



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

מועדון הקריאה

במרכז דיוני מועדון הקריאה בחודש יוני יעמוד אוסף הסיפורים הקלאסי "לראות" מאת הארלן אליסון. פרטים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה העוסקים בספר זה יתפרסמו באתר האגודה. ההשתתפות במועדון הקריאה אינה כרוכה בתשלום, אינה מותנית בהגעה למפגשים נוספים ופתוחה גם למי שאינם חברי אגודה. מועדון הקריאה בתל אביב יתקיים ביום חמישי, 17 ביוני 2010, בבית הקפה "קפה קפה" ברחוב חשמונאים 95, בשעה 20:00. המנחה: שי ברנשטיין. מומלץ להירשם מראש באמצעות הדואל, בכתובת studiober@gmail.com. אנו ממליצים לכם להביא למפגש עותק של הספר. בחודש יולי יוקדש מועדון הקריאה לספר "קוסם היונים" מאת מייגן לינדלהולם. פרטים על מפגשי המועדון העוסקים בספר זה יתפרסמו באתר האגודה ובמכתב החודשי. המעוניינים להנחות מועדוני קריאה בכל רחבי הארץ מוזמנים לפנות בדואל למרכזת הפרויקט, ליאת שחר: liat42@gmail.com.

כנס "מיתופיה 2010"

כנס מיתופיה, בארגון של קהילת טולקין הישראלית וקהילת הארי פוטר לבוגרים, הוא כנס שנתי המוקדש לספרות הפנטסיה, אשר מתמקד ביצירותיהם של ג'.ר.ר. טולקין וג'ק רולינג. השנה יערך הכנס בספרייה המרכזית של מודיעין. כחלק משיתוף הפעולה בין הארגונים יהיו חברי האגודה הישראלית למדע בדיוני ולפנטסיה זכאים לקבל כרטיס חינם לאירוע באולם הגדול, בקניית שני כרטיסים לאירועים נוספים באותו אולם. המארגנים ממליצים להירשם מראש באתר הכנס או בפייסבוק, לצורך קבלת עדכונים כאשר תעלה לאתר הכנס התוכנית המלאה. בין הנרשמים מראש יוגרל כרטיס כניסה יומי. פרטים נוספים באתר [המקדים של הכנס](#), או בדף הפייסבוק של הכנס.

מפגש קהילת טולקין

קהילת טולקין הישראלית מזמינה את כל המעוניינים להשתתף במפגש פתוח, שיתקיים ב-24 ביוני בפארק הירקון בתל אביב. במפגש תוכלו להכיר את חברי הקהילה הוותיקים והחדשים וליהנות משפע של דברי מתיקה ושתייה. הדובדבן של הערב: דיונים מונחים בין חברי קהילה. המפגש פתוח לכל. בחצות הלילה נרים כולנו כוסית לכבוד יום הולדתו של יו"ר העמותה, אילן שליו.

Charles Stross - Author GoH at Icon 2010

צ'ארלס סטרוס – יהיה הסופר האורח באייקון 2010. סטרוס, סופר המד"ב הבריטי, יהיה הסופר האורח בפסטיבל אייקון 2010. סטרוס חי באדינבורו שבסקוטלנד ובין ספריו ספרי מדע-בדיוני, פנטסיה ואימה בסגנון ה. פ. לאבקרפט. (בפברואר 2010, סייברקוזן פרסם בקורת על *Saturn's Children* by Charles Stross (2008) פרטים נוספים עליו ועל יצירתו בקישור הבא: <http://www.icon.org.il/2009/CharlieStrossNews>

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

Letters to the Editor

Hey Aharon,

I liked your review of *The Gripping Hand* (by [Larry Niven](#) and [Jerry Pournelle](#)) (in the May *CyberCozen*), and thanks to you I decided to read the series from the original *The Mote in God's Eye*.

P.S. Apparently there is some misprint: *The Mote in God's Eye* was published in 1974 and not 1975.

Thank you, Roman Gersner

Dear Aharon,

Two comments:

Movie *2012* (reviewed in May *CyberCozen*) -- A good line would have been: "What good is saving humans, if we lose our humanity in the process?" [Too bad it WASN'T in the movie.]

Faster than light travel -- I never understood it but I understand that the existence of "tachyons" has been theorized. Tachyons are subatomic particles whose LOWER limit of speed of travel is the speed of light. I.e. -- they are ALWAYS traveling faster than that.

Anybody care to add?

Regards, Peace and Long Life, **Reuven Frank**

DVD Review by Gary Roth: *Armageddon* (1998), directed by Michael Bay, screenplay by Jonathan Hensleigh and J.J. Abrams, 150 minutes, rated PG-13 for sci-fi disaster action, sensuality and brief language.

A Facebook friend posted a clip of the movie *Armageddon*, and it was most intriguing. I soon thereafter watched the entire motion picture, which is set in our times and raises a lot of good points: from ethical dilemmas, to political decisions, to USA military personnel working with and against civilian employees, to sci-fi disasters and saviors, to saving the entire world and mankind, to people in power making unusual concessions, to NASA working with Russians and other nationals, etc. This film is realistic ("down-to-earth" pun intended), outerworldly (much action in space), well-paced, well-acted, features a wide variety of scenes / people / science / scenery (even a statue from *Ghostbusters*), and ends with a bittersweet conclusion. I didn't care for some of the interpersonal relationships and stories, however. I did like the special effects – computerized graphics and more. While the tone throughout is serious, there are numerous refreshing moments of comic relief – a very worthwhile production indeed!

The introduction shows Earth from outer space – at the time of the dinosaurs a 6-mile long rock hits the planet with the force of many nuclear explosions, casting dust and debris upward that took 1000 years until the sun could penetrate again. 65 million years later a space-walking astronaut is performing a repair near an American space shuttle, when all of a sudden a hail of foreign objects destroy his spacesuit as well as his space vessel. NASA operations control headquarters in Houston was in contact with him at the time, and went into emergency mode to determine if the episode was caused by a surprise attack or some natural phenomenon – 11,000 personnel were immediately activated, the log tapes of the

event were reviewed, and the military was summoned to track every piece of space junk in every orbit. It was determined that a rogue comet collided with a sizeable asteroid, scattering basketball-and-Volkswagen-sized particles to Finland and North America. These particles wreaked much havoc upon impact; fires spread, tsunami-like tidal waves washed ashore, etc.

The President of the USA aboard Air Force 1 was contacted about the situation, and informed that an asteroid the size of Texas was on its way to Earth, approaching at a speed of 22,000 miles per hour – it would not matter where it landed – it would cause the end of mankind and the globe (millions of gallons of seawater would be flashboiled, with 3-mile high tidal waves traveling at 1000 miles per hour), unless it were stopped within 18 days. Half of the population would be incinerated from the heat, the other half from nuclear winter; in short, the worst parts of the Bible. The Prez demands to know why this space anomaly was not spotted earlier, and the answer was that, due to budget limitations, only about 3% of the skies can be tracked. The head of NASA, Dan Truman, convenes a number of urgent meetings with scientific and military advisors to come up with a plan for dealing with the impending *Armageddon*. One of the scientific advisors couldn't stop stammering, due to an overdose of caffeine, and another claimed that he was superior to the President's scientific advisor since he received a better grade in astrophysics in college! One idea was to heat up the rock to the point of fracture with a spread-focus laser generator, but it was discounted as shooting a BB gun at a freight train. Another idea was to land a space craft, deploy large solar sails to spread a huge

canopy, but this was also deemed not practical. Finally, a workable plan unfolds – to drill a hole 800 feet deep into the asteroid, and then to drop in a nuclear bomb to alter its course and to fragment the rock into harmless pieces.

In order to carry out this plan, NASA must recruit the world's #1 expert in oil exploration / drilling holes deep into the ground – Harry Stamper (Bruce Willis). We first see him scaring off a Greenpeace ship in the ocean in the vicinity of his oil rig – he hits golf balls at them! Ultimately, a few Army soldiers fly to the oil rig to ask Mr. Stamper to travel to the mainland on a matter of urgent national security. He agrees, and meets with Dan Truman. NASA has prepared an Armadillo – a roving, manned drill machine, which includes some of Stamper's patented items that the government "stole" from the patent office! Stamper makes a number of suggestions for improving the design (the cams are wrong, as well as the flow, etc.), and is told that young Air Force personnel has been training on the Armadillo for 8 months. Harry insists on replacing them with his experienced team of eccentric drillers, which Truman agrees to. The eccentric team, however, places some demands on the US government, like not paying taxes for the rest of their lives, etc.!

The drillers undergo a grueling physical exam, including a psychological profile. They then go through a crash course in simulated weightless conditions, how to operate the Armadillo, how to maneuver in a spacesuit, practice drilling underwater, what it's like to fly at high-G velocities, and more. The drillers are eventually split into two teams, and paired with two corresponding Air Force / astronaut teams, on two separate titanium-alloy X71 space shuttles. Each shuttle has 800 turbo horsepower in near-zero gravity, and features an impenetrable skin. As the teams get ready for countdown into space, the President addresses the nation and wishes the heroes good luck. Further, he encourages everyone to pray.

The plan and itinerary: 67 minutes to the Russian space dock, refuel with liquid O₂ at the space station with cosmonaut Andropov, then on to the moon (60 hrs.?) – burn rocket thrusters – slingshot effect with 11+ G-force toward the asteroid. The tail debris will hopefully clear via the moon's gravity, allowing the 2 teams to land at 2 different sites (NASA doesn't take chances; it always

sends a backup) of the softest asteroid rock. While some gravity exists there, spacesuit thrusters will be needed to get around (200 degrees in the sun, -200 degrees in the shade), canyons with razor-sharp rock, unpredictable explosions / gravitational conditions. The bomb must be detonated before the zero plane barrier in space.

The Russian cosmonaut has been alone for 18 months, and thus acts a bit weird upon the visitors' arrival. He rotates the space station 40 degrees to allow for some gravity, therefore maximizing the refueling time factor. One of the drillers is assigned to watching the fuel gauge while wearing a cold suit, and is told to notify the Russian when the danger level is reached on the meter, and then to pull the lever to stop the flow. Unfortunately, Andropov was distracted when the distress call came through the intercom video monitor, and emergency warning sirens sound! The 2 teams manage to scramble back into their shuttles, with Andropov, just as the space dock begins to explode. Luckily, they managed to fill up to 90% capacity and safely depart for the next destination.

One of the 2 shuttles indeed encounters more space debris than it can handle (despite special debris radar), and crash lands on the asteroid. Only 3 of the crew survive – the Russian and 2 drillers. They pile into the Armadillo, shoot their way out of the shuttle, and head for the other shuttle (thanks to built-in radar), which safely landed 25 miles away from its original destination. Meanwhile, the other team starts drilling, without much success – they landed in an area with hard iron ferrite. Air Force colonel-pilot Sharp informs the President that the drilling is way behind schedule, and he pulls out a gun while beginning to deploy a bomb "to protect surface detonation" (I'm not sure what that meant). Meanwhile, Air Force officers fill the NASA chambers in Houston, to ensure that the mission is properly carried out. However, Truman manages to sneakily delay the countdown of the bomb via satellite link, until the military officers discovered the change a few minutes later. That bought Stamper and company enough time to force Sharp into allowing the drilling to resume without detonating the bomb. Soon thereafter its Armadillo hits a gas pocket that sends it out into space, but just then the other Armadillo arrives to save the day.

After the 800 foot depth was reached, a rock storm damages the automatic remote-

detonate timer on board the space shuttle, necessitating a manual detonation. Stamper volunteers to stay behind to do the job, in spite of his certain demise. The space shuttle is readied for takeoff back to Earth, but a malfunction prevents the engines from firing up. A female astronaut attempts to fix the engines, but the Russian cosmonaut became impatient and pushed her aside while he smacked the metal casings with a large wrench – it worked! Harry sees his life flash in front of him, and then sets off the bomb. The entire world celebrates the success moments later.

Truman is one of the great characters in the plot. He must mediate between civilians and soldiers, keep the President informed, deal with Air Force General Kinsey, make decisions affecting both outer space and Earth, etc. He always looks ready for

anything, with his white shirt and tie, Southern drawl, and 1-to-2 day facial stubble. In one of the quieter moments, we see that he wanted to be an astronaut but apparently had polio and was disqualified from reaching his dream. It is fun watching Kinsey and Truman take turns picking up the red telephone hotline to the Commander-In-Chief – reminiscent of Batman!

Noteworthy is the "makeup" of Stamper's team of drillers – one is a muscle-bound Black man called "Bear" with high cholesterol, another is a genius with doctorates in several sciences, another is a divorcee – all have differing backgrounds and behaviors. A good number of the men have criminal records and get into bar fights. In short, Armageddon is an enticing movie with a lot of action, plenty of science-fiction, good guys and bad guys, and a lot to be proud of if you are American!

Advice Column: More Advice to the Lovelorn from Salacious Sal

(November 1995)

Dear Sal, I am a fine, handsome, intelligence enhanced gander. I am madly in love with a golden-feathered goose. Unfortunately she has a very "magnetic" personality. A person who touches her is so attracted to her that he can't leave her alone. At the moment Jack is holding her and he is being followed by a long

line of people who are stuck to each other like a chain of DNA, and all because a landlord's daughter tried to steal a feather! My problem is, how do I get my love alone so that she will notice me? **Sauze fer t'Gander**

Dear Sauze:

Unless you want to be stuck with the silly goose forever, leave her alone. Remember, "All that glitters is not gold" and you may discover too late that she's only a pyrite blond. You need a lady who will make a good mother. Now I know just the goose for you! But there is some danger involved as some humans still have a

tendency to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. Good Luck.

Sal

Salacious
Sal



Short Book Review by Aharon Sheer

Major by Rick Shelley (1999), 260 pages.

This is an example of Military Science Fiction, that is, a war story that takes place in the future, often on a distant planet. Authors of such stories are usually veterans of the U.S. Army (or Navy, or

Air Force), and their stories are based in part on their personal wartime experience. Rick Shelley was born in 1947, and died in 2001. I looked extensively in the Internet, but could find nothing about him

expect that he was born in Illinois, and lived in Kentucky. The book's blurb says that he was a veteran of the U.S. Army, but it doesn't say where or when he served.

This book is part of a series that takes place in the 2800s, seven centuries from now. For hundreds of years humans have traveled in space using faster-than-light travel, and have settled at least five hundred worlds. Despite technological progress, humans are still war-like, with raiders from some planets attacking other planets. One method of defense from such attacks is to use skilled mercenaries, and the best of those are from the planet Dirigent. Being mercenaries is Dirigent's main source of income.

Shelley has written numerous books about the Dirigent Military Command (DMC). The Dirigent series starts with the same hero, Lon Nolan. Each book carries him ahead in age. In the first book, he is *Officer-Cadet*, in the second *Lieutenant*, in the next *Captain*, in this book he advances to being *Major*, and in subsequent books becomes *Lieutenant-Colonel*, and in the final book he is *Colonel*. As he grows up, he gets married, has children, and in the last book he commands his own son, now himself a soldier. So part of each book is a mercenary's relations with his friends and family and the difficulties of being a professional soldier while maintaining family life.

This book is an exciting war story. The DMC has been called to a mining planet, a planet which makes its living mining various minerals which they sell to other planets. Unfortunately they are being attacked by vicious raiders who not only come to steal the precious minerals, but also have no hesitation to kill innocent

civilians. At first the mining planet only wanted training for their local forces to fight against the raiders, but Lon Nolan and his soldiers soon learn that these are not simple raiders, but highly trained mercenaries themselves, and he has to raise the price for the DMC assistance since not only training is needed but actual fighting. The DMC gets involved in difficult battles, with many of their men (only men, no women) being killed or seriously wounded.

Since this is the future, space shuttles replace the modern helicopter or airplane for transportation around the planet. Every soldier is equipped with a helmet filled with sophisticated electronics not only for communications but also for maps of the territory, and night vision. Minor injuries can be fixed quickly with "trauma tubes" which "could repair just about anything short of amputation or major neurological damage." [p. 168] (Serious injuries require returning the man to the mother ship for limb or nerve regeneration and recuperation.)

But except for medical care there is not much advanced technology here. Instead we have good human relations and battles not much different from what the author may have encountered in his U.S. Army military service. The story is realistic and convincing, fast-moving and exciting, and there is enough death and injury for the reader to wonder if the heroes are going to survive. But of course Lon Nolan does, being the hero of the whole series.

If you like war stories you may well enjoy Shelley's numerous books. (Note: Shelley also wrote some fantasy, presumably also war stories but taking place in something like the Middle Ages, with magic, etc.)

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