

BCSFAZINE

Clubzine of the British Columbia Science Fiction Association
(Issue #538 – March, 2020)



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BCSFazine is a Canadian non-profit Science Fiction online PDF Clubzine published by the British Columbia Science Fiction Association twelve times a year.

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To submit articles, art work, or letters of comment, contact God-Editor R. Graeme Cameron at:

< the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com >

Anyone interested in downloading current and/or recent issues, please go to:

< www.bcsciencefictionassociation.ca >

(as soon as I can figure out how to access the furslugginer website again)

Anyone interested in the current issue plus tons of back issues, please go to:

< <https://efanzines.com/BCSFA/> >

CURRENT BCSFA EXECUTIVE

Chair: Position open

Vice Chair: Position open.

Treasurer: Kathleen Moore.

Secretary: Barb Dryer.

BCSFazine Editor: R. Graeme Cameron.

Keeper of the FRED Book: Ryan Hawe.

FRED Organizer: Michael Bertrand.

VCON Ambassador for Life: Steve Forty.

NOTE: BCSFA is a social subcommittee of WCSFA,
The West Coast Science Fiction Association, a registered society.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Actually, there isn't any. If you send me something before the end of the month I'll make sure it gets into the following month's issue to be published sometime during the first week of said month. "It will be ready when it's ready" be my motto.

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Art Credits

Cover – A classic Science Fiction novel to remind fen that SF&F literature is worth reading. Cover art by Harold Piffard. *The Polyphemes* by F. Hernaman-Johnson is an H.G. Wells-style speculative adventure to do with giant, intelligent bugs threatening to take over the world. Great fun. First published by Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, London, U.K. in 1906. Here follows the opening paragraph:

“More than a quarter of a century has elapsed since that dark and terrible time; yet to me the memory of those scenes is as clear this day as it was five and twenty years ago. Not that I remember the events of that period as if they had really happened, but rather as one remembers, with oftentimes distressing vividness, the disordered phantasmagoria of an impossible dream. Indeed, were it not for the mark of the Moon god upon my forehead, together with the discrepancy between my age as judged from my physical experience, and the years allotted to me by the official register of births, I should be inclined to think that much of what I am about to set forth had no objective existence; and that, instead of having seen things never before witnessed by man, I had been merely the victim of an extraordinary hallucination.”

They sure knew how to write back then. And how curiously prescient it is in a very personal way. Describes my normal state of mind trying to remember yesterday!

EDITORIAL: THE GOD-EDITOR RETURNS!

I'm kind of excited. Been rather dormant under the dunes of Mars, but those annoying Rovers keep getting closer and closer, so decided to wake up.

Kudos to Felicity Walker, *BCSFazine's* longest serving editor, whose indomitable efforts produced 107 issues from March 2009 (#430) to February 2020 (#537). She will now step back and concentrate on the fun stuff, writing whatever articles and/or columns she feels inspired to contribute. I expect to publish a great deal by her, but the deadline pressure is off, and she is free to contribute as whim and impulse moves her. As are you all.

Few of you recall my reign as God-Editor (a whimsical, off-beat persona I adopted) over *BCSFazine* back in the early 1990s. Past tense stuff. Back then BCSFA was very active with at least two parties per month in people's homes often drawing forty people or more. Membership was well over one hundred. At least a dozen people regularly contributed to *BCSFazine*. Good times. Past times. Impossible to resurrect.

We were so very proud of our VCON convention, too. We all contributed. Now VCON is on hiatus, essentially due to lack of interest and lack of money. The graying of fandom has something to do with it. The explosion of niche fandoms. The dominance of the internet. Changing tastes. Still, WCSFA is determined to get VCON going again in 2021. I look forward to the VCON Phoenix re-emerging.

Technically BCSFA is now a social sub-committee of WCSFA. In reality just twelve or so fen who like to get together in Richmond once a month for a dinner and conversation. Whether or not BCSFA continues an *official* existence, I think the fen involved will continue to meet once a month regardless, simply because dinner and wide-ranging conversation is a fun thing to do. Relaxing, really, and pleasant. Certainly, had I not moved to Nanaimo, I would still be attending.

What about *BCSFazine*? An interesting feature is that each and every editor stamps their mark on the zine. Indeed, it is customary for each to reshape the zine according to their own tastes and interests. In my case, I adopted the outrageous persona of "The God-Editor" back in the day to have some fun and encourage others to go off-the-wall and indulge in their creative imagination. It worked, albeit within the formal setting of an organized club with manifold activities.

Now, of course, the club is very different, having shrunk into itself like a fannish black hole. Yet, the club retains creative *characters*, and there are still off-beat, original-minded fen involved with VCON and WCSFA, not to mention lurking throughout the Lower Mainland, British Columbia, Canada, the Earth, and possibly the Universe. A vast, untapped resource. That's the proper way to look at it.

I see *BCSFazine* being, not so much a club zine (few activities to promote), as an old-fashioned genzine offering a forum for fannish enthusiasm. And I do mean *enthusiasm*. Though unfocused of mind and increasingly intellectually lazy, I still retain a passionate love of all aspects of SF&F. I'm pretty sure there are a bunch of other aging, curmudgeonly old coots out there who would enjoy contributing their wit

and wisdom now and then.

I visualise the zine as a bunch of veteran fans sitting in a fan lounge swapping tales. I've tried doing that in Nanaimo, where I've been for 1.5 years, but I get the impression them local folk don't believe me. I seem to be classified as simply yet another old git spinning senile yarns for the sake of his ego. Well, yeah, but that's beside the point. The yarns happen to be true. But no one, it seems, has the time to go online and check out the veracity of my tales. Sigh.

Still, I figure *BCSFazine* can provide a homey, comfortable atmosphere for fen who have the time to share a few thoughts and memories in an informal manner. Basically a home for pen pals with a passion for SF&F in common. This would still serve the interests of the club, but also fandom at large.

No need to get trapped into writing formal, near-academic essays, especially if enslaved to a regular schedule. Too much work. People don't have time these days. But everybody chats on the internet, so, if intrigued by your own reaction to a book you've read or a movie you've seen, why not jot down a couple of off-the-cuff paragraphs and send them in?

Why bother you say? Facebook is good enough. Really? How often do you post something and no one responds, or worse, they do respond, revealing themselves to be a troll determined to humiliate you?

I see contributing to *BCSFazine* being an old-fashioned hobby, quite leisurely and relaxing in its way, in that you can take as much or as little time as you want to craft your words, secure in the knowledge that the readers will have a full month to ponder your writings and any response they make will probably be quite thoughtful rather than impulsive. More civilized, methinks.

In short, I see *BCSFazine* as being very personal and friendly to all its contributors and readers. I do *not* see it as an "official" club attempt to duplicate information readily found on the internet. Why include long lists of this or that? They're already listed online elsewhere. And no need to lift articles or memes from the internet and plant them on the pages of *BCSFazine*. Nothing creative about that, and chances are people already interested in such have already seen them. Mind you, I'm going to do it anyway, but I'm not just going to leave each article as is. I'll be presenting edited versions imbedded in my own interpretation of their significance which, hopefully, will be of interest.

Fanzines and clubzines were popular back in the day because they offered something unique that could not easily be found anywhere else. This is what I would like *BCSFazine* to be.

For example, the Chinese probe on the far side of the Moon has mapped the Lunar surface to a depth of 40 metres. Simply repeating the information would be boring. I include elsewhere in this issue a short article where I give my own view on the matter, having drawn certain conclusions.

In other words, I don't want a reiteration of mere facts, but people's impressions of what they've read, seen, or witnessed. The personal touch.

So, I'm asking readers to contribute their thoughts (brief articles, quick meanderings, letters of comment, etc.) on whatever aspect of SF&F, past, present or future, that appeals to them. Don't want *downer* articles. This means *no* politics! Stick to what makes *you* feel good. No need to decry the death of the fandom when fond reminiscences of the good old days would be much more interesting. Besides, the present state of affairs has a lot to offer. What is happening *now* that's a lot of fun and a hoot to read about? What has you interested? Intrigued? What entertains you? What do you look forward to? In this glorious hobby of interest in SF&F, what is your particular focus? Let's share the *fun* of being fen!

Cheers! *The Graeme*

Send your letters of comment, submissions, ideas, etc. to:

< the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com >

ODDS AND SODS ABOUT THIS ZINE

Note – All articles unless otherwise stated are by the God-Editor The Graeme.

Nature of zine – This edition has been quickly thrown together to give you an idea of what I have in mind. Future issues will be more coherent, more interesting, and feature less of me and more of you. Right?

Printed Copies – Probably won't be any. This clubzine is designed to be thrown together quickly in an online digital format suitable for easy reading. That will be my entire focus. If for any reason the club wants to produce some printed copies, that will be a decision by the other members and, naturally, the Treasurer. The club couldn't really afford to print the previous version. I'm pretty certain the club can't afford to hard-copy my version either. And I know I won't have the time to reduce it to digest-sized. Conceivably someone else in the club could volunteer, but the result, while possibly cheaper to print, would probably still be prohibitively expensive. Not up to me. I'm just going to concentrate on producing the online zine.

Subscriptions – It is my understanding there are very few and funds will be returned to anyone owed further copies. I have been given a list of people accustomed to receive *BCSFazine* for free via email. That would be my preferred method of distribution. I ask anyone with formal subscriptions to request free emailed PDFs to be sent to them via email from now on.

Reaching out – I will email a PDF of this issue to a whole bunch of fen, the ones not already on the email list, and ask if they would like to receive each and every issue from now on. If they tell me to bugger off with my freebies, no problem. I'll just put together a separate list of people who'd rather die than receive *BCSFazine*. No accounting for taste, after all. Especially in these modern times.

Text Only Version – A couple of readers already on the last. Quite easy to do. So something that will continue as needed.

Trades – Well, hmmm. With no printed copies being produced, will come to a screeching halt. I have no room for additional paper zines in my apartment (which is half the size of the one I used to live in). However, I will willingly trade PDF versions via email, if that be possible. I may or may not review them in *BCSFazine*. But if some volunteer steps forward to do that, I would simply forward the PDFs to that brave, heroic individual who has nothing better to do. In a pinch I would trade PDF BCSFAzines for mailed trade hard-copies but I wouldn't have space to archive them. Email trading looks to be the future. Unless the club decides it can afford otherwise. In which case someone else will deal with the trades. All depends on how things shake out.

Cover Art Policy – I've decided to do something quick and easy. I've got hundreds of old SF&F pocket books. I'll feature one on each cover in order to draw attention to the book and the author in the hope that some readers might be intrigued enough to track them down and read them. Seems a worthwhile promotion to me, and a heck of a worry-free timesaver when preparing *BCSFazine*. What with my deadlines to do with writing weekly columns for *Amazing Stories Magazine* and publishing *Polar Borealis* four times a year, saving time is of utmost importance for me. I'll try devoting my morning coffee wakeup time to doing some work on this zine every day. See what happens. An hour a day should produce something worth reading.

Fan Art Policy – Don't despair! I'm not abandoning the fan art community. By all means send in your art. I will use it, just not on the cover. I might use pieces individually to separate articles, or put together a portfolio section to showcase your art. In the past artists would do this for "the usual," i.e. a free copy of the issue they appear in. But since *BCSFazine* is going to be distributed via the internet, anyone who asks to be put on the list will be on it forever until they beg to be struck off. After all, remember the motto of fanzine fandom: "Death will not release you."

Hosting Availability – With any luck *BCSFazine* will continue to be hosted at the legendary *Efanzines* website (along with hundreds of other nifty zines). I've also been rousing my somnambulant BCSFA website to full consciousness for the purpose of hosting my *BCSFazines* for initial release purposes, but I've run into difficulties accessing the site. Might have to use one of my other sites for a while. One way or another, I intend to publish soonest!

God-Editor's Motivation – Because I think it will be easy, hardly any work at all, and tremendous loads of fun. Are you surprised that some fen question my sanity?

WHAT THE GOD-EDITOR WOULD LIKE TO PUBLISH

It's got to be entertaining to read, one way or another. Intellectually stimulating would be good. Stirring fond memories. Evoking that old sense of wonder. Especially anything to do with the SF&F genres or fandom of same, but doesn't have to be. After all, modern fanzines cover everything under the Sun. Basically, anything that strikes

you as especially noteworthy. But *no* politics! I want *BCSFazine* to be a refuge from this crazy world. I'd go so far as to say I don't want any Facebook-style "debate" in the pages of *BCSFazine*. Can't stand that crap. I want impressions of what people are thinking about, their personal observations, and any comments by others which add to the topic. Communication, not debate, is what I'm after. A sharing of memories and contemporary viewpoints.

Here are some possibilities:

Book Reviews – Can be short or long as tickles your fancy. Chances are you read a lot anyway, so why not jot down a paragraph or two of capsule comments and send in a bunch once and a while? Share your reaction to books you like, or don't like.

Film Reviews – Hordes of people watch films, sometimes in theatres, but mostly at home. Everyone has an opinion. Why not share yours? I particularly like old B movies, but a majority of fen are interested in current or upcoming films. What I want are your opinions about said films. Never mind what the critics say or the online crowd jabbers about. What do *you* think?

Graphic Novel Reviews – A very popular topic methinks.

Space Program Articles – Dealing with the past or present, or maybe the future. The weirder the better. Especially if you give your own thoughts and conclusions.

Oddments of History Articles – If you delve deep enough, history and its leading figures become very peculiar. Plenty worth exploring, as virtually all of it is worth incorporating in alternate history or galactic empires. Not for nothing do a lot of SF writers study history. However, I'm not interested in comparisons with today's events. Simple revelations of the unusual will suffice. I should mention I hate crank theories, if only because so many of them are fundamentally racist in nature. Von Däniken can get stuffed. But commentary on obscure, little known aspects of *genuine* history I'd be willing to publish.

Bizarre Technology Articles – I found these were always popular, be they focused on aviation, ships, automobiles, computers, machinery of any kind, so long as weird and unexpected.

Famous Authors I have Met – So long as it is amusing and not actionable.

Convention Reports – But not dry, matter of fact listings. Want personal details and impressions, especially if anything entertaining or unexpected.

Upcoming Events – I won't have time to do the research, so someone willing to dedicate themselves to this purpose on an ongoing basis would be wonderful. Don't want page after page of listings and links. Just enough to cover a couple of months ahead and reflect a wide variety of genre interests will do quite nicely. Any volunteers to gather the info?

Gaming articles – Not actually all that easy to make a board game sound interesting to the non-gamer, but I bet it can be done.

FRED reports – I'd like Felicity to contribute accounts of conversations at the monthly dinners as she often used to do in the past. A source of pithy anecdotes, often quite amusing.

Local Event Reports – Such as other club gatherings and meetups, book readings, zine fairs, gaming events and any special affairs liable to be of interest to Lower Mainland fen, written up in such a way as to fascinate any and all readers.

Zine Reviews – There's quite a few contemporary zines on display and easily accessed at efanzines.com. I would welcome a regular column devoted to capsule reviews of a wide variety of these zines.

Fan Art – Definitely interested in receiving fan art. If you send a bunch, I may do a portfolio as I've done with Alan White in this issue. I maintain that's a better way of showcasing your talent than dribbling them out one per issue tucked away here or there between articles. Even fillos deserve to be prominent, in my opinion. Let your work be admired, not buried! As good a motto as any, methinks.

No doubt you can think of many more interesting topics that would be of interest. The point is for you to pick something that appeals to you. Even if it is just a couple of paragraphs. A regular column would be cool. I offer *BCSFazine* as an outlet for your inspiration, for your creative energy, and mainly, as an opportunity to derive a sense of accomplishment from writing something less ephemeral and more meaningful than a Facebook rant. I mean, heck, not only do I have the impression people forget online posts as soon as they've read them, I have the impression many forget *while* they're reading them. I'm giving you the chance to indulge in a more relaxed and civilized exercise in letters, a pleasant respite from frantic modernity. What say you?

VOID BREATHER BOMBAST

Yep, this be a brief article on happenings in the Solar System. Not too detailed, just my take on some recent discoveries.

Earth's second Moon – Turns out there's a car-sized mini-Moon darting around old Terra. Nothing to do with Elon Musk's sports car. He's already made that clear. Dubbed "2020 CD3," said object is believed to be a type of asteroid made mostly of carbonates and thus rather dark and hard to see. It was apparently captured by Earth's gravity-well about three years ago. Not to worry, it's eccentric orbit will cause it to break away in a relatively short span of time. Not something we can visit, nor should we. Just a passing Moonlet.

The last time we had a second Moon was when "2006 RH120" showed up in September of 2006. It got bored and left in June of 2007. I suspect these pesky critters show up frequently. We just haven't noticed them before. Maybe, just maybe, if a fairly large one settles into a relatively more stable orbit it might be worthwhile to cobble together some sort of probe to get a closeup look. However, not a likely prospect. Don't hold your breath.

Mining Asteroids – This may be easier than we thought. *Bennu*, another dark, carbonate asteroid, this one being studied by an American probe, turns out to be a cluster of loose boulders, rocks and pebbles which simply came together when our primordial dust cloud began to clump solid bodies into being. Many other asteroids

are quite similar. Seems mining missions won't need to blow things apart so much as simply clamp onto and haul away bits and pieces. Exploiting the resources of the asteroid belt may be more cost effective than hitherto anticipated.

Space Peanut – The Kuiper belt object *Ultimate Thule* which the New Horizons space probe zipped by, gazillions of miles beyond Pluto, is basically conjoined twin planetoid-comet-thingies rather resembling a flattened peanut. Enough information has now trickled in from the probe for scientists to discover that the two parts of the objects did not crash into each other so much as gently nudge and get stuck about 4.5 billion years ago. This result, as well as the study of *Bennu*, and of certain other asteroids, all support the idea that most small bodies in our Solar System are pretty loose and easy to take apart. Mind you, once the larger planetary bodies formed, they began to vacuum up the rest of the debris quite violently, as many a cratered world proves. Nevertheless, it appears that much of the remaining small debris represents an earlier, kinder, more delicate phase of the coalescing of solid bodies at the birth of the Solar system. More cosmic ballet than battle. Kind of cool, I think.

Chinese Rover Probes Lunar Dirt – Chang 4 which landed in Von Kármán Crater on the Moon's farside in January, 2019, disembarked a Rover named Yulu-2 "Jade Rabbit." Said hardworking bunny recently thumped the ground a number of times and discovered the surface layer down to a depth of 40 feet or so consists mostly of loose dirt with pebbles and small rocks. Next comes a layer of more compacted dirt chock full of large rocks and boulders down to a depth of about 130 feet. It is thought that the deeper, lumpier layer is composed of ejecta from molten craters spawned by violent planetoid impacts long ago.

I suspect, though I'm not sure, that this is bad news for future Lunar construction gangs. Some sort of backhoe buggy (literally costing it's weight in gold by the time it's delivered to the Lunar surface) could probably dig a trench in the upper layer, or regolith, sufficient to build a shelter to be subsequently buried for protection against solar radiation, but attempting to dig deeper through a jumble of boulders might not be very cost effective and far too difficult to justify the wear and tear on machinery.

Which reminds me, one of the first things explorers will have to construct is a repair shelter for their machines, a fully equipped Lunar garage so to speak. Hmm, once built, perhaps they'll be like their Earth counterparts and sponsor races, say, first moon buggy around the lip of the crater? Nascar on the Moon? Maybe someday. Not quite sure how they'd handle the seating for spectators though.

SpaceX gets contract to psych out Psyche – Yep, gonna launch a NASA probe to explore 16 Psyche, an all metal asteroid located in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, sometime in 2026. Apparently Psyche is the remnant core of an early planet which no longer exists. Scientists, or at least some accountant on a drunken binge, estimate the nickel and iron comprising the asteroid is worth \$10,000 quadrillion. Yeah, right. I'm pretty sure it will cost at least that much to mine it. Can't use explosives. That would just blast a whole bunch of micro-meteors into space. Going to have to carve the thing into transportable chunks. Nickel-Iron kinda tough,

you know. Not sure how easy it will be to rip chunks out of a flying mountain.

And transport where? Giant space factory floating alongside? Okay, suppose it manages to produce all kinds of furshluggner veeblefetzers. But for whom? Where's the customer base? I tells yah, this space industry stuff is not as easy as it sounds. But I must admit I'd like to know what Psyche looks like from close-up. Hoping there will be a surprise or two resting on its surface. Like what? I don't know. That's why it'll be a surprise. Here's another, the latest SpaceX rocket just blew up. Oopsie!

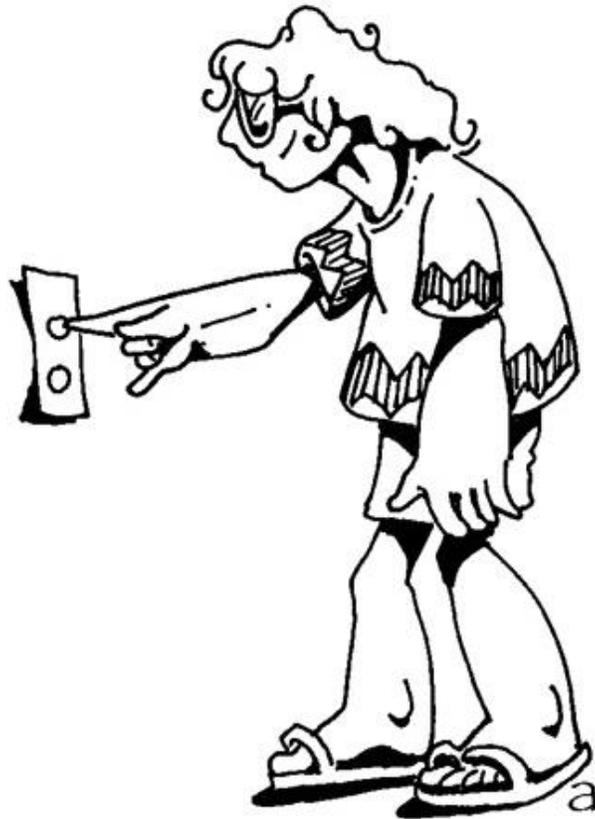
Planet Mars Hot to Trot – The InSight lander says the magnetic field of Mars is ten times more powerful than previously thought (still “not very” compared to Earth) and fluctuates wildly. What? Sometimes it is only four times more powerful? Or just six times? Furthermore, the source of the magnetic pulses is very close to the lander. Ahh, hmmm? No idea what this means. The planetary magnetic pole is close by?

Or, perhaps, just maybe, there's a long-derelict Martian Magnetatron-Reactor buried nearby that's starting to come to life in order to reawaken the long dormant Martian civilization? Huh? What about them prospects? Betcha NASA got nothing to say about that! (For some reason.) Observe how deftly I translate my scientific ignorance into a long dormant pulp fiction cliché! Now you see the value of studying science if you are a sci-fi author. Endless source of ideas! (None of them even remotely plausible.)

ART PORTFOLIO – ALAN WHITE













LITERARY SHENANIGANS

New Canadian SF Magazine Coming – Editor David F. Shulz announces the upcoming magazine to be published by tdotSpec Publications out of Toronto will be titled *Speculative North: Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror!* Their kickstarter campaign has already fully funded the first five issues. Multiple readers are working their way through hundreds of submissions. (Their submission window is currently closed.) But SF writers take note, I will provide more info in future *BCSFazines*. I'll also be reviewing each and every issue of their mag in my *Amazing Stories* (online) Magazine column *Clubhouse*.

Matthew Hughes Channeling Jack Vance – At the invitation of John Vance, son of Jack Vance who wrote *The Demon Princes* series of five novels, Matt has completed the second draft of *Barbarians of the Beyond* (working title), an authorized sequel. If anybody can pull this off, Matt will. He is both an excellent fantasy writer and the

proud owner of a wry sense of humour which fits perfectly with Jack Vance's style. I have ten of Jack Vance's books, including the second *Demon Princes* novel *The Killing Machine*. Haven't read it yet so I have no idea if it includes Jack's trademark style of humour. Hope humour is a part of the series and Matt can add to it.

One piece of Jack Vance's humour I've always cherished, though I can't remember from which novel, possibly *Showboat World*, is a throwaway bit I found hilarious, namely a disgruntled camp of refugee merchants angry their King had seized their prosperous trading centre city, evicted the population, and ordered the entire city with everyone's possessions still in place to be buried so that archaeologists of the future would be mighty pleased. I was quite taken with the concept. Let's do it! It would out-Pompeii Pompeii! Not a politically adept way to increase one's popularity however. Still, nifty idea.

"Unreal" and Unfit" unreal and unfit, indeed! – Or such is my opinion. These two American genre magazines apparently posted a list online of some of the authors whose stories they rejected, complete with two to four star ratings. This in order to sincerely thank them for their efforts. It does not surprise me that not all the authors were pleased.

I mean, what next? Print the notes the slush pile reader makes when perusing unpublishable manuscripts for the first and last time? Judging from my own experience as Publisher and Editor of *Polar Borealis*, this would include comments like "WTF is going on?" and "This doesn't make any sense!" Actually, I exaggerate for the sake of cheap humour. A bit risky, since authors are notoriously touchy about their submissions. So, because of that, I reassure everyone I am quite polite when endeavouring to explain to someone why I rejected their story. Having been rejected so many times in the past, I understand the heartache. Consequently, if I can say anything that might help improve the story's chances elsewhere, I will do so. Authors should never take rejections personally. Besides, it's only one idiot editor's opinion. First thing you should do is mail it off to the next idiot on your list.

Want to know the most important reason you get rejected? 99% of for-profit magazines are always on the cusp of financial collapse. They need authors with a proven readership who are likely to buy the issue just because their favourite author is in it. At most, editor's might be willing to publish *one* story by an unknown author.

Want to know how to guarantee that author will be you? For one thing, keep it short. This will leave more room for the authors known to attract money. Most important of all, and this is the closest thing to a sure-fire sale you can ever hope for, write something *better* than the experienced, professional authors are submitting. Your work will stand out like an atomic blast. Trouble is, this is not easy to do even by the professionals, let alone beginners. Still, it has been known to happen. All it takes is a brilliantly original concept laid out with a deft touch. Worth a try.

Leap Day Ends More Than a Month – As this February 29th day came to a close so too did this year's submission window for my *Polar Borealis Magazine*. Am very grateful I received 73 stories and 50 poems. Already given all of them a quick read-through. Rather insanely I promised the contributors I'd respond no later than March

7th. Which is perhaps a tad overly optimistic deadline. Have already begun the process of rereading each MS carefully, this time adding to the notes with quick judgements “Yes,” “Maybe,” and “No.” By the end of Tuesday, March 3rd, I hope to have plundered the “maybe” section of enough booty to completely fill the “Yes” lists for the next three issues. Then begins my letter writing task. Acceptance letters will be quick and easy. Rejection letters rather more difficult. Inevitably some people, being rejected, will feel rejected. Sad to say, all part of being a writer. I will do my best to ease the pain. Part of my duty as an editor I truly believe.

Aurora Award Eligibility Lists Closed; Nominating process now open! – The Nomination process began March 1st and will be open till April 18th. To check out the details of the process go to < www.prixaurorawards.ca >

Sad news: Canadian Publisher Shuts Down – Coteau Books, a small Press Publisher founded in 1975 and based in Regina, Saskatchewan, laid off its four-member staff on February 7th and has now essentially shut down as it enters a state of bankruptcy. Noted for its wide-ranging selection of more than 500 books by Saskatchewan authors, including YA fantasy, Coteau is currently in the hands of an insolvency trustee to determine the fate of its physical assets (books and office contents). The loss of a Provincial Press devoted to publishing local authors is tragic. Not a good omen for the continued health of Canadian literature and publishing.

Good News: On Spec Magazine open to submissions – Open throughout the month of March! Some relevant information:

“The first reader assigned to each manuscript will determine its literary merit and overall suitability for *On Spec*, and either flag it for further consideration, or recommend an immediate response to the author.

Art submissions are viewed for suitability by two editors, and we may also look at your web site to see other works that may be available.

In the case of stories, after all submissions have been read once and culled, the remaining stories will be evaluated for literary content and reader interest, discussed among editorial staff and ultimately selected or declined.

You will receive either an email saying your story has been declined, or an offer of a publication contract in due course. You can track progress and status of your manuscript through your account created on the *On Spec* site.

Payment – *On Spec* buys first North American serial (magazine) rights to your work. We pay upon acceptance. Pay rates are as follows and in *Canadian* dollars:

Poems (4-100 lines): \$50 plus one contributor’s copy.

Short-short stories (under 1000 words): \$50, plus one contributor’s copy.

Fiction (6000 words max.)

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TONIGHT'S MOVIE – SPIRITED AWAY

By Michael Bertrand

In a departure from all those animated features I have been watching lately, I decided to watch ... an animated feature ... from JAPAN.

Really nudging the envelope there, huh?

I've seen the movie a few times before, and overall, it is probably my favorite Studio Ghibli/Miyazaki film. I have seen a lot of the others, and they are all genius, but this is the one I find most satisfying. Perhaps that is because it got the Disney treatment and they nudged it in the direction of more traditional North American storytelling, so this one make more sense to me, on a deep level, than Totoro or Kiki's.

Regardless of why ... love the movie. It makes me feel like I am taking a trip to Japan, but with a guide, so I don't get lost.

That done, let's start the movie.

What de FOOK? I hit 'play' and I don't get the movie, I get some corporate schmuck who looks like Quentin Tarantino had a kid with David Letterman telling me how lucky I am because I am about to see Spirited Away and how he is "good friends" with Miyazaki-san and holy shit dude, get the fuck over yourself! NEVER put yourself in front of the product in media, never, EVER. Not literally and not figuratively. I don't want to watch some Disney hack jizzing all over himself about what a great movie this is and how we are going to love it and sticking a microphone in poor Miyazaki's face and making him look incredibly uncomfortable (such good friends that you don't know how shy Miyazaki is or how incredibly rude it is to suddenly put a Japanese person of stature on film, without warning, eh?), I want to see the man's work. People did not buy this DVD to see you, you asshole.

I am viscerally offended. Disney, you are better than this.

And now, he is telling me the entire plot of the movie. One second, I have to check something.

Oh phew, I was wrong. I must have thought I hit Play when I hit something else. Faith in Disney restored.

The guy is still a git, but he's an optional git.

01:54 – Listen, Chahiro's parents, you are making your daughter move out into the middle of nowhere. If I was her, I would be bitchy and hard to deal with too, not being the sort of person who enjoys change, especially when it was not my idea. I am sure you would like it if she treated this all as a big adventure, but it ain't gonna happen. Just let her sulk and don't fight her on it, she will get over it faster that way.

Oh, and watch what you eat.

03:15 This road should get us there. Famous last words. I have learned the hard way that you can never, ever assume that Road X hooks up with Road Y, even if all logic and the very laws of time and space and the topology of the Universe says they must. I once got incredibly lost because there turned out to be two roads with the same name next to one another in the outskirts of Portland. One of those roads went

back to my neighbourhood. The other ... did not. So I had a highly unplanned long walk in the country and, as a punchline, only discovered at the very end of my journey that I had passed the very corner I was looking for three times in my wanderings without recognizing it because I had never seen it from ground level, only from the bus.

Never assume anything. That is why I heart GPS units with built in street maps so much. They don't have to guess. They know!

06:54 – I am the billionth person to say this, but the heart of Miyazaki's genius is how well he understands children. Not just how they look and how they move, although I can't think of anyone else who understands that better at well. One of the things that just blew me away about Totoro was how well the animators understood that toddlers and little kids move in a way entirely their own, not like little adults at all, and how to them, getting around is an entirely different thing.

He understands that, but more deeply, he remembers what it is like to be a kid and feel small and unimportant and inconsequential and a little lost in the big big world of adults, and how being a kid could be quite scary, lonely, confusing, and frustrating. This is not Normal Rockwell childhood, where everything is wonderful and sunshiny and new, this is real childhood, the good and the bad. I really appreciate that.

9:42 – Number one rule of the spirit world : don't eat or drink anything. Oh well, I tried to warn them. As usual, in children's entertainment, the kid is right, the grownups are wrong, and, worst nightmare, now you have to be the adult and save them.

15:43 – Oh. Turns out you have to eat some spirit food, or you will disappear. I suppose when reality flips, the spirit world and the human world interchange, and it is we humans who become insubstantial.

26:27 – I love the little sootlings. They are adorable. There is always something extra cute about cute creatures with jobs.

And is that Rene Auberjonois tending the boilers?

Nope. It is David Ogden Stiers

It was such an Odo-like voice, it fooled me.

33:46 Things learned : Daikon-san packs much ass, and all spirits go crazy for roasted newt.

The scene with Chahiro in the elevator with Daikon-san always makes me wonder if that is how I seem to little children sometimes. I am, after all, an unusual kind of person, being VERY fat, plus I have a beard. I never take offense when little ones gape at me. They are just trying to figure out what I am. I am actually a little flattered. Most adults take one look at me and figure they already know.

35:52 Yubaba is so Phyllis Diller. Not the voice, of course, that is Susan Pleshette putting her tooth marks on the scenery in that dishy villain role ever actor or actress loves to play. But in appearance and style, Yubaba is Phyllis Diller as Baba Yaga. Scary!

53:34 – I always feed bad for No-Face. I identify with his wandering the world, looking for someone to let him in. It is not his fault he becomes rather a menace. He has no identity of his own, so he simply becomes whatever he comes across.

Are there really bath houses this big and elaborate in Japan? Spirit weirdness aside, it seems like a great place to go relax and unwind.

And I love the Japanese spirit world. In the West, we have ghosts and that is about it. They are dead people. But Japan, never having known the ravages of monotheism and still quite close to their Shinto animist past, have a huge spirit world teeming with all kinds of awesome spirits. That has to be a lot more fun to imagine.

1:06:09 – They just rid the mighty water spirit of all his garbage. No stink spirit, he! I love that seen because it is such a great example of courage and compassion triumphing over disgust and fear. Disgust, I feel, is often the primary enemy of compassion, which is why we always call people “dirty” and “stinking” to dehumanize them. This was true even in World War II anti-Japanese propaganda, when arguably the Japanese are the cleanest people in the world. Hence bath-houses.

But because Chihiro is brave and compassionate towards the horrible, disgusting, smelly monster (and because Yubaba demonstrates leadership by recognizing opportunity), the spirit loses his affliction and everyone is happy. Yay!

1:13:55 – Overthinking, I know, but ... what are the spirits going to spend all that gold on? Are there spirit supermarkets as well as spirit bath houses? It seems like that bath house is its own little world. What good would money do you there? Well, I suppose you could be like No-Face with the frog inside him, and revel in the joy of being a customer for a change. That could feel pretty good if you have spent your life being a slave to the bath house without every being about to partake of all the pleasures you provide to others. But still, it seems odd to me that they are that greedy.

1:15:54 – Sigh. No-Face just wants to give people what they want. But when he thinks he knows how to make Chahiro what she wants, she doesn't want it. So sad.

And when he get rejected again, when she does not even want gold, he starts eating people. Perhaps that is to fill the void inside himself that his sadness brings him. Perhaps it is just to try to eat the person who will know what Chahiro wants.

1:20:16 – Ah, that primal of all oral-retentive nightmare images, the giant angry spoiled baby. I sometimes myself feel like, in many ways, I am a giant infant with an enormous brain. A brain in diapers, really. And I certainly am oral-retentive. I imagine a lot of fat people are. The oral stage is the stage of pleasure through the mouth, after all, and what is more associated with that than food?

1:46:10 : Random thought : he is a lot cuter as a fat little mouse than as a giant angry spoiled baby. But I guess that goes without saying.

1:51:44 – That shot of Haku in magnificent good health as he comes to get Chahiro at Granny's place in Swamp Bottom never fails to take my breath away. Now THAT is impressive.

2:00:05 – Movie over. What an awesome film. I realized this time through that the main reason I love it so much is that it is all about courageous compassion, and that is a subject I can't ever grow tired of seeing in media. Chahiro is brave not for glory or challenge, like a man, but because she cares too much, about her parents and Haku, to let her fears stop her. She shares that with another animated heroine of mine, Mrs. Brisby. Both ladies do things which clearly terrify them and they do it in the name of compassion. That is true courage in my books. It is courage to do what has to be done despite your fears.

Like maybe going to a wedding that terrifies you. We'll see.

I think the world needs more examples of people doing what scares them because it is what they have to do to protect those they love. The male storytelling mode often buries the compassionate roots of its heroics under bravado and machismo and flashy action. That is one of the things I loved about the A-team. They pretend to be mercenaries, but a lot of the time, they did what they did because they wanted to help people who really needed them, and did not get paid a dime.

But what really gets me is these heroines like Chahiro and Mrs. Brisby. They never pretend they are not afraid. But they do it anyhow.

We all could learn a lot from people like them.

Maybe even weird old guys like me.

Oh, and by the way, this movies does have a few REAL special features. One is the aforementioned talking git, John Lasseter, who as it turns out is the producer of the English-language version of *Spirited Away* (I wonder if he gave it that dumb name? Or is that a translation of the original Japanese title) and one is a fairly generic bit of Disney time filler called The Art Of Spirited Away.

Don't get me wrong, the art is amazing in the movie, as is everything else in it. But I do not need to have that Disney Voice Guy telling me how to enjoy it and spew liner notes at me.

I prefer to just think about the art and the story myself for now.

And maybe learn a lesson or two from it as well.

MESSED-UP MOVIE MUSINGS

Why Harry Hamlin in Harryhausen's "Clash of the Titans?" – Watched this 1981 film again the other day. As usual, quite pleased with Harryhausen's effects. Yet, for me, this is one of Harryhausen's less successful films. Big name cast to be sure, but somewhat wasted. The sacred bunch in Olympus in this film nowhere near as lively and entertaining as the God-crowd in *Jason and the Argonauts*. Misdirected, maybe.

But the worst flaw in the film, I truly believe, is star Harry Hamlin. His face is so immobile it might as well be a mask. I swear his eyes never change expression, not even when confronting the Gorgon. The only performance I would compare this to is Jack Nicolson's frozen stance in the 1963 film *The Terror*. In both cases it's as if the

actors were afraid to act, as if they were somehow intimidated, perhaps by the legendary status of their co-stars (in Nicolson's case, Boris Karloff). Harryhausen was quite charitable in an interview, saying "Hamlin was good. He followed direction well." Physical direction, yes, he even worked up a bit of sweat in some fight scenes, but his expression was as fixed as the stone ruins littering the background.

One thing I noticed for the first time on this viewing. Someone, probably old-time ham Burgess Meredith, taught Hamlin a "bit of business" to give him something to do that might conceivably hint at character and motivation. I think Hamlin was desperate and clung to the bit as his salvation against an ominous lack of interest on the part of the film's director. To wit: almost every time Perseus goes toward a door, a cave mouth, or simply another location, or goes to pick up an object, he pauses and briefly glances back at whomever he is with, as if seeking reassurance. Not very heroic if you ask me. And he does this over and over. Drives me nuts.

Now, Hamlin has been nominated for Golden Globe awards, been very popular on TV shows like *L.A. Law*, and is noted for his roles in Shakespeare productions. The man can obviously act, so why didn't he in *Clash of the Titans*? I blame the Director. Perhaps, if I were to read Harry Hamlin's autobiography I would gain some insight. However, my objection to Hamlin is so insignificantly nit-picky I don't feel at all compelled to research further. I've simply given my impression of his performance.

Which is to say, in my opinion his performance is non-existent, dull, boring, and impossible to identify with. I suspect it constitutes the principle reason why the film was not as successful as it should have been. Hamlin's own career apparently lost momentum for a while as a result, and this turned out to be Harryhausen's last film. Thus we never did get to see Ray's proposed *Sinbad on Mars*. Sigh.

"Mortal Engines" Just Fine by Me – This 2018 film, earning \$83 million against a film production cost approximating \$250 million, is said to be the mother of all box-office bombs. I know a lot of critics tore this movie apart. Professional critics complained it was a failed attempt to become a *Star Wars*-level blockbuster franchise and deservedly didn't find an audience that could appreciate its pointless beauty or absurd complexity of plot. Amateurs complained the whole idea of mobile, predatory cities was offensively unrealistic, posting comments like "Those treads would wear out in less than an hour!" As if *Star Wars* features credible science, physics, and all the rest ...

I had no problem keeping track of the plot, or the characters, for that matter. I rather liked them. Most of all, I loved the premise. It's science *fiction!* You come up with one impossible idea (like time travel, or faster-than-light speed) and run with it. Giant, mobile cities chasing other cities to gobble them up is a metaphor for the nature of civilization today, for Ghu's sake! And it is in the very best tradition of science fiction! Think of James Blish's Spin-Dizzy-driven domed cities fleeing the Earth, for instance. Now there's an insanely unrealistic premise, but loads of fun and a source of great adventure. Not only entertaining but evoking my sense of wonder.

The movie was based on the book *Mortal Engines* by British author Philip Reeve. I haven't read it, though I would like to. In any case, it is probably not relevant, the

author commenting “there were many changes to the characters, world, and story ...” What I like about the movie is its overall ambience and feel, reminiscent of the best of *Heavy Metal Magazine* art, which is to say, the visual fantasy and imagery of that superb Graphic Novel writer and artist Jean Henri Gaston Giraud, otherwise known as “Moebius.” Next to Wally Wood, he is my favourite illustrator.

Which leads me to the crux of the matter. I don’t think the film was actually aimed at the mass audience the studio was hoping for. I think that Peter Jackson and the others involved were deliberating tripping on European SF sensibilities and tastes, as exemplified by the work of Moebius, in order to concoct a premise-driven romp that would appeal to genuine fen already familiar with the literary tradition and, above all, the artistic tradition of classic science fiction. Which is why I think the film is wonderful.

To the average movie-goer who watches sci-fi flicks primarily for the action and maybe the eye-candy, they got plenty of that, but to them the film was ruined by characters that seemed to have come out of no-where, unexpected situations, and technological concepts doubleplus ungoodly “outside” normal action adventure fantasy. Weird enough to feed your crazy uncle, as it were. Lame and stupid. Crap. Garbage. Etc.

Yet, to anyone familiar with the delights of, say, *The Airtight Garage* by Moebius, this surreal approach is entirely of a piece and appropriate. I loved the character of *the Shrike* even though a lot of people didn’t get him. Destroying an entire prison just to release him struck some viewers as excessive, but I accepted it as just another typical arbitrary shortcut by an impatient villain living in a surreal world. Far from being a jarring intrusion, I would argue *the Shrike* fit perfectly into the mix.

The demise of the floating hydrogen-filled balloon city Airhaven was downright silly. Of course it was. In real life it would have flamed up in seconds and plummeted quickly to the ground. In the movie we witness characters battling each other while attempting to escape for, what, ten minutes? Fifteen minutes? Part of that is the custom of film tradition, in which notice how often and easily heroes outrun explosions (physically impossible, by the way), and the European tradition of subtle excess. I think Moebius would have loved it. And Fellini (who loved Moebius’ work.)

This film drew me into a delirium of surreal fantasy and adventure, for which I am grateful. Loved every minute of it. You disagree? I don’t care. Won’t change my mind. I’m stubborn that way. I know what I like when I see it.

UPCOMING EVENTS YOU SHOULD AVOID

BCSFA FRED Dinner – Sometime late in the month. I need to get in touch with the organizers and figure out what’s what. Should be on hand for the April issue.

WCSFA Event – No idea. Need to find out if anything planned. Hopefully the WCSFA Board will send me notifications of all meetings, events, and whatever else they have up their sleeve. Especially anything to do with the next VCON.

Monster Attack Team Canada – A get together of model makers putting on a demonstration of technique and answering any questions you may have. I'll find out what they have planned in April.

Trumpeter Society Gaming Event – Happens monthly. At least a dozen board games and tabletop miniature games going on, including a very sophisticated naval battle with teeny tiny metal warships.

Book Reveals and Book Readings – I'm sure there are some happening. I'll try to pay attention to the announcements I see online.

All Kinds Other Stuff – I'll make it a practice to keep a file which I will add to daily whenever I see or receive notification of anything worthy of note. That'll make it easy to pour it into the *BCSFazine* template as needed.

UPCOMING CONVENTIONS TO PRETEND TO ENJOY

WORLDCON – I'm betting there's gong to be one somewhere. They tend to be so crowded the old-time fans who go specifically to meet up with old-time fans they partied with at the last Worldcon often fail to find each other and wind up getting plastered in a room full of complete strangers. Just as well. Also renowned for finally settling old fan feuds and starting new ones. Besides, its the perfect venue for old-timers to ignore newbies and vice versa. Best of all, famed for dealer's rooms selling items not too your taste and way too expensive anyhow. For all that, will be the subject of fond reminisces and tall tales for decades to come. For them as survives it.

NASFIC – An alternative Worldcon held whenever the latter is held somewhere other than North America. Popular with sedentary types afraid to travel far, I guess.

WESTERCON – A convention so unpopular it travels up and down the West coast of North America without ever finding a permanent home. Still, people show up.

American Conventions – All over the map. Bound to be a few of interest, especially the ones in the Pacific Northwest which is conveniently close to British Columbia. American hotels still refuse to show Canadian TV channels.

Canadian Conventions – Fewer and fewer fan-run ones these days. But here and there are small groups of diehards determined to carry on the hoary traditions most modern fen have never heard of and are completely oblivious to. Not to worry. Tremendous fun to go to if you have sense enough to avoid getting actively involved. Actually, that's not true. Working yourself into martyrdom can be quite exhilarating.

British Conventions – I've heard the tradition is not to have hospitality suites but to head straight to the hotel bar. Drinking be taken very seriously in this Island kingdom. I'm also under the impression there is still a sizable number of traditional fanzine fans who cling to Brit Faned habits like failing to include issue number and date anywhere on and within the zine, as well as maintaining a sarcastic and sardonic attitude applied to their own readers, the competition, fandom in general and the world at large. Apparently, if you trade or contribute to Brit zines you quickly get used to being routinely eviscerated. A rumour-relic of the past or still true?

OOK! OOK! SLOBBER! DROOL!
(Letters of Comment)

From: Mr. Flogmutter

Dear Sir! I protest this obscene emphasis on Mars! Obviously Venus has far more interesting possibilities!

Disrespectfully yours, etc.

From: Moog The Magnificent

Dear Sir! Mr. Flogmutter is such a wet blanket he must be from Venus! As the only Martian stand-up comedian in the Solar System I must protest! Mars is no joke! Mars dirt is the best dirt! Our ruins crumble faster than anybody else's! And our canals are so long they don't go anywhere! Harrumph!

In grippingest tentacle solidarity, yours truly, etc.

From: Mighty Mugalumpwump

Dear Sir! As a proud and arrogant Venusian I doth protest! My glorious planet has more algae and slime than all the cities of Mars and Earth combined! No other race lives in so odorous a world-girdling swamp! Pity Earth ruled by mere mammals! Pity Mars ruled by mere Mollusc-Cephalopoda! On Venus giant, warty, squatty Amphibians reign supreme! A better mold-ridden paradise cannot be imagined! Besides, we croak to beat the band, and we not only use exclamation points, we worship them! I believe I have just proved how great I am! CROAK!

In wallowing-mud ecstasy, never to be yours, etc.

From: Steve Green

Thursday 11 July 2019

Hi Felicity,

12 July 2019 marks the fiftieth anniversary of *Star Trek's* debut on British television, where it occupied the Saturday afternoon slot on BBC1 traditionally occupied by *Doctor Who*. Unlike NBC and its US affiliates, the BBC opened with *Where No Man Has Gone Before*, the second pilot and the first to feature William

Shatner as James T. Kirk. As one of those captivated viewers, this means 12 July 2019 is also the fiftieth anniversary of my becoming a Star Trek fan.

As you probably know, CTV aired *The Man Trap* on 6 September 1966, two days before NBC, meaning Canadian viewers got to enjoy Star Trek first. Live long and prosper.

[I didn't know that! Neat! ☺] – Felicity

Cheers, Steve

[I thought, hey, I kept a journal back then. I wonder if I recorded my impressions? I know I watched the pilot. But when I checked my drawer of journals I discovered I began keeping them in 1967. (Haven't written any in decades.) Searched through January to see if I said anything at all about Star Trek, but the writing was so tiny, blurred and faded it was tough sledding. Couldn't find a thing. Oh well. Fandom will just have to survive not knowing my 15-year-old view of that show when it was first aired. I did like it. I remember that much. Happy now to own the entire set on Blu-ray. Instant nostalgia.] – The Graeme

AFTERWORDS

This has been a tentative, experimental, proof-of-concept issue to mask the return of the God-editor to zinedom. Don't worry about it.

Obviously, I haven't had time to do a proper job of it. Product of maybe ten hours work over two days. Don't worry about it.

Next month I'll do better. Don't worry about it.

Actually, you *should* worry. Because I expect you to seriously consider writing a brief letter of comment. Maybe even an article, or a clump of idle thoughts, a blotch of self-expression, whatever you can come up with. If not every issue, then at least whenever the mood strikes you, the urge compels you, or boredom demands. Ideally, you'll compose your contribution chuckling at your own wit or gasping in awe at the profundity of your prose. I mean, that's the way I write. A bit noisy, but it works. Why not give it a try?

Besides, if a lot of contributions flood in, there'll be far less of me and everyone will be able to breathe easier. Jolly good, that.

To be really honest and totally truthful (now you know I'm gong to lie) my goal is to get as many readers actively participating as often as they can. Purely selfish, of course. Means a lot less work for me. But it could also mean a clubszine readers enjoy and look forward to. That would be very cool, I must say.

Whatever happens, I intend to have as much fun as possible editing and publishing *BCSFazine*. Till people gang together to stop me. But why would they? I figure if I make clear my enthusiasm, it will prove infectious and myriad readers will want to play, too. The world is rough and tough. Time for a prolonged recess.

Cheers! *The Graeme*