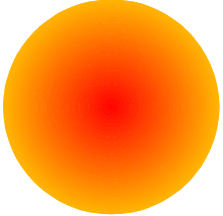




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We meet Raymond Feist

(Photo by Martin Kealey)

**Issue XXXVI - May/June 2013**

# Musings from Under the Mountain

You're getting an extra long editorial this issue for two reasons; firstly, it's been a while, and secondly, Alan's presidential address was so long that I had to move him to page three... leaving most of this page for my ramblings. And a gratuitous cat photo.

I'm behind schedule because I've been working full time for the past six and half weeks—for the first time in over a decade. What may seem ordinary to most of you, and used to be perfectly normal to me, proved to be a shock to the system. I'd come home tired, with little energy to do more than watch TV, play a bit on the laptop, and go to bed at what seemed to be a ridiculously early hour. As for the weekends, that's when I'd sort out my lesson plans for the next week. How did we ever find the time back when we were younger?

So, what was I doing? I was teaching, of course, doing long term relief at Hillary Collegiate. But I wasn't teaching the usual Information Technology, Science and Mathematics. No, it was English and Social Studies for the ESOL (English for Students of Other Languages) classes. This came about because when I did a day relief for the ESOL teacher back in term one, the children didn't complain! Which, apparently they always did when they had a reliever. The fact is that my science and maths has become a bit rusty while my skills in English have been honed with practice. All that writing and editing has to be useful for something!

As for the Social Studies, the topic was the Environment, a subject I can talk about for hours (and I've written a fair bit about in this column). I made it relevant to the kids by putting the emphasis on global warming, its likely effects on the Pacific Islands, and what they can do about it. There are a lot of simple things we all can and should do, like reducing waste. It still bugs me when I see people buying plastic bags for their groceries...

So, it wasn't too onerous, and it certainly was an experience. And it will help to pay for our trip to the WorldCon and parts beyond later this year. This will most likely be our last big trip as a family, because next year Paul will be in year 11 and facing the joys of NCEA assessments. I will add that when I sent a letter to the principal at Onehunga High to inform her that we were taking Paul out of school for half of term III, and where we were going, she replied with a very nice email, saying have a good time, and that the educational benefits of a trip like this still outweigh those of six weeks of regular schooling. Especially if we do the sensible things like take his maths workbook with us, and get him to keep a journal. How many kiwi kids his age get to see London, Paris and Rome? I haven't seen those places yet, and I'm certainly looking forward to it.

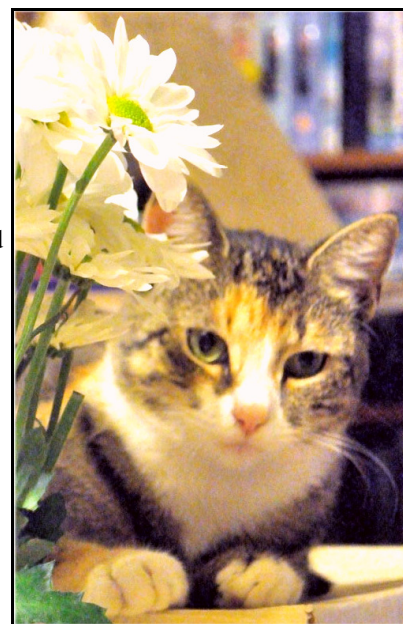
We've also had time since I finished work to do a bit of shopping. There's a new Warehouse on Pah Rd., conveniently placed on our route to the city, and just up from Paul's school. We checked the clearance items and

came out with a cake-taker that fits square cakes, some DVDs, a trio of 3DS games including the highly rated *Scribblenauts Unlimited* for Paul, and the first two books of Raymond Feist's final Midkemia trilogy at \$5 each. Which means, given the review copy of the third book (see p) I have the entire trilogy in hardback for less than the price of a paperback. (And in case you're wondering, we refused the proffered plastic bags and used the cake-taker as a convenient container).

Which brings me to Mr Feist. It's unfortunate that, due to miscommunication on somebody's part, we missed the first part of his address, but what we did hear was interesting, we did get our books signed, and obtained some photos with the man himself. I'd already told the story of how I'd met Sir Ed the first time Raymond Feist came to New Zealand to the children (and assorted staff members) at Hillary Collegiate. What I didn't know was that Mr Feist would probably not have extended his tour to New Zealand without a request from Sir Edmund Hillary. Funny how these things happen.

The last thing I really should do is update you as to where we're at with Conclave 2. We've been venue-shopping, and have a choice of three places which are a suitable size for us, including the venue used for the last Auckland convention (so if there were any positives or negatives with that place, please advise me). We've got a good idea as to who we'd like as fan GoH and some thoughts on our overseas GoH (suggestions are welcome here too, but remember that we're more likely to give consideration to names we recognise—and sadly I think we have to look primarily at writers). I've pulled apart the Conclave logo and put it back together again for Conclave 2 and the result looks quite good. So progress has been made and your input would be most welcome.

And here's Kit-Kat...



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# Signal to Noise Ratio

In the news recently, it emerged that the Kepler Space Telescope has undergone a serious mechanical failure; two out of four of the reaction wheels that stabilise Kepler and enable it to observe the tiny dips in observed starlight that indicate exoplanets transiting across the face of their parent stars have failed. Perhaps this is the end of Kepler's exoplanet hunting mission, but NASA is still assessing options for other missions that the telescope can perform. Even with this setback, the Kepler mission has been a great success, identifying up to 2,700 potential exoplanets, some of which may be Earthlike.

A few other bits and pieces of space news; the Dawn probe is conducting an extended surveillance of Vesta, and all going well, will then travel onwards to Ceres to examine that asteroid as of 2015. The New Horizons probe is en route to flyby Pluto in 2015, and hopefully will then continue to the first close-up encounters with other Kuiper belt objects. It's possible that we may actually see the first human beings get close to Mars within the next five years. Dennis Tito is currently assessing which rocket boosters will enable his proposed Inspiration Mars mission to achieve the first manned Mars flyby in January 2018.

So, what's my point about putting these random thoughts about the current state of space exploration out there? The question I'd like to address is not so much space exploration per se, but the current coverage of it in the media. In the earliest days of space exploration, one of the major driving forces was Cold War rivalry, with each superpower seeking to move ahead of the other in spaceflight achievement. The media back then gave high priority to space missions of the time, as it was a way of raising patriotic sentiment without actually entering a military conflict with the other side. In the post-Cold War world, not only is there much less of the international rivalry to spur space exploration, but the sheer volume of media out there is as big as it has ever been in human history. With round the clock cable news, the Internet, Skype, smartphones, and innumerable other communication technologies, we are able to easily

communicate with each other as never before, but it's what we're using this communication capability for that's the question. There's still plenty of media coverage of space out there (the website space.com is a particularly useful resource), but it's mostly being drowned out in the avalanche of talking heads screaming political points at each other, or of non-news about the antics of Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan, and the Kardashians.

So what are we, as science fiction fans, going to do about this? While the current status of space exploration may be nowhere near what we anticipated in decades past, and the psychological impact of the retirement of the Space Shuttle may have left many people feeling pessimistic, there are still plenty of successes to celebrate on the space front, not least of which is Kepler's great success at its planet finding mission. (Not that a reasonable space exploration program is terribly expensive; NASA's annual budget amounts to about 0.6% of the U.S. federal government's total budget, and actually works out to be less per year than U.S. consumers spend on Internet pornography.)

The other aspect of today's wired world is that the blogger and the citizen journalist have come into their own, and my suggestion is that this is what we need to do to play at least a small role in raising the profile of space exploration. While there are plenty of crazies and conspiracy theorists venting into the blogosphere, there are also voices of reason out there, and science fiction fans are easily capable of adding to the debate, in speaking up for science fact as well as science fiction. If SF fans are willing to take up the cause online, and inject a meaningful level of signal into the general noise of the Internet, then maybe we can help, even in the smallest of ways, to raise the profile of space exploration. If we're willing to take up the cause of real-world space exploration, then we can legitimately claim to have helped make the science fiction dreams of today come true as the science fact of the future!

Alan Parker, President, Stella Nova

*Stella Nova members meet author Raymond Feist (from left: martin, Jacqui, Matthew, Mr Feist, Maree, Keith, Nicolette).*



# The Sky at Night July 2013

It's Winter – definitely Winter. The cold surely gives it away. However, when there are breaks in the clouds, there are lots of things to see in the sky at this time of year. Just recently we had the brightest Full Moon we've seen in a while. This was because of two things; firstly, the Moon was at perigee, being the closest point in its orbit and secondly, it was at the winter solstice which meant that the moon was also at its highest in the sky.

As Orion is the most prominent constellation in the summer sky, so Scorpius is the most recognizable in the winter sky. Its characteristic hook shape, which marks the tail is easy to see, as is the nearby bright red star Antares, marking the heart of the scorpion – and a rather distinctive target for the bow of nearby Sagittarius. Antares means 'rival of Mars' or 'anti-Ares' and they do look rather similar. The hook shape of the tail is also why it is known by the Maori as 'the fish hook of Maui'. Very close to Antares is the globular cluster M4, with another globular, M80, located halfway between Antares and the claws. Binoculars or a small telescope should be able to find them.

The fish hook extends into the Milky Way and two brighter patches of light can be seen near to the left of the end of the hook. These are naked eye objects on a dark night and are the open clusters M7 and M6. M7 is the brightest, and further south and was first recorded by Ptolemy, hence the name "Ptolemy's Cluster" - even though he said it was a nebula. M6 is known as the Butterfly Cluster. It has been proposed that Ptolemy may have seen it as well but the first official record of it was in 1654 by Giovanni Battista Hodierna.

Progressing down the Milky way towards the galactic bulge brings us to Sagittarius or, as most people know it as, the Teapot. Sweeping the area with binoculars reveals a myriad of stars as well as objects such as the Trifid Nebula (M20), the Swan Nebula (M17) and the Lagoon Nebula (M8). M8 and M20 appear to be very close to each other.

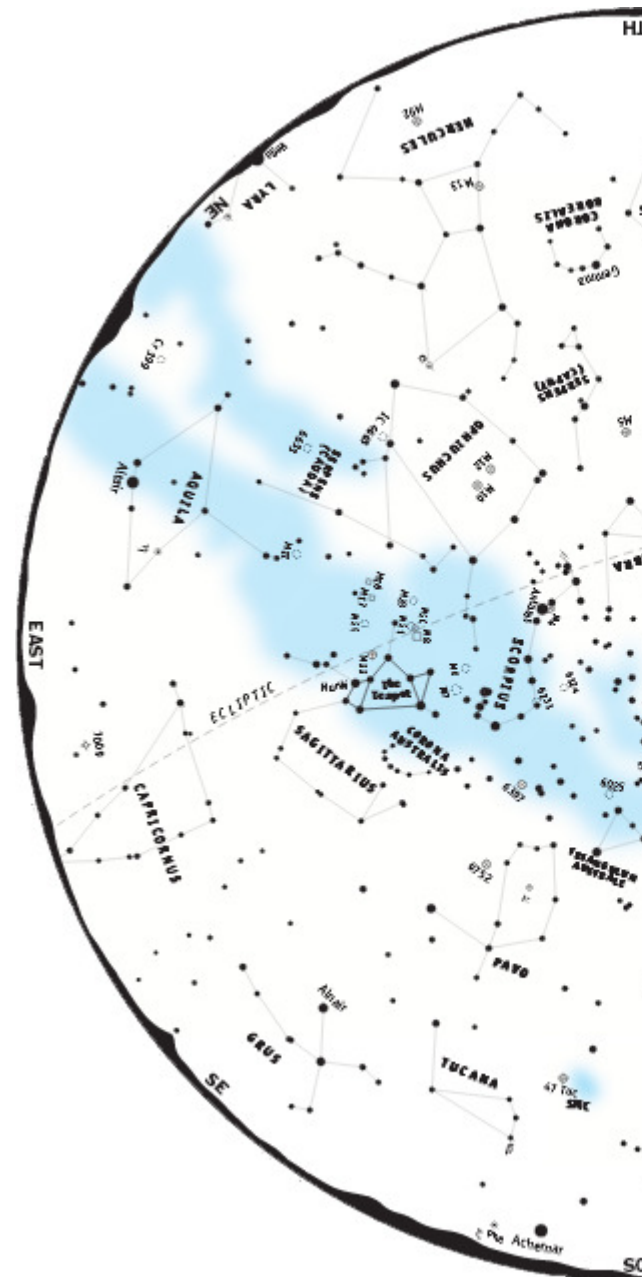
It then continues on north passing through the constellations of Scutum, Aquila, Sagitta, and Vulpecula before reaching Cygnus on the northern horizon. If it's high enough, that is where you will find the bright star Deneb. This, along with Vega (in Lyra) and Altair (in Aquila) form what is known in the Northern Hemisphere as the Summer Triangle, as it is high in their sky in summer. Altair is the highest in our sky and has two fainter stars on either side of it. A line through this row of stars and heading northwest points towards Vega.

Going the other way from Scorpius, the band of the Milky Way passes through constellations such as Centaurus, Crux, Carina and Vela before disappearing below the horizon on it's way to Orion. On the way, we pass the Coal Sack to the left of Crux, the top star of the Diamond Cross which is actually a star cluster known as the Southern Pleiades (IC2602), and a nearby reddish



patch which is the Eta Carina Nebula (NGC3372). Both can be seen with the naked eye and binoculars will reveal many other sights.

Saturn is high in the evening sky and forms a right angle triangle with bluish Spica and orange Arcturus. A telescope will show the rings tipped open and possibly the bright moon Titan nearby. Sufficient magnification and good seeing will see the Cassini Division as a dark band separating the two main rings. The shadow of the planet may also be seen falling on the rings to one side.





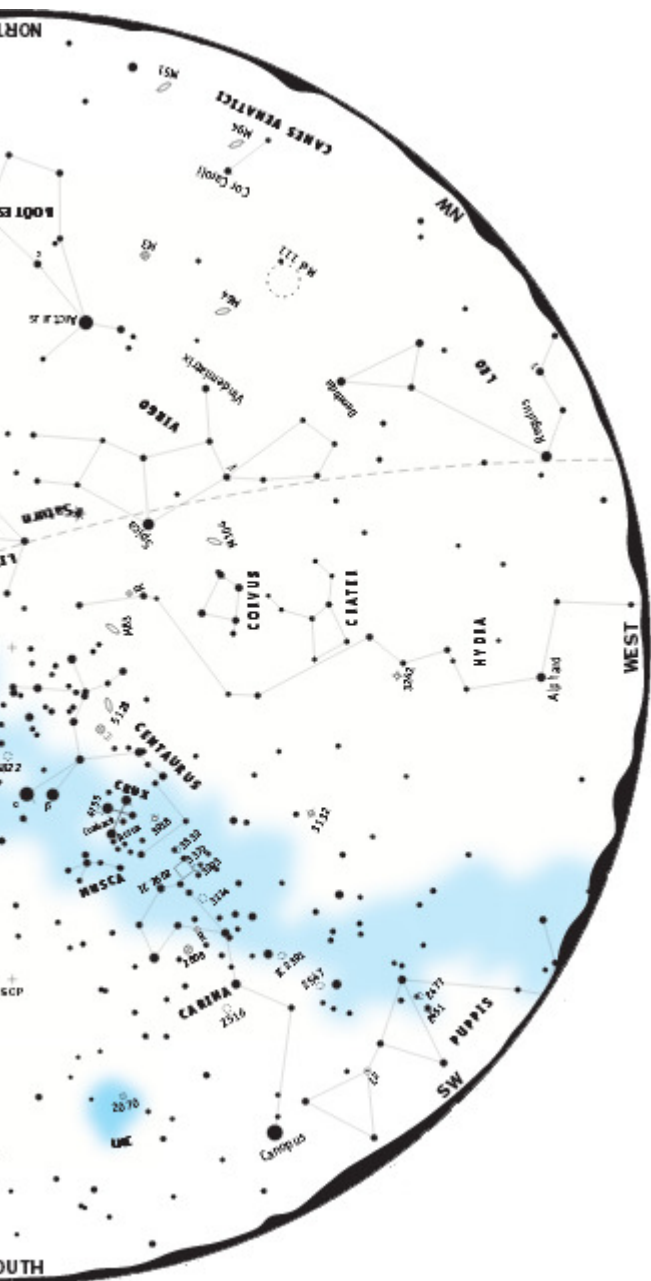
Globular Cluster M4  
 Canary Islands 2 Wide Field  
 Jun 21st, 2012 22:05:32 UTC  
 Taken by Keith Smith



Jupiter has now vanished from the early evening sky so that very bright 'star' visible after sunset is Venus. The remaining three: Jupiter, Mars and Mercury are actually now low in the morning sky. The stars of Orion and Taurus are also appearing before the sun in the east.

**Phases of the Moon:**

- Last Quarter—8<sup>th</sup> July
- New Moon—16<sup>th</sup> July
- First Quarter—23<sup>rd</sup> July
- Full Moon—30<sup>th</sup> July



# Uncorked

By Broderick Wells

The Wells household has recently relocated. The cats have settled in rather well, but I'm unsure if the hominids are quite so settled. There had been a number of adventures with various service providers that made the relocation more stressful than it should have been. Naturally, this led to a depletion of the liquor supplies. (Which had been depleted prior to the relocation as there was no point in moving part-full bottles, as I'm certain most of you would agree. I'm sure the recycling people, if they bothered to check the contents of recycling wheelie bin, would have considered me to be the owner of peculiar drinking habits. While the Crème de Menthe is perfectly explicable, as is the Parfait d'Amour, slivovitz and Crème de Cassis is not the norm for this part of South Auckland. The fact that the Parfait d'Amour was in a glass bottle and not a plastic one with a child-proof cap may also have alarmed them. But do not let it be said that Broderick Wells does not enjoy the odd, sometimes very odd, liqueur. After all, this is the man who managed to get Nicholas S smashed on kirsch. The one regret was that there was not really enough time to replenish the shelves they came off before we moved. But then, it would have been more things that may have been broken if luck had walked out the door.)

However, the one real problem was the loss of internet for almost a fortnight. The telco assured us that supply would be "on" by midweek, due to a slight cock up on the planning front. When it wasn't calls were made. It's all working at our end, said they. No ringing at ours. This persisted for several days. Finally, after being advised of the necessity of supply of telephonic communication via a land-line for medical reasons (who knows when the DTs will strike?), did a technician make an appearance, or rather, a lack of appearance. He traced the fault from the exchange to a switchbox, to a connection to the junction outside the house. Excellent fellow. Finally, we could ring out. But we couldn't ring in on the number we thought we had. Turns out they'd cunningly connected us to a new number that had mysteriously appeared on the phone logs in December 2011. The fluffing around was so bad that She Who Must be Obeyed decided to change service providers. The up side was I got some work done on the thesis.

However, that is not the end of the problems. We appear to have misplaced the cable for the printer, which makes accessing hard copies of certain items kind of difficult. And recently I've not even been able to send email, which really is annoying.

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# O B I T S

# Obituaries

April 8

**Leslie Broderick**, (aged 91), British World War II Royal Air Force Avro Lancaster bomber pilot and teacher who was a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft III and one of the last three survivors of the "Great Escape" (yes, the real one that the movie was based on).

April 10

**Sir Robert Edwards**, (aged 87), British physiologist, winner of Nobel Prize (2010) for his work in successfully pioneering conception through IVF, which led to the birth of the first test-tube baby,

April 11

**Hilary Koprowski**, (aged 96), Polish-born American virologist and immunologist, who invented the first effective live polio vaccine.

**Jonathan Winters**, (aged 87), American comedian and actor, best known in NZ as Mearth in *Mork & Mindy*, and as the voice of Papa Smurf in both the cartoon series and the movie.

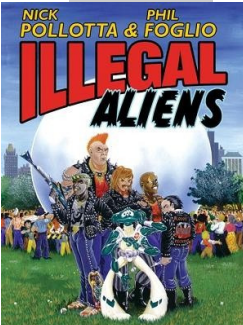


April 12

**Michael France**, (aged 51), American screenwriter who wrote the screenplays for *Cliffhanger* (1993), the James Bond film *GoldenEye* (1995), and the popular comic book films *Hulk* (2003), *The Punisher* (2004), and *Fantastic Four* (2005).

April 13

**Nick Pollotta**, (aged 57), American science fiction author, whom you probably haven't heard of because most of his work was published under pseudonyms including "James Axler" and "Don Pendleton" and "Jack Hopkins". His most well-known work was the science-fiction/humour novel, *Illegal Aliens* (with Phil Foglio), fantasy/humour novel *Bureau 13*, and fantasy/humour novel *That Darn Squid God* (with James Clay).



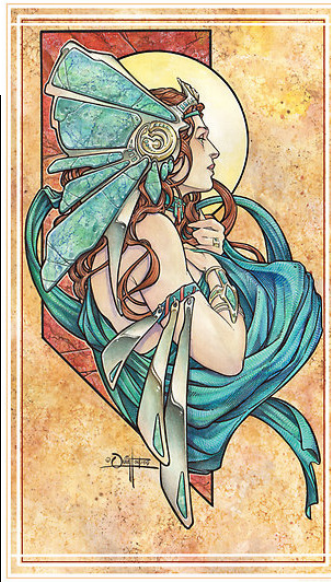
April 15

**Richard LeParmentier**, (aged 66), American actor, best known for his role as Admiral Motti in *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope* and as the acerbic policeman Lt. Santino in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.



April 19

**Kenneth Appel**, (aged 80), American mathematician, who in 1976, with colleague Wolfgang Haken at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, solved one of the most famous problems in mathematics, the four-colour theorem. They proved that any two-dimensional map, with certain limitations, can be filled in with four colours without any adjacent "countries" sharing the same colour.



April 20

**Quinton Hoover**, (aged 49), American artist and trading card illustrator who designed over 70 cards for *Magic: The Gathering* and *L5R*, as well as many illustrations for role-playing books.

April 23

**Norman Jones**, (aged 78), British television actor, who appeared in three Doctor Who serials—*The Abominable Snowmen* (1967, as Khrisong), *Doctor Who and the Silurians* (1970, as Major Baker) and *The Masque of Mandragora* (1976, as Hieronymous).

April 25

**Eion Scarrow**, (aged 81), New Zealand gardening personality, broadcaster and author., who presented the gardening show *Dig This* on New Zealand television from 1972 until 1986.

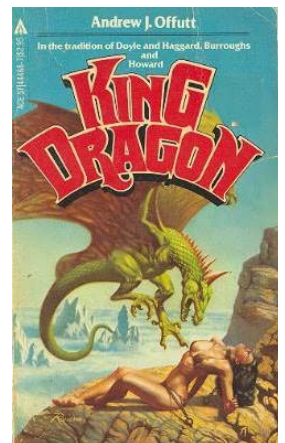


April 25

**Joseph Churchward**, (aged 80), Samoan New Zealand typeface designer who handcrafted an estimated 690 original typefaces., now used around the world.

April 30

**Andrew J. Offutt**, (aged 78), American science fiction and fantasy author, who wrote and published numerous novels and short stories, including several in the *Thieves World* series edited by Robert Lynn Asprin and Lynn Abbey, which feature his best known character, the thief, Hanse, also known as Shadowspawn. His *Iron Lords* series, likewise, was popular. Offutt also wrote two series of books based on characters by Robert E. Howard, one on Howard's best known character, Conan, and one on a lesser known character, Cormac mac Art. He also wrote the 19-book science fiction *Spaceways* series, over half of which were collaborations. (Oh, and I recognised the book cover I've included—I think there's a copy downstairs!)



Compiled by Jacqui Smith

May 7  
**Ray Harryhausen**, (aged 92), American visual effects creator, writer, and producer who created a form of stop-motion model animation known as "Dynamation". His most memorable works include the animation on *Mighty Joe Young* (1949), with his mentor Willis H. O'Brien, which won the Academy Award for special effects; *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958), his first colour film; and *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963), featuring a famous sword fight against seven skeleton warriors. His last film was *Clash of the Titans* (1981), after which he retired.



**Aubrey Woods**, (aged 85), British actor best known to fans as the Controller in the Doctor Who serial *Day of the Daleks*, and as Krantor in the classic Blake's 7 episode *Gambit*.



May 11  
**Joe Farman**, (aged 82), British geophysicist who worked for the British Antarctic Survey. Together with Brian Gardiner and Jon Shanklin he published the discovery of the ozone hole over Antarctica on 16 May 1985.

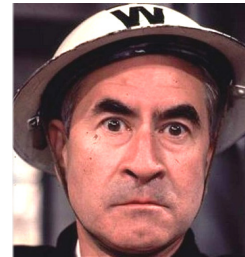
May 16  
**Paul Shane**, (aged 72), British actor and comedian, best known for playing the part of Ted Bovis in *Hi-de-Hi!* and for Alf Stokes in *You Rang, M'Lord?*



May 26  
**Jack Vance**, (aged 96), American fantasy and science fiction author who won the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement in 1984 and was a Guest of Honour at the 1992 WorldCon Science in Orlando. The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America made him its 14th Grand Master in 1997 and the Science Fiction Hall of Fame inducted him in 2001. He won Hugo Awards in 1963

for *The Dragon Masters* and in 1967 for *The Last Castle*. Personally, I remember him best for his fantasy; the *Dying Earth* series and the *Lyonesse* trilogy, written well before fantasy became the major genre it is today—*The Dying Earth* was published in 1950!

May 27  
**Bill Pertwee**, (aged 86), British radio and television actor best known in the role the annoying ARP Warden Hodges in *Dad's Army*.



May 31  
**Jairo Mora**, (aged 26), Costa Rican environmentalist, shot while attempting to protect sea turtles from poachers who steal their eggs because they are believed to have aphrodisiac properties! One has to wonder...



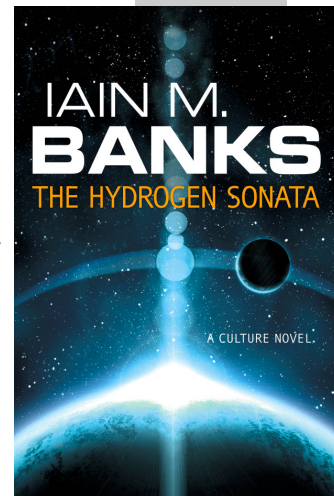
June 1  
**Carl Elsener III**, (aged 90), Swiss industrial executive, CEO of Victorinox from 1950 to 2007, who popularised the Swiss Army knife.

June 6  
**Esther Williams**, (aged 91), American competitive swimmer who joined Billy Rose's Aquacade when she was unable to compete in the 1940 Olympics because of WWII. There she was spotted by an MGM scout and went on to make a series of films in the 1940s and early 1950s known as "aquamusicals," which featured synchronized swimming and diving, including *Bathing Beauty*, *Million Dollar Mermaid*, and *Dangerous When Wet*.



**Jerome Karle**, (aged 94), American physical chemist, who worked on the Manhattan Project with his wife Isabella Karle in 1943. Jointly with Herbert A. Hauptman, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1985, for the direct analysis of crystal structures using X-ray scattering techniques.

June 9  
**Iain Banks**, (aged 59), Scottish author who wrote both mainstream fiction and science fiction under the name Iain M. Banks. His first SF book, *Consider Phlebas*, was released in 1987, marking the start of the popular *Culture* series. He was nominated for a Hugo Award in 2005 for *The Algebraist*. I will admit that after battling through *Feersum Endjinn* some years back, I was quite put off his work, but they tell me that he was actually a pretty good writer.



June 12  
**Jiroemon Kimura**, (aged 116), Japanese supercentenarian, who was the verified oldest man in history.

Compiled by Jacqui Smith

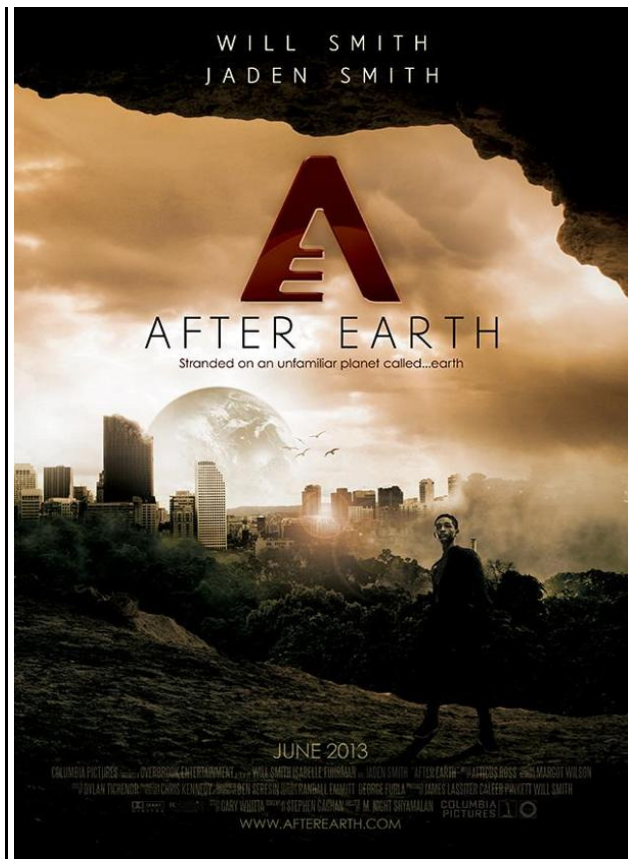
# Q U I Z

## RIP Quiz

A quick quiz about some well-known SF&F personalities from this month's obituaries..

- The stop-motion animation of which monsters in *Jason and the Argonauts* is arguably Ray Harryhausen's most famous work?
  - Ghouls
  - Skeletons
  - Vampires
  - Zombies
- Which of these movies did NOT feature the animations of Ray Harryhausen?
  - Clash of the Titans*
  - Mars Attacks!*
  - Mighty Joe Young*
  - The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*
- Which of these novels was Jack Vance's first book?
  - Araminta Station*
  - Ecce and Old Earth*
  - The Dying Earth*
  - The Star King*
- For which work did Jack Vance win his last Hugo Award (in 2010)?
  - The Dragon Masters*
  - The Last Castle*
  - The Man in the Cage*
  - This is Me, Jack Vance!*
- Which character did Bill Pertwee play in *Dad's Army*?
  - ARP Warden Hodges
  - Captain Mainwaring
  - Lance-Corporal Jones
  - Sergeant Wilson
- Which movie company did Esther Williams make most of her movies for?
  - 20th Century Fox
  - Metro Goldwyn Meyer
  - Paramount
  - Universal
- Esther Williams broke her neck filming a high dive in which movie?
  - Jupiter's Darling*
  - Million Dollar Mermaid*
  - Neptune's Daughter*
  - Pagan Love Song*
- What does the "M" in Iain M. Banks stand for?
  - Melchizedek
  - Melville
  - Menzies
  - Meredith
- What was the last book published in Iain M. Banks *Culture* series?
  - Consider Phlebas*
  - Feersum Endjinn*
  - Matter*
  - The Hydrogen Sonata*

Compiled  
by  
Jacqui  
Smith



Directed by M. Night Shyamalan  
 Produced by Caleeb Pinkett, Jada Pinkett Smith, Will Smith, James Lassiter  
 Screenplay by Gary Whitta, M. Night Shyamalan  
 Story by Will Smith  
 Starring Jaden Smith, Will Smith

Reviewed by Nicolette

It's a millennium after humanity was forced to flee Earth after it stopped being habitable, with people now settled on a desert-like planet called Nova Prime. The famous General Cypher Raige has decided that he wants to spend more time with his estranged family, especially his 13-year old son, Kitai, who wants to be a famous soldier in his own right.

When the ship they're on is damaged by an asteroid storm, they're forced to crash land on a forbidden and dangerous planet... Earth. The General is injured and it's up to his son to travel across unknown territory to retrieve the jettisoned rescue beacon. Kitai has his chance to become a famous soldier, if he survives.

The film was okay, but I thought it had a predictable plot and I wouldn't rush to see it again. The relationship between real-life father and son Will Smith and Jaden seemed strained, but I'm willing to overlook this as part of the plot. There were some nice shots of returned-to-the-wild Earth, and perhaps a hint that the planet isn't entirely empty of people after all.







Directed by J. J. Abrams  
 Produced by J. J. Abrams, Bryan Burk, Damon Lindelof, Alex Kurtzman, Roberto Orci  
 Written by Roberto Orci, Alex Kurtzman, Damon Lindelof  
 Based on Star Trek by Gene Roddenberry  
 Starring John Cho, Benedict Cumberbatch, Alice Eve, Bruce Greenwood, Simon Pegg, Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto

Reviewed by Maree Pavletich

In the first movie they invented transwarp drive, which made starships obsolete. Now they have cured death. Not only are tribble and human DNA compatible but a person needs to be in a cryotube to keep brain activity stable while waiting around for magic healing blood, but a tribble can be left to go smelly on McCoy's desk and the blood will still work!!! Really, McCoy didn't need to put Kirk in a cryotube while drawing Khan's blood after all! And why make BC Khan? I was quite happy for him to be John Harrison - it wasn't needed, unless the writers decided to kill off Kirk then panicked as to how to get him back? And that "tribute" scene, blah. The original was the culmination of decades of friendship and was moving and great, this one was Kirk trying to score points over Spock to prove him wrong, it was insulting to fans and to the franchise.

And don't even get me started on when the Enterprise was falling to Earth. WHERE WERE THE REST OF STARFLEET OR EVEN A COUPLE OF SPACE TUGS???? We didn't see all of BC's scenes, quite a few were cut as we heard the voice over in trailers but never saw those moments. I think BC was just too good, totally stole every scene.

One way to describe this movie? Sloppy, bad, not-well-thought-out fan fiction. Are these guys getting paid? Are they professional? There is fan fiction out there that is

way better. You cannot make a movie Star Trek just by showing a few contrived catch phrases into the script. It struck me that JJ is running scared that each movie will be the last, therefore he has to cram as much expositional angst in for the characters to tell the audience, just about breaking the fourth wall with a nod and a wink, in case he doesn't get another chance.  
 YAH BOO SUCKS.

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

I'm beginning to suspect that both the critics and the movie-going public have been seeing altogether too many physics-bending action-filled mindless superhero movies. It's evident from the reviews that they really liked *Star Trek: Into Darkness* and considered in that context it's a fun movie with lots of action, some fine performances, and great special effects.

Where it fails is when you turn the brain on, and look at this as firstly science fiction, and secondly as part of the Star Trek franchise. Now the nature of science fiction at the movies is such that it's rarely that the laws of physics remain unbroken. If you're going to do space opera you really do have to mess with Einstein on some level—and Star Trek is at its heart a space opera, the "wagon train to the stars". But there were points in this movie where the physics was so broken that it messed with my sense of disbelief to the point that it lost me altogether—notably at the point where the Enterprise is in free fall towards the Earth. Space is BIG, people, and it would take some considerable time to fall from lunar distance. Plenty of time to solve the problem—or even tow the damaged vessel into dock (just where was Starbase One, BTW?) The other problems are more to do with the Star Trek universe. Now, the reboot idea was cleverly handled in *Star Trek 2009*, but creating a new turning point in history doesn't let you mess with what went before. So, you do have to maintain continuity with all of *Star Trek: Enterprise*, and quite possibly previously amended events like those in *First Contact*. You can't force changes to Star Trek's pre-existing past. Thus the character Khan who existed long before the turning point should not have suddenly morphed from a tall commanding Hispanic to a weedy psychopathic paleskin! Yes, it was a brilliant performance by Benedict Cumberbatch, but he wasn't Khan. And I'm not sure that he needed to be. In fact, I'm not sure that we needed any of the many elements from *Wrath of Khan* in this movie. It would have worked much better without them. And with rather more thought into making things make sense. Me, I blame the writers and their lack of imagination—and Hollywood's current obsession with recycling old ideas. Excellent poster, though....

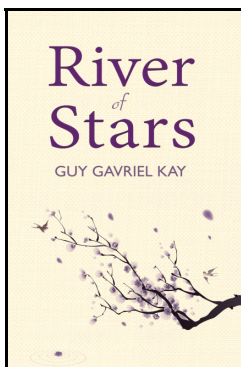
**Quiz Answers:**

1. B. Skeletons
2. B. *Mars Attacks!*
3. C. *The Dying Earth*
4. D. *This is Me, Jack Vance!*
5. A. ARP Warden Hodges
6. B. Metro Goldwyn Meyer
7. B. *Million Dollar Mermaid*
8. C. Menzies
9. D. *The Hydrogen Sonata*

**River of Stars**

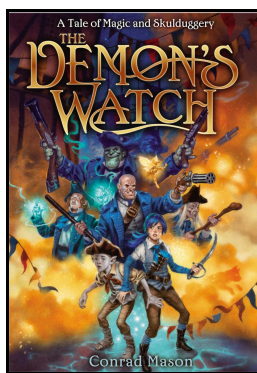
by Guy Gavriel Kay  
Published by Harper Collins  
Supplied by Harper Collins NZ  
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith  
Historical fantasy seems to have become a popular sub-genre of late. Authors take a historical events or settings and add a fantasy twist. It's simple, really, if you follow well-trodden paths to the English or Italian Renaissance, or the ever-popular Victorian period. Not so easy when you take your readers to China in the Song Dynasty, which is foreign territory to most readers, in more ways than one. It may as well be an alien planet! Except, of course, you can research it – and Kay's research is impeccable, even if he did confuse my research by using pseudonyms for major historic characters.

The fantasy element here is subdued, and very much in tune with the cultural beliefs of medieval China, known here as Kitai. This is a place where ghosts are real, curses can have profound effects, and as for the fox spirit.... But the focus here is the history, and the people who shape events. It's not a happy time for Kitai. The barbarians are invading from the north, and there isn't much a decadent society, obsessed with gardens and poetry, and with court-appointed idiots for generals, can do about it. But individuals do matter, and one such is Ren. Born the son of a minor court official, he discovers a talent for war among the outlaws of the marshes. Can he save Kitai? That would be telling. Suffice it to say that this is a beautifully crafted, poetic novel, with characters you will really care about.



**The Demon's Watch: Tales of Fayt 1**

by Conrad Mason  
Published by Doubleday Books  
Supplied by Random House NZ  
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith  
Fantasy! Pirates! Magic! You can tell this book is going to be fun right from the opening paragraphs, and it doesn't disappoint. It's a great yarn, with plenty of action, and the plot works... even as it thickens. The young protagonists have surprising depth, and ensure that there's plenty here for younger teenagers to identify with, but it's still very enjoyable as a light read for adults. It's about the half-goblin child, Grubb, and how he finds a certain something after a bar brawl. Something a lot of people want, among them the evil witch who wants to destroy Port Fayt. It's also about the orphan girl, Tabitha, who's been brought up by Captain Newton and the Demon's Watch, the "other" watchmen of Port Fayt. Together, they get in and out of trouble, and eventually, as they must, save the city. There is an underlying moral about racism, particularly as it applies to the children of mixed relationships, but it's not hammered too hard, and the fantasy setting gives it a nice generic flavour. Some things really are best said outside the context of the real world.



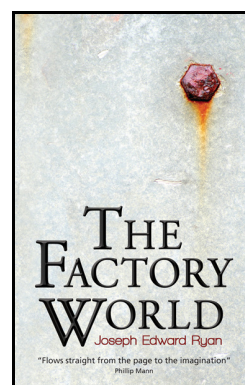
**The Dark Legacy of Shannara Book Two: Bloodfire Quest**

by Terry Brooks  
Published by Orbit  
Supplied by Hachette NZ  
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith  
Now, I will admit that I've read Shannara novels before. Back in the late 70's and early 80's, when Brooks began this series, there wasn't so much fantasy about, and besides, I liked his 1986 Landover novel, "Magic Kingdom For Sale – Sold!" But I tired of them after the first couple of trilogies, and haven't been back there for many years. So, being sent the latest for review, and the middle book of a trilogy at that, presented a bit of a challenge. Not that it was hard to read. Brooks is a competent writer, and knows how to put a novel together, so even this tricky middle volume of a trilogy had a distinct beginning, middle and suitably climatic end. That fight in the forest was by far the most entertaining part of this novel though, which I found, frankly, a bit dull, in spite of quite a lot of action. There are too many characters, too many of them get killed just as soon as they get interesting, and one of the leads has a truly awful name. I mean, "Arlingfant"? Mr Brooks, what were you thinking? Perhaps it's time to put Shannara to bed, quit recycling old ideas, and write something entirely new.



**The Factory World**

by Joseph Edward Ryan  
Published by Steam Press  
Supplied by Steam Press  
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith  
Generally speaking, they tell me, a narrative consists of a plot, some characters and a setting. Most stories are plot-driven, some are character-driven, and just occasionally a novel is setting-driven. "The Factory World" is one of the latter, all about place. And a strange place it is too, alternately dream-like and nightmarish, brought vividly to life through Ryan's elegant prose. There are shades of the Wizard of Oz here – one major character is called the Tin Man; another is a boy who wears a lion costume. There are hints of Phillip Jose Farmer's "Riverworld"; of people from different times waking up together in a strange world. Only here a boy wakes up in a drainpipe, and is rescued by a man in a raincoat. They travel across a dying world together looking for the centre seen only in dreams. Where they believe they will find a way home. It's a simple plot, but then plot is not what this is about. It's about a unique and skilfully designed world, that will stick in your memory... and if the ending seemed a little rushed, and the epilogue unnecessary (there are times when questions are best left unanswered) then that is a small criticism. Read this if you're looking for something truly different.



## Magician's End

by Raymond Feist

Published by Harper Voyager  
Supplied by Harper Collins NZ  
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

Here am I, complaining about fantasy writers and their endless series they refuse to bring to a proper conclusion – and here is Raymond Feist, who has apparently decided to do just that with the *Riftwar* series. I can remember reading the beginning of Pug's story in *Magician* when it first came out in the early 1980's, and I know I especially enjoyed the *Empire* trilogy because of its resemblance to the role-playing game *Empire of the Petal Throne*, which we were very much into at the time. It was no coincidence – it's well known that much of Feist's early work was based on the role-playing games he was involved in. How else would you get a lead character named Pug?

But, I confess that I've not read much of the *Riftwar* for years now. So, it was a bit of a surprise to find *Magician's End* sitting in my books-to-read box. It must have been a serious challenge to write this final book, to attempt to tie up all the loose ends, to make sure that long-dead favourite characters get to say their piece, bring everything to a proper climax, and at the same time make a decent novel of it. Oh, and devise a fitting fate for a certain magician. Now, I can't say what that is, because that would spoil it for you, but it worked well enough for me. It's a lot for one book to achieve, and although it seems a bit contrived at times, it does mostly succeed. I will admit that he lost me a bit in a few places, but the battle scenes were some of the best I have ever read (complete with a nod to Tolkien's King Theoden in the fate of Prince Edward). So, nicely done, Mr Feist... and this time we won't be asking for more.

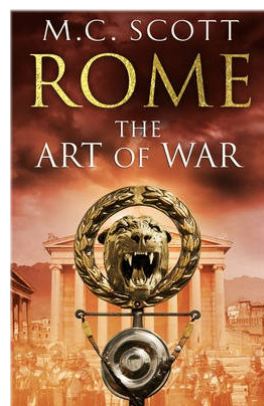


## Rome: The Art of War (Rome #4)

by M.C. Scott

Published by Bantam  
Supplied by Random House NZ  
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

First, this isn't actually either science fiction or fantasy; it's plain historical fiction. That said, if you are fond of historical fantasy, or have an interest in ancient Rome, you probably will enjoy this novel as much as I did. It's the fourth and last of a series, but that's hardly a problem, the author quickly orientates the reader in the historical background—the latter months of AD 69, the infamous Year of Four Emperors. It is the last of four books, so it begins with Vitellius on the throne in Rome and Vespasian in Judaea, where he is promptly declared Emperor. It isn't a history text though, but a novel. The author weaves her web of fictional events and characters through the warp of actual historical events to create a whole cloth, and that with an intricate pattern. Her backgrounds are intricate and detailed – I doubt I'll ever forget her description of the exterior of a Roman brothel!



Her characters are convoluted, fascinating, and their motives are often complex—mainly because about half of them are spies for one faction or the other. Or both. One method the author uses to draw the reader into the characters is to write in the first person, but switching from person to person as the chapter changes. Now, this can be a bit disorientating, and one does have to take note of the chapter header, but in this case it actually worked. Mostly. I would have appreciated a list of dramatis personae to help me keep track.

So, what you have is complex historical fiction with a strong military espionage flavour set in one of ancient Rome's most interesting times. If that appeals, you'll find this an excellent read.

## Promise of Blood

by Brian McClellan

Published by Orbit  
Supplied by Hachette NZ  
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

Viva la revolution! The country of Adro has been languishing under an inept monarch who has been frittering away the royal treasury on fripperies, while the people starve. Before said monarch can sell the country to their enemy, a cabal led by Field Marshal Tamas, stage a military coup... but that's just the start – the King and his nobles all meeting the guillotine by the end of chapter 5. There's the question of the enemy Kez, their agents, stray royalists, traitors to the cause... but the biggest problem is on the lips of dying sorcerers: "You can't break Kresimer's Promise". Unlike revolutionary France, this is a magical world, and killing kings might have unexpected consequences – like the return of long vanished gods. I have to say that I liked McClellan's world. He gives us swords, sorcery and gunpowder, and makes it work. He adds an original twist – powder mages, who can do remarkable things with bullets, for whom powder is power, and is a drug on many levels. McClellan provides detailed maps, and they do appear to make some sense, which is both an aid to the reader and forms a solid foundation for world building.

Unrelenting pace and a fine touch for action make this novel hard to put down. The main characters hold your interest because they are described in sufficient depth that the reader wants to learn more about them, their often-chequered past, and what will happen to them. There is Tamas, the aging powder mage, leader of the coup, who hates the enemy, the Kez, for what they did to his wife. There is his son Taniel, tasked with hunting down the remnants of the King's Cabal. And there is Adamant, a private investigator with problems of own, who is assigned to find the traitor in Tamas' camp. For comic relief there is the mad chef Mihali; yet even here there is a serious nod to gastronomy and its role in logistics and in maintaining morale. It's appropriate too, because both the modern restaurant and the soufflé had their beginnings in the French revolution.

In a first novel, a few glitches and inconsistencies can be forgiven (and are often unnoticed in the rush of events), leaving us with an auspicious beginning both to this trilogy and to McClellan's writing career.



## Inferno

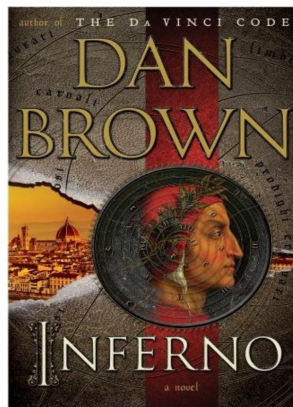
by Dan Brown

Published by Bantam Press

Supplied by Random House

New Zealand

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



Robert Langdon wakes up in a hospital bed in Italy, shot and no memory of how or why it happened. All he can remember is a beautiful woman sitting in a painting depicting Dante's Gates of Hell, urging him to seek and find something. A spiky haired woman tries to assassinate him and he flees for his life with the assistance of an attractive young doctor.

Sienna Brooks is a doctor, used to saving lives and being in control. She saved a patient's life and is now being pursued through the streets of Rome by the police, military, mercenaries, and an assassin. The former child actor has a genius IQ and uncertain immigration status that means she does not want to be noticed.

Fast-paced and with plenty of action, the plot is tightly written with intriguing clues dropped throughout that reveal a clever but horrific plan. As pieces began slotting together small pieces of the puzzle began to emerge but certain events remained a mystery and I couldn't understand them, like the head of the WHO and the man she met. Was she working with him or thwarting him? There were a few shocks as people's secrets were revealed and all the pieces came together right at the very end to display. I did not guess what was coming before it unfolded and I wondered how I missed it.

Set in the exotic streets of Rome, medieval Italian literature and artworks are explored, as Dante's Inferno is key to the plan. History and art buffs will either enjoy this story or pick holes in the authenticity of the story. Fans of a cleverly written thriller will be delighted with this book. I thought the plan was grotesque and so wrong, but worryingly I can see the sensible side of it. Read this latest masterpiece from Dan Brown. It's a gripping read.

## Red Moon

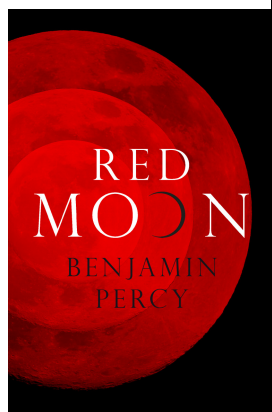
by Benjamin Percy

Published by Hodder &

Stoughton

Supplied by Hachette NZ

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



Claire Forrester is woken one night by government agents kicking down the door and murdering her parents. She manages to escape by changing into her lycan form and running. Unsure what her boring parents have done wrong, she sets off to find answers.

Patrick Gamble boarded a plane to journey to live with his mother, while his father left with the army to fight insurgency in the Lycan Republic. Also on the flight was

a lycan extremist and Patrick was the only passenger who stepped off the plane. Chase Williams is a politician who has pledged to destroy the threat society is facing. Attacked by his enemies, he is becoming the thing he vowed to destroy. Hiding this from the public, he searches frantically for a cure.

The lives of these three are caught up in a war none of them want. Entwined together by events, they each try to make sense of things while struggling to survive. The plot is told from different POVs and the events fit together seamlessly with the timeline being accurate. The world is well thought out and the characters seem real. I'm in two minds about whether I liked this book as the subject matter was rather dark and very gory. I HAD to keep reading to the end to find out what happens. The ending was truly chilling, masterful planning in an obscene way. The ending was left wide open and I assume this book is the first in a series.

The brutal murder of a soldier occurred in London as I was reading and some reactions to the killers were echoes of reactions to the lycans in the book. Ordinary peaceful people were viewed as radicals and it was sobering drawing parallels with what's happening in the world. Marketed as a YA book, this is suitable for anyone, teen or adult.

## The Shining Girls

by Lauren Beukes

Published by HarperCollins

Supplied by HarperCollinsNZ

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



(Though not strictly s/f/f, but a time-travelling serial killer comes close enough.)

Kirby Mazrachi was gutted and left for dead, her dog died defending her; now she wants to find the others. The other victims of the man who did this to her. She enlists the help of Dan Velasquez a former homicide reporter now covering the sports beat. Divorced and twice her age, he's cynical and word weary but growing convinced of Kirby's crazy theories. The killer they're tracking is Harper Curtis, who has a list of names on the wall and a House with a chilling secret.

A time-travelling serial killer. This is a great concept I haven't read before. I wonder if it is based on actual events, it would explain why so many murderers are never caught. Kirby is such a strong heroine, a survivor who doesn't give up. Dan contrasts with her well, someone who gave up but is willing to try once more. The characters are lifelike and you get a view of what they are like through the glimpses of their lives before they encounter Harper for the last time.

The plot is carefully thought out and there's a lot going on. The story jumps around to different time periods and POVs of various characters in short chapters. This is a story that's chillingly addictive and fans of thrillers will enjoy it. Lauren Beukes has written two previous books I must track down and she's now on my must-read list.

## Heart of Obsidian

by Nalini Singh  
Published by Gollancz  
Supplied by Hatchette NZ  
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Sahara is a NightStar, part of the strong clan of F-Psy who foresee events to come. She is only a sub designation B, with the gift of backsight. But she has another talent, so powerful no one knows of it. Except her captor. Held hostage for seven years and forced to use her power to benefit her kidnapers, she created a labyrinth in her mind to escape so complex no one could breach it. Then she was rescued from her prison.

Kaleb Krycek is the youngest member of the Psy Council. Icily ruthless, he is an extremely dangerous and powerful Tk. He's been looking for Sahara for years before he teleports her to his fortress-like home in remote Russia. Kaleb's motives are shrouded in mystery; does he want Sahara in order to gain control of her power or is there a deeper connection?

I knew it! The answer to a question was what I thought and it was so obvious! A lot of questions are answered and some storylines wrapped up, while others remain a mystery and new possibilities for the Psy/changeling/human world are opened. The plot was tightly packed with lots of action, chilling motives of fanatics, and the steamy hot love scenes Nalini Singh writes so well. The pace moved well with events neatly flowing after each other, and the different points of view were easy to follow. There was also a HEA.

A must read for fans, this story can be read as a standalone. I strongly recommend reading the rest of the series first though, mainly to enjoy the backstories of this compelling world. Parental discretion is advised due to the passionate love scenes.

## Shift

by Hugh Howey  
Published by Century  
Supplied by Random House  
New Zealand  
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Troy wakes out of an unnatural deep sleep, despondent as he still has his memories of another life. The pills that will enable him to forget haven't started to work yet. Woken for his first shift he's suddenly in charge, there to ensure nothing goes wrong and uphold the Order.

Donald is a young congressman, in a distant period of time. He meets with Senator Thurman, a meeting that will change the course of many lives. He agrees to work on a project for the Senator that will utilise his architecture



and design skills. Anna Thurman is also working on the project, an old flame who never forgot him.

Interspersed are stories of other ordinary Silo dwellers; Mission and the uprising in Silo 18; Jimmy and how he became Solo; how Juliette found Solo. All are told between flashes of how Donald helped build the Silos and Troy's attempts to make sense of the world.

Very complexly plotted you have to concentrate to follow the story, as it jumps back and forth between time periods and different characters. Each chapter begins with a place and time of where it takes place, which makes the jumps easier to follow. The prequel to Wool, this book explains how the silos came to be. It's quite scary how a few people can control the fate of billions. Definitely one to read for fans of Justin Cronin.

## Dead Ever After

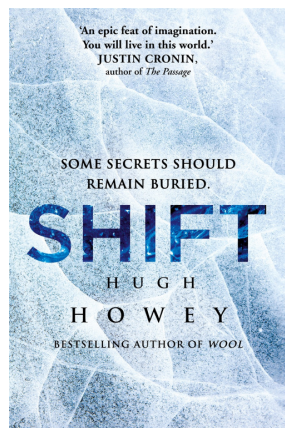
by Charlaine Harris  
Published by Gollancz  
Supplied by Hatchette NZ  
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Sookie is back in her final adventure! Recovering from bringing Sam back to life, she takes time off to think. Eric is remote as she chose to use the fairy wish granter for Sam, instead of for his benefit. He also has an obligation to marry the Queen of Kansas as his maker arranged. A new vampire has shown up and after her great-grandfather and cousin returned to the realm of the fairies Sookie is lonely.

Jason is planning his marriage, Tara is driving a minivan, and Sookie's half-demon godfather has shown up with two witches, a demon, and a telepath. He has learnt several things that make him fear for her safety. Arlene has been released from prison on bail for trying to give Sookie to the Fellowship of the Sun to be crucified. The men that arranged for her bail have only asked for her to do two things; ask for her job back at Merlotte's and a scarf of Sookie's. Meanwhile someone has sold their soul to the devil and decided Sookie is responsible for the deal going sour. She must pay...

A fun, easy read for Sookie fans with has a busy plot that ties up loose ends while hinting at new beginnings. You don't need to have read the other books in the series to pick up what is going on but it's such an addictive world you should. You learn who to trust, some people die, and who Sookie chooses to love.

\*the books bear no relation to the plot of True Blood.  
\*\*but feel free to imagine Eric Northman as Alexander Skaarsgard.



Au Contraire 2013 will be the 34th National Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention, and the second Au Contraire convention.

Where: Wellington

When : 12th to 14th of July 2013  
(last weekend of university holidays)

Venue: Quality Hotel,  
Upper Cuba Street

Guests of Honour:  
Jennifer Fallon

Jennifer Fallon is the author of 15 full-length novels, and a number of published short stories. In addition to her own fantasy series - the Demon Child trilogy, the Hythrun Chronicles, the Second Sons trilogy, the Tide Lords quadrilogy, and the Rift Runners series - she has written both a tie-in novel and short fiction for the TV series Stargate SG-1, an official Zorro story for Disney, a novella for the Legends of Australian Fantasy anthology, and has her own superhero - the Violet Valet.



Fan Guest of Honour:  
Anna Klein

The Fan Guest of Honour for 2013 has been instrumental in the development of both the Auckland and the wider national live action roleplaying community. She has been a driving force behind the New Zealand Live Action Roleplaying Society, a funding and advisory organisation for the hobby. Anna has also led the organisation of Chimera, the original Larp convention in New Zealand.



Charity:  
Wellington Women's Refuge



**WOMEN'S REFUGE®**

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[http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/Main_Page)

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<http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/StellaNova:Novazine-new>

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**This Month:**

**BOOK** Monday July 22nd  
(at Chez Smith)

**SPACE** To be Announced

**Next Quarterly Meeting:**

Wednesday 17th July 2013, 7:30 pm  
Auckland Horticultural Centre,  
990 Great North Road,  
Western Springs



**Upcoming Events:**

**July 12-14th 2013**

**Au Contraire 2013**

34th New Zealand National SF Convention  
<http://www.aucontraire.org.nz/index.php>

**April 24-27th 2014**

**Conclave 2**

35th New Zealand National SF Convention  
<http://www.conclave2.sf.org.nz>