

# Madison foursquare

97

This issue of *Madison Foursquare* is brought to you by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, who live at 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704.

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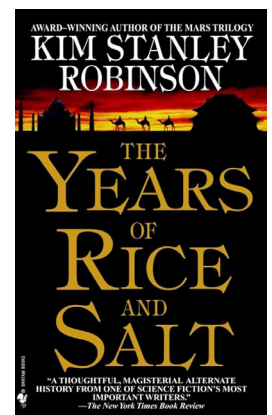
## The election

[JG] Facebook keeps feeding me posts I made four years ago and 8 years ago. Oh yeah, look at that – my Trump-Buster artwork which was adopted and printed on signs during the 2015 Democratic convention. And there's a photo of me wearing white for **Hope** and **Karl's** election party in honor of an expected Hillary Clinton victory. And there are two of my cartoons, drawn in 2020, right after Biden won – a riff on Calvin and Hobbs showing Calvin returned from the insurrection; and another cartoon showing Trump's suitcases and boxes in front of the white house, ready for him to move out, with a locksmith parked in front, getting ready to change the locks. And look! There are my posts from 2022 reacting to the wonderful mid-term elections. And then, looking back just a couple issues of *Turbo*, I see my joyful, hopeful photos and post about Kamala Harris. \*sigh\*

I've been avoiding reading anything more than headlines in our newspaper subscriptions. I am so, so sad and teeth-grittingly angry.

We went to bed at 1am, before the election was called, but the outcome wasn't in much doubt. Nevertheless, I put off looking at my phone and finding out what actually happened, for as long as possible the next morning. Now I'm mostly thinking about what dark days these are and how many dark days and years lie ahead of us. Scott's and my impulses now are to turn away from the larger world, focusing on those we love, on survival. I expect and hope that I will eventually shift my energies to some form of activism and resistance. But I'm not there today. Today I'm afraid for people that Trump/Republicans hate. I'm afraid for Ukraine, for Gaza. I'm afraid for the planet.

Kim Stanley Robinson's novel, *Years of Rice and Salt*, has floated in and out of my consciousness during the past weeks. *Years* is set in an alternate history in which the Black Plague killed 99% of the population of Europe, instead of a third as it did in reality. So, the industrial revolution happens in the Mideast, rather than Europe, and world history proceeds on a different pathway. Indigenous Native Americans form a league to resist Chinese and Muslim invaders, among other deviations from our familiar history. The story spans hundreds





of years and is divided into ten parts that take place in different times and places, but the events are connected by a group of characters who are reincarnated into each time but are identified to the reader by the first letter of their name being consistent in each of their lives. The characters meet up together in the Bardo in between reincarnations.

The reason Robinson's *Years* swims in my consciousness post-election, is the message that I believe inspired Robinson to write it. The characters mostly become better human beings with each reincarnation and view world history from a vantage point that a single, mortal person can't easily access. For instance, one of his characters writes a monumentally important book, that promotes progressive, idealistic ideas circulating in her small, Utopian community. She is celebrated by her community, and they all believe that they are on the cusp of a new and bright future. Her work is suppressed, however, after their country's invasion, by a cruel, despotic, authoritarian ruler, who orders all copies of her book destroyed. Many years later, a single copy of that book is discovered and inspires a powerful renaissance of her ideas in another country. The author's and the community's ideals end up having an enormous, positive impact on the world ... many generations afterward.

When I read Robinson's book in 2002, I read it as his attempt to reassure us that even in times when it seems we take two steps back for every step forward, there is still hope...in the long run. He urges us not to lose hope, not to stop working toward a better world, and to understand that we may not see the results of our work during our lifetimes. I wish that I could take his message to heart now. But I can't yet; my thoughts are apocalyptic. Considering everything that is at risk with Trump's victory, it seems likely to me that both our country and the world will be fatally wounded.

I hope that I get through this funk soon, and find a way to take part in the inevitable resistance. But I am not there yet.

## Comments

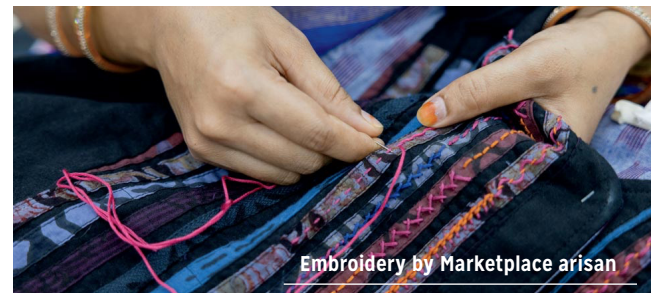
### Elizabeth Matson

[SC] I enjoyed reading about your adventures, all interesting stuff. Nick's absence is still sad, but I liked the photo you included of his memorial. I was also impressed with your National Park Hats display photos, very cool. Thanks as always for your fine book reviews.

Re YCT **Jae**, I like kombucha. It's not sweet, which is good, and I gravitate to the fruity ones more than the herbal ones. I have seen ads for classes in making kombucha (maybe in the Willy St. Coop Reader?) so I think making it is not too difficult.

[JG] The presentation on Indian teas sounds wonderful. I wish I'd been able to attend too. My favorite teas are Indian (though I don't care much for chai). I don't like Chinese teas (like oolong) as much – they are too bitter for me. So, I'd love to know more about how geography differentiated them. I've read several novels in which the opium wars contributed to the plot. So I would have found that historical focus interesting too.

I like the term, "visible mending." I've always avoided mending as much as possible, sometimes even resorting to throwing out a piece of clothing because I knew I'd never get around to fixing it. But I get many shirts from *Marketplace: Handiwork of India* catalogs, and love how individual artisans embroider details onto the shirts. I've occasionally thought about looking into how difficult it would be to add my own embroidered details.



Wow! Your hats and assorted related items made a beautiful display. Very cool.

I love that you actually colored in my artwork on the back cover of your copy of the August *Turbo*. I imagine that the glossy paper might have made coloring somewhat difficult. I will work on my own Ideal Bookshelf and try to include it in this mailing. I will probably not focus on my childhood's picks, but will certainly include some of them.

What a long, meaty zine you published this month! Very impressive!

### Lisa Freitag

[SC] What a wonderfully musical WorldCon report. I have never read one like it, thank you. Do all WorldCons do so much music and I just never noticed or was Glasgow an outlier for some reason? I was particularly attracted to *Dune! The Musical!* and the Glasgow WorldCon Philharmonic concert.

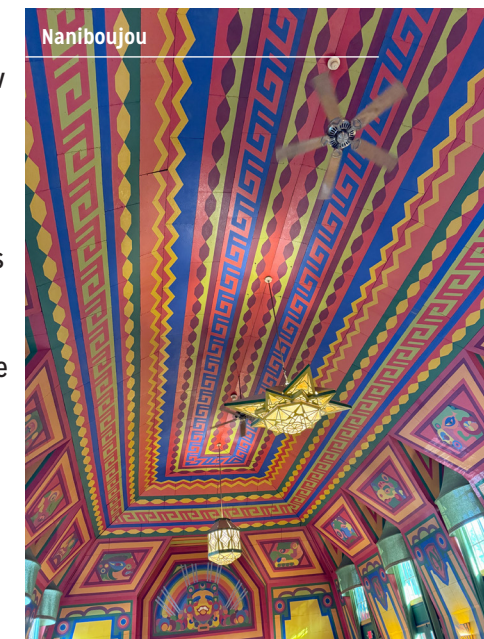
[JG] Thanks for letting us know about *Dune! The Musical!* I found a few of the songs on YouTube: "What do you want to be when you grow up?," "Twisted Mentat," "What if Moby Dick was set on Dune?" and "Gurney Halleck sings 'The Girl of My Dreams.'" (Weirdly, I couldn't find Dan Collins' name anywhere on the YouTube page.) Now, I'd really like to hear the whole thing.

Thanks for your music-centric worldcon report!

I had the same thought you did while looking at the wild colors on Naniboujou's walls and ceiling. How challenging it must be when the walls need repainting! So, I asked a staff person about it and they said, actually, the walls had been repainted only once in Naniboujou's almost-100-year history. I was so flabbergasted by the reply that I neglected to ask when this massive job had been undertaken and who did the work. I did notice, however, that they employed fans to prevent smoke and odors from drifting out of the kitchen and into the dining hall. Good as our meals were, we never smelled anything from the kitchen while we waited for our food. And of course, the whole place was marked with no-smoking signs. I suspect that Naniboujou's staff take great care protecting those walls, so as to put off the need for new coats of paint for as long as possible. However, when and if they do re-paint, getting the colors right shouldn't be a problem. There is a really impressive technology available that allows techs to scan paint chips and whip up a precisely accurate recipe for a new batch of paint, identical to the original. The paint colors that Scott and I chose in our house came from a catalog developed by folks who drilled down to the bottom-most layer of mid-1920s houses. They created a collection of paints based on the colors used in homes built in the same period as our house was built.

### Steve Swartz

[SC] Re okay#26, I was surprised you liked *Red Team Blues*. I don't think the book group has ever



chosen a Doctorow novel and I've been enjoying his columns in *Locus* for a while. When this drew some positive reviews, I nominated it for the group. The plot was fun but I most liked his characters and his technical commentary on shady financial dealings.

Re YCT me, I don't have a problem with food gardening, or any gardening. Up until now, my lawn looked as good (or bad) as my neighbors. I may be grumpy that my new neighbor might set a higher standard than I want to keep up with. Driving completely around Lake Superior is something I would like to do. We did have some good times at the old Essen House. I have a couple of little boot shot glasses for old times' sake. I smiled at your comment to **Andrea**, you are right that I have never had a pet of my own. My dad and older siblings all had pets when I was a kid and I learned the pluses and minuses of pet possession, hence my resistance to having one. When it comes to eating small animals, I admit that we regularly hunted and ate rabbits, squirrels,

pheasants and ducks when I was growing up.

Re *okay* #27, it was great seeing you at TurboCon, thanks for all your help, too. Thank you for the response to my question about Barbarossa in *Little, Big*. I don't think I said Auberon's night with Bruno was a hallucination, but I think Crowley is cagey about whether they actually had sex. Re-reading the passage, it seems like they must have, but Crowley also suggested that Auberon passed out early and they were naked because the room was hot. I agree with you that sex with Bruno might be symbolically significant, but Crowley depicts Auberon as almost relentlessly straight, so who knows.

Re YCT me, at the time I meant New York City specifically, but really, I would not choose to live in any big city unless I was rich. Eugene struck me as very much like Madison the last time I was there (for the last Tiptree symposium). WisCon has



chosen to go virtual again next year, so your signing up to be a co-chair will have to wait (OMG). I am less interested in reading Hugo nominees than you are. The Hugos are a popularity contest and not necessarily a source for the best SF/Fantasy. I'm sometimes curious about the winner, but I like to look for books that show up on a range of award and "best of..." lists. Also, traditionally, we have resisted choosing books that are too new so folks aren't forced to buy hardcovers and the books are more likely to be available from libraries.

[JG] I was blown away by *A City on Mars*, for many of the same reasons that you gave for liking it. It reminded me of Kim Stanley Robinson's *Aurora*, which fictionally exposed the essential problems of interstellar human travel in much the same way as Kelly and Zach Weinersmith critiqued plans for living off-earth. I still think about some of Robinson's characters who were descendants of the people who originally chose to join a multi-generational starship crew. For good reason, these descendants felt angry that their parents and grandparents had made this choice for them.

I also enjoyed *Red Team Blues*, and was pleasantly surprised by Doctorow, or Doctorow's character's willingness to befriend and trust people he met as he traveled. There are a few bad guys in Doctorow's fictional world, but there are far more good guys, potential friends, who are deserving of understanding and help. Right now, post-election, that point of view feels less convincing that it did when I first read the novel.

In answer to your question about why my comments preceded Scott's, I have a pretty mundane answer. I wrote my comments before Scott wrote his. Usually, he emails me a Word file with his comments, which I open and then append with mine. This time, for some reason, I wrote first. I actually can't remember what the reason was. But as you see in this zine, we are back to the usual order.

Re the question of free will vs. determinism .... Well, the reason I said that it didn't matter to me is that I will never actually know whether or not I live in a pre-determined reality or whether I actually make choices of my own free will. But I have decided to act as if I do have free will,



and that I can make choices for myself. If it turns out, in fact, that free choice is a delusion, then I will be glad that my pre-determined self was one who pretended to choose things in what I (perhaps wrongly) perceived as my best interest, rather than being a pre-determined self who gave up and endured a sad, broken life based on perceived powerlessness. Is that what you mean by "consciousness raising"? It's all I've got for this particular issue.

Indeed, I do think that AI art, currently, is outright theft. Students and artists who copy the works of other artists to improve their skills are not allowed to legally sell the copies they make while claiming to be the original artist. If they try and are caught, they are charged with plagiarism or copyright infringement. On the other hand, a book publisher can ask an AI bot to make an illustration in the style of a famous artist, pay nothing, print the AI art on a book cover, and be free thereafter of needing to actually pay the artist who spent years, possibly their whole lifetime, creating a style that made their work popular for book covers. I am sad that there are probably many kinds of art that artists simply won't be able to afford to practice, because as soon as they develop a unique style, their visual ideas will be gobbled up by an AI bot. Some artists will no longer be able to pursue their art as a profession.

### Jeanne Bowman

[SC] The plot synopsis of *Overthrow: A Novel* sounded interesting when I looked it up and it got some positive attention from the *New York Times* and was longlisted for a literary prize, but the reviews on Goodreads sounded much more in line with your reaction, garnering just a 2.72 rating and a lot of complaints that it was "boring." So, I think I'll pass. How did you come across it?

A 750+ mile road trip for two adults and two big dogs stuffed into a Morris Mini? Yikes! How do you get into these situations? Sounds like you had a (hilarious) good time though. You are right about

how traveling with dog(s) will reveal the dog-loving subculture in our country. Great story.

Your Bucket List article showed me how much I don't know about rocks, but was fun to read. Congrats



on finding the haul of garnets and a few tolerant TSA agents.

[JG] I also like rocks, though I've never collected the gaudy ones you favor. But I also feel the power of time and change when I look at my rocks, though my thoughts go more toward images of water than fire. I think quite a few people in this area may have already heard my story of how I used to collect limestone rocks worn to smoothness in the surf at Rock Island State Park, where Scott and I used to camp. Egg-shaped, flying saucers, perfect spheres, all begging to be caressed or perhaps, painted. I picked out my favorite rocks each trip and would hide these prizes in Scott's backpack in the moments just before we boarded the ferry back to the mainland. When we got back home and unpacked our stuff, Scott's voice would cry out, "Jeanne! There are rocks in my pack! You put rocks in my pack!" He frequently warned me that he would turn me into the park ranger for my crimes, but it was all bluff. My record is spotless. Nevertheless, I have a collection of stones that I enjoy for their elegant shapes and the way they feel in my hand. My favorite rock was not collected on Rock Island, but somewhere along the shore of Lake Superior. I found it years before I met Scott, so he wasn't forced to lug this one home for me. In fact, the rock seldom left my hand during that trip. It fits into my grip as if it was molded to my hand. Bespoke. I keep it on my desk and frequently hold it and turn it in my hand while thinking through a problem. Sometimes I wonder if I am not the first person to hold my rock and imagine that its form was created in part by human touch as well as wave action.

I loved your story of getting your rocks past the TSA agents!

### Jim Brooks

[SC] I'm very sorry about your trip to the ICU. Pretty scary. I hope you are now fully recovered. How likely is this to happen again? So far, I've had one brief ambulance ride (not nearly as harrowing as your experience) and one ride handcuffed in the back of a squad car. Both incidents were many years

ago. I would not choose to do either again, thank you.

Great stories in your comments to **Andy** and **Greg**. Re YCT **Carrie**, there are still as many Jims as Jeannes in the membership. It might come down to who first colludes with the smaller Steve Cabal to manage the coup d'etat.

[JG] I loved your story of the Beatles tribute show and the couple who melted into one another's arms when *Hey, Jude* was played. Really a lovely bit of writing. Thanks, Jim. That, followed by the single-sentence, astonishing tribute to Chandler melted me. I'd like to read a story introduced by that sentence.

I'm glad to hear that your infection was arrested and that you returned safe to more comfortable sleeping.

### Pat Hario

[SC] Thank you for the excellent TurboCon report. I appreciated your presence at the Farmers Market expedition on Saturday, which you did not mention. You impressed me right away by showing up at the ungodly hour of 9am on a Saturday, helped shepherd the gang around the busy Square and State Street, then hung out with us for lunch at the Old Fashioned. A delightful morning. I even got to taste a ground cherry which, when shelled, looked like a tiny tomato but tasted like a sweet cherry (why does it never occur to me to ask for a sample? Other people regard samples as practically an entitlement.)

Lovely photos, too. My favorites are the photos of **Carrie**, **Alan**, **SteveSw**, and the **Jeannes** madly creating art.

RYCT to **Walter**, very moving comment about your last days with your dad. That must have been very hard. I'm sorry.

[JG] Thanks for describing the Live Apazine readings. I was really pleased by how that part of TurboCon weekend turned out. And I was absolutely delighted to hear your reading of "Barbie's Inferno." As I mentioned in my own report, it set me thinking about it in unexpected ways.

### Steven Vincent Johnson & Darlene P. Coltrain

[SC] Great photos! Your Johannes Kepler presentation was definitely a high point at TurboCon. Thanks for doing that. As for future presentations, you know you are in the right frame of mind when it's the "fiddly bits" that are getting your attention.



[JG] Two wonderful photos! Thanks.

If you want to do more presentations like the one you did at TurboCon, I suggest looking for partners who can take care of the “fiddly bits” that you’d rather avoid. Maybe you could reach out to the Madison Public Library and find out if they are looking for programs to present. Or maybe there are groups in town that would invite you to be a guest lecturer – Google “Meetups” in Madison, or ask Dick Russell for information about the Meetup groups he works with. There’s a UW department devoted to History of Science, Medicine, and Technology. Talk to someone from that department and maybe they will have a suggestion for where/when you might make a presentation. And there’s the Wisconsin Science Museum, whose mission statement seems open to your program:

“We are committed to creating compelling and inspiring experiences connected to local expertise in biomedical sciences, engineering, information sciences, healthcare, and biotechnology, and educating our community about local and global advancements in science and technology.”

### Andy Hooper

[SC] Terrific article on Dungeons and Dragons, I enjoyed it all. I have never been a player, but it has been part of the Madison SF group ever since I first became acquainted with it. Despite being around players for so many years, there was still a lot about D&D I did not know until now.

I graduated from high school in 1974, so much of what you mentioned about that year was familiar to me though I did not know about the premiere of *NOVA* and I would not have known who Tim Horton was then, but I do now and I was impressed by his spectacular demise.

In your response to William Breiding, you mentioned the



poetry reading event at TurboCon which was held in the Atrium space at Olbrich Gardens. It reminded me that I meant to point out to people who were thinking of touring the gardens (it was a bit windy and overcast that day) that the refurbished Garver Feed Mill building was just a short stroll around the back of the Olbrich property, across a bike path and railroad track. The Garver building is beautiful, with a nice patio and a big open interior space that has a lounge, coffee shop and food vendors. Did you make it over that way on your stroll around?

[JG] The introduction to your essay on D&D, got me thinking. My 12th

birthday was in 1963, and like you, I’ve retained many vivid memories from that year. I first heard the news of President John F. Kennedy’s assassination sitting in Mr. Waldschmidt’s seventh-grade class when Sister Mary Rupert announced the news over St. Luke grade school’s loudspeaker. I felt it personally: During the Kennedy-Nixon campaign I had decided that I would have voted for Kennedy if I was old enough. And they had killed him! We were all sent home. That shocking event was closely followed by Lee Harvey Oswald’s murder. I remember sitting cross-legged on the floor in front of our TV watching Jack Ruby confront Oswald with a gun. I remember thinking it seemed so undramatic, as if Ruby just bumped into Oswald, without the sound effects and dramatic music that a TV show or Movie would have presented it. My memory insists that I was watching a live feed, but I suppose it’s more likely that I was watching a recorded scene since the incident was broadcast over and over for days. I think Kennedy’s assassination would have been seared into my memory even earlier than my 12th year; it was such a landmark event for everyone. Just as clear in my memory is the Cuban missile crisis, which happened the previous year in 1962, when I was eleven years old. I remember bicycling around the block in our



suburban neighborhood, wondering if I should stay close to home in case our family had to rush down into the basement to protect ourselves from the bomb. And I remember the incessant and horrifying coverage of the Vietnam War, the death count mounting, and a monk burning himself alive.

In addition to the news that I absorbed mostly from TV news shows in 1963, I watched TV for entertainment with my family during evenings after I’d finished my homework: I liked *The Outer Limits*, *The Red Skelton Show*, and *My Favorite Martian*, though I allotted most of my TV time to late-night movies. (My parents gave each of us an “allowance” of so many TV-watching hours per week, which we kids scheduled at the beginning of each week and negotiated trades when our choices conflicted. We were allowed to add news shows, plus any PBS documentaries that we claimed had been assigned by our teachers without penalty.) I’m sure I could come up with a list of books that I read that year, but I think I’ll scour my memory for Elizabeth’s “Ideal Bookshelf.” The 1963 movie that stands out in my memory is *How the West Was Won*. I loved that movie and for years I accepted its mythology of US western expansion as real history. My folks took the whole family and grandparents to the theater to see it. The movie was interrupted with an intermission – something that was common in the days before multiplexes, when theaters held only one screen. During the intermission, the audience streamed out into the lobby to buy snacks. After Dad ordered popcorn and sodas, and we chatted about the movie. I felt quite grown-up as I expressed my admiration for the scene in which the settlers’ river raft capsized in the rapids. Then I casually mentioned how irritating I found the rude guy sitting next to me in the theater, who kept pushing his knee into my leg. Dad suddenly disappeared. After the house lights flashed and we returned to the auditorium, the seat next to mine remained empty. The rude guy did not return. Years later I pieced together what Dad must have said or done to the likely pervert. Dad and I never discussed the incident.

Though I was always aware of D&D, especially the Emersonian version played by local Madison fans, I never played it, though I did do a stint dashing off quick sketches for Dick Russell’s D&D show on cable TV. It’s interesting to think about how formative experiences affected our lives, but only become obvious as landmarks when we look back, years later. For me, that twelfth year was about a growing awareness of the dangers in the world outside my family home,

and led pretty directly to a political awareness that eventually dominated my college years.

I like your suggestion to Walter about creating a daybook. I sat for a while thinking about how such a multi-authored book with an unreliable narrator might create an interesting plot for a novel or movie.

### Carrie Root

[SC] I want you to know I was taking mental notes all through your fine travel report (out and back) for reference for our own drive to Seattle next summer. Your clear, straight-forward comments are very helpful. I’m not sure we will take exactly the same route (I will also be consulting Steve S’s travel comments) but it’s all useful data regardless (and the maps are great!) BTW, we already have hotel reservations for WorldCon. When Jeanne and I finally decide to do something, we don’t piss around.

My mother was from Valley City, ND so I have seen the wide-open spaces there a few times. Maybe you have to grow up on the Great Plains to appreciate the beauty of wide-open, big sky of places like North Dakota, Montana and Nebraska. It is a big, stark, bleak endlessness that has a forever feel to it. Not like the ocean. The ocean has a bottomless menace to it, even when it’s calm. On the ocean, you are your boat, without that you are nothing. The desert is also plainly deadly. It can easily kill you trying to walk across it. The plains are not so obviously hostile. The vast open land is like gazing up into a starry night sky, it seems to invite you to think big.

[JG] Thank you for a wonderful trip report!

### Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I’m glad you had a good time at TurboCon, it’s always a treat to visit with you guys. I like black walnut trees, too. There is a beautiful one on my dad’s (now my brother’s) farm. My dad may not have used the best judgment in placing the tree in the part of the yard near where my mom had once gardened (black walnut trees poison the ground around them for gardening) but mom had passed by then and he was not going to carry on with a garden without her anyway. The image of you and Greg pattering around your yard wearing hard hats may sound funny, but I know what you mean by those projectiles. Be careful out there.

Thanks for including the beautiful autumn *Wabe* cover.



[JG] I definitely think of the Madison TurboCon as a one-shot. After WisCon 1, I immediately began thinking about how WisCon 2 might be improved. But I don't feel that urge with TurboCon. We will happily attend the Seattle TurboCon, and try to attend any other versions hosted by other apa members, but for Scott and me, we aren't thinking of this con as a series.

Good luck with the search for a new car!

I love your drawing for the *Wabe* cover. I especially admire the branches emerging from the man's eyebrow.

### Jae Leslie Adams

[SC] I have lately been distributing some books to LFLs in the neighborhood. I thought I knew where they all were, but whenever I strike out on an open-ended walk in a less familiar direction, I'm surprised by how many more I find. Having never worked in a library, the shelving issues you mentioned do not plague me so much, but I do get annoyed at the crap people leave that are not books. Periodicals, sometimes work-related reports, pamphlets, and even magazines. Often just dumped, as you described. Irritating. I don't take the time to re-organize the mess, I just drop off a few choice items and move on. It's always pleasing to find the ones that are obviously lovingly curated by the owner.

I hope you are able to patch things up in Duluth.

[JG] I love the mural on Johnson and East Washington that you neighbor Bill did. I see it often, and each time like to focus on a different part. The colors are wonderful.

I hope you will be able to fix your email settings so that you can send as well as receive email. I suspect that it will be a fairly easy fix since you have no problem receiving email. It's likely that you've got one or two items incorrectly filled in your email settings. You should be able to call the company that provides you with email. There will be a couple required pieces of information that can be provided to you by the company from which you purchase Internet access. Would that be Charter? In any case, I think you could probably solve this in the course of a single telephone



conversation with your provider. They would tell you, field by field, what information you need to type into your mail settings.

And you should tell **Jim** (and the rest of us) what your correct phone number is!

### Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] It has been lovely to see you both starting to get out and about again at TurboCon and **Hope's** party. It has to be supremely annoying for Diane to have to struggle with pain for so long, but things should improve over time. I hope by the January wedding, the struggle will be long over.

Jim, great comment to **Walter**. I want to echo your statement, "we're here for what you need."

That car story you shared was scary. How fast would you say you were going on the turnpike? Someone must have been holding Pete through the rollover? It must have been especially terrifying for anyone not seat-belted in. Kind of remarkable that seven people made it through that accident with no injuries while the car was totaled. I've been in a number of car accidents but only one truly life-threatening experience. I don't like thinking about it. I'll write about it one of these days when I'm in the right mood.

[JG] My most serious accident, and it wasn't at all serious, was with **Diane** when she was giving me a lift to my apartment on Jenifer Street. She must have been going all of 5 mph when we collided with another car on a corner that was turning towards us from the opposite direction. Both Diane and I were wearing seatbelts. The bridge of my nose developed a little bruise after I bumped into the rear-view mirror. The various car-crash videos you can see online makes it seem that demon cars and Godzilla trucks lurk around every corner and across every lane. Both Scott and I are sort of interested in buying a dashcam.

I no longer remember anything about the cliffhanger ending of O'Brian's last Aubrey/Maturin book. Shortly after finishing that last book many years ago, I would have been extremely interested in reading his notes for the following book, but I can barely

remember any plot details from any of the books now, so I'd have to do some re-reading for that to make sense. So, no thanks, but thank you very much for offering!

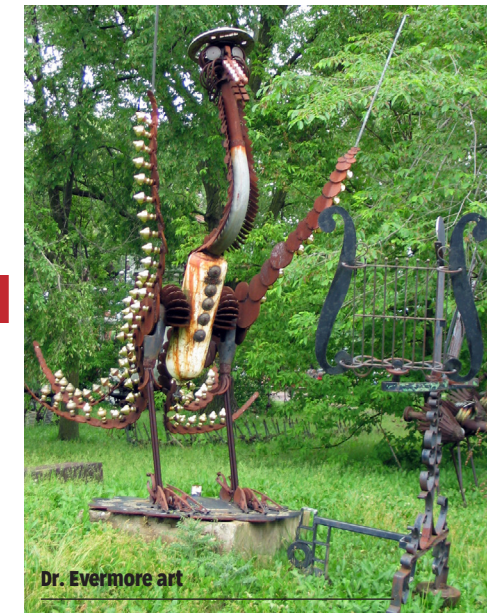
### Luke McGuff

[SC] You and Julie are a font of local information. I had no idea there was a museum at the Badger Ordinance Works. Whenever I drive up Hwy 12, I pretty much ignore the area as a work-still-in-progress. It never occurred to me there might be something to tour, plus a prairie restoration walk. The last time I visited the Forevertron, I don't think they were selling souvenirs. Now I'll have to check that out. Good food suggestions, too. Keep it up!

You were certainly a good sport as GoH at TurboCon and both of you were a vast help. Take a bow. However, I'm on to you now regarding your spelling ability, Luke, don't expect to lure me into any hopeless games of Scrabble.

I'm cautiously optimistic we may get in one more bike ride in November. I'm writing this comment on Halloween and just the day before yesterday it was almost 80 degrees. A good day can still happen, at least until the ice, snow and freezing temps set in. Then I'm truly done.

[JG] I'm so glad you got to see Dr. Evermore's Art Park. I love that place. Somewhere I have some great pictures of the musical instrument army advancing through the meadow. I love his bird sculptures with crests made of evil-looking, rusty blades arranged like a playing hand of cards – and yet, somehow, they look soft and feathery, as if you could brush your fingers through them without drawing blood. The setting



– grassy meadows and scattered trees – seems like the perfect setting for the weird, metal creatures. I'm so glad that it wasn't closed down after Evermore died. I hope we get back there one day. Congratulations on a great first biking season!

We like Taste of Ukraine restaurant too. So far, we haven't had to deal with crowds, I guess because we tend to go out to eat on weekday nights. The first time we ate there I noticed the copper mugs on the shelf which I recognized from seeing them at my brother Steve's house. The mugs are apparently the official vessel for making the cocktail, "Moscow Mules." Knowing this, I thought it was a little weird to see them in a

Ukraine restaurant, considering the on-going war between Russia and Ukraine. So, I asked the owner, but I didn't even finish my sentence before he interrupted me: "We don't call them *that*. We serve Kiev Mules here."

### Catie Pfeifer

[SC] I'm delighted that you had a good time at TurboCon. It was fun to meet Jacob. He flabbergasted me when he said he never (never!) sneaked a look at your copies of the apa. With our awesome covers, how could anyone resist? I don't get it.

I have been to Chicago many times, but somehow, I have never been to Navy Pier. Must add to my "to do in Chicago" list.

Thanks for your perceptive review of *Lord of the Rings: The Musical*, a crazy idea in my opinion. It boggles the mind that they tried to cram a big 3 volume epic fantasy story into a couple hours (how long was it?), with music.

Even doing one volume would have been a tall order. It was impressive that it went as well as it did. I thought you asked a great question about who was the intended audience for this show? For someone who was unfamiliar with LOTR, wouldn't it have felt overstuffed and complicated while longtime fans would have been unhappy with the plot edits and changes. Who is going to like this? Thanks for telling us about it.

[JG] I found your review of *Lord of the Rings: The Musical* intriguing. Thanks





for your detailed analysis. I think I too would have been confused about some of the choices made in the stage play. I checked out a couple reviews of the show online, and it sounds like some audiences, or at least a few reviewers, were as impressed with the actor who played Gollum as you were. One reviewer called him “a real scene stealer. Bozzuto’s physical and voice acting are spectacular – his famous line “My precious,” was chilling.” The reviewer didn’t think that Gollum was being portrayed as a comic character. Maybe the writers and actors will continue to work on the stage play and we’ll eventually get a chance to see an improved version.

### Ruth & Jim Nichols

[SC] You guys have really done some traveling these last few months. Ruth’s report for your September trip to New Mexico was terrific with beautiful pictures, once again (I think the shot of you both on page 2 is my all-time favorite photo of you guys.) I loved it all. You made me want to do another train trip sometime.

Jim, sorry about your GERD attack, but the trip to Wichita sounded otherwise pleasant. Nice photos, too. When you travel to Wichita, do you drive through Illinois and across Missouri or do you drive across Iowa and turn south at Des Moines to K.C. and Wichita? Just curious.

[JG] I love the photo of you two, with Jim gazing adoringly at you. You should frame that one for sure. But all of your photos were great.

I like the interjections from future Ruth as past Ruth describes her preparations for the train trip. Funny! As I read on, I hoped that there would be more interjections. (*There were just a couple.*) I was fascinated by the pottery demo. I would have loved to have seen it done.

Good term – joke tunnel. Sometimes when I’m on a roll – suddenly, inexplicably able to remember lots of jokes – it feels like worm tunnel has opened up in my mind to the secret cupboard where all the jokes I’ve ever heard go to (mostly) be forgotten.

I like the rooster tiles! Are you going to incorporate them into your kitchen backsplash tiles?

I completely understand your campaign-season decision to filter emails with the name, “Harris” in the addresses. I use a different method to reduce spam in my in-box. My filters send any emails to my junk folder that originate from email addresses that do not exist in my contact list. That means that I have to be vigilant

about updating my contact list whenever I expect a message from a new person. It works pretty well.

We missed you at TurboCon.

### What’s New

#### On Screen

[JG] We saw a couple movies in actual theaters, but mostly we streamed. It may seem to you that this list is pretty skimpy compared to previous months, but I will note that there are *seven seasons* in the *Ray Donovan* series. We are watching the final two seasons now, and I expect that we will also watch the movie, *Ray Donovan*, which apparently is the follow-up to the seventh and final season of the television series. Ray is taking up a lot of our streaming attention.

**Conclave** (theater) Cardinal Lawrence (played by Ralph Fiennes) is tasked with managing one of the world’s most secretive and ancient events – the selection of a new Catholic pope. Surrounded by powerful religious leaders in the halls of the Vatican (which include Stanley Tucci and John Lithgow as cardinals, both vying for the top job, and Isabella Rossellini as a nun). Cardinal Lawrence uncovers a trail of deep secrets that could shake the very foundation of the Roman Catholic Church. As an ex-Catholic, I loved seeing how the film-makers put a spotlight on the weird details of the pope-selection procedures – the rites, the rules, even the specific color of red used in cardinals’ robes. (The director preferred the darker, richer color worn by 16th century cardinals over the brighter, cherry color of today’s cardinals’ robes.) *Conclave* is both a mystery *and* a commentary on how we elect our leaders and how challenging it is to make moral choices when power is at stake. This is a marvelous movie. Don’t let anyone tell you many plot details! But go see it!

**The Diplomat**, season 2, (Netflix) Amid an international crisis, a career diplomat, played by Keri Russell, juggles her new high-profile job as ambassador to the United Kingdom and her turbulent marriage to career diplomat Hal Wyler, played by Rufus Sewell. We really enjoyed the first season of this show when it came out in 2023 and were very happy when we discovered that a second season was being filmed and a third is in the works. This is one of these fast-moving stories that make multi-tasking difficult, at least it does for me. Names and characterizations are mentioned once. If you miss too many details because your attention is divided, you will soon be floundering. I do like it when shows assume that I am smart enough to put two and two together without info dumps.



**The Marlow Murder Club on Masterpiece** (PBS) Retired archaeologist and crossword setter, and woman-with-a-mysterious past, Judith Potts (played by Samantha Bond) believes that a brutal murder has taken place in the sleepy town of Marlow. When the police refuse to believe her story, she kicks off a private investigation with two unlikely friends: Becks Starling (Cara Horgan), who is committed to playing the role of the perfect vicar’s wife, but is frustrated at being taken for granted; and Suzie Harris (Jo Martin) an empty-nester, extrovert and pet walker whose job gives her personal connections to many people who live in Marlow. This is a fun series, definitely a cozy mystery.

**Ray Donovan** (Netflix) As I said above, Scott and I have invested quite a bit of time in this series. We’ve layered in a few other movies and series between *Ray Donovan* seasons, but we’ve eagerly returned each time to find out what happens next in Ray’s life. Ray Donovan is a “fixer” for Hollywood’s elite. He is the go-to guy that the city’s celebrities, athletes and business moguls call to make their problems disappear. It’s a lucrative business. But Ray’s got a soft spot in his heart for sincere, well-meaning people and frequently figures out a way to block bad guys in a way that benefits the powerless folks that get tangled in his clients’ schemes. Ray’s past haunts him and the audience gradually finds out more about Ray, his wife, his dead sister, his troubled brothers, and their ex-con father. The family’s roots and trauma in South Boston provide the arc story for this series. But the heart of the show is Ray himself, a taciturn, all-business tough-guy, played by the excellent actor, Liev Schreiber. (Jon Voight plays Ray’s father. And really, there’s excellent acting all around.) There are a few weird things about the show though. For instance, Scott and I frequently commented on and laughed about all the characters, but especially Ray’s, constant whiskey-swigging. (No lie, the scriptwriters must have a keyboard shortcut that pastes in the phrase, “Ray enters, pours whiskey into a glass and swigs it in one gulp. Then he pours another drink for himself...”) I found it unbelievable that no one was killed or injured as a result of drunk driving. Also, no character is ever shown to eat.

They may have a plate of food in front of them, but something always distracts them before they bring fork to mouth. Also, there’s this: I may be the only fan of *Ray Donovan* who has noticed Ray’s startling ability to teleport. Ray’s days are *busy*. His clients and family members constantly call him, usually while he is driving, on his way to fix a different crisis. They tell him it is *urgent*. That he needs to come to them *right now*. Ray, says, “sure,” makes a U-turn, and strides into the room moments later. You get the sense that the person who called Ray just put down their phone. They’re standing in the same place they stood when they called him. And yet ... this is *Los Angeles*. It would typically take around one to two hours to cross the city from one end to the other. And there’s traffic, notoriously heavy traffic. But Ray never gets stuck in traffic and manages to zip between multiple crises in the course of a single day. So, *Ray Donovan* can be viewed as a science fiction story if you’re in the right mood. Just make the *Star Trek* teleporter sound every time Ray makes a U-turn. Despite those ... irregularities ... we are enjoying the show. It certainly has offered a welcome distraction from Real Life.

**We Live in Time** (theater) Almut (played by Florence Pugh) and Tobias (Andrew Garfield) are brought together when Almut runs over Tobias in her car; it’s certainly and unusual “meet-cute” scene. And of course, the accident changes their lives. We find out within the first few moments of the movie that Almut will die young, so there’s no suspense about that. The lovers embark on a path challenged by the limits of time and learn to cherish each moment of their unconventional love story. I was shocked, shocked I tell you, when Scott suggested, without prompting that he wouldn’t mind if we went to see this movie. Normally I have to bargain with him to go to see a romantic tear-jerker. (“You owe me a romantic tear-jerker for that awful movie you picked last week...”) But to be fair, I don’t suggest going to romantic tear-jerkers often, not unless the movie has gotten excellent reviews and looks very good. And to be even more fair, Scott will frequently admit that he enjoyed the romantic tear-jerker and is glad that we went to see it. But this is



the first time he took the initiative to actually suggest that we buy tickets to a romantic tear-jerker. Well, the explanation is that he really likes the actors, Florence Pugh and Andrew Garfield. I do too. They are amazingly good in this movie, and I expect Oscar nominations.



## Little, Big

[SC] I fell behind last month as TurboCon activity caught up with me. Getting apa comments written was all I had time for in October, so this month I include summaries from last month's reading and two of the three chapters in Book 6 scheduled for November. I will do the remaining three chapters next month.

Some of the questions I'm left with at this point mostly surround the confusion about whether a War is actually happening, or something else. Lilac and Eigenblick seem to see it as a war, but Hawksquill hints at something else "very much like war." Any ideas what she's on about? For me the emotional resonance with the characters is finally kicking in as I'm growing more sympathetic with them. The chase with the fake Lilac was exciting, Sophie's meeting with her ghostly (but not a ghost) daughter was very sad and I find myself warming up to Daily Alice's attempts to comfort characters in distress while constrained by the limits of what she can say about the Tale.

## Book 5, Chapter 3

Ariel Hawksquill uses magic to make herself invisible in order to enter Eigenblick's hotel and get past his security to confront him directly. She tells him that she knows who he really is (Emperor Frederick Barbarosssa) and what he really wants. She tells him not to trust the Noisy Bridge Rod and Gun Club and to do as she instructs him. She tells him that she knows his fate as told by the magic cards (which he desperately wants) and that she will help him accomplish his destiny.

Auberon arrives at Edgewood and is welcomed by his sisters, who, of course, knew he was coming. Daily Alice hugs him and notices that his eyebrows have grown together like hers. She also sees the pain and trouble he has been through. He meets other members of the family and exchanges small talk that isn't really small talk. When he's alone again with Alice, he breaks down and weeps. She knows he needs advice that she can't give him, so she whispers instructions to him instead. Eventually, Auberon meets with Smoky. It turns out that each of them thought the other understood Edgewood's mysterious, magical world and would not share the knowledge. Neither of them understood that they were caught in the Tale, but both of them still had secrets they could not share with each other. They

parted as always, unable to really connect. At the end, Auberon crawls into his old bed and briefly falls back into his old life.

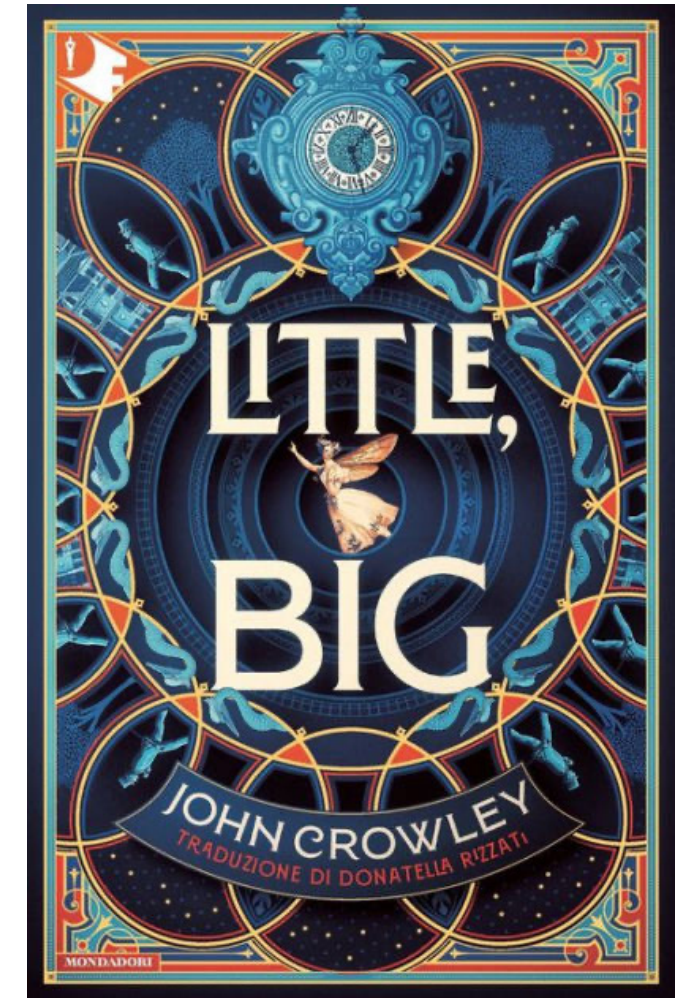
## Book 5, Chapter 4

The instructions Daily Alice gave to Auberon were to go and visit Grandfather Trout. Auberon is hopeful that Trout will tell him where Sylvie is, but, of course, Trout does no such thing. Trout does Auberon no favors at all, telling him that he will always be in pain over the loss of Sylvie even though her departure was not Auberon's fault. Grandfather says love is a myth, like summer is a myth when it's winter time. Grandfather suggests that Auberon will get a gift, though we later learn that Grandfather has no idea if this is true or not.

Ariel Hawksquill realizes she is caught up in something much bigger and more powerful than she thought. She feels at least that if it comes to battle, it will be a fight worthy of her power. She advises Eigenblick to bury the Noisy Bridge Rod and Gun Club in bureaucracy, hold off on his plans to begin The Revelation and instead cool his heels and be President for awhile. Since he plans to reign forever, there is no hurry to start. He likes her ideas and falls asleep.

Auberon returns to George Mouse at Old Law Farm, who takes him in. In the course of telling Auberon that he was once in the fireworks business, George inadvertently talks about Sophie's missing daughter Lilac. He tells Auberon that Lilac is actually his daughter, though Smoky is supposed to think she's his. George knows that Lilac was taken somehow but all he really knows is a fantastic story about the night Sophie came to him with a baby that was not Lilac, and probably not human. She wants George to help her, but the "baby" is aging rapidly and tries to run off. When George catches up to it, it's eating glowing embers from a fire. George manages to lure it into a room full of fireworks and blows it up. Auberon now knows what has happened to the fake Lilac, his invisible friend Lilac he carries inside him so the only question left is where is the real Lilac? Disappeared, perhaps with Sylvie?

Meanwhile the real Lilac is with Mrs. Underhill. After a long day Lilac is tired and Mrs. Underhill brings her to a great pile of leaves beneath a big tree where Lilac curls up to sleep, probably forever. With an owl set to keep watch, Mrs. Underhill completes another of her many tasks. This event maybe a flashback to something that happened 25 years ago.



## Book 6, Chapter 1

The first years of President Eigenblick's rule are hard. Winter has come and it never seems to leave. Everyone appears to be suffering. Sophie at her cards tries to figure out what is going on and what to expect, but gives up due to insufficient information. We switch then to a scene from one of the episodes of Auberon's TV soap opera "A World Elsewhere" that he is now writing, and enjoying success. Auberon is reworking stories from Edgewood and reinvigorating the TV soap opera. But he was also still "carrying a torch" for his lost Sylvie, and currently believing the reason he lost her was because he was fundamentally flawed. We switch then to a letter Daily Alice writes to Auberon where she recites the family history of Nora and Harvey Cloud. Harvey and his father Henry built the orrery that Smoky is trying to bring back to life. We then move to Smoky in the attic of Edgewood working on the orrery and not grasping what power actually drives the machine when young Bud brings him lunch and instantly suggests a way it could work. We then move to a meeting between Hawkquill and



Eigenblick where Hawsquill ponders whether a war is actually going on and suggests they are caught in something that sounds like the Tale, which infuriates Eigenblick. They have a falling out and part ways with him threatening her. We end in Smoky and Alice's bedroom where Alice hints to Smoky that maybe the Tale is nearing its end, which may also be the end of Edgewood. After that maybe they would be free to leave. But Smoky no longer wants to leave, it is his job now to save the house. The chapter ends with them in a lovers embrace as an observant manifestation of Lilac turns away from them and heads down the dark hallway to another room.

## Book 6, Chapter 2

This opens with a heartbreaking scene of Sophie alone and reading in bed when a ghostly Lilac appears in her room. This is no ghost and no dream, but a version of her daughter missing and asleep these last 25 years. Lilac has a message for Sophie, that the family and friends of the Drinkwaters must come together to attend a Parliament to finally end the war that is devastating the Fairie community. Lilac is vague with details but communicates the way to the Parliament can be found in the cards. The next scene is at Old Law Farm where Lilac shows up to speak to George Mouse and Auberon with the same message. Auberon feels his imaginary Lilac inside himself, knows the fake Lilac was blown up so this must indeed be a version of the real, missing Lilac. They are told to get to the meeting by traveling through the forest, and for that they will need a guide. As soon as Lilac leaves, Fred Savage shows up ready to act as guide.


In the last scene Ariel Hawksquill drives up to Edgewood and joins Sophie and Alice and the rest of the gathered Drinkwater clan to begin preparing for the trek to the Parliament. George and Aurberon have not arrived, but Hawksquill confirms they are missing presumably on the way. Once gathered, Alice goes off to collect Smoky who is working on the orrery in the attic. In the attic, Smoky shows Alice that it appears to him that the great machine could never work as designed. Reluctantly he comes down to join everyone else but has a brief "spell" on the staircase that sounds like his angina acting up. Once everyone is together, Sophie begins to tell everyone about her visit from Lilac.

## Little, Big reading schedule

<b>Book One:</b> <i>Edgewood</i>	<b>Book Three:</b> <i>Old Law Firm</i>	<b>September:</b> Chaps 1, 2
<b>January:</b> Chaps 1, 2, 3	<b>May:</b> Chaps 1, 2	<b>October:</b> Chaps 3, 4
<b>February:</b> Chaps 4, 5	<b>June:</b> Chaps 3, 4	<b>Book Six:</b> <i>The Fairies' Parliament</i>
<b>Book Two:</b> <i>Brother North: Wind's Secret</i>	<b>Book Four:</b> <i>The Wild Wood</i>	<b>November:</b> Chaps 1, 2, 3
<b>March:</b> Chaps 1, 2	<b>July:</b> Chaps 1, 2	<b>December:</b> Chaps 4, 5
<b>April:</b> Chaps 3, 4	<b>August:</b> Chaps 3, 4	
	<b>Book Five:</b> <i>The Art of Memory</i>	

## China Mountain Chow Menu

Thanks, **Jae**, for unearthing and sending me this historical document. Remember, a few months ago, we were talking about the Chinese Feast that Bill Hoffman did? Here's a copy of the actual menu.



### China Mountain Chow

**First Course**  
*Moslem-Style Pot Stickers*  
*Spring Rolls*  
*thought to resemble gold bars in Chinese culinary tradition*

**Second Course**  
*Scallion and Ginger Explosion Shrimp*  
*Shantung Cold Eggplant with Sesame Sauce*

**Third Course**  
*Ma-La Cold Chicken*  
*Baby Buddha's Feet*

**Fourth Course**  
*Stir-Fried Spinach and Roasted Garlic*  
*Shrimp Fried Rice*

**Fifth Course**  
*Spicy Steamed Salmon with Ginger*

**Sixth Course**  
*Smoked Tea Duck*  
*"This is an ethereal duck, worthy of a birthday, an honored guest or a special seduction."*

**Seventh Course**  
*Hot and Sour Soup*

**Eighth Course**  
*Sweet Bean Bao and Fruit*  
*Fortune Cookies*

**Also**  
*Tea, Beer, Dipping Sauces*

