



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

מועדון הקריאה

השתתפות במועדון הקריאה אינה כרוכה בתשלום או בהגעה למפגשים ופתוחה גם למי שאינם חברים באגודה. מומלץ להביא את הספר.

לפרטים ולהצטרפות לרשימת התפוצה של מועדון הקריאה: http://www.sf-f.org.il/story_963

חוג מדע בדיוני ברחובות – SFIR - Rehovot Science Fiction Club

23.12 - חתונת הרפאים (Corpse Bride)

בנוסף, ביום ראשון, ה-30 לדצמבר, יתקיים משחק תפקידים. לפרטים נוספים נא לפנות לליאת שחר בכתובת: liat42@gmail.com

כל פעילויות התא הרחובותי מתקיימות בימי א' בשעה 20:00 בפקולטה לחקלאות ברחובות, חדר 2 (הבניין שליד הבריכה). הכניסה לכל הפעילויות אינה כרוכה בתשלום. לפרטים נוספים, כתבו אל Sfir42@yahoo.com.

מסיבה נושאית

"דארק רבולושן" מצדיע לסדרת "מסע בין כוכבים" לרגל ארבעים שנה לקיומה, ועורך מסיבה נושאית – Cyborg, ב-27.12, יום חמישי בחצות, במועדון הסילבר, הרצל 146 תל אביב. חברי אגודה זכאים לכניסה במחיר 40 ₪ במקום 50 ₪ בהצגת כרטיס חבר בקופה.

יתקלטו: DJ Schattenphonix, DJ Von Elixir, DJ Scorpion, בסגנון Industrial / EBM / Dark, Electro / New Wave / Synthpop. במקום צפויים תאורת לייזר, סייבר ספייס ואולטרה, משקאות רדיואקטיביים זוהרים על הבר. במהלך הערב יוקרנו קליפים וסרטונים נדירים של מסע בין כוכבים ומד"ב מכל הזמנים על מסך ענק. מומלץ להגיע בלבוש חלל, סייבר ודברים שזוהרים באולטרה.

More Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

Letter to the Editor

Aharon - I want you to know that every month I quickly devour (visually!) the latest edition of **CyberCozen** in record fashion, and anxiously await the following month's version! **Gary Roth**
Gary – I got the hint. © **Aharon**

Book Review by Aharon Sheer

Mars by **Ben Bova** (1992), 549 pages.

This is sf author Ben Bova's attempt to write a James Michener-style novel about mankind's first visit to the planet Mars. Bova has written a novel with a solid scientific basis as of 1992, which also has a good main character and provides a lot of background for the many kinds of people involved in making a trip to Mars. The story must be taking place many years in our future, yet it is still slightly dated with people using floppy disks and cameras with film in them. Going to Mars is a very expensive trip, involving teams from the United State, Russia, Japan, several European countries, Israel and Brazil. (The fact that there is no Chinese team shows again that the

book is dated.) The Russians have provided the rockets, the Americans and the Russians the pilots (astronauts and cosmonauts), the Japanese the electronics, the Europeans the scientists (most of them, except for two Japanese, two Americans, a Brazilian, a geologist from India, and an Israeli). The leader of the expedition is a Chinese scientist, but he's the only Chinese. The political complications of running a multi-national effort such as this are part of the story.

The hero of the novel is an alien – at least to many of us – he is half Navajo Indian. He is geologist Jamie Waterman, whose admirable grandfather is pure Navajo and proud of it, but whose parents

are university faculty in Berkeley, California, and embarrassed by any suggestion of Navajo in their background. Jamie was not originally supposed to be on the team that landed on Mars, he was just a backup to two other geologists, but at the last minute the other two couldn't go, and Jamie got there. This is not a secret surprise in the book: in the first chapter they land on Mars, Jamie among them. Later on we find out in flashbacks why it was Jamie who ended up on Mars.

Some quotes from the book:

"Sweating like a laborer inside his pressurized hard suit, Jamie smiled bitterly at the thought that the first task of the first explorers on Mars was to toil like coolies, grunting and lifting for hours in mindless drudgery. The public-relations statements and TV pictures make it all look so damned easy, he thought. Nobody ever watches a scientist at work – especially when he's doing dog labor...."

"At the end of their long, exhausting day they moved at last inside the inflated dome...."

"The dome was filled with breathable air at normal Earth pressure and temperature, according to the gauges. The thermometer read precisely twenty-one degree Celsius...." [p. 25]

"Everything about the Mars expedition was done in pairs. There were two landing parties, two backup teams who remained in orbit around the planet, duplicates of every piece of equipment and milligram of supplies.

"The expedition had been planned around the 'split-sprint' mode of operation, which meant (stripped of the technical jargon) that the expedition took the quickest possible route to Mars and planned to stay at the planet for a minimal length of time – two months. That was the 'sprint' mode. The scientists had fought against it with logic and economics; they had failed in the face of the politicians' desire for quick and spectacular results.

"For while it was true that the sprint mode was more costly overall than a more gradual approach that would permit a longer stay time at Mars, the politicians knew that a quick mission would require fewer years of wrangling and painful budgetary crises than a longer one. Moreover, practically every politician involved in the Mars mission wanted to see humans on the red planet while he or she might still be in office to take the credit.

"So the expedition sprinted to Mars." [p. 79]

Jamie gets off on the wrong foot right after they land on Mars. The space agencies wanted to avoid a disaster like what happened when Armstrong landed as first man (sorry, person) on the moon, and opened his mouth and said, "That's one small step for a man, one giant step for mankind." What, no women? Only men? The feminists were horrified, and everyone knew that the first people to land on Mars would have to avoid offending the feminists, as well as anyone else. With so many people from so many countries, each person in the first group to land on Mars had their first words written out for them on Earth before they ever left Earth. Each one was given words to speak in his native language, whether French or Japanese or Portuguese or whatever. Each one memorized his speech and pronounced it as dictated by the bosses. But Jamie didn't do as he was told. Overwhelmed by standing on the surface of Mars, he at first forgets that he was to speak at all. When signaled that it was his turn, he could not remember what he was supposed to say (which was in English, as he represented the U.S.), and instead greeted Mars with a standard Navajo greeting. This caused an enormous uproar on Earth. Was he a Native American activist? Was he trying to convey a political message? There were demands that he be sent immediately back up to one of the backup teams in

orbit, to be replaced by a backup American geologist.

Throughout Jamie's stay on Mars the fact that he was a red Indian, a Native American, not a real American, was a constant irritant to Jamie and the others. Bova's presentation of Jamie's childhood and background, love life, academic experiences, and inter-personal contacts are an important part of this book, and a chance for me to get acquainted with an aspect of American life not familiar to me.

Li Chengdu, the expedition leader, is "angry because [Jamie] is down there on the planet and I am forced to ride in this celestial tin can without ever setting foot on Mars....

"Russians, Americans, Japanese – nineteen different nationalities living cheek by jowl a hundred million kilometers from Earth. If there isn't a mental breakdown before we return home I'll be surprised beyond words....

"The engineers had anticipated all the physical problems of the Mars mission, but they had studiously ignored the worries of the psychologists ... by ordering the psychologists to pick 'well-balanced' personalities who could remain stable.... How does a man remain stable when he is supposed to deny himself sex for nearly two years? This mission should have been planned by Polynesians, not Russians and Americans. The two most prudish peoples in the world." [p. 87]

The book describes many aspects of the scientific exploration of Mars. Visits to the Valles Marineris – the Grand Canyon of Mars, but vastly larger than the Earth's Grand Canyon – is a major topic of the book. It is a vast canyon system that runs along the Martian equator, and is more than 4,000 km long, 200 km wide and up to 7 km deep. Jamie discovers that its rock walls are layered, as if there had

been an ocean or a river there once. It's Jamie who, after his first short geological exploration on Mars, demanded and got the first visit there (to the part called Noctis Labyrinthis), and based on what they found there, the return visit. So the Navajo troublemaker caused a major change in the planned scientific exploration. The behind-the-scenes politicking that was required for this is part of the book's fun. Essentially, Jamie became the acknowledged scientific leader of the expedition, with support from the scientific teams on Earth.

One of the most important objectives of this (or any) Mars explorations is the question of life on Mars. Is there life (in some form) on Mars today? Was there life on Mars in the past? Searching for signs of past or present life is an important part.

I loved picking up this book again and again, each time to read a few more pages. It jumps around from past to future, filling in details nicely. It's also a science fiction adventure book. Many things could go wrong on a two-year trip to and from Mars, and on Mars. Solar flares. Meteor showers. Sand storms. Illness. Bova tries to present a variety of problems that might arise, and describe in an exciting way the possible solutions. Bova also speculates on possible scientific discoveries that might be made on Mars, and chooses some to describe as they are found. We won't know if there is anything to his speculations until an expedition from Earth actually lands on Mars, and explores it. In this book he tries to describe such an expedition as it might be carried out today, or not too long in the future. Although this was the first book I've ever read by Ben Bova, I imagine that I will read others – he's written many.

Advice Column: Salacious Sal's Advice to the Love Lorn:(from **CyberCozen**, May 1993)

Dear Sal: I just met this dreamy guy, and I'm madly in love with him. What I want to know is how many times should we date before I allow him to embrace me? **1st Love**

P.S. I come from a light gravity planet and he comes from a heavy gravity planet, so I know my parents won't approve, but I don't care!

Dear 1st Love: You should care if you're thinking of any heavy dating with dream boat! The minute he crushes you to his manly chest you will find yourself carted away in an ambulance -- if you're lucky.

Haven't your parents ever explained the difference between prejudice and the facts of life? **S. Sal**

Dear Sal: I'm only in my first metamorphosis and she's in her fifth. Do you think she's too old for me? **Einat**

Dear Einat: When two souls are inflamed with love's fire, age is never of any importance and you should not allow it to influence your actions. A relationship with a mature female can be a very rewarding experience. **S. Sal**

P.S. You are compatible shapes aren't you?

Dear Sal: My wife's a real witch. She makes my life hell. If that isn't enough, she comes from a large family and they're always visiting -- her parents, her sisters, her brothers, and even her covens (2nd, 2nd once-removed, and even the distant ones)! I'm going out of my mind! I ask for a glass of beer and I get some wizard brew. I try to watch the velly and find myself watching hallucinations. Love is dead -- and I probably will be soon. What can I do? **D.E. Mon**

Dear D.E.: The best thing a male can do in a situation like this is to become a wizard -- a financial one is best. Wiz her out of the house. Buy her a new racing model broom. Make friends with a large vampire family and invite them to dinner when your in-laws come to visit. Set out to bewitch her and she may learn to behave herself. Good Luck. **Sal**

Star Trek book review by Gary Roth:

Star Trek: The Fate of the Phoenix, by Sondra Marshak and Myrna Culbreath, 262 pages, 1979.

What a difference between this book and the previous "**Phoenix**" novel I reviewed some time ago! The previous story was not enjoyable, whereas this one features non-stop, unpredictable action, including a surprise ending. Once again the main characters are: Omne, the man who died but reappears reborn thanks to special technology that he created; "Jim" and "James" Kirk -- one is the first recreation of the Kirk who

previously died, and the other is a reborn version who agreed to become a husband/servant of the Romulan commander Di'on Charvan; Spock; and the aforementioned female commander. While there is a certain amount of fisticuffs, this time there is much more emphasis on quick thinking and dealing with a wide variety of cultures on different planets. Due to Omne (actually, two of them, who have competing

agendas for taking over the universe), the Federation teeters on the edge of falling apart while the Romulan Empire and Klingons stand ready to take advantage of the changing political situation. The mental links between the 2 Kirks and others come into play in this novel as well, although the links disappear at times.

Omne possesses a super-powerful transporter, and thus can cover a lot of galaxial territory in a short time. With his reincarnation invention, he manages to sway a key Federation official (Roblein) to modify his stand from non-interference (the Prime Directive) to actually questioning the policy of withholding scientific and medical advances to lesser-privileged civilizations. Roblein's wife had died in an accident shortly before Omne's visit, and the official had been prepared to resign his position due to his inability to cope with the tragedy. However, after his wife returned from the dead, obviously Roblein had a change of heart. This action paved the way for Omne to become Lord Regent of the Hegemony, a large group of planets whose people banded together.

An interesting argument breaks out between two identical rulers, both named the Resident of Razar. Apparently the Omne device led to the duplicated redundant figure, but both individuals claimed to be the original and rightful royal person. The two end up killing each other soon after Kirk and Omne arrive on the scene.

Through an odd series of events, Kirk takes the *Enterprise* to the Lord Regent's installation ceremony, and serves as the ceremonial Federation Ambassador, not knowing in advance that he would be reunited with Omne. Things go awry, however, as the second Omne secretly sabotages the event and forces Kirk and the "real" Omne to form a flimsy alliance. Spock, who lost much of his self-control after the original Phoenix events, wishes revenge on the inventor, without success. Before leaving, however, Kirk and Omne engage in an organized debate about the Prime Directive, and the delegates in attendance go to contemplate the two opposite opinions while the two speakers agree to pursue the other Omne.

Meanwhile, the Romulan commander attempts to force the Thorvan Empire to

pledge allegiance to her own Empire, by means of a most-unusual fight with the female ruler, the Doyen. The two ladies battle fiercely with one another in three stages: medieval weapons, hand-to-hand combat, and lastly -- mentally via mind link. While the woman ruler admirably put forth much effort, the visitor emerges with the upper hand. The victor leaves with the "loan" of the loser's special male companion, Trevanian, who unfortunately does not survive the trials and tribulations with the consequent encounters of the Omnes.

Eventually, Spock, Kirk and the first Omne travel to the hideout of the second Omne, while the Romulan commander holds off her threatening Commander-in-Chief, Rovon, who accuses her of treason. Simultaneously, the Doyen arrives on the scene to recollect her companion and reluctantly offers to lend her battlefleet as leverage against Rovon. Ultimately, Kirk feigns amnesia and tricks the second Omne into a final fate, while the original Omne transports the "other" Kirk to a lonely fate on an isolated world with himself. Also, Spock and Kirk have an opportunity to kill the first Omne en route to the hideout location, but keep their word to wake him from a self-repairing slumber on the shuttlecraft.

There are a number of themes that repeat themselves: Omne creates a duplicate Spock but with his own thoughts ruling the body, such that Kirk cannot tell that he is in contact with an imposter during a mindmeld. Distrust runs rampant also when the Doyen parts ways with Trevanian, despite the Romulan commander's vow to return him safely. Further, Omne and Kirk are at odds with each other for much of the duration, yet manage to maintain their wieldy cooperation based on mutual goals. The two Residents of Razar accept that neither can remain in the presence of the other, but neither agrees to leave the planet. Similarly, the two Omnes agree that there is room for only one of them in the galaxy (that the other must go to an alternative universe), but neither desires to be the one to exit!

In all, this book leaves the reader with much food for thought, and so I give it a "90" rating. Check it out!

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