

anyone will be able to prove he is breaking parole. Are mechanisms in place to recognize and track paw prints? I know a lot of Akitas look a lot alike to me. If Taro returned to terrorize New Jersey, could anyone prove that this is the return of the real Taro. Worse yet, suppose some other Akita is accused of being Taro, how could

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he ever prove his innocence? If I were an Akita, I would be taking to lawyers. Actually, animals don't do real well in New Jersey. We have our share of thrill killers going around shooting deer. Our fishermen come in two varieties. There are those who actually kill the fish, and the good sportspeople who let them go. I guess that latter are decent enough people and probably should be allowed to do what they do as long as they sign a waiver agreeing in advance that they themselves don't mind if in the name of sport they themselves are kidnapped and maimed as long as they are eventually released. Turnabout is, after all just sporting fair play. HA-HA-HA! I had you going there. Didn't I? See? I was only joking. PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE don't turn me in to the NRA. Hey you don't really think I'd side with those dirty, godless, antler-headed gooks who pillage our cornfields and would rape our women if they could. Hey, tell the NRA I support them defending American Liberty from those lousy, un-American commie pinko deer, those nasty, drug-running geese and ducks, and the occasional Iraq-sympathizing cow.

2. ISAAC ASIMOV'S ROBOTS IN TIME: PREDATOR by William F. Wu (AvoNova, ISBN 0-380-76510-1, April 1993, 244pp, US\$4.99); ISAAC ASIMOV'S ROBOTS IN TIME: MARAUDER by William F. Wu (AvoNova, ISBN 0-380-76511-X, July 1993, 243pp, US\$4.99); ISAAC ASIMOV'S ROBOTS IN TIME: WARRIOR by William F. Wu (AvoNova, ISBN 0-380-76512-8, 1993, 243pp, US\$4.99); ISAAC ASIMOV'S ROBOTS IN TIME: DICTATOR by William F. Wu (AvoNova, ISBN 0-380-76514-4, Feb 1994, 230pp, US\$4.99) (book reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper):

These are the first four of a (probably) six-book series. The basic premise (revealed in detail in the first book and recapped in a briefing to the main characters at the beginning of each of the

subsequent volumes) is that a scientist has created a "gestalt robot" made up of six component robots which somehow merge to form one "super-robot." This robot starts having problems related to the interaction of its gestalt parts. After several of these robots fail, one decides it must shut itself down to prevent harm from coming to humans because of its problems. It gets a scientist to split it into its six component parts (each a completely functional robot) and sends these parts back in time, miniaturizing them as part of the process. (How? Well, there is some attempt at explaining this in the first volume, but let's just say it's technobabble.) The first part went to the Cretaceous; the team sent back to recover it to try to solve the malfunction doesn't find out until the end of the book that the other parts went to different times and places. (This is not exactly a spoiler, since the reader knows there are more volumes to come.) The second went to 1600's Jamaica during the time of Sir Henry Morgan, the third went to Roman Germany during the First or Second Century, and the

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fourth went to Moscow in 1941. After a while, though, the miniaturization wears off and the component robots regain their full size. Then their programming forces them to act in accordance with Asimov's Three Laws, trying to protect humans from harm and therefore changing history. What's more, if they survive back to the time of their departure, they explode "with nuclear force" (more technobabble).

In D i c t a t o r, for example, our team hears of a nuclear explosion in Moscow (why haven't all the explosions already happened, and why is everything unchanged?) and goes back to retrieve number four from World War II Moscow. They have adventures, accomplish their mission (this is a surprise?), give a moralizing little speech about learning from history, and are told to go to Kubali Khan's China for number five. Definitely a popcorn book, requiring no intellectual investment or offering much beyond "time travelers coping with another age." (The questions I mentioned a couple of sentences ago are not dealt with at all.) If you like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing you will like.

Oh, this book also "features a database of fantastic illustrations by award-winning computer artist Matt Elson." I assume that

"fantastic" hears means "containing fantasy elements" rather than "extraordinary," since I found them fairly uninspired computer art. The whole thing is packaged by Byron Preiss Publications, which explains why the books seem more "product" than "book"--a share-cropped world in a series.

3. THE LOST CONTINENT by Bill Bryson (Harper Perennial, ISBN 0-06-092008-4, 1990 (1989c), 314pp, US\$11) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

This is the funniest book I have read since Joe Keenan's P_u_t_t_i_n_g_o_n_t_h_e_R_i_t_z, and the funniest non-fiction book since I don't know when. Bryson, a native Iowan now living in England, returns to America to tour its small towns and its big cities. Covering 38,000 miles and thirty-eight states, Bryson reminisces about his childhood (his father would go only to free vacation attractions, and stopped at every historical marker), the transition of small-town America into strip malls, and his quest for a baseball cap with a plastic turd on the brim.

As with most humor books, a sample is the best recommendation: "Nevada has the highest crime rate of any state, the highest rape rate, the second highest violent crime rate, the highest highway fatality rate, the second highest rate of gonorrhoea, ..., and the highest proportion of transients. It has more prostitutes than any other state in America. It has a long history of

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corruption and strong links with organized crime. And its most popular entertainer is Wayne Newton. So you may understand why I crossed the border from Utah with a certain disquiet." (Particularly since he also says that Utah is the only place on the face of the earth where Mormons will not come up to you and try to convert you--because they figure everyone in Utah already is one.)

Though Bryson loves to attack the mediocre, he is also ready to praise the praiseworthy, be it a town or a meal or an attitude. I highly recommend this nostalgic, funny, and thoroughly enjoyable

travelogue.

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This life is a hospital in which every patient is
possessed with a desire to change his bed.

-- Charles Baudelaire