

SPARTACUS #74

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God forgive me, but I have a terrible suspicion: that it was all a set-up. Such is my mistrust of Trump and his cadre that I would not be surprised to find that they were willing to put supporters at risk for a cheap political stunt. The universal cry the morning after the assassination attempt was to curtail the tone of hostility and talk of violence that's marked this era in American politics. An unworthy belief like mine surely qualifies, so I feel a bit of shame. But the suspicion abides.

It's not that the quick paranoia infects me alone. Facebook is full of conspiracy theories, *Mein frau* Rose-Marie shared in my doubts until it turned out that a rally attendee had

been snuffed by a stray bullet and that the assassin was a ditzzy late-adolescent nerd. Not even MAGAn, she believes, are slimy enough to put innocents in danger. And even so, why would they pick such a nitwit as their fall guy? Arguments with merit. Nevertheless, the situation lends itself to conspiracy fantasies: the unprofessional and lax behavior of the security at the Pennsylvania event, Trump's posture after the shooting (exposing himself to more bullets to dramatically shake his fist) ... it screams *staging* down the line, at least to those of us who think Trump a fraud from the ground up.

But perhaps we're missing the point, which good Joe Biden, President of the United States and the man I support for a second term, articulated well in his awkward sincerity: American politics has lurched into violent rhetoric and slander. Everyone needs to take a deep breath and concentrate on *policies*. Trump's Project 2025 is reason enough for progressives to fight harder than ever before for their – our – cause. It's on policy that we need to focus more, and so much on personality. Trump is an easy target for those critiques. Look at the unfettered language with which my favorite commentator – myself – addressed the orange-utan after the debate in late June:

The instant Joe Biden — began speaking in his June '24 debate with Donald Trump, I knew he, we, our country, the whole *idea* of our country was in dreadful trouble.

It's not that his opponent shone. Trump was *himself squared*, a smirking, deceitful, posturing bully and fraud, blustering off his 34 criminal convictions, shrugging off with a smile the charges that he's no more to America's worst enemies than Putin's foremost U.I., ignoring the judicial determinaton that he's a rapist as if it s verity didn't matter, which to his cultists, is so. The commentator who described Trump as *Vile* was and remains completely righteous in that charge. On any other night the post-event talk would have been all about replacing *him* on the ballot.

Trump deserves every iota of contempt we can give him. But not the *hoi polloi*. The wingers attending that rally showed themselves to be mostly decent folks. The retired firefighter who apparently died shielding his family certainly qualified, as did the OB/GYN who tried to assist him. They seemed far more typical than the louts flipping the bird to the news cameras after the attack. The worst thing I can say about them, in all fairness, is that they're tragically naïve.

Naïve because of what Trump and his group have planned. The infamous schemata yclept **Project 2025** is only the most visible part of their agenda. Trump is on record as pledging the evisceration of NATO and the overt weaponization of the Department of Justice as vengeance for its prosecution of his crimes. The Project goes further. Though Trump has publicly disavowed some of its plans, his minions have been deeply involved in assembling them, and almost all reflect stated Trumpian aims.

Direct presidential control over hitherto independent government authority is among the most radical. The Department of Justice would no longer act on its own; law enforcement on the highest governmental level would be under the thumb of the White House. Political appointees would replace career professionals in vital departments like the FBI. The Department of Education and its oversight powers over local school board actions, which have included draconian cultural moves like book banning, would be eliminated. A massive deportation effort would be implemented. Another tax cut for the rich would gut America's economy erasing the outstanding growth in the Biden years and the recent progress towards fairness and equanimity.

The dissolution of individual autonomy inherent in the *Dobbs* atrocity would continue, and grow. The next four years could very likely see three vacancies open up on the SCOTUS. Trump's control over the law itself would only grow more radical and permanent. (Who would take my bet that the black-robed stooge who dismissed the documents case against Trump would be nominated – despite the incompetence of every decision she's made where trump is concerned?)

Toning down the rhetoric on this savage year is, of course, a wise idea. But only where violence is threatened or advocated, Decent America is opposed by a determined ignorance that bears more than its share of responsibility for this sick and sour time. Its proposals and dreams have to be opposed, strongly and unequivocally. I sense disaster. I hope to God that America proves me wrong.

On another electoral topic ... Should Biden quit the race and allow a younger candidate to take his place? There's a respectable krewe that insists that he should. On the same day Uncle Joe put himself in isolation due to a light case of COVID, Adam Schiff, one of the hopes of our party, joined the chorus of voices urging him to cede his spot atop the blue ticket. That bit of news approaches the status of serious.

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.

And then again, the judge in the Stormy Daniels case gets to hand down Trump's sentence in that case in September. What if he gives him *jail time*, and refuses to release the creature pending appeal?

What a year...

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LOCCed OUT!

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Many thanks for *Spartacus* 73. Do we put "WIDE LOAD" on [Trump's] back? Maybe he's about to explode flatulently? No awards for front cover for you! Something better MUST be inside...

We saw some of Trump's hush money trial, but for some reason, he was found guilty, and nothing is happening? Could it be there's a special level of the law for special people like Trump? I sincerely hope



not, so why isn't he being fitted for his custom orange jumpsuit? Oh, yes, he's running for president, and if he's not being allowed to run for president, millions of America's worst will descend upon Washington, and various state houses, and other public places, and there will be mass murders of Democrats and anyone else who doesn't agree, and January 6 will look like a picnic in the park. I really want to be wrong here...

More and more, it's Trump who looks like a senile fool, not Biden. I keep noticing the right accuses the left of what they openly do. Trump could win, I gather our federal government is readying themselves for what they call a likely Trump win. He's a convicted felon now, but the hicks that vote for him are legion. I have already seen too many flags that say TRUMP OR DEATH. Whose death? Should Biden win again, the wailing about yet another rigged election will go on forever. Time for America's various crime-fighting organizations to come down heavy on them. January 6th should never happen again.

The idea of a US reich came from a leaked document that stated that concept of Trump's second term being supremely authoritarian. I've seen a telling remark on social media...people are not afraid of the bloodbath if Trump loses, but the concentration camps if he wins. Many are depending on the Supreme Court...will those suspect justices vote for justice or Trump?

I am not anti-semitic or anti-Israel. I am anti-Netanyahu, who has caused the conflict he's always wanted. The World Court wants to prosecute him as a war criminal, and 35,000 dead Gazans might agree. I am anti-Hamas, too, putting their so-called supporters in front of the Israeli army. America's broadcaster used to, by law, present both sides of any argument, and give all political parties equal representation on all channels, so that all citizens could make a fair and informed decision at the ballot box. Ronald Reagan did away with that law, so I lay the blame at his feet for the idiocies of Trump and Fox News.

To Rich Dengrove... I never doubted your sincerity, and I humbly thank you. That might be a little Impostor Syndrome on my part. Today on Facebook, I was able to announce the Best of 2023 collection, and I sometimes have trouble believing this is all happening.

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I'd prefer not to talk about Trump and perhaps the day will come. But on second thoughts that day will never come. Because even when he is no longer around, his legacy will remain. There is the issue as to why so many people were and are willing to vote for him. Can it all be blamed on "the laziness of the average American intelligence"? His continued appeal to such a large proportion of the electorate is deeply unsettling. Lloyd & Yvonne Penney make the plea that should Trump lose the Presidential election that "SCOTUS, judge with law, not politics". Unfortunately, I have no confidence on that score. As I write it's been a couple of days since the New York jury returned their verdict. A bit too early to see if this has any effect on the polls.

Your comments about human nature, with regard to whether a female politician has "decent looks", reminded me of an experiment carried out by Karl Stefanovic. About a decade ago, perhaps a tad more, Stefanovic was the co-host of Australia's *Today* show, a TV breakfast program. He decided that he would go through a year wearing the same suit. No-one noticed. Or if they did notice, no one found it worthy of commentary. Can you imagine the reaction if a female co-host went a year wearing the same outfit? Or not even a year, they'd be complaints if she went two days wearing the same outfit.

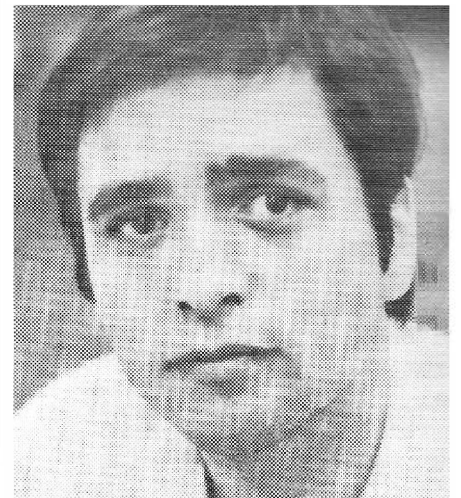
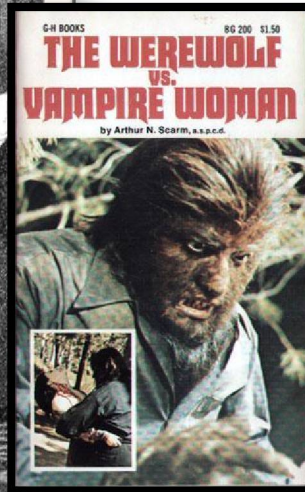
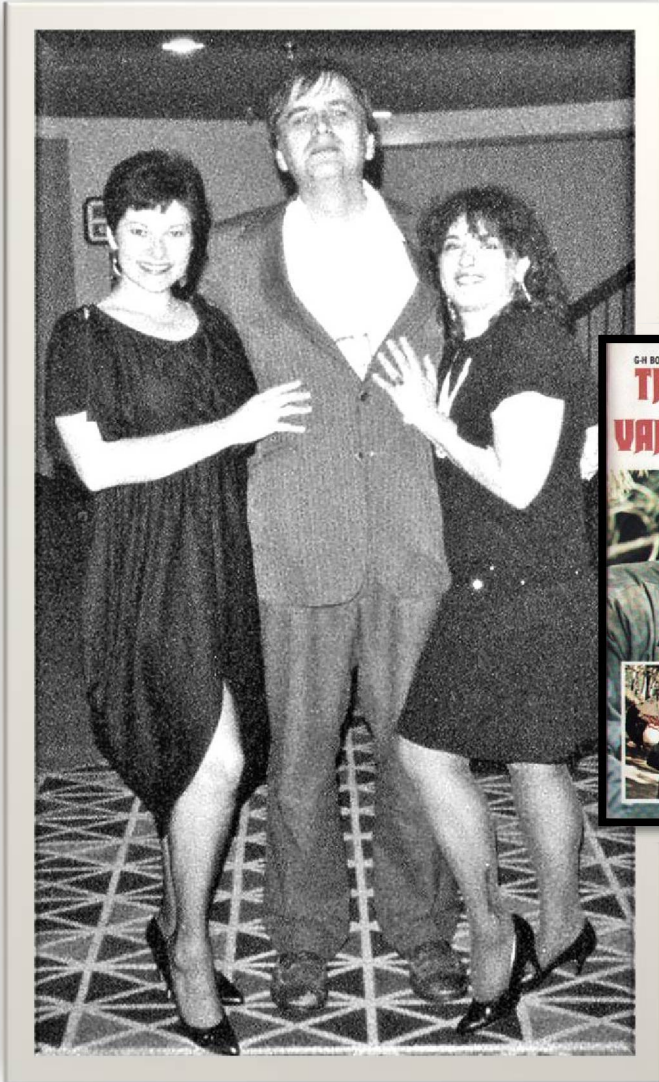
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The Glasgow WorldCon ignores George RR Martin's offer to appear on its program. "Who's he?" they ask.

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George Wells was around fandom since the late 1950s, but he didn't make himself known until the 1972 DeepSouthCon in Atlanta. That DSC was an important con in Southern fannish history.

It marked the emergence of a new dominant generation of con-givers and zine-doers – and a rebirth of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance, the mighty apa which brought the region together in the first place. I was there and George was there. I hope no one takes offense at my saying that the good man was good and drunk for the whole con.



But not so drunk that he could not gift our krewe with one of our favorite binding schticks – the contest for the worst SF novel of all time. Against such competition as *The Clones* by P.T. O'Leary, *Queen Kong* by God Knows Who and *Galaxy 666* by Lionel

Fanthorpe, George put forth *Werewolf vs. the Vampire Woman* by Arthur N. Scarm – or “Scram”, as he's billed on the inside title page). As you may have surmised, the book, depicted above, was a novelization of a terrible Spanish horror movie starring Paul Naschy. It is believed that Scarm/Scram, whoever he was, wrote the thing in a non-stop alcoholic frenzy. Some of his writing could bear this out, *viz*:

Perhaps I should first tell you what a werewolf is like. It was never adequately described, even by a werewolf's wife.

She dug her teeth into Sandy's neck who screamed.

She vaulted into the air, throwing up as she soared.

"Please don't hurt me Mister Werewolf," she begged. "I'm only 21 and I have at least 10 good years ahead of me yet."

Etc. Dave Langford devoted an entire "Thog's Masterclass" to *WWvIWW*. As well he could have.

For introducing us to this masterwork, George was saluted with Southern fandom's Rubble Award. This should be distinguished from Southern fandom's Rebel Award, for services *for* the region, in that it is given for what one has done *to* Southern fandom. George deserved it.

He deserved more, and he got that, too. He got the love of our region. He was funny, he was very generous, he was kind – breaking into tears when he learned of my special neighbor's death during Katrina. He'd only met her once. But the grief was genuine. George was just that kind of guy.

One incident I remember particularly well. It was late Sunday, in Birmingham, after the close of an excellent DeepSouthCon. The con had cleared out but for my New Orleans podnuk Dennis Dolbear, Wells and myself, and Dennis and I were ready to roll. George walked us to the garage door through the empty meeting room that, for three days before, thrived with fans and friends. Now it was lifeless, and as DD and I headed out I lamented to Wells that he and his wife would be stuck for the days left on their vacation in empty rooms.

"Well," said George, "for me those rooms are *not* empty." He meant, even with the people gone, that the convention's joy still resonated.

VALE, great friend. You kept the faith. You were Spartacus.

Turning 75

We Boomers all know them: the family stash of visual aids from the eras before the internet. Mothers would include a tiny extra print of a grade school or baby picture in a letter or Christmas card, and the recipient – if she was like my mother, grandmother, aunt or greataunt would add the photo to an old shirt box crammed with such memorabilia. Usually, every family visit, the photo box would be hauled out, dumped on a kitchen table and laboriously gone through, shot by shot ... the quality of the photography usually poor (blame the advent of the Instamatic camera). It was labor remembering the name of the person depicted, since they often weren't identified by a name on the back. Nowadays, without a maternal or grandmaternal guide, those photos remain mysteries. "Who the hey is *this*?"

But often the blurry unfocused image would sport a familiar face or two, people who were close in their time but are long gone. Guys Lillian, Senior and Junior. Anna Ericksen and Nancy Lancelene King, the ladies they married. My brother as an adorable baby. Myself dolled up in Christmas finery on photo-cards. The cousins I grew up with and their parents. Timebinders.

I recently found a box of ancient photographs, and consider my timing appropriate. Such photos speak of family and remind you of self. True for me, anyway. July 20, Moonday, 2024, was 75 years to the day from my birth.

It's a special birthday, no doubting that. Though we chant denial like demented Dominicans – “Age is just a number!” – *this* number represents a significant fraction of a century, *three-quarters* of one, and outside of fantasies about immortality, there's no fair denying that it qualifies as *old*. For me, as for many of us, it carries with us the onset of poor health as bones and organs realize that they have earned the right to be *tired*. The world changes. The action is concentrated on younger people, as our concerns – the questions and angers that informed our lives – fade and are supplanted. People with whom we have shared life begin to die. Read about one such elsewhere. It is a bitter thing to be left with memories of community and Joy.

Yes, but it's important to realise that *t'was e'er thus*. That's a truth and a comfort. As serious age sets in, we have to accept that our lives are a part of Nature. Which means that though we accede to Time, we can still create, still care, still struggle, still seek peace. So happy birthday, self. Let's sail till we come to the edge.



MY
**Happy Birthday,
Earthling!!**

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