

THE WSFA

JOURNAL

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This and previous issues of the journal may be seen by going to www.wsfa.org

Robins are an alien technology designed to spread Springtime virally. Pass it on.

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- Essays, Musings and Diverse Stuff
- Minutes of March Third Friday and April First Friday Meetings (xx/xx)
- A Short Story (but not about kittens), Part 1

From the Editor...

Hello, all!

Nuff said.

See you all soon!

Drew



Essays, musings and diverse stuff

Drew's Blogging!

It's true, I've started a blog (drewbittner.typepad.com). Most of the content is aimless rambling, the sort of writing I'm good at doing—especially on short notice—but I do have a few items worth a glance.

First off, I am shamelessly cribbing from my reviews on SFRevu. *Titans of Chaos* is a high-profile review (per our infamous Stats page), perhaps because John C. Wright linked to the review on his blog, but *Allegiance* by Timothy Zahn is doing okay too. So those are the two I stole.

I'm also posting a list of stuff I'm reading and stuff I'll be reviewing.

Y'know what? Blogging is addictive. I've been to my site about a hundred times, sometimes just to see if I have any comments (three, so far!), but friends have said they've taken a look and enjoy the posts.

Blogging is just another form of communication. It's fun, fast and cheap—so why not? Besides, it keeps me out of trouble. (Then again, it opens up entirely new universes of ways to get *into* trouble, so that aspect may be a wash.) Anyway, I'm enjoying it, so come visit my blog. That is all.

WSFA Meeting Minutes

WSFA Minutes

Third Friday

Madigan's home, Virginia

March 16, 2007

Meeting convened at 9:55 PM, when a quorum of WSFAans was achieved. Latest beginning to a meeting?

The Secretary and Treasurer were absent, so no reports from them.

Committees: Capclaves Present and Future, Publications, Rules and Trustees were absent, so no reports from them. To the best knowledge of club members present, the Capclave hotel contract is still under negotiation. Lee Strong made a report in absentia that he "knows nothing about anything". Candy Madigan asked not to be nominated for any officer position on pain of no longer hosting WSFA. So do not nominate Candy.

Entertivities committee: more members always appreciated. Captain Chris Christopher from the Department of Homeland Security invited WSFA to the Homeland Security Science & Technology Stakeholders Conference. The conference will be held in the Reagan building May 21 - 24, 2007; WSFA members are being offered free passes for the exhibit hall from 2 - 4 PM, and is offering display space so we can promote, say, Capclave. Christopher believes [paraphrasing] that DHS can benefit from the perspective science fiction fans bring to the impact of evolving technologies in contemporary society. He also pointed out that a group of SF writers including Brin and Bova have been invited for their science knowledge, but that we may wish to contact them to arrange an evening reading/signing event. Candy Madigan moved WSFA should do an evening signing and dinner for the authors, and get a table at the event hall; this was seconded and approved by the club, with no nay votes and two abstentions. Since Balticon is the weekend following (May 25 - 28), Mike Walsh should be contacted about co-ordinating with BSFS; also, Colleen should probably be contacted in her role as Library of Congress critter.

No old business, and other than the Entertivities committee, no new business; someone said that Drew Bittner has announced a Son of WSFA journal is coming soon.

Announcements: email announcements should be sent to WSFA journal editor Drew Bittner at editor@wsfa.org. Hostess announcements: the white bunny bites, no chocolate for the dog, there is a lost and found box, Mike Nelson's "evil villain" cloak is coming along.

We had several new people: Ann and Megan Totuslk from Iowa (first meeting), visiting Alex von Thorn (third(?) meeting).

Bill Lawhorn has found something more disturbing than bacon-flavored Altoids: wondering if bacon-flavored Altoids are kosher. Elizabeth Twitchell reminded us that the last episode of Stargate SG-1 aired in Canada this week, reports that the premiere of Blood Ties, the Lifetime series based on Tanya Huff's vampire novels, was "not as bad as it could be", and announced that The Prestige (a movie which is actually good) is out on DVD this week.

Meeting adjourned at 10:26 PM.

Attendance: Chris Christopher, Adrienne Ertman, Will Frank, Erica Ginter, Paul Haggerty, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Candy Madigan, John Madigan, Judy Newton, Barry Newton, Evan Phillips, Gayle Surrette, Alex von Thorn, Ann Totuslk, Megan Totuslk, Elizabeth Twitchell, Ivy Yap (signed in twice), Madeleine Yeh.

Minutes brought to you by Adrienne Ertman and the music of Seal, Destiny's Child, Doris Day, Annie Lennox, Fall Out Boy, and Coldplay. Have a good evening!

WSFA Minutes

First Friday

Scheiner's home, Virginia

April 4, 2007

CONVENED: The meeting convened at 9:16pm.

ATTENDEES: Drew Bittner, Katherine Bittner, Elaine Brennan, Adrienne Ertman, Will Frank, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, Judy Scheiner, Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Lee Strong, Gayle Surrette, Elizabeth Twitchell, Alex von Thorn, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh

GUESTS: Sarah Mitchell, Marah Searle-Kovacevic (1st), Gayle Dixon (3rd and final!)

SECRETARY'S REPORT: The Secretary made a report but he mumbles a lot.

TREASURER'S REPORT: absent, no report

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Capclave Present & Future: date is October 12-14; Rockville, MD is confirmed as the official site, as it has comparable benefits for accessibility and is larger than our current space. Sam Pierce and Ben Y deserve the credit. The price is *less* than Silver Spring and equally accessible to Metro, with nicer rooms. Reserve rooms now!

Capclave Far Future, DC 2012 and WFC: no report.

Datclave: Mike Walsh and Bob MacIntosh are talking locations

Publications: The March 2007 “Son of the WSFA Journal” was produced and finally sent to Paul for uploading.

Entertivities: Will asked for members to join the committee and recapped 3rd Friday. Given that authors will be at the DHS meeting, Will is trying to angle for arranging a group dinner or some similar event.

Rules Committee: no report.

Trustees: the election for new officers will be held First Friday in May; they will assume office in June. There is a list of candidates which (suspiciously) nobody can produce or even testify to seeing. All we know is that “they” are interested.

Committee to Talk About Science Fiction: Asimov’s May issue! What more need be said?

Awards Committee: now open, already taking on lots of activity. Send nominations (published in 2006) to the board. Guidelines are anything published by a company producing between three and 25 titles per year, magazines with publication under 10k or paying \$.01/word. Go online at www.wsfasmallpressaward.org. So far, nobody in WSFA has nominated a story. The deadline is May 1 so start reading. Read as if your life depends on it.

OLD BUSINESS: none

NEW BUSINESS: Balticon is coming up, and we need to push Capclave. There’s no news on a table yet. RavenCon and Penguin Con are also coming up.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: send email announcements to Drew. Host & hostess announcements. Arlington County Library book sale upcoming. Elizabeth brought a lot of books, please take them off her hands. Judy offered raffle tickets (last chance). Rebecca P invited all to peruse the pictures on the piano and noted that the Washington Philosophical Society has great speakers (including the head of DARPA and a 2006 Nobel Prize winner). Madeleine noted that her martial arts group was doing a presentation at Freedom Plaza on Saturday, April 14. Mike Walsh also has books but they are not being given away. Hugo Nominations are now online; Paul H thanked all for their help.

Library of Congress – upcoming guests include Barbara Hambly (5/7).

ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 9:51pm.



Events

Please email upcoming events to editor@wsfa.org with the word “submission” in the subject line for consideration.

There are no events upcoming.

A Short Story, Part 1

The Gray Cloud of Somber

By Drew

Somber was not always deserving of the name. That much we should make clear at once.

It was quite a lovely place, a village nestled beside a river and not far from verdant woodlands. Farms and orchards lay in abundance within a day's wagon-ride (much less if one rode a horse) and there was even a fellow who kept bees—truly a local wonder—living within sight of Somber's bell tower.

The village earned the name through a singular curiosity: it lay beneath a cloud. The cloud was long and gray as a gull's wing, hovering above the entire village from end to end. Not a single block nor street was spared, with no relief at dawn or dusk. The villagers lived their lives, day by day, under an unrelenting sky of gray.

"It was not always this way," said Osgood, the local storyteller (and the oldest man in Somber), who sat surrounded by children and their parents in the public house that day, as the deepening shadows suggested the approach of night. "No, when I was a young man, we had bright and beautiful skies, boundless and blue, with no fold nor bend of cloud on the clearest of days.

"Then the blighted cloud passed above our town. It was no great wonder, at first, but when it stayed and stayed... well, we took to guessing why. None of us knew. The flowers began to wither and folk cried out that it was an ill omen, that our town was cursed. Well, it is hard to argue when a cloud comes and settles in to stay for months, then years.

"The village priest tried prayer but to no avail. The worker of magic, who lived in that tumbledown tower there to the east, he called up a great wind and flung fire at the cloud, but nothing came of his greatest spells.

"And so time has passed, my young friends, and Somber is as you see it today. A small and unhappy place that might have become a thriving town by now."

Osgood's littlest grandson, Obadiah, piped up. "But Grandfather," he squeaked, trying to sound older and wiser than his eight years, "has anyone ever *talked* to the cloud and asked why it's here?"

The other children and parents and even Osgood shared a laugh. "Obadiah, that was... that was merry of you, to make a joke," Osgood wheezed, wiping away the tears of mirth leaking from his eyes and around his glasses. "Talk to a cloud? One might as well ask the corn whether it will spring up or the hens if they feel like laying eggs." He patted Obadiah on the head and said, "Well, and with that, it is time to bid all good night."

Obadiah's parents sent him off to bed, in the highest room under the eaves of their tall, tall house. (Truth be told, it was higher than it was wide or deep; such architecture was not unknown in Somber, but Obadiah's home was certainly quite tall.) The little boy didn't go to his bed right away; rather, he stood at his one single window, an oval beyond which he could see if he stood on tiptoes, and gazed out at the village and the cloud that lay above all.

“If nobody ever tried it, how do they know?” he whispered. Clenching his jaw and narrowing his eyes, he trundled across the room, shoved aside a pile of old junk his parents and siblings had left there over the years (his room doubled as the family attic) and unearthed the Door That Must Not Be Opened.

It was not locked. If the Door ever had a key—it did have a keyhole beneath the tarnished bronze knob—it was long lost and apparently not used prior to its disappearance, because the knob twisted smoothly in Obadiah’s grip.

The Door led onto the Roof That Must Not Be Trod (Obadiah clearly heard the capital letters each time his father listed the Family Edicts, of which there were precisely 51). And now Obadiah’s slippers set foot upon the roof, in defiance of generations of Family Edicts.

He paused and let out the breath he’d been holding for a long, long minute. He didn’t feel the Burden of Crushing Guilt and Family Dishonor that was the official punishment for many if not all of the Family Edicts—rather, he felt a little dizzy (probably from holding his breath) and a little exhilarated. After all, he was upon the Roof! It was a much better view than the glimpse he had through his oval window; he could see every bit of Somber (well, the parts that weren’t hidden behind other tall houses, anyway), as well as the underbelly of the cloud... which seemed so close he could touch it. So he reached out...

...and did.

“Hm! I always wondered,” Obadiah mumbled. It had a certain texture to it, not rough like a blanket (which is how he’d always thought of it) but rather silky, like one of the curtains in the family’s fancy room on the bottom floor. It also left his hand a bit damp.

=Wondered what?= a breezy voice asked.

“Hello?” Obadiah looked around. If he had broken a Family Edict and stepped out onto the Roof That Must Not Be Trod, could it be everyone else in his family—his two parents, six brothers and five sisters, one aunt and three uncles—had all violated the same Edict on the same night? It would be a stunning coincidence, but these things had been known to happen. “Who’s there?” That bit was just in case it wasn’t a family member but rather some burglar or other person who’d never heard of the Family Edicts.

=I’m right above you.=

Obadiah looked up... and up... and up... and toppled over backward, having bent back too far. With his backside resting on the Roof, he peered upward into the gloomy night sky and beheld a face. Formed of cloudstuff and shadow, it resembled Obadiah’s own, in that it had two eyes, a nose, a mouth and some nebulous stuff that might have been hair framing all the above. “You’re the cloud!”

=I am. And who are you?=
=

“My name is Obadiah.”

=I am pleased to meet you. I am Stratonimbus,= the cloud replied.

“Strat... oh...”

=Perhaps it is best if you call me simply ‘Strat’. I see that you are rather young and my name is very long, after all.=

“Pleased to meet you, too,” Obadiah said, wondering if he should bow. “Um... Strat, why are you here?”

The cloud’s face scrunched up in thought. =When water vapor rises and condenses, it forms a cloud which...=

“No, I mean, why are you here, above Somber? You’ve been here for years. Isn’t it time for you to move or something?”

=No. Not until I have an apology.=

An apology? Obadiah thought. “For what?”

=Many, many years ago, I was passing over this village and spied a flower garden. I had never seen the like. It was truly beautiful, full of flowers in every color of the rainbow. You must believe I was dazzled. I lingered over the garden for a full seven days, taking in the glory of it from every side and angle. Just when I thought I had filled my senses—tasting the pollen of each bloom, seeing the play of sunlight on each petal and leaf—I was... insulted.=

Obadiah was intrigued. Who knew clouds had feelings? “I’m sorry to hear that. Who insulted you?”

=A young man, standing not two feet from where you now sit. He shook his fist at me and bid me leave, calling me terrible names and demanding that the wind carry me off. But I am not so timid nor easily moved. I called out myself, to the Powers of Air and Water, which do not answer to mortal man, and pleaded my case. And so I was given leave to stay, for as long as I chose. And I choose to stay until I have had my apology.=

Obadiah was overwhelmed. Who could have been so foolish? Whoever it was must have known that he’d cursed the cloud and perhaps it had stayed due to outrage or wounded feelings. “I... I am sorry,” he said. “I wish you had not been insulted.”

=It is kind of you to offer your apology, but you have done nothing wrong,= Strat pointed out.
=The only one who can apologize is the one who offended me.=

“What was his name? Maybe I can find him.”

=I do not know. He didn’t tell me amid all the cursing he did.=

Obadiah sighed. How was he going to find out who was guilty of cursing the cloud? It seemed like a very tall order, even for an eight-year-old who had broken two Family Edicts in one night.

He was feeling something very like the Burden of Crushing Guilt and Family Dishonor at that moment.

TO BE CONTINUED