

that an issue has come up between the United States and Iraq that would have my sympathies on the side of Iraq. Unfortunately, in this issue of Deliberti and Barloon, the two Americans who were found inside Iraq's borders, I have to admit that neither my loyalty to my country nor my distaste for the current Iraqi

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government are strong enough to overcome my belief that in this instance, Iraq is in the right. And, oh, did that hurt to say! It felt like eating greasy salted popcorn with fingers that have paper cuts. You know? It isn't like this is an isolated incident. It seems to me there isn't a single sensitive border in the world that we don't have U.S. citizens accidentally straying over every week or so. Didn't we just recently have a pilot accidentally straying over North Korea's border? How long was that incident out of the news before, "Oops, it happened again." What we are hearing is people saying it is wrong that Barloon and Deliberti have been given eight years in prison for having made an easy wrong turn in the desert. It was an accident. Anyone can accidentally make a tiny goof and cross the border into a hostile country run by a power-hungry dictator with a taste for missiles and super-weapons. Hey, nobody's perfect. Well, perhaps. But if you aim a loaded gun at somebody and this involuntary little finger cramp causes you to pull the trigger, you just shot someone. The real crime might be in the loading and aiming of the gun if you were someone subject to finger cramps. If indeed this was an accident, their crime was to go into a desert where a wrong turn that would take them across a sensitive border was possible. It is criminal negligence combined with criminal stupidity if there is any chance of them taking that wrong turn. The American wanderers should probably remain in prison for the eight years because they let themselves do so much damage. I am sure any diplomatic concessions we can win from Iraq in the next years will probably be wasted on their behalf instead of on something more important. I think they should stay as a warning to others as well as a punishment for their own recklessness. And if they really were spying for the U.S. then they knew what they were getting themselves into. The U.S. should do what it can to spring them, perhaps, but they will have a hard time winning my sympathy. I suspect they were not really spying for us, however. I think that eight years is a light sentence for spying. In fact, it is hard to believe the Iraqis really believe

the spying charge themselves if they gave these two luckless wanderers only eight years. [-mrl]

2. Tom Russell [hostar!tlr] has apparently been reading AT&T Today than the rest of us has found the following:

>>> HIGH TEMPERATURE SUPERCONDUCTIVITY ACHIEVED AT MURRAY HILL LAB--Two Bell Labs scientists at Murray Hill have made a discovery which will prove to be as significant to AT&T as when Alexander Graham Bell accidentally poured acid on his experimental telephone apparatus. The team of Juanita Abril and George Fuller made a breakthrough in the field of superconductivity, where there has been intense competition to produce zero-resistance electrical currents at temperatures above 3 degrees Kelvin. According to

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Fuller, "We have a tiny laboratory, and were working late one night and had ordered some pizza. I put the pizza box down on top of the experimental setup while we clearing some space on another work bench, and suddenly the mho-meter went off the top of the scale. The combination of heat, pressure and olive oil on the apparatus did by accident what our scientific methods had not."

Because earlier reports of room-temperature superconductivity have proven to be premature, with unrepeatable results, the two researchers were cautious at first. They recreated the original result and then recovered the spilled olive oil for analysis by the Organic Chemical Lab across the hall in Murray Hill. Fuller said, "Now the story gets interesting. It turned out that the olive oil had been fermented somehow by the intense electro-magnetic fields. The resulting liquid is less dense, is clearer, and has a surprisingly delicious taste when chilled. Finally research has produced a product with unquestionable market potential. Not only is our product intoxicating, it also reduces cholesterol and goes great with Italian food. The manufacturing process--our 'nanobrewery'--also needs almost no power due to the superconductivity effect. We're going to sell our brew under the name 'Mho Gold.'"

What's in the future? The team is working on an aerosol product based on Mho Gold--it will be marketed for use as a ventilation enhancement in windowless office buildings. This is Abril's initiative: "We've done some testing on this already in some Bell Labs buildings. We call the stuff 'Nozak' because it's muzak for your nose. It will certainly do a lot to improve PVA scores throughout AT&T." Some of the profits from Mho Gold and Nozak will be used to provide more space for the Abril-Fuller team.

<<< for release 4/1/95 >>>

3. One reason that Tom can find these articles that I miss is that the infrastructure here may or may not be supplying sufficient bandwidth to support the search, but not enough clockwidth. We are still running at a paltry 86.4 Ksec/day and the expected upgrade is way behind schedule. [-mrl]

4. DOOR-KEEPER by Marina and Sergey Dyachenko (published by KRANG, 1994) (a book review by Boris Sidyuk <boris@sfclub.FreeNet.kiev.ua>):

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This book is evidently the most outstanding event in science fiction and fantasy in Ukraine for the last year. Of course, it has some lacks. But every literary work has. In spite of them this debut novel is the first Ukrainian fantasy of classic type and pretends to be the best book of 1994 published in Ukraine.

The plot is simple and built of two independent plot lines with one start crosspoint and a finish one with a classic victory of Good over Evil. By all canons it comes out standard. But authors found their own way in developing this standard. The novel starts with

some ununderstandable disparities of characters' activities. It seems the authors were not able to find a better way to start the plot. Narration also begins slack. But so happens, from chapter to chapter the plot becomes stronger and more logical and shortcomings vanish.

Medieval-like world. Magic is alive. A withdrawn-into-themselves magicians. They don't rule the world, just exist and research. Very seldom new talented magicians appear and become students of old ones. Rual "Marran" Ilmarranen was one of younger geniuses. He came to study Magic to the most powerful magician Lart. Once Marran bet with one of his friends and provoked hostility between his teacher and another powerful magician. When they realised that they punished Marran having him turned into a half-stand. Any magician being in that condition for a while loses his magic power. Lart forgives Marran and turns him back into a human. And Marran becomes a walking magician with no magic. But he's known in the world as a magician. And people require his protection. Resourceful Marran comes out of the difficult situations with credit. At the same time Lart realises that a new power called the Third Power is about to enter this world and is looking for a door-keeper to let her in. This is the outset.

This novel is already nominated for several awards. Both general public and SF&F fandom meet this novel with great pleasure. Meanwhile the authors have finished their second fantasy novel and are about to finish the third one. The new double star supernova shines brighter and brighter. [-bs]

5. VAMPIRE DETECTIVES by Martin H. Greenberg (DAW, ISBN 0-88677-626-0, 1995, 316pp, US\$4.99) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

How, one might ask, can you have nineteen stories about vampire detectives without having them get a bit repetitious? The answer is that you can't and so what you have here are nineteen stories, *some* of which are about vampire detectives and some of which are about regular detectives hunting vampires. (Well, I suppose the English language allows the latter to be called "vampire

detectives," much as Ace Ventura was a "pet detective." Still, this is a little like having an anthology called NURSE STORIES which is half stories about nurses and half stories about bull-fighting written by nurses.) For that matter, a couple are not about detectives or detection at all.

Reading these, I have to say that perhaps the specialized anthology has gotten too specialized. Or perhaps Greenberg really does need a co-editor to oversee the artistic end of things. (Okay, so some may quibble about the juxtaposition of the word "artistic" and the concept "vampire detectives.") But I found these stories basically boring, and this time I cannot attribute that to having read too many at one sitting, since I spread this out over a couple of weeks.

Not surprisingly, the best of the batch is Kathe Koja and Barry N. Malzberg's "Girl's Night Out." I hope someone publishes a collection of Malzberg's recent short fiction, much of which has been scattered around in anthologies of wildly varying quality. A few, notably William Sanders's "The Count's Mailbox" and Gary Alan Ruse's "Night Tidings," are extremely derivative. (I can't believe that Ruse used such an obvious gimmick from Conan Doyle.) But even the rest are pretty much your basic modern vampire story, with maybe one twist here or one unusual updating there, but on the whole uninteresting. Maybe dyed-in-the-wool (died-in-the-blood?) vampire fans might like them, but the average reader can safely give this collection a miss. [-ecl]

6. WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule review: This is a cute puppy-dog of a film with a cute puppy-dog of an actress. The film called for a collection of characters that is a little weird but adorable. It was close, but the family was never as winning as intended. This is an amusing but fluffy romantic comedy. Rating: low +1 (-4 to +4)

Preston Sturges could have had a good time with this story. John Turteltaub is no Preston Sturges, but he is at least able to make it into an amiable comedy. Sandra Bullock plays Lucy, a drab and lonely token-booth attendant for the Chicago Transit Authority. Her life is dreams. She dreams of travel, She dreams of getting a nice boy friend. She dreams of having a family. And Turteltaub dreams of the audience believing Sandra Bullock as a drab and lonely token-booth attendant with no boyfriends. Lucy does have a dream boyfriend, a well-heeled and handsome man who comes by her CTA station. One lonely Christmas the family-less Lucy is working

and her dream boyfriend is mugged on the platform and falls into the path of an approaching train. Lucy saves his life and takes the unconscious man--Peter as she discovers his name is (appropriately played by Peter Gallagher)--to a hospital. There a careless comment gives a nurse the impression that Lucy is really the now-comatose Peter's fiancée. In the sort of comedy of errors that can occur only in the most contrived of stories, when Peter's somewhat strange family show up, they hear Lucy referred to as Peter's fiancée and they also believe it. Peter's family adopts Lucy as a prospective family member that they have never met. Further complicating matters is that Peter's brother Jack (Bill Pullman) is skeptical that brother Peter would have gotten engaged to Lucy without Jack finding out. He sets out to prove that Lucy is not what she appears to be.

This is a film with its heart in the right place, and one with a good sense of humor. But it just does not have the polished style of a professionally made film. There are mismatched styles of humor that often conflict with each other. Pieces of slapstick are thrown into what is mostly a comedy of personality. Much of the humor is built around the eccentric conversations of Peter's family. Somehow this joke just does not work as well as scriptwriters Daniel G. Sullivan and Frederic Lebow think it does.

Sandra Bullock has been winning in SPEED and was likable in DEMOLITION MAN, but here she overplays her personality. She gives the kind of performance in which you can read her every emotion, just a little too exaggerated, on her face. That works for a while, but the slight overplaying eventually makes her seem sappy and unctuous. It may well have been a director's decision since Peter Gallagher also seems to have the same problem, though luckily for Gallagher he is not on the screen and conscious long enough to allow it to become irritating. Several good veteran character actors are also present including Jack Warden, Glynis Johns, and Peter Boyle are present but do not have sufficient screen time to show us any acting touches that we have not seen from them many times previously.

WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING is no great classic of cinema. In fact, to all appearances it no more than a light Christmas programmer that

got delayed in its release. If it has no great virtues, at least it has no great faults either. This piece of feather-light holiday fluff gets a low +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

Mark Leeper
MT 3F-434 908-957-5619
m.r.leeper@att.com

Psychiatry enables us to correct our faults by
confessing our parents' shortcomings.
-- Laurence J. Peter