

Madison foursquare

54

Striped Scilla in our front yard



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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This is *Madison Foursquare* #54. *Madison Foursquare*

was created using a Mac Pro with

InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop, all CC 2021,

and printed on a Ricoh Aficio CL7200 color printer.

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April 2021 for *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* #418.

Covers

[SC] Thanks for the lovely covers, Catie.

[JG] Yes, very colorful!

Lisa Freitag

[SC] Great story in your issue #46 about winning the lottery for your Pfizer shot. Congratulations.

I thought it was very sad that you were not snapped up as a retired physician to be a Covid volunteer.

You'd think they would be relying on people like you to staff a big public health challenge like this. I think Walgreens is training their own staff to give shots and I doubt they have a medical license. Very troubling.

I think George Clooney's new movie *Midnight Sky* is probably based on the novel you mentioned, *Good Morning, Midnight*. Have you seen the movie? I was wondering what you thought in comparison with the book.

[JG] Months ago, I read about New York's early efforts to recruit retired and out-of-state physicians and nurses to help over-burdened hospitals. It turned out that bureaucratic rules and massive amounts of paperwork largely prevented them from actually enlisting many medical volunteers, despite how eager to help and how qualified they were. I assume this happened all over the country and is likely the reason you weren't employed. I believe that a small part of the Biden anti-COVID task force is now working on regulations that will enable municipalities to bypass

the usual red tape in times of emergency so that volunteers can be put to work.

I was sorry to hear that William tested positive for COVID. It's impossible not to worry about worst case scenarios when someone you love is endangered. I was quite relieved to hear that William got better.

I think you are right that a prison stint is unlikely to provide any kind of moral enlightenment, penitence, or even self-understanding to "the former guy." (I like Biden's nickname.) But that isn't actually one of the reasons I want to see the former guy in jail. Hoping that he suffers because he deserves to suffer is #1, but I am also really concerned about the large number of Republicans who continue to praise him, to repeat his big lies, and who cower away from even a hint of his displeasure, because they continue to perceive him as having power. I think if he goes to jail, he will be recognized as a king with no clothes.

Stories in which none of the characters seems curious about some fantastic/science fictional plot element have always bugged me too. To me, one of the hallmarks of science fiction is that the author (through their characters) searches for answers to the "why?" of the story and will consider at least a couple possible explanations. If the fantastic/science fictional element simply functions as a tool used by the author to consider a philosophical or psychological idea but the author never explores why the thing happened or how the thing might be stopped, I get very irritated. P.D. James' novel, *Children of Men*, is a great example of a book that exasperated me in this way. I don't read much mystery fiction, but this book was an excursion

by P.D. James into SF territory, a world in which, for apparently no reason, women are suddenly unable to conceive children. End of the world stuff, but no one in the story is much concerned with figuring out what was going on or why. On the other end of the spectrum is one of my favorite novels, *Replay*, by Ken Grimwood, in which the science fictional element (the protagonist relives his life over and over again, with all memories of previous lives intact) is thoroughly examined from every possible angle. And it *is* a spectrum, I think: on which the preferences of folks who have read and enjoyed science fiction from an early age generally locate themselves on the “more information, please” side of the spectrum. It’s not that I don’t appreciate a message like “We don’t need to explain it; we just need to learn how to live with it.” Fair enough. But if the story is set in a world where something strange and disruptive has happened, I expect that not ALL the characters will share the *que-sera-sera* attitude. Some of them, if only a few minor background characters, will search for answers or cures, no matter if those searches are doomed or not.

Walter Freitag

[SC] I liked your deep and thoughtful description of *The Phantom Tollbooth*, a book I have heard of but never read. I’m unlikely to read it now, but I’m looking forward to your further experiences.

[JG] I’ve always assumed that I must have read *The Phantom Tollbooth* as a kid, but now, having read your summary, I realize I never did. I see that it was published in 1961, by which time I would have gotten fairly snotty about being too old for picture books and devoted myself to so-called “chapter books.” Too bad. I missed out.

Elizabeth Matson

[SC] The story of your discovery of your new niece Vasilisa (pretty name, cute pictures) was fascinating. What a surprise! I’m left with a lot of questions, none of which are any of my business, but I sympathize with any frustration you and your mom are feeling about this situation. Your inspired *Vasilisa the Brave* story so far sounds terrific.

I was very interested in your yurt photo and comments. You will definitely need help putting that together, but I can see it will be far superior to any tent. I was a little surprised that our general contractor, Rick, expressed some interest in your yurt, so I hope it all works out.

[JG] I loved the stories of Vasilisa, both the mythic and your family’s own Vasilisa. I hope one day that your niece gets to hear you and your mom tell stories about her namesake!

So, did our contractor, Rick, contact you (or you him) about the yurt project? Has the yurt arrived? It must be an extremely heavy package. How are you managing it?

Greg Rihn

[SC] Regarding your comment to Carrie about memorials, I agree with you, but I have some reservations. Growing up in a small town, I have spent a lot of time strolling through local cemeteries and checking out the graves of people I knew and their families as well as my own family. On a nice day, it can be a pleasant, even soothing, thing to do. Cemeteries tell a lot of stories. It’s a little sad to me that I will not be adding my own gravesite to that quiet tradition, but, in the end, I have to admit that it all seems old-fashioned, unsustainable and wildly expensive. I do not plan to be buried in a cemetery with a memorial.

[JG] Re “Ballet and Me” ...I have a similar “awakening” story about opera; I gained an appreciation of *Madame Butterfly* in a revelatory moment that changed the way I heard and thought about opera. But I haven’t experienced a similar epiphany with ballet, as you did. In fact, I’ve noticed that I have rarely been attracted to kinetic art of any sort—dance or sports. It’s a weird thing; it feels like a sort of blind spot, related somewhat to my sense of myself as being a bit clumsy. Nevertheless, I enjoyed your essay, “Ballet and Me!”

Thanks for the link to the *ProPublica* climate maps. I think the maps must have been republished by *The New York Times* because I’ve seen them recently. Speaking of Florida, it was interesting to see on those maps that Florida’s “livability” coloration doesn’t actually change much in either the moderate carbon emissions scenario or the extreme warming scenario. That state will get hit very hard by rising sea levels and economic damages however. But you’re right, Wisconsin does look like a good place to live in the foreseeable bleak future.

I think the 95°F wet-bulb tipping point is frequently breached in the Saudi peninsula. I’ve read accounts of how (mostly immigrant) workers are only able to endure working outdoors for a very limited amount of time. The adaptation there is that everyone must live most of their lives in air conditioned spaces. The

big problem, as average temperatures increase in equatorial countries, will be that residents of massively populated, poverty-stricken areas will not have access to air conditioned refuges.

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I hope your back surgery went smoothly and you are making a quick recovery.

Thanks for sending us a copy of *Notorious Silk Ribbon*! Not read yet, but we will get back to you later.

I'm glad you enjoyed my 17th century anti-coffee cup. My favorite story about my friend and colleague, Teresa, for whom the cup was dedicated, had to do with her beloved beagle, Jake. When Jake was still pretty young and Teresa had not had him very long, she took him with her to run a bunch of errands around their small town of Mazomanie. At the end of the list of errands, the last one being grocery shopping, they were heading home and Teresa decided she still had time to run the car through the car wash.

The Mazo car wash was like one I had in my hometown. It had one stall. You put your money in the slot, drove in until it signaled you to stop. A large metal box with a long curved pole ran up along the side your car and over the top. The box and pole were mounted on a track that ran around the outside of your car as it alternately sprayed soap and water to deliver a pretty mediocre car wash. At the end you got a signal to drive out and a big wind machine dried off your car.

Jake was sitting in the front seat with Teresa when the washer powered up and began moving around the car spraying soap. Jake went nuts! Nose up against the window, barking and howling (like beagles do) at the machine outside, he followed it as it moved around the car. He was so fixated on it, he crawled on top of Teresa in the drivers seat to stay close to the window, howling frantically. As the machine moved to the back of the car, Jake bounded over the front seat and onto the grocery



bags neatly lined up in the backseat. He had eyes only for the machine. As it moved along the rear window, he climbed on top of each of the grocery bags, crushing all the delicate stuff like eggs, chips, grapes and tomatoes. Around and around the car the machine went, Jake madly chasing and barking at it. Teresa laughed hysterically the whole time.

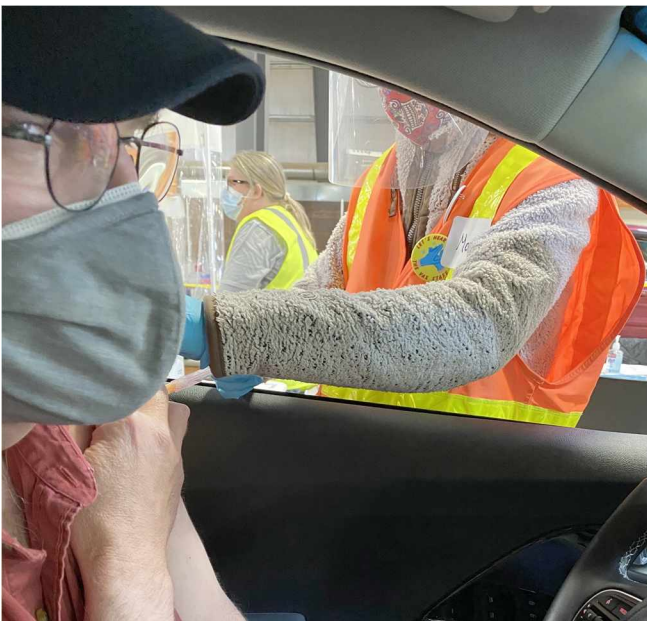
Teresa said at the end that it was clear that Jake had a great time. And years later, if she was driving around with Jake and wanted to give him a thrill, she'd take him to the car wash, without the groceries of course. He loved it.

[JG] I smiled at your fantasy of publishing *Notorious Silk Ribbon* as a chapbook and leaving copies "in likely little libraries." But you would never know what your readers thought of the story, which would be sad. Nevertheless, I empathize with the idea: In fact, I've dropping off a few slightly irregular copies of Suzette Haden Elgin's *Láadan Dictionary* that **Diane Martin** and I edited and published. Last year, after I had sent what I thought were the final files to print, I discovered a couple errors and had to revise the files and have new copies made. But the errors were truly minor and I hated to just trash my several copies of the books. Since then, I deposited a few copies in the little library in front of the Willy Street Coop grocery store. So far, the copies have each been removed in less than a day. I fantasize about a cell of radical feminists teaching each other Láadan and fomenting linguistic revolution.

I hope the spine surgery was successful and easy to recover from!

Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] By the end of March, I was getting pretty antsy about getting a vaccine appointment. When Jeanne went in to our HMO for her second Moderna shot, she asked about what I should do to get on GHC's radar for a shot when I became eligible. They advised that I should fill out a form on my GHC MyChart account because they were going to prioritize people who really wanted the shot. I did that and waited. After a week of being eligible and no word, I started thinking about other options. I signed up with Dane County Public Health and Walgreens and considered trying to get an appointment for a shot at the mass vaccination site at the Wisconsin Center in Milwaukee. Then, on Monday, March 29 (the date Governor Evers originally designated as the eligibility date for folks my age with certain medical issues, before he decided to move



Scott receiving his J&J jab at the Alliant Center

the date sooner by a week) my ship finally came in. Dane County contacted me in the morning to make an appointment at the drive-in site at the Alliant Energy Center for a single Johnson & Johnson shot. And then, that same day, later in the afternoon, GHC reached out to say they were ready for me to make an appointment with them (probably Moderna, like Jeanne got). I elected to go with Alliant Center as it meant just one shot, a two week wait and I'm done. All's well...

Regarding your Civic Hybrid with the failing battery, you didn't mention trading it in on another car. Should we conclude you and Diane are going to become a one-car couple? It works for us.

A chocolate platypus? Well, why not? [JG says: a **dark** chocolate platypus would win me over.]

[JG] Since both Scott and I will be fully vaccinated before the apa deadline, I think the chances of our showing up for an in-person collation party are good! That may very well turn out to be our first post-vaccine social event. We are planning to see a movie



<https://dissentpins.com/collections/science-is-real/products/thanks-science-mini-vaccine-pin>

(*Nomadland*) and go out to dinner right after Scott's two-week waiting period is over (six days before the April *Turbo* deadline), but we have held off on planning get-togethers with family and friends until our contractor gives us a timetable for the work on our bathroom.

Ooo, I loved the movie *A Little Chaos*! Has Kate Winslet ever been in a bad movie? I can't think of one. We just finished watching season 2 of *The Mandalorian* as part of a one-month subscription to Disney+. I enjoyed this season much less than I did the first. The thing that I dislike about comic book story arcs is happening, no surprise, in *The Mandalorian*: contradictory, needlessly embroidered complications get added continuously to artificially extend the storyline. It's the reason I don't like reading comic books and the thing that has come to horrify me about the cancerous mass of plots and characters in the ever-so-extended *Marvel* universe. But I'm glad we did the one-month Disney+ subscription, if only for the opportunity to see the FABULOUS, delightful movie, *Soul*. This may turn out to be one of my favorite Pixar/Disney films ever. If you have a chance to see it, see it. Also, on another steaming service, we are really enjoying the Apple+ series, *For All Mankind*: Really excellent, near-future, hard science fiction.

It is *shocking* to know that you and Diane are sleeping in later than you used to, pre-retirement. I think I have dissuaded Scott a bit too, from his early-morning rising habits. It may be that we will all arrive at a future farmers market around the same time, rather than as passing ships in the morning, waving as you leave and we arrive.

I loved Diane's very short auction story. It possibly recapitulates the power hierarchy of the early Madstf group: It was a bad idea to cross Diane (and maybe a couple other women in the group) in those days.

Kim & Kathi Nash

[SC] We have been enjoying *For All Mankind*, too. The wacky alternate history touches are a plus to be sure, but I most like that there are few if any real bad guys (a nice change from most shows) and the characters occasionally surprise me. We also like noticing how some technology (like video screens attached to phones, desktop computers) show up earlier in this world than ours because of space-related scientific advances.

Kathi, you are looking forward to going to a garden center and I'm looking forward to just being able to go to almost any store and browse. I am a dedicated store

browser and, at best, a grumpy online shopper (ask Jeanne, who prefers shopping online). I detest having to create an account, with login and password, just to buy a pair of damn jeans. Then I fret about the package getting ripped off and, finally, I get email from them forever.

Steven Vincent Johnson

[SC] Hooray for you and Darlene getting your shots. I hadn't known anyone who'd received a Johnson & Johnson shot before I got mine, so I had no idea what to expect afterwards. I consider myself pretty lucky that my only "side effect" was a slightly sore arm and a mild headache the next day. The relief it brought to me, however, was priceless.

J.J. Brutsman & Tom Havighurst

[SC] Great photos! I admired how you took beautiful pictures even though the trees were still bare and the ground was mostly brown. Sky and lake helped, of course, but still.

I have started biking again, but I've only been out once or twice a week. Since I'm also not in the same shape that I was in last year, I've just been taking the Lake Loop around Monona, but if I can start to get out a little more often, I expect to quickly expand my territory. I'm already armed with a State Trail Pass, so I expect to start pushing the city's boundaries this year.

Regarding your comment to me, I'm delighted by Room of One's Own's plan to move to Atwood Ave., very convenient (and dangerous) for me as well. Now we learned that Community Pharmacy has found a place along Fair Oaks Ave. in the Fair Oaks Apartment complex (near Garver Feed Mill), which is a beautiful spot. I will gladly move my business to them from Walgreens. We talked to one of the staff people at the pharmacy and she said that they checked their files and the overwhelming majority of their customers live on the East Side, so that reinforced their decision to follow Room eastward. Meanwhile Target will open a "small" store on State Street, which I believe is the start of a long displacement of local businesses there by national chains. A trend that may benefit our neighborhood as more local State Street business refugees flee to our end of town.



Chicken & Ham Pot Pies

[JG] I love to hear about what you are cooking! The new "keeper" recipes for our month included country-style pork ribs and sauerkraut made in a slow-cooker with apples, onions, garlic, and caraway seeds. Since we do not own a pressure cooker, it took eight hours to cook, but wow, it was worth every minute. And another evening, I used *your* recipe for chicken and ham pot pie. It was wonderful! Yum! Thanks again. I also made some muffins that we shared with Rachel, a neighbor undergoing chemotherapy, using an old favorite recipe from the *Ovens of Brittany* cookbook—Bailey's Corn-Oat Muffins. I sent the recipe along with the muffins in case there was a problem with any of the ingredients. I was delighted by the text she sent me the next day: "I kid you not, those are the best muffins I've ever had. I made more for the freezer because I'm convinced it'll be the only thing I'll feel like eating! You are AWESOME." So, obviously, I started making plans for what to make Rachel next. [See page 10 for recipes.]

Ruth & Jim Nichols

[SC] Jim, good news about your progress playing music and writing songs. Sounds like a perfect retirement occupation. Ruth, is your lovely photo from your walk at the Edna Taylor?

[JG] Jim: Oh-oh. "Unfortunate results" of renting a dream-world apartment? I have frequently sketched out fantasy house and apartment layouts for some of my more elaborate daydreams. In fact, I've got one in progress right now. So, what are the unfortunate results that I should look out for?

Carrie Root

[SC] Congratulations on the fortunate finds in the Little Free Libraries. I have not been stopping to look through them lately because I've been doing more biking than walking, but I have noticed how inventive the designs often are. Someone built a church-shaped one for the front of Trinity Lutheran on the corner of First and Winnebago St. I should take a few pictures of clever ones around town when I'm biking around.

In my own reading, I finished Blake Crouch's *Dark Matter* which was certainly a page-turner. I liked his alternative universe idea here better than his messy time-travel trope in *Recursion*, but I liked the characters more in *Recursion*. Jason Dessen in *Dark Matter* had me ready to toss the book at the wall several times (if it hadn't been on my iPad). When comparing the two novels, I'd give *Recursion* a slight edge. I also finished *The Little Drummer Girl* by John La Carré, as I work my way through most of his novels. His female main character was rather dated, but still strong and interesting in many ways and the last third of the book was worth the long build up.

Nice Kramer Creek photos and kitchen drawings. Aren't home improvement projects exciting? I think they are more fun than car shopping. When do you expect the kitchen job to be finished?

[JG] Cool! A kitchen remodeling project. I loved the planning part (I also produced many drawings for our contractor) and the enjoying-the-kitchen-after-the-work-was-done part. Not so much the in-between parts, but most of the negatives had to do with the fact that we had our kitchen work done in the dead of winter and we set up our emergency, alternate kitchen in the basement. There were many times, stretches of weeks at a time, when we had to go out the front door, walk through snow and ice to the side door and basement entrance in order to make and serve dinner. Lead paint removal and asbestos in the original linoleum flooring made the work take longer than planned, but in the end, our new kitchen was marvelous. It's been six years since we did ours and I still sometimes look around my kitchen and grin happily. I hope that you and Andy survive the work and eventually enjoy your new kitchen as much as we do ours.

Andy Hooper

[SC] I enjoyed the next installment of Horror Hosts of the Month. I was impressed with the argument that

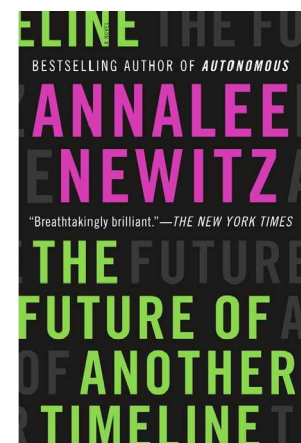
Pittsburgh is Monstertown USA. I would have guessed either New Orleans based on gothic atmosphere or maybe New York City because of all the horror films set there, but your argument for Pittsburgh is persuasive and the list of horror hosts for the area is amazing.

In your question to me on Orson Welles and Camp Indianola, I don't recall Levitan's article mentioning any other incidents of a sexual nature with the camp's staff. The piece was focused on Welles' supposed experience.

Regarding your comment to **Marilyn** on the SF Without Borders book group on Zoom, I was amused by your suggestion that all book groups will eventually end up on Zoom. I'm a big fan of being able to include people from far away or get together despite ugly weather on Zoom, but I also remember how surprised I was at how popular book groups are in the world and how many of these groups are as much about getting out of the house to drink wine, nosh and socialize as they are about discussing books. I think Zoom's very real limitations won't work well for a lot of established book groups, but it might be great for a new group.

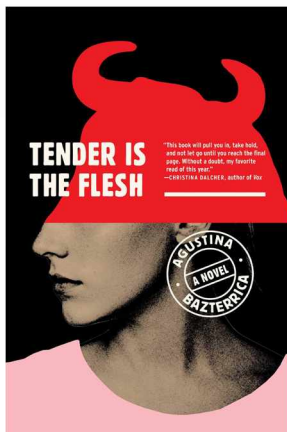
[JG] It's suddenly struck me how many time travel/alternate reality books I've read and thought about recently. I am wondering if it's just me (am I super attracted to time travel stories right now, more than usual)? Or is it a real publishing trend? Maybe some writers are using the time travel trope in the same way that feminist SF writers in the 1970s relied upon post-apocalyptic settings in their fiction. In order to imagine a world free of sexism, many 70s writers first wiped out the existing world (fictionally) which enabled them to start out new with a clean slate. It's tempting to think that contemporary writers might be feeling that there are so few good outcomes to the problems that plague our world today that it is easier to tell their story in an alternate world or timeline.

And here we go again, with the April choice for the Science-Fiction-Without-Borders book discussion: *The Future of Another Timeline*, by Annalee Newitz. As you may have already heard me say, if you read this comment after participating in the zoomed book discussion, I think Newitz's treatment of time travel is totally unique



of all the time travel stories I've ever read. Set in a world in which everyone, past and future, knows that time travel is possible, and in fact may very well have met and talked with a traveler, where everyone knows that there are time travelers all around us—the choices made by time travelers don't have much more power to change reality than the choices made by people operating in their own time. (Though I did think there would be quite a bit of suspicion that unpleasant or unexpected events had been caused by time travelers. "No, honestly officer, I didn't steal that thing. A time-traveler took that thing.") But Newitz's message, if it was her aim to suggest a moral, seems to urge us to make the most of our real-life choices to make a better world, rather than fantasizing about time traveling and "editing" the past.

Books Read, Shows Watched



[JG] I read some non time-travel books too: like *Tender is the Flesh*, by the Argentine writer, Agustina Bazterrica. In fact, I almost suggested this novella for our book discussion, but upon hearing what it was about, Becky (one of the book group's leaders) said that she would absolutely not read it. You may share her feelings, but I was interested because

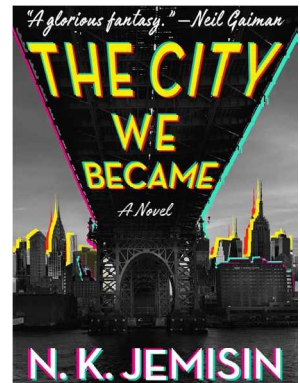
Ursula Le Guin praised Bazterrica's writing several years ago. Locus recommended the book as one of the best SF works of 2020, and it's been attracting quite a few interesting reviews. It's a truly shocking book, made more shocking, I think, because of how well it is written and how much detail there is about a world in which human cannibalism has been normalized.

Working at the local processing plant, Marcos is in the business of slaughtering humans—though no one calls them that anymore. His wife has left him, his father is sinking into dementia, and Marcos tries not to think too hard about how he makes a living. After all, it happened so quickly. First, it was reported that an infectious virus has made all animal meat poisonous to humans. Then governments initiated the "Transition." Now, eating human meat—"special meat"—is legal. Marcos tries to stick to numbers, consignments, processing. Then one day he's given a gift: a live specimen of the finest quality. Though he's aware that any form of personal contact is forbidden on pain of death, little

by little he starts to treat her like a human being. And soon, he becomes tortured by what has been lost—and what might still be saved.



I also read, or rather, I listened to N.K. Jemison's novel, *The City We Became*, because the title has shown up on all the year's best lists, including best audiobook, and has been nominated for a Hugo Award. The praise that the audiobook narrator, Robin Miles, has received is well deserved. Her performance is brilliant. The novel is also brilliant and very much deserves its Hugo nomination. I liked it even more than any of the books in Jemison's *Broken Earth* series. *The City We Became* is the first of Jemison's *Great Cities* series. Beyond that, however, I can't talk about what I want to talk about in *The City We Became* without talking about how the novel ends, so...



MAJOR SPOILER ALERT

New York is in the process of coming alive in *The City We Became*. The city's power flows through its avatars—one avatar for the city as a whole, and an additional avatar for each of its boroughs: Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. In order to save New York from being killed in its infancy, the boroughs and its avatars must all join together in order to wake the city's main avatar, and together fight a monstrous alien city in itself, represented by the woman in white. In fact, in this totally transparent allegory of race and social justice, the monster's various tentacles and alien structures are all white, while all but one of the avatars are people of various color hues. The story is exciting, the battles interesting especially for the custom, borough-specific weapons wielded by the avatars. The characters, each of whose personalities reflects the essence of their borough are fabulous. I loved Bronca, Brooklyn and Manny; though I wished that the Indian math-genius Queens character got a bit more attention. Of the five avatars, [Staten] Island is the only unlikeable character, but she's extremely well-drawn. The source of the avatars' strength comes from the way they reflect the diversity of their homes and how they work together to protect and build the strength of the whole city against the attacks from the alien city. I don't know New York well, and I am sure that New Yorkers caught far more

nuances than I did. For instance, I was hazy on where each of the boroughs is located before reading the book, and I didn't realize that Staten Island is one of the boroughs. Apparently, I'm not alone in overlooking Staten Island. That suburban, mostly white Staten Island is one of New York's boroughs is often forgotten even by native New Yorkers. This becomes an important plot element: Staten Island's avatar, a young, bigoted white woman named Island, who is afraid of leaving her borough and distrusts anyone who looks different than herself and her neighbors, refuses to join the other city avatars. Things look dire when Island rejects the avatar team, even rebuffing their attempts to talk. The other avatars decide they will have to try to save New York without her, but just in the nick of time, a new avatar comes alive representing Jersey City, which actually has more in common with essential New York than does Staten Island. New York is saved but Staten Island is taken over entirely, possibly consumed, by the alien city. It's a startling development. I had been expecting that Island would experience an epiphany about who her true comrades were, or that one of the other avatars would find a way to communicate with her. On the other hand, abandoning Staten Island felt like a deeply satisfying fuck-you to a family member or ally who has gone over to the enemy's side and is demanding that everyone else accommodate her. It was a fuck-you that I think all of us have fantasized recently....

I've thought of saying fuck-you to Trump supporters who proudly proclaim that they will never take the vaccine. Or to white critics of social justice protests who clearly care more about property damage than the lives or civil rights of people of color. Or to Republican Senators who vote against life-saving assistance for their own constituents. Wouldn't it be satisfying to simply leave these guys behind in the dust? In *The City We Became*, the squad of avatars turn their backs on Staten Island because they have no other choice. There is no time. It is the right thing to do; it is the only thing to do. (And happily, Jersey City is born and joins the team and the city's birthing is protected.)

Since I know that two more novels are coming in Jemisin's *Great Cities* series, I was reminded of another trilogy in which the first book tells the story of an abused group of women who abandon their oppressors in order to survive. In Suzy McKee Charnas's *Holdfast* series, the enslaved women of Holdfast escape to the desert and join the Riding Women in a totally separatist society. It's the only thing they can do; it is the right thing to do. They stay isolated for years, growing in

strength and self-confidence, while they construct a new society. So I wonder if Jemisin's subsequent *Great Cities* novels will follow a similar path to that chosen by the women in Charnas's *Holdfast*: first, violent revenge against the former abusers (book 2) and then rebuilding of society (book 3)?

END OF MAJOR SPOILER ALERT

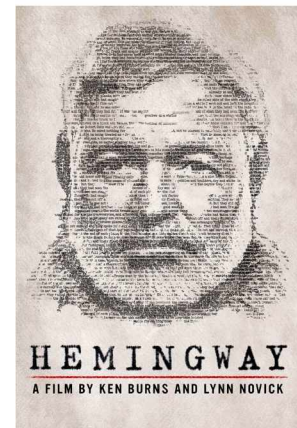
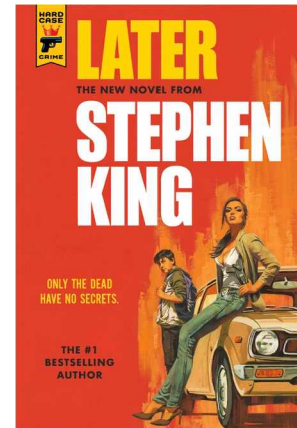


Later, by Stephen King, is based on a really interesting idea: a boy who can see and talk with dead people for just a little while after the person has died. When the boy asks them a question, the dead person is compelled to tell the absolute truth. It was a fun read.



Scott and I watched Ken Burns & Lynn Novick's, *Hemingway*, a 3-part documentary on PBS. I read a lot of Hemingway in my college days; Scott has read a couple of Hemingway's novels, and our interest was piqued by PBS promotions of the show, emphasizing that it would illuminate Hemingway's life and relationships. It certainly did that, though my low opinion of Hemingway, the man,

didn't improve much from when I knew less. I've always admired his writing style, but felt uncomfortable about how he wrote his female characters. Burns and Novick's documentary told the infuriating, sad, repetitive story of the four women he married—Hadley Richardson, Pauline Pfeiffer, Martha Gelhorn, and Mary Welsh. He idolized them, romanced them, married them, and then demanded that they drown all personal ambition and opinion in favor of his ideas and comfort, all the while verbally abusing them and making their lives hell. All his relationships overlapped with one another: Hemingway spurned a former partner only when he had begun a new relationship; he couldn't stand being alone and uncared for. Martha Gelhorn, the remarkable, famous war correspondent is the only one of his wives who saw through his shit and left him;



Hemingway never forgave her for it and blamed her for much that went wrong in his life. Not only was the pattern of all his relationships with women repetitive, but the women themselves all resembled one another physically: thin, boyish-looking, short hair. Think Mary Martin as Peter Pan or Mitzi Gaynor in *South Pacific* I have a nightmarish idea that if Hemingway had ever crossed paths with Alice Sheldon (James Tiptree, Jr.) (and it would have been possible; Sheldon was in England and Hemingway was in Europe during WWII), Hemingway may very well have been very attracted to her. She certainly fit his type, both in her looks and intelligence and androgynous identity, and Sheldon was certainly capable of the selfless devotion to a partner that Hemingway demanded. I don't think that she would ever have written science fiction stories if she'd gotten involved with him, though I hope she would have seen through him eventually as Gelhorn did. What a scary alternate history.

What's New

[JG] Various delays by subcontractors have postponed major work on our bathroom, so we have nothing much to report on that front. The HVAC guys extended the ducts from our furnace and AC into the bathroom and my office (formerly heated with electrical wall-mounted heaters). The electricians put in the wiring for new bathroom lights, fan and switches and the plumbers have removed the toilet and old plumbing connections. But the big changes will happen when the plumbers install the sink, shower and toilet, the carpenter puts in the vanity and wall-mounted cabinets, the flooring guys put in the floor tile, and the walls get painted. We hope all that happens very soon.

From the Vault

Squirrel Slapstick

By Jeanne Gomoll, *Grayscale 22*, in *Intercourse*, July 2001

One afternoon after WisCon 25, Ellen Klages and I went to the terrace in back of the UW Memorial Union to admire the lakefront and people-watch as we discussed some artwork she wanted to commission from me for a book cover. It was a lovely afternoon and we were enjoying ourselves and making progress on the plan. I noticed something weird happening a few yards behind Ellen's shoulder and I stopped talking in mid-sentence and began to laugh. Ellen twisted around to see what I was looking at and then we were both laughing. A squirrel was sitting up on its hindquarters on top of one of the terrace's colorful tables. It was gathering together some paper it had found, crunching and folding the paper with its paws and upper limbs. Unknown to the squirrel, the paper it was pulling towards itself, one paw overlapping the other as it tried to get it all gathered together at its chest, was a part of a whole ROLL of paper, you know, the kind of paper they put in public bathrooms for drying your hands. The squirrel was gradually unwinding that roll of brown toweling and you could tell that it was getting really frustrated that there didn't seem to be an *end* to the paper. So finally the squirrel jumped off the table with the paper it had gathered so far, and was caught a little bit off balance by the resistance of the roll and then, a moment later, surprised when the roll itself followed it (THUMP!) down onto the ground.

By this time our laughter and the squirrel's antics had drawn the attention of a small crowd of folks and all of us were laughing uncontrollably. This probably exacerbated the squirrel's stress levels. It decided to run for a tree with its arm-full of paper treasure but then stumbled, mysteriously held back. The paper resisted its leaps! It unrolled behind it, trailing the poor squirrel with a long brown river of toweling. The squirrel stopped, a little confused and disconcerted at the base of the tree, gathered a little more paper to its chest, and then leapt upwards, but again, the length of towel held him back. The squirrel, by this time, was one very pissed-off squirrel. Nevertheless, it persevered, pulling that long train of brown paper in a spiral around the tree trunk. Finally, halfway up the tree, the paper must have caught on a piece of bark and torn, because the paper drifted down on the breeze and the squirrel disappeared from view.

A little later, a maintenance guy walked across the terrace and stopped to look at the tangle of unrolled paper toweling draped over tables, twisting and overlapping on the ground, and tightly wound to a tree trunk. Shaking his head and muttering under his breath, he cleaned up the mess. No one enlightened him as to what had happened



Bailey's Corn-Oat Muffins

Source: *Ovens of Brittany Cookbook*

1½ cup Flour, sifted	⅔ cup Walnuts, chopped
1½ teaspoons Baking Powder	⅔ cup Quick-cooking Oats
1 teaspoon Baking Soda	⅔ cup Dried Coconut Flakes
1 teaspoon Salt	2 Eggs
½ cup Brown Sugar	1½ cups Buttermilk,
⅔ cup Cornmeal	5 Tablespoons Butter, melted

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Grease muffin pans (for 14-16 muffins).
2. Sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Stir in brown sugar, cornmeal, walnuts oats, and coconut.
3. In a large bowl, lightly beat eggs and mix in buttermilk and melted butter. Add dry ingredients to the wet, and quickly stir until just blended. **DO NOT BEAT OR OVERMIX.**
4. Fill muffin cups nearly full.
5. Bake 15 minutes, until toothpick inserted in center of muffins comes out clean. Cool a few minutes and remove from pan.



Crock Pot Pork and Sauerkraut

2 Tbsp Olive Oil	3 cloves Garlic, pressed or finely minced
3 pounds Country-Style Pork Ribs	1 Apple, diced large
1 teaspoon Kosher Salt	1 (24 oz) jar Good, German Sauerkraut
½ teaspoon Pepper	1 Tablespoons Caraway Seeds
1 Yellow Onion, thick sliced	½ cup Apple Juice

1. Heat a 12" skillet over med-high heat. When hot, add the olive oil, then all of the ribs. Let them brown on one side for 4 minutes or long enough to get some color. Salt and pepper the ribs. Flip the ribs over and do the same on that side.
2. Add the ribs and juices from the skillet to a 6 qt or larger slow cooker. Add the sliced onion and the garlic over the top of the ribs. Sprinkle the caraway seeds over the ribs/onion.
3. Drain ½ of the sauerkraut juice and set aside. Dump the sauerkraut and remaining juice over the meat/onions.
4. Add the apple and then the apple juice.
5. Cook on Low for 8 hours or High for 4 hours, or until the ribs are fall apart tender.
6. Taste for salt and tartness. Use the remaining sauerkraut liquid only if you want the results to be more tart in flavor. Serve hot.

