the weather, he pulled out his knife, the only thing the whore had left him, and slit it open. The knife could have been used to steal some food, but despite appearances, he wasn't a thief. Expertly skinning it, his mouth watered. As he took a huge bite, the blood dribbled down his chin, and back onto the remains of the cat, which were in a pile at his feet. This was the scene the Pharaoh's soldiers were confronted with when they rounded the corner, on their patrol of the area. Their faces turned stony, and then to fear. The wrath of the Gods was sure to come down on this man. Here he was, just a few streets away from the Temple of Anubis, gorging himself on a holy animal. Seeing the Pharaoh's men, his hope disintegrated on the spot. Realisation dawned upon him, what trouble his meal would bring. Marcus turned on his heel and sprinted away as fast as he could, because he'd just remembered the first rule of visiting Egypt - whatever you do, respect the sacred cat...

## The Rogue Verbumancer's Pictonaut Challenge

Last September, Mr John Steele, ex-president of this very society, started up a fiction challenge on his blog, The Rogue Verbumancer ([rogueverbumancer.com](http://rogueverbumancer.com)). He dubbed it the Pictonaut challenge, and the concept is very simple; each month he provides a picture he has found somewhere on the interwebs, and our challenge is to craft a short story of around 1000 words based on or inspired by this picture.

### Pictonaut challenge 1: Space Junkie by Rachel Tonks Hill

*The picture prompt for March is a collaborative work between a Chris Cold ([chriscold.deviantart.com](http://chriscold.deviantart.com)) and a young German artist by the name of Tobias Roetsch ([taenaron.deviantart.com](http://taenaron.deviantart.com)) and is called "Any Direction". Here is the picture prompt and the story based on it.*



Space is really fucking beautiful. Sometimes it's so beautiful that it makes your eyes hurt, your throat close up from the sheer power of the emotions running through you. And they're never emotions you can recognise that put you in this catatonic state, oh no. It's never anger or lust or greed or hunger. Those mundane sorts of emotions that happen every day. These are BIG emotions. Scary fucking things that you're never sure how to process. They're vast and complicated and you only recognise some elements on the edge of a big emotion like that. Some sort of pride in humanity's achievements coupled with the wonder of life itself. Big sodding emotions.

And when I say space is beautiful, I don't mean the *actual* space. The black never-ending void that's just waiting to suck the life out of you if you put a foot wrong. That's not beautiful, that's fucking terrifying. I mean the stuff floating around in that airless freezing void. Planets and stars and nebulae and weird stuff that we've not thought up names for yet. It never looks like the pictures we send back to Earth. Those pictures are beautiful in their own right, but they're nothing compared to the wonder of a new planet up close. There's emotion associated with these things when you're actually there. Emotions that are big and scary and complicated and add to the beauty of it. I see this shit every day. New stars and their systems, new space anomalies. Every day for the past ten years, ever since I joined the science division out here. You'd think I'd be used to it.

You never get used to it though. All this wonder and emotion and awe. Veterans on their last day before retiring still have the same gobsmacked look on their faces as the freshest new recruit on their first day.

It wears you down. Being in this constant state of awe and wonder, being constantly moved by what the universe has to offer and trying to catalogue it in a cold and clinical matter. You lose the ability to feel more mundane emotions. How are you supposed to get excited about someone's birthday when your life is filled with constant wonder? Those of us who do this job, we lose something vital in order to do it. There are 5000 people on this ship and we never talk to each other about anything except work. We don't socialise, we don't chat. We barely even remember to use manners or common courtesy anymore. Those are small, insignificant things and we have to deal with the extraordinary on an everyday basis. We've lost the ability to form meaningful relationships, every single one of use. We don't have families. Most of us never bothered to put the effort into starting one; those who had families have lost them.

Space is like a drug. The wonder and excitement is like a constant high. It's the greatest drug that ever existed and you can never quit. Going cold turkey can never work, and there is no substitute for seeing the things we see out here. We're addicts, every single one. Being on leave is more like torture than a reward. When you go back to Earth or one of the colonies, you go back to a place that is so

mundane. Boring inconsequential worries fill your time, but they can never fill that hole in your chest where all those big emotions were. Your sense of wonder fades, and you can't take enjoyment in anything anymore. Nothing satisfies except the drug itself. It's not so bad when you're on leave; you know you'll be going back soon enough. A few weeks, a month maybe and then you can have another hit. You get through because you know that you'll get that high back.

But what happens when you retire? You've spent maybe thirty or forty years up here in space. Thirty or forty years on a constant high, the likes of which you cannot get anywhere else but out here on the fringes of everything we know. You go home, tell yourself you'll be okay without your drug. But nothing can ever replace the life you've known. Nothing will ever compare to the things you've seen. You can't function in regular society. You're an addict, and you've been cut off from your drug of choice. So you start experimenting with more conventional drugs. Humanity has invented all manner of powerful hallucinogens and psychotics, just for this very purpose. Even in the beginning, the high doesn't compare to the high you were on most of your life. So you ramp up the dose, start mixing them together until you can't remember your name anymore because of the cocktail of drugs rushing through your system.

Most veterans end up overdosing, those that don't commit suicide. Because nothing can replace this feeling in your chest everyday you're out here; nothing can ever fill that hole because it is as black and infinite as the void itself. That is the price for the privilege of seeing extraordinary things.

The suicide rate amongst retired science officers who've done this job is many times that of the suicide rate in the normal population. That's no secret. But the fact is that the suicide rate on science vessels like this is almost as high. Some people overdose on space; they want to get so close that they step outside the airlock without a suit. Some people just can't handle it; space is just too big, too terrifying and too wonderful for them to cope. Some people just snap. They say if you make it through your first year you're a lifer. Most don't make it through their first year out here. The families aren't told the truth of what happened; in space



there are a million and one accidents waiting to happen that can be blamed for the high attrition rate.

Space is dangerous. It is infinitely beautiful and it is infinitely cold and it doesn't give a shit about humanity. Being out here isn't humanity's greatest achievement, it's their greatest folly. We're simply not built to cope with everything the universe has to offer. If you don't get killed by some space virus, or a solar storm, or a landing party gone bad, then you'll get driven mad by the sheer fucking beauty of it all. You wind up a washed out space junkie who's lost everything that made you human in the first place. People aren't meant to be out here. Life is 100% fatal, but space has a knack of killing you quicker and more inventively than any weapon the human race has ever managed to come up with.

I've still got 20 years left on my contract, but I'll be damned if I'm going to die in a pool of my own shit and vomit hopped up on enough psychotics to liquefy my brain. That's not the ending I deserve. I've seen the wonder of the universe, stared the void right in the eye; I'm a junkie, but I'm sure as hell not going to die like one.

So I've decided I'm going to take a walk. A long one, off a short pier if you will, or maybe out the airlock. Maybe I'll put a suit on, and stay out there, as close as a person can get to heaven and wait until my air runs out. Falling asleep wrapped in the sheer intoxicating wonder of the universe. It'll be like being born, only backwards and more glorious.

Yes, that sounds nice.

I'm going out. I may be some time.

## Pictonaut challenge 2: Business as Usual By Sam Kurd



I snuggle down the neon lime pavement with a smile on my face and a tightly-coiled spring in my step. The thundercloud sun bobs in the gravy sky and the barking trees smell delicious as ever. All is as happy as a pig in candyfloss.

I stop, turn, look up, wave to the sun. It waves back, droplets of fire spilling in all directions to light up the night sky in a glorious gooey wave. I ooo appreciatively and nudge my wife the porcupine. It hurts. It hurts so much. Make it sto-

"Oh honey," she grunts and snuffles, "you seem troubled. Take a deep breath, love."

No, I don't, I-

And now I'm away in the sky, an soggy astronaut bathing his way through the stratosphere. I can feel the drool in the corner of my mouth but I can't see it as I whizz past the North Star's mirrored shades. The star gives me thimble thumbs ups.

"Aaaayyyyyyy," I say, backstroking past. It nods sagely and bids me farewell.

I feel my wife snuffling at the back of my neck, licking me with her rough tongue.  
“There now, ain’t that better?”

It is, it’s so much better, better to be free than to be oh look a crab with the head of John Lennon. That’s a bit odd.

“I am the Walrus,” he intones, multifaceted eyes jingling.

“Coo-coo-ca-choo?”

“Right on.”

And away he scuttles. What a pleasant distraction. My phone rings. The harsh tones are piercing. My head hurts. Stop. How does it stop? Oh yes. I answer it. Easy enough.

“Dave?”

No.

“Dave? Can you hear me?”

No, no, I don’t want to, I don’t, you can’t.

“Dave, if you can hear me, come back to me. Please. I need you, Dave, I need you.”

I hang up with a snarl and eat the phone for good measure. It tastes of tears and chocolate. She always does this to me. She always brings me back. Not this time, though, I won’t do, I won’t go back. My hands are cheeseburgers. My eyes are diamonds. My feet ... my feet ... damnit ... my feet are towtrucks!

Relax.

There.

Smile.

Rodent teeth nibble my ear and I smile widely. One of my teeth falls out. No worries. I grow another, this one is made of wood. It joins its brothers, one obsidian,

one plasterboard. I only have three now. I don't need any. I've named them. Steve, Bob and Bacon Sandwich.

I laugh and run my hands through my hair, a clump of which comes out and flies away in a cloud of vermicelli butterflies. I'm so happy. I bounce like a football. I am a football, a meatball football goofball ball ball ball ball ball. I am all the balls.

My stomach rings. I ignore it. Let it ring. Let everything ring. The pavement rings. My wife rings, spines bristling in waves. John Lennoncrab rings. Here comes the sun, and it rings too. The ringing is a whirlpool, a rising tide that lifts me from my feet and sends me spinning gently into the cosmos. Everything drops away, melts into the black. There is only me, me and the ringing.

A cold burning sensation springs up in my hand, my clenched fist of a hand. I open it. Nothing there. The sensation grows until a green shoot bursts from my hand, skin and bone peeling away like putty. Stem. Leaves. A beautiful flower bud. The bud unfolds and inside is a hotdog. It rings, so I eat it.

The world returns in a blast of noiseless colour, fireworks, Hawaiian shirts. An immense blob of humanity oozes towards me, screaming faces and flailing limbs thrusting out of the straining flesh. With one voice the faces roar and growl and gnash their teeth as the blob moves faster and faster towards me. I scream, grow wings and launch myself up and away, leaving it far far behind. A close call, too close to a moment of truth. I don't want truth. I want this. This and only this.

I touch down on the roof of a shiny building. The building looks familiar somehow. A warning bell rings in my head, so I eat it. Can't take any chances. I kneel, run my finger along the surface of the roof. They leave shallow grooves, the roof sticks to my fingers. I draw my name in the roof and lick my fingers. Cake. Butternut squash cake with a hint of anchovy. I grasp at the roof, pull great handfuls out, chew my way down into the building.

It isn't until I stop chewing that I realise my mistake. I look around, panicked. I'm here. There. Here. The building. The lab. I can't be here, I don't want to be here, why can't I go back somewhere else, anywhere else, anywhere but here.

Relax.

Deep breaths.

I look at my hand. It smiles and waves. Take heart. It's not time yet. This isn't really real real. It's real but not as real as the really real realness. I giggle and gurn and cry and creep into my office (not my really real real office, no) on feet of lead and gum.

My office. I did it here, I created I poked I loosed I made I killed – no no no no no no. I slap myself, leaving shallow grooves, the cheek sticks to my fingers. I draw my name in my cheek and lick my fingers. Cake. Anchovy cake with a hint of butternut squash. Disgusting. I spit my cheek out and take a deep breath,

Deep breaths, but they aren't working as good now. Damnit. It's time soon. I hate time, this time, all time for all time.

My desk. My liquorice computer, my assistant and companion. I pour it a scotch from my medicine cabinet. It thanks me and drinks, sparks flying, smoke belching, face melting, blood running from its monitor eyes. I slap it off the desk and it melts into a laughing burbling puddle that sucks greedily at my shoes.

I leap over its reaching flesh-stripped cable arms, crash against a wall, bringing down my framed photographs from the wall. My co-workers at a lab party. My son, swinging a bat. My wife, my really real real wife.

And me.

There's me, standing stock still in the desert, the vast spreading dust cloud rising behind me like Death's sweet cinnamon breath. What a fool. What a stupid, stupid fool. I jab at the photograph, my fingers are pens. If I am a fool, I must look a fool. A stupid hat. Groucho Marx glasses. Hah! Take that, me! I stab at thee, me, foolish me, me the scientistfool, manfool, murdererfool. I obliterate me, photome, and my tears are wasps, stinging me relentlessly. I curl up on the floor, the buzzing of my tears fading away into nothing.



Light bursts, bright white light everywhere and the rumbling boom of the thrice-damned explosion. Time. Lunchtime. I crawl miserably towards the speck of darkness in the centre of the light. It grows, expands, fills my vision my eyes my being my life. Reality. Back to reality. I hate this time.

I open my eyes. I'm slumped on the floor of my lab, hunger pains stabbing me, atrophied muscles complaining with every move. I check the canisters. Empty. Empty. Empty. Empty. Empty. Empty. Full! Full! Full! And that's it.

No.

Three?

Only three?

I cry, dragging myself across the floor to the packets of preserved food I had gathered weeks ago after it had begun. My tired jaws ache with the effort of chewing. Why is the self-preservation instinct so strong? Why can't I just die?

I had hoped to run out of food before I run out of the gas. I don't want to die lucid, I can't, the pain of what I've done is too great to bear. But the need for food always brings me back, the weakness of the frail human body. And my body is so very frail now.

For the hundredth time I consider eating all the food, or throwing it away, or spoiling it somehow. Hell, I consider dragging myself into the corridor, prising a gun from the cold dead hands of a security guard, blowing my brains out. But I can't. I can't.

The phone rings. I let it. I know it's her. No one else rings me. There's an answering machine. It'll pick up. There it goes now.

"Dave? Dave? Please, if you're still alive, please pick up. I love you."

I sigh, drag myself back to the canisters. With weak trembling fingers I unscrew the top, the green gas spews out into the room.

Deep breaths. It's slow.

"The virus, it's gone now, Dave. There were .... Some people ... but it's gone, Dave, it's gone and I need you. Please, please come back."

Deep breaths. It's slow but sure.

"You're not what they say you are, I know it was an accident and it's gone now so you can come back to me, Dave! I don't ... I don't care how many people died! Come back to me! Please!

Deep breaths. It's slow but sure and it's what I deserve but I'm too cowardly to do it the hard way. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

The bottom of my stomach drops away. My eyes roll back, my limbs twitch and spasm. It begins again. Here I go.

Here I go.

I snuggle down the neon lime pavement with a smile on my face and a tightly-coiled spring in my step. The thundercloud sun bobs in the gravy sky and the barking trees smell delicious as ever. All is as happy as a pig in candyfloss.

Yes sir. It's just business as usual around here.

For now.

### Pictonaut Challenge 3: **Fantasy vs Reality** by Rachel Tonks Hill

*My second piece is also based on a Pictonaut prompt, last month's challenge to be exact. February's prompt is the work of Kekai Kotaki ([kekaiart.com](http://kekaiart.com)). It seems to be a piece of concept art for Guild Wars 2. The Rogue Verbumancer dubbed it "Faces in the Woods".*



Why the fucking fuck do these trees have faces? I'm not joking, they've got sodding faces. Not the kind you see in pictures on the internet, where a particular combination of knots or branches combined with a clever camera angle makes it look like they have faces. These look like real human faces. Hell, they look like they could speak if they wanted to. They're so real; they look like they could open their mouths and eat me. Thinking about it, they look pretty fucking angry.

And it's not just a few of the trees that have these faces, its all of them. Every. Single. One. I've never seen trees like this in my life, and I've looked at a few trees in my time. It's like I've been dropped into, I don't know, Middle fucking Earth or something. I seem to recall that the trees got pretty angry in that and started ripping shit up. Fuck. Maybe Game of Thrones, there are trees with faces in that, and I don't remember those upping sticks and destroying anything. Although, come to think of it, the trees in that are worshipped as gods and are probably linked with some ancient magical power. Shit. This is what I get for reading too many fantasy novels.

Back away, slowly. Nice trees. Friendly trees. I don't want to hurt you. I'm not going

to chop you down and set fire to you. I'm a nice guy, I like trees, I'm a regular tree hugger me. Er, that is, if you want to be hugged, I can totally respect your personal space if you don't want a hug.

Shit. Stop talking to the trees. Can trees the trees even hear me? If a man screams in a forest and there's no one around, are the trees listening and plotting to kill me?

Bloody smegging hell, where the fuck am I? I don't remember planning on taking a walk in a wood where the trees have faces. I don't remember taking a walk at all. How the hell did I get here? Crap, maybe I did get transported to some fantasy world. Which is not good, not good at all. Unless I'm the protagonist in this fantasy novel. That would be pretty cool. Except I'll probably have some sort of ridiculously evil baddie to kill, and there'll be lots of danger and at some point I'll have to utterly lose hope in order to be able to triumph over evil. Shit, that doesn't sound so good at all. I think I'll just stay right here. Maybe the story will pass me by.

Nice trees...

What was that noise? Oh hell, there are things in this forest with me. Maybe staying here is a bad idea. I should try to find my way out, or at least a clearing, then the trees won't be so damn close. Right, let's try to find some wide open space so I can breathe.

It's really quite warm here, and sort of dank and musty. Smells a bit like my basement, only a bit more *green*. Does green have a smell? If it did, it would smell exactly like this place. Oh God, why is it so warm here? The air is really oppressive, almost like it's out to get me as well as the trees. How'd the trees even get so big anyway? This forest must be really old for them to have gotten that tall. Wonderful, sentient trees with face that want to kill me and eat me. It would hardly be fair if one of them ate me, I mean, I've never eaten a tree in my life. Don't think it would taste nice.

This forest must be the quietest forest I've ever been in. There are no birds or little furry creatures or even any little bugs crawling around. Just the noise of me thinking. And breathing and crashing through the trees with faces. Not that bugs would be any better. I don't really like bugs. Why is there no noise here? Maybe this

forest is inhabited by some sort of ninja animals. Maybe some of them have really big teeth want to eat me. I'll never even hear it coming...

Awesome, trees with faces and ninja predators that want to eat me. That's really going to help fight the urge to shit my pants.

Wait a minute, it's a bit lighter up ahead. Maybe I've found a clearing at last. It would be really nice to have some extra air, so breathing doesn't hurt so much. A little breeze wouldn't go amiss either.

Shit! Voices. There are people in that clearing. I'll crawl up nice and quiet, see who they are. Maybe they're friendly and will help get me out of here. Maybe they'll want to kill me too. That wouldn't be good. I can see them now. Maybe if I keep down nice and low they won't see me. I can't understand a word they're saying. They're definitely not speaking English. Doesn't sound like any other language I've ever heard either. Bollocks, definitely got dropped into some sort of fantasy story. It's not one I've read though, I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. I hope I'm not the protagonist.

Oh God, that guy has horns on his helmet. And they're all wearing black. Definitely bad guys. Those look like pretty big swords too. Nasty. I bet that's some sort of wizard staff as well. Horned helmets, all in black, big ass swords and a magic staff, outnumbered three-to-one; doesn't look too good for me if they find me. Oooh, pretty blue light; definitely a magic staff, that doesn't bode well- shit, they've seen me.

Running flailing time. Shit shit shit shit shit. Oof, hello ground will you be my friend? Ouch, didn't know that light could hurt so damn much, but I guess it is magical light. Can't move my limbs. Fuck, they've caught me. Nice bad guys, don't hurt me. What are you doing? No, don't pick me up, I can walk just fine by myself if you'd just let me...

Oh, didn't notice that big stone table before, wonder what it's for. Oh, they're tying me down. That's probably not good. Fantastic, looks like I'm about to be sacrificed for something. And I seriously doubt that afterwards the table will crack and I'll be resurrected like a ragingly obvious Jesus metaphor. I wish I could



understand what these guys were saying, even just a word to know why.

Bollock, bollocks, bollocks, bollocks and bottoms.

That, that's a pretty big knife, nice and ceremonial looking. The ropes are too tight to escape. Fuck. End of the line for little old me. And I have no idea why, or even how I got here. Maybe this is just a bad fucking dream. I know, I'll try pinching myself awake. OW! Well, looks like I'm not dreaming. Either that or someone changed the rules of pain in dreams just to fuck me over. Which isn't all that good either.

Yes, yes, yes chanting, mystical spells, blue light. All that shit I've read about a hundred times. Get it over with. If I have to die, I'd rather it happen quickly, before I actually do shit my pants. Fuck fuck fucketty fuck fuck. I didn't want it to end like this. Maybe if I close my eyes they'll go away. Nope, still chanting. And now the horn-helmet guy has raised his knife. This is it.

Shit.

## Final Note

Well, that's the end of this issue of the 'Zine! Hope you all enjoyed it. Thanks again to all our submitters; I can't tell you how grateful I am! Cake will find its way to you as soon as I can find you!

This is the last issue of the 'Zine I'll be editing for you all sadly. Thanks all for voting me in last year! It's been fun! Good luck to Holly Pownall, the new editor for next year! Be nice to her!

Stay geeky! Stay win!

Nel