



Masquerade

# Masquerade

SwanCon | 2001

Editors: Cathy Cupitt and Sarah Locksley  
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CITY of PERTH



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# Introduction

## Warning: Things Are not Always What They Seem

Cathy | Cupitt

Welcome to the souvenir book for Swancon 2001: Masquerade. The year 2001 is rightly famous in science fictional circles and so it seemed appropriate to include it in the name of our convention. However, we are also named Masquerade, which suggests deception, intrigue, glamorous costumes, sword fights, true love... but I digress. While the year 2001 has garnered all the attention, Swancon has quietly turned 26, and the National Convention has turned 40. Forty years old! We are middle-aged!

This rather stunning realisation spurred us on to encourage our guests to do things that were, well, not always what they seemed. In fact we asked for up to 3000 words, or art, on that very theme.

Fortunately for us, they rose to the occasion, and you are holding the results in your hands. Within these pages, you will find renowned fiction writers represented by essays, artists represented by fiction, and scriptwriters represented by prose. But that's not all! Just to keep you guessing, several of our guests incorporated the theme into the content of their work. So beware, your mind may be twisted beyond recognition if you continue to read this book.

We hope the stories, poems, essays and art collected here keep you entertained for many hours. We hope that reading (and re-reading) this book will remind you of the conversations, panels, parties and other encounters you had with the guests at the convention. But most of all we hope that Swancon 2001: Masquerade looks towards the future, beyond 2001, in unexpected, surprising and entirely enjoyable ways. In short, we hope that the convention defies its advanced age and instead lives up to its name!

# The Radish of All Evil

Robert | Silverberg

What I do, primarily, is work with words. I build things out of them. I built a castle out of them once, a vast and playfully conceived place that had some 40,000 rooms, and then I built a whole world to contain it, in six fat volumes and one skinny one. Much earlier, I built the Great Wall of China out of words, too — that was a book I wrote in 1966 — and so on and so on, a mountain of words that I've constructed with my very own two hands over the past five decades.

But I like to play with them as well as work with them. I had the good luck to have an old-fashioned classical education that included four years of Latin, beginning when I was twelve years old. Since Latin provides at least half the structural basis for the English language (the other half being the Anglo-Saxon that was spoken in England before the Norman conquerors arrived, bringing with them their Latin-based French) my knowledge of that language, rusty though it has become with the decades, allows me access to the roots of the words we use.

The roots, I said. The Latin word for "root" is *radix*, as in that good old proverb about *pecunia* being the *radix* of all *malorum*. (*Pecunia*, which means "money" in Latin, started out by meaning "cows," but that's a story I'll save to talk about some other time. Let's stick to roots for the moment.)

*Radix* — meaning root — sounds not unlike "radish," and for a very good reason, since a radish is an edible root and *radix* was what the Romans called that particular root. (*Radices*, in the plural.) But radishes, of course, are not the only edible roots — carrots, turnips, beets,

and potatoes come quickly to mind, among many others — and technically the Romans would have classed all of those as *radices* also, but not as radishes. (Each had its own name. A carrot was a *pastinaca*. A turnip was a *rapum*. A beet was a *beta*. But they were all root-vegetables, and therefore could be called *radices* in a general way, though not in a specific one. Are you still with me?)

That Latin word *radix* has a larger, non-vegetable sense of “root” also. It meant the source or origin of anything. The base of a mountain was its *radix* in Latin. So was the base of the tongue. And so too were the bases on which mathematical structures are built: those square roots that you wrestled with in high-school algebra were square *radices* to Roman mathematicians. Which leads us to the mathematical term “radical,” a quantity expressed as the root of another quantity. “Radical” also turns up in chemistry with a variety of meanings: a fundamental constituent of a chemical compound, for example. And then there is “radical” surgery, which is intended to remove the *root* of the disease.

These various scientific uses of “radical” all refer, essentially, to going to the core of a subject, its fundamental nature, its base. The political use of the word has the same origin: a political radical is one who, after taking a deep look at a social problem, proposes a profound change in the institutions that are responsible for it, that is, reaching down to their very roots to bring about change. (By which we see that the etymological gulf separating Karl Marx from a radish is not very great.)

And so this humble word, originally referring to the underground part of a plant and also to one kind of particular edible root, ramifies in many directions — and the harder we look, the more ramifications we find. “Eradicate,” for example — a word that can mean getting rid of termites in your basement, or of stains on your shirt, or unwanted ethnic groups in your corner of the Balkans — can now be seen to have a root at its root: to “eradicate” is to pull something up by its *radix*. And, since *radix* turned into *racine* in medieval French, we have the French verb *deraciner*, to uproot, which leads us to our word “deracinated,” the state of being cut off from one’s cultural roots.

Does that mean that our word “race,” meaning a family, a tribe, a people, and half a dozen other similar things, has its roots in *radix* too?

My guess is that it does, although the professional etymologists are more cautious, tracing it back only to the medieval French *race* and the medieval Italian *razza*, both meaning “a group connected by common descent,” but they hesitate to take the leap back to *radix* from there. Here in my Latin dictionary, though, is the phrase *radicibus natum*, literally “born of the roots,” and meaning “a native of the same place.” Those who are of the same race spring from the same roots, do they not? I think there’s a connection here.

Ultimately, all the words we European-descended folk use are rooted — there it is again! — in the original Indo-European language, which was spoken in prehistoric times across much of the region stretching from India to Iceland. Since the eighteenth century those who study the history of language have recognised that peoples living in regions greatly distant from one another use similar words for certain basic concepts: for example, the word for “night” is *nox* in Latin, *nacht* in German, *noc* in Czech, *nux* in Greek, *notte* in Italian, and *nakt* in Sanskrit. “Mother” is *mam* in Welsh, *madre* in Spanish, *moder* in Swedish, *madar* in Persian, *matka* in Polish. A nose is *nez* in French, *nosis* in Lithuanian, *nos* in Russian, *nas* in Sanskrit.

The only plausible conclusion is that most of the languages spoken in Europe and Western Asia, however different they are in most respects (and German is very different from French, Czech very different from Persian!), must have had a common ancestor at some time in prehistory — a language spoken, perhaps, by a dynamic migratory race that set out from eastern Europe or western Asia around 3000 B.C. and spread in all directions, one branch going into Greece, another into Italy, some crossing Iran and Afghanistan into India, some going west to the British Isles and Scandinavia. Wherever they went, it seems, they brought their language with them, and managed to impose some form of it on the peoples among whom they settled.

Intensive study of the common roots of the terms that are similar in the various Indo-European languages has given us some idea of what that ancestral tongue must have been like. For example, it’s easy to see that the word for “mother” must have begun with a sound like *ma-*, the word for “father” with *pa-*, the word for “nose” with an *n-* sound.

And when we look behind the Latin *radix* we can see peeking out the Indo-European root *ra-*, meaning “to grow out of” or “to derive from.” It neatly connects the Latin *radix*, “root,” with *ramus*, “branch” — and from *ramus* comes our word “ramify,” to branch out, which I used just a few paragraphs back in describing how the primary meaning of a word can spread in many ways. We can see “radius” lurking there, and “radiate,” and even — by way of the Latin word *ratus*, the past participle of a verb meaning “to count” or “to reckon,” therefore “to think” — such words as “ratio,” “ration,” “rational,” “ratify,” and “reason.”

I find this kind of word-play fun for its own sake. But it's also useful to me as a writer, and should be to you as a reader, because it reminds one that words aren't simply noises to which arbitrary meanings have been assigned, but that they have *inherent* meanings that carry over from language to language. (If you go back far enough, I suppose, the meanings do become arbitrary assignments: there's no inherent reason why a “ma-” sound should refer to a mother and a “pa-” sound to a father and a “ra-” sound to a root, but that's what was agreed on in prehistoric times, perhaps even in Cro-Magnon times, and that's what has come down to us today.) To understand that “radical,” “radish,” “eradicate,” and “deracinate” all harken back to an ancient word meaning “root” is to be able to perceive the interrelatedness of all those seemingly disparate concepts — that is, to be able to make conceptual connections, and thus to be able to think better. Which I am old-fashioned enough to believe is a desirable thing.

Much of the information I have shared with you this month, by the way, comes from Eric Partridge's brilliant book *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, which I have owned and used with pleasure for some forty years. This massive tome of nearly a thousand pages, which Partridge wrote unaided, provides us with the meaning and history and connectedness of more than 12,000 common English words, and without much coaxing I will dip back into it in some future column.

Partridge, a New Zealander educated at Oxford, was plainly a man intoxicated with words. (And points out that although “intoxicated” now means to be drunk, it has as its root “toxic” — poisonous — and “toxic” itself goes back to a Greek word for arrow-poison, derived from the

Scythian root *taksha-*, a bow, and beyond that perhaps even to the Sumerian *tukul*, a weapon. Among his other books is one called *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, a startling exegesis of all the dirty words in the great bard's works, and another, the 1300-page *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, that I go to whenever I need to understand some ancient colloquialism. (“Quiddle: 1) custard, or any sauce for pudding. 2) To spit.”) But it is his *Origins* that I go back to most frequently, again and again.

And isn't it pleasant to think that if the English language had taken a somewhat different evolutionary course, Eric Partridge's famous etymological dictionary might have been called not *Origins* but *Radishes*?

“The Radish of All Evil” is a forthcoming column in *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*.



# Science Fiction is Easy, Life is Hard

Karen | Haber

You can't accuse me of living in the past. In fact, that's the last thing I do. Most of my time is spent in the future. As a science fiction writer, and the spouse of one, I have no choice. Besides, it's not a bad place to visit.

One of the charms of being a science fiction writer is that I can time travel at will anywhere I like. And if the environment doesn't suit me, I can change it.

For example, if the locals are rude and surly I can change them, give them writhing tentacles instead of limbs, or mouths where their eyes used to be. Make them breathe methane and see how they like it. Put their brains where their buttocks would be, and vice versa. Give them acne on their antennae.

Or, if a small inland sea is dark, briny, and filled with yucky phosphorescent water spiders when I prefer cool, pure mountain water and sweet little pink fire fish, I can take care of that, too. The work of a moment — zap! And the job is done.

To be blunt, being a science fiction writer is not unlike being the ruler of a small country or a televangelist. Even better, really. Godlike.

Yes, I know how it feels to be the creator of worlds. And I enjoy visiting most of the places I create. It's the return trip — and the concurrent reality lag — that gets to me.

For example, in the here and now, as I type, my antediluvian 486 PC clone is hiccupping and moving v-e-r-y-s-l-o-w-l-y....

...and now I'm finishing this editorial on my nice new computer. That is, I'm using my nice new computer after it crashed on setup and was

worked on by the kind, sensitive, patient tech — my new best friend — for several days.

But in the 30th century, all computers will be perfect. I think we can all agree on that fact. Yes, in the 30th century, computers will never crash. There will be no need for computer techs and hence, no voice-mail or hold buttons for voice-mail because our computers — like our lives — will be perfect.

All of our computer equipment will be carried in small implants behind our foreheads. We will have memo screens affixed like permanent contact lenses in front of our retinas to ensure that we never miss an important date or appointment.

Just think: no more forgotten meetings, birthdays, or anniversaries, no more fumbling excuses. In the 30th century there will never be any fumbling — because we will all be graceful and perfect — and no need for excuses because nothing will ever go wrong. Publishers will always return agents' calls. We will always remember to pick up a quart of milk on the way home. Always get our manuscripts in on time. Never forget a name or a face unless we want to.

Oh, it will all be so great. Our computers will turn out flawless writing, equipped with not just the 30th century equivalents of spell-check but with plot-check and cliché-check as well. In fact, in the future, the computers will do all the work while we take in the 4-D Festival on Club Mars.

That's right. The escape function will literally practice what it preaches. A small glowing door will open in the middle of the air, you'll tell it where you want to go, and step through. Presto. On the beach at Maui. Snowboarding on Europa's ammonia ice. Sipping champagne on a hoverboat on the Seine. Couldn't be easier.

Did I mention that there will be no disease? Yes, no colds, no cancer, and no injections of any kind. No excess body fat, unless you want it. No blisters. No mosquito bites.

Just imagine: each one of us will have a personal shopping channel *and* shopping android. Computers will have spam force — fields to defend against unwanted e-mail. Automatic coffeemakers will be inter-

active, and will fix breakfast as well. Bathrooms will clean themselves. Cats will empty their own boxes.

Hostile behaviour in editors, children, and other drivers will be short-circuited by behaviour-mod implants. In the 30th century we will have Peace. Prosperity. Golden eyes. Antigravity clothing. Multi-book contracts.

But back here in the early 21st century, I have just three days left to get my car a smog check if I'd like to continue driving it, legally. My new computer ate my index. One of the cats is sick. While Bob and I were in Australia the garden staged a successful guerrilla action against the house. All the windows need washing and reputtying. Our twenty-year-old washing machine is doing the lambada across the basement floor. And the raccoons living in our chimney keep late hours. *Extremely* late hours.

In the 30th century we will have seamless, leakless houses which, like flowers, will follow the sun on its daily journey. We will control the weather and there will be no drought, no hurricanes. Plants will water themselves and lawns will never need weeding or cutting. (Where do you think my husband got the idea for the self-pruning gardens of Majjipoor?)

Windows will repel dirt. Ditto, clothing. There won't even be chimneys. All raccoons will be in bed by six o'clock each evening.

Pets will walk and feed themselves. Cats will live exactly as long as their owners do but — don't worry — will never, ever learn how to speak English.

The late William Rotsler, writer, filmmaker, and artist extraordinaire, once warned a bunch of uncouth and probably illiterate individuals that if they weren't careful he would change their futures for them. That's another perk of this job.

You see, you've got your basic utopia and your basic dystopia. I'm a fan of the former. Not for me the dark visions of cyber-enhanced gangsters and their android molls roaming mean neon-lit streets, slurping udon and sticking virtual ice picks through people's virtual ears.

In my opinion, dystopia is where you keep your modern nuisances: large corporate coffee chains with green circular logos that move in

next door to mom-and-pop cafes, people who drive SUVs and talk loudly on cell phones (although not necessarily at the same time), Hollywood, heads of state with silky southern accents, murderous religious fanatics who persecute women and harbour terrorists, Dan Rather, ads for clothing or computers that feature Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, and/or Humphrey Bogart, societies that fail to care for their needy, the NRA, the Brady Bunch, countries that stockpile germ warfare supplies, Barbara Walters, and anybody else who contributed to making the end of the 20th century the real slice that it was. (If ever a century could have used a good copy editor...)

Not for me, either, your mixed-topia: no dystopia-lite (see late-20th-century, above) or half-caff, nonfat mocha-with-no-foam utopia. I believe in a fully-caffeinated future, thank you. And yes, there will be chocolate. Twenty-four, seven. Guaranteed.

In the 30th century we will all drink double-lattes or mochas, *with* whipped cream, and sleep like babies. Insomnia will be outlawed. Anybody in a bad mood will receive immediate government compensation. No one will know the meaning of terms like "ethnic cleansing," "ergonomic," or "permanent fatal error message." Writers will get paid first and will be exempt from all taxes and anxiety. Best of all, in the 30th century, all the critics will be dead or in jail.

I guess I've got a bad case of future envy. It's an occupational hazard, for a science fiction writer. But I've been there. Trust me. I've seen the future — hell, I've written about it and edited it ad nauseum — and believe me, it's swell.





# Politics and Science Fiction

Rosaleen | Love

No-one who was there will ever forget the wild, lamington-fuelled book launch of *Women of Other Worlds* at WorldCon in Melbourne, August 1999. Editors Helen Merrick and Tess Williams gave their jazzy promotional spiel to a room packed to the corridor with expectant conventioners. Then the frenzy began: wild scenes of do-it-yourself lamington creation in bowls of chocolate icing, shredded coconut and slabs of white cake. At the same time, at the other end of the room, there was an equally mad book-buying frenzy. Justin Ackroyd, book-seller, smiled as never before. Delighted authors gladly signed their pieces. It was book-launch nirvana.

What was it about this book that aroused such excitement? It can't just have been lamingtons and champagne that went to the heads of the audience. They were high on the heady conjunction of sf and women's writing. Wow! This is the way the old world order ends, with chocolate icing and the promise of ideologically labile fruit crisp.

*Women of Other Worlds* is an anthology of the kind that publishers usually don't want, with its mix of fiction and non-fiction, memoir, lit. crit., poems, a fruit-crisp recipe of a certain political persuasion, and more. What linked everything together was material drawn from or inspired by the legendary WisCon20, a feminist sf convention held in Madison, Wisconsin in May, 1996. Judith Merrill and Ursula K. Le Guin were Guests of Honour. A posse of some 15 Australian sf writers made the trek across to Madison, and came back exhilarated at the energy of the event. 'WisCon20 will be like Woodstock', said co-ordinator Jeanne

Gomoll. 'As the years roll by, more and more people will claim to have been there'. Not me, though. I was, really.

Who says science fiction isn't political? Gordon van Gelder, that's who, in the June 2000 editorial comment in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, where he writes on genre fiction and US politics. His line is: 'In popular fiction and in film, the horror genre thrives when Republicans are in the White House, while mysteries thrive when Democrats are in office'. It's a bit of a game he's playing with the reader, in trying to analyse why tastes change. He decides: 'Sf's popularity seems to be linked more strongly to the technology of the times than it is to politics'. Could be van Gelder is looking for politics in some of the wrong places: forget Democrats and Republicans. What about a more universal branch of politics, the politics of gender and race? I think this is where *Women of Other Worlds* hit the populist nerve, at least at that one place and time at WorldCon in 1999.

Science fiction is no more or less political than other forms of fiction. In feminist sf, the political message is upfront, explicit in the writing, the reader knows what's what, and may respond accordingly. (One review of *Women of Other Worlds* by Chris Lawson in *Foundation*, 78, started with the comment: 'I don't like feminist writing'. He then indicated he did like some feminist writing, so he's not totally beyond redemption.) If a political message is not explicit, it's the old adage about it still being there, implicitly, in the writing: attitudes towards unions, democracy, colonisation, family, kings, queens and know-all mages, and so on. The writers women don't read will have, in addition, crappy characterisation of female characters, action that takes place wholly within male realms, etc.

My own brand of feminism would be characterised as a totally inoffensive, mildly liberal-humanist variety. I start from the premise that women suffer from systematic gender-biased social oppression, oppression which has been lightened, in some places, some times, with equality of access to law, to work, to healthcare, and to education.

What is there about *Women of Other Worlds* that polarised its audience? What was its message? And can an edited anthology of some 32 varied contributions be characterised as having any one message?

The transition is made from women's writing – though there are some male contributors – to feminist writing – to whatever it was that sent Chris Lawson stratospheric. The political message irritates because it is labelled 'feminist', though equally it could be labelled humanist and thus not get up Chris's nose. (Unless he's anti-humanist, whoops.)

If feminism is interpreted as the politics of envy, then it will, rightly, irritate. Women seeing men, and other feminists, as the enemy, may serve a polemical purpose, but it also seethes rather than soothes. Turn it around, and talk about gender and gender inequalities, and part of the anti-feminist anger dissipates. The question becomes more one of asking how it is possible in the current world to create a culture of tolerance. Labelling others as the enemy is a noose that tightens, as nearly all others become the enemy, and no-one is feminist enough, just as in wars of religion no-one is devout enough.

If I say that the feminist project is about creating a culture of tolerance, then I am in good company. In *Women of Other Worlds*, this is the concluding message of Ursula K. Le Guin's GOH speech, with the call for 'the next generation raising its own daughters and sons to seek justice, seek equality, seek freedom. Right now, right here, on earth.'

Thinking about the politics of gender, and thinking them through in the magical way a novel or short story allows, is a vibrant part of this process.

I'm not going to review *Women of Other Worlds*, which would be somewhat unethical of me, as I am a contributor. I want to use it as an aid for meditation on politics and sf. One hot topic in futures studies is talk of a 'global ethics'. What this may mean, in practice, is a UNESCO committee that tries to get some kind of cross-cultural, multi-nation agreement on global ethical behaviour for the best outcome for humanity. Whatever. The task is impossible, at the level of global ethical governance. Not to say that it's not worth the try, but what has resulted so far is so much hot air.

Enter sf, and the power of story to have fun with serious problems, not solve them, but formulate them in a way that gives pause for thought. From *Women of Other Worlds*, I'd like to consider the short piece by Eleanor Arnason, 'The small black box of morality'. It's a story about

why we've had problems creating a culture of tolerance, except that's too ponderous a way of putting it. The story takes the form of a creation myth from another place, not quite ours. The Goddess has created the world, and found it good, but not yet good enough. Her plant and animal creations are happy, but lack the capacity for judgment. They can't tell right from wrong. The Goddess decides her world needs morality.

The Goddess is as capricious as any god, handing out morality as if it were an apple. The first humans are the only takers, and they are none too enthusiastic. First Man didn't want it. But First Woman decided it was worth a try. Since she was bigger than the man, she took the larger slice.

Now taking the larger slice is bad manners, and worse. First Woman soon realised what she had done. She urged First Man to eat, for both sexes must be able to tell right from wrong. She knew she has done wrong in being greedy and taking the larger half, and she must learn to live with her moral failure - as he must, with his lesser share - in a world which needs the commitment of both for survival.

Where books like *Women of Other Worlds* are important, interesting, and, yes, different, in the sf field is that the writers are dealing in different ways with the stuff thrown up by cultural revolution, with new ways of seeing self and other, with the boundaries between self and non-self. It's tied up with the rest of today's revolutions, with revolutions from below, from above, with revolutions of technology, revolutions of capital in globalisation.

In her essay, 'Better to have loved', Judith Merrill wrote: "My life has been almost a history of alternative/subversive 'movements'". Where Ursula K. Le Guin spoke as one of the 'envoys from Senectetus', or 'the mobile from Geriatrica', Judith Merrill's mobility at WisCon20 came machine-assisted. She whizzed round in a contraption too hi-tech for a motorised wheel chair, more a scaled down cross between a Ferrari and a scooter. We could see how ill she was, yet at the same time how thoroughly she was determined to enjoy herself. Her generosity of spirit shines through her memoir, as she reflects on her life without regrets, apologies, or bitterness. She wrote 'for the younger people out

there, trying to figure out, before it's entirely too late, where the hell we are going, and (maybe) where we'd like to go instead.' (As good a summary of the futures studies project as any.) As she recalled a life of political engagement in and out of sf, she got into quite a few tangles (as we all do) trying to work out, 'What kind of feminist am I, anyhow?'

The language of sf, the possibilities in fantastic imagined futures and alternative scenarios of the present, help break down the boundaries and restrictions of everyday realities. The ideas presented in *Women of Other Worlds* help create the possibility of another space. In speculating about alternatives, they reflect on how it is possible to create a culture of tolerance.



# Deportation Order

Lewis | Morley

Naluk McGorran allowed the patter of commentary from the news program to penetrate the fog of frustration swirling around her. Almost against her will, she turned towards the images glowing from the wall of her small apartment.

Suddenly she was no longer sitting inside one of a hundred cubicles crammed into the sell of Sydney's old Foxborough wool store.

Suddenly all of her attention was focussed on Murmansk. The city lay beneath the snows of deep winter; the Barents Sea was a motionless white cliff, looming over the city like a frozen tidal wave. At its base, Naluk could make out the jumble of technologies that had failed to prevent the glacier's advance.

Now the buildings lay unprotected in the path of an inexorably slow stampede.

At least, Naluk knew them to be buildings, for all that she could see were blank shapes swathed in insulating foil. Each of the coppery plastic boxes was cocooned in a spiderweb of support braces above a surprisingly small propulsion system.

The commentator was rambling on about the historical significance of this unfolding event, but Naluk's entire attention was focussed on the buildings, as slowly, one after another, they drifted upwards — towards outer space and ultimately to a planet somewhere on the galactic rim. She choked, and tears coursed down her brown cheeks as she realised they weren't coming back, that humanity was finally leaving Earth, possibly forever..

Naluk turned off the news and blundered to her hygiene module to splash cold water on her face. She glanced into the mirron and dark, red-rimmed eyes stared back at her. Her face had never been pretty,

but the increasing tension of her job in the last few months had etched deep lines beneath her cheeks and the corners of her mouth. She almost looked middle-aged already — and she'd only celebrated her twenty-first birthday a few months ago... She gathered her wiry black hair between long thin fingers and pulled in back into a tight bun behind her head.

Shit, that made her look worse; now her heavy eyebrows really stood out, her broad nose and weak chin were accentuated. For a moment she considered brushing her hair forwards and trying to make something of it, but she was a strong believer in only fixing what was possible. She stepped away from the mirror with a muttered curse and began dressing in her most sober, businesslike clothes. She was going to deliver a report, not enter a bloody fashion contest!

The transit carrier whispered across the city of Sydney, its late-morning travellers absorbed with their personal interfaces. Naluk gazed out of the windows at the architecture of three hundred years slipping past. Ahead, the buildings suddenly vanished, as if the transit line was ending at the edge of a gigantic canyon.

She looked at the bookpad on her lap; it contained two years' research and one inescapable conclusion. Naluk tried to remember which ancient people had the tradition of killing the bearer of bad tidings...

The Combined Land Councils' representatives still preferred to meet in person for important gatherings, and Naluk was thankful that over a century of teleconferencing hadn't destroyed that particular tradition. She didn't want the sterile separation of tele-presence at this time. Thanks to her contacts at The Interstellar Group's headquarters, she was able to book a conference room anytime she needed one. There was a nagging thought at the back of her mind that one day, she'd be called on to repay these favours, but she forced herself to concentrate on the agenda of her final report.

The transit carrier came to rest at the St. Peter's terminus and Naluk climbed to street level. She could have taken the direct entrance to the I.G. main lobby, but she felt the need to remain above ground for as long as possible. She walked past the carefully preserved Victorian buildings which, after two centuries, still stood on their original sites.

Naluk couldn't help but wonder how long before they, too, were swathed in copper foil and flown halfway across the Milky Way... From what she knew of The Interstellar Group's evacuation schedule, it probably wouldn't be for a decade, maybe even two... The northern hemisphere, with its advancing ice-cap, would be the order of priority for quite a while yet. Naluk glanced up at the noonday sun; it glowed orange, as if through the haze of a perpetual bushfire — so much for the particles, deliberately seeded in the upper atmosphere to act as a solar filter. Just another stop-gap attempt to slow global warming... no one had predicted the co-incidental slowing of the Gulf Stream which heralded the return of the glaciers. The last century had been one long string of quick fixes; just look at the human genome "improvement" project... No, better not. It was all just too bloody depressing.

Naluk entered the I.G. foyer and headed for the conference room. It was a large, curved area with nice carpets and panelling, just three floors below street level. One entire wall was glazed and looked out into the central operations well. Naluk glanced at the windows on the opposite side, some four kilometres distant and was reminded again of an artificial canyon. Below, The Interstellar Group's operations continued ceaselessly, with loaded cargo trucks and landers drifting slowly past the windows on their way to or from orbit.

There was an attention-seeking cough and Naluk looked back reluctantly to the table ringed by nine tribal elders. These were the representatives of the Combined Land Councils and not one of the them was younger than seventy years old. Naluk felt intimidated by the centuries of experience facing her, and also by the fact that she was the only woman at this meeting. She suspected this intimidation was no accident. Well, fuck 'em. Her respect for her elders only went so far, and all the respect in the world wasn't going to change the facts in the bookpad she gripped in suddenly damp hands.

The presentation didn't go any better than she had expected. Despite her five years' experience with environmental monitoring, the elders simply didn't want to accept the findings. It wasn't that they denied the Earth's imminent environmental collapse. For a people who had tradi-

tionally lived off the land, they understood all too well the consequences once the tucker was gone... It wasn't even that they denied The Interstellar Group's ability to evacuate the entire planet. Or to relocate all of its populations across the galaxy within fifty years.

No, they had no problems with the science or the conclusion; to these men the findings were simply irrelevant. Both they, and the people they represented, had been born on this planet, and most importantly, their ancestors had an unbroken heritage that stretched back into pre-history.

It wasn't that they didn't want to leave — they couldn't.

The headache returned, and Naluk rested her forehead against the cool glass wall overlooking the central well. Outside, the cargo trucks and landers continued to drift upwards. It was as if nothing had changed, as if twenty-two years had never passed, as if her career as an Environmental monitor stood for nothing.

She looked down at her feet; no — the carpets in this bloody room had changed.

She turned back to face the seven seated elders. The old faces were different, and their attitudes towards her had changed somewhat over the years. Recently, she'd begun to detect a wheedling, almost supplicating air in their manner, and it sickened her. It reminded her of the last days of her own mother. How, when her body's internal clock was finally winding down to its inevitable stop, Mum had suddenly found God.

Sadly, God hadn't kept his side of the bargain. Naluk's mother had died right on schedule. There had been no divine extension. Now, Naluk too, could delay the inevitable no longer. She too, had no power to ease these frightened old men's fears.

The city surrounding The Interstellar Group's base looked more like a war-zone each day. The streets were lined with empty sockets where buildings had stood, the sky glittered with foil-wrapped structures already on their relentless way to new homes. Soon the remaining populations — those that had not already chosen a new life amongst the stars — would be marched into comfortable cattle-trucks and sent

down the railway track from planet Earth... their destination not some gas-oven, but simply the future.

The wrinkled faces peered at Naluk. The old bastards were up to something, she could feel it. Ralph Barribinda smiled: she could smell the bullshit coming.

"You've done good for us over the years, missy..." Naluk hated it when he used that term, he must've watched too many movies as a kid.

"...An' we reckon you've never been properly thanked."

His gnarled hand flashed forward and grasped hers.

"You've been working for I.G.," he rasped. Naluk started to protest, but he cut her off. "I know it's just as a consultant, Cultural Expert or whatever, but you've always been on our side."

He held up her hand and stroked the taut brown skin.

"You're one of us, always have been. We need you now, more than ever."

Naluk felt the panic rising inside her. The self-doubt was always there, lurking beneath the smooth surface of her professional image. "I... I am just a consultant, I'm not empowered to represent I.G. in any negotiations."

"I know," he agreed, rising to his feet and placing a surprisingly firm hand on her shoulder. "but you're more than qualified to represent us."

Naluk frowned in puzzlement. Ralph puffed out his chest and addressed the others.

"I formally nominate Naluk Fletcher McGorran as a tribal elder and official representative of the Combined Land Councils, with full authority to make decisions on our behalf and for our benefit."

There was a second of shocked silence, then the six other elders erupted into what could only politely be termed vigorous debate. Naluk tried to back away, but the old man held her firm, in an absurd fatherly pose.

In over twenty years of dealing with these councillors and their predecessors, Naluk had never been treated as an equal. It was clearly an idea that still disturbed many of them.

Naluk's personal interface beeped to remind her their access to the room had nearly expired. She twisted free of Ralph's paternalistic grip

and yelled at the top of her voice, "Just shut up, the lot of you!"

She grabbed the silence and powered forward.

"This is not disrespect, but I don't want the job. Because you're all right. I'm forty-three, far too young to be an elder... and I don't have the community connections you do either. But the main reason I can't do it is that *no* group, ethnic, political, religious, or whatever, has ever swayed The Interstellar Group one millimetre from its goal!"

She scanned the dismayed faces, this inevitability crushing their last hope.

"Most of our people have gone; the ones left behind are just seen as hard-core. Believe me, I would love to be the one who sets these bureaucratic I.G. bastards on their ear, but *it's not going to happen!*"

She paused, the faces around her were changing, they were looking at her — through her. For a moment she felt as if they were peering into her soul — weighing her worth.

She felt the change in these men; suddenly the sense of dismay and inevitability was gone, instead there was expectation — and pride.

Silently Ralph Barribinda raised his hand and looked at the others, rapidly and without comment all seven elders raised their hands in agreement. Naluk started to sob in frustration, but her personal interface cut her short with a chiming exit tone.

She strode to the door, and spun to face the old men. She knew this was something she couldn't refuse. She'd spent twenty years watching the Earth falter beneath the burden of humanity. The planet would recover eventually, but the fleeing people were no longer part of that equation. Technology had provided the means of escape just in time.

Human survival was no longer in question.

Maybe it was time to concentrate on cultural survival.

Naluk drew a deep breath; her life was about to change forever.

"I'm honoured, and I'm bound to accept your decision. But you know my chances of changing their minds are negligible."

Ralph Barribinda stepped forward nodding. "Yeah, we know that... In the short term. But we know you won't let the story end here, we've all got a good feeling about you girl!"

The elders moved forward to leave the room.

"You're part of the hard-core now. You'll find a way. Maybe not today, maybe not next week, but we know you'll do it. Right now, things are looking pretty bad, but things are not always what they seem..."



# The Year of Intelligent Tigers

Kate | Orman

The rain trickled, unending, blowing around in the bad-tempered wind. Not all of the captives were adequately dressed for the weather. They huddled together, sometimes walking hand in hand, sometimes leaning on one another.

Karl glanced back over his shoulder. They were marching across the wide olive-drab plain to the west of the city. The buildings were distant and vague, like a mirage. They were at the edge of the area the colonists called the Bewilderness, for the number of people who had got lost here.

He estimated there were sixty human beings in the group. Twelve tigers formed a loose circle around them. The tigers didn't seem to mind when they whispered amongst themselves, compared notes. They were all music teachers, mostly from the Academy, enough of them to form a small orchestra. There were no singing teachers. Karl tried to imagine an opera of tigers, and failed.

Each of them had been singled out, brought from their homes or their classes to the plaza. The tigers' efficiency was terrifying. They had known exactly whom they wanted. It took them only a few hours to finish rounding up the teachers. In that time, Karl had seen no real signs of human resistance. Distant sirens and shouting, some shots, a lot of growling. There was no reason to believe that the tigers were not now in control of the entire colony.

Except perhaps one. An hour ago, Karl was certain he'd heard a hovercar somewhere above them, hidden by the clouds. The other musicians had turned their faces to the sky, squinting into the rain. He'd

wanted to shout, don't give them away, you fools. He trudged on, pretending he hadn't heard a thing.

The ground began to ripple in a series of gentle downs. Karl glanced around at the creatures striding beside their human herd. Surely these animals were in the employ of some other creature? Invaders programming the local wildlife as shock troops?

Shock troops who wanted to learn how to play the violin. However the tigers had suddenly become intelligent, it would be a mistake to underestimate them.

Why were they being moved to the Bewilderness? If they had taken the city, why not stay there? My god, thought Karl, how many of them are there out here? Do they have a city of their own? An invisible city of tigers?

Without warning, a voice boomed out across the plain. 'Let's teach them to dance!'

The march stopped on the spot. Musicians and tigers alike whirled in confusion, looking for the source of the shout. There was a pounding, distant kettledrums echoing around them.

The riders swarmed over a rise in the ground, seeming to come out of nowhere, horses breaking the surface of the grass like sea creatures coming up for air. There were a dozen of them, all carrying long rifles.

Two of the tigers broke their paralysis and charged the riders. Horses reared and wheeled, leaping over the big cats, and still the riders came on.

A tiger near Karl snarled explosively. There was a great dart in its shoulder, a metallic length tipped by a puff of red fibres.

Karl froze, staring at the leader of the riders. The Doctor - that was the Doctor, all in black, astride a tremendous black horse. Karl's heart thudded. The Doctor's hair streamed out behind him as he thundered across the wet plain, seeming merged with the horse, a dark centaur roaring down to save them.

As Karl watched, the Doctor charged a cluster of tigers, scattering them. Musicians fled through the gap to the safety of the other horses. One of the Doctor's riders threw something into the grass. Instantly, a great river of smoke began to stream across the grass, obscuring half the travellers.

The horses were everywhere. Riders were grabbing musicians and hauling them up onto the steeds as best they could. Darts were whizzing through the air, landing in flanks and limbs. Tigers roared in distress as they lost the ability even to stand. They lay, eyes open, panting on the grass.

Musicians darted back and forth, trying to get past their guards. Karl turned from side to side, peering through the smoke, watching for his chance to make a break for it. The Doctor was a shadow in the centre of the smoke, the heart of it all. Karl caught a glimpse of Anji, reins gripped in her hands, dodging tigers.

A snarling tiger leapt up onto one of the horses as it pounded past, bringing horse and rider down in a shrieking mass of limbs. The tiger raked the horse's belly, tearing it open as the human tried to get free of the flailing, screaming mount. Karl shouted as the tiger sprang onto the human, catching her neck in its mouth. Her arms and legs thrashed in panic, and then she was hanging limp. The tiger dragged her body into the smoke like a bloody side of meat.

'Karl!'

The Doctor was riding right for him, hand outstretched, ready to drag him up on to the horse and away. A tiger bounded in front of him, but the Doctor tugged on the reins and his horse leapt over the startled creature as it ducked, covering its head with its arms. Karl laughed and reached out his hands.

An immense weight slammed into Karl's back, hard and hefty as a battering ram, crushing him to the ground. He couldn't help crying out, flinching helplessly down with his face in the grass and the mud, scrabbling uselessly to get away from the killing bite.

It didn't come. He tried to push up from the ground, to get his mouth and eyes out of the water, gulping breath. He was completely covered by the furry mass.

It held him there for what must have been ten endless seconds. Then it gripped him in its powerful six-fingered hands and dragged him up to his knees, one orange arm closing across his chest like a seatbelt.

Karl wiped at his face, scraping mud and hair out of his eyes until he could see.

The riders were standing well back, away from the tight circle of tigers, a muscular fence ringing in their captives. Karl and the tiger on his back were at the centre of the circle. He could see a handful of escaped humans, protected behind the riders.

The Doctor's eyes were fixed on Karl. The composer realised, suddenly, that he was the reason the rescue attempt had halted. He was their hostage. While his life was threatened, the Doctor wouldn't risk another charge.

Karl rubbed at his eyes. The bitter smoke and the filth had got into them, but he knew he was also weeping with relief and gratitude.

The Doctor said something to the other riders, and they began to back away, pulling the rescued teachers up onto their horses.

'Let your hostages go,' called the Doctor. 'Sit down and talk with us.'

One of the tigers reared up and spat out a string of sounds, words in the coarse tiger language.

'We want to hear your demands,' replied the Doctor. 'But not while you have prisoners.' My god, thought Karl, he can understand what they're saying!

More growls. The tiger put a heavy paw on the body of its companion, two of the metal darts protruding from its side. 'They're unharmed,' the Doctor promised. 'They'll wake up in a few minutes.'

The Doctor listened to the tiger's reply. His eyes met Karl's. The composer felt the tiger's grip on his chest tighten.

'I'll be back for you,' shouted the Doctor. 'We'll be back. For all of you!'

The horses wheeled, suddenly, and vanished over the low hill.

Karl dropped to his hands and knees as the tiger released him. Two of the other captives helped him up.

The tigers looked at one another, exchanging a few words in their secret language. Then they fell on the corpses of the horse and the slaughtered woman. The musicians moaned and screamed and threw up. But none of them ran.



# Art Work

Marilyn | Pride



# Fan Guest of Honour 2001

Susan Jayne Anne Ackermann  
(nee Leighton)

A Profile by  
Andrew | Morton

Sue Ackermann's career is well known to most W.A. fen, and it seems wasteful to rehash overmined territory here. Instead I have chosen to highlight some of the lesser known facts\* in a life which has given us all so much.

## Ten Reasons Why Sue Should be Fan Guest of Honour

- 1 She is the only member of Swancon to have a star named after her
- 2 Her sense of style has changed the way we 'do' Swancon
- 3 The famous 'nightie' costume (Swancon 9 to 18) which eventually inspired Carrie Fisher's costume in *Return of the Jedi*
- 4 She founded ISFA, SAFFA and the late lamented BRSFA
- 5 Gina said so
- 6 Ten years of Theatre Sport workshops
- 7 Those five fannish virgins she deflowered at Swancon 9
- 8 The fact that she is always dignified - even when plastered, prone and giving a panegyric
- 9 Because she has always gone out of her way to make people welcome
- 10 23 years of her unique perspective on fandom

### Touched By an Angel - Lives Changed By Sue

- 1 Richard Court - snubbed by Sue's refusal to become Liberal Party leader, he was forced into retirement
- 2 Luc Longley - Sue taught him to use legs to their best advantage
- 3 Robert Juniper - it was a chance encounter with Sue that inspired his 'Madonna' series
- 4 Uleyton Hewitt - Sue taught him the finer points of sportsmanship
- 5 Julian Ackermann
- 6 Grant Stone - Sue suggested a career in radio
- 7 The anonymous child she stunned into oblivion with a black board
- 8 Alannah Slater - Sue set her on course for the Olympics during her fitness lessons
- 9 Robert Bogucki - Sue was able to tell him a shortcut
- 10 Greg Egan - Sue is Greg Egan

### Ten Facts You Never Knew About Sue

- 1 Her image appears on three of the Wonders of the Ancient World
- 2 She invented her own religion at the age of fifteen
- 3 She was a champion indoor cricketer and has a trophy to prove it
- 4 Sue is descended from the Spanish Royal family
- 5 She has a photographic memory for faces
- 6 At conventions she prefers to shower with a friend
- 7 On the day she was born, Andy Warhol painted 'Green Coca-Cola Bottles'
- 8 Sue lives in five separate realities, simultaneously
- 9 Her family once owned Leighton Beach - but lost it in a Sabbac game
- 10 Sue is a very convincing liar

\* At least ten of these facts are true.

# A Life Less Orderly

## 2001 DUFF Delegates

Naomi | Fisher and  
Patrick | Molloy

Naomi and Patrick are past masters of the "happy accident" approach to Life. That they became science fiction fans at all, let alone met, let alone became the 2001 Down Under Fan Fund Delegates from North America, is a source of bemusement to many, including themselves. Though both were SF readers from the time they were given library cards, fandom was reached in circuitous fashion from Mundane backgrounds. Pat's family was in New Jersey, where his father was Captain of the state's only Fireboat; Naomi grew up in Oregon, where her MD parents practised, and where they raised sheep and cattle in the middle of nowhere. Pat was a railroad fanatic, sneaking down to the local station to watch trains at every opportunity, and dreaming of being an engineer. Naomi was busily injuring herself trying to play polo using croquet mallets (might have worked with a shorter pony), and terrorising cows by leaping at them from trees while under the influence of Tarzan novels.

Families, though, plan without consulting their children. Pat's moved to Bowling Green, Kentucky in 1972, while Naomi's folks joined the Army in '82, and went to Seoul, Korea for three years. Pat was suddenly isolated from rail activities and living in a rural area where his career choices were to grow tobacco, raise livestock, or get enough education to get out. Naomi was deprived of the joys of mucking out barns, and dropped into a foreign culture in one of the planet's 10 largest cities. They both overcompensated in their new environments. Pat actually did become an engineer, though in Computer Science in-

stead of train driving, and as a college freshman was a founding member of the Western Kentucky University Speculative Fiction Society. He discovered SF conventions soon afterwards, attending every one he could afford on a student budget. He went to his first NASFIC in 1979 (NorthAmeriCon, Louisville, KY) and his first Worldcon in 1983 (Constellation, Baltimore, MD). Despite having his pants (and wallet) stolen at the latter, when one of six roommates left the door ajar overnight, he had a wonderful time and has since attended every Worldcon he could.

When Bowling Green fandom had a startup SF con dumped on them in 1979, by an out-of-town fan making commitments in their names, the group elected Pat as ConCave's founding Chairman. This "honour" was conferred due to his vast fannish experience – at the time, he'd been to one more convention (6) than anyone else in the club. This began his continuing habit of *n/o/t/ r/u/n/n/i/n/g/ f/a/s/t/ e/n/o/u/g/h/* dedicated con running, while still too young to legally drink the beer he served in the consuite. The WKUSFS members survived nursing that first ConCave through its infancy, and the convention is thriving as a relaxacon 22 years later. Pat chaired the next few incarnations, but a club field trip to see the Space Shuttle *Enterprise* (at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama) turned a lifelong interest in space into a career. He worked there as a co-op student, moved to Huntsville and joined NASA upon graduation, and promptly became involved with the fledgling North Alabama SF Association. Between working on database systems for NASA, he chaired/co-chaired a DeepSouthCon and several years of the local convention, Con\*Stellation, and became a member (now President) of a railroad museum. The last activity is described as playing with trains on a 1:1 scale.

Meanwhile in Korea, Naomi was evincing hyperactive volunteerism, joining every high school club in sight (Chemistry, Biology, Newspaper, Spanish, Band, Art, JROTC, Drill Team, etc.), and earning a varsity letter as co-captain of the Rifle and Pistol Team. The result is a socially unusable ability to do many things with varying success, shoot critics (musical and otherwise) with stunning accuracy, and fluently order beer in Spanish. She adores her family, but had had enough change imposed

by outside forces, and wanted a stable, predictable existence from college on. To this end, she formed a Clever Plan to escape her obviously erratic parents in 1985 by choosing Western Kentucky University, despite never having been to Kentucky in her life and knowing nobody there. WKU's main attraction was being across the continent from her father's probable next West Coast assignment. The Army then sent her parents to Ft. Campbell, KY, an hour away. So much for planning. About this time, she became lost while looking for a Campus Crusade For Christ meeting, was invited instead to the WKUSFS get-together, and never left, even after graduation.

Three years later, 30 minutes after arriving at her first convention, Naomi met Pat, and discovered her fancy for mesomorphic blond martial artists was as nothing compared with her fascination with balding brunette computer geeks. This startled Pat as much as it did her, but 12 years later, most admit it apparently works. Their partnership has led to joint involvement in fannish activities across the US, six Worldcon bids, numerous con committees and SF organisations, and considerable fame for throwing epic room parties. They've been individual Fan Guests of Honour (Pat twice, Naomi once), and Pat was given the Rebel Award in 1993 for services done for Southern Fandom. Naomi has received the Rebel's evil twin, the Rubble Award, an unprecedented twice for doing the most to Southern Fandom – once for crimes against fannish waistlines, once for single handedly destroying banquet sales when fans saved their appetites for her party.

Their current role as the 2001 DUFF delegates seems, in hindsight, like a logical continuation of their longtime support for and belief in the Fan Funds. At the time of their nomination, though, their reaction was "What hit us?" Pat says (hopefully) that if you ply him with beer, he'll tell all about the combination of Carol Resnick's enthusiasm, Dick and Leah Zeldes Smith's persuasiveness, and a consuite full of people at Octocon with duelling Palm Pilots that led to that nomination and their eventual election. Naomi would like to encourage you to bid early and often at your next neighbourhood DUFF auction. Both will cheerfully talk your ear off about the good work done and goodwill promoted by the Fan

Funds in general, and DUFF in particular, over the years. They're True Believers, but try hard not to be too obnoxious about it. They're also, in no particular order, members of the Boston in 2004 Worldcon Bid, proud owners of two domestic (and descended) skunks, and utterly delighted to be at Swancon. This is their second visit to Perth, and their first Australian National Convention. Be sure to introduce yourself - they're here to meet you!



# Lucent Carbon and the Singularity Shadow

Russell | Blackford

During the past few years, my thoughts have often revolved around Vernor Vinge's concept of a technological Singularity—a point in the near future when change will become, for practical purpose, infinite, the result of awesome technologies, including some form of posthuman or postbiological intelligence.

Until recently, Vinge's idea would have seemed preposterous to almost anyone outside the science fiction community—even I retain some scepticism about the prospect of postbiological superintelligence in the next few decades. Nonetheless, in a 1998 essay in *Quadrant* magazine, I suggested that Western society was about to enter a time when a truly extraordinary acceleration of biological and information technologies, leading to the creation of postbiological intelligences, would begin to seem plausible. Widespread speculation about a posthuman future would generate a religious/moral/political backlash, much like that created by the cloning of Dolly, with its potential implications for human cloning.

Since then, we have seen the beginning of the backlash; whether or not we are headed for the Singularity itself, we have entered the era that I christened "the Singularity Shadow".

I expect that much of my future writing, fiction or otherwise, will be part of the debate. Here is just a taste. What follows below is an abridged extract from my 1997 *Eidolon* story, "Lucent Carbon" (the whole thing is most easily found in *The Year's Best Australian Science Fiction and Fantasy: Volume Two*, ed. Jonathan Strahan and Jeremy G. Byrne, HarperCollins, 1998). Like some of my other stories ("Byzantium vs Re-

public of Australia", "The Soldier in the Machine" and "Two Thousand Years") this is set in a world that may be approaching the Singularity...

"Corinthians?" the underkid said.

Music played, and I watched the video wall: Lucent Carbon, the fashionable dragon singer—she was one of my heroes. Starch-shirted waiters poured drinks. The place was noisy with clientele speaking several languages. Heavily morphed dragons with hairless, illuminated scalps hunched around their drinks, like starving peasants from a Bertolt Brecht play. Bored underkids in T-shirts and black jackets sheltered from the winter streets, hustling deals from table to table, stool to stool, while beautiful young salarypeople with long, shiny hair sat straight and brave, chattering over cocktails, pretending to be ultrabrights. Some glanced my way, sensing, perhaps, that I was the real thing. I took my eyes from the video wall, just for a second, looked the underkid over. "Were you speaking to me?" Lucent Carbon's synthesised music—gongs, drums, and oriental flutes—filled every corner.

"I said, I'm selling Corinthians."

I wasn't feeling unkind, but I shook my head, and laughed. "No. I'm sorry." My contact was already three minutes late, so I glanced at the door. "I'm not in the market."

He looked down at his chest, avoiding my eyes. The kid was maybe fifteen, already taller than me by ten centimetres, his face disfigured by niobium implants and badly-treated acne. "They're going cheap, lady." I sighed at that. Lucent Carbon danced, lean and sensuous in her tight, fish-tailed sheath of glittering, sea-green fabric, high-heeled mules on her feet, an iridescent golden band planted about her depilated head. She sang in a voice like little bells.

I laughed again, nervously, and finished my drink, a single malt whisky—then stood to walk away. At that moment, my contact finally entered the bar, an upload Technician from Japan. I recognised him at once, and waved to him as I headed toward the door.

The kid followed me. "Really cheap."

This was starting to be harassment. I turned for a moment and glared.

"I have what I want. Really. Scram, pal." Dark, lank hair fell over his eyes. "Give me a break," I told him. "I said to scram."

He looked at me almost pleadingly.

"I could hurt you if it came to that," I said. He was bigger, but I had better genes, for money made it so.

Again he looked down, but he finally got the message: he shrugged and turned back to the bar. I sighed loudly, then straightened my shoulders. When the Technician reached me, I offered my hand, business-like. "I'm Idol Le Saint," I said. "I'm glad you made it." The newcomer put down his Qantas bag and looked to the bar. The adolescent pusher was talking urgently to a young dragon gal perched on one of the high stools. I shook my head quickly. "It's not a problem."

The Technician smiled and I offered my hand once more. This time he took it. "I am glad to be here. Truly." Like many genuinely strong men, he did not grip firmly on the handshake. His palm, his fingers were very warm, as soft as glove leather and large for those of a small man. I liked the feel of his hand immediately. He squeezed softly, then let me go.

"I'll take you to meet the boss," I said. "He's expecting you."

"Thank you, Ms Le Saint."

In a quite literal sense, I am unnaturally beautiful. Unnaturally—because my genes were shaped that way before I was born, sculpted like an ornamental hedge. In my case, the result was more than ornamental, but lots of men can't see beyond physical beauty. I was well-dressed for our rendezvous—warm layers of microfibre and purple velvet—and my hair was perfectly coifed in a severe, golden bun. But the Technician showed no sign of being intimidated. He simply half-shouldered as he picked up his bag and looked me straight in the eye. With six-centimetre shoe heels I was nearly as tall as him and, of course, I held his gaze. "They call you Peccadillo?"

"Oh, yes. They do. I am enchanted to meet you, Ms Le Saint." He gave a grin, half shy, half mischievous. In his profession, true names were never exchanged; like pop musicians, he and his kind relied on whimsical handles for day to day use; on artfully constructed IDs to facilitate their international travel; strings of memorised alphanumeric

code to transfer large sums from willing clients into digital cash lines maintained in Switzerland. For a week's work, a Technician with this man's skills could charge a fee that would support a clerical worker for a year.

I offered my best smile, one ultrabright to another. "And you can't imagine how pleased I am to meet you!"

"I think I can."

"What?"

"Just joking." Peccadillo was a short, skinny man—skinny until you noticed the way his brown, hairless forearms bulged with muscle. He wore his blue-black hair in a pony-tail. Like me, he was in his late twenties I guessed, though we both looked even younger. He was a first-generation ultrabright, physically perfect, no genetic propensities for disease, possessed of an extraordinary intelligence quotient. No implants or body jewellery, no tattoos, nano-illuminations, or cosmetic scars, were visible on his exposed skin. Still grinning, he said, "Then take me to your client."

"Take you to my leader?"

"Whatever you call Mr. Chung."

"All right," I said. "Let's go."

He touched my arm gently with his free hand, which he left there, just lightly. "Never fear, beautiful Idol; I know we must hurry." There was no explanation of how he got here: two days before, I'd arranged the meeting place via an intermediary in Kenya; as promised, here he was. He must have taken the Kilimanjaro sub-orbital to the Timor Hub without being recognised by Interpol software. That was part of his trade. Then from Darwin to Sydney.

Though he obviously knew the way, I led him from the room, smoothly withdrawing from his touch, though it left a nice feeling behind. "Everything is arranged for you."

"Of course. Thank you." The elevator descended swiftly to the ground floor, telling us, when we stepped out, to have a nice day. Peccadillo laughed gently. His accent was British if anything, not Japanese. "Mr. Chung will have a worthy edification."

I sucked on my lips at that. *Edification*: that was the word they used, the euphemism. These Technicians never said *death*, but the law assumed personality uploading—edification—was exactly that: death itself. I was devoted to Mr. Chung's wishes, whatever they might turn out to be, but I thought about what I was doing. I was about to kill my client, my friend.

On the Sydney streets it was sixteen degrees Celsius. Peccadillo was under-dressed for the winter, but he seemed not to notice the cold.

We took a taxi to a corporate address in North Sydney. Once there, I paid the cab driver, entered the dark, armorglass structure through a revolving door—Peccadillo following close behind—and stepped up to the uniformed security guard in the foyer. I swiped my security pass through a magnetic reader under the guard's watchful eye, though this was a formality, since she knew me well. "Hello, Carmody," I said to her. "Peccadillo's with me."

"No problems, Ms Le Saint." Carmody was skinny as a whip, skinnier than Peccadillo. She was smart and alert as always, helped along by a Ghalib-Liechti infusion apparatus implanted within her. Hers was a portable version: held safely in her body cavity was a sac of high-octane drug cocktail leaking slowly into her vascular system via a catheter in her thigh, all this controlled by a nano-sized floating chip, keyed to her body signs and diurnal rhythms. Except for the use of an internal drug sac, the smart infusion apparatus resembled the one being used with Mr. Chung's illness. Carmody gestured for Peccadillo to hand over his bag, which she ran through an X-ray-based Stealth Probe.

I walked between the metal posts of a skin scanner and into the elevator lobby, Peccadillo still close on my heels. He gathered up his bag and we stepped into the silvery elevator. As its door closed, I keyed my ID code into a touch-pad. "Good afternoon, Ms Le Saint," the elevator's voice said—the voice of an Asian woman with a trace of American accent. Thirty seconds later, we exited on the 70th floor, then took stairs to a roof-top helipad where a pilot was waiting in a royal blue copter.

We flew to a 300-ton corporate vessel at anchor in the harbour. "Who was the child following you?" Peccadillo said.

"In the bar?"

"Yes."

"Just an underkid. He tried to sell me some Corinthians."

"Did you buy?"

"Not my drug of choice."

"I see. Do you have a drug of choice, Idol?"

"That's something I tell my friends."

"Then I'll ask later." His awareness seemed to roll inward as the copter landed. Truly, though, he was a splendid animal.

There was work to be done. We lived among the last generation of mortals, but Peccadillo and I were the first generation of gods. Contrary to the Law's strictures, we had clients rich enough to join us in a world without death. The clients paid our bills.

No time to waste.

Without the need for any drug mix to induce it, I was getting myself focused.

David Chung was not a young man; much too old to be an ultrabright, though his parents had enjoyed the necessary wealth, if only he'd been born some decades later. Not young, no, but nowhere near ready to die of old age or its attendant misfortunes.

Propped up in bed, with a sheet and a thin, grey blanket gathered under his shaven chin, he was diminished, reduced to his essence as a relatively unimpressive mammal preparing for the end. His programmed infusion contained drugs to resist his infection and relieve his pain, while death approached like a tireless rider. This was hardly the striding, quick-talking presence whom I'd known for the past six years, the man whose decisions controlled billions of yen, reals, American dollars and Euro-dollars from one-hundred-floor towers in Hong Kong, Sydney, Kuala Lumpur. Mr. Chung's short hair was dull grey and brittle, the pillows moulding it into unmanageable shapes, while his arms flopped by his sides, withered with illness, outside the zone of the covering blanket. On the bed, near his right hand, was a saucer-shaped digital remote to control the room's facilities. Across from him,

directly within his line of sight, was a full-sized video wall, currently showing Olympic Games *jai alai* highlights with the volume turned down. "Idol?" he said in his throaty Chinese accent.

"Yes, sir." As a sign of respect—that and a way of keeping my distance—I still called him that: "sir" or "Mr. Chung". I spoke six languages fluently, and had high-powered degrees in liberal arts, law and management; I was a corporate troubleshooter for the rich and powerful of the Chinese Union, and some of their riches, their power flowed on to me—much of it, I dare say. But I treated my clients with polite deference, partly out of sorrow for them.

I had one thing that my clients lacked, however powerful they might be: a potential for immortality coded into my genes, the hope of unending bodily life. Like Peccadillo, I was engineered not to die of disease, and I aged slowly. By the time old age was any threat, modern genetic science would have discerned how to reverse the aging process altogether. If I took due care, I need never die, not until the Big Crunch of the Universe. In a sense, I was exactly the wrong person to be involved in Mr. Chung's terrible dream of a life beyond the time of his body.

"Let me brief you, Mr. Chung."

"Is this the..."—Mr. Chung hesitated—"Technician? Are you Peccadillo, the edifier? Yes? The uploader?"

Peccadillo gave a sharp nod. "I am pleased to be of service, Mr. Chung."

"I recognised you. Yes, yes. Thank you, Idol. He's here. That's what matters." He paused, obviously thinking something that he found difficult.

I knew all the things he could say. We'd discussed them at length. He planned to be uploaded out of his body and he feared the consequences, just as much as he feared the alternative: death by an incurable disease strain that fought—fought a winning battle—with the various drugs in his system...

We now had a large part of our medical team gathered in the ward room. Two efficient-looking nurses and Mr. Chung's personal physician, Ian Ramsland. Peccadillo, with his superb skills in modelling brain states on digital neurons, was the jewel in our biomedical crown.

On video screen, the jai alai highlights from Tel Aviv were replaced by an afternoon news commentary. Mr. Chung pressed the remote to turn up the volume. An angry crowd staged a demonstration outside the Berlin Headquarters of Hammered Gold, the international lobby for repeal of UN Conventions and national laws banning the edification process. There was pushing and fighting between the demonstrators and a sinister line of police, anonymous in their body armour, transparent diamondoid shields strapped to their arms. As the sound came up we could hear the demonstrators chanting and shouting in guttural German. Some hurled fruit and stones. Among them were Christian-Islamic purity warriors—teenage kids in baggy paramilitary dress, armed with baseball bats or kendo sticks.

Amid the kicking, shouting, and striking of bats and sticks on shields, there was a close-up scene of a police officer in a skin of slick black armour tossing a demonstrator like she was a stuffed doll. Those diamond fibre skins multiplied their wearers' strength. More purity warriors screamed and charged forward beneath the harsh summer sun, waving their placards and weapons, hitting bystanders and media people as often as the invulnerable Berlin cops. Another close-up showed an overweight bystander being dragged into the melee and punched savagely in the face by half a dozen young men and women in purity warrior costume.

Suddenly, the screen cut to the image of Judith Blake, a spokesperson in Sydney for the local anti-uploading group, Self and Soul.

Blake was being interviewed by a young man who could easily have been an ultrabright—with cosmetically sculpted media reptiles, it was difficult to tell, even with my trained eye. The reptile asked a sequence of easy questions that provided Blake with an opportunity to lecture. "We were not created to play God," she said. "Man was put upon this world as a creature of the Lord, not to act like a Creator."

"Do you accept that the violence in demonstrations, such as what happened overnight in Berlin, was unnecessary?"

"I don't encourage violence," Blake said. "Self and Soul regrets it." She looked directly into the news camera, giving me the creeps with her

certainty, her burning animus. "Those people who preach the gospel of edification are killers. We know that there are secret uploadings every day and the justice system doesn't stop them. They kill human beings and create digital abominations in their place." Then she said, with an air of reasonableness, "You have to realise that this makes people angry: good people, righteous people, fine young people who, ordinarily, would never hurt anyone."

"Will we see that kind of violence in Australia?"

Now Blake gave a sweet look, as if a halo were about to form over her ugly, self-righteous head. It made her words even more chilling. "In the circumstances, why not?"

We are the first generation of immortals, I thought to myself. Me and Peccadillo, Lucent Carbon, maybe that video interviewer—we need never die. I wondered how the interviewer would react if some incurable disease should strike him like a blitzkrieg—something his genes had not been programmed to resist—as the Santos strain had struck down poor, mortal David Chung. It was easy for immortal ultrabrights to scorn edification, and pander to the likes of Judith Blake, but what if one of us were injured too badly to survive, or too badly for life to be worth living? What then?





# Wolfskin

Juliet | Marillier

*This excerpt comes from Wolfskin, the first book in Juliet Marillier's new historical fantasy series, to be published by Pan Macmillan commencing in 2002. The story is set in 8th century Norway and Orkney. The Wolfskin warriors were an elite fighting force also known as Bearshirts (Berserks). In this section the fourteen-year-old Eyvind faces a test to determine whether he can join their troop.*

In the time of the first frost, Eyvind dreamed of blood and of fire. He saw bright eyes in the darkness, watching; he heard the whisper of the god. The next day they came for him.

It is not a sight granted to many, to watch a full team of Wolfskins ride by. Eirik led them; Hakon was by his side, and following grim and silent rode an assembly of warriors who seemed the stuff of some fantastic dream. Their hair was long and wild, or cut to mere stubble on the naked scalp. Their faces were fierce and scarred. Each wore the short cloak of shaggy wolf pelt, fastened at the shoulder with a clasp of bronze or silver. But this garment was no uniform, no sign of a particular allegiance. Each man was himself: at the moment of ultimate test, each went forth alone. And they bore the signs of it: one had an ear missing, and one a deep seam across temple and cheek, where the skin puckered around the old mark of some adversary's blade. There was a fellow with many teeth gone: his grin was an alarming sight, but even more worrying was his shield-rim, which was splintered and worn down all around its upper edge. The children whispered as they watched him: maybe the stories they had heard were true. There were no greybeards amongst the Wolfskins, and

none of middle years. Such a calling was not for a man who wanted a wife and sons and a farm, and to die comfortably in his bed.

Eyvind's heart was drumming as he swung up onto his horse. They rode away northwards, and he did not look back. The farm, the longhouse, the days of childhood were left behind. Thor summoned him; if Eyvind passed the test he would not come home again before seeding time.

They rode a great distance that day. At dusk they halted deep in the woods on a high flat stretch of ground circled by tall firs. A fire was made, a ring of torches placed well out towards the trees. With nightfall came a bone-chilling cold which crept into every corner of the body, numbing fingers and toes, freezing nose and ears and making each breath a burden. Eyvind was hungry, for they had not stopped to eat and there was now no sign of supper. He did not ask.

The men sat in a circle around the fire. One or two of them were humming under their breath, a strange, monotonous sort of tune that rose and fell, rose and fell. He could not understand the words. A third man had a little drum, cowhide stretched across a wooden frame, and his fingers tapped in time with the chant. Nobody spoke. Above and around them the forest was still, as if listening. The sound was like a tiny whisper in the vastness of the chill autumn night, no more significant than the chirp of a single cricket in a whole field of corn.

Eyvind sat cross-legged. He wanted to ask, *What must I do? When can I start?* Mindful of Thor's presence, he kept silent. In time, no doubt, the answers would become clear. Still, this was not at all what he had expected. Combat, challenges, hunting: all these things he excelled at. When would they allow him to show his strength?

"Here." Hakon was passing a drinking horn; Eyvind took it and swallowed gratefully. The ale was very cold and very strong. He passed it to the man on his left.

"Eyvind?"

Eirik was giving him something now, a wad of some kind of gum or resin, sticky and pungent smelling.

"What?"

"You must chew this. And drink more ale. Pass the horn around again, men."

Eyvind eyed the lump of grey matter dubiously. It seemed more the kind of thing one might use to plug a hole in a bucket, or mend a wall, than an item of foodstuff. He might be hungry, but he wasn't sure he was as hungry as that.

"Chew slowly," Eirik said. "Don't swallow it. The ale should help."

"What's in it?"

Hakon grinned. "It won't poison you. Look." He reached out, pinched off a corner of the insalubrious-looking mess, and put it in his own mouth. "Herbs, mushrooms, pine gum. Harmless. Good for you. Drink some more ale; you're a man now."

Eyvind put the lump in his mouth and chewed. It tasted worse than it smelled; still, they were right, the ale took the worst of the bitterness away, and soon he was feeling much better, quite warm in fact, and at ease in the warriors' company. The drum beat on, keeping time with his heart; the odd little chant ebbed and flowed, ebbed and flowed like his own breath, in and out, in and out. It was dark. Beyond the ring of torches was a profound deep blackness that even the moonlight could not penetrate. It was a darkness of *between*: the instant of nothingness before outward breath becomes inward, the point of balance between life and death...

"You must sleep now." It was his brother's voice, and Eirik's hand easing him down to lie on a blanket near the fire.

"Sleep?" Eyvind was dismayed, though indeed he could not stop the convulsive yawning that suddenly overtook him. "But..."

"Sleep now," said Eirik firmly, and as Eyvind's lids closed over his eyes he seemed to see his brother's image doubled and tripled, a fantastic beast with six, eight, ten blue eyes and a crown of wild golden fur, and beyond it a whirling mass of jewel-bright stars.

The chant went on; the drum passed from hand to hand with never a beat astray. Eyvind slept in the circle of men, in the ring of fire. The dark firs, the star-filled sky, the earth on which he lay made another circle, encompassing all, and in his sleep he understood this. Then,

abruptly, he was more awake than he had ever been before. Still night: still dark; still cold enough to turn the marrow to ice. There was no song now, no drumming. The torches lit a pathway across the clearing towards the dark shadow of the forest's margin. Beyond the torches there were faces, strange, watchful faces that were neither human nor animal: empty eyes, painted brows, pelts that were not hair nor feathers nor fur, but something between. Beyond the fire there were bodies, shifting, moving, changing. What were they? Surely these were no warriors, but forest spirits conjured from shadow and moonlight. Perhaps his companions were gone, swallowed up by some evil enchantment.

"It is time."

Eyvind whirled around. Behind him a dark-robed figure stood, perhaps his brother, but maybe not, for the face was masked, the body quite concealed by the long garments.

"Undress. Naked the wolf comes to face you; naked you go in challenge. Fire is your only cloak: your weapons, only those he himself possesses. On equal terms you confront him, for to know him is to defeat him; to defeat him is to become him. I will guide you, but I will not stand by you at the end. This battle is yours alone."

Perhaps the guide was Thor himself. The god wore many guises; even so did he delight in walking amongst mortals. Eyvind stripped off his clothes, wondering vaguely if he might die of cold before he got anywhere near any wolf. The axe; he would take that, surely Thor would approve - or maybe a spear, for at least that allowed the security of striking from a distance. But no. *Your weapons only what he possesses.* Teeth; claws. A sharpened stick. A little knife. No choice but to hold one in each hand, since he hadn't even a belt to decorate his nakedness. *Fire is your cloak.* By the very edge, beyond the glowing coals, the ashes had lost their heat. He smeared the fine powder on chest and arms, on brow and buttocks. It would mask his scent, if not quite smother it. Then, small weapons in hand and blood racing, he set off up the hill along the line of torches. The robed man followed, silent. And beyond the light the others came, others that now seemed

to move on scampering paw and prancing hoof and slithering belly, that seemed to merge and emerge, part substance, part shadow. Their eyes shone red in the firelight, and yet when he glanced across they seemed no more than holes of blackness in the blank masks of their faces. It was so quiet he could hear the cautious progress of his bare feet on the carpet of needles beneath the firs. Beyond the farthest torch now, under the trees, into the darkness.

"Go forward," his guide murmured. "Go onward, Eyvind. A blind man does not fear the setting of the sun. Hear with the creature's ears; scent your prey as he does. Be of the earth; be of the night. You have learned to hunt. Learn now to be hunted."

The path led upwards, narrow between great rocks, precipitous and quite without light. The blind man...He does not fear the dark because he knows the dark, thought Eyvind; he finds his way not by sight but by hearing, and smell, and something else; the something else that sends a forest creature into hiding before ever the man's foot cracks a twig, or his alien scent is borne across the hillside by the wind. Step by step Eyvind moved forward, balancing his body to keep safe footing yet maintain silence, counting his breathing to make it slow and quiet, listening in a way he already knew. He had been a hunter many seasons, for all he was but barely a man.

The forest creatures had been silent. Not a chirrup; not a rustle. Now, sudden in the dark, an owl hooted and he heard the beat of its wings passing high overhead. And behind it, in the same instant, another cry; a howl, a summons, a challenge surely meant only for his ears. He had never hunted a wolf before. Rabbits and hares were easy prey; deer and boar stronger, yet readily taken if you knew what you were doing. But a wolf was clever. And if he understood right, this was not a hunt, but a kind of combat. Each sought to conquer the other. *Nobody expects a Wolfskin to be clever, Eyvind.* He had not forgotten that. Yet it was unthinkable that he fail.

Gripping his simple weapons, Eyvind moved forward up the path. The cry had not come again, but he had fixed its direction and thought he knew its distance. Three hundred paces, maybe, beyond the tree

line, on the rocks to the south east. It would be lighter there, under the moon: advantage and disadvantage.

The track came to an abrupt end, and it was necessary to use his hands to climb. Very well; stick and knife held between clenched teeth, and a careful progress up over the rock face. He could see the moon now beyond the ridge above, fir branches brushing its cold pale face. His fingers were growing numb; he hauled himself atop the outcrop, wincing as the stones caught his body unprotected and left their mark. He sat, eyes shut; a blind man in the darkness. No sound; his quarry would not call him forth, not now. He must find him in silence. No sound; no sight. But... there it was, he thought he had it... no, gone again. He made his breath slower. Forget the cold, forget the bruises; fill your senses with *him*, with the one you seek. Yes, there it was, a scent, faint but sharp, the edgy, acrid smell that was not boar or deer or bear, that was not dog either, but something far more subtle, and far more dangerous. He was there, not far ahead, waiting. Perhaps a whole pack of them waited. And Eyvind was alone. No choice. It was like the moment on the longship's prow, when it locks with the enemy's fleet and you charge forwards, be there ten or twenty men against you. You see only victory, you hear only Thor's voice, and in that moment nothing can touch you.

The same; but different. A wolf did not think like a man. To defeat him, you must become him. Wolfskin. That was the trick of it. Circle up, softly still, bare feet curling and balancing on the uneven surface, body crouched low, ash-cloak blending grey with a landscape slowly illuminated, cold and bare, under the impassive moon. Slow, so slow. These cold-cramped fingers must be made to obey, to grip and control, or he could never succeed. *I am strong. I am a hunter. And I will see him before he knows I am here.* Under the trees, stooping yet watchful, using the last cover of shadows, Eyvind moved with stealthy purpose. It was the upper rim of the great forest; before him, a jagged mass of tumbled stones rose to high, bare crags, the eerie light turning their ledges and cracks and fissures into a thing of mystery and wonder. It was a landscape of grey on grey, encompassing every hue from the pale sheen of a fine pearl to a profound shadow-darkness. Twenty

paces before him, a ledge jutted out from the hillside like the prow of some great ocean-going vessel, and there stood the wolf. Eyvind gazed at him and felt the hairs on the back of his neck prickle, and his skin grow clammy with sweat. The creature was huge, surely bigger than any earthly wolf, for he stood three times higher in the shoulder than the farm dog Grim, and his long, shining pelt lent his form a grandeur that had something kingly in it. The eyes were golden, shining, feral. They were a savage chieftain's eyes, deep and knowing, yet wholly animal. Staring up at his adversary, Eyvind understood the message of that gaze. *You are come. I sense your presence in the darkness. Who is the hunter here, and who the prey? Come out. If you have the courage, come out and face me. For one of us will die tonight.* Then the great wolf raised his muzzle to the sky and howled again, a cry to freeze the blood and still the heart, a call that rang out over the forest and into the very depths of Eyvind's spirit. *It is time.*

If he had had a spear, if he had had a bow, he knew just how he would have done it. But this was to be a combat on equal footing. Equal. Naked flesh against thick pelt, small knife against many-clawed feet, stick against dagger-teeth; the idea was laughable. Still, he must win. His courage must be enough to tip the balance, for that was all he had.

Eyvind rose to his feet, no longer careful to be silent. The wolf turned its head. Eyvind stepped forward and began to walk up across the rocks towards the vantage point where the great creature now stood facing him. There was a deep, low growling, very quiet, a sound that said plainly, *Come no further. This place is mine.* When he had reached a spot ten paces from the wolf, Eyvind halted. Naked, ash-smothered, he held his head high and his shoulders strong. With the sharpened stick in his right hand and the little knife in his left, he looked the great creature straight in the eye.

*Now,* said a voice that was not a voice; perhaps his robed guide, though Eyvind had believed himself alone on that journey, perhaps another. Maybe it was his own voice he heard. He would not turn. It seemed to him that as long as he held that glowing, amber gaze with

his own the wolf would not attack him. The creature stared back unblinking, and for an instant he thought - no, it couldn't be - it seemed it was a man he saw there, stern-faced, strong-jawed, with eyes as yellow and feral as any forest predator's. *Ware behind you,* said the voice, and he heard a breath, sensed the furtive pad of a foot, and there was no choice now but to break that stare and whirl around, arms raised. The creature behind him lunged, jaws snapping, breath rancid in his face, a wolf, a masked man, a demon, he did not know, but he slashed high with the knife and stabbed low with the stick and rolled out of the way as the long claws raked down across his shoulder. He smelled blood; he felt the blow, but no pain. Eyes were watching, a circle of eyes in the moonlight. They were all around him. A wolf does not hunt alone. He rose to his feet. He could still hold the knife; that was good. Think like a hunter, not the hunted. This was a challenge, not an ambush. Take the strongest; forget the rest. Oh, for a burning brand, for the weapon of fire. That would buy precious time. *Fire,* muttered Eyvind. *Fire.* And the world spun and steadied and spun again, and he felt the fire within him, growing ever fiercer and hotter until his head burned with it, his breast near burst with its power and he opened his mouth and screamed, a cry that made of his whole being a mighty battle-trumpet. Perhaps he called Thor's name; perhaps something far older and darker. He spun in place, once, twice, three times as if to ready himself for a great flight of the war-hammer or throwing-axe. Tonight his deadliest weapon was the fire within. Roaring his challenge, Eyvind hurled himself across the open space towards the golden-eyed chieftain of the wolves.

This cannot be. A man does not attack thus, as if he cares nothing for his own safety. A man does not challenge thus, without cold iron. These eyes are wrong; they seem to welcome death. Why is the man unafraid? Does he think to take my place? Mine? I am not old yet, I am still strong... I will kill him, stinking in his nakedness, I will rend him... And yet, the fear. This is not a man, but another like myself, and he comes to take what is mine...

Knife slashed, fingers gripped rough hair, the stick, he had dropped

the stick, quickly now, dodge beneath, roll, spring, grab the stick and lunge before those teeth close again, perhaps on the neck or the exposed groin. Quick now. Screaming defiance, Eyvind thrust upwards with all his strength. The stake drove true; hot blood gushed over his face. The wolf thrashed and twisted, its gut impaled on the shaft of wood. The claws scrabbled for purchase on the rock and there was an eldritch whine of agony. The others, silent in their circle, watched narrow-eyed, shivering. The owl called again, remote and sorrowful. The wolf twisted its head back, snapping at Eyvind's arm, its eyes fierce with outrage. It was valiant; it fought to wrench the stake from his grasp, and finish him with its dying strength.

Brave; yes brave; but you will not have what is mine. Pierce me with your long tooth, would you? I fight on; I fight you until the moment, until the moment when all grows dark...

The wolf bucked and pulled; the stick slid from Eyvind's grasp, leaving a palm full of splinters. The creature turned, dragging the stake under its belly. Its mouth dripped blood, its bared teeth shone red in the moonlight. Out on the rocks the others waited; wolves, or men, or something which was in between, some manifestation of night and blood and shadow. Eyvind's hands were cold, so cold now he could hardly feel his fingers where they still clutched the little knife which had once carved a token for a girl. One chance. There was still enough strength in the beast to finish him. Those eyes did not speak surrender; but Eyvind would win. He must.

*You are nothing. You have no tribe, no place, you have no weapon but those you borrow. Your body is as naked and weak as a cub new-whelped. You are nothing. Do not think to take my place, for you cannot.* The wolf growled deep and flattened its ears.

Eyvind opened his hand and let the knife fall to the rocks. The little sound of it echoed away across the hillside into the night. It seemed all drew breath; and then there was silence. The wolf gathered its last strength to spring.

"Naked I come and naked I overcome," whispered Eyvind, raising his hands before him. "Against you, I use no weapon you cannot use; equal we do battle, equal under the gaze of Thor. And if I cannot defeat

you thus, I am myself defeated." Then he sprang forward, and the wolf leaped, and the two of them rolled together, this way and that, a frenzy of tooth and claw, of straining limb and screaming, growling, bloody combat. Eyvind could not tell where his own body ended and the creature's began, so close-locked were they. It was pain and blood and darkness; it was a pair of strong hands, holding and squeezing and never letting go as the enemy scratched and gouged and snapped, as the blood flowed and the desperate sounds rang in his ears and the night became a chaotic jumble of moon and stars and darkness, of rock and treetop and sky, of silent, waiting forms which were not man and were not beast, but Other. At the end, at the very end, they lay panting, spent, almost like lovers worn out by a night of passion; and Eyvind looked into the wolf's eyes one last time. The creature was still now, the golden gaze grew dim as Eyvind's hands maintained their merciless grip about the neck. The wolf bled from mouth and belly; Eyvind knew his own blood flowed from a myriad wounds on his body, on his chest, his shoulder, his face, his hands, somewhere in another world. He stared into his adversary's eyes and the truth looked back at him. This was the moment; the moment of changing. There were no words; simply the recognition of place, of tribe, of kingship; the knowledge of being, wild, free, strong. Then the shadow, and the darkness. The wolf shuddered and grew limp. The shining eyes clouded and were blank. Time to draw a single breath, and to begin to sense a weariness bone-deep, a pain in every corner of the body, a cold sudden and fierce that numbed his heart and froze his very blood. An instant only; and then with a rustling and a stirring the waiting circle of beings rose and moved and closed in around him. The world reeled; the stars began to shift in crazy patterns. Beyond them, he thought he saw a man, a great, tall man like a giant with the mask of a wolf and eyes of brightest gold; and the man said, *Son, well done.* Then for Eyvind, too, came the darkness.

# At The River of Crocodiles

Zan | Ross

Let's say  
a woman goes to the river,  
a basket on her head full of clothes.  
She is here to wash — flakes of skin,  
semen, blood,  
faeces, urine dried in fibres.  
She comes to this same place morning,  
night, draws water to cook, bathe  
on the bank of The River of Crocodiles.

She is small, like a child, her skin  
soft as tropical earth, her hair in a  
plait to her waist. She walks in the  
sound of water over stones, to the  
sound of her own heart, her hips  
breaking open a rhythm of claw and  
tail mudfalls. She washes with one  
eye closed, slapping against a stone  
hunched in the mud.

Let's say  
He sees her come to the river, smells  
her brittle bones, her softness to  
the steel of his hide. Their need  
the same — desire each morning,

each evening when she comes. leaves  
gifts, hopes to lure  
a child into her body.  
He spirals toward her. She turns,  
one eye closed, then looks to the river.  
He is gentle, mounts  
her three, four times. Semen drips  
onto rock, and he knows, she knows.

Let's say  
six months later the mid-wife will not  
come. Her husband must help her deliver.  
She is ripe fruit, splits when  
the child slides onto the earth in a fall  
of grace, his partial hide scraping the  
man's hands as he holds it. She  
lifts her head, is silent  
at evidence so incontrovertible.

Let's say  
a man goes down to the river.  
He carries a woman who has just  
given birth. He carries a mis-  
shapen child. He tosses the  
woman into the water, holds her head  
until she drowns, her long hair trailing  
current. Face up, her body flows  
toward the sea.

The mis-shapen child is pitched into the  
current, but swims away. The father rises from  
The River of Crocodiles, closes  
his mouth full of teeth on the man's torso,  
pulls him under and rolls, rolls.

Can you say  
what we know about these people,  
what you know about these people?

If  
I am telling you the truth; if  
you believe my story,  
they are dead.

Because they belonged to my village,  
we no longer go to The River of Crocodiles to  
swim, wash, conceive, though  
water is our solace in this too hot place,  
the river is our desire.



# At The Ogleeanski Estates

Scot | Snow

In Germany they first came for the Communists and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me—and by that time no one was left to speak up.

—Pastor Martin Niemöller

In Germany I saw them come for the Communists and I did not speak up, but I watched as they shot dead, on the street right outside my home, those who did speak up. After they had come for the Jews, and butchered, once again, those who spoke out, I fled. I put my most cherished belongings in an old battered suitcase and fled. For I knew, soon enough, it would be my turn to be taken away...

That morning Yuri Plenska watched as the Secret Police beat a withered old woman to death in the alley just next to the Midnight Mission; stared much longer than he needed to get the point. Stared as they used club and boot in a leathery, oiled, black blur of motion and spat on her as she pleaded for her life, screaming that she had only wanted to feed her granddaughter, now left alone in her abode; and smashed the bones in her thin arms as she tried to cover herself from the bar-

rage. In one small, wrinkled hand she still gripped a tuft of bread; a mere mouthful of farinaceous sustenance. Clearly they had caught her in the act of thievery and there would be no respite.

Only when one of the Police turned, with curled lip and bared teeth, and caught him watching, staring, did Yuri move on, quickly, gripping tightly the pencils and drafting materials wrapped in butcher's paper under his arm. He did not look back.

It was better not to have seen these things.

"Oh, Yuri, not with this again? Not now," said Lotte, when she saw him unwrapping his paper package. "I thought we had agreed; no more of this craziness?" She had always been sceptical of his theories on mathematics, even though he had done his best to explain it to her. "I think you're losing your grip on reality."

"No, I don't think I am; I just want to find options, that's all. I want to know, really *know* if it's possible. I don't think it's unrealistic," he said.

She sighed heavily. "Yes, I think it is. All this talk of calculus based keys opening geometric doorways to other dimensions, hidden worlds. It's an obsession. I just think you want to get away, is what it is."

He looked out the window at the heavy layer of smog over the Estates; thick concentration camp smoke. "I think it'd be good," he said, "to get away. Look at this world, just look at it, for pity's sake."

"I know. I see it every day, too. Grey and slate coloured, sometimes. I don't like it much either, but it is *our* world. There's no getting around it."

He sat down heavily, his eyes flat and grey. "It's not just that. This morning I watched them brutalise an old lady for scavenging bread to feed her granddaughter; yesterday I saw a dog eating a man while he just lay there staring at nothing, offering no resistance; last week I saw a woman take her child and—but no, it's too much, I don't want to think about it."

She took his hand in hers and gently rubbed with her thumbs. "Listen Yuri, I understand your need to look but you mustn't let it interfere with your work at the University, okay? We cannot live on my income

alone. If that happens this place really will become unliveable, or at best a living hell. Neither of us could survive that."

He was quiet a moment, then, "You know they came and set fire to the Kersh wing last month? All those beautiful ficciones; gone. Apparently we are not allowed the luxury of imagination; it breeds wilfulness we are told. It's too much, I can't take it any longer, Lotte, I just cannot. It's too much."

She looked at him. "And you think this other world, if it exists at all, will be any better? Any different? It's a fantasy, Yuri, a *fantasy!* I'll tell you what I think, I think this is all some kind of death wish fulfilment. That's what I think."

"My god, no. Are you crazy? I don't want to die! That's not it at all."

"Okay. So what then?"

"I'm not sure. I just want—no, *need*—to see this other world. I know it's there. Sometimes if I turn around too quickly I catch a glimpse of it before it dissolves and vanishes. And the key is some kind of mathematical equation. I know it has to be."

"Again with the math! Who *cares?*"

He was silent, then, "I'd be happy if I could just go there for a little while."

She said, not unkindly, "Well, that's not really likely, is it?"

"But it's not impossible, either."

"No," she sighed, "I guess it's not that, it's not impossible."

From an early age his father had instilled in him a love of mathematics. Yuri resisted at first, finding all the numbers on the page nothing but a jumbled up mess; an indecipherable cacophony; long strings of digits with no meaning at all. He would sit for hours, staring, seeing little, understanding even less. Growing frustrated. Then, gradually, he began to discern patterns in the hieroglyphs; just here and there at first, but more and more over time. Eventually he was able to solve equations without having to look at the formulae on paper, like some kind of chess prodigy, where the physical apparatus of board and paper is replaced by the mind itself. It gave him a little trill of excitement when-



ever he discovered something new, or a fresh application for an old formula.

He never understood, though, his father's drive in teaching him this to the exclusion of all else. It was a singular pursuit. It wasn't until his father died, two weeks after the funeral, in point of fact, that he discovered the truth.

The hidden obsession.

"Hey, what's this? Your face is wet," she said.

"No."

"You've been crying."

"No, not really."

"I can tell when you've been crying, don't try and kid me, okay? I can tell."

"Well, maybe..."

"Maybe nothing! What is it? The University, the book burning? Is that it?"

"No, not that. I don't think it's that."

"Okay, so what, then?"

"Nothing," he said, "it's nothing. I wasn't crying. Just had something in my eye." Frustrated, he kicked at the mound of crumpled paper popcorn balls on the floor and wiped his face dry.

She sighed gently and turned away and left him alone.

It was a great big steamer trunk and it had sat in a corner of his father's study since age had given him memory. But he could not remember ever having seen the inside of it. Whenever he got close, his father would take him by the shoulder and guide him away, direct his attention elsewhere.

After his father died, the trunk became his.

At first he was outraged, that all he had been left was this and that his sister out in Gueelanti (they hadn't heard from her in five years, for crying out loud!) had gotten everything else. God knows, he could have done with just a *little* of the estate what with all the cutbacks at the University. But he didn't get any of it.

Instead he got the trunk.

And in the trunk, this:

Notebooks. Dozens of leather notebooks: some stained with age and mildew, others almost brand new. Those on top were filled with his father's precise printing; those underneath with the spidery scrawl of his grandfather. Notebooks filled to every corner with mathematical diagrams and equations. And as he read, one tome after another, Yuri learned of his familial heritage; the hidden obsession. The work which amounted to this: the search for the key to the door of that other world.

For two years now he had worked with pencil and rule and protractor. He had gone over every equation in every notebook: fixed those that were incorrect; created more of his own, but no progress had been made. Frustratingly, he was stalled. He could see no way around and into and past the problem. He felt that the answer was right there, *right there*, in front of him if only he could pull aside the veil.

His head hurt.

One evening, after he'd been at his drafting board for the better part of a day, Lotte said, "I know this is not my field of expertise, but..."

"Yes, go on."

"...but perhaps I could make a suggestion, or an observation?"

"Of course," he said.

So she told him, she gave him her suggestion, voiced her observation. And it was like a bolt of lightning hitting a rod. It was brutally simple and blindingly obvious.

It *had* to work.

At first, it didn't. The paper was too flimsy; the butcher paper he used tore and came apart whenever he tried to fold and twist it at the requisite points. He needed something stronger. Lotte scoured the apartment and found some craft paper hidden in one of the cupboards, it was stiff and firm; perfect.

But it still wasn't working. He recalculated and realised the folds, the creases, the twists and the turns had to be absolutely, minutely pre-

cise: the curse and the blessing of all scientific and mathematical endeavour.

This time, when he took the final corner, twisted it just *thus*, folded it back like *that*, and finally slipped it between these two points *there*, he was rewarded with a shattering, blinding, breath stealing slash of light...

Lotte had him by the shoulder, shaking him awake, "Yuri! My god, are you okay? There was a flash of lightning and a horrendous popping sound! I thought the roof had fallen in!"

The paper sculpture lay a few feet away, unfolded.

He looked at her and said, "Lotte, pack your bags: I saw it! It's there! I, by god, *saw* it!"

Excited; "What, what did you see?"

"Green hills, Lotte! Green hills and sky the colour of your eyes and air that tastes sweeter than nectar!"

"My god!"

"Yes! It's there!"

They made plans. They would only take that which was absolutely essential to their comfort; and nothing else. Yuri set about transcribing his findings into a single notebook and destroyed those of his father and grandfather (it wouldn't do for them to fall into the wrong hands now, would it?).

On their last night, the Secret Police came for the Pleshettes who had an old printing press and lived across the hall. There was screaming and violence; cursing and brutality; it was the price of speaking out, of making a fuss. Yuri and Lotte clung to each other on their side of the door, trembling but trying to make no noise at all. They wept quietly.

"What will we do when we get there?" said Lotte.

"I don't know. Does it matter?"

"No, I don't suppose it does."

"It'll be better than here."

"Yes, there is that."

He took the paper and began to fold. "Here," he said, "you have to hold onto it too."

She did so, with unsteady fingers, and looked at him with wet eyes. He smiled and kissed her gently on the forehead, and then they turned to take one last look at the Ogleeanski Estates. In the distance, the library was burning and people were screaming and bleeding; the great chimneys belched their toxins into the air.

Finally, it was a good day to be leaving.



# Love is the Ugliest Drug

Grant | Watson

She finds the girl standing outside the Stuf-U-Mart two streets down, delicately sucking on a lime green popsicle.

"What are you doing here?" she asks her. "You were supposed to stay at my place."

The girl doesn't stop sucking her popsicle, but at least she looks her in the eye.

"I just don't understand you," she says. "What are you doing here?"

"Got bored," the girl finally says, all sulky and petulant, and sticks out a bright green tongue.

It takes her ten minutes to convince the girl to go back with her, another fifteen to slowly guide her there while she stops, pauses, delays and generally makes life difficult the entire time they are walking.

She has to kick some dooper out of her doorway to get inside, and when she does get inside the girl just breezes past and sits in the bedroom.

She considers locking her in there to prevent her from wandering outside, but she knows that if the girl found out she would thrash against the door and scream like a banshee until she let her out again.

So she leaves the bedroom door unlocked, slumps into a chair and thinks of nothing but the girl all evening.

Her name was Andy Criddle, and she found the girl in a midcity tech laboratory.

She was hired to clean the waste paper baskets, and wipe the benches, and mop the floors. She never asked what they did up there.

she just cleaned, wiped, mopped, minded her own business and collected her pay cheque.

It was after her first week, well into the graveyard shift, that she first saw the girl: sitting along on a bench in a cell, staring patiently at the opposite wall. She looked about eight, with shoulder-length dull hair, dressed in a white cotton t-shirt and pants. Her bare feet didn't quite touch the floor when she sat on the bench.

She didn't open the door or knock on the glass. Not the first time. It was another two days before she built up the courage to do that.

After an hour or so Andy pokes her head inside the bedroom. The girl is still sitting there, right where she left her, staring calmly at the poster on the wall.

"Are you hungry?" Andy asks. The girl turns and looks at her, slowly, and breaks into a wide smile.

"I would love some food," she says.

Andy nods, and heads for the kitchen.

"I love you," she suddenly hears the girl say. It warms her, just like it does every time she says it.

And Andy loves her right back.

The first time she knocked on the glass of the cell door the girl didn't even respond, as if in a trance. Maybe she simply didn't hear it.

Andy tried a second time and the girl looked, standing up and walking over to meet her.

The glass blocked out pretty much all of the sound, but they managed to wave 'hello' to one another. Andy tried further communication, but the girl's vague gestures seemed inexplicable to her.

Her intentions, however, seemed extremely clear.

She wanted to be free.

Andy boils some rice and throws it on a plate with some stir-fried vegetables.

The girl doesn't seem very interested in leaving the bedroom, so

Andy brings the food to her. The girl eats delicately and slowly, eating every morsel with a mechanical precision.

Then after she has finished, she places the empty plate on the floor and holds out her hand. Andy watches it, unsure.

"Please hold me," the girl says.

So Andy climbs onto the bed with her, and they lay in each other's arms until both have fallen asleep.

Two weeks into her job Andy forced the lock of the cell and smuggled the girl out of the building.

She asked the girl her name, and she said she didn't know. She told the girl her name, and the girl said that it was nice.

She didn't know why the girl had been locked up but she knew she had to be free. She took her to the place she was staying and packed up straight away. They took the rail line up to the northern precincts, heading down — deep down — into the depths of the undercity.

She knew she would lose her deposit for leaving the apartment, but she didn't care. She knew the laboratory would be after the girl and she had to keep her safe.

A crack like a thunderstorm wakes her from sleep, a fierce light disorienting her, heavy leather hands grabbing her and throwing her to the floor.

She can't see but someone kicks her hard in the gut, bending her double. She screams.

"Andy Criddle?" says a voice, hard and deep.

Again, she is kicked. She nods frantically, coughing like she's about to bring up a lung.

"This girl doesn't belong to you," says the voice.

She can see the girl, silhouetted by the light. She can see someone wrapping a blanket around her small, willowy body.

"Am I going home now?" the girl asks, and Andy hears someone tell the girl, yes, she was.

Then she hears the hard, deep voice again, leaning closer over her. "Curiosity killed the cat," he says.

Andy tries to rise, to argue, to speak, but all she can do is lie in a foetal ball on the floor, doubled up in pain, her stomach burning.

"Go and see a doctor," says the voice, "a good one. If you're very lucky you have four months to live."

And then Andy hears them walking, leaving her alone in the darkness.

And she hears the girl say, "I love you."

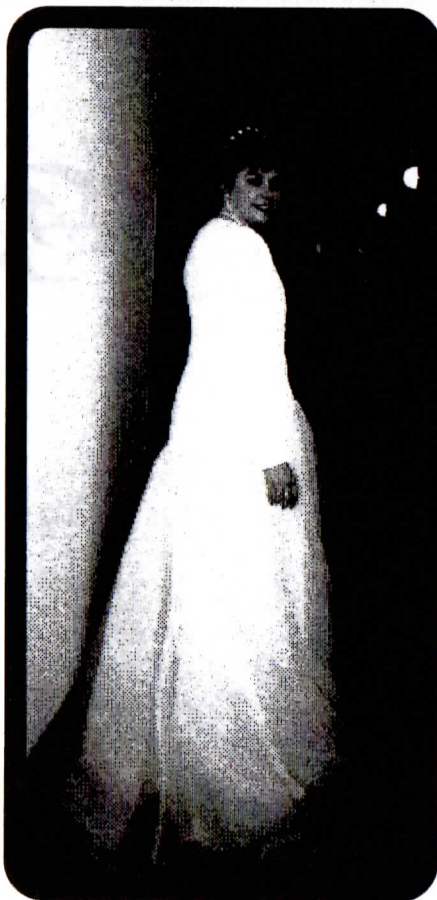
And she hears the hard, deep voice say, "I know you do. You love us all."



# Guest Biographies

## Susan | Ackermann

Our fan guest of honour, Susan Ackermann, has been an active science fiction fan for many years. She started her first science fiction club when she was in high school, in an attempt to make the pastime of playing Dungeons and Dragons more acceptable to the powers that be at MLC. She went on to found SAFFA (the Science and Fantasy Fiction Association) at UWA. She has been involved in Theatre Sports since she saw a performance at Swancon in 1989, and since then has often competed in the state championships. Her team regularly comes third. In a rare aberration they won the title two years ago. Susan has also represented the state in the national Public Speaking finals, won many trophies for Debating and is the Empress of the Swancon convention committee for 2002. She has attended many, many Swancons and is invariably friendly and approachable.



## Russell | Blackford

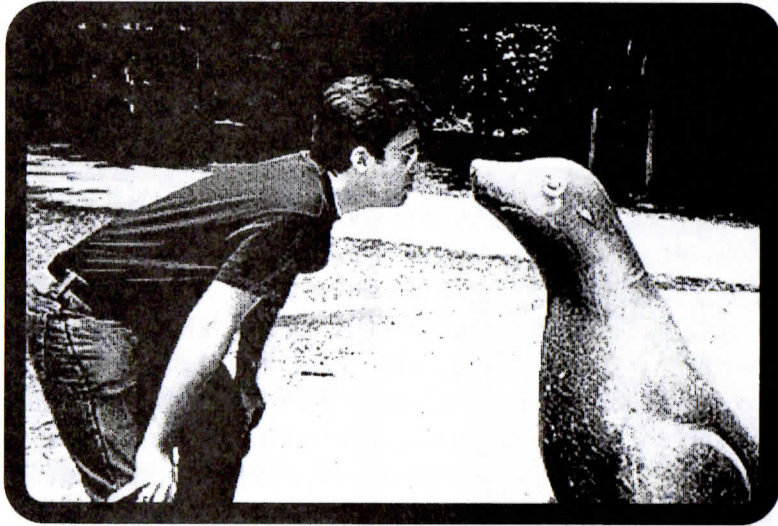
Russell Blackford is a Sydney-born, Melbourne-based writer who writes mainly about philosophy, science and science fiction. Russell has first class honours degrees in both Arts and Law and a Ph.D. on the supposed return to myth in modern fiction. More recently, he has studied philosophy extensively on a non-degree basis, mainly at Monash University.

In Australia, he is probably best known for his frequent articles in *Quadrant* magazine, covering such subjects as the prospects of computer superintelligence, post-modernist theory and its problems, cyberspace, cloning and genetic engineering, radical life extension, the philosophy of Raimond Gaita, and contemporary debates about free speech. However, he has also published articles, reviews and stories in many other journals, magazines, anthologies and reference works in Australia, the US, the UK, and continental Europe. He is respected internationally as a prominent sf critic.

Russell was a member of the editorial collective of *Australian Science Fiction Review: Second Series*, Australia's most ambitious sf-related magazine of the 1980s. His book covering the history of Australian sf, *Strange Constellations* (co-written with Van Ikin and Sean McMullen), was published by Greenwood Press in 1999. In 2000, he and his wife, Jenny Blackford, edited a special issue of the British academic journal *Foundation* (based on their efforts in running the academic track of Aussiecon 3).

Russell's own fiction has won the Aurealis Award and the Ditmar Award. He has won the William Atheling, Jr Award for Criticism or Review on three occasions.

## Jonathan | Blum



Jonathan Blum moved to Sydney in 1998 from Maryland in the US, where he grew up. He's co-author of three Doctor Who books with his wife, Kate Orman. On his own, he's written the short story "Model Train Set", and now the seventh Doctor/Ace audio play, *The Fearmonger*. His audio play "The I Job" is forthcoming from BBV.

## Naomi | Fisher and Patrick | Molloy

Patrick and Naomi have been involved for decades in every aspect of SF fandom (Pat since 1978, Naomi since 1985). They've done everything from founding, chairing, running and working on conventions, to fanzine and apa contribution, editing and publishing, to very active involvement in SF groups - local, regional and national. Both of them know fans throughout the US and Canada, usually from having worked

on cons with and for them (they're chronic volunteers) or from meeting them at parties, many of which they've hosted. Naomi and Patrick go to a large number of conventions (well over 200 since 1978 for Pat, 100+ since 1988 on Naomi's count) across much of the country, and expect to continue doing so. The year 2000 saw them involved in Worldcon bid activities and attending 17 cons, but that was excessive even by their standards! Patrick and Naomi try (usually succeeding) to go to Worldcon no matter where it's held, getting to Glasgow in '95, Melbourne in '99, and every US Worldcon since '89.

On the personal front, Pat's made his interest in space exploration into his career, working for NASA as a database engineer for 18 years now. Naomi is going back for a second degree in computer science (more saleable in the US than Biology/Chemistry) this summer. They're cheerful, experienced travellers, and though certainly not independently wealthy (why isn't the phrase 'independently middle-class' ever used?), believe seeing the world beyond con hotels is a top priority. Naomi and Patrick generally make careful saving, research, and willingness to jump at opportunities substitute for vast funds. As a result, the two of them have planned and taken trips through an astonishing amount of the North American continent, and can tell of weird, wonderful things to see and do in a wide variety of places. They've been to Australia before, twice on mileage and travel awards, once on their own savings, and spent enough time to see much of the country, but not many members of Australian fandom. They've done sightseeing - and think it would be great to finally meet the people instead of the places!





## Karen | Haber

Karen Haber is the author of eight novels including *Star Trek Voyager: Bless the Beasts* from Pocket Books and a three-book series for DAW Books: *Woman Without A Shadow*, *The War Minstrels* and *Sister Blood*. She is the co-author of *Science of the X-Men*, and editor of the upcoming *Meditations on Middle Earth*.

Her short fiction has appeared in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *The Sandman: Book of Dreams*, and many other anthologies, including *Alien Pets* from DAW Books.

In her secret identity as an art journalist she reviews art books for *Locus* magazine and has profiled many of the top artists in the Science Fiction and Fantasy field for various publications.

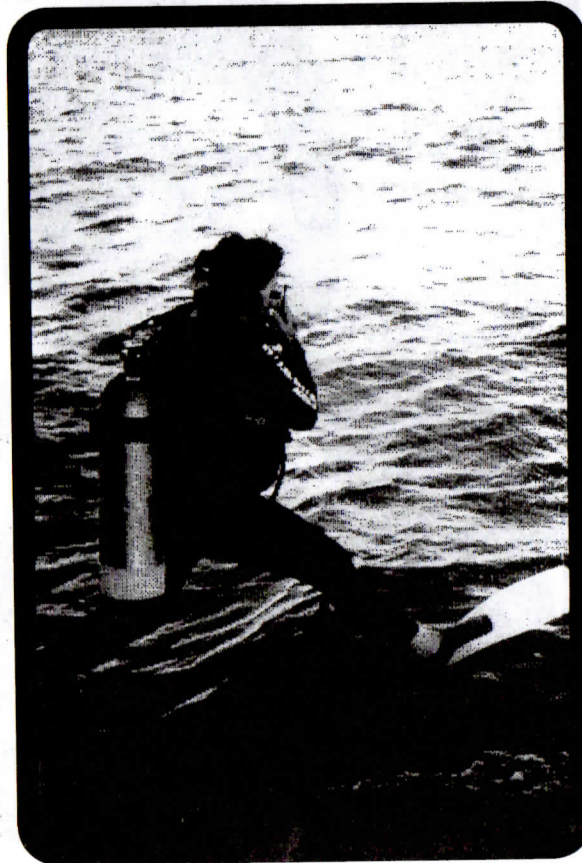
She lives with her spouse, Robert Silverberg, in earthquake country near San Francisco, where they collect cats and breakable pieces of art.

## Rosaleen | Love

Rosaleen Love began her fiction writing career with the short story "The Laws of Life", which won the Fellowship of Australian Writers, State of Victoria Short Story Award for 1983. She published two collections of science fiction short stories with the Women's Press: *The Total Devotion Machine* (1989) and *Evolution Annie* (1993). She has also edited an anthology of Australian science writing, *If Atoms could Talk* (Greenhouse

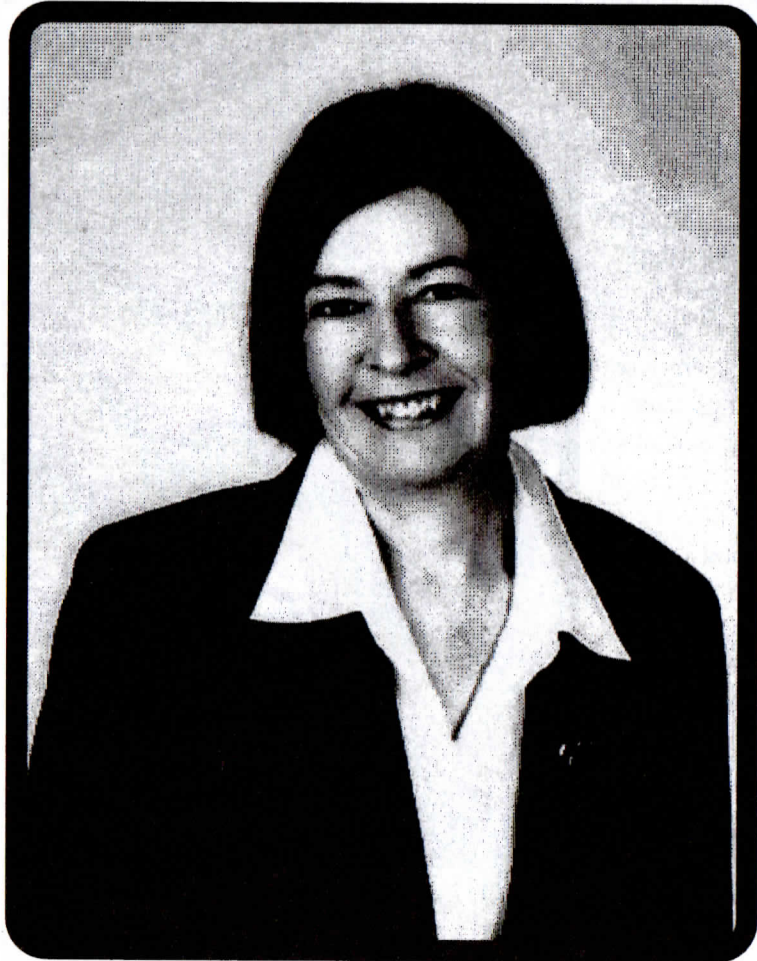
Press, 1987). Her short stories and essays have been widely anthologised both in mainstream and in science fiction anthologies, such as *Heroines*, *Glass Reptile Breakout*, *Millennium*, *Women of Wonder*, *She's Fantastical*, *Dreaming Down Under*, *The Oxford Book of Australian Schooldays*, and *Colombus' Blindness*. A book of non-fiction essays on the Great Barrier Reef, *Reefscape*, has been published by Allen and Unwin this year.

Rosaleen is a graduate of the universities of Queensland, Cambridge (UK) and Melbourne, and taught for twenty-five years at tertiary level at first Melbourne University, then Swinburne, in the history of philosophy of science, then latterly at Victoria University, in professional writing. She is now a Senior Research Associate at Monash University in the School of Literary, Visual and Cultural Studies, and enjoying the life of the fulltime writer. Most of Rosaleen's work springs from a deep and abiding interest in the history of wrong ideas, from the history and philosophy of science to futures studies.



## Juliet | Marillier

Juliet Marillier was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, a town with strong Scottish roots. She graduated from Otago University with a BA in languages and an honours degree in music, and has had a varied career which includes lecturing in music history and opera singing. She currently works part time in a government agency and spends the rest of her time writing.



Juliet achieved international recognition with *Daughter of the Forest*, the first book of her Sevenwaters Trilogy, a historical fantasy series set in ninth century Ireland and Britain. Both *Daughter of the Forest* and its sequel, *Son of the Shadows*, were shortlisted for the Aurealis Award for best fantasy novel. The final book in the series, *Child of the Prophecy*, will be published by Pan Macmillan in August 2001.

Juliet now lives in the Swan Valley area of Western Australia. Her interest in myth, legend and folklore has a strong influence on both style and theme in her writing. A commitment to conservationist ideals and the principles of druidry also underlie her work. Juliet is currently writing her second historical fantasy series, which is set in Norway and Orkney in the Viking era.

## Lewis | Morley

Lewis Morley is probably best known in Australian Science Fiction fandom for the elaborate masquerade costumes he used to construct. Sadly, these days he can't afford the time to build them, but he still dreams of stifling under layers of stinking latex rubber whilst blundering around in the dark... As a child born of the 1960s, Lewis was heavily influenced by the gadgetry of *Thunderbirds* and the James Bond films. Derek Meddings became his patron saint and he dreamed of working in the special effects industry.

After a brief stint as an architectural modelmaker, he started working for television commercials and soon graduated to his chosen field. Over a career spanning almost twenty years, he has worked on many of the science fiction and fantasy films produced in Australia. These include *Razorback*, *Bliss*, *Something is Out There*, *Salute of the Juggler* and both seasons of the *Mission: Impossible* re-make television show. More recent films include *Dark City*, *The Matrix* and *Two Hands*.

Recently his film work has evolved in the changing conditions of the Australian industry and he has contributed to the design process in such films as *M.I.:2*, *Red Planet*, *Star Wars: Episode 2* and (hopefully) the upcoming *Matrix* sequels.





All this work has cut down on the time Lewis has available for personal projects; his current obsession is an on-going mature readers comicbook entitled, *Peregrine Besset*, a science fiction/fantasy story featuring an ancient Egyptian dwarf.

Lewis has won a Ditmar for Best Artist once, but he's ended up making the actual trophies for quite a few years now!

## Marilyn | Pride

Marilyn Pride is well known in Australian Science Fiction fandom for her natural history and fantasy illustrations. Her style can be traced back to her childhood, when she wrote and illustrated stories about sea serpents, bunyips and dinosaurs. Even then, she was careful to detail not only how they looked but also how they lived. It was probably this interest that led her to study anthropology at Macquarie University.

Apart from numerous fantasy bookcovers, she has written and illustrated two non-fiction books, *Australian Dinosaurs and Their Relatives*

and *More Australian Dinosaurs*.

Marilyn has won the Ditmar award for Best Artist four times. *Australian Dinosaurs and Their Relatives* also won her the Crichton Award for best first book.

With her partner, Lewis Morley, she has also worked on several Australian films, including *Razorback*, *Howling 3* and *Dark City*.

Marilyn has lived for several years in her dream house — a grass-roofed cottage called "Tatoro", situated in the N.S.W. Blue Mountains.

## Kate | Orman

Kate Orman has written or co-written eleven Doctor Who novels, and boy, are her arms tired. Her latest Who book, *The Year of Intelligent Tigers*, will be out in June 2001. She has also been published in *Interzone* and *Realms of Fantasy*. She lives in Sydney with her husband and co-author, Jon Blum.

Kate's work has been short-listed for the Aurealis Award in 1995, 1998 and 1999.





## Zan | Ross

Zan Ross was born in the US but considers herself to be Australian—twenty-two years in this country and citizenship papers ought to entitle her to think so. She's currently undertaking doctoral studies at Curtin University in WA, but considers herself to be first and foremost a writer.

Zan has appeared in most of the major literary magazines in Australia, has had a collection of poetry (*B-Grade*)

and a chapbook (*Je ne sais quoi*) published. Another collection is currently undergoing editing with Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

Her haunting poem, "At The River of Crocodiles," appeared in the twelfth annual *Year's Best Fantasy and Horror*, 1999, edited by Terry Windling and Ellen Datlow.

## Robert | Silverberg

It's almost impossible to sum up the work of Robert Silverberg in the amount of space available here. His career has been long, prolific, and has produced an enormous amount of work of the highest quality.

An indication of how well regarded he is as a science fiction writer is that he has been nominated for the Nebulas twenty times (and won five times) and been nominated for the Hugos twenty-seven times (and won four times, withdrawing four times), beginning with the Hugo for "most promising new author" in 1955, a promise that he has well and

truly made good on. He has also been nominated for the Locus Readers Award ninety-seven times and won five times. Most notably, he is the only science fiction writer to have won major awards in every decade from the 1950s to the 1990s.

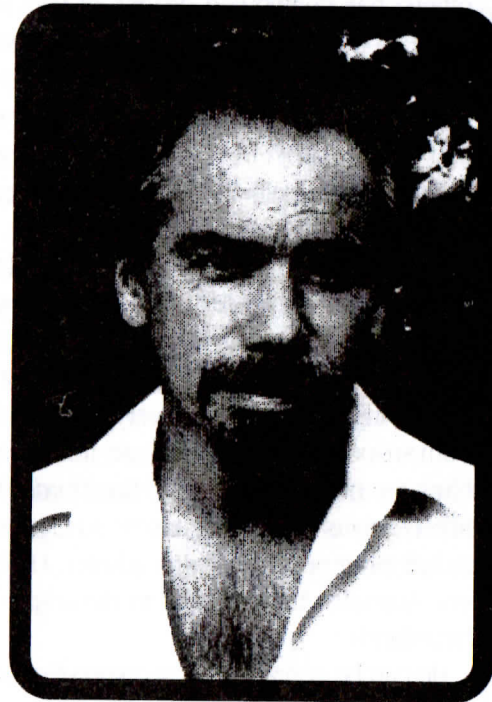
He is not only a writer of an enormous amount of superb science fiction, but also a notable editor (for example, he edited the recent *Legends* anthology), and writer on many other subjects (including much excellent non-fiction).

He is also a witty, warm and entertaining speaker, who has been a guest of honour\* at many science fiction conventions before.

Perhaps his best known recent work is the Majipoor series, beginning with *Lord Valentine's Castle*. The series is currently continuing with books such as *Lord Prestimion*, and *The King of Dreams* which concludes the Prestimion part of the Majipoor series.

## Scot | Snow

Scot Snow is one of the best kept secrets in Australian literature. He has written and seen published something like 110 short stories in markets like, *The Australasian Post*, *Westerly*, *Woman's Day*, *Rage*, *Hypatia*, *London Magazine*, *Penthouse*, *atventure.com*, *MysteryNet.com* and many



others: has contributed dozens of television scripts, including work (some of it forthcoming) on *Doctor Who*, *Star Trek*, *Twilight Zone*, *Monsters*, *Farscape*, *Night Visions*, as well as some you really don't need to know about; his film work includes script doctoring for two major motion pictures, both of which you will have heard of, neither of which he's allowed to talk about. He also writes a regular column, "Buried Gems", for *The Rhizome Factor*.

His work has been glowingly compared to Donald Barthelme, Gerald Kersh, Roald Dahl, E. L. Vasey, Queen and James M. Cain. He was twice shortlisted in the Young Playwright's Award ('88 and '89) and has had his work translated into Gaelic and broadcast on Irish and Scottish radio. His writing encompasses every genre from science-fiction to erotica, from suspense to the fantastique, from horror to the western, and often blurs the boundaries of all. *Blue Murder Monthly* called him, "a short fiction genius in an age of bloat. A very necessary writer." He wishes to hell more people would read him. He currently lives in Perth, Western Australia, but is about to decamp for the lower Los Angelean hinterlands.

He can be contacted at: [scotsnow@geocities.com](mailto:scotsnow@geocities.com).

| torch

torch is this year's virtual guest; look out for her online chat session.

torch has been participating in the online slash community since 1994 and writing fan fiction since 1995, to the great enchantment of many, admiring as they do her facility with language and ability to make the ordinary delightful. She has produced an alarming number of stories in 13 different fandoms, some of them markedly distressing and disturbing to the average unsuspecting reader.

Her web site, the flambeau factory, can be found here: <http://www.strangeplaces.net/torch/>

Grant | Watson

Grant Watson is a Perth playwright, with seven staged plays to his credit. Amongst them, *Degree Absolute* and *R3* (based on Shakespeare's *Richard the Third*) have been performed to general acclaim. This year, his plays *Fortune and Glory* and *In His Name* are to be staged, and his adaptation of *The Wasp Factory* is in the works.

In addition to script-writing, Grant has recently started writing and drawing the Ditmar nominated cartoon, *The Angriest Video-store Clerk in the World*. He was also an editor of the anthology *Twenty3: A Miscellany*, and the souvenir book for the National Science Fiction Convention in 2000.

He is also a director, actor and academic. Grant is currently working on a pilot script for a television series, and is about to embark on a Ph.D. at Murdoch University. And yes, he really is a video-store clerk, some of the time.



Things

are

not

always

what  
they

seem...

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