



# SPARTACUS #75

A JOURNAL OF OPINION AND NOISE by GUY H. LILLIAN III  
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# , LA!

*That* about sums it up! {

It is so *fulfilling* to be proven right. Consider what I wrote about this political eventuality in *Spartacus* no. 74:

A new candidate would excite interest and curiosity, and hopefully lure in undecided suburbanites, who by then should be confused and disgusted by the whole election circus. That could be an advantage when competing with a well-known and much-loathed character like Trump. Presidents are often chosen out of a need for newness, a curiosity, an urge for change. So a fresh face like Gavin Newsom *might* connect. But who am I fooling? If it isn't our man Biden, it'll be Kamala Harris, excellently qualified but as charismatic as yesterday's pizza box. Unfairly unpopular.

{t is so *fulfilling* to be proven right. Someday it might happen.

What a difference an issue makes. What a difference a *day* makes! A mere *moment*! Especially that moment when noble Joe Biden conceded, against every fighting instinct in his Delaware heart, that his age and disastrous debate demeanor might doom his party to losses down the line in November. Worse, that mistrust of the effect of his years might sentence his country to a fascist future – and so withdrew his name from re-nomination as President of the United States. An astonishing, all but unique sacrifice in American history, advancing a remarkable woman to the brink of a remarkable achievement – and bringing us all a needed injection of Hope. *Spartacus*.

Ms. Harris has shown astonishing charisma since she ascended to her nomination. “Pizza box” my anchovies! She's enthralled crowds, embracing uncertain voting groups, making wise moves – her veep pick, Tim Walz, was totally unfamiliar to me, but won me over with his first appearance by Kamala's side. His naturalness, his ease before people, his positivity – an inspired choice. It bides well for the quality of staff and optimism President Harris would give America.

And although I am very superstitious about such matters, I'll allow myself a shard of confidence. After the Democratic convention, I think the progressives can accomplish *anything* – even an electoral victory over the schemes of conscience-less Republicans.

Need I list the reasons for Trump's total unsuitability for the Presidency? His hysteria, his desperation, his total lack of judgment or empathy? He displays these daily – just yesterday, at Arlington itself, befouling that most solemn American site with a crude political stunt and a battery – no less – on the cemetery's staff. The vile 2025 playbook exposes his movement's intentions, which he hides behind his own incoherence – each time claiming that the literal fascism he promotes is a mere joke. Through insults to Kamala's ethnicity and family he promotes a “revolution” totally alien to American values. We've all seen dangerous Republican candidates and Presidents before; here we see overt authoritarianism on the prod.

Fortunately, we also see their movement opposed by an imaginative, affirmative, optimistic party whose candidate is exciting, articulate, dedicated and competent, a happy warrior who is more than a match for the venality of the Trump perversion, no matter how historical it is. She is historical herself ... and not just because she's a woman or because of her ethnicity. Kamala Harris is historical as she's the right person at the right place at the right time, and for the USA's sake, we hope she wins.

This election is a test of the national character. A committed, honest, competent political professional faces a legally established sexual predator and swindler. Our vote is our identity. Which will it be?

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Now to the *important* stuff – the Glasgow Worldcon. Weeks after the convention passed its gavel to Seattle, I still haven't seen any detailed reports. No news is good news. Especially when the only aspect of the event I heard about was this year's bestowal of **the Hugo Awards**.

I couldn't figure out how to call up the ceremony so I had to wait until the winners were posted. This was an interesting list. *Barbie* won the Dramatic Presentation Hugo. I liked that. Being familiar with only three nominees in any of the other categories.

This was okay in some ways – with few hooks in the river, it's less of a disappointment to catch few fish – but that *nominated* episode of *The Last of Us* was tremendously moving and dammit, Geri Sullivan's *Idea* was the best *real* fanzine I've beheld in a long time. But according to this posted list, a *Doctor Who* and a blog had scotched those hopes. And the Novel victor, *The Adventures of Amina al-Sirafi*, was an outright fantasy. Like many purists, I want a *science fiction* novel to win whenever-

**Wait a damn minute.** Another list of 2024 winners appeared online – a very *different* list ... This one said Emily Tesh's *Some Desperate Glory* was the Glasgow Best Novel! The squibs on the bacover says that it's SF!<sup>1</sup> “Long, Long Time”, the aforementioned episode of *The Last of Us*, did win the Hugo, but *Barbie* didn't. Neither did *Idea*. So where did the fake news come from? WTF, Glasgow?

Somehow I ended up with two copies of the Tesh novel – hardback and paperback – after ordering just one from eBay. I've regained at least some of my reading mojo after the Iceland trip, so I look forward to giving it a try. I have a complete set of Hugo'ed novels, and am at least five years behind in scanning them. I need to get back to them.

**Bill Burns** passed on information about Glasgow that he calls “A report from a trusted source: The last I saw from the convention Discord channel was 156 cases of Covid and 31 of other con crud (feeling gross but with negative Covid tests), so getting on for 200 people being ill with \*something\*.

“With over 7,000 attendees this would be about 3% reporting some illness either at or shortly after Worldcon.”

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It behooves any SF movie fan to discuss *Alien: Romulus*, which I found fun but flawed. The new stuff, particularly Robert Bobrozkzyi's “Offspring,” is surprising and original, and the appearance of an old character is unexpected and very well done, but the lines and scenes borrowed from earlier movies in the canon are intrusive and distracting and too cute by half. Worse, they remind us that we're watching a movie, imposing a distance on the experience we don't need. Still, not bad. I look forward to the TV series, and the day when the powers reverse the worst mistake ever made in a science fiction movie and **bring back Newt**,



Renewed congratulations to *me* – The annual National Fan Federation Laureate Award for the Best Non-N3F Fan Publication went ... *right here*, to *Spartacus*. Two years ago my zine about zines, *The Zine Dump*, won the same compliment. Great thanks, N3F.

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Time to get personal and provide a quick **health summary**. Parkinson's is still rough – I still don't drive and stumble about like the Frankenstein monster. I've changed my neurologist, again, back to my original one, who has beaten me into agreeing to take my carbidopa-levodopa-smoke-a-dopa meds on a regular schedule. My cardiologist says my heart is fine, though, my nephrologist's PA reports that my kidney values remain stable, and my last blood work showed no signs of that demon of old men, prostate cancer (although he's sending me to a urologist for a check-up). My dermatologist goes apeshit with her liquid nitrogen spray (which stings) but reports no serious problems with my skin. I'm changing to a cheaper dentist and returning to my gastrologist to work on my ferocious digestion. My eyesight is getting better, and I can actually read books again – currently scanning *Clete*, the best James Lee Burke in three or four years. (His new Edgar winner, *Flags on the Bayou*, awaits attention.) I've never read anyone in genre fiction so adept in bringing a *setting* to life. South Louisiana is akin to another character under Burke's hand.

Speaking of health, the best of luck to *Alexiad* fan-ed Joe Major as he deals with six months in a brace for a crushed vertebra.

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*Rosie and I send our deepest sympathies to my old DC workmate Jack Harris, his wife and family on the passing of his daughter.*

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## NUMBERS ... UHH, *LETTERS*

**Mark Nelson**

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On *Spartacus* #74

In the mid-1960s British Prime Minister Harold Wilson is reputed to have said that "a week is a long time in politics". It's been longer than a week since I wrote my loc on *Spartacus* 73. In that time an attempt has been made on Trump's life and Biden has withdrawn his nomination to be the next Democrat candidate for President. Momentum seems to have fallen behind Kamala Harris, who picked the seemingly sensible and likable Governor Tim Walz as her vice presidential candidate whereas Trump has picked Senator JD Vance. Neither sensible nor likable appear to appropriate adjectives. I have to confess, and it's a t of shameful admission, but my first thought on hearing of the assassination attempt was to wonder if it was a cheap political stunt.

That was a nice tribute to George Wells. I feel like pointing out, though I am sure you already know, that the photograph of George on **fancylopedia.org** is a photograph of the two of you at DeepSouthCon 30.

**Rich Lynch**

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In an issue filled with anti-Trump oratory, you ask a fair question about President Biden: “Should Biden quit the race and allow a younger candidate to take his place?” Since he did, we can transform that question to: “Did Biden do the right thing by quitting the race to allow a younger candidate to take his place?” And the answer is yes. Like you, I was a firm Biden supporter but after what happened during the first debate and its immediate aftermath, let’s be pragmatic: he wasn’t gonna beat Trump. He was underwater in terms of popularity in the polls. And his verbal gaffes happened at exactly the wrong moments which made things much, much worse in terms of reinforcing the innuendo about him being too old. If Biden had stayed in the race the election would have been all about his suitability to be President when it instead needs to be about Trump’s. It was interesting that Biden’s withdrawal was done at a strategically opportune time, as it completely blunted any momentum that Trump might have gotten at the conclusion of the Republican National Convention. I wonder if it was deliberately planned that way.

**Bob Jennings**

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Noticed the new *Spartacus* at the e-zines site a few minutes ago. You should have waited another couple of days to post; you could have gotten in Joe Biden's decision to withdraw from the Presidential race.

I was surprised you missed a core part of the Trump shooting conspiracy theory. The shooter was an accomplished expert marksman who had been target shooting for years. Plus he had a distance/scope with him on that roof top. If he had wanted Trump dead, Trump would have been dead. He wanted a nick, a superficial wound, and he got it, a hole in Caligula Trump's ear. It cost him his own life, but it made Trump a martyr.

Hey, if the fascist Trumpers can embrace all those looney-tunes conspiracy theories, we democracy-lovers ought to be entitled to at least one of our own.

*Whether or not the shooting was “real” or not, it doesn’t seem to have stimulated any general sympathy for the Orange Thing.*

You young punks and your whining about hitting age 75. Wait til you hit 81, my age, then you can complain with some kind of justification.

*Joe Green, my father-in-law, is 93 – and guffaws at 81 being considered old.*

**Lloyd & Yvonne Penney**

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Thanks for *Spartacus* 74, and given politics these days, I look forward to each issue to see what politics are under discussion. And, as usual, a certain Orange Monster is in it up to his eyebrows. More follows...

I understand your doubts about Trump getting shot. We wondered about it being a set-up, too. The FBI and Secret Service both say that Trump was shot by the kid on the roof in Pennsylvania, the Secret Service failed to react, even when everyday citizens pointed out the gunman to anyone who would listen, which was nearly no one. We wondered about eh size of ammunition an AR-15 uses, and if Trump was wounded by a bullet from an AR-15, even a missed shot would do a lot more damage than what Trump sustained. He felt something hit his ear, and then he reached up...and we suspect he had a tiny blood pad in his hand, and smeared the blood onto his ear. Afterwards, a laughable square pad was



supposed to keep it sterile? Later photos show the side of Trump's head had no damage at all. It wouldn't surprise me if Trump was trying to martyr himself a little to keep his base loyal.

*If so, it was at the cost of two lives.*

Joe Biden...we are all going to go through something like what Biden was going through, some obvious cognitive decline. We fight the notion that we're not as competent as we think we are. I can only imagine the pain he went through when he finally realized that he couldn't handle Trump, even with his own cognitive decline, also becoming more and more obvious every day. I do not think Biden and his sacrifice will ever get the credit it should get, but with him standing aside to let Kamela Harris run, that sacrifice may be that which will save American from Trump and MAGA, and the horrific Project 2025.

Project 2025...I read a bit of it, and I think it's 900 pages long so that no one will ever take the time to read the whole thing. It sounds like a total reset of American society will happen so that Trump can have his fascist little fiefdom, with him as de facto King. We're praying that Kamala Harris can burst through the Trumpish gloom like a smiling ray of sunshine, and keep in democracy whole. I read something about Trump's plans including a Secretary of Retribution? He sounds more like a crime boss every day.

My loc... It seems one is above the law, Trump. Your Supreme Court is quite disgraceful. Already, Trump is insulting world leaders who haven't kissed his ring, like our Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, mostly because of wise preparations for a catastrophic Trump win. (Look up Pierre Polievre, the new leader of the Opposition here. He is employing a former Trump advisor. The MAGA way has arrived here.)

### **David Schlosser**

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On Spartacus #73

Well, Trump didn't walk on the "hush money" trial although just what sort of sentence he gets is very much up in the air right now. // I'm rather curious. That graffiti you saw in 1967 about the U.S. whitewashing Israel's sins. What exactly would that have been referring to? (I assume you probably never found that out.) Up until earlier that year neither Gaza nor the West Bank ((nor the Sinai)) were in Israeli hands so I'm puzzled.

I do understand that "From the river to the sea" has various shades of meaning but that fact that it's been heavily absconded with by Hamas makes it's use in any other shade very difficult to sustain or justify. Using a rather less "gray" comparison, the term "Sieg Heil" is just "Hail Victory", but try using it in any sort of neutral context and see what happens.

Nice tribute to Sheila Strickland.

Gary Brown: There was a Michael Reagan column in the Sunday paper accusing those of thinking 45X would be a dictator, etc. of "Trump Derangement Syndrome," which I found utterly inexplicable seeing as we're simply listening to the words that are coming out of his mouth (yes, and those of his advisors/allies).

### **Gary Brown**

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Trump has lost weight in this photo on your cover. Thinking of you and Rosie going to Iceland on that tour, last week there was a feature on CNN where people in several towns in Massachusetts were trying to get rid of tourists. Salem was one of them. A couple of people complained that "tourists were everywhere" and it was difficult to get around without having to direct someone to a town statue or house. I scratched my head at why these few people were bothered. Sure, a little inconvenience, but I have no doubt many businesses profit nicely from these visitors — spending thousands and thousands of

dollars. Then I realized no town officials were advocating getting rid of tourists, just a few loud mouths. I believe the protests on campuses here regarding the over-extended military force by Israel against Palestinians make sense. However, using antisemitism to make a point is wrong.

Nice farewell to Sheila Strickland. Thanks for this.

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## ARLINGTON

I last visited Arlington National Cemetery near Christmas, 1983. I was en route from Baton Rouge, where I had just completed the one semester of law school I would attend at Louisiana State University, to my brother's home in/on Grand Island, New York. It was a dark journey.

The background. In August I'd left Greensboro North Carolina and my marriage of four years. It was not the best time to take on the challenge of law school, Stress City under the best of circumstances; in the midst of s divorce, it's madness. Not only that, by the end of classes I was certain that I'd flunked (I couldn't remember the duty-risk equation in my final exam in Torts), and my friends in Louisiana all lived in New Orleans, a 90-minuyr drive from Baton Rouge. The final stroke: LSU decided that I was an out-of-state student, subject to enhanced tuition. Squashed like a cockroach under the heel of Life, I left for Christmas break and fled north.

Indeed a dark journey. But brightened here and there by incandescence. I paused in Greensboro and had a calming talk with my estranged soon-to-be-ex and spent awesome hours with members of my writing class. Driving on the next day, I had an idea – to stop by Arlington on my way through D.C. Specifically, to visit the graves of the crew of Apollo 1.

On January 27, 1967, Gus Grissom – one of the original Mercury 7 astronauts and America's second man in space – Ed White – our first spacewalker – and rookie Roger Chaffee were locked into the first Apollo capsule, a ship Grissom described as a “lemon” and which was still being readied for its task, with loose wiring still exposed. The capsule was pumped full of pure O<sub>2</sub>. There was a spark.

Losing pilots is expected in their business, but to the public, the tragedy was all but unspeakable. Our space program, was America's great positive project; our astronauts were superhero celebrities. The deaths of the crew of Apollo 1 were the most shocking horrors to hit us since the murder of JFK. I remember the broadcast of Grissom's burial, the caisson, the other astronauts walking alongside as honorary pallbearers. I wanted to see that spot.

Arlington, as I recall, sits on a hill overlooking the Potomac and the gleaming capital beyond. I walked up from the parking lot towards the forest of white headstones, tens of thousands of them, consulting a map and getting lost. I did find the Custis-Lee Mansion and the Kennedy graves. Over Bobby Kennedy's simple cross I repeated the words I'd said to his face, a week before he died: “You poor devil.” A smartass tweener sassed his father there joking about JFK's stillborn daughter; years later I was reminded of the incident by that twit photographed clowning by one of the cemetery's cautionary signs. Giving up on the map, I wandered and followed signage to the heart of the cemetery, the Tomb of the Unknowns. Another of the signs stood at its entrance: SILENCE AND RESPECT.

A gleaming white sarcophagus inscribed *Here Rests in Honored Glory AN AMERICAN SOLDIER Known But to God*. Before it three marble sections bearing the names of the wars the men beneath them fought: World War II. Korea. Vietnam. Along a long rubber mat a sentinel in full dress paced steadily

and solemnly. At the time I called his walk “pantherish.” Day and night, a sentinel is there. You ‘ll find on YouTube videos of what happens when tourists become too boisterous or someone comes too close to the Tomb. It isn’t brutal but it *is* stern. America takes this place seriously.

I could see why. I went up the steps of the visitors’ amphitheater to the exhibit hall, artifacts and medals in glass cases – including several versions of the Medal of Honor. I’d never seen one before. I *had* read some of the citations; it’s unbelievable what brave men can do when they need to. I talked with a guy at the exhibit, a young fella a few years my junior, and mentioned the graves I’d come to see and how frustrated I was in not finding them. Cemetery Historian, He offered to take me there.

In fact, he drove me all over Arlington, pointing out significant stones and artifacts – the mast of the *Maine* atop the highest hill – the peaked stones of Confederate soldiers (not true, he said, that they were sharp on top to keep Yankees from sitting on them) I spotted graves of men I’d met or recognized – Earl Warren., whose hand I’d shaken at Berkeley Joe Louis – William Howard Taft, the only man to serve as both President (mediocre) and Chief justice (very well), “Blackjack” Pershing, amongst other World War I soldiers, as he requested – like all Medal of Honor winners, his name was etvhd in gold, A whole section of slaves, The dead from every American war ... and Virgil I. Grissom and Roger Chaffee, astronauts, side by side, close to the road. There were flowers on Chaffee’s grave.

*My country, ‘tis of thee.* Even an old Berkeley boy like me, it seems, is entitled to disgust at Trump’s posturing at an Arlington grave. SILENCE AND RESPECT. Trump showed neither. I, at least, hold onto the latter – and hereafter, embrace the first.

