

GUILTY PLEASURES

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Eve Ackerman
for SFGA 235

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ORLDCON

Toronto, Torcon 3 has come and gone.

You will hear reports of good times and chaos, last minute disasters and personal triumphs. They're all true. Let me just say that many rank and file Torcon staffers worked their butts off trying to salvage situations not of their creating, and should get a hearty round of fannish applause for their hard work.

I think I saw less of Toronto than most convention cities I've visited. And I say that having discovered that the hotel we were booked into, the Marriott Renaissance Skydome hotel, was on the *other* side of the block from the Convention Centre and the Royal York where all the parties were. But it

was all to the good. I walked so much to and fro I ended up losing half a pound despite my eating lavish and delightful meals (and again, a tip of the beanie to Janice for finding tasty restaurants and making [gasp!] reservations each night so we didn't have a horde of fans in the lobby saying "Where do *you* want to go?"). And the hotel itself was very quiet, a major plus when you room with the world's lightest sleeper.

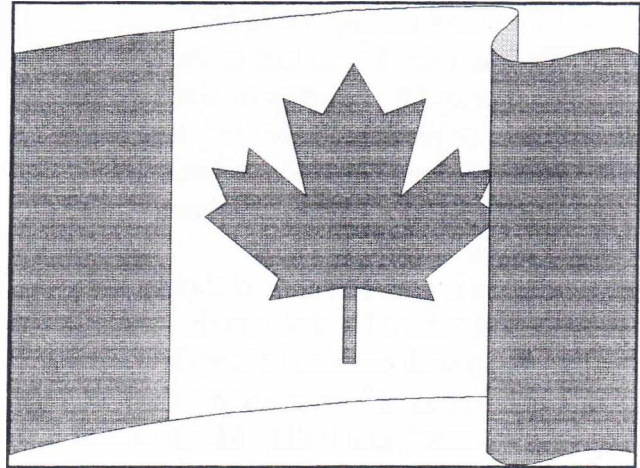
There were some highlights of the convention that will stay with me: Afternoon tea at the Royal York with Parris McBride and David Axler, where they served *real* tea, loose in the pot, scones, berries and cream and for those with larger appetites, finger sandwiches. All in an atmosphere that made me relieved I'd dressed well, but wishing for one of my elegant suit and hat combos. And pearls, of course.

The post Hugo (Hugo Losers) party where Janice and I were Door Dragons and looked absolutely smashing as we politely turned away "A" list wannabes. We were aided by N4 mafia types standing guard at the elevators and vetting some of the guests for us.

We're told the Hugos themselves came off without too many problems, and congratulations to our own Rich and Nicki Lynch for *Mimosa* winning a fanzine Hugo!

We watched the Yankees play the Blue Jays from Stephen Boucher's hotel room at the Marriott, and it was a slightly disorienting experience, being high enough that it looked like we were watching it on TV, yet still hearing the actual roar of the crowd.

The closing ceremonies had N4 Chair Deb Geisler presenting Torcon GoH George R.R. Martin with what he's always craved, "a really big one", in this case a giant inflatable rocket to make up for not getting the Hugo this year.



Filthy Pierre is to be applauded for keeping us up to date on party lists since the daily newszine generally didn't feel it was important enough to post. And Pierre also gets thanks for maintaining the Voodoo Message Board, a particularly valuable low tech tool for those of us not using cellphones outside of the US.

On our last day Janice and I made a drugstore run to dump some of our funny money and get the kind of item tourists love to bring back from Canada, acetaminophen with codeine. Amazingly enough I needed it a week later (see below), so it was a heck of a lot better than the souvenirs I usually bring back!

Oh, and I'd been warned to get to the Toronto Airport at least 2-3 hours early because of expected long lines and delays going through Customs and baggage check.

It took me 10 minutes in line, and some time walking from Point A to Point B. Fortunately, I'd brought plenty of reading material.

My sons are back in school, and what passes for normal life around here has resumed. Or so I thought. About the third week of school Micah complained of a sore throat and it quickly morphed into something much worse.

"You have mono," I told him.

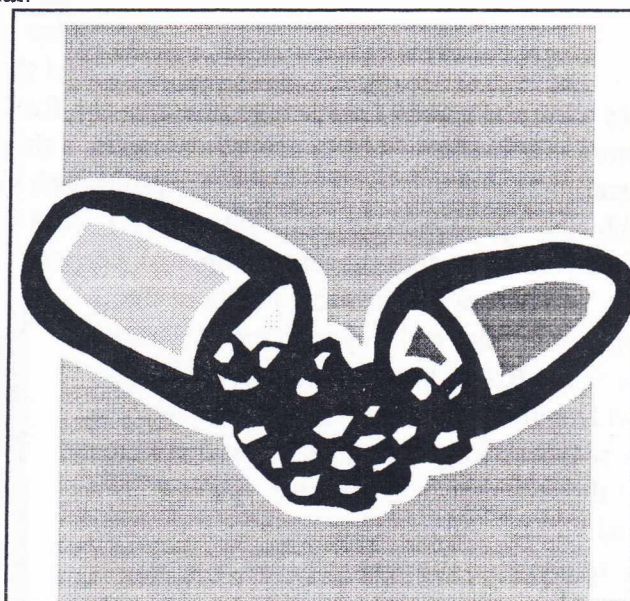
The next day I took him to the doctor.

"I concur, Dr. Ackerman. Sore throat without fever or rash, negative strep test, we'll know when the mono spot comes back, but my diagnosis matches yours--infections mononucleosis."

And so it was. Micah had about four days from hell, where I'd give him the acetaminophen with codeine to keep him from howling in pain and able to get some sleep at night, but after the third day I said "Trust me, it's going to get better", and it did. Micah missed a week of school, and given that he's taking a heavy AP and Honors load with no electives, it's going to be difficult for him to make it up. But he said he's willing to try, and I said, "Look--you're a young Junior because of your June birthday. If you had to repeat this year you'd still be with your age group peers when you start college. My only concern is that you get back on your feet, and do your work in a satisfactory manner. Anything else isn't that important."

So we're taking it a day at a time and he's easing himself back into his class schedule, but we won't know for a while yet how far behind he's fallen.

In the meantime Raphi says he's doing well with his sophomore year at Brandeis. The work is tougher, but life is better because he's in a double dorm room with his roomie from last year, rather than a triple, and he's been chosen for one of the school improv groups. Brandeis has a huge theater department so competition is stiff for the various groups. He's also writing some



Op-Ed pieces for "The Justice", the school paper, which never looks bad on a resume.

Wow! Maybe it *is* the coolest thing since sliced bread--I got a flash drive last week, an Attache USB 2.0 on sale and rebated at Best Buy. I'd been thinking about it because I've got an external ZIP drive that I use for back up, but in this day and age I needed something better than floppies to do quick saves, transfer files, etc.

But what really convinced me was when Janice said "...and of course, many people use it to hide their porn collections..."

Hey! Then I wouldn't have to worry about the techs stumbling across my collection of midgets with goats and maple syrup the next time I take the computer in for repairs!

So I was sold on the idea. I'm still using the ZIP for backing up my writing and total system back ups, but now I've got all my other important files on the flash as well because I'm sort of a belt and suspenders person, and I always worry that sure, I'm backing up, but what if the media I'm backing up to is corrupted? It's good to have two methods

I also was steered towards a free program that checks ZIP disks to make sure they're really error free when they're telling you they're error free. It's "Trouble in Paradise (TIP)" by Steve Gibson, and I've used it a couple times now. It does give me that extra feeling of safety.

On the other hand, after I read how Amy Tan lost all of her latest novel in a house fire I may take a set of Zip disks over to our safety deposit box, just to be extra, extra safe.

Speaking of cool things, I purchased a bag of edame beans last week, just to try something different. I found myself going to fridge and eating the cooked beans at odd times during the day and I finally figured out what the appeal was. They're not only tasty, they're edible bubble wrap! There's something very satisfying about popping the beans out of their shells, an action that's as soothing as the satisfaction of flattening a hunk of bubble wrap.

Reviews-->INTO THE

FIRE, Anne Stuart--Jamie Kincaid

needs answers. Nate Kincaid, more of a brother than a cousin, is dead. Beaten to death in a drug deal gone bad, and the only one with the answers about Nate's death is his best friend and partner in crime, Dillon

Gaynor. But Jamie doesn't want to confront Dillon, because if she does, she might have to come face to face with her own unresolved feelings for the bad boy she's dreamt about since she was a



teenager.

INTO THE FIRE is an Anne Stuart story from start to finish, beginning with a hero who looks, and acts, like someone a good girl should stay far away from, because when it comes to bad boys, Anne Stuart is very, very, good.

The story is well done, the mystery unfolds nicely, the clues and insights into Dillon, Jamie and Nate's complex relationships are splendidly laid out. The biggest problem in the book, and one that there may be no avoiding given the way she's lived her life, is that the denouement is marred by a heroine who's TSTL (Too Stupid To Live). When she finally comes to the confrontation with the bad guy, a man she knows is a psychopath, who's already hacked to death at least one person she's fond of, who's carved obscenities onto her chest with a knife and tried to kill her, whom she has every reason to believe will kill her the next time he sees her, what does she do? She leaves a fully loaded nine millimeter handgun in the car because she might have to use it. Well, duh!

Not to mention the beginning of the book where she drives to Wisconsin in November and leaves her coat in Rhode Island because it was balmy when she left. Doh!

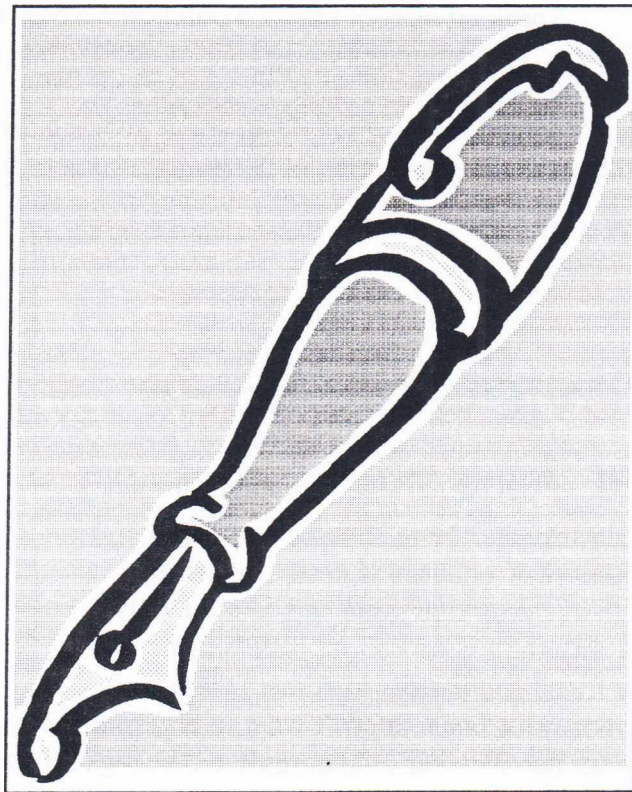
But really, other than these niggling little details, it's a good read. Really. The sex is hot and steamy, Dillon is a great conflicted hero, Jamie's got enough emotional baggage dragging behind her that the reader can forgive lots of her crazy actions, and the book should be a must read for all Anne Stuart fans.

INTO THE FIRE is a great beach book for finishing off the summer, a hot tale of steamy suspense that offers up the kind of bad boy your mama warned you about, but who's the kind of hero that makes romance readers keep turning those pages.

TWIST OF FATE, Mary Jo

Putney--When Mary Jo Putney began publishing contemporary novels, some of her fans were apprehensive. Could a noted writer of historicals and Regencies make a smooth transition to contemporary fare?

TWIST OF FATE shows that whether it's contemporary or historical, Putney's feel for characters and real emotion puts her head and shoulders above many of her peers. TWIST OF FATE picks up a character from THE BURNING POINT, Putney's first contemporary and a novel that daringly presented a reformed spouse abuser as the hero. Her subsequent modern novels haven't



shied away from tackling delicate subjects, and in TWIST OF FATE the death penalty is brought under the harsh spotlight.

Val Covington has deserted the sterile practice of corporate law for her own practice, one where she gets to do the kind of law that matters. And her first client is her own legal assistant, desperate to prove that the father of her child was unjustly sentenced to death for killing a police officer nearly 20 years ago.

Val finds an unexpected ally in Rob Smith, her landlord and handyman, who is hiding his own troubled past behind a new look and a new life. He's willing to risk exposure to help Val, but Val's hesitant to risk her own heart. Fate has brought them together, but searching out the truth of a capital crime forces them both to confront every nightmare that's kept them from having full relationships in their lives. But their problems pale in comparison to the 11th hour attempt to save Daniel Monroe from execution, and that goal drives the story every bit as much as the romantic entanglement moves the narrative along.

Mary Jo Putney tells a darn good sermon, and she does it so neatly, wraps it inside a story so skillfully, that you're going to find yourself in the "amen corner" right along with her. Her contemporary novels may bring her a whole new set of fans, and her established core of Regency and historical readers will be right there with them.

Mailing

Comments, SFPA

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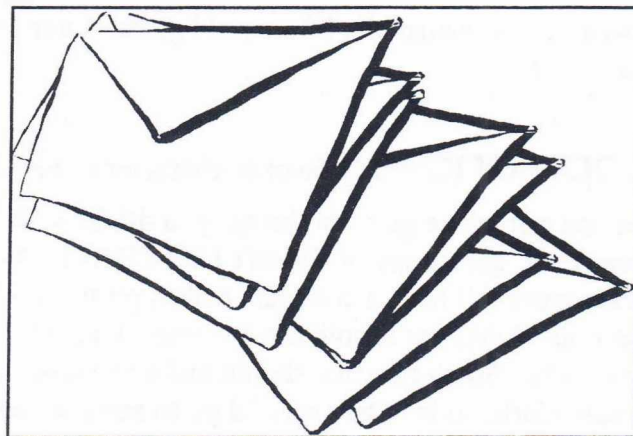
Hughes, S--Amazing! You went all

the way to New Zealand and didn't mention

"The Lord of the Rings" even once! And I'm doing my part against the possums. I bought a New Zealand "possum down" scarf when I was in Australia and can report it's quite warm and cozy. Take that, you encroaching marsupial pests!!!!##

Brooks--Great cover. Very fannish!!!!##

Hlavaty--Glad you weren't seriously hurt in the car crash. Do you know why your tire blew?//As always, your zine was quite entertaining. The Enron books sounded good, but too depressing for words. Who wants to read the anatomy of a train wreck we should all have seen coming?!!!!##



Hughes, S--A 3-D viewer of my very own! Extreme coolness! (Later) Ow. My eyes hurt. This doesn't work so well with those of us who were monocular contacts (left eye for reading, right eye for distance) I can see I'll enjoy this more in small doses. But it's fun, really!////###

Lillian--Your saga behind bars was frightening. How easy it is to lose one's rights and dignity when caught up in the bureaucratic gears of justice!////###

Lynch--Your lunch time excursions show two things: 1. There are definite advantages to living in the nation's capitol, in terms of the entertainment and intellectual stimulation offered and 2. Your questions and the responses show you're far too bright for most of these events.////###

Strickland--As my teens would say, that majorly sucks about you being dropped from grad school because of a 20 year old grade. I hope you'll have better news to share this disty.////###

Copeland--My favorite character in FAKING IT was Ford Brown, the hitman. How can you not love a guy who brings you drinks with little paper umbrellas? By the way, if you haven't yet, get a copy of Crusie's GETTING RID OF BRADLEY. One of my favorites of her earlier works. I have a complete collection from when she wrote for Harlequin. I also understand that Lois McMaster Bujold has become a huge Crusie fan after being turned on by some of *her* fans.// The Disney ride that should make us quake in fear that they'll turn it into a movie is the "Small World" ride. Only way I'd go to see that movie is if it features hitmen with automatic weapons taking out those annoying singing youngsters.//Ct. Lillian: Janice has that five language "I'm sorry, my president is an idiot" shirt. It was a huge hit at Torcon.////###



And that's all for now— **Eve**