

THE WSFA

JOURNAL

The Official Newsletter of the Washington Science Fiction Association

December 2006 – ISSN 0894-5411

Drew Bittner, Editor / Gayle Surrette, Assistant Editor

Email Address: editor@wsfa.org Please put "Submission:" at the beginning of the subject line if it is to be considered for publication. Entries not marked this way may not get routed by our automatic filters.

Mailing Address: WSFA Journal, 5911 Edsall Rd. #611, Alexandria, VA 22304

This and previous issues of the journal may be seen by going to www.wsfa.org

Throg Skullbreaker and his barbarian hordes read the WSFA Journal!

CONTENTS

- From the Editor
- Minutes of November Third Friday/December First Friday Meeting
- Media Reviews: The Lost Room, Heroes, The Dresden Files
- Events
- Miscellany: I Warned You About Kittens...

FROM THE EDITOR...

Hello, all!

If you aren't feeling the holidays yet, there's still a tiny bit of time left to generate some Christmas cheer. What works wonders is decorating. Kat and I got our tree last week—a misadventure only in that we crammed a five-foot-seven tree into a compact car's backseat and then couldn't find a stand for sale anywhere (Target helped out)—and then decorated our condo's balcony with lights. First time ever.

Makes all the difference.

I hadn't really done the decorating thing for years. Being a bachelor who went to family homes for the holidays, I never saw the point. But now, being married and all, there's nothing like having the holidays reflected in our shared living space. It adds something to those moments watching *Grinch* or *Rudolph* on TV, y'know?

What does this have to do with sf? Not much. Maybe I'll be back on track next time but for now, enjoy the holidays.

See you all soon!

Drew



MEDIA REVIEWS

TV: A Wonderland for SF/Fantasy

Drew Bittner

If it seems like there's some amazing sf/fantasy on TV these days... well, there is. Let's take a look at two things that are out now and one that's coming up.

The Lost Room

SciFi Channel Original Miniseries

In 1961, something "terrible" happened... and a motel room vanished from the face of the Earth. The only way to reach this room is by using a key, one imbued with the power to unlock any door. But the key is not the only mysterious and powerful object associated with the room. There are as many as 100 objects out there, each with a singular power and sought by ruthless and dangerous people.

That's the underlying story of *The Lost Room*, a six-hour miniseries on SciFi Channel. Airing originally December 11-13, it airs again December 17 in a six hour marathon session. And what a show it is.

Peter Krause (*Six Feet Under*) plays Joe Miller, a detective who comes into possession of the motel room key while investigating a mysterious murder. He goes from hunter to hunted as diverse factions fight to wrest the key from his grip. Stalked by Howard "the Weasel" Montague (Roger Bart) and offered help by Jennifer Bloom (Julianna Margulies), Miller struggles to understand the cosmic scope of this game... and then his daughter Anna (Elle Fanning) is lost inside the room, lending personal urgency to solving the room's ultimate mysteries. He must seek help from Karl Kreutzfeld (Kevin Pollak), an unscrupulous hunter, and Martin Ruber (Dennis Christopher), a police scientist driven to the brink of madness by the Lost Room's revelations.

What ensues is a sort of scavenger hunt wrapped around a mystery, all of which pits Joe against powerful and shadowy forces. Allies and enemies are interchangeable and nothing is for certain. All Joe knows is that one object *must* be able to bring his daughter back. But is he willing to do literally whatever it takes?

Written by Laura Harkcom, Christopher Leone and Paul Workman, directed by Craig Baxley and Michael Watkins, the miniseries combines elements of *Twilight Zone*, *X-*

Files, and many more sf classics into a singular adventure. Krause and the talented cast do a fantastic job, conveying the elements of a worldwide “conspiracy” in fascinating ways. *The Lost Room* is a terrific story—but the story is open-ended, leaving nearly unlimited possibilities for an ongoing series. Here’s hoping SciFi will take that next step.

Strongly recommended.

Heroes

NBC TV

A handful of people around the world are coming to realize that they’re special. Not just gifted or talented or particularly capable—*special*. Able to stop time, heal any injury, perform inhuman feats of strength or simply remember anything read or seen... they might be the next step in human evolution.

They’re “heroes.”

Let’s look at just three: an upbeat Japanese office worker, Hiro (Masi Oka), finds he has the power to bend time and space. A heroin-addicted painter in New York, Isaac (Santiago Cabrera), paints an apocalyptic nuclear explosion in New York. And hospice nurse Peter Petrelli (Milo Ventimiglia) dreams that he can fly... and is ready to jump off a roof to prove it.

After eleven episodes, these characters are beginning to come together—but the plotlines are many and diffuse. There’s a serial killer named Sylar (Zachary Quinto) hunting the specials, while Bennett (Jack Coleman), the adoptive father of fast-healing cheerleader Claire (Hayden Panettiere), is kidnapping specials and studying them with the help of a memory-erasing Haitian (Jimmy-Jean Louis). What are their agendas? Who are they working for? And why did Future Hiro tell Peter that he must “save the cheerleader, save the world”?

One thing’s for sure. With nominations from the Golden Globes and the Writers Guild of America, *Heroes* is one of the best-received shows of the year. If you aren’t watching, you can catch up as SciFi Channel is rerunning episodes every Friday.

Visit the website at www.nbc.com/Heroes.

Strongly recommended.

The Dresden Files

SciFi Channel Original Series

Fans of dark urban fantasy already know about *The Dresden Files* series from writer Jim Butcher. What they may *not* know is that the books are being turned into a series for the SciFi Channel. Starting on January 21, the adventures of Harry Dresden, Chicago’s only wizard listed in the Yellow Pages, come to TV.

Dresden is a private investigator of the occult. On retainer with the Chicago police, he consults on those cases that seem "too weird for belief." To Harry, hunting down vampires, werewolves, faeries and rogue wizards is just another day on the job.

His allies include Bob, a wisecracking skull-bound spirit, and Connie Murphy, a police lieutenant... and the only one thinking Dresden is what he claims to be. Per SciFi.com: "The story begins when local gangster Tommy Tom and his girlfriend Jennifer Randall are found dead in a hotel room, their hearts having literally exploded from their chests. There's no natural explanation for the gruesome scene — no forced entry, no sign of struggle and no evidence that the two organs had become fatally claustrophobic."

Hey, how can you go wrong? Once the show airs, don't be surprised if we review it here or at SFRevu.com! With Paul Blackthorne as Harry Dresden.

Visit the website at www.scifi.com/dresden/index.html

WSFA MEETING MINUTES

WSFA Minutes
First Friday
Scheiner's Home, Virginia
December 1, 2006

CONVENED: The meeting convened at 9:14 pm.

ATTENDEES:

Mike Bartman, Drew Bittner, Katherine Bittner, Colleen Cahill, Gayle Dixon, Will Frank, Martin Garbowski, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Judy Scheiner, Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Chris Springob, Lee Strong, Gayle Surette, Elizabeth Twitchell, Ivy Yap and sundry others who didn't sign the sheet.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: The Secretary offered a rambling critique of modern art, then composed his assessment of the previous meeting in a series of haiku. (Actually, he just did the report, but the version above sounds more interesting.)

TREASURER'S REPORT: No report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Capclave Present: Sam Scheiner reported that, per Barry and Judy, there were 378 memberships to Capclave (a number just below 2005's total), of which 288 were paid (a number down about 40 from last year). There were more comps this time around (90). However, the con appears to be in the black by perhaps \$2000. The hotel negotiations for compensation—due to hosting the university football team at the same time and thus eliminating some previously agreed-upon space—are still in progress.

Capclave Future: There will be a committee meeting in December, but the hotel issues are not yet settled. The website is available for updates and announcements.

Capclave Far Future, DC 2012 and WFC: No report.

Publications: The November Journal will be in print form at the next (December 15) meeting, as will the December Journal, which will heavily feature kittens. Those in attendance were warned about the consequences of not submitting material to the Journal.

Entertainment: This committee is absorbing the Activities committee through a leveraged stock buyout, to be followed by dismantling the previous committee and selling off its components to earn short-term profit and boost fourth quarter earnings. Given the effort required to merge these two naturally antagonistic organizations, there was no entertainment at the meeting. No report either.

Activities: See above.

Rules Committee: no report.

Trustees: no report, nor interesting spam either.

Committee to Talk About Science Fiction: The committee will discuss this month's issue of *Asimov's* (a double-sized edition), if I'm reading my notes right, and hope to discuss the January issue next time.

Award Committee: The initial statement, outlining the goals and aspirations and intent of establishing this award, has been drafted and will be distributed by Colleen. She will compile feedback. There was a reading of the draft statement, as well as a question regarding the election of five nominating committee members; it was stated that five is appropriate for breaking ties.

OLD BUSINESS: Martin's motion regarding support for Polish sf translated into English (with intent to publish) is still tabled, pending consultation with our resident publishing entrepreneur and related parties.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Send email announcements to Drew. Send Journal material to Drew. Hell, send **anything** to Drew, he needs stuff to put in the Journal. Your recalcitrance is forcing me to dire measures... even though I am managing to entertain myself.

The hostess announcements were that the cat stays in. Whether this is code for something sinister remains unknown.

Nikki Lynch is working on charitable endeavors. John Pomeranz is in Boston, apparently stuck there due to inclement weather. (We believe he has since made it home.) Kathi Overton had a scifi chat. It was announced that Day Break (on Fox) is an entertaining show, but Drew killed the room's enthusiasm by noting it is supposedly already cancelled. Rebecca Prather held her party on December 10, and there will be a New Years Eve party at Casa Pomeranz/Overton.

Gayle Dixon was recognized for attending her first WSFA meeting. We hope she will return.

ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 9:58 pm.



EVENTS

Please email upcoming events to editor@wsfa.org with the word "submission" in the subject line for consideration.

There will be a New Years Eve party at the Pomeranz/Overton household. Details TBD.

MISCELLANY

On the Subject of Kittens

Drew Bittner

At the last two meetings, I have made specific mention that kittens would be included in this Journal if I received no submissions.

You asked for it.

The Long Run of Kit-10

Kit-10 yanked the blaster from its place at his side, cyberclone reflexes earning him a split-second lead on the Unmuzzled threesome crowding the alleyway ahead. *I might be young, but I know danger when I see it*, the cyberclone thought, snapping off four shots as he ducked into a handy doorframe.

Answering blaster bolts sizzled and spat around him, one coming close enough to singe the downy fur on his cheek.

"Give up, Kit-10! You know you're outnumbered," one of the dog troopers snarled.

"You Unmuzzled chumps oughtta go back to your kennel," Kit-10 shouted back.

"Big words from a catboy just out of the tank," another dog said.

"Bring it on, puppy chow."

With a bark of aggravation, the three dog-faced humanoids broke from their cover, trying to overwhelm Kit-10...

...but the felinoid was already in motion as well, clawing his way up the side of the grimy buildings as fast as he could. By the time the dogs looked up, he was on the roof and racing toward the spaceport.

<<You have five minutes to reach your transport,>> his wristcomp reminded him.

"You are so unhelpful," Kit-10 sighed. He patted the courier bag at his side, assuring himself that the package was still safe. "I'd better move..."

KABOOM!

Kit-10's feet were knocked out from under him as an explosion engulfed the rooftop. Rolling to a stop, the singed felinoid scrambled to recover his blaster as a matte black dogship swung into view. He back-flipped to his feet and started to run as spotlights caught him in a dazzling white circle.

"Oh splice, I'm in deep now..." Kit-10 muttered. "How am I gonna get out of this...?" He leaped, hoping to clear the next roofline, just as another explosion rocked the building. He lost his footing and fell amid the blazing debris...

"Honey, look."

Tom glanced up from the TV, where Cylons and Colonial Vipers were happily blazing away at each other. "What is it?"

Sharon nodded toward the kitten, whose legs were twitching in his sleep. "I think he's dreaming."

Tom chuckled, adjusting his glasses. "What do you think kittens dream about?"

"No idea, but I hope it's good." She reached down and petted the kitten, earning a loud but drowsy purr. "Hey, you want to turn that down? You're going to give him nightmares."

Tom sighed and dialed down the volume. It was hard to hear her over the explosions, true, but...ah well. Such was married life.

Sharon stroked the kitten's soft fur, wondering what was going on inside his tiny skull...

...while Kit-10 landed safely on his feet, the dogship lost amid the smoke far above. They would never be able to find him down here. Without meaning to, they'd given him an escape route. It was his lucky day! He purred happily.

"Ha ha! The dogs outwitted themselves this time," he chuckled, taking off for the mothership. Holstering his blaster, he smiled to himself. "Life's just one long adventure when you're... Kit-10."

end