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Step on the Cat?

Minutes for First Friday in October 2001

Recorded by Lee Strong

The regular First Friday business meeting convened at 9:18 p.m. 5 October 2001. Treasurer Bob MacIntosh attempted to start the meeting in the absence of the President and appointed a fake substitute Secretary, Lee Strong, in the absence of real Secretary Sam Lubell. Bob stated that Sam had notified him (Bob) in advance that he (Sam) would not be able to attend tonight's meeting. Lee Gilliland was jealous that Sam had notified Bob and not her.

Lee's diversion gave President Judy Kindell time to arrive and retake the gavel from Bob who happily slunk off to his corner.

There was no outstanding Old Business. Bob reported that we have \$214.67 in the Treasury. Cathy Golden stated that we have a positive cash flow. The club chortled at Cathy's optimism. Sorry, it's negative.

Entertainment Committee chair Alexis Gilliland stated that Capclave included a panel on Joe Mayhew. Subsequently, he remembered the one time that he rendered Joe speechless. Dick and Nicki Lynch did a William Rotsler issue of *Mimosa*. Joe criticized it to Alexis who rejoined that Rotsler had said nice things about him, rendering Joe speechless for a few seconds. Alexis asked Capclave attendees to amend their memories so that he said this during the Capclave panel.

Capclave Past is in a wrap up mode according to chair Bob MacIntosh. We made some money for Capclave 2002, but doubt that we will be able to transfuse significant sums to WSFA. There were 296 attendees. The tornado cut attendance.

Capclave Present chair Mike Nelson has given Elspeth Kovar a list of Maryland hotels. Since the Baltimore Book Festival is the last weekend in September, he is shooting for Columbus Day 2002. The alternative is the third weekend in October.

Activities Committee chair Lee Gilliland is organizing a theater party for *Monsters, Inc.* in November. Exact date to be decided. Judy received a telephone call about a possible theater party for *K-Pax*, a movie about a man who claims to be an alien visiting Earth from planet K-Pax. No details yet.

The Trustees should start thinking about Capclave Future. There was no New Business.

Announcements

Someone pronounced Lee Strong to be a fake Secretary. Lee denied that, and stated that anyone wishing his/her announcement to appear correctly should submit to him in writing following the meeting. The submission will be transmitted over the Internet for strange people to read, mostly Sam Lubell.

There is a new proposal for a fitting punishment for terrorist Osama bin Ladin. Shooting him might cause reprisals and jailing him might inspire rescue attempts. So, the idea is to give him a sex change and force him/her to live in a society where people think like him/her.

Lee is now car less. His 15 year car gave up the ghost in September and Lee donated it to T.C. Williams High School Shop Program. George Shiner asked about the 1986 Plymouth Caravelle and Lee referred George to the Shop Program.

IT ENRAGES THE ORTHODOX
AND ANNOYS THE CONGREGATION
BUT A CLOWN'S GOT TO DO
WHAT A CLOWN'S GOT TO DO!



WE DID SHRINK DOWN
THE COMMUNION
CREAM PIE, THOUGH.

Lee Gilliland, hostess for First Fridays, requests that people use toilet paper in the john. There are 2 kitty cats in the house. Someone stated that one was snoozing in an exposed position in the upper floor hallway where he might be stepped on. Lee said that that would be the only way he will learn not to sleep in the hallway.

Rebecca Prather announced that there is a strange white car parked near Chez Gilliland (because she owns it). She found some Battlefield Earth bookmarks at Capclave. Nobody wanted them. Mensa is hosting a con in the near future, and Rebecca hosts Mensa parties on a regular basis. Contact her for details about each. Mensa includes a Science Fiction Special Interest Group (SF SIG).

Elsbeth reported that the Capclave hotel gave her a box of Captain Morgan standups. She will not be taking them home. She bought bookshelves and now has enough shelves for all her books. "Momentarily," corrected a voice.

Keith Lynch lost a map of Prince George's County while at Capclave. If you find it, please return it. Keith has had to abandon his practice of never discarding email due to spam and html attachments.

Elsbeth also reported that our Capclave banner was left on site. Judy Scheiner made the banner so that it can be displayed for many Capclaves to come. The club applauded Judy's foresight and confidence.

Judy Kindell announced a party that's already over so you can't go anyway.

The club unanimously adjourned at 9:38 p.m.

Attendees not mentioned above included Ivy Yap, Andrew Williams, Cecil Washington, George Shiner, Sam Scheiner, Sam Pierce, Dick and Nicki Lynch, Will Ludwigsen, Ron Kean, Eric Jablow, Sally Hand, Adrienne Ertman, Wayne "Rorik" Dionne, Joanna Dionne, Sheri Bell, Bernard Bell, and F.L. Ash.

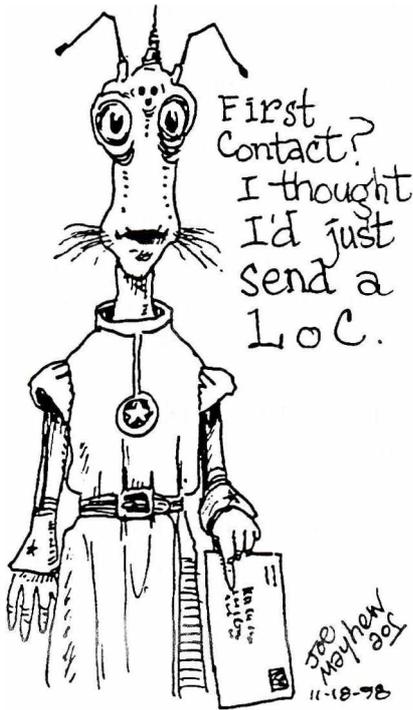
FANZINES By Ted White

Check out the fanzine below and broaden your participation in fandom.

PLOKTA (Steve Davies, 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, Berks RG30 2RP, UK & Alison Scott, 24 St Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG, UK editors of the paper version; Mike Scott, 9 Jagger House, Rosenau Road, London SW11 4QY, UK editor of the web version at www.plokta.com; e-mail: locs@plokta.com; available for letters of comment, fanzines in trade, contributions, "editorial whim, or for a baby-proof reset switch for Steve's computer;" no price given)

Plokta is a clever fanzine. It flashes its cleverness at you visually with studio-professional-looking design and layout, taking full advantage of the potentials of DTP. The cover of the latest issue, #24, is a clever mockup of a cereal box - perhaps more recognizable in its parody to British readers, since this is a British fanzine - and chock-full of clever puns and allusions (starting with "Universal Cereal Bus" and the USB symbol and including "With Added Thionite" and "Free! Plokta Action Figure writes! prints! collates! staples! Nine to Collect!"). The two *Plokta* children, in Teletubby guise, are the central figures under the motto, "Wireless Networking for Kids," with lightning striking their head antennae.

This is carried over into a box on the contents page which tells us that "Serving size" is "16 pages," "Servings per packet: 1," and a list of percentages: "Bollocks - 100%, Babies - 120%, Strontium-90 - 50%, Angst - Trace." Thus are life's domestic joys - babies, children - mixed in with computer-cleverness, a fair indication of what this fanzine is made of.



The actual written material would read well in any fanzine, but seems almost incongruous in this setting. The editorial describes life in a tent at a music festival - complete with photos of the tent being erected. Jaine Weddell describes acquiring a bread machine, likening her cooking to alchemy. Alison Scott writes about the invasion of her house by a mouse and pigeons. Sue Mason tells three short anecdotes about long-lost items returning to her via circuitous routes. Steven Cain writes about bicycling. Steve Davies describes getting lost in Hyde Park. And amid these close-focused, personal pieces the issue's centerpiece is Alasdair Mackintosh's "If Life Gives You Citroens, Make Lemonade." This piece reads like it was written for a professional magazine - *Time* or *Newsweek*, say - and is an excellent (if brief) story of the invention and history of the Citroen DS, a revolutionary car of the mid-'50s which is now obsolete but still fascinatingly unique. I have no idea what this piece is doing in *Plokta*, or indeed in any fanzine, but I was glad for the opportunity to read it.

There are in addition clever little bits scattered through the issue under the title of "Bollocks," three and a half pages of letters (in four narrow columns of type per page), and the back cover presents captioned photos from the wedding of Jo Walton and Emmet O'Brien in Hay on Wye.

In past issues *Plokta's* cleverness has included CD-ROMs and its website has always been an active adjunct to the paper fanzine. For what it is, *Plokta* is probably the most accomplished fanzine I've yet reviewed in this column.

Actual Elementary School Excuse Notes from Bob Schngider Submitted by Lee Gilliland

10. "Jerry was at his grandmother's yesterday and she did not bring him to school because Jerry couldn't remember where the school was."
9. "Ronnie would not finish his work last night. He said his brain was too tired of spelling."
8. "Eric hurt his knee in a karate tournament over the weekend. He won his age group, but was in too much pain to do his math assignment."
7. "Amy did not do her homework last night because we went out to a party and did not get home until late. If she is tired, please let her sleep during recess time."
6. "Henry stayed home because he had a stomach ache from eating too much frosting."
5. "It was my fault Mike did not do his math homework last night. His pencil broke and we do not have a pencil sharpener at home."

STUDENTS ARISE!



Saturday."

4. "Scott didn't practice last night because he lost his tooth in the mouthpiece of his trumpet."
3. "Diane was late on Wednesday. She fell asleep on the bus and was taken back to the bus yard."
2. "Cody was absent yesterday because we were out bowling until 2 am."
1. "Tommy wasn't in school yesterday because he thought it was

Housekeeping

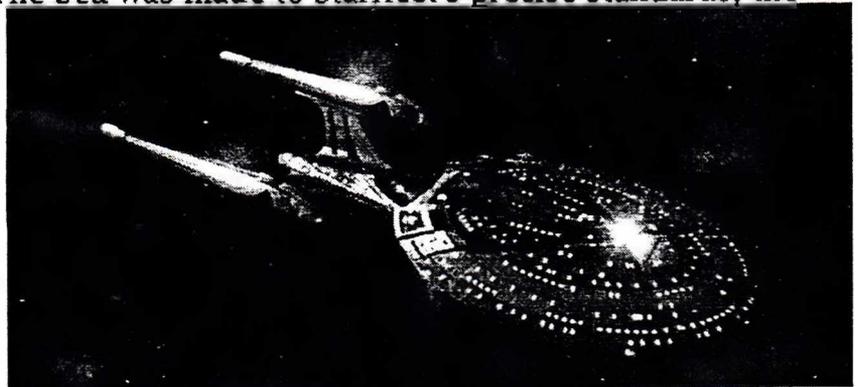
Star Trek Fanfic by Lee Strong

Commander William Dornan, Executive Officer of the USS *Enterprise*, NCC 1701-L, had a lot on his mind, starting with a critical early staff meeting with Captain Flores. As a result, he overrode the Ship's Computer and had himself transported directly to the Staff Room so he could debate his impending decision to the Captain in peace. This left the Computer's Housekeeper subsystem without fresh orders.

Dutifully, the Computer contacted Dornan via communicator, but he cut it off with a brusque command, "Just clean the room like usual." So, the Housekeeper fell back on its default programming.

First, it scanned the Executive Officer's quarters and categorized everything by what humans called "Personal Priority." Then it began transporting objects out of the three room suite. The first to go were the Commander's personal keepsakes, mostly sports trophies from high gravity planets. Their energy patterns went into a temporary file. The hard copy of *Captain Horatio Hornblower* lying face down on the desk belonged to the ship's library so the Computer flagged it and dematerialized it. Another scan confirmed that everything else in the quarters -- the unmade bed, mouth spray spilled in the bathroom, and yesterday's crumpled uniform carelessly tossed in the corner -- all belonged to the Ship. The transporter hummed again, and momentarily the interior volume (Quarters, Galaxy Class, Executive Officer, Quantity 1), was completely empty... even the air rendered into energy patterns stored in the Ship's reserve capacitors.

Then it began reversing the process. The Freiberger Effect blazed again, this time filling in the blanks. First, a complete new suite materialized including bedroom, bathroom, and dayroom/study. The bed was made to Starfleet's precise standards, the bathroom hygienic supplies were fresh and unopened, and Dornan's new uniforms (Human Male Size XL, Command Team, Commander) filled the closet. A new copy of *Hornblower* appeared on the desk, this time face up and closed with a bookmark in the proper place. And finally, the memorabilia



shimmered into existence in the display shelves. The Housekeeper scanned the room one last time and checked off another task on its daily work schedule as "Completed."

Meanwhile, Commander Dornan had come to the decision that he had been dreading. Ensign Cho just wasn't working out. As the *Enterprise's* chief personnel officer, Dornan could see no alternative to replacing the young officer and starting over. The transporter hummed again.

***War for the Oaks* by Emma Bull (New York : TOR Books, 2001)**
A review by Colleen R. Cahill

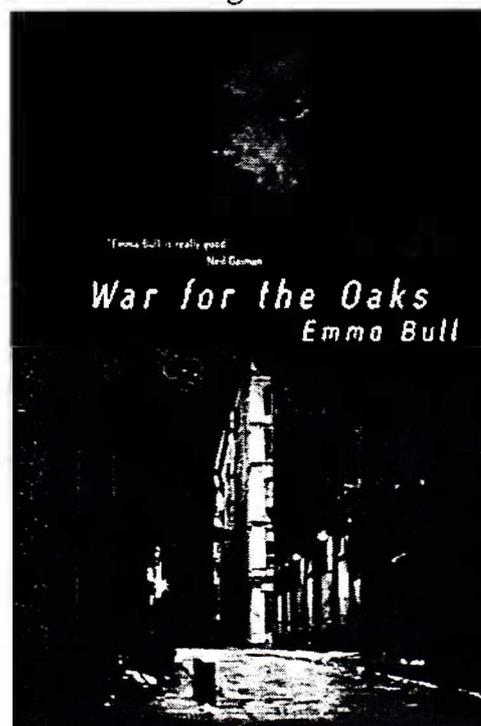
When thinking of magical places, Avalon or Oz jump to my mind. Certainly Minneapolis is nowhere on the list. But Emma Bull has made this city a place of light and dark in *War for the Oaks*. With a blend of music and magic, humor and conflict, Bull has written an urban fantasy that puts the fair folk and rock musicians together in a way that surprises and delights.

Eddi McCandry, rock band guitarist, is having a bad day: the band is breaking up and her love life is going down the tubes. And to top it all off, she is being stalked by a strange, dark man. Or is that a large, dark dog? Eddi soon learns that these are one in the same and that she has gained a phouka bodyguard. The Phouka can be a man or a dog, but in either form he is a thorn in Eddi's side. His purpose is to keep her safe so she can be the human emissary for the Seelie Court who are at war with their rivals, the Unseelie Court. Without her on the battlefield, the Fair Folk would fight but not die, as both sides are immortal without her presence. That fact that Eddi is unwilling to participate does not matter to the either side; she has been chosen and will serve from May Day until the end of Summer. Unless, of course, the Unseelie Court kill her first.

Now Eddi has to form a band and find places to play while not being knocked off by some dark elf. She is also caught up in the class system and politics of the Seelie Court. While initially resistant to being a part of the fairy war, Eddi does learn a great deal about their society and becomes involved with various members, including a brownie and a elven knight. As Eddi gets to know the Phouka, she realized that his choice of her was not random, that he has an agenda above the purpose of being able to kill Unseelie Court warriors. The Phouka selected her to shake up things at the staid Seelie Court and change the way the Court sees it's purpose.

What makes this book a treasure is the interaction between the characters and their growth throughout the book. The interplay between Eddi and the Phouka is highly amusing, but the relationship changes as both learn from each other. It is not a glib novel, as the war scenes are not softened nor is the commitment Eddi and her band members make to their music. The contrasts and similarities between these two emotional, creative groups makes this a fascinating work..

The book was originally published in 1987 and Bull used groups like Boiled in Lead and Men without Hats for her musical inspiration; while this dates the work, it also gives it a feeling of reality. TOR's reissue



includes a new introduction from the author in which she explains some of the background for the book. This is one of my favorite titles and I re-read about once a year. If you have never read this book, I give it the highest recommendation. If you have read this and your old copy is wearing out, as mine was, here is your chance to get a replacement.

Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora
edited by Sheree R. Thomas (Warner Books, 2000)
A review by Colleen R. Cahill

Anthologies gather stories with similarities to provide the reader with a glimpse of a body of literature. Sometimes this is based on story theme, literary period or genre type. *Dark Matter* is an anthology that looks at fiction written in English by authors of African descent and a wide range of material is presented. The central theme of the collection is "A century of speculative fiction from the African Diaspora". These stories represent the vision of Black authors from various times, places and with numerous topics.

Although most of the writers are from the United States, the Caribbean and Europe are also represented. The range of dates starts in the last century with the earliest story being "The Goophered Grapevine" by Charles W. Chesnutt, written in 1887. The majority of the titles were written in the year 2000 with a selections of earlier works. Some of the items are short stories and some are selections from novels, such as "Future Christmas", an excerpt from Ishmael Reed's novel *The Terrible Twos*. Luminaries of all levels are included, such as Octavia Butler, Steven Barnes and Samuel Delany. Even by size the works vary: some are a few pages and others are novella length. All these fit the purpose of the anthology but they also make it so much more.

The stories and their subjects explore a vast territory. The title of the anthology uses the term speculative fiction and quite appropriately. Some are clearly science fiction stories, such as "The Comet" by W.E.B. Du Bois and "The Becoming" by Akua Lezli Hope. Others can be classified as fantasy, like Nisi Shawl's "At the huts of Ajala". A few could be called horror, as in Nalo Hopkinson's "Greedy Choke Puppy." Not all the selections are fiction: five essays are included at the end of the anthology, written by Samuel Delany, Charles Saunders and others, all addressing the central theme of the collection: Blacks and speculative fiction.

The editor states that one of her goals in *Dark Matter* was to introduce readers to a few of her favorite authors. I was happy to read this collection of works by authors both familiar and new to me which lead me to agree with the editor that there is more to this genre than meets the eye.

WSFA to Do the Full Monty?

The 10/19 meeting opened with Alexis banging the hammer. [Alexis??? No, he didn't lead a terrorist attack and takeover of the club's vast treasury. He merely was seated in the chair up front where the gavel is placed while Bob, who started the meeting, was on the couch.] "Meeting Time" yelled Bob over the hoards of people talking. Lee said, "But we're having fun now!" Bob insisted that, "We'll just postpone it." Than Sam Pierce walked in. "Is it time?" he asked. "It's past time," roared Bob. "It's 9:22 after the hour, Mr. Secretary?"

The Secretary said that he had been informed that there was no business at the last meeting. Sam P asked, "How's the money situation?" Bob said, "\$203.06" Sam P said, "That won't cover the insurance."

Alexis, for the Entertainment Committee noted that "The Republican House left and the Democratic Senate stayed even though it was the Democrats who got the Anthrax." Lee for Activities said that the club will go see *Monsters Inc.* on Nov 3 at 7:30 at the Skyline Theater. "We have two locations." There was a vote and the club decided to go to the Skyline.

Erica for Austerity, "wants to thank people for bringing money which will bring us hot hors d'oeuvres so not so austere today." Eric added, "But don't bring powdered donuts for duration of the emergency."

Bob, for Capclave [recently] past said, "We're wrapping up, trying to clear it up. People who are owed money should see Mr. Smith. If have people who assisted, pass names to Peggy." Elspeth asked who gets the money. "Capclave 2002 gets money for members of those who volunteered." Elspeth, continuing to play straight man, asked "How many hours worked should count?" This led to a debate. Eventually Bob settled on 4-6 hours or "if you feel your volunteers did a substantial amount of work. We're reasonably flexible on this. Money is transferred to 2002 Capclave. WSFA gets what's left."

Elspeth said, "Capclave present is not here. I've been scouting from BWI to Greenbelt, I've focused on MD hotels."

Sam P called on the trustees. They said, "We're looking for a Capclave 2003 chair. Any volunteers?" Sam Lubell volunteered. Lee said, "How about Third Friday meeting in November for an election? That means First Friday will be last chance to talk to trustees." Sam Lubell reminded people, "But you can still be nominated from the floor."



We had actual new business. Sam Lubell moved, "that the austerity committee think about ways to raise money." Eric said, "Have you seen the Full Monty?" Steve said, "If you can imagine this club in spandex, you're sicker than I thought." Bill Jensen asked, "Can we raise rates to account for it." Adrienne said, "This starving college student says no." Keith said, "We could have a special rate for cute girls..."

There was a fast and furious debate, ultimately settled when Sam P said, "All in favor of getting austerity committee to think about fund raising say Aye." Ayes were heard. Alexis voted the only no, "Having these people think is a bad idea."

Eric suggested changing the group's name to the Austerity and Fundraising Committee. He dropped it when Elspeth said it was good to have an austere committee. Someone

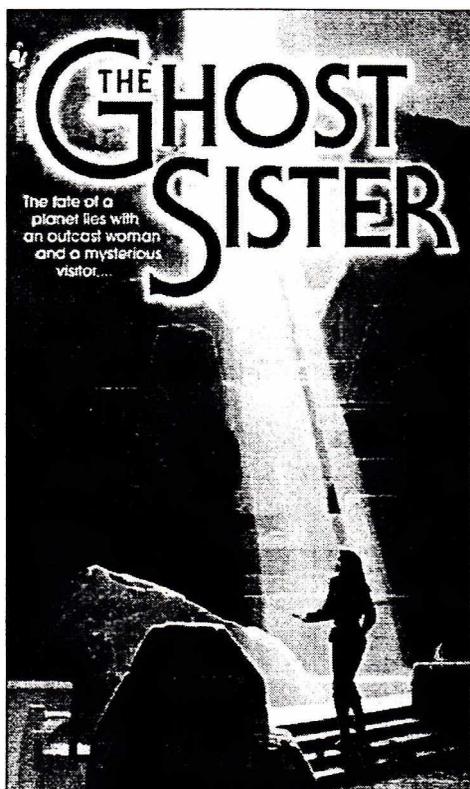
suggested a Swimsuit Issue of the WSFA Journal.

Announcements. Anyone who wishes your announcement to appear in the swimsuit issue of the Journal, please submit it with a photo. Someone asked if we would charge for this issue. "Of course, it is a fundraiser." Others suggested that they'd pay NOT to see it. Steve pointed out that Keith doesn't use a graphic browser so he's safe. Erica told about the tornado that hit College Park and the University of Maryland the week before the convention. [Trapping your editor in a university basement for about 15 minutes.] Her car is now a convertible. Anyone who wants firewood should see her. All you can heat. Lee Gilliland said James is no longer engaged. They put old cat away and got a new one, Trigger. She suggests people see play *Eleanor*. She saw it with Laura Bush. Adrienne is Lee's apprentice WSFA flirt. Send addresses to Colleen for WSFA address book. Keith is looking for his map of PG County. It was last in use at Capclave. Give Keith information of upcoming cons. Lee made motion to kill the meeting. It adjourned unanimously 9:49.

Attendance: VP Sam Pierce, Sec. Samuel Lubell, Treas. and 2001 Chair Bob MacIntosh,

Trust. Lee Gilliland, Trust Nicki Lynch, Sheri Bell, Colleen Cahill, Alexis Gilliland, Erica Ginter, Karl Ginter, Cathy Green, Ron Kean, Elspeth Kovar, Will Ludwigsen, Keith Lynch, Richard Lynch, Keith Marshall, Walter Miles, Barry Newton, Evan Phillips, George Shaner, Steven Smith, Michael Taylor, Michael Walsh, Andrew Williams, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh, Thierry Barston, John Madigan, Carolyn Frank, Dennis Landis, Bill Jensen, Candy Madigan, and Kindra Gresham.

Review of *The Ghost Sister* by Liz Williams (Bantam, 2001, \$5.99)
Reviewed by Samuel Lubell



In a genre with big space battles with the fate of the universe at stake, the more quiet discoveries of anthropological SF may be missed. These books, among them *Always Coming Home*, *Through Alien Eyes*, *A Woman of the Iron People* etc., usually feature a human/Earthling visiting a newly discovered alien culture only to learn that it is more sophisticated than it first appears. Williams, in her first novel, has a few twists on the formula. First, the world being explored is a human colony world that has been out of touch with the other worlds. Second, the humans on the world of Monde D'Isle have reverted to savagery literally and physically. They are somehow linked to their world and have the abilities to sense tides, metals, and energy lines, keeping them safe. But they pay for this with the bloodmind that can overwhelm their human mind, causing them to behave like savages, killing anything (and anyone) that seems weak. One of the main themes in the book is the struggle of the native protagonist, Eleres, to avoid killing his sister who is a "ghost" because she is not linked to the bloodmind for some unknown reason.

Into this world come a team of civilized folk from the planet Irie including a priestess of the Gaian Path and apprentice, exo-biologist, and the book's other narrator, who seems to be a writer/journalist. The Gaian Path is to ReForm planets to make them more suitable for humans, exactly the opposite of what happens here. Thankfully, the book avoids the cliché of colonists versus homeworld (although it does fall into the trap of the power-mad religious leader). Gradually, the off-worlders make first contact with Mevennen, the ghost sister of the title and her brother. The off-worlders too are considered ghosts since they are not linked to the bloodmind, and are sometimes completely ignored by the planet folk. Both sets of narrators gradually struggle to learn what is really going on in the planet and what has caused the bloodmind to appear.

I would have liked a bit more debate over their right to make changes to the planet although by the time the offworlders learn enough to do that, they have already split into two camps. Also the final explanation for what is going on and how to fix things (including Mevennen's ghost status, seems a little too easy.) Still the book is always interesting and these are slight flaws that are forgivable in a complex work, especially since this is a first novel. Characterization is a strong point and events unfold logically given the premises. As in most anthropological SF, the fun is seeing the culture and how everything fits together.

And, for the most part in this book they do.

From the description in the back of the book, it seems the author's next book will tackle the Indian caste system comparing it to Earth's status in an interstellar empire. If it is as good as this one, I look forward to reading it.

21 Ways to Annoy the Taliban and Like Minded Terrorists by Lee Strong

Practice freedom of religion.

Vote.

Don't let a stupid terrorist ruin your convention life.

Wear revealing clothing. The Taliban considers short sleeved shirts and blouses to be "revealing clothing."

Read.

Take photographs and make films.

Watch television and movies. The leader of the Taliban prescribes looking at flowers for entertainment.

Practice and improve science and technology.

Practice responsible citizenship. Read the Constitution. Support public authorities when they're doing a necessary job. Express disagreement thru constitutional means.

Eat healthy foods and beverages.

Drink alcohol in moderation.

Don't use psychoactive drugs except as part of a bona fide medical plan.

Have a life.

Learn other languages.

Learn about other peoples and cultures. The leader of the Taliban has only met 2 non-Muslims in his entire life.

Travel.

Practice courtesy.

Associate with members of the opposite sex on a basis of mutual respect.

Party. The Taliban's idea of a party is men drinking coffee in the living and women drinking tea in the kitchen.

Think for yourself.

Enjoy life.

