

DAVID DRAKE'S OFFICIAL HOME PAGE



Dear People

I hope this web site will provide a little background to readers who want to know something about me. I'm not trying to sell you books, I figure if you're here, you're probably interested in my work. If you're not, huckstering won't change it, and it sure isn't something I'm comfortable doing. Come in and have a look.
-Dave Drake

*Listen to Dave read his welcome letter
([175K wav file](#))*

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This is David Drake, SF and fantasy writer, not the [other David Drakes](#) you may have heard of.



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last updated 22 August 2006 by webmaster@david-drake.com

David Drake



A picture of my wife Jo and me, March 1970

I was born on September 24, 1945, in Dubuque, Iowa. In 1967 I graduated from the University of Iowa with a BA in History (with honors) and Latin; married my wife Jo (one son, Jonathan, born 1973); and entered Duke Law School. I was drafted out of law school and served in the army 1969-71, spending most of 1970 as an interrogator with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, the Blackhorse, in Vietnam and Cambodia.

I returned, finished law school, and spent eight years as Assistant Town Attorney of Chapel Hill, NC. In 1980 I resigned and drove a city bus part-time for a year while I did more writing. Since 1981 I've been a fulltime freelance writer.

I sold my first story (a really bad Lovecraftian pastiche) to August Derleth of Arkham House in 1966 while I was an undergraduate. I continued to sell stories in law school, the army, and while working as an attorney. In 1979 my first book, the military SF collection *Hammer's Slammers*, and my first novel, *The Dragon Lord* (a swords and sorcery piece) were published.

In total I've written or co-written over 60 books; edited or co-edited about thirty; done plot outlines for another twenty-odd, the books themselves being written by another author. I don't count reissues, whether or not they're expanded, nor recom compilations in these figures. I've sold more than a hundred stories.

I'm probably best known for my military SF, but that's never been more than about a quarter of my

output. While all my work has been in the fantasy/SF genre, within these bounds I've written about everything except for romance--humor, thriller, epic fantasy, S&S, military SF, space opera, historical (both fantasy and SF).

For more about some of my personal interests and influences, see the following pages:

- [Early Influences](#)
- [My Connections to Iowa](#)
- [Viet Nam](#)
- [My Motorcycles](#)
- [Rudyard Kipling](#)
- [Classics](#)
 - [Ovid, including my own translations](#)
- [Manly Wade Wellman](#)
- [Whispers Magazine](#)
- [Jim Baen](#)



This is a robin's egg blue turquoise ring (it hasn't been heated to drive out the waters of hydration.) My brother-in-law in Iowa had a handicraft shop in which I saw this piece of Navajo silverwork. I thought it was the most lovely turquoise I'd ever seen and my wife bought it for me for our anniversary.

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last updated 28 June 2006 by webmaster@david-drake.com

David Drake's
Publication List



A Working Bibliography of David Drake's Writing

This bibliography is the beginning of a complete listing of Dave's work. We will continue to update and add comments.

Different printings of books are listed only when the ISBN or price has changed. The list is divided into four sections:

- A) books (novels and collections of stories) written by David Drake, including titles for which he wrote the plot outlines, listed at the end of the section;
- B) books edited by David Drake;
- C) his short fiction published in magazines and anthologies; and
- D) miscellaneous writings such as essays, comments, book introductions and odd pieces that don't fit elsewhere.

A version of the bibliography was published in the limited edition of *Balefires* (Night Shade Books, 2007) [Download PDF](#) (316 K)

[Chronological list of first editions of books](#)

[Chronological list of first printing of stories](#)

BOOKS: NOVELS AND COLLECTIONS OF STORIES

Active Measures. With J. Morris. 1985, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 365 p. 0671559451 (pb). \$3.95.

All the Way to the Gallows. 1996, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 293 p. 0671877534 (pb). \$5.99. [Dave's Comments](#)

Arc Riders. With J. Morris. Arc Riders Series. 1995, New York, NY: Warner Books. 312 p. 0446601527 (pb). \$5.50.

At Any Price. [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 1985, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 288 p. 0671559788 (pb). \$3.50. [Contents](#)

----- *The Butcher's Bill*. 1998, Riverdale, NY: Baen.

----- *The Complete Hammer's Slammers, v.2*. 2007, San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books.

Birds of Prey. 1984, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 348 p. 0671559095. \$14.95. [Dave's comments](#)

----- 1985, New York, NY: Tor. 348 p. 0812536126 (pb). \$2.95.

----- 1991, New York, NY: Tor. 348 p. 0812513568 (pb). \$3.95.

----- 1999, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 348 p. 0671577905 (pb). \$6.99.

Bridgehead. 1986, New York, NY: Tor. 279 p. 0812536169 (pb). \$3.50. [Dave's comments](#)

----- 1990, New York, NY: Tor. 279 p. 0812511689 (pb). \$3.95.

----- 2006, New York, NY: Tor. 288 p. 0765356473 (pb). \$6.99.

The Butcher's Bill. [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 1998, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 409 p. 0671577735. \$6.99.

[Contents](#)

Caught in the Crossfire. [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 1998, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 394 p. 0671878824.

\$6.99. [Dave's comments](#)

Codex. 2003, Chapel Hill: Sidecar Preservation Society. 27 p. A limited edition of 175 copies, some of which were bound in boards.

The Complete Hammer's Slammers, Volume 1. [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 2006, San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books. 395 p. 189238969X. \$35.00.

----- Limited ed. 2006, San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books. 395 p. 1892389703. \$60.00.

The Complete Hammer's Slammers, Volume 2. [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 2007, San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books. 500 p. 1892389738. \$35.00.

----- Limited ed. 2007, San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books. 500 p. 1892389746. \$60.00.

- The Complete Hammer's Slammers, Volume 3.* [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). [Nov. 2007], San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books. 500 p. 1892389800. \$35.00.
----- Limited ed. 2007, San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books. 500 p. 1892389819. \$60.00.
- Counting the Cost.* [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 1987, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 267 p. 0671653555. \$3.50.
----- *Caught in the Crossfire.* 1998, Riverdale, NY: Baen.
----- *The Complete Hammer's Slammers, v.2.* 2007, San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books.
- Cross the Stars.* [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 1984, New York, NY: Tor. 342 p. 0812536142 (pb). \$2.95.
----- 1994, New York, NY: Tor. 342 p. 0812509994 (pb). \$2.95.
----- 1999, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 309 p. 0671578219. \$1.99.
- Dagger.* Thieves' World Series. 1988, New York, NY: Ace Books. 250 p. 0441806090 (pb). \$3.50.
[Dave's comments](#)
----- 1988, New York, NY: SFBC. 218 p. \$5.50.
- The Dragon Lord.* 1979, New York, NY: Berkley Pub. Corp. : distributed by Putnam. 286 p. 0399123806 (hc). (This edition varies from the following paperback editions.) [Dave's comments](#)
----- 1982, New York, NY: Tor. 320 p. 0523485522 (pb). \$2.95.
----- 1989, New York, NY: Tor. 320 p. 0812536053 (pb). \$3.95.
----- 1994, New York, NY: Tor. 320 p. 0812536053 (pb). \$4.99.
----- 1998, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 284 p. 0671878905 (pb). \$5.99.
- Explorers in Hell.* With J. Morris. Heroes in Hell Series. 1989, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 312 p. 0671698133 (pb). \$3.95.
- The Far Side of the Stars.* RCN Series. 2003, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 436 p. 074347158X (hardcover). \$25.00.
----- 2004, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 514 p. 0743488644 (pb). \$7.99.
----- 2005, New York, NY: SFBC. 436 p. SFBC 1154846. \$12.49.
- Fireships.* The Reaches Series. 1996, New York, NY: Ace Books. 326 p. 044100329X (hc). \$19.95.
[Dave's comments](#)
----- 1997, New York, NY: Ace Books. 326 p. 0441004172 (pb). \$5.99.
----- *The Reaches.* 2004, Riverdale, NY: Baen.
- The Forlorn Hope.* 1984, New York, NY: Tor. 318 p. 081253610X (pb). \$2.95. [Dave's comments](#)
----- 1988, New York, NY: Tor. 318 p. 0812536223 (pb). \$3.50.
----- 1991, New York, NY: Tor. 318 p. 0812513320 (pb). \$3.95.
----- 2006, New York, NY: Tor. 320 p. 0765356465 (pb). \$6.99.

Fortress. 1987, New York, NY: Tor. 311 p. 0812930011. \$15.95. [Dave's comments](#)

----- 1988, New York, NY: Tor. 311 p. 0812536207 (pb). \$3.95.

----- 1999, New York, NY: Tor. 311 p. 0812536207 (pb). \$5.99.

The Fortress of Glass. [Crown of the Isles Series](#). 2006, New York, NY: Tor. 384 p. 076531259X. \$25.95.

The Fourth Rome. With J. Morris. Arc Riders Series. 1996, New York, NY: Warner Books. 310 p. 0446601535 (pb). \$5.99.

From the Heart of Darkness. 1983, NY: Tor. 320 p. 081253607X. \$2.95. [Dave's comments](#)

Goddess of the Ice Realm. [Lord of the Isles Series](#). 2003, New York, NY: Tor Fantasy. 496 p. 0312873883 (hc). \$27.95.

----- 2003, New York: Audio Renaissance. 4 sound cassettes.

----- 2003, New York: Audio Renaissance. 1559279508. 5 sound cassettes.

----- 2004, New York, NY: Tor. 522 p. 0812575415 (pb). \$7.99.

Grimmer Than Hell. 2003, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 373 p. 0743435907 (hc). \$23.00.

----- 2004, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 435 p. 074348830X (pb). \$7.99.

Hammer's Slammers. [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 1979, New York, NY: AceBooks. 274p. 0441315933 (pb) (There were nine printings at five prices from \$1.95 to \$2.95 of this edition.) [Dave's comments](#)

----- 1987, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 318 p. 0671656325. \$3.50.

----- 1989, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 318 p. 0671656325. \$3.95.

The Hunter Returns. With J. Kjelgaard 1991, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 275 p. 0671720422 (pb). \$4.50.

[Dave's comments](#)

Igniting the Reaches. The Reaches Series. 1994, New York, NY: Ace Books. 262 p. 0441000266 (hc). \$18.95. [Dave's comments](#)

----- 1995, New York, NY: Ace Books. 262 p. 0441001793 (pb). \$4.99.

----- *The Reaches*. 2004, Riverdale, NY: Baen.

The Jungle. 1991, New York, NY: Tor. 282 p. 0312851979. \$18.95. Volume contains *Clash By Night* by H. Kuttner. 1992, New York, NY: Tor. 282 p. 0812501985 (pb). \$4.99. [Dave's comments](#)

----- *Seas of Venus*. 2002, Riverdale, NY: Baen

Justice. Northworld Series. 1992, New York, NY: Ace Books. 282 p. 0441586163 (pb). \$4.99.

[Northworld comments](#)

----- Northworld: Justice (Extract)" *Amazing*, March 1992.

----- *Northworld Trilogy*. 1999, Riverdale NY: Baen.

Kill Ratio. With J. Morris. 1987, New York, NY: Ace Books. 268 p. 0441441165 (pb). \$3.50.

Killer. With K. E. Wagner. 1985, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 270 p. 0671559311 (pb). \$2.95. [Dave's comments](#)

----- 1990, New York, NY: Tor. 270 p. 0812509846 (pb). \$3.95.

----- 2002, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 270 p. 0743435869 (pb). \$6.99. (This edition differs from earlier editions of the novel.)

Lacey and His Friends. 1986, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 299 p. 0671655930 (pb). \$3.50. [Dave's comments](#)

Lest Darkness Fall/To Bring the Light. With L. S. de Camp. 1996, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 336 p. 0671877364 (pb). \$5.99.

Lord of the Isles. [Lord of the Isles Series](#). 1997, New York, NY: Tor. 459 p. 0312853963 (hc). \$25.95.

----- 1997, New York, NY: SFBC. 501 p.

----- 1997 Library ed., Grand Haven, MI: Brilliance Corp. 1567408419 12 sound cassettes (1,200 min.)

----- 1997 Unabridged ed., Grand Haven, MI: Brilliance Corp. 6 sound cassettes (20 hour.)

----- 1997 Abridged ed., Grand Haven, MI: Brilliance Corp. 156100992X 2 sound cassettes (180 min.) .

----- 1998, New York, NY: Tor. 625 p. 0812522400 (pb). \$6.99.

----- 2002, New York, NY: Tor. 625 p. 0812522400 (pb). \$7.99.

----- 2006, New York, NY: Tor. 625 p. 0765354764 (pb). \$3.99.

Lt. Leary, Commanding. [RCN Series](#). 2000, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 432 p. 0671578758. \$24.00.

----- 2000, New York, NY: SFBC. 432 p. SFBC 05840. \$11.98.

----- 2001, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 556 p. 0671319922 (pb). \$7.99.

Master of the Cauldron. [Lord of the Isles Series](#). 2004, New York, NY: Tor. 428 p. 0312874960 (hc). \$25.95.

----- 2006, New York, NY: Tor. 512 p. 0812561708 (pb). \$7.99.

The Military Dimension. 1991, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 273 p. 0671720546 (pb). \$4.50. [Dave's comments](#)

The Military Dimension: Mark II. 1995, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 310 p. 067187697X (pb). \$5.99. [Dave's comments](#)

The Mirror of Worlds. [Crown of the Isles Series](#). 2007, New York, NY: Tor. 336 p. 9780765312600.

\$25.95.

Mistress of the Catacombs. [Lord of the Isles Series](#). 2001, New York, NY: Tor Fantasy. 464 p. 0312873875. \$25.95.

----- 2001, New York, NY: SFBC. 511 p. SFBC 10614. \$13.50.

----- 2002, New York, NY: Tor Fantasy. 655 p. 0812575407. \$7.99.

Northworld. Northworld Series. 1990, New York, NY: Ace Books. 250 p. 0441848303 (pb). \$3.95.
1999, Riverdale NY: Baen. [Northworld comments](#)

Northworld Trilogy. Northworld Series. 1999, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 799 p. 0671577875 (pb). \$6.99.
[Northworld comments](#)

Old Nathan. 1991, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 228 p. 0671720848 (pb). \$4.50. [Dave's comments](#)

----- Mountain Magic. 2004, Riverdale, NY: Baen.

Other Times Than Peace. 2006, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 331 p. 1416520767. \$25.00. [Contents](#)

Patriots. 1st ed. 1996, New York, NY: A Tom Doherty Associates Book. 300 p. 0312862458. \$23.95.

[Dave's Comments](#)

----- 1997, New York, NY: Tor. 240 p. 0312590848. \$5.99.

Paying the Piper. 1st ed. [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 2002, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 358 p. 0743435478. \$24.00.

----- 2003, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 445 p. 0743471725 (pb). \$7.99.

----- *The Complete Hammer's Slammers, v.3*. 2007, San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books.

Queen of Demons. 1st ed. [Lord of the Isles Series](#). 1998, New York, NY: Tor. 480 p. 031286468X. \$25.95.

----- 1998 Library ed., Grand Haven, MI: Brilliance Corp. 1567405916 14 sound cassettes (21 hrs.)

----- 1998 Unabridged ed., Grand Haven, MI: Brilliance Corp. 1567400620 7 sound cassettes (21 hrs.)

----- 1998 Abridged ed., Grand Haven, MI: Brilliance Corp. 1567403034 2 sound cassettes (3 hrs.)

----- 1999, New York, NY: Tor. 647 p. 0812564936 (pb). \$6.99.

----- 1999, New York, NY: SFBC. 480 p. SFBC. \$12.98..

----- 2002, New York N.Y.: Tor. 647 p. 0812564936 (pb). \$7.99.

Ranks of Bronze. 1986, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 314 p. 067165568X (pb). \$3.50. [Dave's comments](#)

----- "Ranks of Bronze (extract)" Far Frontiers Vol. V, J. E. Pournelle, J. Baen and E. Mitchell,

Editors.

----- 1986, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 2001, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 314 p. 0671318330 (pb). \$5.99.

The Reaches. The Reaches Series. 2004, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 874 p. 0743471776 (hc). \$24.00.

----- 2004: SFBC. 874 p. SFBC 64696. \$14.99.

Redliners. 1996, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 374 p. 067187733X. \$19.00. Dave's Comments

----- 1997, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 374 p. 067187789-5 (pb). \$5.99.

Rolling Hot. Hammer's Slammers Series. 1989, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 280 p. 0671698370 (pb). \$3.95.

Dave's comments

1990, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 280 p. 0671720562 (pb).

----- The Tank Lords. 1997, Riverdale, NY: Baen.

----- The Complete Hammer's Slammers, v.2. 2007, San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books.

The Sea Hag. The World of Crystal Walls Series. 1988, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 334 p. 0671654241 (pb).

\$3.95. Dave's comments

Seas of Venus. 2002, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 400 p. 0743435648. \$15.00.

----- 2004, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 489 p. 074347192X (pb). \$7.99.

Servant of the Dragon. Lord of the Isles Series. 1999, New York, NY: Tor. 479p. 0812864698. \$26.95.

----- 1999, New York, NY: SFBC. 463 p. SFBC 06231. \$26.95.

----- 1999. Library ed. Grand Haven, MI: Brilliance Corp. 156740670X. 14 sound cassettes (1,140 min.)

----- 1999. Unabridged ed. Grand Haven, MI: Brilliance Corp. 1567404448. 7 sound cassettes (19 hrs.)

----- 1999. Abridged ed. Grand Haven, MI: Nova Audio Books; Brilliance Corp. 1587880008. 2 sound cassettes (ca. 3 hours)

----- 1999. Abridged ed. Grand Haven, MI: Nova Audio Books; Brilliance Corp. 1567408540. 2 sound cassettes (ca. 3 hours)

----- 2000, New York, NY: Tor Fantasy. 612 p. 0812564944. \$6.99.

----- 2002, New York, NY: Tor Fantasy. 612 p. 0812564944. \$6.99.

----- 2004, New York, NY: Tor 612 p. 0812564944 (pb). \$7.99.

The Sharp End. Hammer's Slammers Series. 1993, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 377 p. 0671721925. \$20.00.

Dave's comments

----- "The Sharp End (Extract)" Amazing, October 1993.

----- 1994, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 377 p. 0671876325 (pb). \$5.99.

----- *The Complete Hammer's Slammers, v.3*. 2007, San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books.

Skyripper. 1983, NY: Tor. 352 p. 0812536185. \$3.50. 1992, NY: Tor. 352 p. 0812520041. \$3.99. [Dave's comments](#)

Some Golden Harbor. [RCN Series](#). 2006, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 373 p. 1416520805. \$25.00.
----- 2006, SFBC ed. Riverdale, NY: Baen. 373 p. 13:9781416520801.

The Square Deal. Car Warriors Series. 1992, New York, NY: Tor. 213 p. 0812519892. \$8.99. [Dave's comments](#)

----- 1993, New York, NY: Tor. 213 p. 0812530306. \$4.99.

Starliner. 1992, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 314 p. 0671721216 (pb). \$5.99. [Dave's comments](#)

----- 1993, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 314 p. 0671721216 (pb). \$5.99. (A reprint which includes a dedication accidentally left out of the first edition.)

Surface Action. 1990, New York, NY: Ace Books. 236 p. 044136375X (pb). \$3.95. [Dave's comments](#)

----- Seas of Venus. 2002, Riverdale, NY: Baen

The Tank Lords. [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 1997, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 391 p. 0671877941 (pb). \$6.99. [Contents](#)

Target. With J. Morris. 1989, New York, NY: Ace Books. 312 p. 0441799558 (pb). \$3.95.

Team Yankee: The Graphic Novel. With H. Coyle, R. Whigham and G. Forton. 1989, New York, NY: Berkley. 176p. 0425112195. 6 issues in series; \$1.95 each.

Through the Breach. [The Reaches Series](#). 1995, New York, NY: Ace Books. 327 p. 0441001718. \$19.95. [Dave's comments](#)

----- 1996, New York, NY: Ace Books. 327 p. 0441003265 (pb). \$5.99.

----- "Through the Breach" The Reaches. 2004, Riverdale, NY: Baen.

Time Safari. 1982, New York, NY: Tor. 278 p. 0523485417. \$2.75. [Dave's comments](#)

----- 1989, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 258 p. 0671698125 (pb). \$3.50.

Tyrannosaur. 1993, New York, NY: Tor. 220 p. 0812535308. \$4.99. (Part I and II of this novel were published in somewhat different form in Time Safari. 1982, New York, NY: Tor.)

Vengeance. Northworld Series. 1991, New York, NY: Ace Books. 330 p. 0441586155 (pb). \$4.95. [Northworld comments](#)

----- "Vengeance" Northworld Trilogy. 1999, Riverdale NY: Baen.

Vettius and His Friends. 1989, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 304 p. 0671698028 (pb). \$3.95. [Dave's comments](#)

The Voyage. [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 1994, New York, NY: Tor. 415 p. 0312851588. \$23.95.

[Dave's comments](#)

----- 1995, New York, NY: Tor. 403 p. 0812513401 (pb). \$5.99.

The Warrior. [Hammer's Slammers Series](#). 1991, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 275 p. 0671720589 (pb). \$4.95.

[Contents](#)

----- Caught in the Crossfire. 1998, Riverdale, NY: Baen

----- "The Warrior (Extract)" Power, S. M. Stirling, Editor. 1991, Riverdale, NY: Baen. (Part 1 of a 3 part novel.)

----- The Complete Hammer's Slammers, v.2. 2007, San Francisco, CA: Night Shade Books.

The Way to Glory. 1st ed. [RCN Series](#). 2005, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 402 p. 0743498828 (hc). \$25.00.

----- 2005, New York, NY: SFBC. 402 p. SFBC 1185629. \$12.49.

When the Tide Rises. [RCN Series](#). [Mar 2008], Riverdale, NY: Baen. 416 p. 14165-55277 (hc). \$25.00.

Window of Opportunity : A Blueprint for the Future. With N.Gingrich and M.Gingrich. 1984, Riverdale, NY: T. Doherty Associates in association with Baen Enterprises. xvi, 272 p. 0312939221.

With the Lightnings. [RCN Series](#). 1998, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 323 p. 0671878816. \$22.00.

----- 1999, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 400 p. 0671578189 (pb). \$6.99.

----- 2000, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 323 p. 0671878863. \$6.99.

Dave wrote the plots for books in the following series:

The Crisis of Empire Series:

An Honorable Defense. With T. T. Thomas, 1988, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 310 p. 0671697897 (pb). \$3.95.

Cluster Command. With W. C. Dietz. 1989, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 276 p. 0671698176 (pb).

The War Machine. With R. M. Allen. 1989, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 338 p. 0671698451 (pb). \$3.95.

Crown of Empire. With C. Q. Yarbrow. 1994, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 244 p. 0671722085 (pb)

The General Series:

The Forge. With S. M. Stirling. 1991, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 323 p. 0671720376 (pb).

----- "The Forge" With S. M. Stirling. *Warlord*. 2003, Riverdale, NY: Baen.

The Hammer. With S. M. Stirling. 1992, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 307 p. 0671721054 (pb).

----- "The Hammer" With S. M. Stirling. *Warlord*. 2003, Riverdale, NY: Baen.

The Anvil. 1993, With S. M. Stirling. Riverdale, NY: Baen. 301 p. 0671721712 (pb).

-----“The Anvil” With S. M. Stirling. *Conqueror*. 2003, Riverdale, NY: Baen
The Steel. With S. M. Stirling. 1993, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 302 p. 0671721895.
-----“The Steel” With S. M. Stirling. *Conqueror*. 2003, Riverdale, NY: Baen
The Sword. With S. M. Stirling. 1995, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 343 p. 0671876473 (pb).
The Chosen. With S. M. Stirling. 1996, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 472 p. 0671877240.
The Reformer. With S. M. Stirling. 1999, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 294 p. 0671578049.
----- 2000, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 312 p. 067157860X (pb).
The Tyrant. With E. Flint. 2002, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 394 p. 0743435214.
----- 2003, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 501 p. 0743471504 (pb).
Warlord. With S. M. Stirling. 2003, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 567 p. 0743435877. Contains “The Forge”
and “The Hammer.”
Conqueror. With S. M. Stirling. 2003, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 633 p. 074343594X. Contains “The Anvil,”
“TheSteel” and “The Sword.”

The Belisarius Series:

An Oblique Approach. With E. Flint. 1998, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 467 p. 0671878654.
In the Heart of Darkness. With E. Flint. 1998, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 463 p. 0671878859.
Destiny’s Shield. With E. Flint. 1999, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 471 p. 0671578170 (hc).
Fortune’s Stroke. With E. Flint. 2000, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 402 p. 0671578715.
----- 2001, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 503 p. 0671319981 (pb)
The Tide of Victory. With E. Flint. 2001, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 500 p. 0671319965.
----- 2001, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 561 p. 0743435656 (pb).
The Dance of Time. With E. Flint. 2006, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 468 p. 1416509313 (hc).

Terra Nova Series:

Enemy of My Enemy. With B. Ohlander. 1995, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 360 p. 0671876929.

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EDITED BOOKS

Armageddon. D. Drake, B. S. Mosiman and M. H. Greenberg, eds. 1998, Riverdale, NY: Baen. 296 p.
067187876X (pb).
Battlestation Book One. D. Drake and B. Fawcett, eds. Battlestation Series. 1992, New York, NY: Ace.
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Dave Answers Some
**Frequently Asked
Questions**

What are you working on now?

I've turned in an RCN (Leary/Mundy) space opera, *When The Tide Rises*, and now I'm midway in *The Gods Return*, the final fantasy of the Crown of the Isles Trilogy.

Why aren't any of your continuing Isles series offered in unabridged audio format?

The short answer is that nobody's bought the rights. My own agent got things going with Brilliance. Tor insisted on taking control of the audio subrights, then screwed things up in a fashion that my agent hasn't been able to retrieve even now that Tor has surrendered the rights again.

What's the connection between the novella *A Grand Tour* and the RCN series?

Dave Weber asked me for a novella for his first shared universe anthology set in the Honor Harrington universe (Worlds of Honor). I'd been thinking of doing a series of space operas based on Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey/Maturin series, so I decided to use this novella as a chance to test the concept of two dissimilar friends as dual leads.

For a setting I used a young nobleman making a grand tour with his tutor and personal servant. The action stemmed from real events in the Greek islands in 1795: a Russian nobleman determined to take a Greek temple back to St. Petersburg in the warship he borrowed from the Czar--and who bombarded it in fury when he couldn't manage to dismantle it; and a French frigate whose crew murdered their officers in harbor when they were ordered to fight a (much smaller) British sloop.

Incidentally, I'd arranged with Dave Weber that he would edit my story to bring it firmly into the Honorverse. (I wasn't going to memorize the 70 pages of physics he'd invented for the series, for example.) He did a heavy edit for that purpose. I still get complaints about mistakes I made in ranks and technology. No, Dave Weber made the final decision on every one of those choices.

I was pleased with the way *A Grand Tour* worked out, but I felt it needed the length of a full novel to do the concept justice. I used a similar pairing (a young naval officer and a librarian) in *With the Lightnings*--not at all the same characters but the same sort of characters--and think the result is some of the best work I've ever done.

Will you ever write more books in the Northworld Series?

Probably not. I'm proud of the existing trilogy; in some ways they're my best and most subtly complex books (observe, for example, the way in Vengeance and Justice that words are echoed either from the end of a section to the beginning of the next, or from the end of one thread to the resumption of that thread), but they're also harsh in a fashion that I no longer feel a need to be.

I actually did rough the plot for a fourth book. It'd have been Ragnarok, with Hansen taking the place of Vithar and surviving to 'the new earth and the new sun'. I decided not to do it at the time because I'd come to like the characters—yes, even North—and decided they were in a good place so I'd leave them.

That was a good decision.

Is there a place where fans can get together to chat about your work?

I stick my head in on Baen's Bar regularly (<http://bar.baen.com>), but I don't have (and don't want) a conference of my own. I'll generally find a question or comment with the words David Drake in it on the bar and respond to it.

In addition, there's a fan-run site that my webmaster looks in on, but I don't do so myself. (I have the wrong personality for that sort of thing.) Redliners at Yahoo Groups was formed to talk about David Drake's works particularly, and military fiction in general. To subscribe, send e-mail to redliners-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

I'll cheerfully answer any question put to me e-mailed from the form below, and anything I say to anybody is said for publication if that person wants to publish it.

Why are so many of your despicable characters named "Platt?"

There's a person named Charles Platt who's lived in the US for many years but who has all the attributes that go into the term 'Chinless Wonder' for the British upper classes. (His uncle was in the House of Lords.) He produced a supercilious review of Hammer's Slammers suggesting that if I'd really seen war I wouldn't write such queasy voyeurism. I didn't respond directly--you don't respond to reviewers, in my judgment--but I haven't forgotten that either.

Have any movies been made from your books?

Years ago I had a few TV options on short stories, none of which were ever picked up.

While I would be delighted to have somebody buy the right to make a movie from my fiction, I've never made it a priority; I write books. They'll really have to come looking for me--and to date nothing in that line has gotten to the point of signed paper and a check in my hand.

Has there been any gaming interests in your books?

Yes, in several fashions.

Mayfair Games brought out a Hammer's Slammers board game back in the '80s.

Intracorps licensed electronic game rights to Hammer's Slammers in the mid '90s. They got seriously into development, but they were overextended and went bankrupt well before they completed the game. (They paid me part of the money. The business was frustrating in a number of respects, but I was paid well enough to justify the hassle.)

In 2000 Mattel paid a bundle up front for electronic game rights to Hammer's Slammers. So far as I know the game hasn't gotten beyond the preliminary concept stage--but their check cleared.

And greatly to my surprise, the Hammer stories are important texts in British miniature wargaming circles. There's a website dedicated to one club's vision of Hammer's Slammers [<http://www.salute.co.uk/slammers3/index.htm>].

The club's vehicles weren't quite what I had in mind, but I worked with John Treadaway (the club's webmaster) and John Lamshead, the British Museum's expert in marine nematodes, to bring out a history and campaign book on Hammer's Slammers for the miniature wargaming market. [Ground Zero Games](#) has done 25-mm and 15-mm miniature figures, and Old Crow has done combat vehicles in both scales(<http://www.oldcrowmodels.co.uk/hammers.htm>). The book is out from [Pireme Publications](#). This was a lot of fun. Check our [Hammer's Slammers war game web page](#).

How long does it take to write a book?

That depends on how long the book is. I started jotting plot notes for *Lt Leary, Commanding* on May 26, 1999. I finished the plot on July 8, 1999. I started writing on July 11, 1999. I finished writing the rough draft on December 22, 1999--a novel of 153K. I did two more complete passes, running off drafts of each and editing on hardcopy (which works better for me than editing on the screen). I finished and mailed off the final draft on January 11, 2000. It's worth mentioning that I was so fried that what I really mailed was a blank disk that I thought I'd copied the novel onto, but the e-mailed version reached Jim Baen himself safely and he distributed it to his production people. During the period I was writing the book, all the usual things occurred: holidays, birthdays, two weeks at the beach, and computer problems. (Unfortunately computer problems are quite usual for me.) *Lt Leary, Commanding* is my longest sf novel by a goodly ways, but all three of the recent fantasy novels (the *Isles* series) are over 200K words. They take correspondingly longer to write.

How complete do you make the plot of a story before you write it?

I do very heavy plots. I usually have at least 10% of the story/novel wordage in the plot. Here's an example: the plot for *Far Side of the Stars*, with the working title *Far Side of Heaven*. Scenes were re-ordered numerically as I wrote the book.

Do you write sequentially, from beginning of the plot to the end?

I do plots beginning to end, and I do very long plots, but there's not a right way.

How do you go about writing your drafts?

I work on a notebook computer outside, then edit the hardcopy and go through at least three drafts.

At any one time, how many stories are you working on?

I work on one thing at a time. Other people like multiple jobs, but for me I concentrate very heavily and I get crazy when I'm taken off it.

What novel have you personally enjoyed the most writing?

Once I apparently answered this question, '*Northworld*.' I can't imagine why I did that, because I was so stressed while writing *Northworld* that I was having back spasms that made it difficult for me to walk some days. I'm very proud of the book and the series, but they're enormously complex works--note the way words are echoed within and among the interwoven plot strands, for example--and the first one darned near crippled me.

Now I'd say *Lord of the Isles*. I've always loved fantasy, but because I'd been successful with military SF I wasn't able to do as much as I'd have liked to. Getting the chance to write *Lord of the Isles* was a wonderful change of pace. You can take the series as homage to Tolkien and to Robert E Howard both if you like; I do.



Do you use a computer for your work?

I've been composing on a computer since 1986, when IBM came out with its first laptop. From 1981 I was using a dedicated word-processor for second and third drafts, but I was composing with a pencil on legal pad. (Many legal pads.) As soon as there was a computer I could take out in the yard and work as I had with pencil and paper, I switched to computer first drafts.

I'm obviously not a technophobe, let alone a Luddite; but



neither do I find anything magical to technology. Some of the stories that I wrote longhand and typed on a portable I bought in Nam (electric but with a manual carriage return; very cheap) are still in print after thirty years.

Since 1987 I've used Word for DOS on increasingly old computers. That changed in March of 2001, when my last DOS machine died in mid-project and I converted to Word for Windows (which, for a professional writer as opposed to a desktop publisher, is significantly less useful than the old system). I'm now working on sub-notebooks with Pentium 90 CPUs. I've killed one of them and will doubtless kill the rest, as I've killed literally dozens of computers in the past; and will replace with something else obsolete but more than adequate for my purposes.

Which genre do you feel is your best to write in?

Best is tricky. I don't know really. I can do some things in the military that others who've had different lives can't, but I personally think some of the *Old Nathan* stories are as close to a unique thing as I've done.

Who were your influences?

One strand is pulp fiction--literally, stories from the '30s and '40s collected into anthologies in the '50s when I started reading SF and fantasy. Robert E. Howard in particular, then when I got to college the Tolkien trilogy in the SUI Library before the books came out in paperback.

The other strand is Latin authors and the classics more generally (though the Greek mostly in translation). I've got a separate section on this site on the [classics](#), but the short version is that Tacitus and Caesar in their different ways are models for prose in any language, and the ability of some of the poets (Ovid and Juvenal spring first to mind) to handle tricky problems like continuous action and capsule description can teach any writer. They certainly taught me.

What's your best book?

Again, that's a matter of definition. Personally I'd say *Redliners*, but that's not a book for everybody. It's a very tough story about war and redemption. *With the Lightnings*--a space opera--and the *Isles* Series, my Tolkienesque fantasies, have characters that more people are going to find attractive. I think maybe writing *Redliners* did something positive for me. At any rate, it probably isn't chance that the books I've written after that one are--I won't say softer, exactly, but peopled with characters who haven't done so many things that they can't forgive themselves for.

How did you come up with the magic in the *Isles* Series?

It surprises me to be asked this so frequently since I thought I'd covered it in the introductory notes to each volume. Classical peoples were heavily involved in magic (as opposed to religion). This seems to have been mostly Egyptian in origin, though there are mixtures of classical religion as well as Judaism and Christianity.

Spells could be for any purpose: revenge on a thief or strayed lover, gambling success, and good health are among the range of typical examples. The person making the spell spoke it or wrote and buried it. A lot of those buried (often in a graveyard) have been discovered in modern times.

The person making the spell would get the attention of the spirits (demiurges, not the Great Gods) by addressing them in their own language. He would then tell them what he wanted them to do in common (human) language.

For the *Isles* series, I've used the 'spirit language' (*voces mysticae* in modern parlance) from real spells for the spells the wizards speak.

What are the books in the Hammer series?

The original *Hammer's Slammers* was published by Ace, but republished in an expanded fashion by Baen. The rest of the series was also Baen--*At Any Price*, *Counting the Cost*, *Rolling Hot*, and *The Warrior*. In addition to these, *The Sharp End* is post-Hammer Hammer. (There's no particular order to the first five books.)

The most recent book in the series is *Paying the Piper* (Baen, 2002), which again is in no particular order with the first five books. The notion of doing a follow-on series (with *The Sharp End*) was a bad idea.

The entire contents of the first five books in the series, plus a new story per volume, have been reprinted in the three Baen omnibus collections: *The Tank Lords*, *Caught in the Crossfire*, and *The Butcher's Bill*. These are still in print. *Cross the Stars* (Tor, later Baen) and *The Voyage* use the Hammer universe to retell classical Greek epics (with some of the Hammer characters in the form of Gods).

Night Shade Books is bringing out the *Complete Hammer's Slammers*, which is just that. The first two (lovely) of the three volumes are out.

Are you going to write more Hammer stories?

Yes, I've done three recent novelets in the series (*A Death in Peacetime*, *The Day of Glory*, and *The Darkness*). One will appear in each volume of the Night Shade limited edition trilogy of *The Complete Hammer's Slammers*.

I'll probably do more as well, but I don't have current plans.

What's the relationship between Joachim Steuben of the Hammer series and Johann Vierziger?

Vierziger is named in a manner of speaking after the Mifune character in Sanjuro where he takes an obvious alias from the chrysanthemum trees growing in the garden. My intent was to do something that had no obvious natural explanation in a work that was otherwise straight SF/adventure. In a degree I was playing off the myth of the Vegan Orbital Fort in Blish's *Earthman, Come Home*.

The other part of what I was doing there was offering a chance at redemption to a very damaged person. I was finally able to address that directly in *Redliners*; I guess I was working up to it.

Who do you read for pleasure?

In the field--I read a lot of stuff out of the f/sf field--I read Vance and Pratchett among living authors, and have a particular affection for Kuttner, Kornbluth, and Jack Williamson's work from the '30s and '40s. Hmm; and I regularly reread R.E.Howard and C.A.Smith; I should mention them.

How many books will comprise the ISLES series? When will the last one come out?

Each the first six Isles novels is intended to be a self-standing work that can be read alone. (This is true of all my books; and, for that matter, my stories.)

The series was conceived as open-ended, but I think this may have been a mistake. I'm now writing a trilogy whose individual pieces will read far better in order and as a whole. The first of these (seventh in the series overall), *The Fortress of Glass*, was an April, 2006, hardcover from Tor.

The Mirror of Worlds, the second in the trilogy and eighth overall is now available.. That leaves the final volume whose working title is *The Gods Return*.

The previous titles are (in order): *Lord of the Isles*, *Queen of Demons*, *Servant of the Dragon*, *Mistress of the Catacombs*, *Goddess of the Ice Realm*, and *Master of the Cauldron*.

Why is the hardcover edition of *Servant of the Dragon* so poorly proofread?

This is a sore subject with me. I did three drafts of the novel (as usual). My friend Dan Breen read each section after I'd gone over it the first time, and my wife read the final typescript. By the time I sent electronic copy to my Tor editor (whom I won't name here) it was very clean.

Tor ran off hardcopy, which went to Terry McGarry for copyedit. Terry did her usual excellent job on it. The copyedited mss was sent to me for a final proofing. I returned it.

My editor should then have sent the electronic copy to the production department, along with the copyedited hardcopy for final corrections. Instead he sent only the hardcopy. (He later assured me that the Tor production department wasn't set up to accept electronic copy. This statement is untrue and utterly amazed the production manager when I repeated it to him.)

The production department reset the whole manuscript of over 200,000 words. There were fewer errors than I would have expected in such a process, but there were lots of errors. I went ballistic when I got the proofs, but I buckled down and made all the corrections I could and sent them back.

The production department then lost the corrections. Nobody at Tor is sure how this happened. The book as published is as typeset, without proofing.

I didn't realize how bad it was (I assumed they'd entered my corrections, which I knew couldn't be complete) until the volume of complaints from both friends and total strangers caused me to look at the text. I found things that I knew I'd corrected (for example, 'a field of barely' in place of 'a field of barley') that were wrong in the printed version. At this point I wrote the publisher instead of making another attempt to go through editorial. The paperback is largely corrected, in part due to the efforts of two long-time friends, Sharon Pigott and Rick LaBach. (Sharon read the galleys on my first book as well, many years ago.) For *Mistress*, the new head of production and I made sure she got electronic copy to work from and produced it accurately.

This is one I feel bad about. But I swear to goodness, it wasn't my fault.

Did you take the plot of THE SHARP END from Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* or from Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars*?

No, I took the plot from *Red Harvest* by Dashiell Hammett, his first novel (a fixup from novellas he'd written for *Black Mask* magazine in the late 1920s). Kurosawa took Hammett's plot for his fine Samurai film (I'm told there may have been a Japanese gangster novel as an intermediary, but I haven't seen it myself), and Leone then turned Kurosawa's film into the first of his Spaghetti Westerns. I'm familiar with (and like) both films, but I read Hammett before I saw them and have reread him often since then. I'm a little surprised to be asked this question so often, because my credit to Hammett in the front of the novel is explicit. Apparently a lot of people expect more originality of the film industry than I do.

If you are interested in subscribing to David Drake's newsletter mailing list to get updates on what's new with him, send an e-mail message to webmaster@david-drake.com. This is a subscription list for Dave's occasional announcements only, not a general participation list. Replies to the mailings will go through the webmaster. Past newsletters are archived [here](#).

To submit a question for Dave to answer, fill in the following form. (Mail is submitted to the Webmaster who will forward it to Dave.)

By the way, we're talking here about David Drake, not David Weber.

Your e-mail address:

Your name:

Your question:

Who is your webmaster?



Here's my webmaster, Karen Zimmerman.
She's currently Digital Collections
Archivist in the Library's Special
Collections Department at IUPUI in
Indianapolis.

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Dave's News

Upcoming Appearances

[DragonCon](#), Atlanta GA, 31 August-3 September 2007

[World Fantasy Con](#), Saratoga NY 1-4 November 2007

[OmegaCon](#), Birmingham AL, 14-16 March 2008

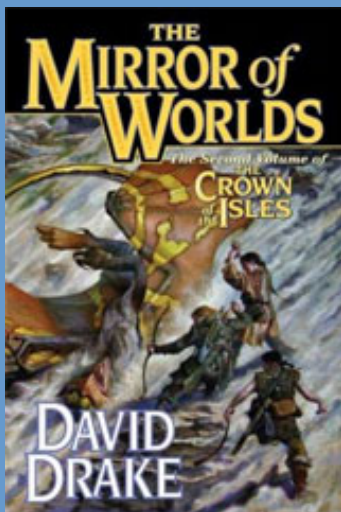
[Walden West Festival](#), Sauk City WI, 11-12 October 2008

[World Fantasy Con](#), Calgary, 30 October-2 November 2008

[Ad Astra](#), Toronto, 27-29 March 2009

Forthcoming and Recent Releases

Now Available!



The Mirror of Worlds (2nd book in the final trilogy of the Isles Series) is now available. The beautiful cover art is by Donato.

Coming March 2008



Color art sketch



Finished cover art

Cover art by Steve Hickman for **When the Tide Rises**, a Leary-Mundy RCN adventure from Baen

The Complete Hammer's Slammers

The first two volumes of three of the limited edition hardcover of *The Complete Hammer's Slammers* are Now Available!

Volume 3 expected November 2007

Cover Art by John Berkey

"This three volume set presents for the first time the genre-defining Slammers series in a uniform hardcover set." --[Night Shade Books](#)



This volume features all of the Hammer's Slammer short fiction, as well as all of the



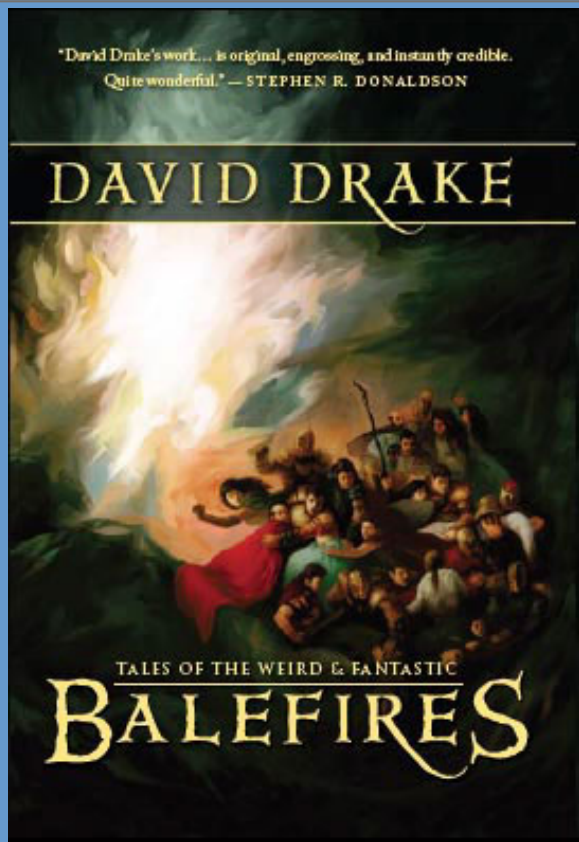
This volume features the first four Hammer Novels: *At Any Price* (1985), *Counting the Cost*

interstitial material from the original Slammers collection, new artwork and new interstitial material. The first volume features an introduction by Gene Wolfe. Also included is an original Slammers story, "A Death in Peacetime".

(1987), *Rolling Hot* (1989) and *The Warrior* (1991) as well as new artwork and new interstitial material. Volume 2 also features an Introduction by David Hartwell. Also included is an original Slammers story, "A Day of Glory".

The limited edition is bound in leather, and is signed by Drake, Hartwell and Berkey, and contains an extra piece of artwork by Berkey. Limited to 250 copies.

Now Available !



Balefires

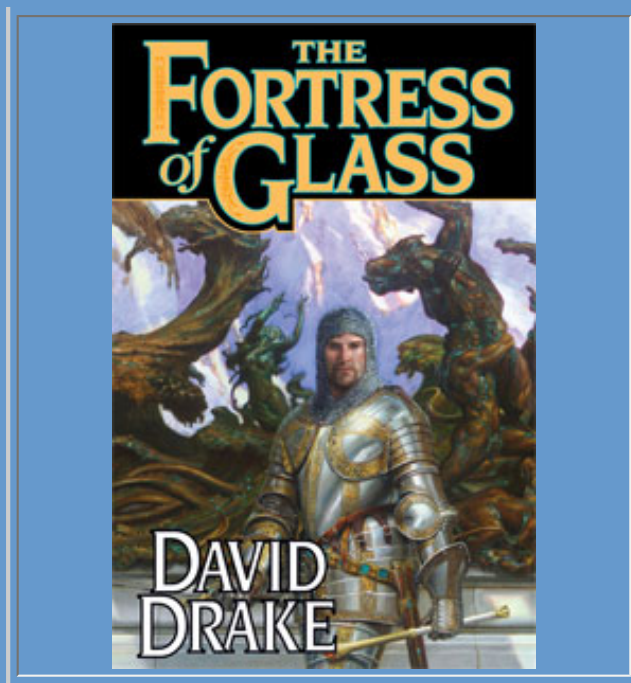
A Collection of Dave's fantasy stories from Night Shade Books

Contents:

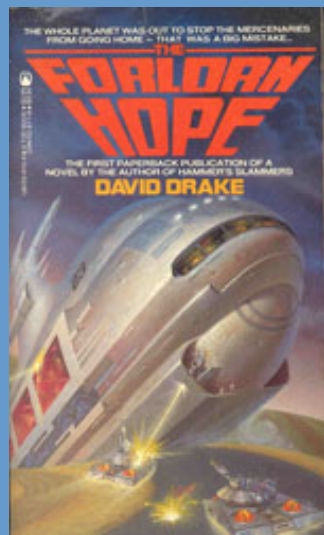
- A Land of Romance
- Arlight
- Awakening
- Best of Luck
- Black Iron
- Blood Debt
- Children of the Forest
- The Master of Demons
- Denkirch
- Firefight
- Lord of the Depths
- Men Like Us
- Smokie Joe
- Something Had to be Done
- Than Curse the Darkness
- The Automatic Rifleman
- The Barrow Troll
- The Dancer in the Flames
- The Elf House
- The False Prophet
- The Hunting Ground
- The Red Leer
- The Shortest Way
- The Song of the Bone

Cover art by Richard Pellegrino, based on Goya's *Fire at Night*, 1793-94

Now Available in Paperback



Reprints Available



After being out of print for ten years, *The Forlorn Hope* and *Bridgehead* are again available as Tor reprints.

[Hammer's Slammers War Game Handbook and Miniatures Page](#)

updated 3 February 2007

NEWSLETTER!

If you are interested in subscribing to David Drake's newsletter mailing list to get updates on what's new with him, send an e-mail message to webmaster@david-drake.com with the word subscribe in the subject line. This is a subscription list for Dave's occasional announcements only, not a general participation list. Replies to the mailings will go through the webmaster.

[Newsletter #40](#) sent out 29 July 2007

[Newsletter Archives](#)

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Dave's Recent Photos

Dave's Photo Archives

July 4, 2007 in our side yard



Fireworks photos by Gina Massel-Castater, and a picture of the casings for the clean-up crew (me.)



My wife and I visited Niagara Falls in June. Here I boldly go where Frederick Church (and many others) went before.



Grandpa Dave, Tristan and Jonathan, May 2007



On April 17, 2007 Toni Weisskopf hosted a Baenish dinner at the chef's table (which turned out to be a work table in the prep room; we were sitting on bar stools) of the Angus Barn in Raleigh. From left are Mark L Van Name (Baen consultant and author), Jo Drake, Dave, Jennie Faries (Baen graphic designer), Hank Reinhardt (Mr Toni Weisskopf) and Toni.

It was both fun and delicious. Most of us are teetotal so we didn't do justice to the wines, but the wine steward's descriptions of the choices for each course were neat anyway.

The menu included: Lump crab on cucumber rounds, Coconut shrimp on a bed of jalapeno cheese grits with a Thai pepper sauce, Duck confit and goat cheese raviolis in a roasted tomato sauce, Field greens with marinated mozzarella in a balsamic vinegarete, Mango sorbet palette cleanser, Six week aged beef tenderloin over saffron risotto and grilled asparagus, Pears poached in red wine and cinnamon with chocolate mousse and berries

Dave visits the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, March 2007



Dave on the dais on which race winners are interviewed.



Dave and the 1950 Cummins Diesel Racer, which has fascinated him since he was eight.



Dave is jailed by Doug Johnson and guarded by Ed the Klingon at Millennicon 21, March 2007.

Artist Steve Hickman and Dave with cover paintings



ConStellation, October 2006





Dave at home with Hickman paintings



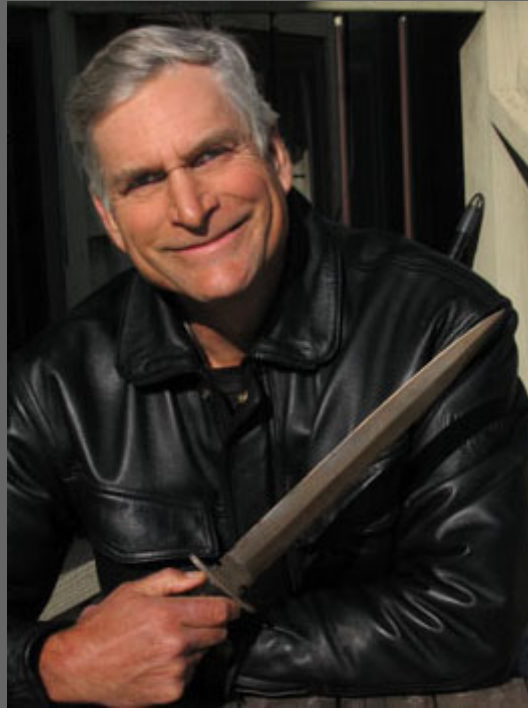
Toni, Dave and Comet with Jim Baen's gravestone



Dave and his friend Barry Malzberg, in Raleigh during Deep South Con.

Dave cautiously petting Valkyrie, a Harris Hawk who attended Conestoga with the Royal Gauntlet Birds of Prey group.

Self Portrait



A bookseller asked if I'd sign bookplates for her; sure, I said. (I always say that.) But this time instead of using a commercial product, she wanted to create personalized bookplates with Photoshop. She asked if I still had the pictures I took of my Damascus-steel dagger for Gary Ruddell when he painted the cover of *Dagger*. I didn't, but I had the dagger and a camera with a timer. It was cold and windy, so I put on my motorcycle jacket (normally I'd have been wearing a ratty nylon bomber jacket under a photographer's vest; but then, normally I wouldn't have been holding a long custom dagger).

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Which David Drake?

There are various David Drakes out there. At present I write fantasy and SF exclusively, although I did a number of horror short stories in the '70s.

Among the people who aren't me are the following:

- David Drake the gay activist, the author (among other works) of *The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me*.
- David Drake who lives in Chapel Hill and works behind the camera for WUNC-TV. (He gets a lot of my phone calls. Sorry, Mr Drake.)
- David Drake who wrote the romance novel *Strangers and Lovers*, published in 1986.
- Wisconsin troubadour David HB Drake (<http://www.davidhbdrake.com/main.htm>)
- There's a David Drake porn site on the web that hasn't anything to do with either me or, so far as I know, any of the other folks in this list.
- Asa Drake, a pen name used for heroic fantasy by a writing team including C. Dean Andersson. Mr. Andersson went on to write horror novels under his own name. I wouldn't mention this except that conventions have arranged stacks of my books for him to sign and have tried to put me on panels on themes of abuse in horror fiction. Go figure. Hmm.

Having said that I write only SF and fantasy, I should note that I was, however, the David Drake who worked as rewrite man on Newt Gingrich's 1984 manifesto *Window of Opportunity*. For more details,

see my [bibliography](#) section.

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EARLY INFLUENCES



Dave on his second birthday, with a glass of milk and his favorite food.

My parents read to me before I was able to read for myself. One of the books they read--and there were many--was *The Big Golden Book of Poetry*. The first edition was published in 1947 when I would've been two years old, and I suspect they got a copy hot off the presses.

In the collection was an anonymous poem titled *The Chickens*. It was toward the back of the volume and didn't have the color illustrations that more important poems got. There's no obvious reason why it should've appealed to me.

But it did. My folks swear that I insisted on hearing *The Chickens* every night. Furthermore I demanded that they read it to me, even though I had the poem memorized and could recite it by heart. They got very, very tired of *The Chickens*; but as dutiful parents they read it to me anyway.

In later years I would have forgotten about the poem except for hearing my folks tell the story. Out of curiosity, I looked it up again a few years ago. I was really shocked by what I learned. I didn't remember *The Chickens* at all; but the philosophy of it is the one I've lived my life by.

The Chickens, an anonymous poem

Said the first little chicken,
With a queer little squirm,

"I wish I could find
A fat little worm!"

Said the next little chicken,
With an odd little shrug,
"I wish I could find
A fat little bug!"

Said the third little chicken,
With a small sigh of grief:
"I wish I could find
A green little leaf!"

Said the fourth little chicken,
With a faint little moan:
"I wish I could find
A wee gravel stone!"

"Now see here!" said the mother,
From the green garden patch,
"If you want any breakfast,
Just come here and scratch!"

THE ANGRY PLANET by John Keir Cross



I was fascinated by SF from a very early age--I'm not sure why--but there wasn't very much real science fiction available for kids during the 1950s. I made do with books like *Miss Pickerell Goes to Mars* and dreamed of the day I'd turn 13 and could check out books from the adult section of the library. (In fact the librarians at the Clinton Public Library gave me--unasked, bless their hearts--an adult card when I turned 12, but that was still a long time coming.)

In 1955 when I was ten years old I found *The Angry Planet* in the children's section. I think it may at least have shaped--I won't quite say changed--my life.

Though I read an American edition, *The Angry Planet* had been published as part of a British series of children's books in 1945. The editor's choices were... odd; some of you will understand what I mean when I say that another of the series' authors was EH Visiak. John Keir Cross, who wrote *The Angry Planet*, was a Scottish author of some literary reputation; his collection, *The Other Passenger*, is highly regarded.

The Angry Planet is in form a typical children's SF novel of the period. A Scottish scientist builds a spaceship in his back yard. He and a writer-friend fly to Mars in it. Three children in their early teens, staying with the writer, stow away on the spaceship.

The atmosphere of Mars is breathable. The planet is inhabited by the Beautiful People--willowy, intelligent folk with a fringe of cilia which serve them as hands--who inhabit glassy cities, and their racial enemies, the Terrible Ones--massive, tentacled monsters; also intelligent but utterly evil.

The humans visit the Beautiful People's city; one of the children is captured by the Terrible Ones but escapes; and there's a climactic battle in which the humans aid the Beautiful People against the monstrous foes. The humans return to Earth.

As I said, perfectly standard children's fare--in form. The execution is another matter.

To begin with, Cross wrote a far too stylistically subtle book for it to appeal to children. The chapters are in the form of diary entries, school essays (literally, *How I Spent My Summer Vacation*), scientific papers and the like. The skill with which Cross did this is remarkable to me now, but the effect would have been dry and scattered to the target audience. It certainly wasn't the style that impressed my fifth-grade self, though it obviously didn't put me off.

The really strange aspect--for a children's book--is the theme. *The Angry Planet* is a clear story of the battle between Good and Evil. Evil wins.

The Terrible Ones attack the Beautiful People's city. The Beautiful People warriors defend themselves bravely but are overwhelmed. The humans watch as a Terrible One in an act of pointless cruelty breaks in half a young female of the Beautiful People whom they've befriended. The spear of the chief of the Beautiful People slashes the leader of the Terrible Ones, a damaging but not fatal blow. The Terrible One leaps high and comes down on the chief, smashing him flat. During the battle a volcano erupts; the lava must inevitably destroy anything the Terrible Ones leave.

The humans escape with the only survivor of the Beautiful People's community, a youth who's a friend of the children. He sickens and dies on the voyage back; when the corpse starts to decay, they have to put it out the airlock. It floats outside the spaceship's window all the way to Earth, where the children are forced to watch it burn up in the atmosphere.

So there you have it, the plot of the first real science fiction novel I read. It was only after I came back from Viet Nam that I realized how accurate a mirror *The Angry Planet* had held up to life.

--*Dave Drake*

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Dave's Iowa Connections

Piedmont North Carolina has been my permanent home since 1967, when I moved to Durham to enter Duke University Law School. But as I get older I appreciate with increasing clarity how much I was shaped by being born and raised in Iowa and how proud I am to be an Iowan. I made a couple trips back in 2003, so it seems a good time to comment on my relationship with the state.

DUBUQUE

My parents graduated from the U of Dubuque, and my mother's family all lived in Dubuque. Mom came home from Boca Raton where my folks were living during the war (Dad worked for the Navy) to have me. When the war ended before she could return, Dad came back also to find a civilian job.



The 4th Street Elevator: Now (and for many years) a tourist attraction, but originally built by a banker in 1883 to commute between his home on top of the bluff and his office in the floodplain.

Dubuque, on the Mississippi, is the oldest settlement in Iowa. Indeed, it's older than white settlement in the region: the bluffs overlooking the river are full of lead ore, which Amerinds were mining before voyageur Julian Dubuque settled among them.

For a few years in the 1880s, Dubuque was the wealthiest community in the US with more millionaires and more telephones per capita than anywhere else in the country. The boom (from sawmills) was brief, but it led to some lovely High Victorian buildings. Because the economy then crashed, many of those fine buildings weren't torn down for new construction for long enough that people had a chance to appreciate what they had. (Not entirely: the mansion Graystone was bulldozed to become a parking lot in 1945. Its partner Redstone remains as a bed and breakfast, I'm happy to say.)



Redstone: Industrialist AA Cooper's mansion from the 1880s, preserved as a bed and breakfast.

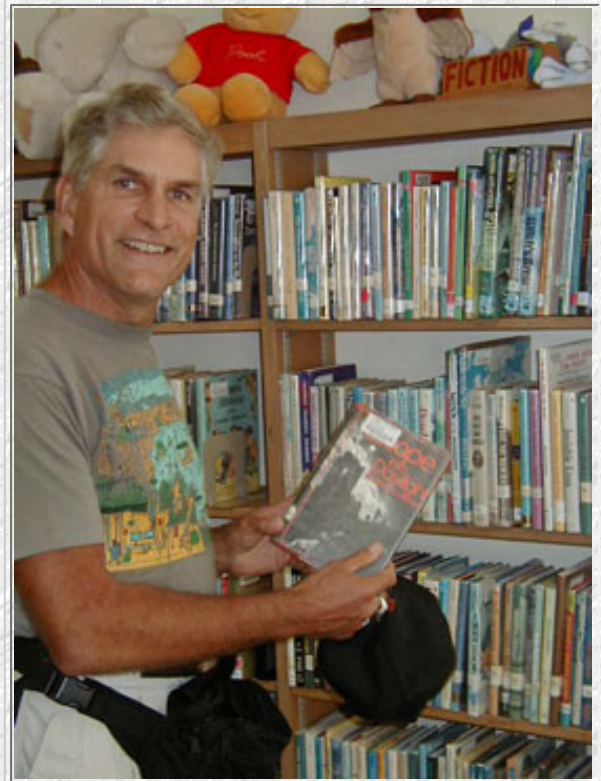
Perhaps the most important thing about Iowa is the importance its citizens give to education. When I was growing up, it had the highest literacy rate in the nation, and Dubuque County today has the highest SAT average in the US as well.

CLINTON



The Clinton Public Library, October 2003

In 1955, when I was ten, we moved 70 miles south along the river to Clinton. I was already a voracious reader, but in Clinton I was old enough to go to the public library on my own. At the time, patrons weren't allowed to check out books from the adult section till they were 13, but the library staff made an exception for me. When I went into the library on my 12th birthday, they presented me with an adult card.



*Me, finding a Geoffrey Household novel in the Childrens Section of the Clinton Public Library. (Household's first novel, *The Mystery of the Spanish Cave*, was a favorite of mine at 14)*

When I returned to the library on October 10, 2003, I found a considerable collection of my books with Clinton author neatly pencilled into the front of them. One of the ladies who'd been on the desk in 1960 was still there as a volunteer; she remembered me vividly. (She said I haven't changed. That's not true, but the comment was flattering.)

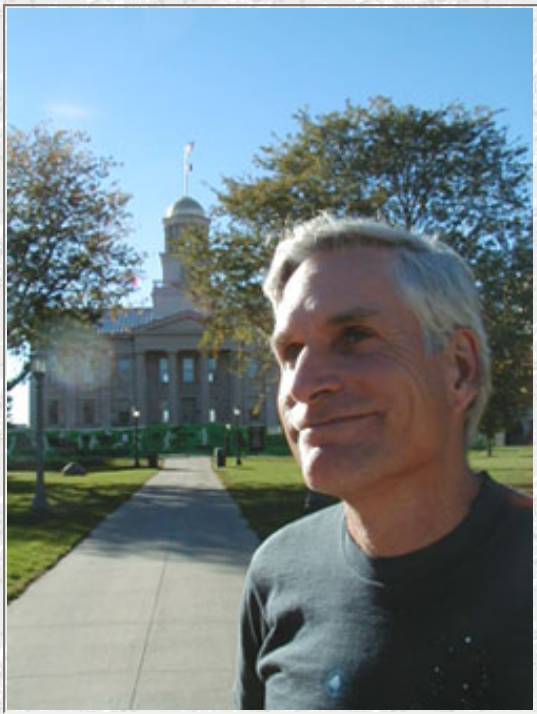


Clinton Public Library: Me and Marilyn in the (present; in my day it was downstairs) Children's Room. Marilyn was on the desk when I got my card to the adult section



I chatted with Dan Horwath, Director, Kim Limond, Reference Librarian, and Marta Fowler, Desk Assistant while signing books for the library

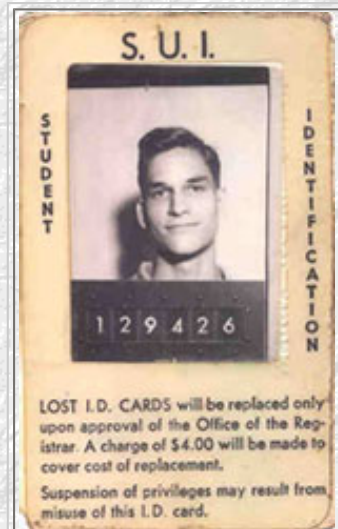
THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA



Like many other bright Iowans, I never took the SAT. The U of Iowa accepts scores from the American College Test (based in Iowa City, like the U of I itself) for enrollment--and you could go a long way without finding a better university than Iowa. (Incidentally, 'educators' in states like North Carolina claim Iowa's low rate of taking the SAT means that the state's ranking is artificially raised. The evidence is that the 5% of Iowans who do take the SAT are in fact a fully representative sample; but if you're an education bureaucrat from NC, you grasp at straws.)

I had wonderful teachers at Iowa. They taught me not only how to learn but to love learning. Moreover, I worked in the Main Library as a book page, an education in itself. In the course of reshelving everything that came through the library, I learned of the existence of all sorts of subjects that I'd never have run into in my normal classwork. I pursued some of them, on my own and in classes, and broadened my range of knowledge and interests enormously.

It was at the university that I met my wife, Jo. Though she's from Dubuque, we didn't meet till our freshman year. (I attended her 40th high school reunion in August and knew over 10% of the attendees from my grade school days.



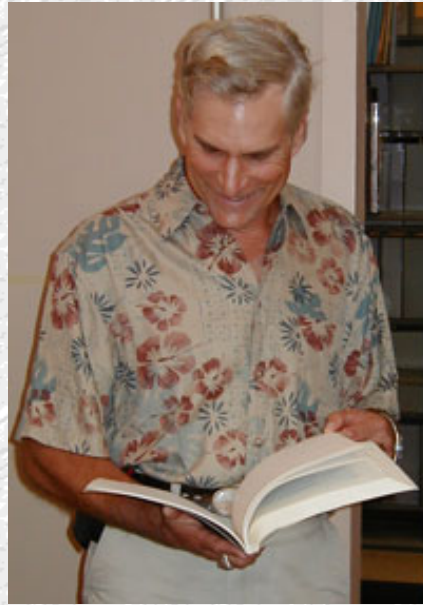
I was a history major, but because I wound up taking some thirty hours of Latin also (mostly for fun) I got a double major. My interest in both subjects has continued to my great benefit as a writer and as a citizen.

Thanks to the suggestion of my webmaster, a librarian at Iowa, there's now a considerable quantity of my books and papers in the Iowa Authors Collection. (The guide to the manuscript collection is available online: [MsC592](#) and the books are listed in the University of Iowa Libraries [online catalog](#).) I visited it in October, 2003, and found to my delight that they'd added a copy of my Honors Thesis (*New*

York Times Reporting of Atrocities on the Western Front, 1914-18). There were also copies of two of my books in the library's [book drop vending machine](#). It's amazing and wonderful to be part of a university and a library which were so important to my becoming who I am.



David Schoonover, Curator of Rare Books, shows me the shelves of my books in the Iowa Authors Collection.



*Me, looking at my history honor's thesis for the first time in many years. (*New York Times Reporting of Atrocities on the Western Front, 1914-18*)*

There's one other aspect of the state and the university which I want to mention. When I was an undergraduate there was a tree in front of the Old Capitol (it was an elm and died soon after from Dutch Elm Disease) with a bronze plaque noting that it had been planted by the woman who was the sole graduate of the Class of 1864. Southerners tend to claim the Civil War for their own, but Iowans under Sherman were still standing on the Shiloh battlefield after the southern forces retreated.

Iowans are raised to take their citizenship seriously. When my draft notice arrived, I went--because that's what a citizen does, however much he may loathe the cause for which he's being drafted to fight.

The Iowa Alumni Magazine published a little article about me in their [June 2004](#) issue.

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Nam

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition.
And gentlemen in England now abed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

—Shakespeare



The picture above was taken in July of 1970 when I was in the field with the 1st Squadron of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. I was at a firebase somewhere in Military Region III. The place didn't have a local name that I ever heard; it was just a chunk of jungle bulldozed open to hold maybe fifty armored vehicles including six 155-mm self-propelled howitzers. I was an enlisted interrogator, part of the six-man Military Intelligence team accompanying the squadron.

The greatest single influence on my life was the Vietnam War. I wish that weren't true, but it is.

In a normal world I'd have graduated from law school and gone on to be an attorney who'd sold a couple stories when he was in his twenties. Instead I was drafted out of law school in the middle of my second year; sent to basic training (Ft Bragg, NC), Vietnamese language school (Ft Bliss, TX), interrogation training (Ft Meade, MD); and Southeast Asia, just in time for the 1970 invasion of Cambodia which the 11th Cav spearheaded. There was a time that I'd actually spent twice as long in Cambodia as I had Viet Nam.

I then came back to the World, finished law school, and (though I had a job as Assistant Town Attorney for Chapel Hill) wrote a great deal more fiction than would otherwise have been the case.

Frequently I write about soldiers or veterans: military sf. Because of that I'm accused of writing militaristic sf by those who either don't know the difference between description and advocacy or who deny there is a difference. I wrote the following essay as an afterword to a collection of military sf stories, attempting to explain exactly where I'm coming from. I'm reprinting it here for the same reason.

Afterword to *The Tank Lords*

I wouldn't have—and couldn't have—written these stories without being a Nam vet. Because of that and because I'm sometimes accused of believing things that I certainly don't believe, I've decided to state clearly what I think about Viet-Nam and about war in general. I don't insist that I'm right, but this is where I stand. The speech Shakespeare creates for Henry V to -deliver on the morning of Agincourt (the Speech on St. Crispin's Day) is one of his most moving and effective. The -degree to which the sentiments therein are true in any absolute sense, though—that's another matter.

My own suspicion is that most soldiers (and maybe the real Henry among them, a soldier to the core) would have agreed with the opinion put in the mouth of the Earl of Warwick earlier in the scene. Warwick, noting the odds were six to one against them, wishes that a few of the men having a holiday in England were here with the army in France. One of the leader's jobs is to encourage his troops, though. If Henry'd had a good enough speechwriter, he might have said exactly what Shakespeare claims he did.

A soldier in a combat unit may see the world, but he or she isn't likely to “meet exotic people” in the sense implied by the recruiting posters. (Mind you, one's fellow soldiers may turn out to be exotic people, and one may turn into a regrettably exotic person oneself.) I travelled through a fair chunk of Viet-Nam and a corner of Cambodia. My only contact with the locals as people came on a couple MedCAPs in which a platoon with the company medics and the Civil Affairs Officer entered a village to provide minor medical help and gather intelligence.

My other contacts involved riding an armored vehicle past silent locals; searching a village whose inhabitants had fled (for good reason; the village was a staging post for the North Vietnamese just over the Cambodian border, and we burned it that afternoon); the Coke girls, hooch maids and boom-boom girls who were really a part of the U.S. involvement, not of Viet-Nam itself.

And of course there's also the chance that some unseen Vietnamese or Cambodian was downrange when I was shooting out into the darkness. That doesn't count as meeting people either.

I was in an armored unit: the 11th Armored Cavalry, the Blackhorse Regiment. Infantrymen probably saw more of the real local people, but not a lot more. The tens of thousands of U.S. personnel working out of air-conditioned buildings in Saigon, Long Binh, and



11th Cavalry Rear Base at Di An, 1970

other centers saw merely a large-scale version of the Coke girls, hooch maids and boom-boom girls whom combat units met. The relative handful of advisors and Special Forces were the only American citizens actually living among the Vietnamese as opposed to being geographically within Viet-Nam.

I very much doubt that things were significantly different for soldiers fighting foreign wars at any other period of history. Sensible civilians need strong economic motives to get close to groups of heavily-armed foreigners, and the needs of troops in a war zone tend to be more basic than a desire to imbibe foreign culture.

Soldiers aren't any more apt to like all their fellows than members of any other interest group are. In school you were friends with some of your classmates, had no particular feelings about most of the rest, and strongly disliked one or two. The same is true of units, even quite small units, in a war zone. The stress of possible external attack makes it harder, not easier, to get along with the people with whom you're isolated.

And isolated is the key word. We changed base frequently in the field. One day we shifted an unusually long distance, over fifty miles. The tank I was riding on was part of a group that got separated from the remainder of the squadron. We had three tanks, four armored personnel carriers modified into fighting vehicles (ACAVs), an APC with added headroom and radios (a command track), and a light recovery vehicle that we called a cherrypicker though it had just a crane, not a bucket. We ran out of daylight.

By this point three ACAVs and the command track had broken down and were being towed. The remaining ACAV and one of the tanks were going to blow their engines at any moment. All the vehicles were badly overloaded with additional weapons and armor, and the need to pack all the squadron's gear for the move had exacerbated an already bad situation.

We shut down, trying by radio to raise the new base camp which *had* to be somewhere nearby. The night was pitch dark, a darkness that you can't imagine unless you've seen rural areas in a poor part of the Third World. We were hot, tired, and dizzy from twelve hours' hammering by tracked vehicles with half of the torsion bars in their suspensions broken.

And we were very much alone. So far as I could tell, nobody in the group would have described himself as happy, but we were certainly a few. Personally, I felt like a chunk of raw meat in shark waters.

The squadron commander's helicopter lifted from the new base, located our flares, and guided us in. No enemy contact, no harm done. But I'll never forget the way I felt that night, and the incident can stand as

an unusually striking example of what the whole tour felt like: I was alone and an alien in an environment that might at any instant explode in violence against me.

Don't mistake what I'm saying: the environment and particularly the people of Viet-Nam and Cambodia were in much greater danger from our violence than we were from theirs. I saw plenty of examples of that, and I was a part of some of them. I'm just telling you what it felt like at the time.

So Shakespeare was right about "few" and wrong about "happy." The jury (in my head) is still out about folks who missed the war counting their manhoods cheap.

I'd like to think people had better sense than that. The one thing that ought to be obvious to a civilian is that war zones are an experience to avoid. Nonetheless, I know a couple men who've moaned that they missed "Nam," the great test of manhood of our generation. They're idiots if they believe that, and twits if they were just mouthing words that had become the in thing for their social circles.

I haven't tested my manhood by having my leg ampu-tated without anesthetic; I don't feel less of a man for lack of the experience. And believe me, I don't feel more of a man for anything I saw or did in Southeast Asia.

The people I served with in 1970 (the enlisted men) were almost entirely draftees. At that time nobody I knew in-country:

- thought the war could be won;
- thought our government was even trying to win;
- thought the brutal, corrupt Saigon government was worth saving;
- thought our presence was doing the least bit of good to anybody, particularly ourselves.

But you know, I'm still proud of my unit and the men I served with. They weren't exactly my brothers, but they were the folks who were alone with me. Given the remarkably high percentage of those eligible who've joined the association of war-service Blackhorse veterans, my feelings are normal for the 11th Cav.

Nobody who missed the Viet-Nam War should regret the fact. It was a waste of blood and time and treasure. It did no good of which I'm aware, and did a great deal of evil of which I'm far too aware. But having said that . . .

I rode with the Blackhorse.



All US Cavalry regiments use this patch with variations in color. This is the version of my unit--the 11th Armored Cavalry, the Blackhorse.

In the field by 1970 all patches were 'subdued'; that is, black on olive drab. I picked up this dress patch while I was in country but I never wore it.

You can tell the original version (embroidered in Viet-Nam) quite easily from those made more recently. This horse is very evidently a stallion, while current patches have a more neutral--more politically correct, some might say--animal.

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My Motorcycles



I got my first motorcycle, a very battered Honda CL-175, in 1973 when we moved from town to a house in the country. I'd never much liked driving a car and a friend (whose youth was much more reckless and misspent than mine; to be fair, his youth was more reckless and misspent than that of most people who survive to age 30) suggested I get a motorcycle.

I was amazed to learn that I really like riding a bike. I haven't driven a car since 1988, because in North Carolina it's practical to ride almost every day if you don't mind being rained on. If it's more than me alone going somewhere, then generally the other party or parties drive. One of the major virtues of a bike for me is that if I screw up, I'm unlikely to hurt anybody but myself.

In 1974 I got the 1973 BMW R60/5 I'm standing with in the picture. I don't want to anthropomorphize something that was obviously Just A Machine, but we taught each other a great deal. I ran her three days a week (when she was out of the shop), going into Chapel Hill to check my post office box. [Listen to Dave kickstart his Beemer](#) (125 K wav file). She's been out of service with an intractable electrical problem for years, but I just haven't had the courage to dispose of her.

Ever since the earliest days of the CL-175, I've always had two bikes. (Motorcycles spend just as much time in the shop as sports cars do: even a basic bike is a high performance machine.) Save for the Beemer, they've all been rice-burners.

My current back-up bike is a Suzuki GS500E. It's small and light but remarkably capable. I'd thought of

it as the equivalent of my original CL-175, but to my utter amazement, it'll hold a comfortable 80 on suitable roads. Here I'm coasting down the driveway after picking up the mail in town.



For some time I had a Kawasaki Concours. I don't any more because when a Kawasaki dealer screwed up the maintenance, Kawasaki told me they don't stand behind their dealers. When I paid another Kawasaki dealer to fix the problem with OEM parts, the cams had a bad heat treat and began flaking. Kawasaki wouldn't fix that either. I decided I wanted a bike that worked, and Kawasakis do not work.

If any of you have seen Patti Perret's photo of me in *The Faces of Science Fiction*, that's my first superbike: a Suzuki GS1100E. The chain drive was a hassle and the wrong cross-wind at 80 mph could set up a speed wobble that darned near gave me heart failure the first time it happened; I quite sensibly traded it in on a better bike a few years later.

But you know, I missed that 1100. Sometimes you get something that just works for you, even if you couldn't in a million years explain why that should be so. Suzuki hasn't made the GS1100E since 1983--

But what they do make is the Bandit 1200, which has all the virtues of the GS1100E, without the speed wobble. I don't think it's quite as pretty as the GS1100E, but it's nice and as well as speed it's got the acceleration and handling which a sport tourer does not. I find it's not a big deal to lube the chain ever 200 miles or so.



You do sometimes get second chances, with bikes and in life more generally. And sometimes it really is better the second time around.



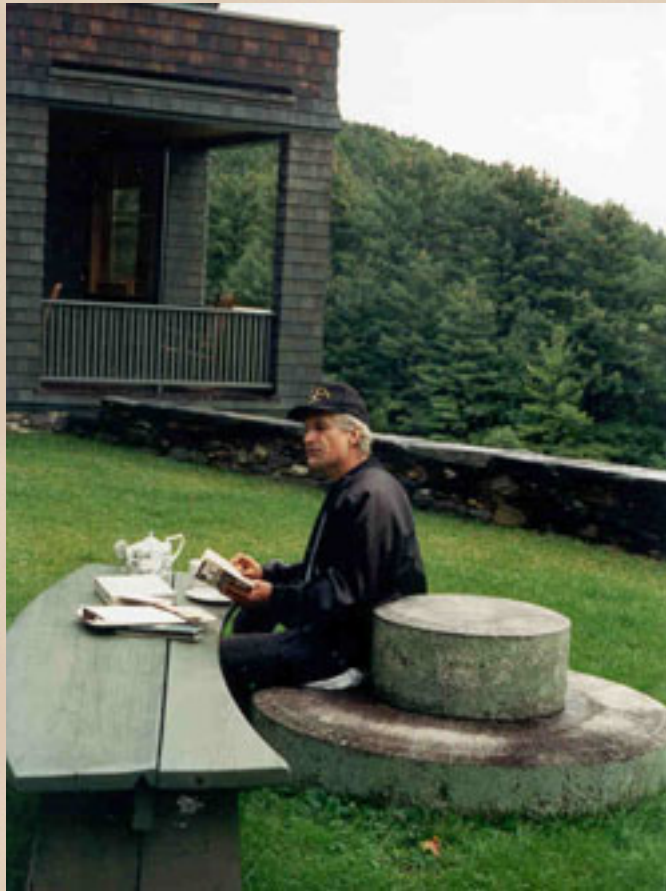
This ring is an image of Narasimha. To ISKCON devotees, he's an avatar of Krishna; in orthodox Hinduism the connection is with Vishnu. He is a protection when going into danger, which the Hare Krishna friend who brought me the ring back from India considers riding a motorcycle to be. (I'm a very careful rider; but sure, there are risks.)

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Rudyard Kipling



Kipling had a major influence on my writing and a lesser one on my life. The photo above is me in the garden of his house in Brattleboro in September, 1996. The one at the bottom of the essay is a more general shot of the house and grounds, looking down toward the Connecticut River. (The child is Sarah Van Name, the daughter of my friends Mark and Rana.)

My folks had copies of *The Jungle Book* and *The Second Jungle Book* which I read them when I was quite young. The first volume contains the Mowgli stories, which are fairly straightforward. I won't say that I understood them at age ten or so, but I thought I understood them.

The second volume has *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*--mongoose kills cobras in aid of human beings, also straightforward; and others like *The White Seal*, stories of a form that I'd seen before in Thornton W. Burgess and elsewhere. And then there were the two that I didn't begin to understand: *The Undertakers*, told by a group of carrion eaters; and *Her Majesty's Servants*, a similar self-description but by the baggage animals of the army in India.

These last two stories are quite wonderful in the way they evoke the intertwining lives of beasts and men, but they were completely beyond me. The funny thing is, though, that I read them several times. I didn't know what I was missing, but I *did* know there was something in the pieces.

Then I stopped reading Kipling for five years or so. The Jungle Books were the only volumes in our house, and it would never have occurred to me to go to the library to find more.

When I was fifteen I read Poul Anderson's fine novel *The Enemy Stars*. Its magazine title was *We Have Fed Our Sea* from the Kipling poem of the same name, and it used snatches of the poem as epigraphs. That started me looking for the first time at Kipling's verse, and I quickly became addicted to it. (Incidentally, *Ripple Song* is the end piece to *The Undertakers*; but if I didn't understand the story you can bet I didn't have a clue about that wonderful, horrifying poem.)

After I'd read all Kipling's verse, I started reading the rest of the short stories as well. By this point in my life I was trying to write fiction and could appreciate not only the stories but the craftsmanship of the writer. This didn't make me want to write even more: it depressed the dickens out of me because I knew I'd never be that good myself.

On the other hand, neither will anybody else. There are other fine English short story writers; H.G. Wells and Somerset Maugham are two of my favorites. At their best, they're not as good as Kipling at his best; and Kipling was usually at his best, albeit he wrote stories of widely different styles.

For the first forty years of its existence, modern SF was a short story genre. As a result, it's only to be expected that a short story writer as good as Kipling would be very influential in the field. My friend Sandra Miesel and I edited two anthologies of Kipling-inspired SF stories, but the effect he had on the field is far broader than that--and irrespective of the fact Kipling himself wrote quite a bit of SF.

I've learned a great deal from Kipling. About craftsmanship of course, but about people as well. He understood things he hadn't personally experienced. In some cases they're things that I have now experienced and he got it right, I swear he did. Any soldier who's been sent overseas during wartime can find his soul laid bare in *The 'Birds of Prey' March*, and that one example can stand for hundreds.

I've got favorites of Kipling's stories. *The Devil and the Deep Sea* shows how much men can accomplish when they devote themselves to a cause. The fact that these are bad men and their cause is scarcely good is beside the point--but at another level, that is the point.

The Janeites, summarized, is a comedy: a simple man is brought to love Jane Austen's work and survives World War One as a result. Only, of course, he doesn't survive, not really; and that's something you might hear from other veterans, if you know them very well. The art which created a piece so affecting on all levels makes me shiver every time I read it.

So those are two I particularly like. If you're a writer or want to be, you can learn from any story Kipling wrote; and if you care about human beings, there are things to learn on that score as well. He understood more than he can possibly have *known*.

For three years, 1893-6, Kipling lived in his wife's home town of Brattleboro, Vermont. He built a house there to his specifications as a writer. I rented the house for the week of my 51st birthday and stayed there with family and friends. It's a wonderful place to work--and I did--and also a wonderful place to reread Kipling.

But any place will do to read Kipling.



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Greece and Rome



The photograph is a ruined caravansary from southern Turkey, some days' journey east of Adana. The building was constructed during the Seljuk period--old, probably from the 1st millennium AD, but post-classical. It's a stopping place for caravans, where merchants could lock up themselves and their goods for the night in rooms around the periphery while their animals were corraled in the open courtyard in the center. A building that served the same purpose and looked much the same has probably stood here throughout recorded history: donkeys moved at the same speed in the 3d millennium BC as they did in the 19th century, so the resting places would have been the same distance apart.

I used this particular caravansary for the climax of *Birds of Prey*, one of my personal favorites of my novels, though the book is set in 262 AD. As I said above, there'd have been something similar at the location then.

I've made a lot of fictional use of classical places and times, but that's not the main value the classics have provided me. They've been my life's anchor at times I badly needed one.

I'd taken two years of Latin in high school. When I went off to a large university and found everything scary and different, I took more Latin not for any practical reason but just to remind myself of a time when my life was simpler. (Well, come to think that was a pretty practical reason.) The first year and a half of Duke Law School was tough, but I found I could take classics courses along with those in law school. They didn't count toward law school graduation, of course, but I didn't care about that.

Then I got drafted and sent to Southeast Asia. I read Horace in basic training and Vergil in Cambodia. Oxford Classical Texts and a compact dictionary didn't take up much room even in my dufflebag in the

field. (I'd have had more of a problem if I'd been with infantry instead of an armored unit, but I'd still have needed Latin.)

I took more Latin after I got back to the World and finished law school. I remember the paper I did in Medieval Latin on weapon terminology in *The Walterius* more vividly than I do any of the courses I was taking in law school at the same time; after the fact, that strikes even me as odd.

I was a long way from sane back then; but I was functional, which is at least as much due to the Latin authors I was reading as to any other single factor. It's a regular pleasure to me to read a few hundred lines of Ovid or Juvenal or Tacitus--and others as the whim strikes me. Not only do they bring back pleasant memories, they are in their different ways some of the best writers in human history. (OK, Silius Italicus isn't one of the best writers ever; and the various authors of the *Priapea* mostly weren't great either, though that's a fun little volume.)

My Greek was never very good. It's sufficient to make sense of footnotes or to illuminate an English translation in a bilingual edition, but apart from some Xenophon and chunks of *The Iliad* I don't claim to have read Greek. Greek history interests me as much as Roman, however, and some of the best historians of Rome wrote in Greek. I continue to read them also--for fun, but I regularly jot notes from them to use in my fiction. I find it a lot easier to copy reality than I do inventing it.

I said that the classics were more important to me than merely to use as sources and that's true, but they do regularly provide me with bits to work into my fiction. Some of my pieces have classical settings (like *Ranks of Bronze* and many others), and I've written my share of actual fantasies where people are swinging swords and don't have electricity. (*Lord of the Isles* and its sequels fall into this category.)

But it's beyond that. I assume that people are going to be much the same in the future as they are now and were in the past, so human politics are going to be similar also. *Lt Leary, Commanding*, the space opera I turned in to Baen Books in January, 2000, had its genesis in a fragmentary story told by the 2nd century AD historian Appian. That's one example of many where a squib in a classical writer has given me a bit of business.

Twice I've reworked the plot of a classical masterpiece into SF. *Cross the Stars* uses *The Odyssey* for its armature, and *The Voyage* is a very direct retelling of Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*. There are many other cases where my copying isn't quite so close. *The Forlorn Hope* had Xenophon's *Anabasis* as its germ, but the action diverges quickly from that of the historical original; and *The Warrior* isn't *The Iliad* but rather Horace's description in the *Ars Poetica* of the character of Achilles. And so on. The classics permeate my life; it's inevitable that they should permeate my work as well.



The setting of this ring is a denarius of Hadrian from 122 OR 123 AD. (The dating is determined by the number of times the emperor received certain honors.) It reverses, so I could wear it showing Hadrian's head if I wanted to; but I decided many years ago that I'd rather stay with the winged victory that you see here.

Some of my translations of Ovid

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OVID



Because Ovid's verse is relatively easy to translate (compared to Horace, say, let alone Catullus), there's a tendency to undervalue his ability as a poet. (This isn't a situation limited to Roman literature, of course; some critics seem to equate opacity with literary merit.)

I find Ovid a remarkably skillful craftsman. He and Tacitus are the two Latin authors who've taught me the most about composition and storytelling (and by the way, they have absolutely nothing in common but their ability). This past year I've been translating a fair amount of Ovid's work, and for the first time I've done *written* translations. I've learned that if I don't write it down, there are going to be gaps that I never really figure out. (That's particularly true of mythological allusions and specialist sections like the description of weaving in the story of Arachne.)

For no particular reason, I've decided to run the translations here on my website for anybody who wants to see them. I started with the third volume of the *Amores*, picking up where my bookmark happened to be from the last time I dipped into that particular Oxford Classical Text. I've done a couple chunks from the *Metamorphoses*, unquestionably Ovid's masterwork, but mostly I prefer to concentrate on lyrics of 20-40 lines apiece. The more noteworthy portions of the *Metamorphoses* involve blocks of several hundred lines apiece.

Strange things happen when you do something like this. I started translating the verse discussing the funeral of Propertius while sitting in a motel room, preparing to go to my Dad's funeral. It's been a stressful year.

If anybody out there would like me to translate some particular chunk of Latin literature, send me a note through the FAQ form. I make no promises, but I've got a very extensive collection of Latin texts and I'm willing to consider other people's whim while I indulge my own.

And with that thought, maybe in a few days I'll throw in one of the Corpus Priapeorum which is attributed to Ovid. He was a very urbane, very witty, man.

	<u>Amores</u>	
	<u>II:1</u>	
	<u>Amores</u>	
	<u>II:2</u>	
	<u>Amores</u>	
	<u>II:3</u>	<u>Metamorphoses I:1-75: In the Beginning</u>
	<u>Amores</u>	
	<u>II:4</u>	<u>Metamorphoses I:76-150: The Four Ages of Man</u>
<u>Amores</u>	<u>Amores</u>	
<u>I:1-3</u>	<u>II:5</u>	<u>Metamorphoses I:244-312; Deucalion's Flood</u>
<u>Amores</u>	<u>Amores</u>	
<u>I:4-5</u>	<u>II:6</u>	<u>Metamorphoses I:748-II:366: Phaethon</u>
<u>Amores I:6</u>	<u>Amores</u>	
<u>Amores I:7</u>	<u>II:7</u>	<u>Metamorphoses III:577-691: Bacchus</u>
<u>Amores I:8</u>	<u>Amores</u>	
<u>Amores I:9</u>	<u>II:8</u>	<u>Metamorphoses III:339-510: Echo and Narcissus</u>
<u>Amores</u>		
<u>I:10</u>	<u>Amores</u>	
<u>Amores</u>	<u>III:8</u>	<u>Metamorphoses IV:604-803: Perseus</u>
<u>I:11</u>	<u>Amores</u>	
<u>Amores</u>	<u>III:9</u>	<u>Metamorphoses VI:5-145:Arachne</u>
<u>I:12</u>	<u>Amores</u>	
<u>Amores</u>	<u>III:10</u>	<u>Metamorphoses VI:146-312:Niobe</u>
<u>I:13</u>	<u>Amores</u>	
<u>Amores</u>	<u>III:11b</u>	<u>Metamorphoses VIII:152-235: Daedalus</u>
<u>I:14</u>	<u>Amores</u>	
<u>Amores</u>	<u>III:12</u>	<u>Metamorphoses IX:324-393:Dryope</u>
<u>I:15</u>	<u>Amores</u>	
	<u>III:13</u>	
	<u>Amores</u>	
	<u>III:14</u>	
	<u>Amores</u>	
	<u>III:15</u>	



Dave as Ovid declaiming his translation of Amores I:6 at Jennie Faries' birthday party, June 2003

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MANLY WADE WELLMAN

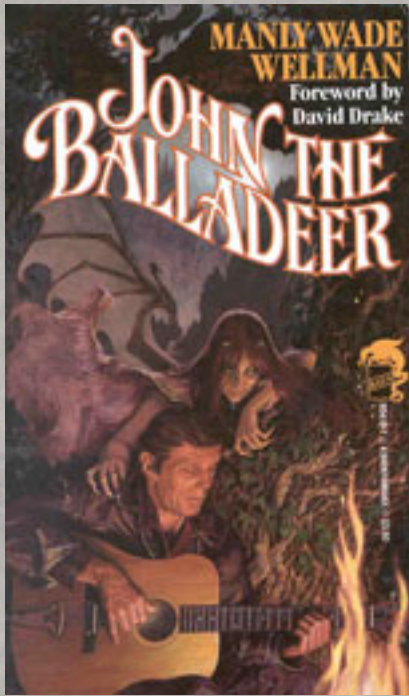


Me, Manly Wade Wellman and Dave Shelton, 1971

On March 17, 1970, I met Manly for the first time, in his writing office above a drugstore in the center of Chapel Hill. According to my journal for the day:

Talked to Mr. Wellman ("My parents wrote my great-uncle Manly to say they were naming me after him. He wrote back 'Forget about me; name him Wade Hampton!' So I got the full load."): heavy, iron-grey with a brush mustache, wearing a sport coat, dark blue shirt & tie.

We talked about the John stories, about Charles Fort (Manly said that Orlin Tremaine, the first editor of *Astounding* after Street and Smith Publishing took over the magazine, bought the rights to Fort's third



book, *Lo!*, to serve as plot germs which he would farm around to his stable of trained seals--including Manly. Tremaine wound up publishing the whole volume as a serial in the magazine, however); about North Carolina folklore; about Lord Dunsany (whom Manly had met) and about Oscar Wilde.

In range and choice of subjects that conversation was pretty typical of the hundreds of others I had with Manly in later years. He also mentioned the young friend who'd sold a novel ('That Robert E Howard stuff') and dropped out of medical school to write full time. The young friend was Karl Edward Wagner, and Karl too became a major part of my life after I got back to the World.

I was under orders to go to Vietnam in two weeks. I had read and loved Manly's work since 1958, but although I knew he lived in Chapel Hill I hadn't looked him up when we moved down to the area in 1967 when I started law school. I was embarrassed and didn't want to seem pushy to such a great figure. I phoned to set up a meeting in the awareness that there was a very good chance I was going to die in the next year and that I'd feel like an idiot in my last moments if I hadn't taken the chance to meet Mr Wellman when I could have done so.

When I got back, Jo and I socialized with Manly and his wife Frances, and with Karl Wagner both before and during his marriage. We'd all get together several times a month. I wouldn't say Manly and I were close friends, but I heard a lot of stories about his marvelously varied life: birth and boyhood in Portuguese West Africa, now Angola; tramping through Arkansas with Vance Randolph, the pioneer folklorist; interviewing celebrities whose trains passed through Wichita when Manly was a reporter in the early '30s; meeting in Steuben's Delicatessan with other professional writers in the '40s; befriending a Navy veteran, Mac McKenna and travelling with him to the Milford writers' conferences in the '50s before Mac wrote *The Sand Pebbles*.

Manly was a lot smarter than I in my arrogance (my *stupid* arrogance) gave him credit for. As one example that can stand for many (this, by the way, is a peril of a memory as good as mine is: I remember many things that embarrass me with the eyes of hindsight), Manly was adamant that cocaine was an addictive and destructive drug, based on his experience as a police reporter in Wichita. Karl was sneeringly certain of the medical opinion that cocaine was non-addictive.

I bought into the 'scientific truth'. Now, after watching a very close friend as well as a number of acquaintances in the writing community (including Stephen King) lose years and nearly their lives to cocaine, I can only nod to Manly's memory. Now I know there's psychological addiction as well as physiological addiction. Manly was right; I was wrong. And that was generally true when we differed on matters of opinion.

In 1985 Manly fell and broke his elbow. The wonderful UNC orthopedics department fixed that injury, but because Manly stubbornly refused to move for several days while convalescing he got bed sores on his heels. Over the next ten months those bed sores killed him by inches. He lost his heels; then his legs; and finally he died.

Because I had reliable transportation and a flexible schedule, I was the only one of Manly's many friends who was able to visit Manly more days than not. He used me, consciously I believe, as a dump for his memories about old girlfriends, books he'd known and loved, and all the other fragments of his long life that were most vivid to him in what he knew were his last months.

I wouldn't wish anyone go through the pain that Manly did during that time, but if he'd died quickly and peacefully I wouldn't really have known him despite the previous fifteen years and the enormous influence his writing had on me. If it had to happen, I'm glad I was there; and Manly was glad to have me.



So long as I live, so does a little bit of Manly Wade Hampton Wellman.

--*Dave Drake*

THE REAL FRONT PAGE: One of the stories Manly told to friends.

After he returned from Columbia in the late '20s, Manly worked as a crime reporter for the pro-Democrat newspapers in Wichita. The wife of a small-time grifter whom Manly knew (I vaguely think he may have been called Rabbit) took up with the local drug lord. Wichita was on the route that brought cocaine up from Mexico. One day the drug lord was shot to death in bed by a rival gang; they killed the grifter's wife also.

On May 7, 2000, my friend Frances Obrist Wellman died peacefully at home; she was 92. On the 14th we scattered her ashes in the sideyard of her home of fifty years where they joined the remains of her late husband Manly. Frances said she still saw Manly around the house with her, so I don't think much has changed.

Freelance writers are difficult people to live with. Frances was as good a wife for Manly as I can

imagine existing. They were married 55 years at the time of his death, including the difficult last ten months while she nursed him.

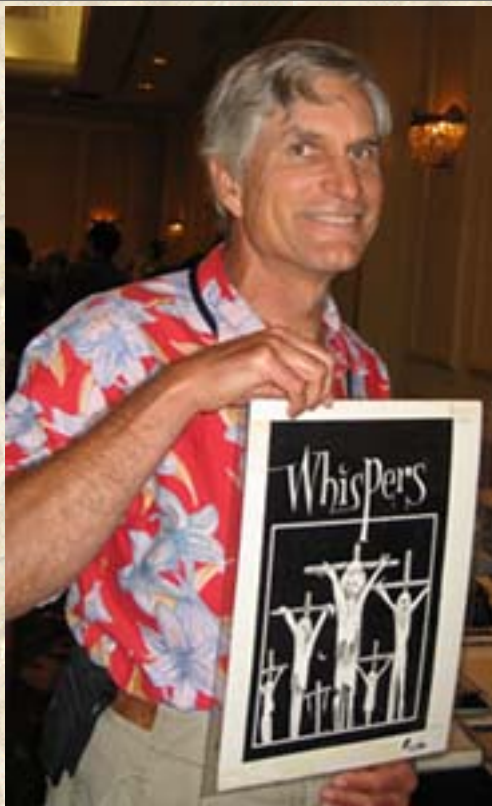
Frances always did her best. As I get older I realize how rare, and how great, a virtue that is. I miss her.

--*Dave Drake*

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Dave with the Lee Brown Coye original from issue three of Whispers (the Easter issue). This issue contained Dave's The Shortest Way (the cover story) and the famous Sticks by Karl Edward Wagner.

Whispers Magazine

In 1971 August Derleth died. He'd been publishing *The Arkham Collector*, a little magazine associated with his fantasy small press Arkham House. (My only published poem appeared in it.) Stu Schiff, a long-time collector and at that point a dentist with the army, decided to fill the gap with what he first planned to call *Whispers from Arkham*; the Arkham House heirs didn't like that, so it became simply *Whispers*.

Stu said at the time that a major impetus was the huge, glossy-paper one-shot fanzine *HPL* that came out in 1971. He'd selected the art and believed he was supposed to have credit as art editor, but that didn't happen. He was determined to start his own magazine so that he would get the credit he deserved.

Stu was stationed at Ft Bragg and came to a little convention in Durham, NC, where he met me, Karl Wagner, and Manly Wade Wellman. Stu solicited free material from us. I gave him a story but told him that if he didn't pay something, he wasn't going to get publishable material. As a result of that discussion, he started paying a penny a word--unlike the fanzines which just provided egoboo.

When Stu came to the next local con, he asked me to be his associate editor, reading submissions to the magazine. This may in part have been because of the comments Karl and I both had made about some of his own prose choices. I agreed, but said 'assistant' editor was more appropriate. He sent me manuscripts which I commented on and returned.

Shortly after this started, Stu realized that the army would transfer him in the foreseeable future (he went to Ft Dix by choice to be closer to his wife's family). Without telling me what he intended, he switched the magazine's address to my Chapel Hill PO box. For some years, ten or so, I got a lot of mail--usually fifty or more manilla envelopes a week.

Consider that: the magazine paid a penny a word. It came out twice a year, with luck. It published about three stories per issue.

Fifty envelopes a week, and some of them containing several submissions.

My technique became brusque and simple. I xeroxed hundreds of form rejections at a time. I ripped the envelopes open only when I was ready to read them (so there was no point in including a postcard to say I'd received the envelope) and read them in large blocks. Usually I read the first couple pages, then

skimmed to the end, and stuffed them in the return envelope (when there was one.) I never got dreadfully far behind, because my attitude is that an unpleasant job is going to take just as long whenever you do it; you may as well get through it immediately.

Most of the submissions were crap. Two in twenty, maybe, I lingered over. Maybe half that I sent on to Stuart for his final decision. I was no respecter of persons--and I should have been more respectful, but I was full of the wrong kind of ideals then. I rejected two of three stories I saw from Stephen King, and I rejected a story, *The Dolmen*, by Sprague deCamp which I later saw in F&SF. (I was right on that one.)

Occasionally there were oddities. Sometimes people would get cute and insert remarks in their text to see if the story was really being read. I have a good eye for anomaly; I caught a lot of those, probably not all. I can't imagine what the writer thought he was accomplishing by the exercise, but writers are all nuts (as I know better than most).

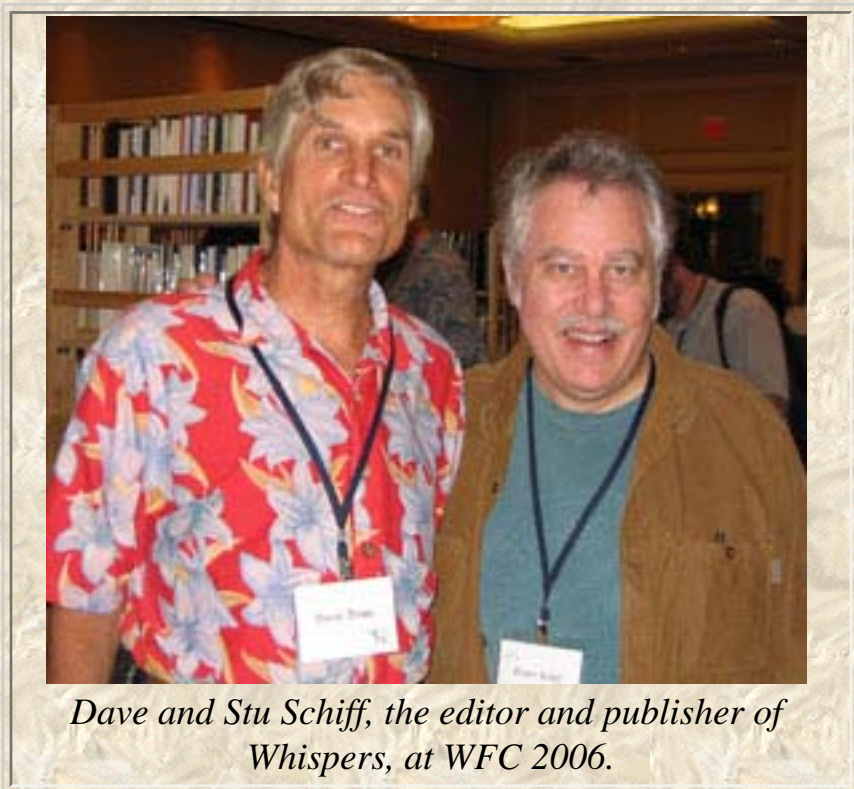
The most amusing thing I recall from my time was a perfectly-prepared mss. This was back in the days before computers and spell checkers, so it really stood out. I quickly realized that somebody's secretary had typed it on the office machine--either for the secretary's own son, or for the boss's. The story itself was dreadful, a lengthy heroic fantasy of the worst kind. (It was too long for the magazine even if it'd been good.)

What makes the novelet really vivid in my mind was the single typo--because I really did read this one through, in amazement.

The hero enters a black room. The only light is from the black tapir burning in the middle of the black table. I visualized that poor tapir, and it struck me that it must smell really awful when you burn an animal that large.

Stuart got into private practice in Binghamton and fatherhood. He focused more on collecting and changed the direction of the magazine to one that solicited stories from name authors. (No, the Harlan Ellison issue hasn't appeared yet.) *Whispers* became increasingly infrequent. Other semi-prozines appeared, paying as Stuart had taught them to do and filling the gap he left.

I wasn't sorry to be shut of the slush pile... but you know, I learned a lot of things that I wouldn't have gotten any other way. I'm glad I did it--and I'm glad to have helped Stuart keep short fantasy fiction alive during the '70s when there was little or no other place for it.



--Dave Drake

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JIM BAEN

October 22, 1943 - June 28, 2006



Jim Baen called me on the afternoon of June 11. He generally phoned on weekends, and we'd usually talk a couple more times in the course of a week; but this was the last time.

In the course of the conversation he said, "You've got to write my obituary, you know." I laughed (I'll get to that) and said, "Sure, if I'm around--but remember, I'm the one who rides the motorcycle."

So I'm writing this. Part of it's adapted from the profile I did in 2000 for the program book of the Chicago Worldcon at which Jim was Editor Guest of Honor. They cut my original title, which Jim loved: The God of Baendom. I guess they thought it was undignified and whimsical.

The title *was* undignified and whimsical. So was Jim.

James Patrick Baen was born October 22, 1943, on the Pennsylvania - New York border, a long way by road or in culture from New York City . He was introduced to

SF early through the magazines in a step-uncle's attic, including the November, 1957, issue of *Astounding* with *The Gentle Earth* by Christopher Anvil.

The two books Jim most remembered as formative influences were *Fire-Hunter* by Jim Kjelgaard and *Against the Fall of Night* by Arthur C Clarke. The theme of both short novels is that a youth from a decaying culture escapes the trap of accepted wisdom and saves his people despite themselves. This is a fair description of Jim's life in SF: he was always his own man, always a maverick, and very often brilliantly successful because he didn't listen to what other people thought.

For example, the traditional model of electronic publishing required that the works be encrypted. Jim thought that just made it hard for people to read books, the worst mistake a publisher could make. His e-texts were clear and in a variety of common formats.

While e-publishing has been a costly waste of effort for others, Baen Books quickly began earning more from electronic sales than it did from Canada . By the time of Jim's death, the figure had risen to ten times that.

Jim didn't forget his friends. In later years he arranged for the expansion of *Fire-Hunter* so that he could republish it (as *The Hunter Returns* , originally the title of the Charles R Knight painting Jim put on the cover).

Though Clarke didn't need help to keep his books in print the way Kjelgaard did, Jim didn't forget him either. Jim called me for help a week before his stroke, because Amazon.com had asked him to list the ten SF novels that everyone needed to read to understand the field. *Against the Fall of Night* was one of the titles that we settled on.

Jim's father died at age fifty; he and his stepfather

didn't warm to one another. Jim left home at 17 and lived on the streets for several months, losing weight that he couldn't at the time afford. He enlisted in the army as the only available alternative to starving to death.

Jim spent his military career in Bavaria where he worked for the Army Security Agency as a Morse Code Intercept Operator, monitoring transmissions from a Soviet callsign that was probably a armored corps. One night he determined that 'his' Soviet formation was moving swiftly toward the border. This turned out to be an unannounced training exercise--but if World War III had broken out in 1960, Jim would've been the person who announced it.

Jim entered CCNY on the GI Bill and became a Hippie. Among other jobs he managed a Greenwich Village coffee house, sometimes acting as barker as well: 'Come in and see tomorrow's stars today!' None of the entertainers became tomorrow's stars, but that experience of unabashed huckstering is part of the reason that Jim himself did.

Jim's first job in publishing was as an assistant in the Complaints Department of Ace Books. He was good at it--so good that management tried to promote him to running the department. He turned the offer down, however, because he really wanted to be an SF editor.

In 1973 Jim was hired at *Galaxy* and *If* magazines when Judy-Lynn Benjamin left. He became assistant to Ejler Jakobson, who with Bernie Williams taught Jim the elements of slash and burn editing.

Unfortunately, this was a necessary skill for an editor in Jim's position. The publisher wasn't in a hurry to pay authors, so established writers who could sell elsewhere preferred to do so. *Galaxy* and *If* published a lot of first stories and not a few rejects by major names. Material like that had to be edited for intelligibility and the printer's deadline, not nuances of

prose style.

Apart from basic technique Jim had very little to learn from his senior, who shortly thereafter left to pursue other opportunities. Jim's first act as editor was to recall stories that his predecessor had rejected over Jim's recommendation. When in later years I thanked him for retrieving the first two Hammer stories, Jim responded, "Oh, David--Jake rejected *much* better stories than yours!" (Among them was Ursula K LeGuin's Nebula winner, *The Day Before the Revolution* .)

Ace Books, in many ways the standard bearer of SF paperback publishing in the Fifties, had fallen on hard times in the Seventies. Charter Communications bought the company and installed Tom Doherty as publisher. Tom hired Jim to run the SF line. The first thing the new team did was to pay Ace's back (and in some cases, way back) royalties. By the time the famous SFWA audit of Ace Books was complete, the money had already been paid to the authors; a matter of some embarrassment to the SFWA officers who were aware of the facts.

Ace regained its position as an SF line where readers could depend on getting a good story. (To Homer, that was the essence of art; not all writers and editors of more recent times would have agreed.) As well as pleasing readers, the Ace SF line made money for the company; unfortunately (due to decisions from far above the level of publisher) SF came to be the only part of the company that *did* make money. Tom left Ace in 1980, founded Tor Books, and hired Jim to set up the Tor SF line.

Which Jim did, following the same pattern that had revived Ace: a focus on story and a mix of established authors with first-timers whom Jim thought just might have what it took. It worked again.

In fact it worked so well that when Simon and

Schuster went through a series of upheavals in its Pocket Books line in 1983, management decided to hire Jim as their new SF editor. Jim thought about the offer, then made a counter-offer: with the backing of two friends, he would form a separate company which would provide S&S with an SF line to distribute. S&S agreed and Baen Books was born.

Jim used the same formulas with his new line as he had at Ace and Tor, and again he succeeded. If that were easy, then past decades wouldn't be littered with the detritus of so many other people's attempts to do the same thing.

Even more than had been the case at Ace and Tor, Jim was his own art director at Baen Books--and he really directed rather than viewing his job as one of coddling artists. Baen Books gained a distinct look. Like the book contents, the covers weren't to everyone's taste--but they worked.

Jim had the advantage over *some* editors in that he knew what a story is. He had the advantage over *most* editors in being able to spot talent before somebody else had published it. (Lois Bujold, Eric Flint, John Ringo and Dave Weber were all Baen discoveries whom Jim promoted to stardom.)

Furthermore, he never stopped developing new writers. The week before his stroke, Jim bought a first novel from a writer whom Baen Books had been grooming through short stories over the past year.

The most important thing of all which Jim brought to his company was a personal vision. Baen Books didn't try to be for everybody, but it *was* always true to itself. In that as in so many other ways, the company mirrored Jim himself.

When Jim called me on June 11, he told me he was dying. I thought he was simply having a bad interaction among prescription drugs. Though the

stroke that killed him occurred the next day in hospital, Jim was right and I was wrong--again.

After that opening, Jim said, "I'm just going to say it: we've known each other all these years and you seem to like me. Why?"

That's a hell of a thing to be hit with out of the blue. Jim had always known that he was socially awkward and that he not infrequently rubbed people the wrong way, but it wasn't something we discussed. (And it's obviously not a subject on which I could be of much help.)

If I'd been a different person, I'd have started out by listing the things he did right: for example, that I'd never met a more loving father than Jim was to his children (Jessica Baen, 29, Jim's daughter with Madeline Gleich, and Katherine Baen, 14, Jim's daughter with Toni Weisskopf). Being me, I instead answered the question a number of us ask ourselves: "How can you like a person who's behaved the way you know I have?" I said that his flaws were childish ones, tantrums and sulking; not, *never* in my experience, studied cruelty. He agreed with that.

And then I thought further and said that when I was sure my career was tanking--

" You thought that? When was that?"

In the mid '90s, I explained, when Military SF was going down the tubes with the downsizing of the military. But when I was at my lowest point, which was very low, I thought, "I can write two books a year. And Jim will pay me \$20K apiece for them--"

"I'd have paid a lot more than that!"

And I explained that this wasn't about reality: this was me in the irrational depths of real depression. And even when I was most depressed and most irrational,

I knew in my heart that Jim Baen would pay me enough to keep me alive, because he was that sort of person. He'd done that for Keith Laumer whom he disliked, because Laumer had been an author Jim looked for when he was starting to read SF.

I could not get so crazy and depressed that I didn't trust Jim Baen to stand by me if I needed him. I don't know a better statement than that to sum up what was important about Jim, as a man and as a friend.

--Dave Drake

Toni Weisskopf and Dave suggest that people who wish to make a memorial donation purchase copies of THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN and donate them to libraries or teenagers of their acquaintance.



*The last resting place of my friend
Jim Baen and his mother, in the
grove beside my house.*



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A WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY OF DAVID DRAKE'S WRITING

BY KAREN ZIMMERMAN

David Drake sold his first story in 1966 and continues to write novels, short fiction, essays and other miscellaneous pieces. Although he is sometimes referred to as the “King of Military Science Fiction,” his fiction spans multiple genres. He claims to have written just about every subgenre except SF romance. This bibliography is the beginning of a complete listing of his work. However, this list does not include foreign imprints or electronic versions of his work, such as those available through the Baen Free Library or Webscriptions. Also omitted are other formats such as *The Drake Disk*, a CD-ROM collection of his work produced by Baen Publishing Enterprises in 2003. See the Baen web site (<http://www.baen.com>) for listings of electronic versions available.

Different printings of books are listed only when the ISBN or price has changed. The list is divided into four sections: A) books (novels and collections of stories) written by David Drake, including titles for which he wrote the plot outlines, listed at the end of the section; B) books edited by David Drake; C) his short fiction published in magazines and anthologies; and D) miscellaneous writings such as essays, comments, book introductions and odd pieces that don't fit elsewhere. This list does not include introductions to individual stories.

This list will be updated at David's official web site: <http://david-drake.com>. His web site also contains other pieces of his writing unavailable elsewhere, including his translations of Ovid, not included in this bibliography.

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Dave's novels in chronological order with comments:

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THE DRAGON LORD (Putnams/1979) [Dave's comments](#)
TIME SAFARI (Tor/1982) [Dave's comments](#)
FROM THE HEART OF DARKNESS (Tor/1983) [Dave's comments](#)
SKYRIPPER (Tor/1983) [Dave's comments](#)
CROSS THE STARS (*Connected to Hammer Series*) (Tor/1984)
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KILLER (with Karl Edward Wagner) (Baen/1985) [Dave's comments](#)
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KILL RATIO (with Janet Morris) (Ace/1987)
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TARGET (with Janet Morris) (Ace/1989)
EXPLORERS IN HELL (with Janet Morris) (Baen/1989)
VETTIUS AND HIS FRIENDS (Baen/1989) [Dave's comments](#)
ROLLING HOT (*Hammer Series*) (Baen/1989) *A solo novel, reprinted in The Tank Lords.* [Dave's comments](#)
NORTHWORLD (Ace/1990) [Dave's comments](#)
SURFACE ACTION (Ace/1990) [Dave's comments](#)
THE HUNTER RETURNS (with Jim Kjelgaard) (Baen/1991) [Dave's comments](#)
VENGEANCE (Ace/1991) [Northworld comments](#)
THE MILITARY DIMENSION (Baen/1991) [Dave's comments](#)
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JUSTICE (Ace/1992) [Northworld comments](#)
STARLINER (Baen/1992) [Dave's comments](#)
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IGNITING THE REACHES (Ace/1994) [Dave's comments](#)
THE VOYAGE (*Connected to Hammer Series*) (Tor/1994) [Dave's comments](#)
ARC RIDERS (with Janet Morris) (Warner/1995)
THROUGH THE BREACH (Ace/1995) [Dave's comments](#)
THE FOURTH ROME (with Janet Morris) (Warner/1996)
ALL THE WAY TO THE GALLOWS (Baen/1996) [Dave's Comments](#)
FIRESHIPS (Ace/1996) [Dave's comments](#)
REDLINERS (Baen/1996) [Dave's Comments](#)
PATRIOTS (Tor/1996) [Dave's Comments](#)
LORD OF THE ISLES *Isles Series* (Tor/1997) [Dave's comments](#)
WITH THE LIGHTNINGS *RCN Series* (Baen/1998) [Dave's comments](#)
QUEEN OF DEMONS *Isles Series* (Tor/1998)
SERVANT OF THE DRAGON *Isles Series* (Tor/1999)
LT LEARY, COMMANDING *RCN Series* (Baen/2000)
MISTRESS OF THE CATACOMBS *Isles Series* (Tor/2001)
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GRIMMER THAN HELL (Baen/2003) [Contents](#)
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THE FORTRESS OF GLASS *Crown of the Isles Trilogy* (Tor/2006)
SOME GOLDEN HARBOR *RCN Series* (Baen/2006)
OTHER TIMES THAN PEACE (Baen/2006) [Contents](#)
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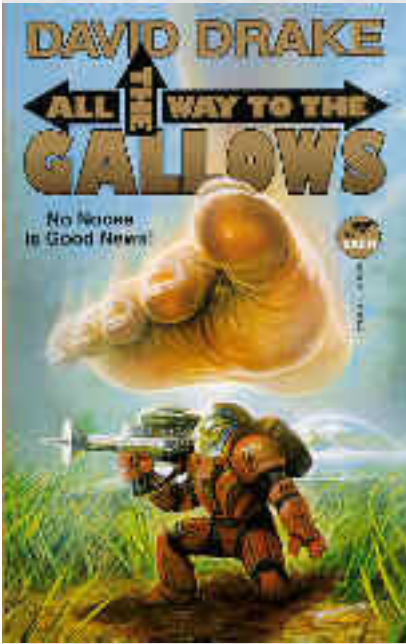
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- Introduction: Why Gallows Humor?
- The Enchanted Bunny
- The Noble Savages
- Airborne All the Way!
- Cannibal Plants from Heck
- The Bond
- Mom and the Kids (with Larry Niven)
- The Bullhead
- A Very Offensive Weapon

This is a collection of my humorous SF and fantasy. To my delight it sold very well. There's really a lot of humor in my other fiction, but it tends to get lost in the other things that are going on in the story.

Quite apart from being funny, *Airborne All the Way!* and *A Very Offensive Weapon* are two of the handful of best stories I've written. Roger Zelazny created the milieu and heroine of the latter, and directed me as to how the story was to develop; I used his novelet *The Furies* as a model for my writing. In fact Roger had more to do with the story than Larry Niven did with *Mom and the Kids*.

--Dave Drake

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Dave's guide to Hammer's Slammers:

HAMMER'S SLAMMERS (*Hammer Series*) (Ace/1979) [Dave's comments](#)

CROSS THE STARS (*Connected to Hammer Series*) (Tor/1984)

AT ANY PRICE (*Hammer Series*) (Baen/1985) [Contents](#)

COUNTING THE COST (*Hammer Series*) (Baen/1987) A solo novel, reprinted in *Caught in the Crossfire*

ROLLING HOT (*Hammer Series*) (Baen/1989) A solo novel, reprinted in *The Tank Lords*. [Dave's comments](#)

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PAYING THE PIPER (*three Hammer novellas*) (Baen/2002)

The Complete Hammer's Slammers

The first two volumes of three of the limited edition hardcover of The Complete Hammer's Slammers are available from [Night Shade Books](#)..

What are the books in the Hammer series?

The original *Hammer's Slammers* was published by Ace, but republished in an expanded fashion by Baen. The rest of the series was also Baen--*At Any Price*, *Counting the Cost*, *Rolling Hot*, and *The Warrior*. In addition to these, *The Sharp End* is post-Hammer Hammer. (There's no particular order to the first five books.)

The most recent book in the series is *Paying the Piper* (Baen, 2002), which again is in no particular order with the first five books. The notion of doing a follow-on series (with *The Sharp End*) was a bad idea.

The entire contents of the first five books in the series, plus a new story per volume, have been reprinted in the three Baen omnibus collections: *The Tank Lords*, *Caught in the Crossfire*, and *The Butcher's Bill*. These are still in print. *Cross the Stars* (Tor, later Baen) and *The Voyage* use the Hammer universe to retell classical Greek epics (with some of the Hammer characters in the form of Gods).

[Night Shade Books](#) is bringing out the *Complete Hammer's Slammers*, which is just that. The first two (lovely) of the three volumes are out.

Are you going to write more Hammer stories?

Yes, I've done three recent novelets in the series (*A Death in Peacetime*, *The Day of Glory* and *The Darkness*). One will appear in each volume of the Night Shade limited edition trilogy of *The Complete Hammer's Slammers*.

I'll probably do more as well, but I don't have current plans.

Hammer's Slammers Games

Mayfair Games brought out a Hammer's Slammers board game back in the '80s.

Intracorps licensed electronic game rights to Hammer's Slammers in the mid '90s. They got seriously into development, but they were overextended and went bankrupt well before they completed the game. (They paid me part of the money. The business was frustrating in a number of respects, but I was paid well enough to justify the hassle.)

In 2000 Mattel paid a bundle up front for electronic game rights to Hammer's Slammers. So far as I know the game hasn't gotten beyond the preliminary concept stage--but their check cleared.

And greatly to my surprise, the Hammer stories are important texts in British miniature wargaming circles. There's a website dedicated to one club's vision of Hammer's Slammers [<http://www.salute.co.uk/slammers3/index.htm>].

The club's vehicles weren't quite what I had in mind, but I worked with John Treadaway (the club's webmaster) and John Lambshead, the British Museum's expert in marine nematodes, to bring out a history and campaign book on Hammer's Slammers for the miniature wargaming market. [Ground Zero Games](#) has done 25-mm and 15-mm miniature figures, and Old Crow has done combat vehicles in both scales(<http://www.oldcrowmodels.co.uk/hammers.htm>). The book is out from *Pireme Publications*. This was a lot of fun. Check our [Hammer's Slammers war game web page](#).

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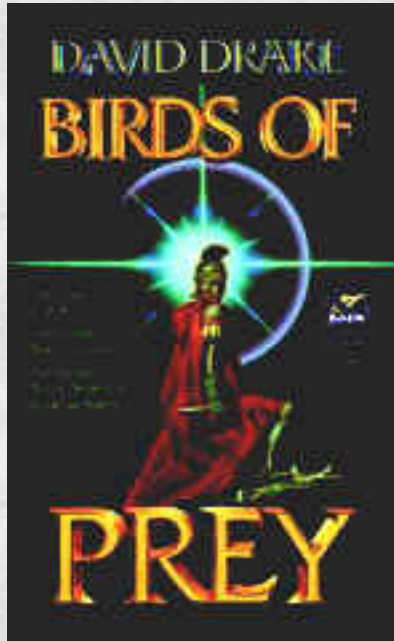
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- The Interrogation Team (*Caught in the Crossfire*)
- Code-Name Feirefitz (*The Tank Lords*)

--*Dave Drake*

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BIRDS OF PREY was the first novel I tried to write. It was a very long time before I succeeded, but I think in this case the wait was worth it.

While I was still in law school I got and read the two-volume Teubner (Latin text only) edition of the so-called *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, the Augustan Histories. This is a collection of lives of the later emperors (Hadrian through Numerian), purportedly by many contemporary authors but probably by one man of much later (5th century?) date with political axes to grind. While the SHA is in many respects a fictional text, it does incorporate material from books that haven't survived--and is, for my purposes as a writer, very evocative.

I became interested in the so-called Third Century Crisis: the point at which the Roman Empire shattered and almost ended, only to be pulled back by Diocletian to further centuries of flowering. I got some notions--scenes only, but vivid scenes--and thought maybe I could turn them into a novel.

Not then I couldn't. I wrote a chapter or two, then stalled out. I didn't know how to plot yet, and I didn't know that I *had* to plot. (There are various ways to write a novel. The way that works for me is to plot it out in detail before I start the actual writing.) That first attempt occurred before I was drafted in 1968.

I made several more tries at writing a novel in the years following. Not only did I write a few chapters (probably the same few chapters) of my 3d century fantasy (it got a title this time: *The Warm Summer Rain*), I did a time travel YA (which I actually completed; Karl Wagner read it and heaped no-doubt deserved scorn on it. No one else is likely to read it during my lifetime) and some chapters of a Roman historical which have a degree of merit. They weren't a novel, but the writing was vivid.

There matters rested till Andy Offutt asked me to plot a novel for him (see my comments on [The Dragon](#)

[Lord](#)) and I learned what a novel was. (Incidentally, if it seems to you that there were easier ways to get where I was going, I think you're right. This is the way I took, but I'd never recommend that another would-be writer try to model him- or herself on me.) I wrote *The Dragon Lord*, then wrote [The Forlorn Hope](#) for Ace (see the comments on why Ace didn't publish it) and *Skyripper* in response to a call from Jim Baen who needed material for Tor Books, which Tom Doherty had just founded and hired him to be editorial director of. (There's a story in that too, but I'm not going to tell it. Even for me, some things are water under the bridge.)

After I turned in *Skyripper*, Jim called again to offer me a two-book contract, a major book and a minor one. I was ready this time to write the 3d century novel; it became *Birds of Prey*. (The minor one was *Cross the Stars*; not in fact as minor as I thought it was going to be. And the day after that call, Jim called back and made it a three-book contract, the third being *Bridgehead*. It was an exciting time to be alive--but you know, they all are if you've got the spirit to understand that.)

The title came from a Kipling poem, "*The Birds of Prey*" *March*, a perfectly-realized description of soldiers boarding a troopship for overseas deployment. The refrain, "The Large Birds o' Prey, they will carry us away, and you'll never see your soldiers any more," caught for me the mood of the book I intended to write. Jim didn't tell me that *The Warm Summer Rain* was the stupidest title he'd ever heard of, but he might have done. (Nowadays he probably would.)

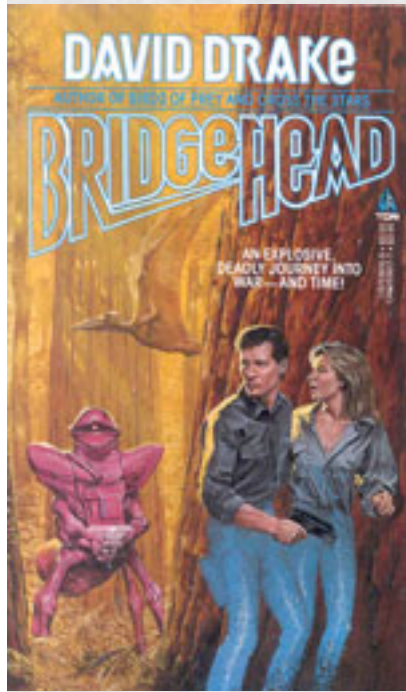
I did a great deal of research into the history of the period (the SHA is mood and incident, not history). Most of it's archeology and conjecture; there really are no first-rate written sources extant. That wasn't an entirely bad thing from my viewpoint. My most valuable single source was a trip to Adana, Turkey, and across Mesopotamia by road to Diyarbakir on the Tigris. That was possible due to my friend Glenn Knight, then US vice-consul in Adana. (I'd originally--that is, in 1968--intended to climax the novel in North Africa; which, oddly enough, we'd visited a couple years before the Turkish trip when Glenn was GSO at the US mission in Algiers)

I wrote *Birds of Prey* in 1983, about 15 years after my first attempt. I'd learned to plot and I'd learned more about writing (I'm still learning more about writing); but the most important difference had come in the years 1969-71. During that time I got intelligence training from the US Army and was given a close-up view of what war, soldiers, and lands wrecked by catastrophe are really like.

Birds of Prey isn't a perfectly-structured novel, but it's a darned strong and vivid one. It has in it a lot of what I believe is true. I'm proud of the result, and I don't regret that it was a long time coming.

--Dave Drake

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BRIDGEHEAD was my first attempt to write what I think of as mainstream SF: a novel about a scientific experiment without any tanks or legions or swordsmen or spies. The genesis of the plot was a friend telling me about a non-sanctioned Psi experiment that was once run in the basement of the Engineering Building at Duke University. It went badly wrong, leading to the retirement of the department head.

The novel was part of my first three-book contract, back in 1982. I'd written *The Dragon Lord* on spec, and I'd done the additional wordage for *Hammer's Slammers* for Jim Baen at Ace. I'd then done *Time Safari*, an expansion of a novella, for Jim after he'd followed Ace publisher Tom Doherty to Tor, the new company he founded; and when I turned that in, Jim asked for and I wrote a technothriller (*Skyripper*).

At that point, I guess you'd say I became a Made Man: Jim called me, offering a two-book contract; and called back the next night, expanding the contract to three books--subject to be determined later by agreement of the parties. (Actually, I missed his first follow-up call. When I learned that, I ran out and bought my first answering machine... a \$400 investment at the time.)

I had over a year's guaranteed employment laid out in front of me, more than I'd ever had with the Town of Chapel Hill where my job was a line item on the annual budget. I was a writer.

That left the question of what the books would be. I wanted to do the historical SF novel that I'd been attempting for a decade; that became *Birds of Prey* and was the first of the three. I'd been thinking of turning the *Odyssey* into SF; I did, as *Cross the Stars*. And there was the mainstream SF novel that I was doing because I was sure that was what Tor really wanted. (It turned out that what Tor--Jim and Tom--really wanted was me to write books that I was excited about writing, but I was full of naive cynicism at

the time.)

By the time I wrote *Bridgehead* in 1985, Jim had left to found Baen Books and supply SF under contract to Simon and Schuster. His immediate replacement was the wonderful Harriet McDougal, but Harriet really isn't an SF person (though she did a fine job on *Cross the Stars* and *The Jungle*). Tor had just hired Beth Meacham from Ace to become SF editor, and *Bridgehead* landed on her desk.

I wasn't concerned about the change. I'd had pleasant dealings with Ms Meacham at Ace, though she hadn't been my editor there.

The edited mss and a four-page editorial letter came back very promptly. I opened the package and within a matter of seconds was as angry as I've ever been in my life. I was later told (by an informant who might or might not have had inside information) that Ms Meacham was having personal problems and that my editorial letter was similar in tone to three others that she wrote at the same time. I don't know about that; all I can swear to is what was in mine.

First, the mss had been edited at least in part in purple indelible pencil, with marginal notations including, *Oh come now!* and *This isn't English!* The letter included a number of flat statements about my factual errors, including *Dinosaurs are reptiles and reptiles don't nurture their young; change this scene*, and *There is no such thing as an Ambassador in Residence at a university. Change the character to a political science professor.*

Those are sufficient to give you the flavor of the edit; they were also sufficient to make me dizzy with anger. My fingers were trembling so badly that I had difficulty dialing Tom Doherty, and I stuttered as I offered to pay back the advance and take *Bridgehead* to a publisher who wanted it. (Tom later told Harriet that he hadn't realized I was capable of getting that angry; to be honest, neither had I.)

Harriet returned as my editor (until she finally turned me over to Dave Hartwell so that she could concentrate on the work of her husband, Robert Jordan, and on lowering her stress levels). All was well. But the night after the business resolved, I had an attack of hives for the first and only time in my life.

Most of you are probably aware that dinosaurs weren't reptiles and that a number of reptiles do nurture their young (as dinosaurs certainly did). You may not know, however, that the State Department has an Ambassador in Residence program as a temporary placement for senior staff who're waiting for a foreign posting. The State Department pays their salaries; they teach a few courses and steer likely prospects to careers in the Foreign Service. I'd met the guy who was in charge of the program.

I'm darned if I know what happened. Ms Meacham later apologized, and folks who've worked with her since speak very highly of her editorial ability. It's one of the very few unpleasant editorial experiences I've had; but believe me, it was very unpleasant.

Quite apart from the editorial adventures, the book was badly flawed. I used a large number of

characters and switched between them in very short segments. That was deliberate, but it made the story jerky and harder to follow than it needed to have been.

Both for artistic reasons and because of the mental baggage I carry around from Ms Meacham's editorial letter I don't have much affection for *Bridgehead*, but I learned a lot from the project. The next time I wrote a complex novel (and I've written far more complex novels in the years since) I knew to pare down the number of characters and to develop each scene fully enough that the reader has a story rather than a kaleidoscope.

The other valuable lesson I learned was that money isn't nearly as important to me as working with friends. As a result I've never been tempted to auction a book to whoever offers the most money; it just isn't worth the strain.

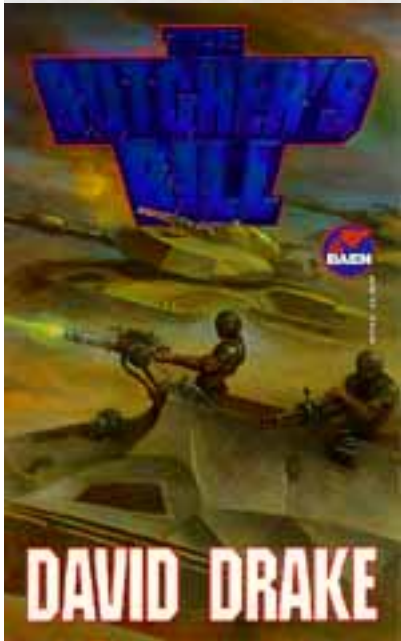
I *never* want to be that angry again.

--*Dave Drake*

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Contents of THE BUTCHER'S BILL

- Introduction: Becoming a Professional Writer by Way of Southeast Asia
- But Loyal to His Own
- At Any Price
- The Butcher's Bill
- Hangman
- The Irresistable Force
- Cultural Conflict
- Liberty Port
- Standing Down

--*Dave Drake*

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Contents of CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

- Introduction: Mercenaries
- The Warrior
- Caught in the Crossfire
- The Immovable Object
- Counting the Cost
- The Interrogation Team

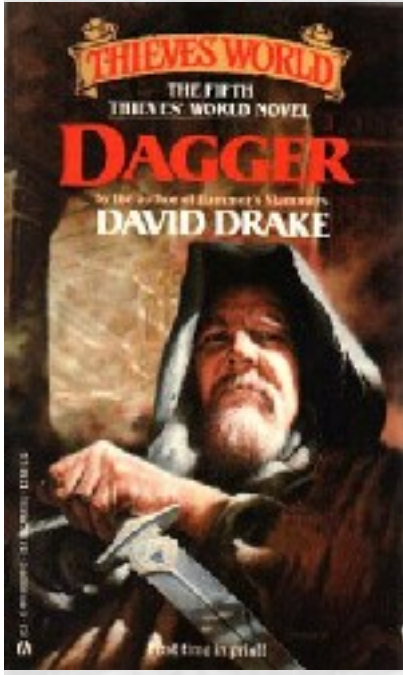
Without any conscious intention on my part, this compilation is probably the most grim and depressing book I've published. If anybody wants my opinion of war and what it does to anybody who gets close to it, they can find it here. I swear I was just fitting stories to length and theme when I put the volume together. Though it occurs to me that as a former 96C2L94 (Interrogator, Vietnamese Language) any collection that includes *The Interrogation Team* is going to strike me that way.

--*Dave Drake*

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DAGGER was an important book for me in various odd ways. In the Fall of 1979 I ran into Bob Asprin when we were both boarding an airplane to return from a convention (probably World Fantasy Con in Providence, but I don't swear to that). I told him I'd picked up a copy of his new novel *Tambu*. "But did you get *Thieves' World*?" Bob said. "That's much more important. Read it and write me a story for the next volume."

Looking back on it, the whole business seems improbable--starting with an author saying his solo novel was less important than the anthology he'd edited--but it really did happen that way. And Bob was right: *Thieves' World* was possibly the most important book in the f/sf field during the 1980s. There'd been earlier shared universe volumes, just as there'd been horror novels before *Carrie*; but *Carrie* and *Thieves' World* created new genres which for a time were the hottest thing going.

I rewrote into TW form a story I'd drafted in high school. Bob bought it for the second volume. There, so far as I was concerned, my involvement with shared universes had ended.

Man proposes, God disposes.

Bob called me three years later, reminding me that I'd said I might do another TW story some time. Could I do one in two weeks?

I'd said, 'some time' in the fashion that you say, 'We'll have to get together for lunch some time,' to somebody you never want to see again but wish to be polite to. Still, I could do a story. Two weeks would be a stretch for me, but I'd I said I'd try.

Bob called back the next day. I told him it was going pretty well. Fine, he said. Ah--could I finish it in

one week instead of two? I didn't think I could, but I did. The 4500 words of the climax of *Votary* are still the greatest daily wordage of my career--and I did them with a pencil on legal pad. (I later learned that Andy Offutt had thrown a hissie and withdrawn his story at the last instant.)

That could've been the end of it, but Jim Baen introduced me to Janet Morris and put us together on a number of projects. Janet was heavily involved with the planning of TW, and she had big-budget books with Putnam/Berkley who'd bought the TW franchise along with the rest of Ace Books. Janet decided she was going to raise my profile and income.

The first stage of this was to get me a TW novel contract for \$30K. (That was my share: the TW creators properly got a significant payment from the publisher as well.) Janet accomplished this. At the time, Baen Books had a ceiling (imposed by the equity holder) of \$20K/book and I hadn't been paid even that much by Tor, so it was a very significant jump.

In order to maximize my income, I also used the first section of the novel as a story for another TW volume. I'm embarrassed about this: I'd never done it before and I never did it again. I think it's a cheat on the reader and leads a writer to think only of the money, which is utterly destructive of the writer's morality. (I've let editors have chunks of novels because they begged me, and Karl used our existing story *Killer* as the opening of the novel of the same name when he sketched out a plot. In the case of *Goddess*, the first third of *Dagger*, all I was thinking of was the absurd 24-cents/word TW was by then paying for stories.)

Having said that, the novel itself is interesting. I'd bought and read a three-volume UCal set titled *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. It introduced me to the concept of wisdom literature. (My first experience with wisdom literature itself is the book of *Proverbs* in the Old Testament, but I didn't know it was a standard *form* of literature in all cultures.) I used Egyptian wisdom texts to flavor the dialogue of the wizard's manikin, just as I did that of the little robot in *The Sea Hag* which I wrote shortly thereafter. I didn't execute the concept well in either instance, I'm afraid; but it wasn't a bad idea.

The dagger, by the way, is one I own. (Well, mine isn't magical.) It's a show piece of Damascus steel. (I'll come back to Damascus steel shortly.) Gary Ruddell used a photo I sent him when he composed his excellent cover for the Ace edition.

Dagger was my first attempt at giving my hero (which in my usage includes heroines) an inhuman sidekick who has immense knowledge. I'm still working on the concept. I don't think I've gotten it quite right yet, but Mellie in *Lord of the Isles* came pretty close.

Dagger was an Egypt-intensive novel. Besides the wisdom literature, the temple of Abu Simbel features prominently in the middle section, and the final section is based on an Egyptian folktale (as well as using an Egyptian residential setting). I think there's good stuff in it.

And there the good stuff ends, people. Don't do things just for the money: they will rise up and bite you

on the ass, and you'll deserve it--just as I did.

I started the novel before I took my wife and son on a three-week trip to Iceland. Because I was still drafting longhand, I actually worked on it *in* Iceland, though none of the setting of *Dagger* is Icelandic. (For that see the Northworld trilogy.) The trip was wonderful but very expensive. (I didn't know ahead of time that Iceland has the highest *per capita* income in the world, but I certainly realized the fact while we were there.)

I got home and finished the novel. As I started to type the edited version into my Olivetti ET 360 (a dedicated word processor), it died. (Parenthetically, it later came out that Olivetti had been forced to pay a seven million dollar bribe to get even the Italian government to buy their office machines.) I ran out and bought the first laptop computer, an IBM Convertible. This is not a highly regarded machine, but I have a certain amount of affection for it. The IBM worked, which was never a conspicuous virtue of the Olivetti.

Still, the Convertible was another couple thousand dollars of expense, and I had to pay for my son's braces at that time as well. I sent *Dagger* off and waited anxiously for the \$15K turn-in payment.

Which didn't come. There were layers of editing on TW projects--not only the in-house Ace editor, a nice woman named Sue Stone with whom I've had pleasant contact in later years, but also Bob's then wife, Lynn Abbey; a nice woman as well, and one whose line-by-line writing skills are above average.

But the technical sophistication of the pair is suggested by the problem with the dagger blade. The name 'Damascus steel' came about because Damascus was the point of entry to Western Europe of high-quality Oriental blades forged by welding strips of iron and steel, then doubling the bar and hammering the result flat again--hundreds of times. The city of Damascus doesn't exist in the TW universe, so I used a common alternate terminology: watered steel, so called because the pattern on the polished blade looks like waves.

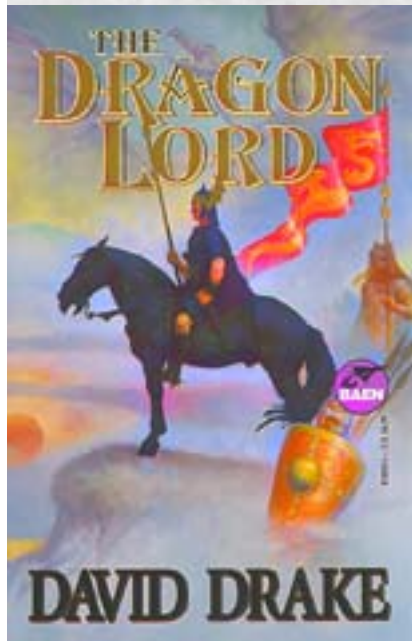
"Shouldn't this be 'oiled steel', because you describe the blade as being tempered in oil?" was one of the editorial questions. I honestly didn't know where to start with my answer. (One of Lynn's stories involved 'green-glittering steel ore' and red-hot blades quenched in ice water. If you don't understand the problem with those statements, you shouldn't be editing a book of mine either.)

I borrowed money from a friend to pay my bills; and eventually I got paid for *Dagger*. I think of it as being a learning experience. Which is also how I describe the time I spent in Viet Nam.

--Dave Drake

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THE DRAGON LORD was my first novel. There was a heroic fantasy boom in the latter '70s. Andy Offutt (as he then styled himself) had a contract with Zebra Books to write novels about the Robert E. Howard character Cormac Mac Art. Because Andy found plotting difficult, in 1977 he asked me and at least one other newbie writer to plot novels for him. No terms were discussed, but I expected to get a few hundred dollars (and no credit).

I took the offer because I desperately wanted to learn how to write a novel. I'd been trying to do that at least since 1972 and probably before. I figured by watching Andy develop my outline, I'd learn how to write a novel myself.

I dived into the research, among other things reading the complete *Histories* of Procopius (knowledge which stood me in good stead later). I set the plot in the court of King Arthur, because I wasn't in the least interested in Arthurian fantasy and therefore wouldn't be depressed to have to turn my work over to somebody else.

Funny thing about that: when you spend six months immersed in a subject, you come to love it. (Hmm; plotting as a special case of Stockholm Syndrome?). I created an enormously detailed 16,000 word plot which I hated to turn over to Andy. Still, a deal is a deal. I sent him the plot.

Andy rejected it. His reasons were partly personal, partly due to business difficulties with Zebra. He offered a kill fee, but I couldn't have been happier to turn the outline into a novel myself.

I did so, eliminating all characters from Howard or Andy's text. Dave Hartwell was the second editor to see *The Dragon Lord* (the first one, Nancy Neiman, asked me to turn it into a trilogy and she'd look at it again. I blanched). Dave bought it but wanted changes before the climax and asked me to drop the epilogue. I obeyed, though Dave had left Putnam's before I turned in the revised novel. (Dave is editor

on my Tor fantasy series now; it's a small world.)

Dave's successor John Silbersack became my editor, but when John was forced out the ninnie who replaced him (actually, she was really good at office politics, so perhaps ninnie is unfair) shelved the paperback version of the book. I reverted it (to her surprise; her assistant told me the contract didn't permit that. The assistant wasn't a lawyer and I, for my sins, am). Jim Baen bought the rights for Tor's brand new line.

Jim wanted changes. He wouldn't have forced me, but I laughed when I heard and did what he wanted. Basically, that was to change the novel back to the way I'd written it the first time before I made the changes for Dave. The hardcover and pb versions of *The Dragon Lord* are significantly different.

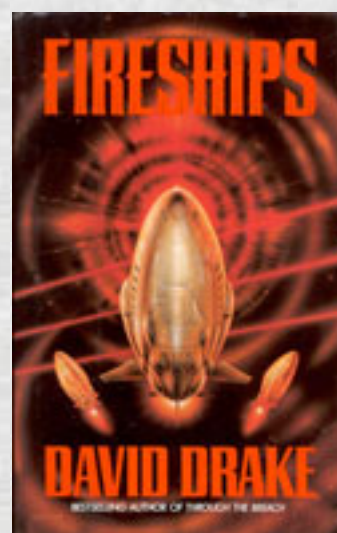
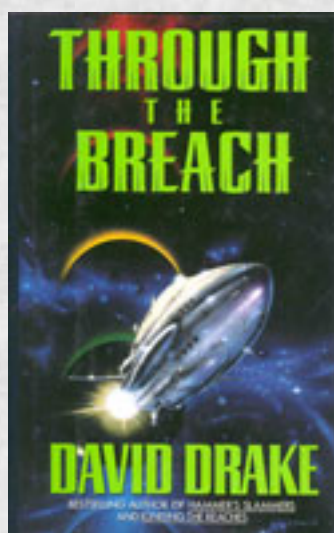
I had things to learn about plotting, but there's a lot of neat stuff in this book.

--*Dave Drake*

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INTRODUCTION: *The One That Got Away*

I'm a very organized writer--insanely organized, one might say, and we'll get back to that in a moment. I take extensive notes before I start plotting, and I do very detailed plots (usually in the range of 5-15,000 words per plot, though a few have been much longer).

Occasionally I hear a writer say something along the lines of, "My hero went off in a direction I didn't expect." I shake my head: my heroes don't do anything of the sort. It turned out, however, that they could still surprise me.

I got the notion of using the Age of Discovery as the background for a series of space operas. I'd bought a set (eight volumes) of Hakluyt's *Voyages* (the 1598 edition, which adds a great deal of material but drops David Ingram's very interesting account from the 1589 edition) while I was still an undergraduate and dipped into it frequently. When I chose that world for my setting, I read and took notes of the whole work. I then started plotting.

The life of Francis, later Sir Francis, Drake lent itself to development into a trilogy: his first voyages to the Caribbean, which made him an enemy of Spain and gained him a name; the round the world voyage of 1580-1, which brought him great wealth and a knighthood; and finally the climactic struggle against the Armada. I actually followed Drake's life quite closely, but especially in the second book I wove in events which happened to some of his contemporaries.

Though Drake was my model, I didn't attempt to tell the stories from his viewpoint. He's a very attractive man in many ways. His luck was in great measure the result of careful planning. For example, he didn't lose a man to scurvy, the deficiency disease which nearly wiped out Magellan's crew during the only round the world voyage preceding Drake's. Anson, a century and a half later, was still losing large numbers of crewmen to scurvy. Drake had figured out something that the greatest navigators before and

after him did not, to their great cost.

Furthermore, in a cruel age and under brutal conditions, Drake wasn't himself cruel and didn't allow those under him to practice cruelty. This is truly remarkable, more remarkable than readers who haven't been in hard places themselves can imagine. Drake, suffering a painful wound from an Indian ambush, prevented his men from bombarding the Indian village. He said, probably correctly, that the Indians mistook him for a Spaniard--but the man who could do that after an arrow has been pulled from his face was humane in the best sense of the word.

But.

Drake was a religious fanatic and a fanatical patriot. He had sufficient reason--Philip II of Spain was a tyrant from the same mold as later provided the world with Hitler--and Drake's behavior was almost invariably within what now are accepted civilized norms. (The one instance of a war crime in modern terms involved hanging a hostage priest and promising to hang more if the Spaniard who'd murdered an envoy under a white flag weren't surrendered for punishment.)

But if what Drake did is acceptable, what he was is not. I don't say that I couldn't get into the mind of a fanatic, but the world and my world wouldn't be better places if I did so. I told the story--the stories--from the point of view of fictional sidekicks who, though men of their times, took a detached attitude toward the great issues of their day. Men, in short, who weren't very different from me.

I won't say that was a mistake, but I think it is the reason that the wheels came off my careful plan. Those viewpoint characters turned out to have minds of their own: my mind. And as a result, the novels weren't at all what I'd intended them to be.

That's the background to *The Reaches*. I'll now offer three... well, call them caveats regarding the books themselves.

1. I postulated a future in which war had brought Mankind to the brink of extinction. The civilization that returns is based on individual craftsmanship, not mass production (although that's clearly on its way back by the end of the series). Some readers, faced with stories in which the characters fly starships but fight (some of them) with single-shot rifles, were not only baffled but infuriated.
2. Though I didn't use ideologues for my viewpoint characters, the period itself was fiercely ideological. I didn't attempt to hide that reality by inventing characters with modern sensibilities to exclaim with horror at situations which everyone of the day took for granted. Thus the books are deeply steeped in ideology that readers may find not only foreign but distasteful.
3. Finally, I'd intended *The Reaches* to be light space opera, the sort of thing I later did in the RCN series. Space opera they are, but they're very hard, *harsh* books. *Through the Breach* in particular is a more realistic view of what war does to a citizen/soldier than *Redliners* was. I'm more self-aware now than I was when I wrote the series, but I'm honestly not sure whether more than

chance was involved in my choosing to write *Through the Breach* in first person, which is nearly unique in my fiction.

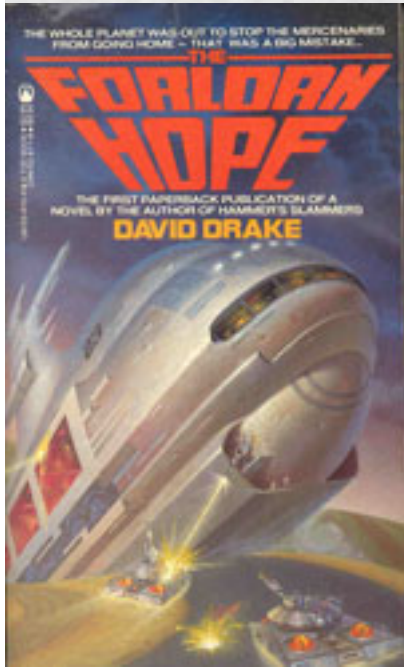
There's no single Truth in my world, but there are lots of little truths. There are several of those woven into *The Reaches*, but they're not all of them the truths that make me happiest in the hours before dawn.

--*Dave Drake*

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THE FORLORN HOPE started in 1980 with a phone call from Susan Allison, who had just taken over as SF editor of Ace Books after Jim Baen left. Ace hired her away from Pocket Books, but earlier she'd been Jim's assistant and knew both his methods and his authors, me included.

Military books--fiction and non-fiction--were selling very well at the time. All the divisions of Ace Books had been directed to start military series. *Hammer's Slammers* had been very successful for Ace (at the time, I had no idea how successful) so Susan came to me with a proposal:

I would write a military SF novel, introducing characters and a milieu. Later volumes would be farmed out to other writers. There was no suggestion of me plotting novels for others to write--that whole business started years later--but I had reason to expect that I'd be paid a considerably larger advance than I'd gotten previously.

I started writing the book without waiting for Ace and my agent to work out the contract details. I used Xenophon's *Anabasis*--the March Upcountry--as a model for the opening situation but based the remainder of the milieu more on the Thirty Years War. I had a good time writing the book while waiting for a contract.

The contract didn't come. Ace was in severe financial straits, facing bankruptcy. I finished the book and light dawned: Putnams had bought Ace, providing the SF line with real financial backing for the first time in years. Obviously there were going to be delays while the new owners looked over projects, but I thought I had reasonable hope of getting perhaps as much as \$20K for the book.

Ace offered \$7,500--less than I had gotten from Tor for *Skyripper*. I went ballistic. When Jim Baen heard that I had a completed military SF novel in hand, he immediately offered \$15K for it. My agent

felt that we owed Ace the chance to raise their low-ball offer (so far as I was concerned, if I never heard about Ace again in my life it was too soon. I was very frightened of my new status as a person without a regular paycheck, and as a result I was silly about a lot of things). Ace raised their offer to \$12.5K, still below what Tor had on the table, and I gleefully took Tor's offer.

I like *The Forlorn Hope*, but I've never felt a desire to write a sequel to it. The book was meant to have sequels, but I never from the first intended to write them; I'd ended it at the point that satisfied me.

Xenophon, I think, would have understood.

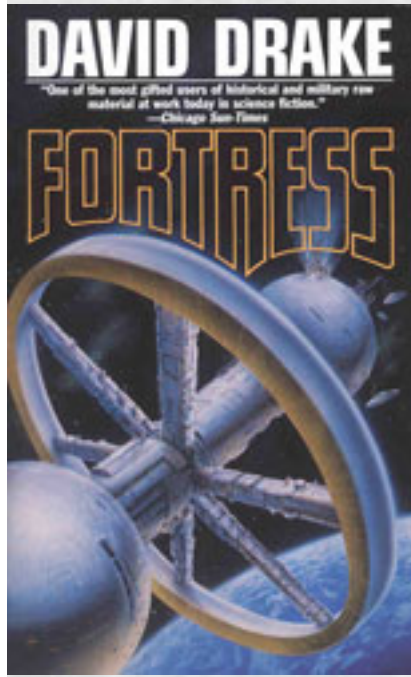
--*Dave Drake*

Note: The Forlorn Hope has been reprinted by Tor, September 2006.

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FORTRESS is the only solo book I've written when I didn't want to write it.

When Jim Baen left Tor Books to found his own publishing house, Baen Books, I intended to continue working for both men. (They're both friends of mine, and friends to one another.) To emphasize this, I told Tom to decide what he wanted me to write as my next book. He wanted a sequel to *Skyripper* (which has its own entry) that involved using the Strategic Defense Initiative (the Star Wars defense) against invading aliens.

Boy! did I not want to write that book.

Partly that's because I had doubts about SDI technology. (I still have doubts, but considered as a political initiative SDI was a brilliant stroke that put paid to the Soviet Union.) I could argue around that, however; the real problem was that I didn't want to go back into the mind of Tom Kelly.

All of my characters are either parts of me or other people as I filter them through the medium of my own mind. Tom Kelly is me on a very bad day.

Fortress and *Skyripper* have many virtues, including great car chases, gunfights, and an examination of class structures and intraservice hostility within the US intelligence community (which last went right over the heads of some British reviewers, I found to my amusement; Brits are unused to thinking of class outside their own national terms). Kelly also has virtues; but he won't compromise, and he's absolutely ruthless.

Like I said, me on a bad day. I was glad to finish the book and be able to bury that character a little deeper in my psyche again.

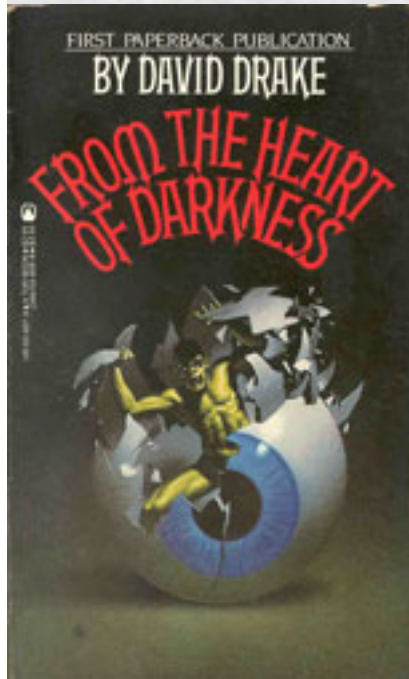
--Dave Drake

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LORD OF THE ISLES *Isles Series* (Tor/1997) [Dave's comments](#)
QUEEN OF DEMONS *Isles Series* (Tor/1998)
SERVANT OF THE DRAGON *Isles Series* (Tor/1999)
MISTRESS OF THE CATACOMBS *Isles Series* (Tor/2001)
GODDESS OF THE ICE REALM *Isles Series* (Tor/2003)
MASTER OF THE CAULDRON *Isles Series* (Tor/2004)
FORTRESS OF GLASS *Crown of the Isles Trilogy*(Tor/2006)
THE MIRROR OF WORLDS *Crown of the Isles Trilogy*(Tor/2007)



Contents of FROM THE HEART OF DARKNESS

- Introduction by Karl Edward Wagner, MD
- Men Like Us
- Something Had to be Done
- The Automatic Rifleman
- Than Curse the Darkness
- Firefight
- The Red Leer
- The Shortest Way
- Best of Luck
- Dragons' Teeth
- Out of Africa
- The Dancer in the Flames
- Smokie Joe
- Children of the Forest
- Blood Debt
- The Barrow Troll
- The Hunting Ground

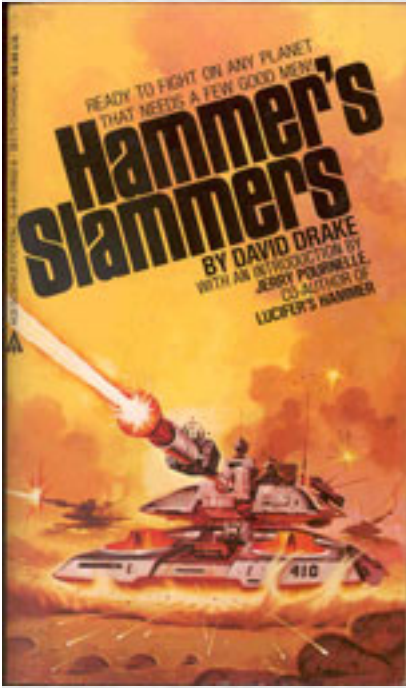
My original title for this collection was BALEFIRES. Jim Baen asked me to change it late in the process because a big-budget book of that title was due out shortly. I may use the title on the planned Fedogan & Bremer collection of my early horror stories, but by this point I'm not sure it's a good title.

--Dave Drake

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Contents of HAMMER'S SLAMMERS, with note as to which omnibus volume holds the material now.

- Intro: Mercenaries and Military Virtue by Jerry Pournelle
- But Loyal to His Own (*The Butcher's Bill*)
- The Butcher's Bill (*The Butcher's Bill*)
- Under the Hammer (*The Tank Lords*)
- Cultural Conflict (*The Butcher's Bill*)
- Caught in the Crossfire (*Caught in the Crossfire*)
- Hangman (*The Butcher's Bill*)
- Standing Down (*The Butcher's Bill*)
- Interludes: *Supertanks*, *The Church of the Lord's Universe*, *Powerguns*, *Backdrop to Chaos*, *The Bonding Authority*, and *Table of Organization and Equipment*, *Hammer's Regiment* (*The Tank Lords*, as *Appendix*) The Baen (1987) edition adds *The Tank Lords* (*The Tank Lords*)

HAMMER'S SLAMMERS is a short story collection, not a novel, and my first book. It made it possible for me to become a full-time writer, though I didn't realize it at the time.

I'd sold a story as an undergraduate, another story after I started law school, and even one while I was in Nam. After I came back I continued writing at a faster rate, in part because I became friends with two writers in the Triangle area: Manly Wade Wellman and Karl Edward Wagner. Manly and Karl suggested that I use Southeast Asian settings instead of writing historical fantasies. I wrote a fantasy, *Arclight*, and an SF story, *Contact!* and both sold. These were set in Nam (come to think, both were based on things that happened in Cambodia), but there was no military theme to the stories.

Then I wrote *The Butcher's Bill*: an sf story about soldiers and war rather than an sf story with soldiers

as characters. It didn't sell to quite a number of markets. One of the editors rejecting it was Fred Pohl who said it required too sophisticated a knowledge of the military for the entry-level anthology he was buying for. I immediately wrote *Under the Hammer* in which the reader could view the milieu through the eyes of a young recruit who got on-the-job training in somewhat the same fashion as I did in Cambodia.

Fred rejected that one also; but pretty much by chance I'd used the same unit, Hammer's Slammers, as the setting for both stories even though I was only trying to sell the *second* story at the time. I had a series.

Jim Baen bought those two stories for *Galaxy* and another in the series besides. He rejected two more, but when he took over as sf editor of Ace Books he asked my agent for a collection of Hammer stories which would include the five already written and additional wordage to bring the book up to length.

All that was important, but the stories were more important to me as self-therapy than they were as the start of a career. They gave me a chance to write about what I'd seen and heard; about the men I'd served with and person I'd become in that time. Being able to get that out on paper helped me keep it between the ditches and (from what they've told me) helped other veterans by showing them that they weren't alone.

At one point I hoped the stories would help civilians understand also. I don't think that can happen. It's nobody's fault, it's just a matter of people not having the background to hear what the words mean to people who've been there.

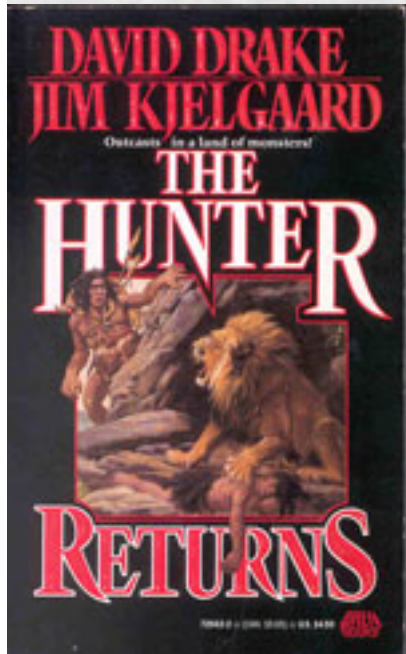
That's OK. I've still been able to do something for myself and my people.

--*Dave Drake*

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THE HUNTER RETURNS owes its genesis to the fact that Jim Kjelgaard's estate was represented by a very clever agent, Eleanor Wood. Jim Baen and I both were big fans of Kjelgaard's YA (Young Adult) novels when we were growing up, but the one that had the greatest impact on Jim was *Fire-Hunter*, which I hadn't read. For Jim it was one of the two books which he believes were the most formative on him. (The other was *Against the Fall of Night*, by the way.)

Eleanor learned this--and offered the book to Jim for reprint. He took it, though *Fire-Hunter* only marginally fits within an SF line: the novel describes the adventures of Hawk, a Paleolithic youth, who's expelled from his tribe for innovation. Hawk not only survives but flourishes; at the conclusion, the wretched remnants of his former tribe beg to be allowed to join him.

After Jim took *Fire-Hunter*, he called me. A YA in 1951 was 40,000 words. That wasn't long enough to publish as a mass-market paperback in 1991. Jim asked me to bulk the book up to 65K. I agreed because it sounded interesting; because I too had loved Kjelgaard; and because Jim's a very good friend.

Fire-Hunter has an episodic structure. After Hawk is expelled (for inventing the atlatl, the spear-thrower), he goes from strength to strength by taming dogs, inventing the bow and arrow, moving into a cave instead of living a nomadic life, inventing arrow poison, inventing pottery--well, you get the idea.

Jim suggested that I expand the novel by following the adventures of Hawk's tribe after they kicked him out. The new chapters could be fitted between the originals which describe Hawk's repeated triumphs. That sounded like a good idea to me, so I executed it. That's when things got interesting. Kjelgaard gives the size of the tribe when Hawk leaves it: over thirty, as I recall. When the starving survivors meet Hawk again, there are only seven of them left. I had seven chapters to reduce the numbers by three quarters. That isn't as easy as it might seem, but I'm a professional.

The trick was to avoid repetition; that is, I didn't want to have dire wolves kill people in more than one chapter. Also, I didn't want to use the animals over which Hawk himself was triumphing. Kjelgaard had taken most of the good ones: mammoths, sabertooth tigers, cave bears, and poisonous snakes.

Well, I still had dire wolves, heavy-bodied relatives of the timber wolf, which I've always liked. My tribesmen try to steal spears and fall into conflict with another tribe, but this was completely different from the fashion in which Hawk routs human invaders. And I used a herd of the great Imperial Bison, a species which became extinct before Europeans reached North America. (That was a good chapter; you can get rid of lots of spear-carriers, so to speak, in a bison stampede.)

After that.... A mixed herd of horses and camels aren't the most exciting animals on their own, but I used them as a lead-in to the conflict with another tribe. I thought of hyenas--really scary beasts--but it turns out that the only hyena in ancient North America was a cursorial hunter similar in habits to the cheetah. There was a canid specialized for crunching bones, though, so I used a group of them in one of the book's more grisly scenes.

I *still* needed to kill more people. This is where the chapters whose working titles were *The Giant Beaver of Death* and *The Marmot of Doom* came in. The first was a very large Pleistocene beaver, a grazer rather than a bark eater, which got rid of a hunter for me. The marmot was just that, a little furry critter that lives in a hole in the ground, but it in its way finished whittling the tribe down to the size I needed for the reunion with Hawk. (Come to think, there were *lots* of grisly scenes in my chapters.)

I sent the material in, feeling I'd done a good job on a project that was trickier than I'd assumed when I took it on. I immediately got a horrified call from Jim. Jim doesn't insist on books being all sweetness and light, but jeeppers! This was one of the most depressing thing he could remember ever reading!

I reminded him that my chapters were to be interfiled with Kjelgaard's, so that the person who bought the new book wasn't going to read straight through 25,000 words of men, women, and children dying horribly. Jim knew that, of course, but my text had shocked the fact out of his mind. I think says something about the strength, if nothing else, of what I'd written.

There were two remaining problems, a new title (since the book was substantially different from the original) and a cover. About that time Jim saw a show of work by Charles R Knight, the wonderful Turn-of-the-Century artist of prehistoric life. Among the paintings was a Paleo-Indian coming back to the cave to find his mate under the claws of a lion. It was perfect for the new book, so Jim bought reprint rights to it.

The painting's title was *The Hunter Returns*. I thought for a moment and suggested that we use it for the title of the expanded novel. That's what we did.

Incidentally, two books in 1991 used Knight's work on their covers. The other was *Wonderful Life*, Stephen J Gould's discussion of the Burgess Shale and the beginnings of life on Earth.

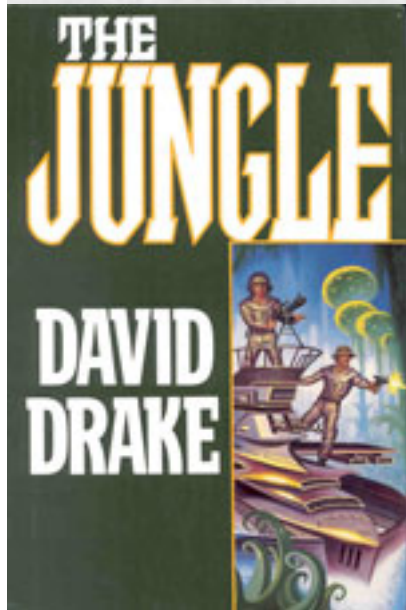
The Hunter Returns didn't make me a lot of money in exchange for the amount of research it required; but heck, the research was fun and it's not like I was missing meals as a result of poverty. I like to do different things in my writing. This project was not only different, it was a lot of fun.

--*Dave Drake*

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THE JUNGLE grew out of the series of Tor dos-a-dos double novels which I discuss in my comments on [Surface Action](#). You can check the background there, so I won't repeat myself.

Tor had terminated that series, but my plan remained basically the same: to write a short novel that could be packaged with Henry Kuttner's novella *Clash By Night*. That 1943 classic was a formative influence on me, and I wanted to bring it back into print.

I like to stretch myself in my writing by doing something new each time. The setting of this one would be the same Kuttner Venus as *Surface Action*: land masses covered with ravaging jungles; domed underwater cities; and competition between cities through proxy battles by fleets of mercenary warships.

Surface Action had been a very simple story stylistically, though. I decided to use three viewpoint characters in the new piece, and to run one strand of the story in continuous story present. Paired with each such chapter was another, from the same viewpoint but at widely scattered periods of the story past.

The result was far and away the most stylistically complex thing I've ever written, even compared to the Northworld trilogy. I'm really pleased with the way it turned out.

Another aspect of the book came from Anthony Price, one of the best writers of spy novels. Most of his novels have contemporary settings, but he did one that was never published in the US: *The Hour of the Donkey*, set in the chaos of the Fall of France and the prelude to the British withdrawal at Dunkirk.

The Hour of the Donkey is about real heroes: people who go on doing their job because it's the only thing they understand as the world goes to pieces about them. They don't think about what they're doing as remarkable; mostly they don't even feel that they're carrying their own weight. They're confused and afraid; they make mistakes, and the best of them were never saints.

But they go on until they're killed; and because of them, others can go on also.

I was lucky enough to know and serve with some of those people in the Blackhorse. I hope I did them justice in *The Jungle*.

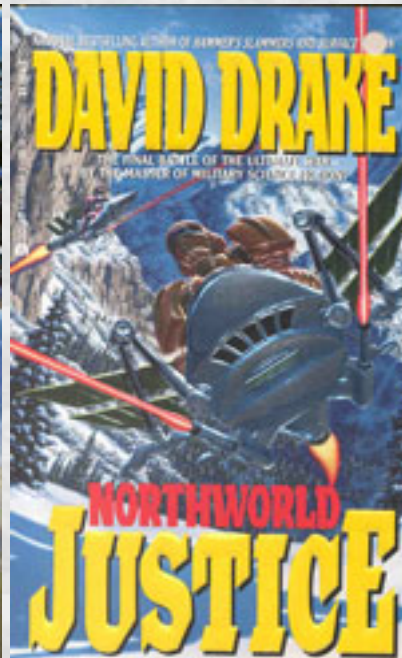
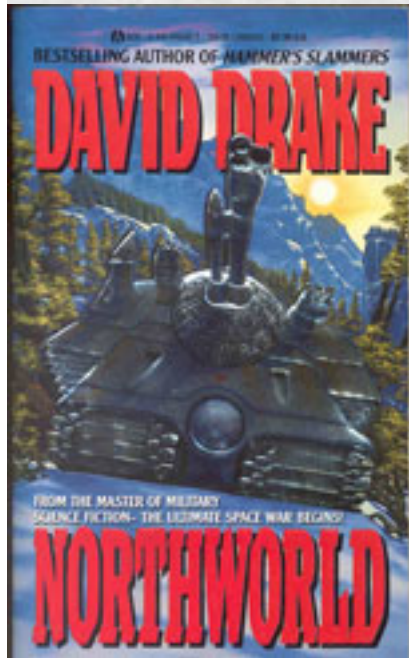
And I hope that if the time comes, I'll be one of those who goes on also.

--*Dave Drake*

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I wrote NORTHWORLD because Beth Fleisher, a wonderful editor, told me as I rose after we'd had breakfast at a convention that if I ever wanted to do something for a larger house than Baen Books, she at Ace would like to see it.

I sat down again. we--my wife, son, and I--had just gotten back from Iceland. I had an idea for a very complex series Of SF novels using Norse myth as their basis. I told Beth that, and added that I wanted \$100,000 for the trilogy. (I'd gotten \$22.SK when I last wrote a contract, but that had been some time earlier and my books were doing well.)

Beth said, "Let me be clear on this: you'll do all three books for a hundred thousand dollars, not a hundred thousand per book?" I agreed that those were my terms, but added that while a turn-down was fine, I would get very angry if Ace made a lowball counteroffer. (see my comments on *The Forlorn Hope*.)

Beth came back in two days with agreement in principle. I didn't think the Archangel Gabriel could've gotten the Ace bureaucracy to move that fast. (I said above that Beth was wonderful. she still is, but I regret that she's no longer editing.)

I then got down to plotting what I knew was the most complicated book of my life, as well as the work that would determine my career as a writer. I wrote reams of notes (as I always do), but the pieces didn't fit together the way they usually did. I got very depressed.

Then I had my teeth checked; learned in the midst of getting a crown that one tooth was cracked straight down through the roots and had to come out entirely; and when it did, immediately found my brain worked again. I'd been in constant low-level pain for about six months. I wasn't consciously aware of it,

but it had short-circuited the higher reaches of my mind where the plotting took place.

While I was writing *Northworld*, Beth called to ask what the book was about because they needed to put a cover on it. I sent her a scene of people dueling in powered personal armor. Beth called back in a week. "We had a cover conference on your book," she said. "We're going to put a tank on the cover. Is there a tank in the book?"

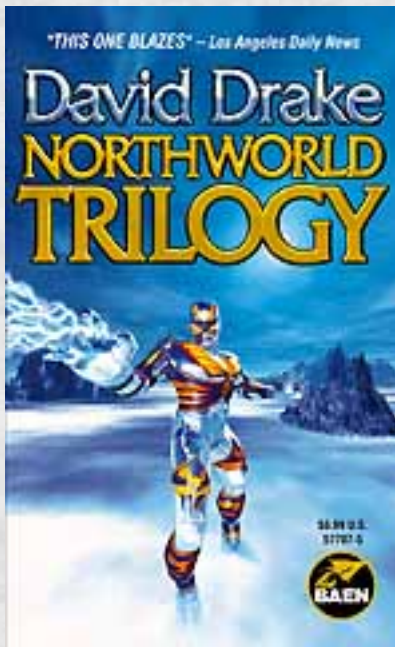
I told her that there would be, now that I'd been told about the cover. And there is.

I made what I thought was a pointless change from my normal procedure by adding a short afterward to *Northworld*. For years my friends Jim Baen and Mark Van Name had been urging me to do that, telling people the literary and historical background of the work. I regarded this as silly: the story was the story, good or bad; and no better or worse because it had a background in history, classical literature, or (here) Norse myth. But I did it anyway, because Jim and Mark are very smart and unquestionably have my best interests at heart.

Lo and behold, all the reviews of *Northworld* noted the intricate play of Norse myth in the novel. well, yes; I'd precised the *Elder Edda*, the *Prose Edda*, and the *Volsungensaga* before I even started to plot. But I always work that way: I'd outlined all of Procopius' works save for *The Buildings* before I started plotting my first novel, *The Dragon Lord*. The only difference with *Northworld* was that I told the reviewers what I'd done; and, being told, they were able to see what I in my innocence had thought was obvious.

Live and learn. I frequently write explanatory essays now. I'm extremely proud of the three Northworld books (*Northworld*, *Vengeance*, and *Justice*; reprinted in one volume as *The Northworld Trilogy* by Baen Books). They aren't gentle works, because they catch the feel of a world of ice and fire; but they're some of my best writing. The viewpoint character, Nils Hansen, is a highly emotional man who doesn't let emotion or anything else get in the way of what he sees as his job. I found it easy to identify with a man like that.

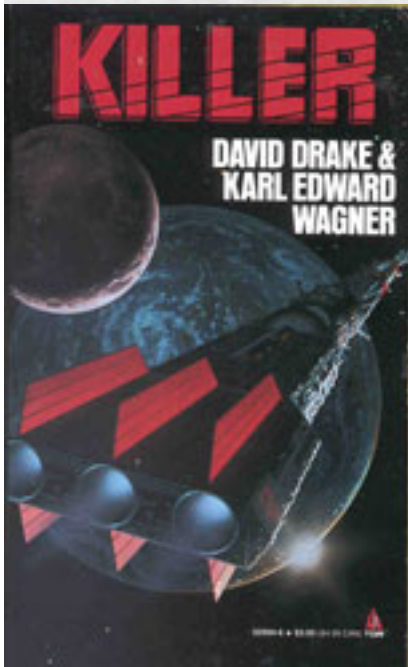
--*Dave Drake*



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KILLER holds a lot of memories for me, most of them bad. Sometimes things work out that way.

August Derleth died in 1971. His small press, Arkham House, was the only market to which I'd sold fiction. F&SF published some fantasy but not (as I learned by trying) heroic fantasy; so when I wrote *Hunter's Moon*, a heroic fantasy set in Italy under the Emperor Domitian, I sent it to the other possible market: *Fantastic*. Ten years earlier under Cele Goldsmith/Lalli, *Fantastic* had been a very good magazine. That was no longer the case, but beggars can't be choosers.

I wouldn't have been surprised if the story'd been rejected, but in fact it didn't come back at all. Letters and self-addressed reply cards to the editor over the next couple years had no effect whatever. (Knowing more about the editor than I did thirty years ago, I'm not surprised at what happened.)

I hadn't kept a copy of the final draft, a remarkably stupid mistake even for a newbie writer like me. *Hunter's Moon* was gone forever.

In 1974 a fan decided to put out a Karl Wagner fanzine and gave Karl *carte blanche* over the contents. To add variety to his own work, Karl asked if he could rewrite my second draft (a typescript with extensive holograph interlineations) and use it in the fanzine. I was too disgusted with what had happened to the story (and my own stupidity!) to revise the story again, so I cheerfully agreed.

Karl rewrote *Hunter's Moon*, added a major character, expanded the text by 50%, and retitled it *Killer*. It was published in the fanzine, *Midnight Sun*, as by Karl Edward Wagner and David A Drake, still in 1974.

Karl's career had a spectacular but brief *fluit* before dissolving in alcohol and missed deadlines; his last

novel, a Conan pastiche, came out in 1979. Then in 1983 Jim Baen started Baen Books and needed material badly. Jim, knowing I was worried about Karl, asked me to collaborate with him on a horror novel based on the story *Killer*. Payments would be structured to encourage Karl to perform.

I agreed. Karl agreed. Then things started to get very bad.

Normally the authors of collaborations are billed in alphabetical order. Karl insisted that because he was the more important author, his name had to come first. I wasn't going to quarrel about it, but Jim went ballistic and absolutely refused. The agent Karl and I shared asked me to beg Jim to let Karl's name come first as Jim's personal favor to me; otherwise Karl would nut.

I did it. Jim, fuming, agreed. Over the next couple months I pointed out to Karl exactly what it meant to piss off a publisher as badly as that business had pissed off Jim (and me too; believe me, me too). Karl had a sudden change of heart and decided the billing should be alphabetical.

I wrote a complete rough draft of the novel longhand, then keyed it into my early word processor. I gave the typescript to Karl. Then, for a long time, nothing happened.

Afterwards it turned out that Karl had begun by moving scenes around and changing motivations. (As an aside, in my draft characters occasionally said something snide about the medical profession; all of those comments were struck out.) By the time Karl was two-thirds of the way through, he'd had to scrap a goodly chunk of text because the action of it no longer followed the revised early chapters. In order to have a novel of contract length, Karl would have to write 10-15,000 words himself... and he couldn't.

The book was scheduled; time was running very short. Karl finally managed to grind out the wordage in a chase through the sewers and sent in the book. The last 15,000 words were xeroxes of my rough draft with some of the typos corrected.

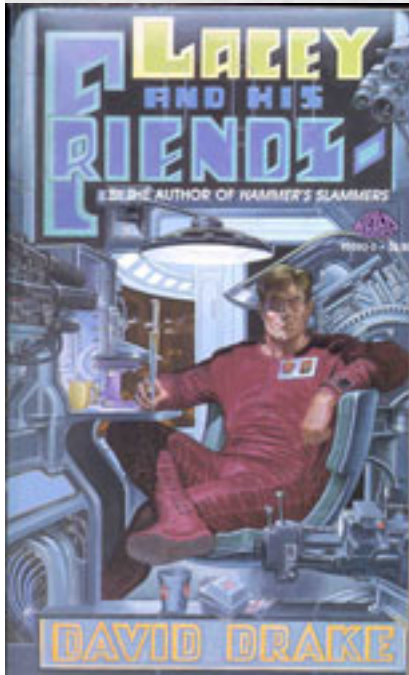
I was furious when Baen Books described the state of the manuscript. I certainly didn't consider my drafts to be publishable at the time (and even now, with a lot more experience, I always do at least three edit passes after the rough). Jim pulled the last section from production and gave me a chance to give it a degree of polish.

A lot of people like *Killer*. I had fun researching the Roman backgrounds; my earliest stories were horror, and *Killer* was the only time I returned to that milieu at novel length. But you know, I have really bad feelings about the whole long history of the piece. Sometimes things work out that way.

--Dave Drake

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Contents of LACEY AND HIS FRIENDS

- Nation Without Walls
- The Predators
- Underground Travellers
- Time Safari

I've had a lot of good book covers. I've never had a cover better than Steve Hickman's for this volume.

The three Lacey stories are harsher than anything else I've written. It's probably not a coincidence that I wrote them in the later '70s when I was starting to raise my head up a little. For the first five years or more after I got back to the World I was afraid to do that.

By contrast, Travellers is a gentle, upbeat time travel story, and Time Safari a novella about hunting dinosaurs. Neither one has any heavy emotional baggage for me.

The Lacey stories were successful in a commercial as well as (I believe) a literary sense. I've been asked to do more of them; and have refused, because that's not a place I want my head to go back to.

The thing is, if I hadn't written the stories maybe my head would still be back there.

--*Dave Drake*

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WITH THE LIGHTNINGS *RCN Series* (Baen/1998) [Dave's comments](#)

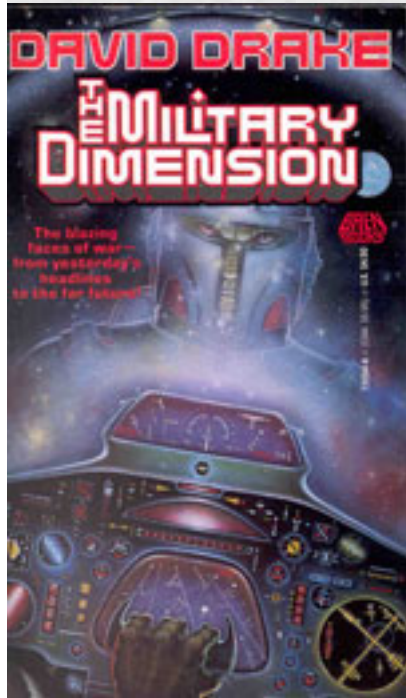
LT LEARY, COMMANDING *RCN Series* (Baen/2000)

THE FAR SIDE OF THE STARS *RCN Series* (Baen/2003)

THE WAY TO GLORY *RCN Series* (Baen/2005)

SOME GOLDEN HARBOR *RCN Series* (Baen/2006)

WHEN THE TIDE RISES *RCN Series* (Baen/2008)



Contents of THE MILITARY DIMENSION

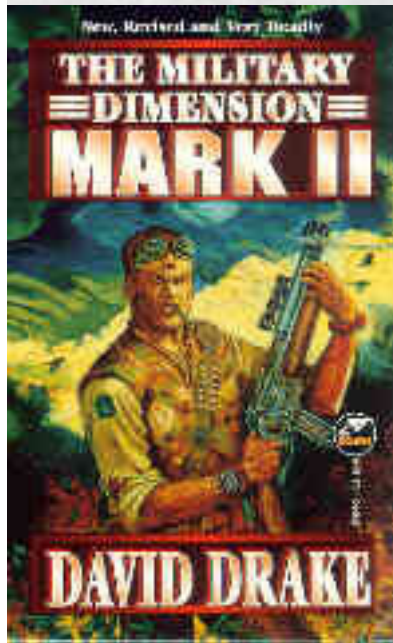
- Introduction: Welcome to the War Zone
- Rescue Mission
- The Dancer in the Flames
- Arclight
- Band of Brothers
- Firefight
- Contact!
- Best of Luck
- The Guardroom
- The Last Battalion
- The Tank Lords
- The Way We Die

I've written quite a lot of military SF. This collection (and its expanded reissue [Mark II](#)) weren't intended to collect all of it (that would take a very big book, even for the short fiction) but rather to show the range possible within that sub-genre.

--*Dave Drake*

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Contents of MARK II

- Introduction: Welcome to the War Zone
- Rescue Mission
- The Dancer in the Flames
- Arclight
- Band of Brothers
- Firefight
- Contact!
- As Our Strength Lessens
- Best of Luck
- The Guardroom
- The Last Battalion
- The Tank Lords
- The End
- The Way We Die
- Afterword: One War Later

This is the expanded reissue of [*The Military Dimension*](#).

--*Dave Drake*

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OLD NATHAN is a book I wrote for myself. There've been books that didn't do as well as I'd hoped (*The Sea Hag* is a striking example), but I think *Old Nathan* is the only one I wrote in the certain knowledge that it wasn't going to make a lot of money for anybody.

Jim Baen did me a favor by publishing *Old Nathan* because he knew it was important to me. This is an example of why I work for friends. Sure, it's business; but if that was all it was, I could've stayed a lawyer. (Though Jim assures me that he didn't lose money, just the profit that he'd have expected on a new David Drake title.)

The arc of five stories take place in 1830 in what's now Lewis County, Tennessee. The lead character, Old Nathan, is a cunning man--a hedge wizard. I consciously modeled him on John the Balladeer, to my mind the most evocative of the many characters created by my friend Manly Wade Wellman.

I wrote the first two stories in the series in May, 1986, the month after Manly died... and that's why the book was important to me.

The stories are Appalachian versions of classic English folktales. In this I was guided by *The Jack Tales* by Richard Chase (whom the Wellmans knew and intensely disliked, by the by), though in form mine are as realistic as I could make tales of haunts, witches, and the mouth of Hell.

I wrote the pieces in dialect, following texts by a number of contemporary writers (in particular Mrs Trollope) and in the full knowledge that this wasn't going to be a good thing for general comprehension and wide readership. I was doing the stories for myself and for Manly; I decided to do them right. (This is one of the few times I've consciously written something in a less commercial fashion than I could. There are many things that I don't try because it'd turn my stomach to do so, but under normal circumstances I pride myself on clean, clear prose.)

The Central Tennessee setting came about because my parents retired to a tract in the hills above Hohenwald, Tennessee, and I visited them there. Though the town itself is fairly flat, the region to the north and east (in the direction of the new Saturn plant at Spring Hill) is as I've described it in these stories.

Old Nathan was from its inception an episodic novel, not a collection of stories like (for example) *Hammer's Slammers*. I wrote only *The Bull* and *The Fool* in 1986, but I plotted all five stories at the same time. There was no market for them. My friend Stu Schiff published the first two in his little magazine *Whispers* and in one of his Doubleday anthologies of the same title; but I had debts to pay and only a limited amount of time to spend grieving for a friend. I went on to other projects.

Then in 1990 my friend Jim Baen, for reasons that boil down to the fact that we *are* friends, offered to publish the book at an advance that wouldn't hurt either of us. I gleefully wrote the other three stories.

The cover, by the way, was a painting that Kentuckian Larry Elmore did for his own reasons. It had appeared as the cover of a gaming magazine and as a limited-edition print before it went on *Old Nathan*. I have had very few covers--maybe only one, that of *Lacey and His Friends*--which more perfectly capture the feel and setting of the work within.

There are lots of ways to judge the success of a book. By the measure of my own personal satisfaction, *Old Nathan* and *Redliners* are the books of mine that rank highest.

--Dave Drake

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Contents of *Other Times Than Peace*:

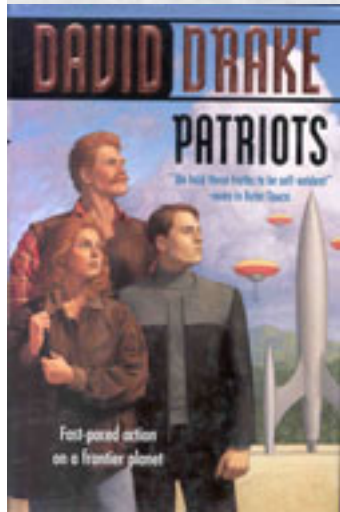
- *Lambs to the Slaughter*
- *Men Like Us*
- *The Day of Glory*
- *The Interrogation Team*
- *A Death in Peacetime*
- *Dreams in Amber*
- *Safe to Sea*
- *The Murder of Halley's Comet*
- *The Hunting Ground*
- *The False Prophet*
- *A Grand Tour*

--*Dave Drake*

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PATRIOTS was the idea of Tor's publisher, Tom Doherty. Before I explain how that came about, let me remark that I've noticed that my commentaries involve more discussion of business than they do of art. That accurately reflects the subjects' relative importance to me; but I should add that neither do I speak much about craftsmanship, which I find *hugely* important.

I offered to do a major book for Tor for a large price (\$60K, if I remember the contract correctly), and a shorter YA title for only \$20K. That way I could honestly tell other publishers that Tor was giving me \$60K/book, while making it clear to Tor that I wasn't out to screw them. Tom agreed and suggested that I use Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys as the subject for the YA.

My first reaction was to make sure that Tom meant Ethan Allen would become the paradigm for an SF novel rather than for me to write an actual historical. (He did.) Then I started researching the subject.

Normally I don't research my books *per se*. That is, I pick things that interest me and read heavily in them, but I already know a lot about whatever it is. In this case, I come from the Midwest (see the Iowa section of this website) and have only a passing interest in the American revolution. Tom Doherty, however, was born and raised in Connecticut. Ethan Allen was as much a part of Tom's heritage as Julian Dubuque was of mine (as well as being an important national figure, which I don't claim for Dubuque).

As a result I knew almost nothing about Ethan Allen until I started researching *Patriots* as an adult. I had only the most general preconceptions about the man, nothing more detailed than an assumption that he was a sturdy patriot. The facts were a lot more complicated--and interesting--than I'd dreamed.

Ethan Allen was big, powerful fellow with a long history of violence, drunkenness, and drunken violence. He'd been hired by a group of colonial financiers who'd been selling land on dodgy titles. A rival group of financiers had the legal apparatus of the colony of New York in its pocket, so Allen raised the Green Mountain Boys as muscle to deal with settlers whose land titles came from New York, as well as with the New York sheriffs who tried to back those settlers up.

When the colonial governments broke with the British crown in 1776, Allen and his gang on their own initiative captured Ft. Ticonderoga--and with the fort, the artillery that allowed the revolution to survive its first few months. Nobody knows why. Absolutely nothing in Allen's previous life suggests he was a patriot in any ordinary sense of the word. I had a lot of fun considering the motivations of a man like that; and since I didn't start thinking about him until I was an adult, I was able to compare him with a couple friends whom I could imagine doing exactly the same thing.

There were other interesting things about Allen. While unquestionably violent, neither he nor the violent men under his command killed anybody. That's really remarkable. Taking Allen as a model, I wrote a book in which nobody is killed (which a lot of people will find remarkable also).

I'm pleased with *Patriots*. Though it may not look it from the outside, the book stretched me in useful fashions. It didn't sell especially well (the YA market, especially for a solo book--Tor didn't have a YA line for it to drop into--is tough), but I've gotten a lot of appreciative comments and been handed many copies of the book to sign.

Gordy Dickson read *Patriots* in manuscript (I didn't send it to him; I think a mutual friend may have told him about what I was doing, causing him to ask for a copy) and really liked it. He suggested that I continue mining what he felt was a new vein of Frontier SF. I was going in different directions, but I felt and feel greatly honored by the praise of a writer who's given me and the SF field in general so many great things to read.

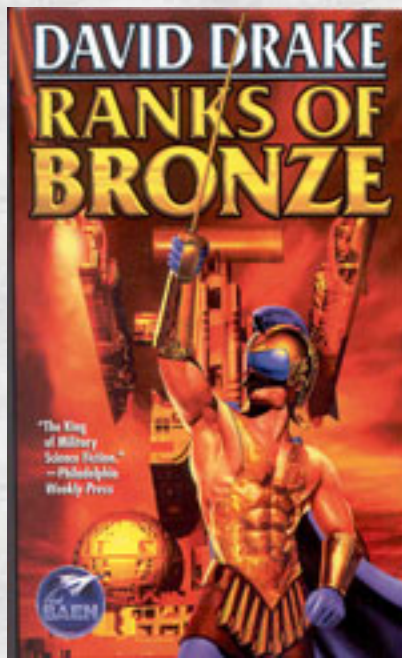
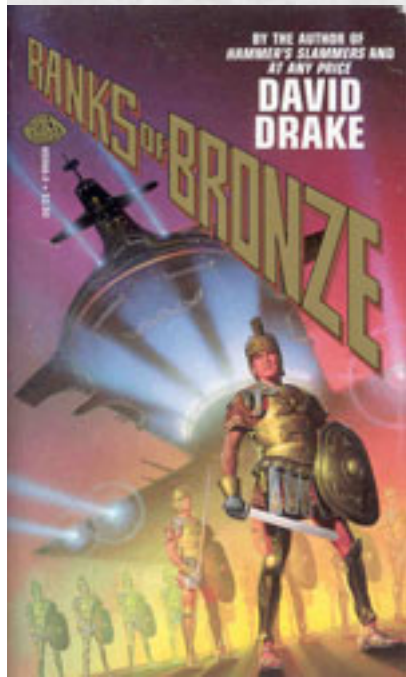
So *Patriots* was a win in its own terms--and I got \$60K for the next book I did for Ace.

--*Dave Drake*

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RANKS OF BRONZE arose from two bits of knowledge I ran into while I was an undergraduate. I don't know which came first, but I wouldn't have written the story--and the later novel--without both occurring.

I read all of Horace then for the first time. In an Ode he bewails the disgrace of Roman soldiers captured in Parthia taking foreign wives and being lost forever to their fatherland. At about the same time I read that, I learned in my Chinese history course that when China expanded westward during the Former Han Dynasty, Chinese troops in the neighborhood of modern Nepal met and defeated mercenaries equipped in what appears to be Roman fashion. It's possible that the troops were prisoners whom the Parthians captured at Carrhae in 56 BC and sold eastward as military slaves (like the Mamelukes of a later day).

I found Horace's lament very moving and speculation about the Roman prisoners being sold as a fighting force fascinating. The ideas bounced around in my head until in 1975 I wrote a very tight little story, *Ranks of Bronze*, in which the purchasers weren't Nepalese but rather star-travellers and the Romans' alien wives were *very* alien.

Jim Baen loved the story. Perhaps by chance, *Galaxy* actually paid me before publication, the only time that happened. (Five months later was the normal course of business.) When I read the printed version, I found Jim had added a couple hundred words of exposition. It made the story better, and I didn't go ballistic. (Getting paid early had probably mollified me.)

I'd done a lot of research on a 3500-word story, including buying and reading a Latin text of Vegetius. There was no economic justification for so much labor on a short story, but I wasn't writing as an economic endeavor. The care helped make *Ranks* a very good story.

When Jim started Baen Books, he asked me to turn *Ranks* into a novel. It took me a while to figure out that I could do tale as a series of campaigns. When Janet Morris reminded me of *The Battle of the Frogs and the Mice*, a work attributed to Hesiod, the last bits fell into place.

I wrote the book. It's one of my most artistically successful novels, and it sold well besides. And you remember all that research I did that made no economic sense? Because I'd gone to the effort to begin with, I could expand the story into a novel very easily. Doing a job right the first time should be its own justification, but I've found that not infrequently the universe decides to put money in your pocket also.

Frequently people have suggested that I do a sequel to *Ranks*. (Jim Baen most often.) I wrote the book as a story of growing up, a Bildungsroman. At the end of the novel, the viewpoint character has become a man and there's no story to continue from that point. That's *my* opinion.

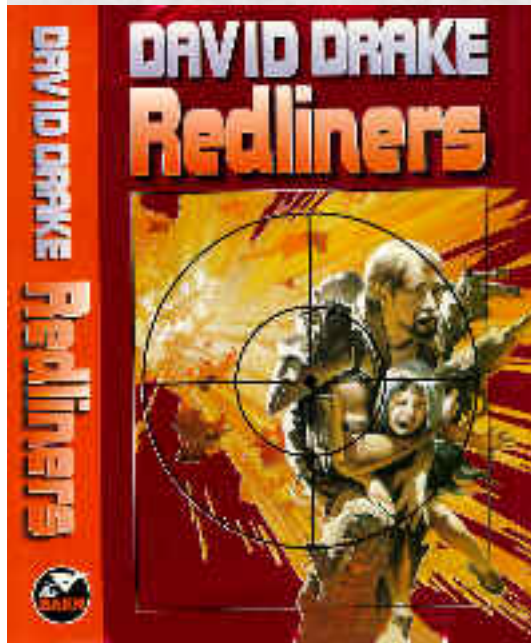
Jim kept asking. Finally he suggested that I edit a shared universe anthology based on *Ranks*, and in a moment of weakness I agreed. The story I wrote for the anthology involves wholly different characters from the novel, but both Eric Flint and Steve Stirling continued my original characters. The folks who wanted a direct sequel will get their wish.

--*Dave Drake*

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REDLINERS is possibly the best thing I've written. It's certainly the most important thing, both to me personally and to the audience I particularly care about: the veterans, the people who've been there, wherever 'there' happened to be.

Having said that, *Redliners* isn't a book for everybody. It's very tough even by my standards, and to understand the novel's underlying optimism you have to have been some very bad places.

I didn't realize until after I'd written *Redliners* how many people have been those places. To be perfectly honest, until I came out the other side--as I think I have, pretty much, most days--I didn't realize how bad the places I'd been were.

The plot germ started when I pitched three ideas to Susan Allison of Ace for a new contract. She chose to have me write a third book in the *Lands beyond Pluto* (Sir Francis Drake) series, which became *Fireships*.

The other two ideas were 1) a fairly direct development of the Sumerian legend of Inanna's journey to the Underworld (in the manner I handled the Norse Eddas in the Northworld series), and 2) a much transformed version of the same myth involving veteran soldiers who entered an environment even worse than what they were used to and who came back out the the other end. Susan quite reasonably said that the Inanna notions offered too much scope to my love of complex plotting.

But that last idea didn't go away. I got to thinking at a conscious level about the problem of reintegrating veterans into civil society. My own reintegration involved one day being with my unit in Viet-Nam and 72 hours later sitting in the lounge of the Duke University Law School, waiting to begin my fourth semester after a two-year interruption. Other Nam vets had similar experiences.

Those who stayed in the military were in a different situation, one I can't personally speak to; but the people I served with in the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment were mostly draftees like me, and even the lifers had to get out some time. What happened then?

I suspect the answer was generally my answer: I kept it between the ditches. I was considered weird in law school but heck, I'd been weird in the army also. (One of the guys in my 6-man intelligence unit [BICC] in Cambodia recently commented that the only thing he remembered about me is that I was always translating Latin.) I was a whole lot stranger for the first five or ten years after I got back than I think was obvious from the outside, but I didn't let it out in really bad ways. Thank goodness I had my writing (though it added its share of stresses, too).

I think there are better ways to reintegrate veterans than were in place in 1971, but I'm not sure there are any really good ones. My job is fiction, though, not social engineering, so I created a radical solution that could only be imposed by an autocracy as extreme as that of modern-day China. (In passing I'll note that I wouldn't care to live in that society; but then, I didn't much like going to Cambodia in the fashion I did either.)

That's how the notion came to be. It leaves the question of why I picked an infantry unit rather than tankers like the men I served with in Nam (and who became the basis of my Hammer series).

I wasn't consciously aware of how I'd made that choice until I put together the collection *Grimmer Than Hell* (a February, 2003, release from Baen Books). It includes the stories I wrote for *The Fleet*, a shared universe I co-edited with Bill Fawcett back in the late '80s. Bill conceived *The Fleet* as Military SF, but in fact--and properly--most of the stories we bought were space opera.

My own entries in the six volumes were Military SF, however, following the command team of a special operations commando in a war that was about as messy as the one I'd been in. The series was open-ended; I'd thought/hoped it would end with the fourth volume, but it went on for two more. Well, that was real also. My characters behaved like people who knew the war would be over only when they died; and they kept on going, because they were soldiers and that was what they did. When the series did end, the characters were left with no certainty but the one I returned to the World with in 1971: the certainty of their own death.

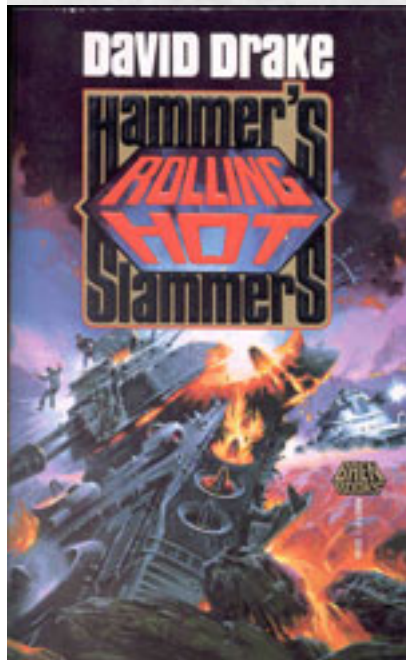
Fifteen years later I wrote *Redliners* about a unit very like theirs, fighting a war very like theirs--and I've come to realize, very like every war is to the people who fight it. The characters in *Redliners* got a chance to come back, though; and most unexpectedly, writing the novel allowed me to come back too--pretty much, on most days.

Maybe there could be a better result, but this one's a great improvement on what I had before.

--Dave Drake

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ROLLING HOT--the title is from military aviation, meaning the aircraft is moving to the attack with ordnance ready to fire--is based very loosely on Tet of '68. That's an event I'm glad to have missed, but a number of the folks I served with in 1970 had stories and even photographs of what the Blackhorse had been doing then.

For those of you who weren't around at the time, the Viet Cong made a massive win-the-war attack on US and South Vietnamese forces during the truce declared for the Lunar New Year holiday, Tet. Politically, it won them the war: Tet proved that President Johnson and the US generals had been lying when they claimed the VC was nearly finished as a fighting force. Such public support for the war as had previously existed vanished abruptly.

Militarily what happened is that the guerrillas came out in large numbers where US firepower slaughtered them. The Blackhorse was tasked to recover the huge Bien Hoa airbase, and that's just what happened. One platoon sergeant showed me his snapshots of VC bodies in windrows on the concrete runways where cal fifties and canister rounds from tank main guns had laid them.

The thing is, tanks don't fight wars by themselves; they're tools, controlled by the human beings inside them. In a very real sense, human beings also become tools under the stress of war: automatons which flee or die or win through. The situation short circuits the higher regions of the brain which make reasoned decisions. All the firepower in the world won't help if the crews are cowering in their bunkers rather than face determined enemies who outnumber them twenty to one.

Rolling Hot, like much of my fiction, is about people who don't run away. They aren't necessarily good people; their cause may not be any better than our attempt to save the brutally corrupt Saigon regime was; and they may lose, just as we did in Viet-Nam. But the fact that there are people who don't quit is

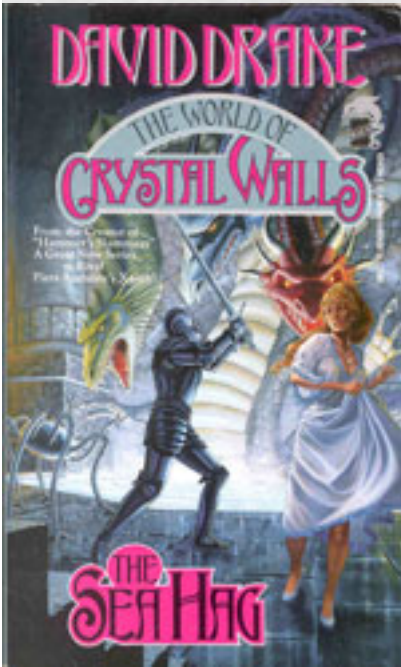
the reason that, for good or ill, the human race has survived. I'm proud to have served with them.

--*Dave Drake*

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THE SEA HAG was one of my attempts to write a commercially successful book that was different from anything I'd done before. The closest analog to my plan was The Dying Earth series by Jack Vance: a world in which magic works but the vestiges of ancient super-science remain also. (I hadn't read it at the time, but Vance's novelet *The Miracle Workers* is even closer to what I was trying to do than his Dying Earth stories.)

Though Vance gave me a model, I fashioned the action of *The Sea Hag* from fairy tales. Among the first books I read by myself were the Color Fairy Books edited by Alexander Lang. I reread several of them while I was plotting my novel as well as reading Alan Garner's recent (and brilliant) collections, but most of the tales I used were from the Pantheon collection *Russian Fairy Tales*.

The reason I turned to folktales was the same one that caused me to model *Cross the Stars* on *The Odyssey*: literature that's survived for thousands of years must resonate below the conscious level of the human psyche. I wanted to tap that power for my own writing.

A folktale hero generally has a sidekick who acts as mentor and provides help at crucial junctures. Rather than a talking crow or cat, I gave my hero a non-anthropoid robot (whom I named Chester after a beloved dog who'd come to a bad end). There was no conscious connection with R2-D2 of Star Wars; I think in fact it was a matter of convergent evolution.

I made Chester a sententious, half-humorous character like those of the westerns of my childhood--the Gabby Hayes/Andy Devine variety of sidekick. (I don't say this was a good idea; it's what I did.)

On whim, and because I was capable of doing it, Chester's aphorisms come from Wisdom Literature. (I don't say *that* was a good idea either.) Most cultures have such collections; the most familiar to

somebody raised in the Judeo-Christian tradition is the *Book of Proverbs*, but (for instance) one lay of the *Elder Edda* contains the wisdom Odin gained when he hung for three days on the tree. (An example of this Viking wisdom: 'Don't bandy words with a poor man in Parliament; just draw your sword and cut him down.') Chester's wisdom is Egyptian, from the 2nd millennium BC.

The Sea Hag wasn't Jim Baen's sort of book but he got behind it with a will. The result wasn't a disaster, but it certainly wasn't the commercial success I'd been trying for. A space opera written from my outline came out in the same list and outsold my solo novel both in absolute terms and in percentage of sell-through.

The funny thing, though, is that there are people who like *The Sea Hag* better than anything else I've written (and indeed, like the book when they don't like anything else I've written). The kinship to *The Dying Earth* was closer than I'd intended: both are cult classics, but neither has been a lot of help with the writer's mortgage.

Well, back to the drawing board. I never again attempted to use fairy tales directly in a book I hoped would have broad appeal (I consciously wrote *Old Nathan* for a limited audience).

But that doesn't mean I gave up on my basic intention. I used the tropes of fairy tales in my Isles series, but here I melded them into the structure of heroic fantasy in the Tolkien/Robert E Howard tradition. This time the commercial result was very good indeed. Will I go back to the World of Crystal Walls? Probably not. But you see, I never really left it.

--*Dave Drake*

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THE SHARP END is a book many people tell me is one of their favorites; they're generally surprised to learn I don't have a high opinion of it myself. I've given various reasons for my ill feelings, all of them true to a degree; but now, forcing myself to look at the situation from the safe distance of a decade, I'm ready to be honest.

The early '90s were a difficult period for me. I'd been a full-time freelance writer since 1981. I'd done all right financially from the beginning and from the mid-'80s on had done very well indeed. We'd bought a tract of land in the country and my wife was becoming increasingly demanding that we should start to build a (much larger) house on it. She was quite right: it was time. We arranged with an excellent and utterly trustworthy architect and contractor to begin work.

I was terrified to an irrational degree. Our son was in a private college, and I was very well aware that a freelance writer is in an extremely chancy business. I'd dealt with the uncertainty by buying nothing on time: if I couldn't pay cash, I waited. This understandably created stress at home, since people with much lower incomes were (for example) buying new cars.

I was, I repeat, irrational on the subject; though I think many people take--and certainly took, fifteen years ago--far too much for granted. My need for a completely controlled environment is in part a reaction to Viet Nam, which put an emotional loading on matters which others mostly saw from my reactions alone.

When I was firmly committed to building the new house, the Berlin Wall came down and the USSR collapsed. I was just as happy about that as anybody else, but one of the obvious consequences was that the US military would be downsized. Much of my income depended on Military SF, a subgenre which would be negatively impacted by the fact that there would be a million fewer young men and women with an interest in the military and time in barracks to read.

I say 'obvious' because it certainly was obvious to me, but I couldn't get anybody else to listen. I wrote space operas, in no sense Military SF, and saw them published with "The King of Military Science Fiction!" on the cover. And sure enough, Military SF took a serious hit. (I'm sure Cassandra would've agreed with me that there's no satisfaction in saying, "I told you so!" when your world is burning down around you.)

I had three publishers at the time: Tor, Ace, and Baen. My (wonderful) editor at Ace had left publishing. This had a bad result for my books there because though my new editor was a friend and very able, she was also a VP of Putnams, the parent corporation, and simply didn't have the time to work with individual titles. I learned that my next Ace book wouldn't be published for two years after I'd turned it in. There was going to be a considerable period in which no book of mine appeared.

I noted earlier in this essay that Nam was part of my problem. On the credit side, it--or at least the fact I served with the Blackhorse--taught me to react to bad situations instead of waiting for them to roll over me. I knew Jim Baen could bring a book out quickly, so I called him and arranged to do one to plug into the gap.

The problem was that Jim wanted something military. It struck me that I could satisfy him by having soldiers as my viewpoint characters while actually writing an action/adventure story. I'd use a six-man team assessing a gangster-ruled planet for potential mercenary deployment. The book could be honestly marketed as adventure if Jim came around to my way of thinking later. (He didn't.)

I stole the plot from Dashiell Hammett. His first novel, *Red Harvest*, has always been a favorite of mine (second only to *The Glass Key*).

When in 1962 I saw *A Fistful of Dollars*, the first spaghetti western, I assumed it'd been lifted from *Red Harvest* with the addition of an important scene from *The Glass Key*. I later learned that that Leone, the director, had copied Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*, and that it was Kurosawa who'd cribbed it from Hammett. I like both movies very much, however movie people are not only thieves (which doesn't bother me) but litigious thieves. With that in mind I wish to emphasize that the entire plot of *The Sharp End* came from Dashiell Hammett, not from Akira Kurosawa or Sergio Leone.

I adapted the plot and was proceeding happily with an 80,000 word paperback original when Jim called and told me he'd be doing the book as a hardcover. I wasn't one of the writers who demanded the prestige of hardcover publication. I made my money from mass-market paperbacks, and status isn't a major concern of mine. A hardcover needed more bulk than a paperback (even in the early '90s), but it was too late to add an additional 20-30K into the plot proper. Furthermore, the change would delay publication, the whole reason I was doing the book in the first place.

Man proposes, God disposes; and once more, thank God for Blackhorse training. I wrote introductory scenes giving the background of the six main characters, bringing the total wordage to 109,000--just what I'd been aiming at.

All six of my central characters are trying to redeem themselves. One of them, Johann Vierziger, is what Hammer's dead assassin and bodyguard, Joachim Steuben, might've been if he were returned to the waking world to find what in his case is redemption of a particularly muscular kind.

Many readers have asked me how that could happen. I don't have an answer or at least not a rational answer. I hope that everyone who's looking for redemption finds it somewhere, though; whether or not we can find a rational basis for it.

Jim pushed his sales force hard enough to get out a lot of copies of *The Sharp End*; more than half of them came back. Jim told me--volunteered to me with some irritation--that the book had failed in hardcover and that Military SF was in serious trouble. Neither of those things was news to me.

Things got better. My son graduated. I paid off the new house. I began writing epic fantasy successfully with covers that didn't refer to Military SF. And for that matter, Military SF picked up to previous levels for me, because writers who'd come into the subgenre because it was booming were sifted out of the marketplace when it crashed.

The paperback of *The Sharp End* did fine on initial release and continues to bring in money every royalty period. It's a good book, as it should be when I used a master like Dashiell Hammett for my model.

But the text itself is only a small part of what goes through my mind when I think about a book, and this book comes with a lot of baggage.

--*Dave Drake*

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SKYRIPPER was a more important book for me than I'd realized until this moment. In 1981 I was driving a bus for the Town of Chapel Hill, having decided that being a lawyer was killing me--and quitting the law business. I'd turned *Time Safari* in to Jim Baen, SF editor of Tor Books. He and Tom Doherty, the publisher, were pleased with the result.

At the time, technothrillers were a hot new genre. Tom, Jim, and Tor's financial backer decided that they wanted in on it and I was the guy to deliver for them. Jim called me, telling me what they wanted.

I was a little doubtful. I'd decided that I would write a mainstream historical novel set in the 1690s in England and India. I'd done an enormous amount of research and had well over a 100K words written. Tor agreed to buy that novel also (*Court of Diamonds*--my title; *The Diamond Court* as it appears in Tor documents) when it was finished, but I should get onto the technothriller first.

I dived straight in. We'd vacationed in Algeria the previous summer, so I set the book there. I did my usual amount of research. One day a woman on the bus I was driving insisted on learning what book I was reading on a layover. Parenthetically, driving a bus wasn't a bad job, but dealing with the public wasn't a part of the task that I ever warmed to. The woman shut up when I handed her *How to Kill, Volume III*.

The book proceeded. It was immediately evident not only that I didn't need to drive the bus for the sake of financial security, I actually lost money because my time would have been more productively spent in writing. I kept the job, however, because I was afraid that if I didn't force myself to get out and interact with people I'd get dangerously weird and reclusive. (My friends are probably chuckling as they read this.)

Then management dealt with a disciplinary problem (which had nothing to do with me) in a fashion that made my life there much more difficult. I exploded, "I don't have to take this crap!" And I didn't.

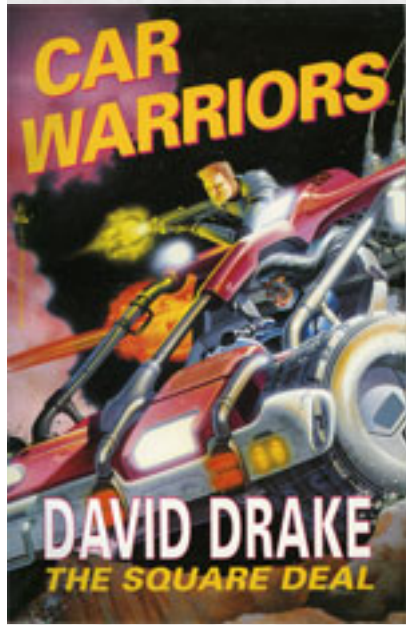
I gave my two weeks notice, and since then have been a full-time freelance writer.

--Dave Drake

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THE SQUARE DEAL started when a friend noticed that many publishers had books based on games but that Tor did not. She sold Tom Doherty, Tor's publisher, on the idea of books set in the Car Wars universe of Steve Jackson Games; called SJG to get their approval; and then called me.

Because I'm a successful writer, I get asked to do a lot of things. It's not easy for me to say no to friends--or for that matter, to anybody else--and I've been involved with a variety of projects that I wasn't personally enthusiastic about at the beginning. I've always learned something from the experience, but often the major lesson has been that I never want to do *that* again. (I've got pretty good instincts, but I'm also personally conservative. If I did only the things that I immediately wanted to do, I'd be a very narrow and limited person. Well, more limited and narrow.)

The initial proposal was that I create outlines for three books which would then be written by others. I turned this idea down for a variety of reasons, particularly because I'd been really unhappy with the process leading to *The War Machine*, the last of the Crisis of Empire books I'd plotted.

Further, working for Tor would mean a battle to get my name to follow that of the actual writer on the cover. I'd won that fight with Jim Baen (who wasn't any happier than the Tor marketing people would be) by saying that otherwise I wouldn't be involved in the project at all, but I didn't want to go over the same ground again. (I accept that my decision is unreasonable from a commercial standpoint. I have enough problems with the things that go through my mind at 3 AM, however, that I don't want to add an instance of me treating newbie writers in a fashion I had refused to be treated when I was a newbie.)

I counteroffered that I (solo) would write the first novel of the series for a lot less money than Tor was paying me for other things; Tor accepted my terms. The series would be called Car Warriors. By terms of the settlement with Lucasfilms, SJG could continue to use Car Wars on the game itself but could not use that name for any other purpose.

I got a packet of material from SJG, game modules and written comments by members of the SJG staff. (This was before I was on e-mail, so it was all hardcopy by mail.) There was even a comic book licensed to Marvel at the same time. I started reading.

I'd been heavily into Avalon Hill board games during the early '60s, and a little later I'd done some miniature wargaming. (For an odd echo of that, see <http://david-drake.com/haswargame.html>.) I'd never been involved with role playing games like Car Wars, though. That wasn't a major problem, but some aspects of the background were. Car Wars is an SF game in the sense that motorists in a near-future world shoot it out with one another in armed and armored cars. I could accept the premise in the name of getting a story off the ground, but the details sometimes ignored physics too. I'm a real believer in physics.

It was quite obvious that the game creators hadn't spent much time in combat. The vehicles were hugely over-weaponed, either ignoring recoil or mounting recoilless weapons (which balance the weight of the shell with a similar weight of powder gas blasting out the back of the gun) in closed turrets. "What do you do about the backblast?" I asked one of the creators. "We didn't think about that," he replied.

I had to think about it since I was putting my name on the book: I vented the recoilless rifles. I also dropped the armament to reasonable levels. 3d World technicals often mount guns whose recoil would tip the vehicle over if they were really fired; Car Wars went even farther in that direction.

In addition I came up with ablative armor which would be much more practical than the homogenous plastic sheeting of the game universe. This was stupid and unprofessional of me. My job was to write a story that conformed to the game, and I was instead trying to change one of the basic tenets of that game.

While I needed and accepted SJG direction on the game hardware, I was also getting commentary on my plot and prose. One of the initial suggestions from SJG had been that any story that would work for a western could work for Car Wars. I'm not a big fan of westerns, but when I was 13 I'd picked up (I don't know why) *Justice, My Brother!* by James Keene and had really liked it. I reread the book, found it just as well done as I remembered, and adapted the basic plot to my purposes.

I sent the completed plot to SJG as a courtesy. The STG staff responded that it was too downbeat. I ignored them, which was proper, but I also fulminated about having to deal with a gaggle of morons; which *wasn't* proper. Games people are used to operating in a collegial setting, much like movie people. They were simply behaving as was proper for them. I'm not a team player. (In fairness to me, a bunch of gamers who were trying to teach me how to plot my hundredth or hundred-and-fiftieth story weren't showing the best judgment either.)

I wrote the story my way with a couple technical assists from SJG. (One I'm embarrassed about: I had the DU rotor that powers the railgun spinning axially. That would've made the car impossible to turn. I knew better than that, but I had it wrong till SJG corrected me.) The book was short, so I went back and added a bit to the middle (the scene of removing the white phosphorous particles in the bathtub and the chapter immediately previous). SJG comments on the finished book included one fellow saying that he

hadn't thought the plot would work, but he'd been wrong.

The Square Deal has some good stuff in it, but it was not a commercial success. I'll take my share of the blame, but I think the concept was flawed from the start.

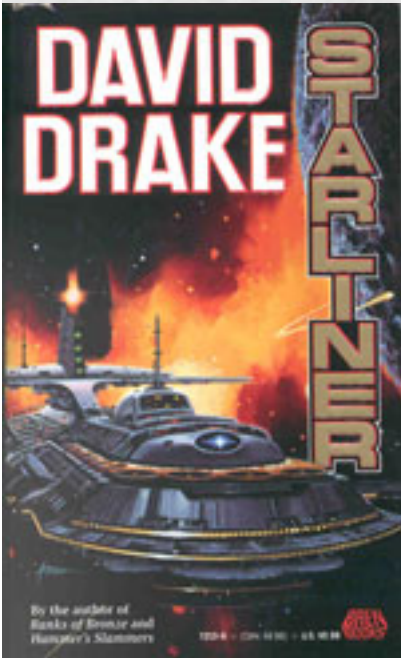
I never want to do *that* again.

--*Dave Drake*

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STARLINER is a book I wrote for myself. It isn't exactly that Jim Baen didn't want it, but he sure didn't want it as much as he wanted another Hammer volume from me.

I'm best known--at least I was before I started writing the Isles series--for my military SF, but that's never been more than about a quarter of my output. (The fraction looks much higher because of the covers publishers put on my books; see my comments on [Northworld](#) for a striking example of this.) Jim let me do what I wanted this time, knowing that the next book would be the one he was after. (This is a paradigm of our relationship over decades, and an example of why we *have* a decades-long relationship.)

I conceived *Starliner* as classic space opera, a longer version of a typical novella from *Startling Stories* or even *Astounding* during the 1940s. I've always been fascinated by ocean liners, so I used the superliner *Normandie* of 1938 as the template for my starship. (I have no idea why ocean liners fascinate me; with some people it's trains, but for me it's liners.)

I did a lot of research before writing *Starliner*, but to be completely honest the book was an excuse to use the research rather than the other way around. To a greater or lesser extent, that's true of almost everything I write. It's also a major reason that I'm so happy to be a writer as opposed to any of the other things I've done for money: every part of the job except the business negotiations and keying in the first-stage editing changes is fun.

The Cold Crews, working in Hell on a starship's exterior, were modeled on the stokers of coal-fired steamships. People who (rightly) note how cramped and unpleasant ocean travel was for the immigrants in 3d Class (or 4th, in some vessels) generally forget that the ship's Black Gang made the voyages in conditions worse by an order of magnitude. They did backbreaking labor in temperatures well over a hundred degrees, the boiler rooms lighted only by the flaming maws of the fireboxes and the atmosphere

dulled by steam which escaped from every fitting.

Even on the smoothest of voyages, injuries were common. In a storm, while the ship rolled and the boiler room decks sloshed with sea water, the engines still had to be kept running if the ship and all aboard her were to survive. Men fell into machinery or the fires, but the boilers were fed regardless.

When stokers fought, the officers locked the boiler room hatches and let the men come to their own conclusions with coal shovels and clinker bars. There was no punishment that was worse than a normal day's work in the Black Gang.

There's a romance of sorts in people who do jobs worse than any sanction they could be threatened with for refusing. Kipling caught that attitude well a number of times--listen to the trolley horse speaking in *A Walking Delegate*, for example. It's not moonlight on the promenade deck, but it affected me. I hope at least a little of what I'm talking about comes through to readers of *Starliner*.

My viewpoint character is a young man who likes women and who--because he doesn't understand women at all--treats them the way he'd like to be treated himself. By so doing he wrecks lives with complete innocence.

I only mention this because occasionally I'm accused of being ignorant of the negative side of characters I've drawn as so job-focused that they take personal relationships at face value--and trivial. (Ritter in *Northworld: Vengeance* has a similar attitude.) No, I'm quite aware of what I'm saying, as surely as I am when I describe reconnaissance by fire--shooting into a clump of trees that might hold a sniper; or an old woman digging roots, of course.

Most of the incidents in *Starliner* are based on things that have really happened to somebody, somewhere; again, that's true of most of my fiction. I didn't invent Wade and Belgeddes, but neither did I personally know the guy on whom they were based. Was the story about him true? Damned if I know.

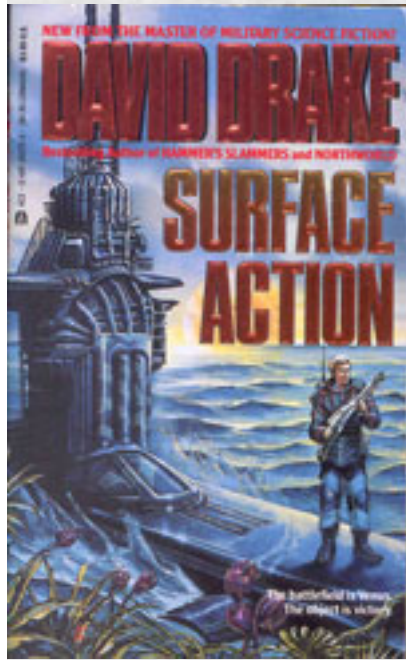
A few readers have picked up on the fact that snatches of the racist song in the first chapter is based on a real one sung by US troops in the Philippines during Taft's term of office. (The original can be found either as *The Carabao Song* or *Damn the Filipinos*.) "*Underneath the starry flag we'll civilize them with a Krag* [that is, a Krag-Jorgenson rifle]." I wish politicians would keep past human experience in mind when they discuss using soldiers to bring peace and civilization to troubled regions....

Starliner was fun to write. It didn't sell as well as another Hammer book might've done, but it did all right. I'm glad I wrote it and still more glad that Jim let me write it.

--Dave Drake

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SURFACE ACTION came about because Marty Greenberg was packaging a series of dos-a-dos short novels for Tor Books, pairing a classic with new work by a contemporary author. He suggested that I write a sequel to *Clash By Night*, written in 1943 by Henry Kuttner with input from his wife CL Moore (billing themselves as Lawrence O'Donnell). I first read *Clash by Night* when I was thirteen, and it'd made an enormous impact on me. I agreed.

Things got fuzzy then. I really wanted some paperwork to say exactly what I was doing and for how much money. I didn't much care what the answers to those questions were, but I was a lawyer: I wanted the terms down on paper, especially since this was a three-party transaction. Marty is completely honest, but he *isn't* a lawyer. No contract appeared.

Then things got awkward. I talked to Debbie Notkin, the Tor editor who was handling the project. Another book in the series was the classic *Vintage Season*, written by CL Moore alone but again using the pseudonym Lawrence O'Donnell. Robert Silverberg was writing the sequel. Ms Notkin made it politely clear that one O'Donnell piece was enough for the series; that she preferred Bob's work to mine; and that anyway, Kuttner and Moore had written their own sequel to *Clash By Night*, the novel *Fury*.

Professionally (and I hope generally in life) I don't go where I'm not wanted. I wrote the book anyway but removed direct references to *Clash By Night*. A new agent I was trying at the time put it up for auction. Ace (who were doing the Northworld series then) and Baen Books (my friend Jim) bid. Tom Doherty, Tor's publisher, had heard by then about why Tor wasn't getting the book and acted himself, making a third bidder.

I'm really uncomfortable about what happened next. Supposedly the parties didn't know one another's bids. The book would've gone to Tor, except at the last moment the Ace publisher (whom I've never met) stepped in and boosted the Ace bid by \$5,000 over the recommendation of my friend and editor

Beth Fleisher.

One reason that might have happened is that somebody had told the publisher what the Tor bid was. I personally can't think of another reasonable possibility.

Ace got the book--which in itself was fine. I felt bad enough about the way it'd happened, though, that I wrote a different sequel to *Clash By Night* for Tor (and for that, see my notes on [The Jungle](#)) and sold it to Tom (myself) for half the money Ace had paid for *Surface Action*.

That's a lot about the business side of the book. As for the writing--the fun part--I had a great time. Kuttner's story was about a soldier who tries to become a civilian but realizes when the chips are down that he'll never be happy as anything *but* a soldier. I turned that on its head, a civilian who thinks he wants to be a soldier, but who sees what that really means and returns to civilian life.

I consciously wrote my story in a tone and style appropriate to 1943 SF. This isn't the tone of adult fiction today, so I turned *Surface Action* pretty much into a Young Adult novel with a teenaged protagonist. (If it had been published as a YA, I'd have made the few sexual innuendos less graphic.)

I've always loved warships. Kuttner's story was built around the concepts of fleet action that were common between the World Wars, when aircraft were merely scouts for the fighting fleets and the real action was carried on by dreadnought battleships.

This obviously wasn't reality by 1943, so Kuttner eliminated aircraft from the Venusian atmosphere by auctorial fiat--citing the weather. He wanted to write about battleships slugging it out; and that suited me right down to the ground, because that's what I wanted to do also.

Golden Age writers often added poetic epigraphs to stories or chapters within longer pieces. Kuttner did this in *Clash by Night*, thereby introducing me to Matthew Arnold and AE Housman (the latter poet a lifelong companion as a result). I took enormous pleasure in choosing epigraphs for *Surface Action*.

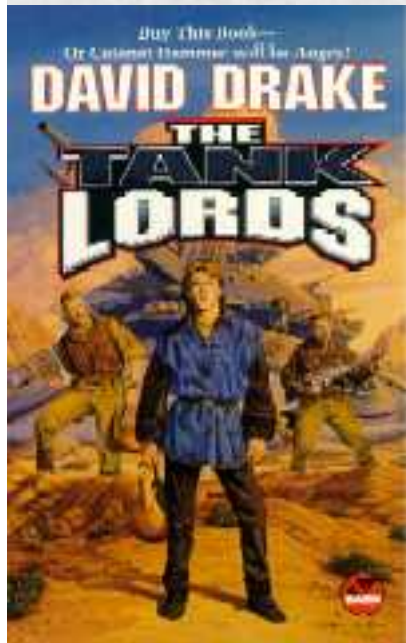
As a matter of fact, I had a great time with every part of *Surface Action* except for the business side, and the business was as unpleasant as that of any solo book I've done. Still, even that was a learning experience--I learned never to do certain things again. I'll call that a win too.

--Dave Drake

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Contents of THE TANK LORDS

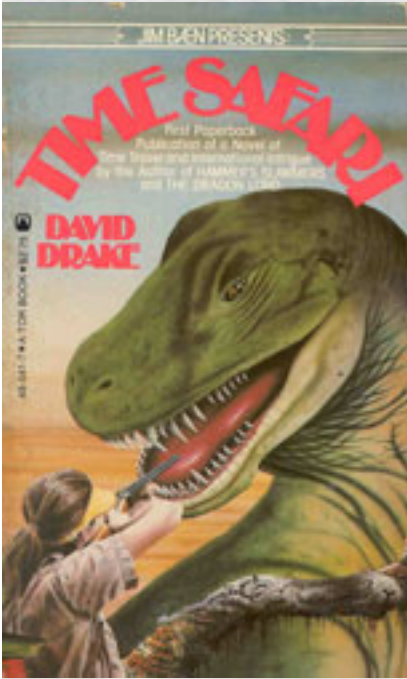
- Under the Hammer
- Rolling Hot
- Night March
- Code-Name Feirefitz
- The Tank Lords
- Appendix
- Afterword: We Happy Few

--*Dave Drake*

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Contents of TIME SAFARI

- Calibration Run
- Time Safari
- Boundary Layer
- Afterword: The Sixty-Five Million Years Afterword

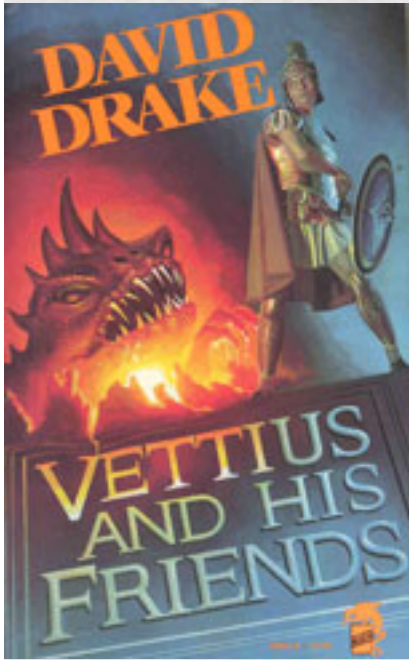
In 1993 Tom Doherty got the notion of reissuing this volume with a new story containing elements which he specified to replace *Calibration Run*, under the new title TYRANNOSAUR. He hoped to cash in marketing for *Jurassic Park*. The contents of this version of the book are:

- King Tyrant Lizard
- Time Safari
- Boundary Layer

I had a good time researching all the parts of the book, but from a commercial standpoint it was a bad idea on all counts. Still, it was turning in TIME SAFARI, on time and to specifications, to Jim and Tom that convinced them to try me for a project they had in mind; for which see *Skyripper*.

--Dave Drake

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Contents of VETTIUS AND HIS FRIENDS

- Introduction: Source Materials
- The False Prophet
- Black Iron
- The Mantichore
- The Shortest Way
- From the Dark Waters
- Nemesis Place
- Dragons' Teeth
- The Barrow Troll
- Killer (with Karl Edward Wagner)
- Ranks of Bronze
- Dreams in Amber
- King Crocodile

I started writing with heroic fantasies either explicitly set during the classical past or closely modeled on that past. Black Iron was the fourth story I sold and the first that I consider to be really publishable.

These aren't necessarily my best stories (though *The Barrow Troll* comes pretty close), but they're very dear to my heart.

--*Dave Drake*

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THE VOYAGE is space opera based on the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes, with embellishments from other classical writers who touched on legends of Jason and the Argonauts. It's a sequel of sorts to *Cross the Stars*--a minor character from the earlier novel is the hero of this one--and was a direct attempt to use the lessons I'd learned in a decade of writing to do the same sort of book, only better.

I think I did what I set out to do, but I learned some new lessons besides. The most important was that not all epics are equal.

The *Odyssey*, my model for *Cross the Stars*, was composed in the Early Iron Age, a savage time whose bones stick out through the story's fabric in many places. I changed a number of situations in order to soften them.

On the other hand, Apollonius was head of the foremost intellectual and literary center of his time, the Library of Alexandria; he was a highly sophisticated man (and poet) by any standards. He told the story of the Argo very skillfully, but he didn't describe (and perhaps couldn't visualize) the brutal realities that must have underlain such a story.

I'd been thinking about the project for many years before I actually wrote *The Voyage*. In fact, I recall beginning to precis the *Argonautica* during one of my trips to Atlanta in 1983 while I was working on *Window of Opportunity*. I'd used the *Odyssey* only as a general model when I wrote *Cross the Stars*, but *The Voyage* stuck very close to Apollonius. That is, I eliminated some incidents and conflated others, but those which remain (up to the climax) are from the *Argonautica* and in the order Apollonius set them out.

The *Argonautica* stops as the Argo and her triumphant crew approach their home port. The bloodbath that followed the return was outside the taste and understanding of a literary sophisticate like Apollonius. In another, better, world I might have been able to say the same about myself; but in this

one, I was drafted and sent to Southeast Asia in 1970. I was able to tell the rest of the story; and for the sake of the men I served with, I thought and think I needed to tell it.

Hiding that sort of truth makes it more likely that some later LBJ or Robert S MacNamara could send our children into a cesspool like the one those statesmen created in Viet-Nam. *The Voyage* is a more violent book than could've appealed to Apollonius, but I hope he would have appreciated the degree to which it's homage to him. Besides, the book contains a vignette that's both as good and as peaceful as anything I've written: a scene modeled on Jason's sighting of the Cattle of the Sun on the island of Trinacria. Apollonius--and also his rival Callimachus--might well have taken pleasure in that little flash of tranquility.

--*Dave Drake*

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Contents of THE WARRIOR, with note as to which omnibus volume holds the material now.

- The Warrior (*Caught in the Crossfire*)
- Liberty Port (*The Butcher's Bill*)

--*Dave Drake*

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Hammer's Slammers Handbooks

Vehicle designs & technical specifications plus an easy play gaming system.

John Lamshead & John Treadaway
Approved by David Drake

now available at [Pireme Publications](http://www.pireme.com).

[View Sample Pages](#)

Dave has appeared at *Salute*, a British wargaming show in Kensington, London 24 April 2004. For a description of his England trip including *Salute*, see his [travel narrative](#).

To order Slammers resin vehicles in either 25- or 15-mm scales from Old Crow Models, go to <http://www.oldcrowmodels.co.uk/galhammbckgrnd.htm>.

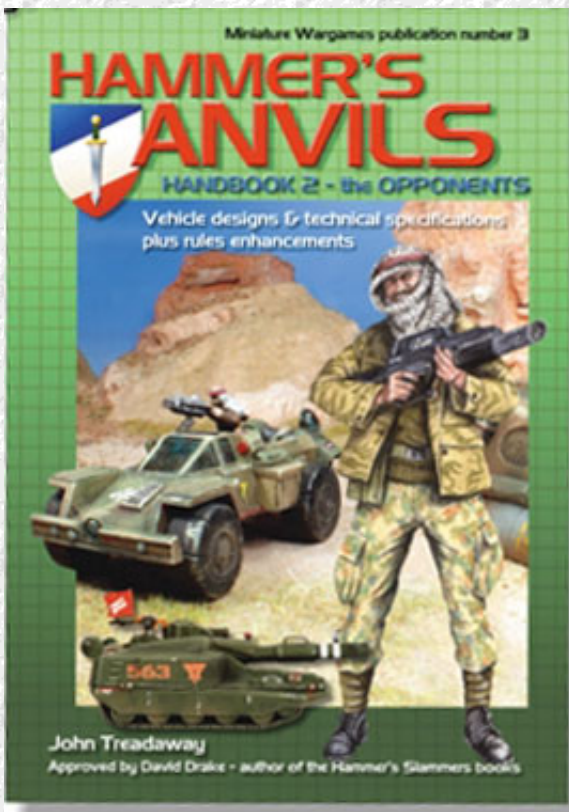
To order Hammer's Slammers figures in either 25- or 15-mm scale from Ground Zero Games, go to <http://www.gzgs.net/gzgstore/>

To order rule books and starter packs in 15-mm scale, go to [Pireme Publications](http://www.pireme.com).



A second handbook is now available from Pireme as well. See <http://www.hammers-slammers.com/details2.htm>

And, a Starter Pack



All three are listed at <http://www.miniwargames.com/indexa.asp?intDeptID=10>



Combat car



Line tank from side



Line tank from above



Troops and vehicles

DrakeNews Archive

If you are interested in subscribing to David Drake's newsletter mailing list to get updates on what's new with him, send an e-mail message to webmaster@david-drake.com with the word subscribe in the subject line. This is a subscription list for Dave's occasional announcements only, not a general participation list. Replies to the mailings will go through the webmaster.

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- [Newsletter #34](#) sent out 22 August 2006
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- [Newsletter #31](#) sent out New Year's 2006
- [Newsletter #30](#) sent out Thanksgiving 2005
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- [Newsletter #18](#) sent out 15 September 2003
- [Newsletter #17](#) sent out 3 July 2003
- [Newsletter #16](#) sent out 6 May 2003
- [Newsletter #15](#) sent out 5 March 2003
- [Newsletter #14](#) sent out 26 January 2003
- [Newsletter #13](#) sent out 6 November 2002
- [Newsletter #12](#) sent out 9 September 2002
- [Newsletter #11](#) sent out 27 June 2002
- [Newsletter #10](#) sent out 6 April 2002

[Newsletter #9](#) sent out 13 January 2002

[Newsletter #8.1](#) sent out 3 December 2001 [Newsletter #8 never made it through the mail queue.]

[Newsletter #7](#) sent out 1 September 2001

[Newsletter #6](#) sent out 9 July 2001

[Newsletter #5](#) sent out 31 May 2001

[Newsletter #4](#) sent out 11 April 2001

[Newsletter #3](#) sent out 15 February 2001

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NEWSLETTER 40: July 29, 2007

Dear People,

This has been a pretty darned exciting couple months to live, though I don't know that reading about is going to have the same effect on other folks. First, *The Mirror of Worlds* (the second book of the Crown of the Isles fantasy trilogy) is out as a Tor hardcover. It's beautiful. On the website we've got not only the cover but an image of the painting before it was cropped for cover use.

You know, it's possible that no other author in the field has gotten as many really good covers as I have. That's partly a factor of the sheer number of books I've written (a matter that my fellow Iowan and soulmate Tom Disch once remarked on), but I'd venture that I've got among the highest percentages of great covers as well.

I'm pleased with *Mirror*. It goes a way toward resolving the conflicts set up in *The Fortress of Glass* (now out in pb), and it leads very comfortably into *The Gods Return*, which will close the trilogy and the Isles series as a whole.

Speaking of which, *The Gods Return* is moving right along. I'm about 55K words into the rough draft. That's well into the mid-book period where I'm emotionally certain I'm writing crap and boring crap besides. Each morning as I edit the previous day's text, I find it reads pretty well... but when I'm writing it, I'm wading through muck.

If you've been reading these newsletters for a while, you're familiar with this litany. Goodness knows *I'm* familiar with it. I haven't found a solution other than just driving on till I finish, which is what I've been doing for the past 29 years. (Gosh! that's a long time.) So I'm driving on.

Also up on the news page is Steve Hickman's color sketch for the cover of the next RCN space opera from Baen, *When the Tide Rises*. I'm telling you it's a sketch because you certainly wouldn't guess it wasn't finished art by glancing at it. (See above for what I said about consistently getting great covers.)

The Gods Return is not only the final book in the Isles series, it's the last book on my current Tor contract. I've therefore opened negotiations with Tor for a new series.

The notion behind the new series is one I've been working on since 1996 (although that makes my mental puttering sound more formal than the process really is). It'll use a Roman cultural setting instead of British Early Modern like that of the Isles series, but it isn't going to *be* Rome, not even a fantasy Rome. (I'm thinking of using Carce as the name of the capital city, a tip of the hat to *The Worm Ouroboros* by ER Eddison.)

The reason for not calling it Rome is a comment Tom Doherty made back in 1995 when I told

him I was going to use Atlantis as the setting for my new series: "David, none of the series that have taken off use a real historical setting. Now, I know that Atlantis isn't exactly real, but--"

And I said, "I think I'll call it the Isles."

There are various ways that you can react when a known expert criticizes your proposal. Saying, "Yes *sir!*" is the response that's always given me the best chance of a good result.

My fantasy/horror collection *Balefires* has done nicely for Night Shade. They want to get into mass market, so I told them to go ahead and experiment with *Balefires*.

Jason Williams--the Night Shade editor? He and Jeremy Lassen both wear a lot of hats, but I think Jeremy's title is publisher--called to explain sadly that they were going to have to go with a more vulgar cover for the mass market, in part because it's simply a smaller area. I laughed and said that it might not be true of any other author on the Night Shade list (which tends toward the Lit'ry), but that he didn't have to apologize to me for trying to sell my books in an effective manner. I'll let you know how it comes out.

Incidentally, all but a handful of the hardcover have been shipped. If you think you might want a copy, now would be a good time to get one. (I could not be more happy with the package or with the book itself. This really is forty years of my professional life beneath a lovely cover painting.)

Having mentioned Night Shade, I'll add that volume three of *The Complete Hammer's Slammers* is due out from them in November, 2007. It collects *The Sharp End*, *Paying the Piper*, my obituary of Jim Baen, and the new novelet *The Darkness*. That last item is possibly the best fiction I've ever written (though it's not the most upbeat thing I've ever written).

There have been lots of changes on the website since the most recent newsletter. One that's been long overdue is My Motorcycles. The changes reflected in the text and pictures took place some while ago, but bikes turn out to be a very emotional subject with me. (This probably shouldn't have surprised me.)

Actually, I get emotional about quite a lot of things. I don't regret that--I spent a decade and more after Nam being pretty well shut down emotionally, and that's not a good way to live--but I expend a lot of effort in controlling my *responses* to emotion. I wish people generally would work on controlling what they say and do in the heat of emotion, because that would lead to a more courteous world.

My webmaster Karen has also made a huge revision to the Bibliography section. The new version is based on the one she created for the limited edition of *Balefires* (for which see above). I find it easier to use as well as being fuller. (It'll probably be tweaked further as Karen refines her vision of The Perfect Bibliography.)

There are a couple pictures of the July 4 event at our house. I don't consider this my party: Mark Van Name grills hamburgers and hotdogs for a hundred or so people, then sets off a considerable quantity of fireworks (this year about \$2200 worth, with several other friends chipping in).

Mark lives near the airport, so the party is at our house on 20+ acres in the country instead of at his. My task--the Drake household task, with my wife Jo doing all the interior work--is limited to site preparation and cleanup.

It's always marvelous; this year there's general agreement that it was the best yet. I've put up a couple of the pictures Gina Massel-Castater (part of the Drake/Van Name extended family) took. Also there's a picture of the pile of casings before I burned them the next morning. In past years I've shown the cakes laid out for use, but I think this 'After' shot gives a better impression of the real volume.

Jo and I went to Niagara Falls on our fortieth anniversary. (If you go, be sure to take the *Maid of the Mist* beneath the falls. There are several numbered *Maid*s, leaving from both the American and Canadian sides.) A couple of the pictures I took are up on the site. I don't think Frederick Church is worried about my competition, but perhaps he's not rolling in his grave either.

I guess I'll give a little background to the negotiations with Tor on the new series. What actually happened is that I'd sent Tom Doherty a postcard from the Drake/Van Name family beach vacation. Tom got it the Saturday after we got back and phoned to chat--because we're friends. (The two of us ought to be in charge of national energy policy, not because we're smarter than everybody in power now but because we'd deal with the problem instead of pandering to special interests.)

Since we were on the phone anyway, I bounced the new series off him. Looking back on it, I suspect what he really got out of my description was my enthusiasm--I was happily burbling about Tarquin, quoting from the *Dies Irae*, and so on; off the top of my head (I hadn't been expecting to have this conversation). Anyway, he liked the idea, so my agent will be talking to my editor.

The lesson some people would draw from the above story is that you can't get published unless you know somebody. I remember vividly a party in 1980 when another local writer bellowed to the assembly, "The only reason David Drake sells books and I don't is that he's friends with Jim Baen!" (I suspect he still believes that, though he stopped drinking and is less likely to say it publicly.)

Jim and I became friends because we could talk to one another. He bought books from me because they were profitable for him at Ace, Tor, and Baen Books. Likewise Tom (well, except for the Baen Books part).

Publishers don't stay in business by buying books from friends who can't write. This isn't rocket science, but I've heard smart people (much smarter than the acquaintance above) make statements which implicitly ignore the fact.

I've chosen to work for people whom I like, rather than working for whoever's willing to pay me the most this month. A side benefit of this choice is that sometimes a friendly chat turns into a business deal.

But the *real* reason for working with friends is that it's a much more pleasant environment. This is something that everybody, not just writers, should keep in mind.

Now, back to my heroes, defending mankind against an army of man-sized rats!

Dave Drake

To subscribe, unsubscribe or change your e-mail address, e-mail webmaster@david-drake.com

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Dave's Photo Archives

[Pictures and travel narrative from Dave's trip to England, August 2006](#)

[Pictures from Dave's trip to California, August 2005](#)

[Pictures from Millennicon, Cincinnati, 18-20 March, 2005](#)

[Pictures from SheVaCon, Roanoke, 25-27 February 2005](#)

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[Pictures from ICON, Cedar Rapids IA, 10-12 October 2003](#)

[Pictures from LibertyCon 16, Chattanooga 25-27 July 2003](#)

[Pictures from ConDFW, Dallas-Fort Worth TX, 21-23 February 2003](#)

[Tristan David Drake, son of Jonathan and April Drake, born Saturday January 25, 2003 at 6:03 p.m. EST. At a healthy 8 pounds 8 ounces, he's the first grandchild for Dave and Jo Drake.](#)

[Joke Covers from Trinoc*coN Roast, October 2002](#)

[Pictures from ConGlomeration 2, August 2002](#)

[For pictures and report from Dave's trip to Belize, go to the \[Belize Album Page\]\(#\).](#)

[For pictures from ConVersion XVIII, go to the \[ConVersion Album Page\]\(#\).](#)

[For pictures from LibertyCon 15, go to the \[LibertyCon Album Page\]\(#\).](#)

World Fantasy Con, Madison WI 1-4 November 2005



Arkham House panel: Walden Derleth, Scott Connors, Dwayne Olson, Drew Smith and Dave



Jonathan, Tristan and Grandpa Dave, 2005

Dave's 59th Birthday Dinner

TECHNOLOGY 2

DAVE 0

I managed to set the camera for a 2-second (instead of 10-second) delay twice before I finally got a picture of the twelve of us (most of my extended family) at dinner for my 59th birthday on September 24, 2004.



SUCCESS!

Counterclockwise from Mark Van Name at the head of the table: Sarah VN; April Drake; Tristan D; Jonathan D; Jennie Faries; me; my wife Jo D; Allyn Vogel; Scott VN; and Rana VN.

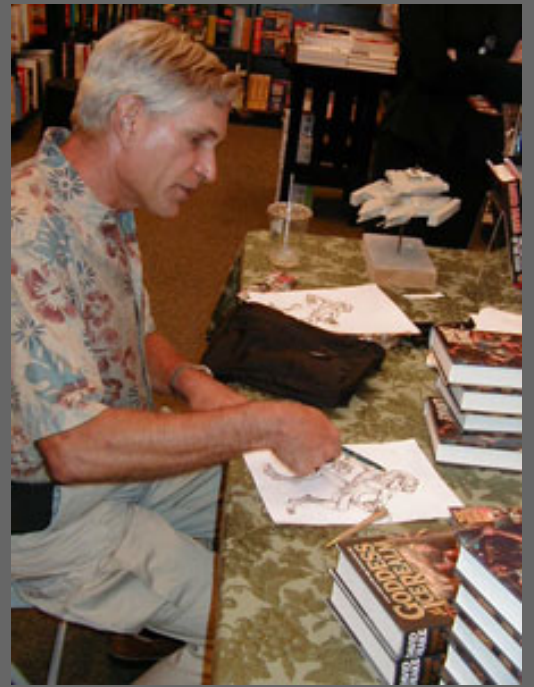
You'll notice that my repeated screwups with the camera worked as a great comedy turn, so people were smiling more naturally than is sometimes the case.



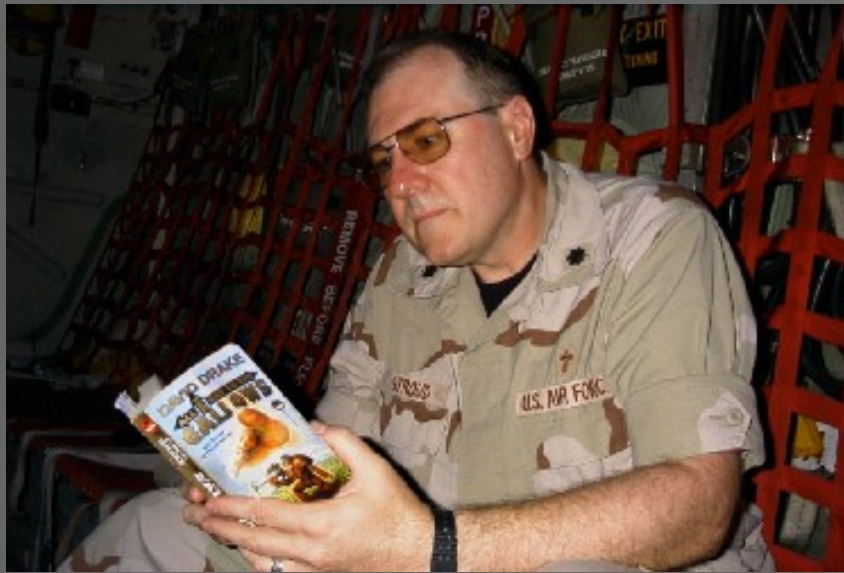
From a signing October 9, 2003 at the Waterloo IA Barnes and Noble



Dieter Zimmerman and Dave at display



Dave at Orton Plantations, July 2003



LtCol. Robert Stroud, USAF Operation Enduring Freedom, Group Chaplain (Deployed) (who assures me he wears earplugs) with recommended reading on a C-130



Jennie Faries (a friend who's now doing some of the cover and brochure design for Baen Books) and Jim Baen going over cover designs for *Grimmer Than Hell* July 4, 2002.

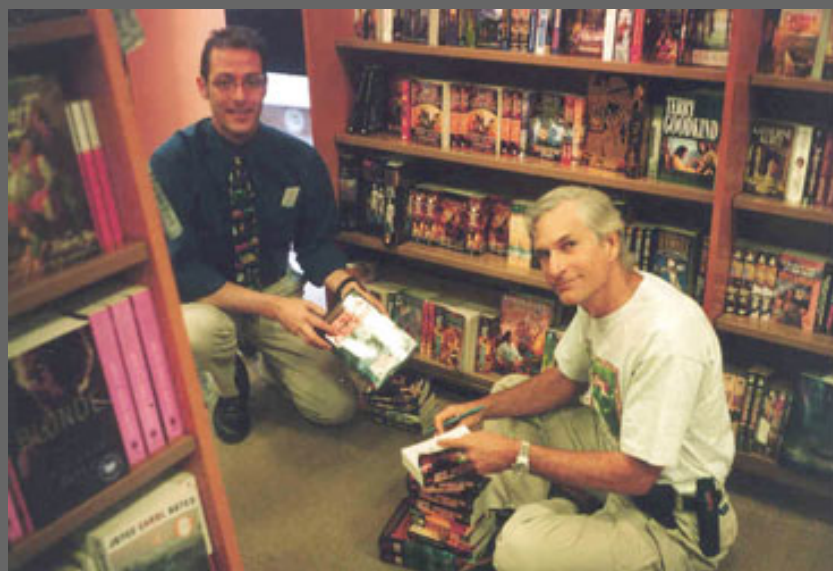
World Fantasy Con, Montreal, November 1-4, 2001



Tania and Tom Doherty, Lee Modesitt, and Dave after a very good dinner in Montreal.



Dave looking wifty after a stock signing at Chapters in Montreal.

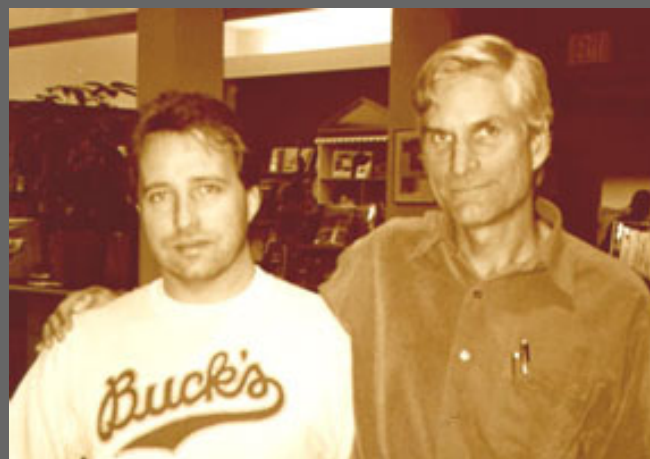


Ed has Dave signing at Indigo Books in Montreal.

Book Tour Pictures, September 2001



At Books & Co. in Dayton. Some signings were better than others. This was one of the best.



With fan David Huskins



With an acquaintance from 1970: a 15,000 pound daisy cutter bomb.



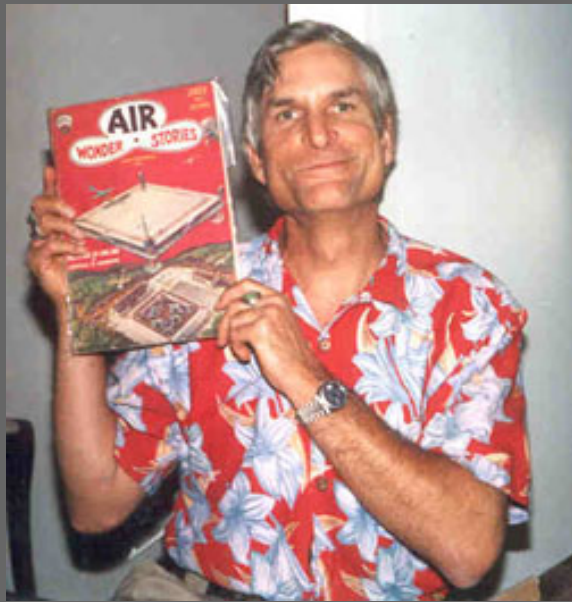
Taking picture of Northrup F-89 Scorpion, high-tech air defense from his childhood.



The bomb casing beside me is not, as I thought I read on the card, that of one similar to the plutonium bomb Bockscar dropped on Nagasaki.

Here I am at Lebanon State Forest in the heart of the Pine Barrens of New Jersey, a side trip from the JerseyDevilCon April 6, 2001





CHRISTMAS

My friends give me neat stuff. This Christmas the presents included the first two issues of *Air Wonder Stories*, completing my set of that deservedly-little-known pulp.



Baen Books has now officially moved to North Carolina. Jo and I had dinner Christmas Eve with Jim at his house/office. The place is gorgeous, and it's in an even nicer setting including five-acre pond. The left picture is Jim at his e-mail computer; the right is Jim in the office portion of the building holding the Gary Ruddell cover for *THE TIDE OF VICTORY*, the fifth book in the Belisarius series which Eric Flint is writing from my outlines.



Jim was invited to our family and friends Thanksgiving dinner (fifteen people, and a great time was had by all) but had to cancel at the last moment because his car wouldn't start. He did, however, make it to dinner of pretty much the same group the next night at a family-style BBQ place in Durham, another tradition in our crowd. Everybody pigged out happily again. The shots here are from that event, not Thanksgiving; but maybe next year.

Celebrating My 55th Birthday, September 24, 2000



Every year (since 1973) for my birthday we have a pig-picking--a whole barbecued pig. The past several years we've been borrowing a gas cooker from a neighbor instead of doing it with wood or wood and charcoal; this isn't as traditional, but I don't have a splitting headache the next day either. On the left, I'm cutting up the pig with the help of two guests (there were about a hundred people this year). On the right, one of the presents my friends gave me. This is the August, 1930, issue (whole number eight) of *Astounding*, the issue I needed to complete my set of the magazine. I won't claim to like getting older; but I will say that the friends I've made over the years are the best part of my very good life.

On June 5, 2000, Jo and I visited the Mark Twain Mansion in Hartford, CT. Twain and Kipling were similar in many ways, drawn from poverty by their genius, and they got along well when they met. I was struck by the different ways they lived, though.

Kipling's house in Brattleboro was a writer's work area



with lovely views, very secluded. Twain built a mansion in the center of the literary district of Hartford (beside Harriet Beecher Stowe), and entertained lavishly to build his image with opinion makers.

They both succeeded brilliantly, and both were (and remain) world-class writers. But my taste is with Kipling's methods.



Misty Squires married Greg Peeler on May 27, 2000. Misty's father, John, is one of my oldest friends (and is one of the world's experts on MP Shiel and his writings). Here's a picture of John and me at the reception.

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Book Arts for the Masses

UI Libraries and UI Center for the Book create the 'Book Drop' vending machine

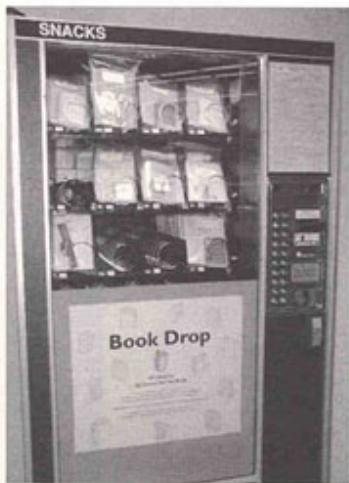


Book studies students (left to right) Tatiana Gingsberg and Julie Cobb prepare kits and finished books to place in the vending machine.

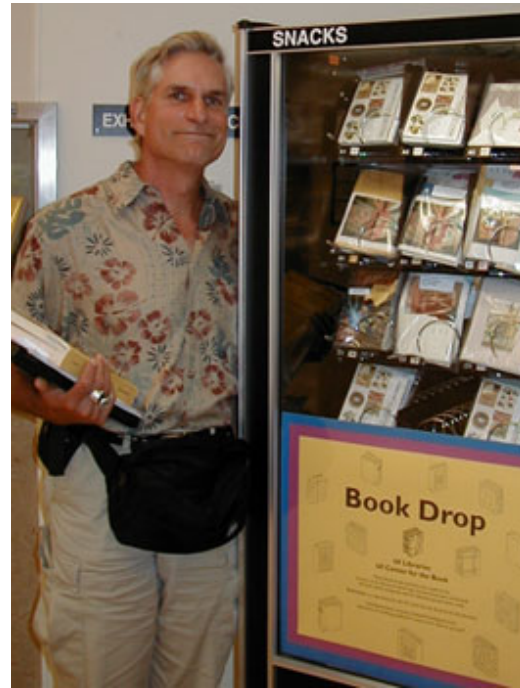
During December 2001 and January 2002, the 'Book Drop' represented a unique experiment in the promotion of the book arts. Conceived and implemented by the University Libraries Conservation Unit and the UI Center for the Book, the project consisted of handmade books, sold as kits and in completed form, through a vending machine in the North Exhibition Hall of the Main Library. Historical information about each book type as well as complete instructions and materials, in the case of the kits, was also included. The books were modestly priced from \$5 to \$15, and proceeds will be used to support the UI Book Studies curriculum.

The book arts vending project grew out of a class offered at the UI Libraries, Structure of the Handmade Book. When the listed course was unexpectedly cancelled, its instructor, University Conservator Gary Frost, and the students decided to move forward under the cover of an independent study course. Because the class size was small, the opportunity was present to do something different, to push the envelope or perhaps more fittingly, the book case.

The UI Libraries and the UI Center for the Book regularly collaborate on projects and programs that enhance understanding of and appreciation for the written record in all of its various forms. There are plans to expand on this idea so that books will be available through museum gift shops and other such venues throughout the year. For more information, contact Gary Frost, university conservator, 319.335.5908, <gary-frost@uiowa.edu>, or Tim Barrett, director, UI Center for the Book, 319.331.5013.



During the months of December 2001 and January 2002, the Book Drop vending machine was installed in the North Exhibition Hall of the Main Library. It offered a variety of items including Ethiopian book-binding kits, Japanese stab bindings and long-stitch bindings ideal for personal notes.



Dave's books featured in the University of Iowa Libraries' Book Vending machine as "signed by Iowa Author."



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Amores I:1-3

translated by David Drake

Amores I:1

EPIGRAM: We who once were five books by Naso now are three. The author himself has trimmed us. Now even if you don't like what you read, at least you're spared the punishment of two more books.

I-1: I started to write of arms and bloody wars in hexameters, suiting my subject to the meter, but each second verse came out crippled: Cupid had laughed and snatched away one foot.

"Who are you, unruly boy, to tell me what to write? We bards are subject to the Muses, not to you!" I cried.

"What if Venus snatched the weapons from blond Minerva and blond Minerva waved the torches of passion? Who would want Ceres to rule in the mountain glades while the fields lay under the laws of quiver-bearing Diana? Who would array shining Phoebus with a spear and give Mars an Aonian lyre to play?

"These subjects are too great for you, boy! Why do you get in over your head? Or--is everything subject to you? Do you also rule Helicon in Tempe? Is not even Phoebus' lyre safe from you? For when I start a new page, the first verse is fine but the next forces me to write it shorter--and my subject isn't suitable for lighter meters! I'm not writing about a boy nor a girl dressing her long hair."

Thus I complained, but Cupid chose from his quiver the shaft that doomed me. Curving his bow he cried, "Here is the work I give you to sing, bard!"

Poor me. Cupid's arrows are certain, I am afire, and Love rules my empty breast. My verses start on six feet but end in five.

Farewell, iron war and war's meters. Bind my temples with white flowering the seashore's myrtle, Muse who must be sung on eleven feet.

Amores I:2

Why, I ask, does the bed seem so hard? I keep throwing off the bedclothes, and I'm sleepless through nights that seem interminable. I toss and turn till my tired bones ache. I might feel this way if I were being tried by Love. Has the clever god slipped in and made a secret attack on me?

Aye, so it is! Love's slender shafts feather my heart, and he twists my emotions in a savage gyre. Shall I surrender, or shall I fan the unexpected fire brighter by struggling against it? Ah, I'll surrender; for a burden feels lighter if borne willingly.

I've seen flames leap higher as a torch is whipped through the air, and I've seen them die when no one stirs them. Oxen who've learned to like the plow aren't beaten like the animals who jerk away from the first touch of the yoke. The skittish horse is broken with a toothed bit, but the veteran warhorse doesn't feel the reins.

Love goads the unwilling more sharply and viciously than it does those who admit they are enslaved. All right, then--I admit I'm your latest conquest, Cupid. I raise my conquered hands to accept your will. There's no point in fighting: I only ask your mercy and your peace. You would gain little honor from destroying an unarmed victim like me.

Bind myrtle in your hair, yoke the doves of your mother Venus, and borrow a chariot from your stepfather Mars. Let the yoked birds draw you in that chariot past the crowd cheering your triumph. Captive youths and maids will follow you; such will be the pomp of your splendid triumph. Because I am newly captured, I still show my wounds and bear the marks of recent fetters on my mind.

You drag along Good Sense with her hands tied behind her back, and with her goes Shame and anyone else who dares oppose the forces of Love. All peoples fear you; the mob raises its hands to you and cries, "Hail, Thou Triumphant!" to you.

Flattery, Mistake, and Lust are your comrades, and they bring a horde of victims to your throng. With these champions you conquer men and gods; without their help you would be disarmed.

Your joyful mother applauds your triumph from the top of Olympus, sprinkling roses on your cheeks. Gems glitter on your wings and in your hair. Golden yourself, you ride in a golden chariot.

You have had your own many affairs, if truth be told, and you've not escaped wounding yourself many times. Your arrows fly whether you wish them to or not, and heat from your bubbling flames burns without favor.

You are as splendid as Bacchus after he'd conquered the region of the Ganges, you in winged splendor and him riding on tigers. Therefore spare me after I accompany your sacred triumph. Follow the happy custom of your kinsman Caesar, who protects the conquered with the same hand that conquered them.

I ask for justice! May the woman who recently stole my heart either love me or give me reason to love her forever.

Ah, that is too much to ask, for merely to be allowed to love is a great thing. Still I believe that Cytherean Venus will hear my repeated prayer. Receive me, for I will serve you throughout the long years to come.

Receive me, for I know how to love in faithful purity. I lack the commendation of a noble lineage, for the founder of my house was a knight. My lands are not so spacious that plows without number are needed to turn them, for both my parents lived frugally.

Nonetheless Apollo, the nine Muses, Bacchus the father of wine, and Love himself who gives me to you are my sponsors. Besides their testimony I bring unfailing faithfulness, a stainless personal life, simple purity, and shining decency.

I'm no juggler of love who seeks a thousand women. I will be yours forever if you are faithful to me. With you I will spend as many years as the Fates' thread grants me. I will live with you, and I will die leaving you to mourn me.

Give yourself to me to become an ideal source of my poetry, for my songs cannot fail to be worthy with you as their subject. Already I have brought fame to frightened Io, wandering as a cow. I've shown adulterous Jupiter sporting in the guise of a swan and how, pretending to be a bull, he bore the maiden over the seas as she held his crooked horn with her delicate hand.

I will sing your praises through the whole world, and your name will always be joined with mine!

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Amores I:4-5

translated by David Drake

Amores I:4

Your husband is going to the same dinner party as we are; I pray that this is the last dinner he lives to eat!

How shall I react when I see my beloved mistress as a fellow guest? Will he be the one you fondle, and will you snuggle into his bosom to be petted? Will he put his hand on your shoulder whenever he pleases?

No one should be surprised that when the wine had passed, the white body of Thessalian Hippodamia drove the Centaurs to violence! I don't live in the forest and I'm not half a horse, but I can scarcely keep my hands off you.

This is how you must behave--and don't give my words to the winds to scatter! Arrive ahead of your husband; we won't be able to do anything if you precede him, but precede him anyway.

When he's reclined on his couch and you walk over to lie beside him, wearing the visage of a modest wife, touch your foot secretly to mine.

Keep your eyes on me to catch my nods and meaningful looks: take and return these secret notes. My eyebrows will speak silent volumes, and you may read the words my fingers draw in wine on the tabletop.

When you think about the sex games we've played, touch your tender thumb to your rosy cheek. If you have a silent complaint about me, touch your earlobe with a gentle hand. If something I do or say pleases you, my light, rotate your ring with your finger.

Press the table with your hand the way those praying touch the ground. That will mean you're wishing many well-deserved evils on your husband.

When he mixes you a cup of wine, I direct that you order him to drink it himself. Ask the slave lightly for what you want to drink.

When the cup returns to you, I'll take a sip from the place where you then will drink. If perchance he tries to give you a tidbit he's sampled, reject the bits his mouth has tasted.

Don't let him put his arm around your shoulders, nor should you gently lay your head on his hard breast--

nor let him reach under your garment and finger your nipples. Especially avoid giving him kisses! If you kiss him, I'll openly admit to being your lover. I'll cry, 'Those are mine!' and push him away.

Now, this just covers what I can see. The things that may go on under your cloak are a source of blind fear to me. don't lay your thigh over his thigh, nor let your shins rub; nor let your gentle feet play with his hard ones.

Poor me! I have so much to fear because I know how shamelessly I've behaved in the past; memory of my own actions tortures me. Often I've hastened delight for myself and my mistress by carrying on the sweet work beneath the cover of our garments. You won't do this, of course--but so that I can be sure, take off the cloak that would conceal his hand.

Encourage your husband to drink (but don't wheedle him with kisses!), and while he's drinking add wine secretly to his cup if you can manage it. If he's dead to the world, lost in dreams and drink, we'll know how to use the time and place.

Don't go home till we're all ready to go together, and make sure you stay in the middle of the group leaving. You'll find me in the crowd or I'll find you. Touch any part of me you can, then.

Ah, woe is me! I'm trying to make the best of a few hours, but night commands me to lie separate from my mistress. Your husband locks you in by night. Sadly with tears starting I go to the merciless gates--as far as I am permitted.

Now he takes your kisses--and now more than that! What you give me secretly, he demands of you by right. Still, you can show that you're unwilling and give in to him as one compelled. Don't whisper blandishments, and let your gift be grudging.

If my prayers have any value, I hope he will be unable to pleasure you; if not, then at least may he pleasure you only once. But however the luck of the night turns out, tomorrow deny with a strait face that anything happened.

Amores I:5

It was summer and the day had reached its middle hour. I was sprawled comfortably in the middle of the couch.

Part of the window was open, the other part shuttered, creating an almost-light like that of the deep woods. This is the way the evening shimmers as the sun sets or the moment when night has fled but day hasn't yet broken. This is the sort of light that modest girls must have, where their timid embarrassment can hope for concealment.

Then comes Corinna with her tunic unbelted, her hair spilling to either side of her white neck. She looks as lovely as Semiramis going to her marriage bed or as the courtesan Lais, beloved of many men.

I tugged at her tunic. It was so thin that it hid little, but nevertheless she struggled to keep it on. Protesting like one who doesn't really want to be listened to, she finally surrendered the garment not unhappily.

She stood before me with her clothes cast aside; her body was wholly without flaw. What shoulders, what lovely arms I saw and touched! How perfectly shaped for squeezing were her breasts! How flat her belly below her slender torso, how smooth and swelling her hips, how youthful her thigh.

But why do I describe individual beauties? I saw nothing that was not worthy of praise, and I pressed her naked body to mine.

Is there anyone who doesn't know what happened next? Finally we both lay back exhausted. Noontime often brings me this kind of good fortune.

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Amores I:6

translated by David Drake

Amores I:6

Doorkeeper, though it's embarrassing to ask this, loose your hard chain and swing the surly outer door inward a trifle on its hinges. I ask but a little thing: that you make enough room on the threshold for me to lie there at an angle. Long service of love has hardened my body to such uses and trained my limbs to scrunch up under my body. The same experience has shown me how to creep quietly by the posts of the night watch, and it directs my feet so they don't make a sound.

Once upon a time I was afraid of the night and all sorts of vain phantasms; I marveled to hear that anybody would walk through the gloom. I heard Cupid with his tender mother laugh and say cheerfully, "You too will become brave."

And at once love came: I don't fear shadows flying at night nor the hands of lurking assassins. I fear only your indifference, doorkeeper. I pray to you alone: you hold the thunderbolt which can destroy me.

Behold (and so that you may look, pull back the heavy bar) how wet the door is with my tears. Remember how I spoke up for you when you stood trembling before your mistress with your tunic pulled down for a beating. Think of what a shame it would be if the tongue that saved you then didn't avail me now! Pay me back for my kindness: it's all right to do as you wish out of gratitude.

The time of night is passing; slide the bolt back from its socket.

Slide it back, and then also loosen the long chain. If you do, then you won't always have to drink water as a slave.

Ah, doorman, you are made of iron to hear me praying unmoved. The thick, oak-braced door remains firm.

Cities under siege need the protection of closed gates, but what arms do you fear here in the midst of peace? Why, doors who were built against an enemy, do you now exclude a lover?

The time of night is passing; slide the bolt back from its socket.

I don't come with troops and arms; I'd be alone, were not savage Love my companion. I couldn't dismiss him even if I tried; it'd be easier to lop off my limbs.

So here I am with only Love, a little wine, and a wreath around my temples which lies askew on my

perfumed hair. Are these arms for you to fear? Who'd be afraid to face them?

The time of night is passing; slide the bolt back from its socket.

Don't you care, or is it sleep--may you dream of Hell!--which repels the words of a lover from your ears and gives them to the wind? But I remember that in the beginning when I wanted to hide from you, you were wakeful till the constellations of the middle of the night arose.

Perhaps even now your girlfriend is cuddling with you? Alas, how much luckier you are than I, so long as these harsh chains pass before me.

The time of night is passing; slide the bolt back from its socket.

Am I deceived or do I hear hinges squeal and the thunder of a slammed door? No, I was deceived: that was just the wind blowing a door shut.

Woe is me, that a mere breeze should raise my hopes so high. If you remember snatching off Orithyia, Boreas, you will rush here and blast these silent gates with your lightning!

The whole city is sleeping and the time has come when the night drips with glassy dew. Slide back the bolt from its socket or I will come again with sword and flame! I'll wave my torch high, I'll attack this haughty dwelling! Night and Love and wine are not counsellors of moderation; night takes away shame, while wine and love rob me of fear.

I've tried everything. Neither prayers nor threats have moved you, doorman harder than the doors themselves. It's not fitting that one like you watch the threshold of a lovely girl. Your sort might better guard a prison.

Already Lucifer strains to turn the frozen axle of his chariot and rouse the roosters to end our hopes. But you, wreath that I pull from my no longer festive temples, lie on this doorstep which has been hard all night. When in the morning my mistress sees you flung here, you will bear witness of the time I spent so ill.

Farewell to this duty from which I depart like one retiring for age; farewell wretched man who ignored the lover whom he refused to admit.

And to you also: cruel doorposts, unyielding threshold, and doors braced with hard wood--farewell!

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Amores I:7

translated by David Drake

If I have any friends present, clamp manacles on my hands (for they deserve to be chained) before the madness returns: for madness moved my arms to strike my mistress. My injured darling weeps from my woeful hand!

After that deed I might've attacked my dear parents or lashed out savagely at the holy gods. Why not? Did not Ajax, the hero with the seven-layered shield, slaughter the flock he found wandering in the broad meadows [thinking they were his comrades]? Did not Orestes, the evil avenger of his father's murder on his mother, dare to demand weapons against the Furies? So might I, having disarranged my mistress' high-piled hair!

Though she was still beautiful. Such I think Schoeneus' daughter Atalanta must have looked when she hunted the Maenalian beasts with her bow; so looked Cretan Ariadne as she watched the South Winds blow away the sails and the promises of perjured Theseus; thus looked Cassandra (though her hair was in a priestess' fillet) when she flung herself before your temple, chaste Minerva.

Who would not have called me a madman? Who would not shout, "Barbarian!" to me? But she said nothing: shuddering fear froze her tongue.

Nonetheless her silent features accused me; the tears on her silent face indicted me. Would that my arms had fallen from my shoulders instead; I'd be better off mutilated! I've used my vicious strength to my own loss, struggled violently to my own punishment!

Why don't you come for me, Furies, avengers of slaughter and crimes? Lay on my hands the bonds of a sacrilege! Or do you claim that though I would be punished for striking the lowest plebian citizen, I have a right to strike my mistress?

Diomedes provided a horrible example of crime: he was the first man to strike a goddess. I was another. Yet he was less in the wrong than I: I struck one whom I claimed to love, while Diomedes attacked an enemy.

Go now, conqueror--arrange your splendid triumph, bind a wreath of laurel in your hair, and sacrifice to Jupiter for your deliverance. Let a throng of companions follow your chariot, crying, 'Hallelujah! This brave man has conquered a girl!'

Let the weeping captive go before me with her hair loose, her skin gleaming white save for the red of my hand on her cheek. Her neck glows, more suitable for gently pressing lips or the touch of caressing teeth.

Even if I was driven like the plunging torrent because blind wrath had made me its prey, wouldn't it have been enough to have shouted at the poor frightened girl and not besides those blood-curdling threats to have torn her tunic from throat to waist where her girdle stopped me? But I, iron-hearted, proceeded after disarranging the hair from her forehead to slap her face besides.

She stared at me in terror, her face as white and bloodless as the fine marble quarried from the cliffs of Paros. I saw her joints slacken and her limbs tremble like aspen trees when the breeze blows their leaves... as the slender reed vibrates at the touch of the West Wind... as the wave-tip is scattered by the warm South Wind.

The pent-up tears flowed down her cheeks the way water flows out of snow. Then for the first time I realized the crime I had committed. Those tears she shed were my blood. Thrice I tried to throw myself a suppliant at her feet; thrice she drove me back with fearful hands.

Do not hesitate--for punishment will diminish my grief--to claw my face with your nails, nor spare my eyes and hair: may wrath strengthen your womanly hands. And lest the sad evidences of my crime remain, comb your hair and put it back in place.

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Amores I:8

translated by David Drake

There's a certain old woman--if you want to know how a procurer works, listen to me--there's a certain old woman named Dipsas. She got her nickname from her habits: She's never been sober to watch Dawn, the mother of Memnon, rise on rosy horses.

She knows the arts of the Magi and the song that Circe sings on Aeaëa; she can make water flow back to its source by her arts. She knows well the uses of herbs and how to twist a thread into a symbol of power and how to extract the elixir of a mare in heat. At her word, clouds gathered over the whole heaven. At her word, the sun shone bright in a pure sky.

She showed me the stars dripping blood, if you can believe that. I saw the face of Luna flushed with blood. I think she flies through the shadows of the night, her wizened body covered with feathers. I think, and so it is rumored, that the pupils of her eyes sparkle and her eyeballs themselves glow. She calls great grandfathers and their forebears from ancient tombs, she splits the solid ground to the depths with her spell.

This is the woman who proposes to foul my chaste relationship, nor does her tongue lack noxious eloquence. Chance made me a witness to her approaches. She said as I listened through a false door, 'Did you know, dear one, that you've impressed a wealthy young heir? Your appearance so struck him that he's still besotted. And why shouldn't you strike him? Your body is second to none... though alas, you can't deck yourself out the way you deserve. I'd like to see you as rich as you're beautiful, for I know that if you're wealthy I won't be a pauper myself.

'Your sign was opposed by Mars, but now Mars has set and favorable Venus is in your house. Listen to me so that you can take advantage of your beauty: a rich lover desires you. He wonders what it might be that you're lacking. He's as good-looking as you are; if it weren't that he wishes to buy you, he'd be bought himself.

'She blushed! Shame befits a pale complexion--but only if it's faked. The real thing will betray you. When you look into your lap with downcast eyes, respect each lover to the degree he gives you gifts.

'Perhaps under the rule of Tatiüs the uncultured Sabine women didn't want to be available to many men; now Mars wields his weapons on the borders, and Venus reigns in the city of Aeneas. All the pretty girls play--chastity is for those whom no one asks; and indeed, if she isn't a hick from the sticks, she asks the man.

'If you examine even women who carry themselves sternly, you'll find that those frowning foreheads cover many sins. Indeed Penelope tried the strength of many youths with the bow--and their horny bows tried her loins as well.

'Time slips away unseen, vanishing like the dew. The year rushes by on galloping horses. Bronze shines from use, and a fine garment begs to be worn. Abandoned dwellings fall mildewed and their grounds grow up in weeds. Unless you put your body to work, it'll grow old from lack of exercise. It's not enough to use it now and again!

'You'll make more money if you deal with many and your looting won't really hurt them. Wise old wolves prey on the whole of the flock.

'Tell me, what does your poet give you except new poems? You can read thousands of poems in your lover's collection. The god of poets himself is impressive in a golden robe, and he plays a gilded lyre. Trust me--the man who'll give you things is greater than Homer. Giving is a work of true genius.

'Nor should you turn up your nose at somebody who's bought himself out of slavery: nobody now cares who came to Rome with his feet chalked for sale. And don't let the wax death masks around somebody's atrium deceive you: take your ancestors off with you, poor lover!

'Nor let anybody have you for free because he's good looking. He can get your price from the lover he sells himself to.

'Don't push on the price while you're luring them into the net, lest they flee. When you've got them sure, burn them for all they're worth.

'Feigned love isn't a bad thing. Let him believe you love him, but beware lest real love take root in you.

'Often deny him a night with you: claim to have a headache, or say that the rites of Isis prevent you. Then take him back so that he doesn't get used to being without you. His oft-repulsed affection will never grow stale.

'Let your door be deaf to his prayers but open to his offerings. Let the lover you receive listen to the whimpering of the one you exclude. Also rage at your victim occasionally as though he had harmed you: your own sins will vanish when you pretend they're merely repayment for his.

'Never give him a long time to become angry, though. Often built-up wrath leads to a serious quarrel. Instead force your eyes to learn to weep, so that either at call can dampen your cheeks.

'Never fear to foreswear yourself when you have to deceive him. Venus demands that all her fellow deities be deaf when there's a matter of dalliance involved.

'You should have a slave and a clever handmaiden prepared to aid you by briefing him on the things he ought to buy you--and while they're at it, making a few requests of their own. If they get a little from

each of many men, they'll wind up with a huge pile in their personal accounts.

'Your sister and mother and nurse will also take nibbles. Loot will come quickly when sought by so many hands. When you don't have a reason for asking for a gift, let a cake stand as witness to your birthday.

'Beware lest your lover feel secure because he has no rival. Love doesn't long endure if you avoid arguments. Let him see the outline of a man's body on your mattress and livid hickies on the side of your neck. Especially let him see the presents that another man has sent you. If nobody else has sent any, visit the shops of the Sacred Way yourself.

'When you have stripped him of many possessions but he refuses to give you everything he owns, ask him to loan you things which you'll never return. Your tongue will aid you by hiding your intent. Flatter him and ruin him; let your wicked poisons hide beneath sweet honey.

'If you properly perform these techniques which I have learned through long experience and don't let the winds whisk away my words, you will often bless me, you will often pray that when I die my bones rest gently--'

She stopped in the middle of a sentence when my shadow betrayed me. I could scarcely restrain my hands from rending her white hair, her wine-bleared eyes, and her wrinkled cheeks. May the gods snatch her home from her, may she have poverty in her old age and long winters and a permanent thirst!

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Amores I:9

translated by David Drake

Every lover is a soldier and guards the camp of Cupid; believe me, Atticus, every lover is a soldier.

The age that's suitable for war is equally fitted for Venus. An aged soldier is a sad thing, just as an old man's love is sad. The range of years that generals look for in a brave soldier are the same years that a pretty girl looks for in a companion. Soldier and lover both will have to keep long watches and either will have to sleep on the ground: the lover guards the doorstep of his mistress, the soldier that of his general.

Long journeys are the duty of a soldier. Likewise if his girl goes on a trip, the worthy lover follows no matter how far she goes. Lover and soldier alike will march into stark mountains and cross rivers doubled by rainfall; either will chop a path through piled snow, nor will he make the excuse that he can't press on because violent east winds lash the shore and force him to wait for sailing season before he puts to sea. Who but a soldier or a lover would bear the chill of night or snow mixed with heavy rain?

One is sent as a scout against hostile enemies; the other keeps his eyes on a rival as though an enemy. One besieges mighty cities, the other the doorstep of his sweetheart. One smashes a city gate, the other a bedroom door.

Often a soldier is able to attack when his enemies are sleeping, slaughtering the unarmed mob with the weapon in his hand. Thus the heroes of the Iliad butchered the wild Thracians whom Rhesus led so that his captured horses left their dead master behind. Lovers of course use the dreams of husbands and move their weapons while their enemies sleep.

Mars is doubtful, nor is Venus certain: the defeated rise up again, and those whom you'd swear will never manage it again are back on the job. Those who think love is only desire should think again: Love is a matter of skill and experience.

Achilles was miserable, burning with love when Briseis was taken away from him. (While he grieves, use your chance to break the Argive lines, Trojans.) Hector left the embraces of Andromache to arm himself--and she, his wife, was the one who set the helmet on his head. The greatest of the leaders, Agamemnon son of Atreus, stood lovestruck at the sight of Priam's daughter Cassandra with her hair flying like a Maenad of Bacchus. Even Mars when caught by love was caught in Vulcan's net as well; no story made the rounds more often in heaven.

I was born with a sluggish disposition meant for quiet leisure; when shadows fell, sleep was all I cared for. Love of a pretty girl spurred me from my lethargy and drove me to earn my wage in Cupid's camp. Now you see me a brisk man waging nocturnal wars. If a man wants to avoid laziness, let him love.

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Amores I:10

translated by David Drake

As lovely as Helen who had two husbands, while she was being borne by Phrygian ships from the Eurotas Strait to be the cause of war; as lovely as Leda, to whom cleverly adulterous Zeus made love clad as a bird in white feathers; as lovely as Amymone when she carried an urn on her piled-up hair through parched Argos--so were you to me. I feared you'd be carried off by an eagle or a bull or whatever creature great Jupiter formed himself into for love.

Now I'm no longer afraid. The mad love that gripped my soul has healed and your face no longer holds my eyes.

You ask how I come to be changed? Because you asked me for gifts. For that reason alone I can no longer find you attractive. While you were innocent, I loved your soul with your body; now your figure is scarred by the disfigurement of your mind.

Love is nude and a boy. He is of an age without sin, and he has no garments so he can remain completely candid. Why do you want Venus' son to sell himself for money? He doesn't even have a tunic in whose bosom he could carry the payment!

Fierce arms befit neither Venus nor her son. It isn't right for these unwarlike gods to become mercenaries.

The whore puts herself out at a given price, available to anyone who pays it; she seeks a wretched return by letting her body take orders. Though she curses the commands of her greedy madam, nevertheless she does by compulsion what you do by your own choice.

Heed the example of the dumb beasts: it would be disgraceful to show less intelligence than the animals. The mare doesn't demand a gift from the stallion or the heifer of the bull, nor does the ram mount the ewe of his choice for a price. Woman alone prides herself on the spoils she strips from a man. Only she lets out contracts on her nights, and only she comes as contracted to sell that which pleases both parties and which both want. She makes her profit the arbiter of her pleasure.

When love delights both parties equally, why does one sell it and the other buy? Why should desire be costly to me but profitable to you, since its couplings are mutual between man and woman?

It's bad when bought witnesses sell perjured testimony and when the sitting judge's cash box stands open for contributions. It's shameful to hire out your tongue to defend miserable defendants, and a tribunal which creates great wealth is shameful. So too it's shameful to increase your net worth by the earnings of your couch and to sell your beauty for money.

A grateful return is owed for tasks done well voluntarily: no gratitude is required for a couch let out for hire. The lessee's responsibility ends with his payment; he owes her nothing more.

Cease, pretty ones, to bargain for the price of a night. Wealth gained this sordid way doesn't lead to good results: the gold brassards of the Sabine soldiers weren't of such value that they equalled the weight of the shields thrown with them to crush the head of the priestess who betrayed the Citadel. Similarly it was because Eriphyle had been bought with a necklace that her son ran a sword through the womb from which he'd entered the world.

Now, I'm not saying it's unworthy to ask money from a rich man: he's able to give anything he wants in response to a request. You may pluck grapes from vines hanging heavy from the vine, and the orchard of Alcinous willingly offers fruit.

A poor man pays in service and attentiveness and faith: he bestows these, all the valuables he owns, on his mistress. My additional gift is to be able to celebrate worthy girls with my verses: when I wish it, a girl becomes famous by my art. Clothes become torn, and jewels and gold are broken, but the fame which my songs bestow will be eternal.

Nor am I unwilling to give gifts: I only hate and disdain to be wheedled for them. What I refuse to your asking, I will give when you cease to beg.

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Amores I:11

translated by David Drake

Nape, you're skilled at arranging your mistress' scattered hair, but you're not merely a handmaid. You've shown your talent for the duties of the furtive night, and you've proved your cleverness at passing me notes. Often you've encouraged a hesitant Corinna to come to me, often you've proven faithful when I was in difficulties.

Thrust aside all forms of delay and take the tablets I've written this morning to your mistress. You don't have veins of stone nor a heart of hard iron, and you're not a complete innocent. I believe you too have sensed the darts of Cupid: guard these as though they were the standards of your own service.

If she asks what I'm doing, say that I live in hope of a night with her. For the rest, just offer in your charming hand the wax on which I've written.

While I'm talking, the hour flies. Slip her the tablet when she's alone, but make sure that she reads it immediately. And carefully watch her eyes and her forehead while she reads: from her expression alone it's possible to foretell the future.

Hasten! Tell her to reply with a long letter when she's read mine. I hate it when most of the tablet shines unused! Let her squeeze her lines together on the wax and scribble the last letters in the margin so that I have to squint to read them.

And yet what need is there for her to tire her fingers with a stylus? Let her write nothing on the tablet but, "Come!"

If this succeeds I won't delay to wrap the victorious tablet in laurel and hang it in the temple of Venus with the caption: NASO DEDICATES THIS FAITHFUL MINISTER TO VENUS, WHO RECENTLY TREATED HIM LIKE TRASH.

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Amores I:12

translated by David Drake

Weep with me for my hard luck: my girlfriend's answer came back, "No." Her wretched message denies she can see me today.

I should've known from the omens. When Nape turned to leave the house with my request, she stubbed her toe on the lintel. Girl, the next time you're sent out, remember to cross the lintel carefully and take high, dignified steps.

As for you, surly tablet--get out of my sight! Your wood panels are suitable for a funeral pyre and your wax is filled with words of denial, wax which I think bees on ill-famed Corsica collected from the flowers of the tall hemlock. You blush as though you'd been dyed with vermilion, and this color proved truly bloody. May you be thrown down at a crossroads, useless tablet, where the wheels of passing wagons will smash you to bits!

The man who turned you from a tree into a writing tablet must have been a criminal. That tree had displayed men by their miserable necks; that tree had supplied executioners with their grim crosses. This tree shaded hooting owls; its branches bore the weight of vultures and the nests of screech-owls.

Was I mad to have committed our love and my gentle words to my mistress to such a tablet? Better should this wax have been used for a bail application which some grim-faced assessor would read, or it could've lain among the daily accounts and the profit and loss statements over which the greedy merchant grieves.

I realize now that you're not just a two-leaf notebook but a two-faced one, for two is not a number of good omen. I can do nothing in my anger but pray that old age gnaws you with woodworm and that your white wax may end in an ash heap.

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Amores I:13

translated by David Drake

Already the blond dawn-maiden rises above the ocean from the side of her elderly husband and sets the day to turning on its frozen axis. Why do you hasten, Aurora? Hold for a time: the flock of birds that every year memorializes the shades of your son Memnon spends an entire day battling to the death.

Now I'm relaxing in the soft arms of my mistress. Now as always when her thigh touches mine, I'm at peace. At this moment my dreams are comforting and the air is cool; a bird trills liquidly through its slender throat.

Why do you hasten, Aurora, when your presence is unwanted by men and girls alike? Draw back on the dew-bright reins with your rosy hand. Before you rise the sailor can guide his course by the constellations and needn't wander lost in the waste of water. At your coming the traveller has to get up though he's still exhausted, and the soldier reaches for his weapons with brutal hands.

You're the first to see stooping farmers cultivating their crops with hoes; you first call the slow-moving oxen beneath the broad yoke. You snatch boys from their dreams and hand them over to schoolmasters who will savagely beat their tender hands.

You send many to court over a badly phrased document so that great losses result from a single word. Neither the legal expert nor the barrister is pleased by your arrival, for you make both get up to tire themselves in new litigation. You call the wool spinner's hand back to her weights after she's put aside her womanly labors.

I've willingly borne all sorts of things for myself, but who except a man who doesn't have a girl could be cruel enough to make girls rise at dawn? How often have I wished that Night refuse to cede to you and that the wheeling stars not flee your visage! How often have I wished that the winds would break the axle of your chariot or that your horse would stumble, wrapped in thick clouds!

Envious woman, whither do you hasten? Black was the skin of your son; black also is the heart of his mother! Would that I could complain of you to your husband Tithonus: there would be no woman in heaven more disdained.

You flee your husband because he's bent with extreme age; you leave the old man in the morning to mount your chariot which brings discontent. But if it were Cephalus whom you held in your arms, you would cry, "Hasten slowly, horses of the night!"

You're not getting any at home because your husband is old, but why should I, a lover, be tortured? Am I responsible for you marrying an old man?

Look at how many dreams the Moon gives to a youth in love, and she's just as attractive as you are. The Father of the Gods himself used his power to double the length of the night lest he see you too soon.

I'll end my complaints. You can tell that dawn has heard, for she's blushing--but nevertheless the day rises at the same time as usual.

Translator's note: This lyric is one of the clearer examples of the fact that that Ovid was trained for the courts, not for literature. I would say it was of little intrinsic merit were it not for the phrase, "Lente currite, noctis equi," which I find lovely and beyond my capacity to do justice to in translation.

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Amores I:14

translated by David Drake

I said, "Stop dyeing your hair," but now you no longer have hair to dye. Whoever had thicker hair than you when you let it fall free? And it touched the backs of your knees!

What have you done to hair which was so fine you might fear even to pin it up? It was like the fabrics which the yellow Chinese make or the strands which the spider's delicate foot stretches, weaving gossamer from the beam of a ruin.

Your hair was neither black nor golden; it was a color mixed of both and yet neither, like the trunk of a tall cedar stripped of its bark in the deep, dew-drenched vales of Mount Ida. Besides that, it was supple and easily thrown into a hundred curls; never ever was it a cause of trouble for you. That hair didn't break pins nor the teeth of combs: your hairdresser never had to worry about being beaten. I've seen her dress your hair, and never did you snatch a pin and jab her arm with it.

Often in the earliest morning I watched my mistress asleep with her hair spread on the dawn-lit couch. Without any adornment she was perfect, like a Thracian Bacchante lying where she fell on the green grass, exhausted by frenzy.

How sheer was her hair, the image of finest down--and alas, how terrible was the fate which that tortured hair has borne! How patiently they bore themselves when they were twisted into a mass of tight curls by steel and flame.

I shouted, "It is a crime, a crime, to sear those locks! They're beautiful by their own will. Spare your own head, woman of iron! Your hair doesn't deserve to be burned. Why, it can teach the hairpin where to lie!"

But that lovely head of hair perished; that hair that Apollo might have wished, that Bacchus would've loved to have adorning his own head. I could have gathered them up, just as nude Venus was once painting supporting her hair with a hand dripping seafoam.

Why do you now wail the loss of your ill-dressed hair? Why do you foolishly hold a mirror in your wretched hand? You're making a mistake by looking at yourself with eyes which remember the past; that your appearance may please you, forget what you were.

The harm was not done by the poison of a jealous rival nor did an old witch woman bathe you in a

poison from haunted Thessaly. It was not disease that harmed you (let my words not be an omen!) nor did envious tongues cause your hair to drop out. It was by your act and your decision that the deed was done. You mixed the venom for your own head.

Now Germany sends you the hair of its captives; you will be preserved by the tribute of conquered people. Oh how often will you blush as someone marvels at your hair and you have to say, "Now I'm being congratulated for something I bought. He's praising not me but some Sygambrian woman or other. But I can remember a time when my own beauty was famed."

Woe is me! I have to wipe my hand across my eyes to hide the tears when I see the blush staining her lovely cheeks. She holds her own hair in her lap and stares at it; oh woe, it did not deserve to have this end.

Nevertheless, compose your mind and your visage: the loss is reparable. In good time your natural hair will reappear.

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Amores I:15

translated by David Drake

Why do you complain, carping Envy, that I'm wasting my life? Do you call poetry a lazy man's work? Do you say that I should be like the ancient Romans who so long as health permitted pursued the rewards of military service on the dusty field, or that I should study wordy laws and prostitute my talents by speaking in the uncaring law courts?

Homer of Maeonia will live so long as stand Tenedos and Mount Ida, so long as the Simois hurls its swift waters down to the sea. Ascraean Hesiod will live so long as the grape swells with juice, so long as grain falls to the stroke of the incurved sickle. Callimachus the son of Battus too will be recited forever in all lands: what he lacked in genius, he made up for with craftsmanship.

Oblivion will never come for the dramas of Sophocles, and Aratus will live as long as the sun and the moon he wrote about. So long as there's a tricky slave, a stern father, a shameless bawd and a whore with a heart of gold, Menander will remain.

Artless Ennius and proud-tongued Accius have names which will never be lost. And what age will forget Varro and Argo, the first ship, and the golden fleece which Aeson's son Jason sought?

The verses of heavenly Lucretius will not die till death claims the world itself. The shepherd Tityrus, the Georgics, and the arms of Aeneas will be read so long as Rome rules a conquered world. So long as Cupid bears his arms, his bow and his torches, your songs will be studied, cultured Tibullus. Gallus is known to the Western Isles and Gallus is known to the dawn-winds, and Lycoris is known with her Gallus.

Therefore though the rocks and the hardworn plowshare will eventually vanish, poetry will not die. Kings and the triumphs of kings must give way to poetry, and the kindly banks of the gold-bearing Tagus must give way.

Let the mob marvel at mortal things! To me blond Apollo offers cups filled with the Muses' Castalian waters. I will bind back my hair with a wreath of frost-fearing laurel, NS I will be widely read by anxious lovers.

Envy can only gnaw at the living: she leaves the dead alone to be judged on their individual merits. Therefore when the funeral fire has devoured me I will live, and a great part of me will be immortal.

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Amores II:1

translated by David Drake

I, Naso, born in the stream-cut Paelignian hills, composed this book also. I am the poet of my own dalliances.

And again Love has called me to write. Get away from here, get away, you moralists! You aren't the right playhouse for my tender strains.

Let the warm-blooded maiden read me to her betrothed, and let me be read by the love-struck boy who knows nothing of the art. Also there are men who, like me, has been wounded by the Love's bow and who recognize the flames I describe. They wondering will cry, "Who was it that told the poet about what happened to me so that he could write this?"

I remember that once I dared to write of the heavenly battle, of Gyas with a hundred hands and as many heads, when Earth sought vengeance by piling Ossa on steep Pelion to assault Olympus. I was in the clouds and held the thunderbolt with Jupiter when he shot it skillfully to defend his heavens.

Then my girlfriend closed her gates to me. I dropped both Jupiter and the thunderbolt. In fact Jupiter flew right out of my mind.

Jupiter, you must forgive me: your weapons are of no aid to me now. That closed door was more of a thunderbolt to me than yours.

I returned to my own weapons, compliments and delicate lyrics. Such smooth words can soften the bar of any gate.

The proper verses can draw down the horns of the blood-red moon and call back the snowy horses of the racing sun. Serpents split apart, their jaws parted by a verse, and streams run back to their sources. Though they be made of oak, gates and the crossbars locked to the door posts will fall to my verses. Victory will come at last to me!

What would it gain me to sing of swift Achilles? What good to me are the deeds of Agamemnon or his brother Menelaus either one? What matter the wanderings of Odysseus after so many years of war, or the spectacle of poor Hector being dragged behind Achilles' Thessalian horses?

But when a poet praises the face of a pretty girl, she herself comes to him as his payment. That's a great price indeed!

Farewell, you heroes with famous names; your thanks don't benefit me. But girls turn their lovely faces

to the songs which purple-clad Love whispers to me.

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Amores II:2

translated by David Drake

Bagoas, the duty of guarding your mistress is in your hands, so listen well while I go over a few necessary matters with you.

Yesterday I saw my girlfriend taking the air in the Portico of the Palatine Apollo, decorated with the procession of the daughters of Danaus. Immediately I wrote her a note asking to get together with her. She wrote back in a trembling hand, "I can't!" And when I asked why she couldn't, she answered my complaints by explaining that your care of your mistress was too unpleasantly complete.

Believe me, good attendant, if you're wise you'll stop earning yourself hatred: everybody wants to destroy the person they fear.

Her husband isn't smart either. Why is he so determined to protect something that won't be diminished even if you don't guard it? But regardless, let him go on with his foolish version of love and demand that his wife be chaste, as many do. You can give her the gift of secret freedom, and what you provide her with will come around to you as well.

Do you wish to know all? Then your mistress is under obligation to her slave. Do you fear to know all? It's easy to ignore things.

For example: she gets a note that she reads privately. You can assume her mother sent it. A stranger comes to see her? Presently he won't be a stranger. She goes to see a dear girlfriend who isn't sick? Let her visit and perhaps you'll decide the girl is sick after all.

Nor should you object to what may happen in the temple of linen-veiled Isis nor fear the curved benches of the theater. The confederate in a conspiracy has many duties, but what task is easier than to keep your mouth shut?

The slave who pleases and keeps his own counsel at home is never beaten. He has power, and his fellow slaves lie at his feet. False reasons for his success are invented to hide the real ones, but both master and mistress approve of him--because the mistress alone does. While the husband composes his face cheerfully and smoothes his wrinkles, my girl is able to do as she likes with a bland expression.

However she'll be careful to feign complaints against you and weep false tears and call you a torturer. You in turn accuse her of doing harmless things, so that you may destroy belief in the truth by inventing false sins.

Thus you'll always be held in high regard, thus your personal wealth will increase. If you follow this

plan, you'll be able to buy your freedom in no time at all.

But do you notice the chains binding the necks of tattletales? The slave pen waits for those whose hearts are without honor. Tantalus lies in water tormented by thirst and snatching at the fruits which flee his touch, the punishment his wagging tongue brought him. Because Ion, the servant of Juno, was too good a guard, he died before his time. She was, after all, a goddess.

I've seen a slave with legs scarred to his feet because a husband was required to learn that his wife was unchaste. That punishment was less than he deserved, for his evil tongue harmed two: the husband was miserable, and the wife got a bad reputation.

Believe me, a wife's sins don't make any husband happy, nor will they help anybody even if he listens to them. If he doesn't care about his wife, then you waste your indictment on complaisant ears. If he loves her, however, your officiousness has made him miserable.

Nor is this sort of accusation easy to prove even if it happens in plain sight: often the wife comes through safely because the judge is on her side. A husband who's seen the very act may still believe her denials, faulting his eyes and cursing himself for doubting. Let him see his wife crying and he'll wail himself, crying, "That busybody will pay for his lies!"

Why would you take part in a contest so one-sided? If you lose, you'll be beaten while she sits on the judge's lap.

We aren't plotting some crime, we're not getting together to mix poisons; drawn swords won't gleam in our hands. We're asking to be able to love in private by your help: what could be easier to grant than our prayers?

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Amores II:3

translated by David Drake

Woe is me, for you who guard my mistress are neither male nor female; you can never know the mutual joys of Venus. The fellow who first gelded a boy should suffer the same injury himself!

If you'd felt the glow love toward either sex, you'd be indulgent and kindly toward those begging you. You weren't born to ride horses nor are you suited for bold arms; the warlike spear isn't shaped to your right hand. That work is for men.

You must set aside manly dreams and bear aloft the standards of your mistress. If your deeds satisfy her, then her thanks will well repay you. If you fail her, though, who else is there to help you?

Her beauty and youth are meant for loving games; it'd be a crime if that body were to waste away from dull neglect. Besides, she'll be able to deceive you even if you try to put yourself in her way: what she and I both wish will come about regardless.

We prefer to ask first: grant us our wish while you still have time to profit by your assent.

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Amores II:4

translated by David Drake

I don't dare try to defend my unfortunate practices or to engage in battle falsely on behalf of my flaws. I'll confess them if it does any good to admit mistakes: I have no control over my actions in this matter.

I hate my weakness regarding women, but the fact my behavior disgusts me doesn't enable me to control it. Alas how heavy a weight it is to bear though you may try to put it down! For I have no strength or control over this: I'm swept off, like a ship shaken by a swift current.

There's no particular sort of woman who spurs my desires: there's a hundred different types, enough to keep me always in love.

If a woman keeps her eyes modestly averted, I burn with lust and plot against her chastity in a way that shames me. If on the other hand she's rather forward, I'm captivated because she's not a rustic and her manner gives me hope of easing her into my soft bed.

If she has an austere manner and seems to imitate the stern virtues of the ancient Sabines, I think she's protesting too much to really mean it. If you're well read, you offer me the richness of rare knowledge; if you're uneducated, your simplicity pleases me.

What if she says that compared to my poetry, that of Callimachus was rustic doggerel? She to whom I am pleasing is pleasing to me. But if she finds fault with me as a poet and my verses besides, I want her spread thighs to bear my weight.

This one has a graceful walk; her movements delight me. That one stumps along, but maybe she'll be more graceful with a man clasped in her arms.

I'd love to kiss this one as she sings because she has a sweet voice and enormous range. That one's skilled thumb coaxes plaintive chords from the lyre; who wouldn't love such skilled hands?

This one delights me because she moves her arms and torso gracefully in practiced gestures. I won't say how this affects me (because everything affects me), but introduce her to chaste Hippolytus and he'd become as horny as Priapus.

You, because you're tall, make me think of epic heroines; you'd be able to exercise me over the whole bed. But this one is desirable because she's so short. I'm overwhelmed by both: both tall and short are just what I'm looking for.

This one isn't fashionably gotten up; she takes by stealth what fashion tries to attack. This one is adorned; she's an advertisement of her value.

The pale woman is fetching to me, the tanned woman is fetching to me. Lust even in the form of a negress finds me.

When dark hair hangs against the white neck of this one, I think of how striking black-haired Leda was; but if she were a blonde, she'd remind me of Aurora with her gleaming yellow hair. My love will fit itself to any myth.

Youth entices me, mature age touches me. The first is better looking, but the latter has experience.

Besides that, if there's any girl in this City whom anyone fancies, my love has designs on her.

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Amores II:5

translated by David Drake

No love is so important (get away from me, Cupid with your quiver of arrows!) that I ought to wish so often that I were dead. Woe is me! I wish I were dead when I think of how many times you've cheated on me, you girl born for perpetual faithlessness.

I haven't been reading your love letters to learn what you've been doing, nor is it because you've been secretly receiving gifts that I know you're false. Oh, would that I could accuse you in a fashion that permitted me to acquit you! But no, miserable me, my case for the prosecution is unshakeable.

Happy is the man who dares to strongly defend what he loves, a man whose girlfriend can say, "I didn't do it." You have to be iron and in love with your own misery to really want to read the death penalty when the girl you love lies convicted before you.

Poor me! I was watching you, sober and alert, while you thought I was sleeping when the party starting drinking unmixed wine after dinner. I saw you saying many things with twitches of your eyebrows, and your nods were as good as words. Your eyes weren't silent either, and the table became a document on which your fingers wrote notes in spilled wine. I recognized the parts of the conversation that were going on under the surface and the words that were given double meanings.

And then the many guests got up from the table; this and that young man went out together. I saw--and the sight loosed the tongue I'd been keeping silent--you bestowing improper kisses, not the sort a sister gives to her strait-laced brother but rather what an immoral girlfriend gives to the man she desires. It isn't possible that Diana would give such a kisses to Phoebus, but Venus often gave them to Mars.

"What are you doing?" I shout. "Why have you destroyed my happiness? I will defend my rights with my fists! Why is a third party making free of the property which was yours and mine alone?"

I cried these things which grief dictated to my tongue, and a blush of shame touched her guilty cheek. This is the faint glow with which Dawn, the wife of Tithonus, colors the sky, or which a young bride turns when seen by her new husband. Thus roses flame when planted among lilies, or the Moon turns when witchcraft delays the flight of her horses across the sky; or the color which a Lydian woman painted Assyrian ivory so that it wouldn't turn yellow with age.

One of these was the color she blushed, or some color very like to them--and never was she more beautiful than now.

She looked at the ground; she was fetching when she looked at the ground. She wore a sad expression; sadness became her.

I was going to pull her lovely hair and slap her tender cheeks, but I saw her face and my angry arms fell to my sides. My girl was defended by her own weapons. I who had so recently been furious now begged that she not kiss me less warmly. She laughed and willingly gave me wonderful kisses, the sort that shook me like the forked lightning of angry Jove.

I am tortured with the wish that no other man had felt such kisses, and I wish I didn't know that the kisses I had taught her were far less sweet so that she must've been taking lessons elsewhere. It's terrible that your kisses were so delightful, that you put your whole tongue into my mouth and received all mine in yours.

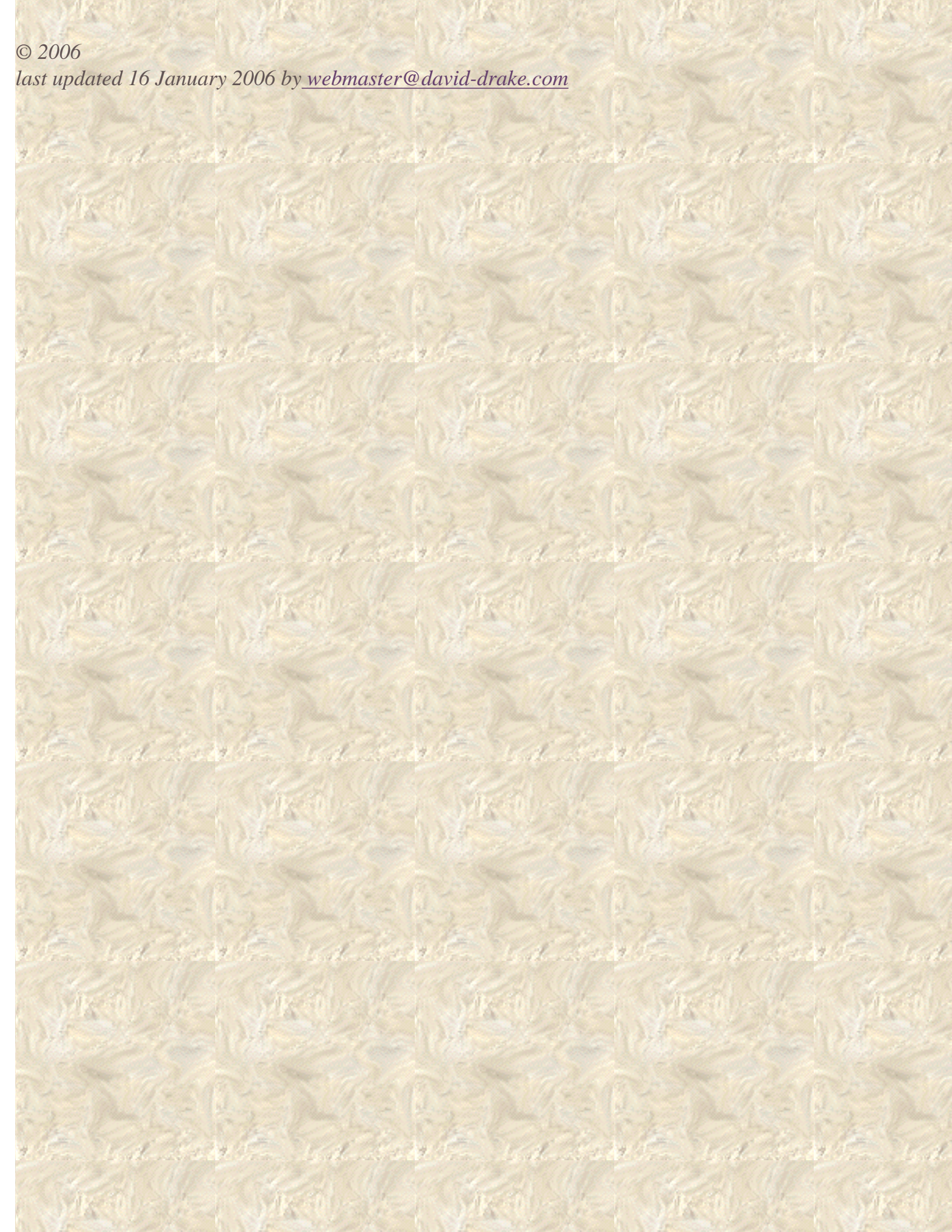
But this one thing grieves me, not that you have exchanged kisses with others (though I do grieve because of that) but because you could have learned them only in bed. I do not doubt the heavy price your teacher charged.

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Amores II:6

translated by David Drake

My girlfriend's parrot, her winged mimic from the Dawn-lighted Indies, has died. Flock to its funeral rites, birds. Come, dutiful winged ones: beat your breasts with your pinions and tear your delicate cheeks with your unbending claws. Pluck out your crests as humans tear their hair and let your own songs quiver in place of the funerary horn.

Philomela, you have complained long enough about the crime of the tyrant Tereus; now turn your grief to the miserable funeral of *this* rare bird. The fate of Itys was terrible, but it's in the far past now.

All of you who wend your courses through the currents of the air, grieve! And you above all grieve for your friend, turtledove. You and the parrot lived together in perfect concord for his whole life; your mutual faith remained firm to the end. As was the friendship of Phocian Pylades with Orestes the Argive, so was the turtledove's to you, parrot, for so long as the fates granted.

But what value was your friendship, your uniquely beautiful color, your amazing art of mimicry; what value that you pleased my girlfriend, to whom you were given with that intent? Though you were beyond question the very crown of avian existence, you lie in death!

Your wings made the green of brittle emeralds look dull and your beak blushed as though stained with Tyrian purple. No bird in all the world could better mimic a human voice: you spoke back the words perfectly, but with a fetching lisp.

It was envy that snatched you off. You were never quarrelsome; you chattered gently, a lover of peaceful calm. Look at the way quail live, constantly fighting among themselves even worse than a gaggle of old women.

It didn't take much to fill you, nor did you stop talking frequently to gobble down more food. A nut was enough for you or the head of a sleep-bearing poppy, and a drink of pure water slaked your thirst. The vulture is greed incarnate; likewise the kite wheeling in the skies and the jackdaw that brings the rains. The crow, though hated by armed Minerva, lives for nine centuries and more; but you have died, parrot, gift brought from the ends of the Earth.

It's always the best whom the greedy shades first snatch off; lesser creatures are left to fill out long lives. Thersites lived to watch the sad funeral of Protesilaus, and Hector was cremated while his brothers lived.

Why is it that I must remember the prayers of my frightened girlfriend--vain prayers which Notus, the stormy Southwind, snatched across the sea? Your seventh dawn rose, but there would not be an eighth. Fate stood holding the distaff empty of the thread of your life.

Even at the end your throat did not choke on unworthy words. Dying, your tongue cried, "Corinna, farewell!"

Beneath the hill of Elysium spreads a grove of dark ilex; the grass is always green on the well-watered soil beneath. If one may ever speak with confidence about such doubtful things, there is the place of blessed birds from which their foul kin are barred. There flocks of harmless swans browse, and there lives the only phoenix ever to exist. Here the peacock sacred to Juno displays, and the gentle dove gives kisses to her loving mate. The parrot has reached this shaded grove and has taught the pious birds to speak the way he does.

A cairn covers his bones, a cairn far greater than his body. Its capstone bears this worthy epitaph:

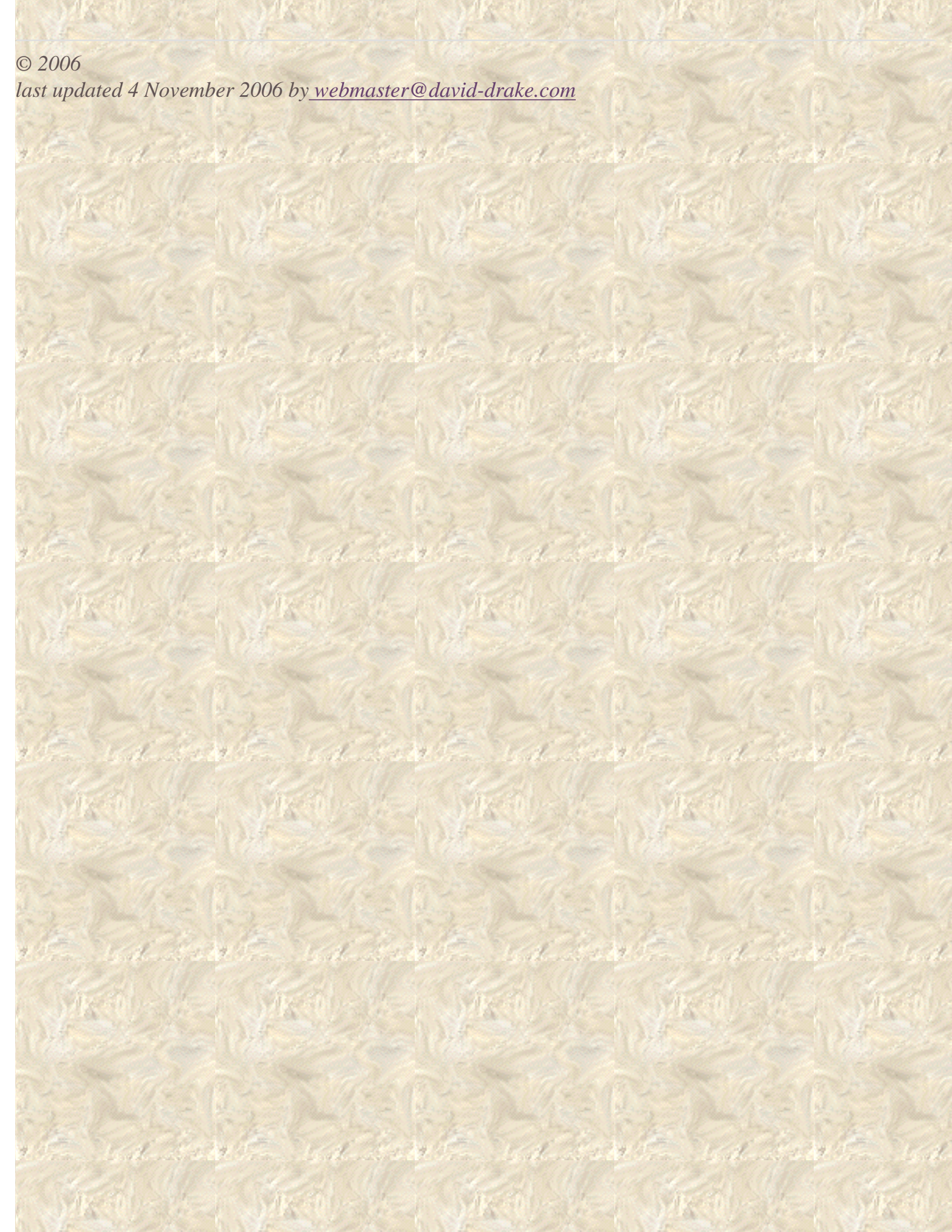
I WAS BROUGHT TO THIS TOMB TO PLEASE MY MISTRESS, MY TONGUE SPOKE BETTER
THAN THAT OF ANY BIRD.

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Amores II:7

translated by David Drake

Do you think it's my whole purpose in life to defend myself against your new accusations? Even though I succeed, it's wearing to have to fight all the time.

If I happened to look up at the crowd filling the marble seats of the theater, you picked whichever face you wanted from those many to give me grief about. Or if some handsome woman happened to glance at me without speaking, you claimed that she was giving me a silent come-on.

If I praised some woman, you clawed at my poor eyes; if I ran her down, you thought I was trying to conceal what I'd been doing with her.

If I'm bright and cheerful, I don't care how you're feeling; if I'm under the weather, you say I'm heartsick with love of another.

It's gotten to the point that I'd like to have done something wrong: those who deserve to be punished can bear it more easily.

When you become furious for no reason and believe all sorts of empty nonsense, you devalue your wrath: remember that even the long-eared donkey, that wretched beast, eventually becomes inured to blows.

Now you've come up with an extraordinary accusation: you claim that Cypassis, your clever hairdresser, has besmirched her mistress' bed! By all the Gods! I hope that if lust does overpower me I can do better than some dirty little slave wench!

When one is able to make love to Venus, why would he want to embrace a body scarred by the welts of Venus' switch?

In addition there's the fact that Cypassis is very dutiful at fixing your hair and her skilled craftsmanship makes her one of your favorite servants. Would I risk proving my infidelity with a slave who's so close to you? Isn't it obvious that the whole accusation has to be rejected on the evidence?

I swear by Venus and the bow of her winged son that I have done nothing for which you could rightly reproach me!

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Amores II:8

translated by David Drake

Cypassis, only goddesses could be worthy of your perfected skill at arranging hair in a thousand styles, and the skill which I know you possess for stolen pleasures is not at all that of a farm girl. You're a treasure for your mistress, but a greater treasure to me.

Who told Corinna about the way our bodies fit together? How did she learn about your trysts? Did I perhaps blush? Did I reveal our secret passion with an ill-chosen word?

But why should I feel that dallying with a slave girl is a sign of madness? Achilles burned for the face of the handmaid Briseis, and though the Apollo-descended Cassandra was only a slave, Agamemnon, the scion of Tantalus, loved her. I'm no better than the Mycenaean warlord nor the Thessalian hero; shall I feel defiled for behavior that kings found acceptable?

But nevertheless when your mistress fixed her angry eyes on you, I saw your whole face redden. And then, if you'll remember, I instantly swore my innocence with a fierce oath to Venus. (I call on you, goddess! May you order the gentle South Wind to sweep the false oaths of a true servant into the seas off Crete.)

Now it's time to repay my good offices, swarthy Cypassis, by sleeping with me. Why do you deny me and pretend you're all frightened, ungrateful one? It's enough that you give full satisfaction to one of your pair of masters.

Because if you continue to foolishly deny me, I'll blurt to your mistress all we've done in the past, coming forward as a witness to betray my own sin. I'll tell her not only where and how often we got together, Cypassis, but what we did and how many times we did it.

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Amores III:8

translated by David Drake

Does anybody still think that distinguished art and delicate poetry are sufficient to win a lover? Once genius was more valuable than gold, but today's universal barbarism counts it for nothing.

Once my brilliant little poetry collections pleased my mistress, but today I can no longer go where my books went then. Once she praised me, but now her doors are closed against my praised self. Thus she sends my genius packing.

Behold--a nouveau riche who gained his wealth through slaughter, a former centurion fed on blood till it raised him to a knighthood. He is preferred to me!

Dear heart, can your lovely arms embrace him? Can you lie in his embrace? Do you not see that his head bore a helmet, a sword was sheathed along the thigh that now lies next to yours, and the left hand with which he counts his recent ill-got gains then carried a shield. Would you touch a right hand that was wet with blood?

Are you able to hold the hand by which men died? Alas, where have you hidden your gentle heart? Behold his scars, the marks of bygone battle. Everything he has, he gained by force.

Perhaps he'll be willing to tell you how many men he's killed. Are you so greedy you'd touch the hands his own words condemn? Yet I, the pure priest of Apollo and the Muses, sing my song vainly to your barred gates.

Let anyone who's wise learn not the arts of leisure as I did but rather those of the fearful battleline and the savage camp, so that he can command a cohort instead of writing polished verse. You can only spend the night with your girlfriend, Homer, if you're a warrior!

When Jupiter rained himself down as the price of Danae's maidenhead, he showed us that nothing has more power than gold. If you don't have money, you'll find her father harsh, the girl herself prim, the door barred, and an iron tower before you; but when the wise whoremonger offers a gift, she bares her bosom and gives whatever he orders her to give.

In the days when ancient Saturn reigned in heaven, the deep earth hid all wealth in its shadows. Bronze and silver along with gold and iron remained among the dead in the Underworld; there was no refined metal. But the earth gave better things: grain without need for the curved plowshare, apples and honey from the hollow oak. No harsh plow ripped the earth, no surveyor marked off the limitless fields. Nor did men harry the seas with downthrust oars; the shoreline was as far as a mortal's path could take him.

But then, Human Nature, you were cunning to your own injury and damned by your own ingenuity. What do you gain by putting your hands to weapons, what need have you with the deeps? You had been content with the land. Will you now make the heavens your own as well?

We have gouged the earth to gain massy gold instead of crops. Soldiers hold wealth they gained by blood. The courts are closed to poor men and wealth confers public office. Such is what the upright judge and the stalwart official have come to!

Let greed and wealth have all things else--let the court and forum serve them, let them decide on peace or stark war as they choose, so long as their greed doesn't interfere with my lovemaking. A poor man must have something! But now a pretty girl is in the same wretched state as the Sabine women: whoever can pay the most rules her like a slave.

The doorman bars me; when I arrive, my girl herself says she fears her husband's wrath. If I'd paid, they'd both have thrown open the whole house.

Ah, if there's any God to avenge neglected lovers, let him turn all ill-sought wealth to dust!

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Amores III:9

translated by David Drake

Memnon's mother and Achilles' mother both wept over their sons. If such grief could touch great goddesses, then you too, Elegy, shall loose your hair now in unfamiliar grief. Ah, now you must become a funeral elegy: the empty husk of Tibullus, your true bard and your fame, burns on a high-built pyre.

Look how Cupid has broken his bow and put out his torch; he holds his quiver upended. See, he walks with his wings dragging, beating his bare breast with his fists. The hair that falls to his shoulders catches his tears and his mouth gives forth a stricken sob. He says Tibullus is leaving your house, handsome Iulus, and going from the funeral to the hall of his brother Aeneas. Nearby, his mother Venus is as distraught as she was the day the wild boar ripped up Adonis' groin.

We bards are called 'sacred' and thought to be the special care of the gods. There are those who think we have some part of the divine... but death is a boor which violates every sacrament and lays its shadowy hands on everyone.

What did the high lineage of Ismarian Orpheus benefit him? Of what use did he find the song that mastered savage beasts? His father Linon is said to have often heard in the deep forest the sound of his windblown lyre whispering, "Ah, Linon...."

Behold Homer, the bard from whom like a perpetual spring poured the Pierian waters. he too knew a final day which dragged him down to black Avernus. His song alone escaped the greedy pyre.

The words of the bards endure, the slow labor of Troy and the horse the Greeks built to bring doom in the night. Thus Nemesis and Delia will be long remembered: the first Tibullus' recent love, the other his first.

What good is there in sacrificing to the gods? What value now do you find in the sistrum and rites of Isis? What use was there in lying alone in your chaste bed?

When ill fates swallow good men, those close to them--forgive me if I speak the truth--think there are no gods. Though you live and die a pious life, crushing death will still drag you to the empty tomb from the temple where you worship.

Do you trust instead in your art? Behold: there lies Tibullus. The little that remains of him will fit in a small urn.

Did the flames of the pyre take even you, sacred bard? Did they not fear to devour even your heart? Flames capable of a crime like that could as easily burn the temples of the sacred gods!

Avert your eyes, great Venus, for there are things that would make even you weep; yet it could be worse. What if Tibullus had died of his youthful illness on Corcyra and lay there in an unmarked grave? Here at least his mother could weep a final offering onto the ashes from which his soul has fled, and his sister could join the poor mother in grief, her hair wild and tangled.

Nor did Nemesis nor the girl who earlier joined her kisses with yours desert your pyre, Tibullus. Delia, as she was leaving, said, "I was the luckier in your love, for you lived while I was your flame." To her Nemesis replied, "Why are you claiming concern at a loss that was mine alone? Dying, he held me with his failing hand."

If death leaves us anything but a name and a shadow, Tibullus will walk in the Vale of Elysium. Learned Catullus, you and your friend Calvus will meet him there, your youthful temples wreathed with ivy; you too will join him, Gallus, so great in soul and lineage, if the accusation that you betrayed the emperor's friendship is false. Tibullus, your urbane shade will be comrade to such men and will increase their pious number--if souls have any later existence.

May your bones sleep safely in their urn, and may the earth lie light upon your ashes.

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Amores III:10

translated by David Drake

It is the time of the Cerealia, so my girlfriend sleeps in her bed alone. Blond Ceres with your fine hair tied with wheat straw, why do you inconvenience us for your rites? All peoples call you generous, Goddess--a person who wishes to bring good to all mankind. Until your arrival the shaggy rustic didn't parch grain nor did he have a work for threshing floor. The oaks whose rustling leaves were the first means of prophecy offered the people mast, for acorns and salads of wild greens were all they had to eat.

Ceres first taught the seed to swell in the ground and first cut the grain with a sickle when it turned golden. She first compelled oxen to bow their necks to the yoke and first ripped up the ancient soil with a plow's curved blade.

Who would believe that such a lady rejoiced in the tears of lovers? Or that she thought the torments of those she'd forced to sleep alone were a sacrifice worthy of her?

And though Ceres may love those who do the hard labor of the fields, she is no rustic nor is her heart bereft of love. Let the Cretans be my witnesses; they will not lie, for they pride themselves on having nourished Jupiter, the god of oaths.

Jupiter who bends the starry bow of the firmament was a little boy on Crete, drinking milk with his toothless mouth. There can be no doubt of the island's witness, for the God is fostered praisers it.

Besides, I think Ceres herself would testify to a lapse so well known.

For beneath Cretan Ida, the Goddess saw Iasius shooting game with a steady hand. She saw him, and all her senses took flame. Shame drew her one way, but love pulled in the other.

Love conquered her shame. All over the world, the furrows dried up and the sewn grain sprouted only sparsely. Though hoes and the hooked plowshare expertly broke clods, and though the seeds fell evenly across the broad fields, the prayers of the hopeful cultivators were vain.

The goddess of crops instead loitered instead in the deep forests. The wheat fell from the long hair into which she'd braided it, and the only place in the world in which crops grew that year was Crete.

Everywhere the Goddess went brought a bountiful harvest. Crops ripened in the deep woods about Ida, and the wild boar reaped spelt with his tusks. Even lawgiving Minos might have preferred such a harvest to those he knew during the Golden Age. Crete alone wished that Ceres' love would last long.

Then while you were in love, blond Goddess, you would have found nights apart miserable --but to such

your rites now compel me. Why should I be miserable when Proserpina, your daughter by Iasius, rules by the same right as Juno (albeit a lesser kingdom)?

A holiday calls for love and song and wine. These are duties we should offer to the Gods who rule us.

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Amores III:11

translated by David Drake

Long have I borne your slights, but your insults have finally overcome my patience. I have liberated myself, broken my chains, and now am ashamed to have borne what I wasn't ashamed to bear. I have revolted from Love's domination and trampled him underfoot; at last I am grown a man.

"Steel yourself and bear it," I tell myself. "This hardship will pay future dividends. Often a bitter drink is the best thing for those who've been completely drained."

Was it for this I bore the checks, that I was so often blocked by your gates and forced to lay my delicate body on the hard ground before them? Was it for this that I lay late before your barred door while you embraced What's-his-face?

Oh, yes, I saw him--the lover who staggered from your house with his dick dragging! Even that was less painful than that he should see me and sneer--but this shame too I bore!

When did I fail to stand by you and be your protector, your husband and your comrade? Besides that, I introduced you into society. Because of my love, you were loved by many!

What shall I say of the lies your tongue told to deceive me, or the sworn promises you broke to my loss? What about the way you exchanged nods with other men at parties, or the innocent conversations your wink turned into come-ons?

You told me you were sick. Headlong and terrified I rushed to you--and found that you were well enough for my rival.

All this I ignored, enduring in silence. Just try to find another who'd bear what I have! But now at last I've garlanded my ship for departure and dare to launch it onto the tumbling waves. You can stop your flattery and the words that used to have the power to destroy me: I am not the fool I used to be.

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Amores III:11b

translated by David Drake

Love and hatred strive, twisting my fickle heart in opposite directions; but I think love conquers.

I flee your wantonness, but your beauty draws me back from flight. I'd like to shun your immorality, but still I love your body. Thus I can neither live with you nor without you, and I don't seem to know what I want.

I wish you were either less lovely or less of a slut, so that such a wonderful body were not the frame for debauched morals. Your behavior deserves my hatred, but your face demands that I love you. Alas for me, that face has more effect than your vices.

Spare me, I beg you, by the pledges we made to one another in bed; by all the gods who so often give you leave to foreswear yourself; by your face, which to me is itself the image of a great goddess; and finally by your eyes, which have blinded me.

Whatever you are, you will always be mine. No matter what you choose, you get me as well whether you want me or not; my madness compels me. I am a sail raised to the wind, compelled to love you whether I would or no.

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Amores III:12

translated by David Drake

Why must there always come the day on which you black birds caw sad omens to a lover? What star shall I blame for my fate, against which gods shall I rail for waging war against me?

She who was mine and whom but I loved at the beginning, I fear I must now share with many. Am I mistaken or was it my own verses which brought her fame? But so it is: my genius allows her to sell herself.

I deserve this punishment! Why did I proclaim the excellence of her body? It's my fault that my girl has become a hot commodity!

I'm the madam who displays her, I'm the pimp who guides lovers to her. I'm the one who opened her gate to the world.

I don't know if poetry can aid a lover, but mine has certainly hurt me. My verses have roused envy of my good fortune. Instead of Thebes or Troy, instead of Caesar's glory, I took Corinna as my sole theme. Would that the Muses had turned their backs on my verse, would that Apollo had deserted my labors!

But even so, people don't usually believe what poets say. I wish they hadn't given weight to my words.

I've told how Scylla's thighs and groin sprouted raging dogs because she stole the hair that was her father's strength. I have wings to Hermes' feet, I gave snakes to Medusa's hair. I told of conquering Bellerophon borne on a winged horse. I stretched fallen Tityos over many acres and formed the three heads of snake-born Cerberus. I made Enceladus wave a thousand arms in battle and described the men transformed by Circe. I bound the Aeolian winds in bladders for Odysseus.

I make treacherous Tantalus thirst in the middle of a river. I turned Niobe into rock and Callisto into a she-bear. Through me the owl hoots at Odryssian Itys hoots, and my Jupiter transforms himself into birds or gold or swims through the sea as a bull with a maiden on his back.

I tell of Proteus and the sowing of the dragon's teeth at Thebes. Mine were the bulls who breathed flame, mine were those sisters of Phaeton who wept tears of amber, and mine were those ships which now are sea-nymphs. I recounted the black day of the cannibal feast of Atreus and how hard rock was shattered by the note of a lyre.

The fancy of poets is unbounded and should prevent belief in anything they say. My praises of my girlfriend should have seemed false. Instead, your belief has ruined me!

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Amores III:13

translated by David Drake

Since my wife comes from the fruit-bearing Faliscan region, we journeyed to the city of Falerii which you conquered, Camillus. There priestesses were preparing the chaste festival of Juno, featuring famous games and locally-raised cattle.

The ceremonies repaid the effort we made to see them, though the route to the temple is narrow and steep. At the top stands an ancient grove, thickly grown and gloomy. Just look around: you cannot doubt that this place is home to a spirit. The altar which receives prayers and pinches of frankincense from the pious has been built artlessly by the hands of our ancestors.

When the trumpet sounds its solemn call, an annual procession winds through the dressed streets to this place. Past the cheering populace are led snowy heifers which have been fed on the grasses of the Faliscan meadows. They're followed by calves too young to have threatening horns; and behind those come lesser victims, a pig from an humble sty and a bellweather who lead his flock with long, curling horns.

Juno scorns only the she goat as a sacrifice, because a she goat is said to have found her when she was hiding in the deep forest and forced her to give up her attempt at flight. Today as part of the rites, boys hurling javelins chase a she goat whose meat becomes the prize for the one who hits her.

Groups of youths and innocent girls strew the road along which the goddess will come with garments. The maidens' hair is dressed with gold and jewels, and they wear purple dresses which hang down to their gilded sandals. According to the custom originated by the city's Greek founder, each priestess tosses a fold of her white robe over her head.

Then the people cheer as Juno herself follows in gilded state behind her priestesses. The character of the procession is Argive, for after Agamemnon's slaughter Halaesus fled crime and the wealth of his fatherland. After wandering long by sea and shore, he founded these high walls with a skilled hand.

Halaesus taught the Faliscan people the rites of Juno. May these rites always avail me and the folk of Falisci.

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Amores III:14

translated by David Drake

Since you are so beautiful I do not plead with you not to sin; but only that you not force miserable me to know about it. I don't require that you be chaste, but I ask that you make an effort to lie about it. The woman who can claim she doesn't sin is without sin; only admitted guilt makes a woman notorious.

What madness is it that leads you you to admit in the daylight the things that were hidden in darkness, and to say openly what you did in secret? Even the whore about to couple with a stranger first shoots the bolt lest someone walk in on them.

Do you publish your sins for the sake of ill fame? Do you pursue an indictment of your own behavior? Get some common sense and at least pretend to imitate chaste women, allowing me to think you're honest though you won't be.

Continue to do the things you've been doing--but deny that you've done them. don't be ashamed to keep at least your language modest.

Create a place for your wantonness. Fill it with all delights and make modesty stand outside. When you go from that place, though, let all lust remain behind and leave your sins behind on the bed.

In that place, strip off your clothing and your chastity, and time after time lay thigh on thigh. There let the tongue thrust into purple lips and let desire teach love a thousand different positions. There urge him on with words and wordless cries, and let the bedframe shudder with the violence of your lust.

When you don your tunic, put on also a face that shuns all sin and let an expression of chastity belie the sexual acrobatics you've just performed. Lie to the public and lie to me. Allow me to wander in ignorance, happy in my foolish credulity.

Why must I so often see you send and receive letters? Why is your bed furrowed before I get into it? Why have more than dreams tousled your hair and why do I see bite marks on your shoulders? You shouldn't make your actions so obvious. If you don't care about sparing your reputation, at least spare me!

I grow faint and tremble whenever you admit your sins; ice water flows through my veins. Then I love you and vainly try to hate, because love I must. I wish I were dead--but dead with you.

I swear I'll never ask you what you're doing nor try to ferret out the things you set about to hide. The best gift you can give me is your lie.

If nonetheless you're caught in the middle of your sin and are proved unfaithful by the evidence of my eyes, still deny what we both know full well I saw. Your words will vanquish the evidence of my eyes. The palm of victory inclines to you, conquering one who wishes to be conquered, so long as your tongue remembers to say, "I didn't!"

With those two words you will succeed, though you triumph because of your judge rather than the strength of your case.

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Amores III:15

translated by David Drake

You must find a new bard, mother of the little Cupids: my elegies will go no farther. I am the offspring of the Paelignian countryside, and I'm not ashamed of the sophisticated verses which I've composed to date. If it's of any interest to you, my family was of the equestrian order back to ancient times; I'm not a centurion whirled into the order yesterday at the end of his military service.

Mantua rejoices in Vergil, Verona in Catullus; I am known as the glory of the Paelignian peoples, who took arms rightly in the cause of their liberty when Rome trembled during the Social War. A visitor looking on the walls of Sulmo and its few acres of river-bounded plain might say, "However small you are, any land which could send forth so great a poet is itself worthy of being called great!"

Urbane Cupid and Venus, mother of the urbane child, may you always hold your golden standard above the fields where I grew up. Horned Bacchus has shaken his mighty thyrsus above them.

But a larger race courses require the strength of greater horses; peaceful elegies and my smiling Muse, farewell. You, my works, will long survive me.

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Metamorphoses I: 1-75
In the Beginning
translated by David Drake



Wilhelm Bauer
(1600-1642)

Nuremberg,
1670, 1687

It is said that there exists a spirit with the power to change existing shapes into new ones. Gods (for You too have been responsible for such changes), breathe life into my opening and lead my work from the origin of the world down to my own time.

Before the appearance of the sea and lands and the heavens which covers all things, Nature had only a single aspect. This they call Chaos, a heap with neither shape nor structure. It was mass without energy, an ill-mixed, discordant pile containing the seeds of all existence.

No solar Titan yet lighted the universe, nor did lunar Phoebe restore herself by swelling her horns anew. The Earth didn't hang, balanced by its own weight, in the center of the surrounding air, nor did Amphitrite spread her arms of seawater about the long margins of the continents.

Land and sea and air were mixed: the earth was too thin to stand on, the sea was too thick to swim in, and the air lacked light. Nothing had certain form, and each portion interfered with the others. In a single body cold elements fought with hot ones, dry elements with wet, soft elements with hard, and weight with weightlessness.

God, the true Nature, ended this struggle. Nature severed the earth from the heavens and the seas from the land, then squeezed the thicker air from the crystalline firmament. After It had spread out the blind pile and separated the elements, It bound them into their proper places in peace and harmony.

The weightless, fiery force hangs in the hollow firmament, shining down from the seat it has made for itself at the highest point. Next in place (because of its lightness) is the blanket of air. The earth, denser than these, holds the heavy elements which are pressed together by their own weight. Around all flows water, binding the land into a solid.

Then whatever God It was carved up the mass It had separated and rejoined the pieces. First It formed the land into a ball, so that it became equal in all directions. Then It ordered the roaring winds to drive straits through the rising land and made true shores arise around the encircled land. Next, It placed springs and great swamps and lakes.

It bound the downrushing rivers with sloping banks. The varied lands through which they pass drink part of their water, but part of it flows to the sea. There the rivers spend the burden they've swept from the plains in pounding more heavily on the shores than they could've done individually to their banks.

The power ordered the plains to spread, the valleys to sink, the forests to spread their leaves, the craggy mountains to rise.

It divided the right half of the firmament into two parts and the same number on the left half, with the fifth part in the center hotter than the others. Then, with this task completed, the careful Deity imposed similar regions on the lands beneath. The central region is uninhabitable because of heat; deep snow covers the two poles. Between these extremes It created temperate regions to which It gave a mixture of fire and ice.

Above land and sea hangs the air. Just as the weight of water is less than the weight of land, so air is heavier than fire. Here It placed the mists and clouds, here is the thunder that frightens men and the winds which grind out thunderbolts and sheets of lightning.

To the air the Builder of the World set a firm mandate. Scarcely anything is barred to the winds, but each rules a separate tract lest uncontrolled they scour the world bare: for so great is the discord of brothers.

Eurus went off to the Dawn Lands and the Nabatean kingdom, to Persia and the mountains beneath the morning sun. Vesper went to the shores which the setting sun warms, adjacent to the regions of Zephyr. Bristling Boreas tears across Scythia and the lands of the Great Bear. The lands opposite to Boreas are soaked by Auster with constant clouds and rain.

Highest of all It placed the crystal Aether, which has neither weight nor any trace of earthly squalor.

Scarcely had It completed Its task of setting boundaries for all things than the constellations, long smothered in blind muck, began to glitter across the heavens. Nor was any region without animals suited for it: celestial Olympus and the shapes of gods formed among the stars; the habitation of the waves fell to the lot of glittering fish; and the lands brought forth beasts, as the trembling air did birds.

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Metamorphoses I:244-312
Deucalion's Flood
translated by David Drake



The
Universal
Flood
A.
Rusconi,
1520-
1587

Jupiter thought of raining thunderbolts onto all the continents but he was afraid lest so many fires ignite the sacred aether itself and the world burn from pole to pole. He remembered also the prophecy that some day the sea, the land, and the heavenly palaces of the gods should take fire, and it would go hard for all life on earth in the overwhelming flames.

Therefore he put aside the weapons made for him by the hands of the Cyclopes. Instead he decided on a different punishment: to destroy mankind beneath the waves and to send storm clouds from every part of heaven.

Immediately in the caves of Aeolus he shut up Aquilo the North Wind and every other breeze that might scatter the clouds he would bring together, and he sent out Notus the South Wind. Notus flew on sodden wings, his terrible face covered by a pitch-black veil. His beard was thick with storm clouds, and streams of water rolled from his white hair. Fog shrouded his forehead, and dew dripped from his wings and bosom; wherever his hand squeezed the low-hanging clouds, thunder broke. Thus the dense storm clouds poured down from the aether

Juno's messenger Iris in her rainbow garment lifted water, bringing fresh supplies to the clouds. Rain beat down crops and laid flat the farmer's prayers, laying waste the labor of the whole year past.

Nor was the wrath of Jupiter limited to his heavens: his sea-blue brother Neptune aided him with armies of waves and called an assembly of the river gods. As soon as they'd entered the palace of their master, Neptune

said, "No long speech is needed here: simply pour out all your strength! That is what is required. Open your dwellings and send out your streams unchecked!"

Thus he ordered. The river gods returned and opened the mouths of their springs so that the streams rolled into the sea unleashed. Neptune himself struck the ground with his trident so that it shuddered and opened new passages for the water to pour through.

Spreading wide the rivers rushed through the open fields, sweeping away crops and brushwood, flocks and men; houses with their altars and the images of their gods. Here and there stood a building which the general disaster hadn't been able to throw down. Above each gathered a great wave, covering it and sinking its drowned towers beneath the sea.

Now there was no boundary between sea and land: all was sea, and the sea was without shore.

This man has climbed onto a hilltop; that one sits in his curved skiff and rows where recently he had plowed. One man sails over sunken crops and the roof of his villa; another sees a fish among the branches of a high elm. Perhaps an anchor catches in a green field or a curved keel scrapes the stakes of a vineyard.

Seals, their bodies travesties of what animals should look like, now swim where recently slender goats cropped the meadow. Nereids marvel to see groves and cities and houses beneath the water. Dolphins range the forests, swimming among the high branches and shaking the trunks of the oaks as they pass.

The wolf floats among the sheep; the wave carries off the tawny lions and carries off tigers. The boar's flashing strength cannot save it, nor can the swift legs of the stag caught in the current. A bird, having searched long for land where it could perch, finally with exhausted wings falls into the sea.

The unbridled sea has uprooted tombs, and fresh floods rock the tops of the mountains. Most human beings are taken by the waves; starvation grinds down those few whom the waves spare.

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Metamorphoses I:748-II:366

Phaethon

translated by David Drake



Artist Johann Wilhelm Baur (1600-1640) designed 151 illustrations for the Metamorphoses. They first appeared in Vienna possibly as early as 1639 and were reissued several times. This illustration is taken from the edition printed at Nuremberg in 1703.

Because Epaphus was believed to be the son of great Jove, he was worshipped throughout the land in the temples of his mother Isis. Phaethon, offspring of Phoebus the Sun God, was a similarly spirited youth. One day when Phaethon bragged that because Phoebus was his father he owed precedence to no one, Epaphus said, "You must be out of your mind to believe everything your mother told you! You're just puffing yourself up because of a fantasy of who your father is."

Phaethon blushed and out of shame held back from an angry retort. He took Epaphus' jeers home to his mother Cymene, adding, "You should feel even worse, mother, to know that though generally I'm a bold fellow who speaks his mind, I dared say nothing! I'm ashamed to have made no reply to these insults because I couldn't refute them. If I really am a shoot from the heavenly stock, then give me proof of my parentage and plant me in heaven!"

So speaking, he wrapped his arms about his mother's neck and begged her by the head of King Merops and the marriage of his sisters that she deliver proof that he was the son of Phoebus.

It's hard to say whether Clymene was moved more by Phaethon's prayers or by anger because he'd accused her of dishonesty. She raised her arms to heaven and, directing her eyes toward the sun, cried, "I swear by Him

above who hears and sees me, his corona dazzling us with flashing light, that you my son are the seed of Phoebus who regulates the world. If I lie, let him deny himself to me! Let this be the last light my eyes receive! You can visit your father's home easily enough if you will. The house from which he rises is just to the east of our Ethiopia. If you have spirit enough to go there, you can see for yourself."

Joyful at what his mother had blurted to him, Phaethon set his mind on the skies. He strode swiftly across Ethiopia, then India close beneath the heavenly fire, and at last reached his father's land.

The palace of the Sun stood high. It was fronted with mighty columns, brilliant with glittering gold and polished bronze that shimmered like flames.

The double gate shone with silvery light. Its workmanship was even finer than the materials, for Vulcan had here engraved the seas surrounding the land, the continents, and also the heavens which loom over all. The waves were carved with sea gods: Triton sounding his conch; many-formed Proteus; Aegaeon sitting on the backs of whales and holding onto them with his hundred arms; and Doris, Queen of the Sea with her daughters. Some of those daughters seemed to swim while others sat on rocks to dry their blue-green hair. Their features were individually molded, but their family resemblance was marked: all were clearly sisters.

The earth had on it men and cities, forests and beasts, rivers and nymphs and all the other spirits of the countryside. Above land and sea hung the image of the shining heavens with six constellations carved on the right gate leaf and as many on the left.

As soon as Clymene's son reached the end of the steep path, he entered the house of his putative father. He started toward the paternal visage but stopped at a distance, for his eyes couldn't have borne the light if he drew closer. Phoebus sat veiled in purple garments on a throne gleaming with flawless emeralds. On his right and left stood the Days and Months, the Year and Cycles of Years, and the Hours of equal separation.

Spring wore a new girdle and a floral crown. Next to her stood naked Summer with garlands of wheat. There stood Autumn, his legs stained by trampling the vintage. Last stood Winter, his scraggly hair white with ice.

Sol, seated in the midst of things, beheld the boy frightened by the strangeness of all the things he saw about him. "What reason had you to take this road?" he asked. "What do you seek in this citadel, Phaethon, offspring whom I gladly acknowledge?"

The boy replied, "O Phoebus, light of the whole great world; father, if you give me the right to use that word of you and if Clymene didn't hide her indiscretion under a false story. Give me a token, father, through which I may be seen to be your true offspring, and lift this misapprehension from my soul!"

So he spoke. His father took off the glittering crown that circled his head and ordered the boy to come closer, then embraced him and said, "You are worthy to be called my son: Clymene told you the truth of your origin. What pledge would you like me to give you that may confirm your belief? For I will bestow it on you forthwith! Be witness to my sacred oath, thou Stygian waters whom I the Sun never see!"

Scarcely had the father finished speaking when the boy asked to govern the chariot of day and to guide the wing-footed horses.

The father regretted his oath. Shaking his gleaming head thrice and a fourth time, he said, "My words have been made rash by yours. Would it were possible for me to take back my promise! I admit, my son, that this one thing I would deny you.

"At least I'm allowed to try to dissuade you: this wish of yours is not safe! You ask a great thing, Phaethon: to perform a duty which is beyond your strength and boyish years. You are mortal: what you desire is not for mortals! Ignorantly you aspire to something that is beyond the gods themselves, for none of them is able to stand in the fiery chariot save me alone! The ruler of great Olympus, Jupiter who hurls the ravaging lightning with his terrible right hand, cannot drive this chariot; and who is greater than Jove?

"The way starts out so steep that though the horses are fresh they can scarcely struggle up it in the morning. The highest part of the route is at mid sky, whence often even I feel fright in looking down at the sea and lands; the heart in my breast trembles with fear. The last part of the route drives downward too sharply for real control and finally plunges me into the engulfing waves. Tethys herself must take care that I not be borne into her depths!

"Besides all that the heavens are turning swiftly, dragging the constellations and twisting them in their swift circuit. I press on against their flow; their current doesn't overwhelm me as it does all others, and I struggle against the movements of the globe.

"Suppose I gave you my chariot? Are you able to drive it against the wheeling world, or would its swift spinning carry you off?

"And perhaps you think you'll be travelling through the groves and cities of the gods and past treasuries packed with rich gifts? Your journey lies among ambushes and crouching beasts unless you hold your course without the slightest mistake! Even so you must climb past the horns of the Bull, the Thessalian archer, and the jaws of the snarling lion. The Scorpion will curve its clawed arms toward you, and then the Crab will curve its arms toward you from the other flank.

"Nor will you find it easy to govern your spirited horses. Their breasts carry fire which they blast out through their mouths and nostrils. Scarcely do they obey me when their fierce spirits blaze; their necks fight against the reins. Lest my gift be the death of you, my son, listen to me and change your mind while there's still time!

"Perhaps you're looking for certain proof that you're of my blood? My very concern is proof: My paternal fear proves I'm your father. Just take a look at my expression! And would that you were able to cast your gaze into my heart and behold the paternal care in my very marrow!

"Just look around at all the riches the world holds. Demand whatever bounty you want of sky or land or sea: you won't be refused! I pray you not to ask this one thing, which might better be called a punishment than an honor. You beg me for punishment, Phaethon, in the name of a gift!

"Why do you cling to my neck with pleading arms, you ignorant boy? You need not doubt--you'll get what you're asking for. I swore by the waters of the Styx! But please, ask more wisely."

Phoebus ended his admonition. Nevertheless the boy ignored his words and pressed his demands, even more

inflamed with desire to drive the chariot.

His father had delayed as long as he could but now he finally led the youth to the mighty chariot, the work of Vulcan. The axle was gold, the tongue was gold, the tires of the wheels were golden, and the spokes were made of silver. On the yoke of topaz were set gems whose clear light reflected that of Phoebus.

While great-spirited Phaethon marveled, poring over the craftsmanship, behold! watchful Aurora in the shining east swung open the purple gates to her courtyard of rosy light. The stars fled with Lucifer driving them in a long line; before long the last of them wound its way from the heavens.

The Titan Phoebus saw that the sky was blushing and ready to brighten the lands, and that the horns of the waning moon were fading away. He ordered the speeding Hours to yoke the horses. Those swift goddesses carried out his orders promptly, leading the fire-breathing steeds, replete with the juice of ambrosia, from their high stables and fitting the jangling harness.

Then the father covered the face of his son with the sacred ointment that would allow him to stand the leaping flames. He placed the scintillating crown on the boy's head and said, breathing a groan of anticipatory grief, "If you're capable of hearing this one piece of advice from a parent, please, my boy, spare the whip and with all your strength draw back on the reins: the horses will hasten of their own will. The real difficulty is to slow their flight.

"Furthermore, don't take the straight route across the Earth's five regions. Your path is oblique. The road curves, keeping itself within the three middle zones and shunning both the southern pole and the Great Bear from which comes Aquilo the North Wind. Let your journey follow the visible wheel tracks.

"To keep the heat of land and heavens equal, neither guide the chariot low nor take it up into the highest aether. If you rise too high, you'll ignite the palaces of the gods; go lower and the houses of men will burn. The middle course is safest.

"Neither let your wheels edge to the right toward the twisting Serpent nor to the left so that you collide with the nearby Altar; stay between them! I entrust the rest to Fortune: may she aid you and be of better counsel to you than you are to yourself.

"While I have been speaking, dew-drenched Night has reached the Pillars of Hercules in the west. We have no time to delay: we are summoned, and Aurora lights the fleeing stars on their way.

"Take the reins in your hand! Or if you will reconsider--take my counsel, not my chariot. While you're still able and stand on solid ground, and before you mount the car which you in your ignorance have demanded, watch in safety as I instead bring light to the world."

Phaethon mounts the delicately built chariot and stands upright, rejoicing to take the reins given into his youthful hands; he thanks his unhappy parent. Meanwhile the winged horses of the Sun, Fiery and Dawnborn and Airy and the fourth, Burning, fill the breezes with their flaming whinnies and bang the stable doors with their hooves.

Then Tethys, who doesn't foresee the fate of her grandson, throws open the doors to give the horses the freedom of the heavens. They blaze off along the route, pounding the air with their hooves, driving through any clouds in the way and with their wings outstripping the southeast breezes following the same path.

The horses of the Sun don't bear their accustomed burden. Indeed, they can't feel anything at all; the yoke constraining them lacks its usual mass. Just as ships without proper ballast bob nervously through the sea, unstable because they're too light, thus the chariot without its accustomed load is tossed in wild leaps through the air almost as though it were empty.

As soon as the four yokemates realize that, they leave the well-worn path and no longer follow their usual order. The boy is terrified, unable to guide the reins entrusted to him. He doesn't know where the route is nor, if he did know, could he force his team onto it.

Then for the first time the sun's rays heat the frozen Plow-Oxen; they try vainly to sink themselves in the sea which they are forbidden. The Serpent which lies next to the icy pole had previously been sluggish and harmless from the chill; now, warmed, it lashes in blazing wrath. They say you too were driven into flight, Bootes, though slowly for your wagon held you back.

Now as deeply miserable Phaethon looked down from the highest aether to the lands spread in the depths below, he grew pale. His knees shook with sudden terror; shadows dimmed his eyes despite the great light he bore. Now he would like never to have touched his father's horses, now he regretted learning the truth of his lineage and gaining his wish.

Now Phaethon wished he'd been satisfied to be known as the child of Merops, King of Ethiopia! He shook like a pine in a headlong north wind. He was his own driver but the reins were loose in his hands, abandoned to the gods and to his desperate prayers.

What could he do? Though he'd coursed through much of heaven, still more remained before him. He measured both distances with his eyes, first viewing the place of sunset (which he wasn't fated to reach) and then looking behind him the place of sunrise. He stood transfixed, stunned by his dilemma. Neither could he drop the reins nor was he able to hold them. He didn't even know the names of the horses!

Phaethon sees marvels scattered throughout the heavens and is frightened by the forms of fierce beasts. Here's the Scorpion, curving its pincers in twin arcs; its tail is bent and its legs spread so that it covers the space of two constellations with its limbs. The boy sees the creature threatening wounds with a curved sting which drips black venom. Struck senseless by icy fear, he drops the reins.

When the horses feel the reins lying on their backs they stretch out. With nothing checking them they race through the breezes into regions they'd never traversed. They race through the high aether as the whim drives them, crashing into fixed stars and dragging the chariot along where there are no paths.

First they bolt toward the heights, then they plunge downward and drive headlong to skim the earth itself. The Moon marvels to see her brother's horses galloping below her own. The burning clouds spew smoke, and the earth is wrapped in flames. The cliffs split and wrinkle, and the parched field cracks. The meadow bleaches; the tree is consumed with its leaves, and the seared brushwood provides the fuel for its own destruction.

I've been describing minor tragedies: great walled cities perished in the conflagration, and whole races of men, every soul of them, were turned to ash.

Mountains and the forests covering them blaze: Athos and Cilician Taurus and Tmolus and Oete and then parched Ida, previously known for her many springs, and Helicon that the Muses frequent, and Haemus before Oeagrius came there. Aetna blazes into the heights with redoubled fire.

Fire consumes the two peaks of Parnassus--and Eryx, and Cynthus, and Othrys, and Rhodope stripped of her usual snows, and Mimas, and Mycale, and Cithaeron, destined for sacred rites. Scythia's bitter winters didn't preserve her: the Caucasus burns, and Ossa with Pindus and Olympus greater than both. The high-flung Alps and the cloud-wrapped Apennines burn as well.

Now Phaethon sees the world enkindled from pole to pole, unable to bear such great heat. He realizes the scorching breath of his chariot is like the blast from the mouth of a furnace. He can't bear the ash and sparks flung out by the fires, and hot fumes completely wrap him. He doesn't know where he's going nor where he is; it's as though he were lost in pitch darkness. The winged horses snatch him hither and yon at their whim.

It's generally believed that it was at this time that the blood was sucked into the outer skin of the peoples of Aethiopia to give them their black color, and that now the heat tore all the water out of Libya, leaving it a desert. On this day the nymphs let down their hair to bewail their springs and ponds. Boeotia mourned Dirce, Argos mourned Amymone, and Ephyre mourned the waters of Pirene.

Nor were the rivers permitted to run safely between their broad banks: the nymph Tanais seethed in the midst of her waters, likewise old Peneus, and also Caicus running through the land of the Teuthrantes and swift Ismenos with Phegian Erymanthus. The Xanthus burned as it had before when Achilles fought there. The muddy Lycormas and Meander whose waters play in loops and Mygdonian Melas and Taenarian Eurotas all burned. Babylonian Euphrates burned, the Orontes burned, the swift Thermodon and the Ganges and the Phasis and the Hister burned. The Alpheos grew hot, and the banks of the Sperchides blazed.

The gold which the Tagus used to bear in water now flowed in fire, and the swans whose songs made famous the Maeonian banks were boiled alive in the Cayster. The terrified Nile fled into the furthest part of the globe and hid its head; it remains hidden to this day. His seven mouths were dusty, his seven branches dry. The same ill-fortune dried the Ismarian Ebro and Strymon and the western rivers Rhine and Rhone and Po, along with the Tiber to whom much was promised for the future.

The earth cracked open and light penetrated through the cracks to Tartarus, shocking the king of the dead and his wife. The sea shrank, leaving a plain of dry sand where once water had been. The mountains which the deeps had covered rose, augmenting the scattered Cyclades.

Fish sought the depths, nor did the supple dolphins dare to make their accustomed leaps into the air. Seals swim listlessly on their backs in the deepest abyss. They say that Nereus himself hid with Doris and their daughters within a cave as the waters warmed. Thrice Neptune tried to raise his arms and furious head from the waters; thrice the fiery air drove him back.

Moreover kindly Mother Earth, encircled as she was by Ocean, raised her battered visage on blistered shoulders to succor the waters of the seas and the shrinking springs. They hid themselves in the opaque bosom of their mother. Shielding her eyes with a hand, she gave a great shudder.

Then, when she had calmed herself, she cried in a solemn voice, "If I have the right and duty to ask, greatest of the gods, why do you hesitate to use your thunderbolts? See to it that your fire blasts away the strength of the devouring fire and that you by your will lift the disaster confronting us. My lips are so dry that I can scarcely force these few words through them!"

Smoke wrapped her face. "Behold my crinkly hair, the ashes in my eyes and pelting my whole face! Do my fruits and fertility deserve this reward? Is this what I get for bearing the furrows of hooked plows and being gouged by hoes throughout the year? How shall I provide foliage to the cattle and ripe fodder, or fruits to humankind, or frankincense to your altars?"

"But perhaps you think I deserve such an end; what have the waters, what has your brother done to deserve this? By what lot was it decreed that the seas should shrink and distance themselves from the aether?"

"And if benevolence neither to your brother nor to me moves you, at least pity your own heavens! Look around you: they smoke from pole to pole! If the fire eats through them, your palace will fall in ruin. Look at how Atlas struggles and can scarcely bear the blazing world on his shoulders.

"If the seas and lands shall perish with the palaces of heaven, we will be plunged into ancient Chaos. End the flames while something still remains and accept your responsibility for all existence!"

So spoke Tellus. She couldn't bear the steam any longer, so she said no more and hid her face deep in the caves of the Underworld.

Finally the omnipotent father called to witness the gods, including Phoebus who'd handed the chariot to Phaethon. Jupiter deplored that unless he acted, the universe would perish in a terrible fashion. Only then did he climb to the high ridge from which he spread clouds over the lands, moving the thunders and shaking his quivering thunderbolts. Now there were no clouds to spread nor were there rains he could send from heaven.

He thundered. His right hand he hurled lightning--through the air into the charioteer, blasting him at once from life and from the vehicle. The greater fire of Jupiter's bolt snuffed the savage flames.

The startled horses turned about, snatching their necks from the yoke and breaking the traces. The reins flew loose, the axle was torn from the tongue, and the spokes of the broken wheels flew everywhere. The remains of the shredded chariot were scattered far and wide.

But Phaethon, with the flames eating at his red-gold hair, spun far down from the high sky. Thus sometimes a star seems to fall from the clear heavens, though that's an optical illusion. The Eridanus River, far distant from the youth's Aethiopian homeland, received his body and quenched his fiery face. The Hesperian Naiads built a tomb to cover the toothed flames leaping from his corpse and carved this verse on a headstone:

HERE LIES PHAETHON, WHO DROVE BUT COULDN'T CONTROL HIS FATHER'S CHARIOT.

NEVERTHELESS HE DIED HAVING DARED A GREAT THING.

Phoebus turned his face away, sick with grief. The story is that there was one full day without sun. The many fires still burning provided light, however, so even that disaster was not without its uses.

Clymene said the things which must be said after so great a loss. Then she set out across the world, wild and tearful and tearing her bosom. At first she was looking for his lifeless body, then for his bones. She found those bones buried on the bank of an alien river. She lay there, washing with her tears the name carved on the marble and pressing her bare breast to it.

Nor less did the daughters of the Sun grieve and pour out their tears, those vain offerings to death. They beat their breasts with their hands, called by night and day to Phaethon (who couldn't hear their wretched mourning), and threw themselves on his grave.

The horns of the full Moon joined. The sisters in their custom--for repetition had made it a custom--made their noisy lamentation. The eldest, Phaethusa, tried to lie down and cried that her feet had stiffened. Blond Lampetie tried to go to her aid but found she too had suddenly put down roots. The third sister tried to tear her hair with her hands and found she stripped away leaves instead. One cries that her legs are turned to trunks, another that her arms have become long branches.

While they marvel the bark covers their groins, then gradually their bellies and torsos and shoulders and hands. They stand, calling to their mother.

Yet what can their mother do--except what she does, run to and fro and for as long as it's possible to kiss their lips. It doesn't help. She tries to pull their bodies from the enveloping trunks and to peel the slender branches off their limbs, but that makes blood drip as if from wounds.

"I beg you mother, spare me!" the wounded daughter cries. "Spare me, I beg you! You injure my body with the tree!" But the bark then covered her final words.

The trees wept, then, and their liquid tears condensed in the sunlight. From the new branches amber dripped into the clear water of the river, which carried it down to be marveled at by the women of Latium.

Metamorphoses I: 1-75:		
In the Beginning		Amores II:1
Metamorphoses I: 76-150:		Amores II:2
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Metamorphoses IV: 604-	Amores I: 9	Amores III:8
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Metamorphoses III: 577-691

Bacchus

translated by David Drake



Engraving by
Johann
Whilhelm Baur
(1600-1640)
published in a
1703
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Metamorphoses*

Pentheus' eyes glinted with rage when he saw the captured follower of Bacchus. Though talking would delay the man's punishment, Pentheus said, 'You who are going to die and by your death give a lesson to others, tell me your name, your country, and why you have joined this new religion.'

Fearlessly the prisoner replied, "My name is Acoetes, and I come from Maeonia. My parents were of the working class. My father didn't bequeath me fields for sturdy cattle to plow, nor did he have herds: he was a poor man who made his living by catching leaping fish with his line, hook, and rod.

"This skill was his entire stock in trade. When he was ready to pass it on to me, he said, 'Receive such wealth as I have, heir and successor to all my possessions!' When he died, he left me nothing but the waters; I was able to call them alone my inheritance.

"Soon, because I didn't choose to cling to the same rock, I learned to guide a ship with my right hand on the tiller and to recognize the rainy constellation of Amaltheia, the Olenian she-goat who suckled Zeus, and Taygete the Pleiad, and the Hyades, and the Great Bear; I learned the winds' quarters and where a ship could safely anchor.

"Perchance I approached the shore of Chios on my way to Delos. I ordered my crew to drive onto the beach with their starboard oars, where we jumped easily down to the wet sand.

"When the night was almost over--the first light of dawn was reddening--I roused the crew, telling them

to find fresh water and pointing out a path that led to a spring. I myself climbed to the top of a high mound to check the wind, then called to my comrades as I returned to the ship.

"Here we are!" said Opheltus, the stroke oar, and showed me what he thought was loot he'd found in an empty field: a boy of girlish beauty whom he was leading along the shore. The boy seemed to stagger from drowsiness and too much wine; he could scarcely walk.

"When I viewed the captive's clothing, face, and gait, I was sure that he whom I looked at was no mortal man. To my fellows I said what I sensed: 'I don't know what soul there is in this body, but I know it isn't a human soul. Whoever you are, bless us and favor our endeavors!'

"You don't speak for us!" said Dictys, the quickest of the crew at climbing to the top of the mast and sliding down a stay rope. Libys agreed, as did blond Melanthus, the bow lookout, and Alcimedon and the coxswain Epopeus who cheered on the oarsmen. They were all in agreement, blinded by their desire for loot.

"I won't let you foul my ship with this sacred burden!" I said, putting myself in their way. 'It's my right to prevent you!'

"They all became furious, especially Lycabas, an Etruscan who'd been exiled from his city as punishment for manslaughter. When I resisted, he struck me a fierce blow in the throat. It would've knocked me into the sea if I hadn't grabbed a rope and held it despite being barely semi-conscious. The impious gang cheered his action.

"Then at last Bacchus--for the youth was Bacchus--wakened at the clamor and regained his wine-drugged senses. 'What are you doing?' he asked. 'Why are you shouting? Tell me, sailors, what you intend by this business? Where do you plan to take me?'

"Don't worry,' Proreus said. 'We'll put you ashore at the port of whichever land you want to go to.'

"Then turn our course to Naxos,' the god Liber said. 'That is my home. The land will welcome you.'

"The liars swore by the sea and all spirits that they would do so, then ordered me to set the sails of our painted ship. Naxos was off to starboard. As I set the sails to take us in that direction, Opheltus said, 'What are you doing, you fool? Are you out of your mind?' They should have shivered when he said that. With a combination of nods and whispers, he indicated what he really wanted: 'Turn us to port!'

"I froze. 'Let somebody else take over!' I said, removing myself from execution of the criminal plot. They all cursed me, and the whole band muttered. Aethalion said, 'Maybe you think you're the only one who knows how to navigate?' as he sat down to take my place at the tiller. We set off, leaving Naxos behind us.

"When the God finally realized they were lying, he began playing with them. 'These are not the shores

you promised me, fellows,' he said. 'This is not the land I asked for. What did I do to deserve this ill-treatment? What honor can you claim that so many grown men were able to deceive a boy?'

"I began to weep. The impious band mocked my tears and drove the ship through the sea with hastening oars.

"I swear by the God himself (for he is present with us now) that I'm telling you the truth, though I'll admit it takes some believing: the ship halted in mid-sea as if it were sitting in dry-dock. The amazed crew continued to lash their oars and also set the sails, hoping by this doubled effort to proceed.

"Ivy bound the oars. It snaked around them in twisting bonds and hung clusters of berries over the sails. Bacchus himself stood with grape-heavy vines about his forehead, shaking a staff wreathed in leafy vine-shoots. Around him sprawled mirages of fierce beasts, tigers and lynxes and spotted leopards.

"The men leaped overboard, either from madness or from fear. First Medon's body turned black and his back curved. Lycabas shouted to him, 'Into what wonder are you transformed?' As he spoke his grin broadened, his nose stretched, and his skin thickened and grew scaly.

"Libys, still trying to drive the immobile oars, saw his hands shorten and become not hands but fins. Another sailor, reaching into the knotted rigging, no longer had arms; with a shortened body and humped back, he leaped into the waves. At his tail was a crescent fin, like the horns of the partial moon.

"As dolphins they leaped on all sides, dripping with spray; rising again and plunging into the depths. They danced like the chorus of a play, blowing their lungs clear of seawater through their broad nostrils.

"I alone remained of the twenty--for that was the number of our crew. The god was scarcely able to rouse me from my frozen terror. 'Strike the fear from your heart and hold your course to Naxos,' he said.

"Delivered to that place, I found his worshippers and since then have frequented the rites of Bacchus."

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES:

1. I've spent a good deal of time with maps of the Aegean. I still don't understand the geography of this section.
2. No, dolphins (porpoises) don't have scaly skins. Take the matter up with Ovid.

<u>Metamorphoses I: 1-75:</u>		
<u>In the Beginning</u>		<u>Amores II: 1</u>
<u>Metamorphoses I: 76-</u>	<u>Amores I: 1-</u>	<u>Amores II: 2</u>
<u>150:</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>Amores II: 3</u>
<u>The Four Ages of Man</u>	<u>Amores I: 4-</u>	<u>Amores II: 4</u>
<u>Metamorphoses I: 244-</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Amores II: 5</u>
<u>312 Deucalion's Flood</u>	<u>Amores I: 6</u>	<u>Amores II: 6</u>
<u>Metamorphoses I: 748-</u>	<u>Amores I: 7</u>	<u>Amores II: 7</u>
<u>II: 366: Phaethon</u>	<u>Amores I: 8</u>	<u>Amores II: 8</u>
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<u>691: Bacchus</u>	<u>Amores</u>	
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Metamorphoses III: 339-510
Echo and Narcissus
translated by David Drake



Artist
and
edition:
Raphael
Regius
(died
1520),
Venice
ca. 1513

Tiresias became famous throughout the cities of Aonia for giving unfailingly accurate predictions to those who asked him about fate. The first of those to demonstrate with certain confidence the truth of his words was the sea nymph Liriope whom once the river-spirit Cephisos had raped, binding her in his curving banks and smothering her with his waves.

When her time came, the lovely nymph gave birth to an infant who even from the first was utterly loveable; she named him Narcissus. When she asked Tiresias whether her son would live to ripe old age, he replied, "Yes, if he doesn't meet himself.

For a long time the soothsayer's prediction appeared meaningless. The final result proved its accuracy, though, in the form of the boy's death and the unique madness which caused it.

When the son of Cephisos became fifteen, he could be viewed either as a boy or a youth. Many youths desired the boy while many girls desired the youth, but so harshly arrogant was the soul in that tender form that no youth nor girl could touch him.

The nymph Echo could not remain silent if someone else spoke, nor could she herself speak first. She

saw Narcissus while he was netting terrified stags. At the time Echo had a body, not just a voice, but her powers of speech were as limited as they now are: she could only reply with the last word of whatever was said to her.

Juno had done this to her, because one day the goddess had gone out to catch Jove sporting with nymphs on the mountainside. Echo had deliberately held Juno in conversation while the nymphs fled to safety. After Saturn's daughter Juno realized what'd happened, she said, "I will let you retain only the least power, the very slightest use, of this tongue with which you tricked me."

Juno made good on her threat: from then on Echo sadly spoke the final portion of a sentence and returned the words she had heard.

Therefore when she saw Narcissus wandering odd nooks of the countryside and burned with love for him, she could only follow his track secretly. But the more she watched him, the hotter burned the flame in her. It was like seeing sulfur smeared around the ends of torches take fire when they're touched with flame.

Oh how often she wished to come to him with sweet words and grasp him with her gentle prayers! Nature didn't permit her to do what she wished, but she was ready to do everything which it did allow: she was waiting for him to say something to which she could reply.

Perchance the boy, drawn away from his band of faithful companions, called, "Is anyone here?" Echo responded, "One here!"

This amazed him. He looked in all directions and called, "Come here!" loudly. "Come here," she replied.

Again he looked around but didn't see anyone coming. "Why do you flee me?" he called, and she responded in the same words.

"Here, let's come together," he called, and Echo had never spoken a more heartfelt word when she cried, "Let's come together!" She rushed through the forest, intending to suit her action to her words and throw her arms about the neck which she so desired.

But he fled when he saw her, crying, "Take your hands away from me! I'll die before I'd give the time to you!" She could only respond, "I'd give the time to you...."

Spurned, she hid in the woods and covered her embarrassed face with leaves. Her love remained, however, and even grew with grief at her repulse. Sleepless worry thinned her body, and lack of food wore away her skin. Her juices evaporated and her whole body wasted away. For a time only her voice and her bones remained; then it was her voice alone, for her bones had turned to rock. From that day Echo hides in the forest and is never seen on the bare slopes of the hills. She is heard by everyone, but only the sound of her lives.

Thus Narcissus treated her, and not only her but the other nymphs of the streams and hillsides as well as the pubescent boys who desired him. Finally another scorned youth lifted his hands to the heavens and prayed, "Thus may he love, and may thus he be unable to gain his love!" Rhamnusian Nemesis heard the prayer and found it just.

There was a spring without a hint of mud, silvery with shining waters. Neither the shepherds nor the she-goats they tended on the hillside ever drank from it, nor did any other animal of the herd. Neither bird nor beast disturbed it, nor ever did a tree branch fall into its water. Around it grew grasses nourished by its water and a glade which shadowed it from the warming touch of the sun.

Here the boy, drawn by the look of the place and the spring, threw himself down one day, tired from hunting and the summer heat. In trying to quench his thirst he awakened another thirst: for while he drank, he was entranced by the reflection of the form he saw, falling in love with a bodiless hope. He mistook the spring for the body and stood amazed by himself, so paralyzed by his own visage that he might've been a statue of Parian marble.

Lying on the sward he saw twin stars--his own eyes--and hair worthy of Bacchus, worthy of Apollo; he saw youthful cheeks and an ivory neck and lovely features in which a blush was mixed with snowy whiteness. He, who was a marvel to all, marveled at all these things.

Unwisely he desired and was approved by him whom he approved. He who sought was equally sought; he both kindled love and burned with it. Oh how often he gave vain kisses to the deceitful fountain! How often he plunged his arms into those waters to grasp the neck he saw there--and grasped nothing. He didn't know what he was seeing, but what he saw burned him. The very eyes that tricked him were the font of his desire.

Trusting fool, why do you vainly snatch at fleeting images? What you search for doesn't exist and never did! Turn away from what you love, doomed one! What you see is merely a shadow, a reflected image. It has no separate being: it came with you and stays with you. It will leave with you--if you're able to leave!

Neither need for food nor of sleep was able to drag Narcissus away. Sprawled on the dark vegetation he stared at the lying image with longing eyes, and through those eyes he slew himself.

Lifting himself a little, he raised his arms to the surrounding trees and cried, "Tell me, trees, what love was ever crueler? For you have seen much; many lovers have found opportunity in your shady nooks. In all the centuries of your existence do you remember anyone to have wasted away as I do? He is pleasing, and I see him; but though I see him and he pleases, nonetheless I cannot find him: it is a delusion which makes me love.

"I grieve the more because we're separated not by a great sea nor a long road nor mountains nor walls

whose gates are shut: we are barred from one another by a film of water.

"He desires to be held! So often as I bend to kiss him who lies on his back in the shimmering water, he raises himself toward my lips. You might think I could touch him. It is a tiny thing that obstructs us two lovers.

"Whoever you are, come here! Why do you deceive me, perfect youth? Where is it that you flee when I reach for you? Certainly it can't be my beauty nor my youth that drives you away, for all the nymphs love me. You give me hope with your come-hither glances, and when I stretch my arms out to you, you seem to embrace me. When I laughed, you laugh with me; but often I saw your tears when I too was crying. You nod to me when I nod, and although I can read the words on your beautiful lips, the sounds do not reach my ears.

"I am my own love! I realized that, nor does my image deceive me. I am consumed with love of myself, and I both light the flames and bear them. What will I do? Shall I be asked for a date or ask for one--and who then will I ask?

"The thing I desire is mine already. The very completeness of my victory ensures my defeat. Oh would that I could step out of my own body! Here's a vow that Love never heard before: I wish that I could be apart from my beloved!

"Already misery robs me of my strength. The period of my life cannot be long extended; I will be snuffed out in my prime. Death doesn't weigh on me, for with death I will put aside my cares. But would that he for whom I yearn might live longer. For we will die two hearts together in one soul."

Thus he spoke. As his sanity slipped away, he plunged his face into the water and disturbed it with his tears. The image blurred into the shaken surface.

"Why are you fleeing?" he cried. "Stay and do not desert your lover, cruel one! Though I cannot touch you, I should still be permitted to see you and thus add fuel to my miserable passion."

While he grieved, he pulled his garment over his head and beat his bare breast with his alabaster hands. His stricken breast swelled with a rosy blush. It was like an apple, white in part but red in part, or the way grapes form varicolored clusters before they reach their purple maturity.

When the water cleared, Narcissus saw that loveliness again and melted like yellow beeswax in a flame or morning frost that's warmed by the sun. He was wasted by love and eaten away by the fire within. The white-mixed-with-red color was gone, nor did he retain his energy or strength or other pleasing traits. Not even the body which Echo had loved remained.

Yet though she saw that, despite the anger and her memories, she still grieved. Each time the wretched boy called, "Alas!" she repeated his resonant cry, "Alas!" When he pounded his arms with his hands, she

clapped the same grief back in reply.

The last words of the boy looking into the water he desired were, "Oh, vainly beloved youth!" The woods gave back the same words, and when he called "Goodbye," Echo too called, "Goodbye!"

Narcissus lay his worn-out head on the green turf; Death closed his eyes, marveling at the beauty of the boy's form.

Even after Narcissus entered the realm of the dead he spent his time staring into the water of the Styx. The Naiads bewailed him and the boys of his age dedicated their boyhood locks to him; the Dryads also wailed. Echo responded to the mourners as they prepared a bier, a pyre, and torches to light it.

But there was no body, merely a crimson stamen for the body in the midst of white petals.

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Metamorphoses IV: 604-803

Perseus

translated by David Drake



"Perseus rescues Andromeda from the sea monster" by the Nuremberg engraver Virgil Solis (1514-1562) Frankfurt, 1569. Note that the artist shows Perseus riding a winged horse (like Bellerophon) rather than wearing the winged sandals of Hermes as Ovid (and other accounts) actually describe him.

But nevertheless mighty Bacchus--worshipped by conquered India and to whom Achaea has built temples--brought solace to his grandparents, Cadmus and his wife, after they were turned into snakes.

Acrisius, risen from the same lineage as Perseus, was the only ruler who still opposed Bacchus, driving him from the walls of Argos; nor did Acrisius believe his grandson Perseus was the offspring of Jupiter when Danae conceived in a shower of gold. Soon, however--for so obvious were the proofs of reality--

Acrisius was made to regret that he'd fought against one god and had refused to recognize the offspring of another. For Bacchus joined the company of heaven, and Perseus, bearing the back the unique trophy of the serpent-haired monster, strode the thin air on thrumming wings. When he flew over the Lybian sands after his victory, drops of blood fell from the Gorgon's head; where the soil absorbed them, they took life as many kinds of snakes. As a result, North Africa is a dangerous land crawling with vipers.

After that the blustery winds caught Perseus and drove him like a wisp of cloud here and there through the sky. He gazed down from the high heavens upon distant lands as he whirled above the whole world. Thrice he saw the frozen Arctic, thrice the tropics beneath Cancer's spreading claws. Often was he driven beneath the sunset, often into the sunrise. Finally, as the day ended, fearful of committing himself to the night, he landed on the Hesperides, the Kingdom of Atlas, and tried to sleep until the Morning Star should summon the flush of Aurora and Aurora call the chariots of the day.

Atlas, the son of the titan Iapetus, was the largest of all men. His was the westernmost land and the sea which received the Sun's panting horses and his chariot's squeaking wheels. A thousand flocks and as many herds wandered through his pastures, and no neighbors crowded his domains. On his trees, golden leaves sprouted from golden branches and shaded golden apples.

"Good host," Perseus said to him, "if you're interested in glorious lineage, my line springs from Jupiter himself. If instead you're a man who honors deeds rather than birth, you will honor mine. I ask only quiet and your hospitality."

Atlas was mindful of the ancient prophecy of Themis the Parnasian, who had said, "The time will come, Atlas, in which your trees will be stripped of their gold; and the one who robs you will be a son of Jupiter." So, fearing theft, he'd enclosed his orchard in a solid wall and set a huge serpent to guard it, and he drove all visitors from his lands.

To Perseus Atlas cried, "Keep moving, lest Jupiter miss all these wonderful deeds you lie about." He thundered threats in response to his visitor's mild words and, when Perseus delayed, didn't stop with words but tried to push him away with his hands.

Perseus was weaker--what man wasn't weaker than Atlas?--but he cried, "Since my thanks mean so little to you, take this gift instead!" With his head averted, he raised the serpent-haired visage of Medusa in his left hand.

Because of his great size, Atlas became a mountain when he turned to stone. His beard and hair changed into forests, his shoulders and hands became ridges; what had been his head was now the mountain's highest peak, and his bones were rock. Then all parts of his body grew to vast size--for so, Great Gods, you decided--and all the starry heavens rested on him.

When Aeolus closed the winds in their eternal prison and brilliant Lucifer rose into the high heavens to call men to their labors, Perseus bound wings to his feet. He belted on his hooked sword and split the

clear air with his winged sandals. After flying over and beyond innumerable races, he saw the residents of Aethiopia and the kingdom of Cepheus. There the Oracle of Ammon had decreed that innocent Andromeda should pay undeserved punishment because her mother had boasted she was more beautiful than the sea nymphs.

As soon as Perseus saw Andromeda's arms bound to the rocky cliffs--he might have thought her a marble statue, save that the light breeze ruffled her hair and a slow tear dripped from her eye--he felt the fires of love. He gaped, so taken by the beauty of her form that he almost forgot to beat the air with his wings. Hovering he cried, "O, you shouldn't be bound with these chains but rather with the bonds that link lovers! Tell me your name, your nation, and why you are shackled here!"

At first the maiden said nothing, embarrassed to answer a strange man. She would have hidden her modest face in her hands had they not been bound. Her eyes were free; they brimmed with tears.

Finally after many false starts, afraid that it would seem her silence was hiding her own crimes, she told him her name and her country and explained that she was chained here because her mother had so boasted of her beauty. Before she could finish the story, the waves thundered and an oncoming beast towered over the great sea, hiding the waters beneath its breast.

The maiden cried out. Her sad-faced father watch and with him her mother; both were miserable but the woman's misery was with better cause. They could offer no aid but they wept as the situation demanded, crying out and clinging to the girl's bound body.

To them Perseus said, "You'll have plenty of time to mourn, but the chance to do some good is a brief one. I seek your daughter's hand. I am Perseus, son of Jupiter and she who though imprisoned Jupiter filled with golden seed; I am Perseus who overcame the snake-haired Gorgon and who dares to wing his way through the windy skies on swift-beating wings.

"For my past merits alone I should have preference over other suitors, but in addition I propose to offer your daughter's life as my bride price. If with the help of the gods I succeed, I will enjoy her whom my courage has preserved."

The parents accepted his offer--was there any doubt that they would?--with prayers of thanks and a promise of the kingdom as a dowry to accompany her.

Behold! Just as the ram of a warship driven by its oarsmen's sweating backs cleaves the water, so the beast's writhing torso shoved the waves aside. It approached as near to the cliffs a Balaeric slinger can fling his leaden bullet through the air. Then the youth leaped from the ground and drove high into the clouds. His shadow quivered on the surface of the sea and, thinking the shadow was a man, the beast savaged it.

Just as the eagle strikes from behind when he sees a serpent gleaming in the sunlit field below, driving

his greedy claws deep in the scaly neck lest the snake twist back its fanged head, so Perseus plunged headlong through the empty sky to bury the hooked blade of his sword in the shoulder of the raging beast.

The deeply-wounded monster now leaped into air, now dived into the waves, now whirled in its own length like a ferocious boar when the yelping hounds worry it. Perseus avoided the hungry jaws on swift wings and struck again with his hooked sword whenever he could: now into the back armored with curved scales, now into the side ribs, now where the slender tail spreads into fins like a fish.

The beast's mouth suddenly spewed seawater mixed with purple blood, soaking Perseus' wings and making his flight heavy. He no longer dared to trust the soaked feathers, so he saw a crag whose peak now stood high above the waters, now was almost covered by the lashing waves. He struggled to it and gripped a ledge with his left hand, then drove his sword thrice and a fourth time through the beast's loins.

The beast's bellows echoed from the cliffs and filled the high houses of the gods. Cassiope and father Cepheus hail Perseus as son-in-law and ally, admitting he has preserved their house. With her chains cast off the maiden steps free, together the cause and the reward of heroism.

Perseus washes his victorious hands in the surging water. Lest he damage his snake-haired trophy by laying it on the rocky shore, he cushions the ground with a bed of leaves and reeds he's pulled up from the water, then sets the head of Medusa, daughter of Phorcus, there face-down. The reeds, so fresh that the sap still flows in their veins, receive the force of the monster's touch and harden, taking on a new rigidity in their branches and leaves.

The sea nymphs try the wonder and are delighted to find they can spread the effect to other reeds and even sow their seeds widely through the waves. Coral has retained this same nature ever after, hardening on contact with the air. Though flexible under water, it becomes stone above the surface.

Perseus built separate turf altars to three gods who'd aided him: on the left to Mercury; on the right to you, war maiden; and in the center to Jupiter. He sacrificed a heifer to Minerva, a calf to the wing-footed one, and a bull to you, greatest of the gods.

Then he took Andromeda, spurning the kingdom offered with her as the reward for his great deed. The marriage god Hymenaeus and Love shake the marriage torches, whose flames are rich with sweet scents. Wreaths hang from the roof gables, and everywhere sound lyres and flutes and singing, the joyful proofs of happy spirits. The doors are thrown back so that the whole golden palace lies open, and the chief men of the kingdom of Cepheus enter in grand state to take part in the banquet set there.

After they had eaten and flooded their spirits with abundant wine, Lycides began to question Perseus about the agriculture and geography of the places he'd seen, and about the customs of their inhabitants. [Marked ellipsis.] He then went on, "Now, oh bravest of men, tell I beg you, what strength and skill

allowed you to cut off the snake-haired head?"

So Perseus, the scion of Agenor, told of how in the shadow of Mount Atlas lies a place surrounded by walls of solid rock. At its entrance lived the twin daughters of Phorcus who shared the use of one eye between them. Perseus snatched the eye away while they were handing it from one to another, by putting his hand over that of the sister who was to receive the eye.

Then, by hidden tracks through those cliffs bristling with straggling trees which overlook the lands of the Gorgon, he reached fields and roadways where stood statues of men and beasts turned to stone when they came face to face with Medusa. He himself only looked at the image of terrible Medusa reflected in the polished bronze of the shield he wore on his left arm. While she and the serpents of her hair slept, he struck the head from her neck. From Medusa's blood sprang winged Pegasus and his brother Chrysaor. He then recounted the long, dangerous journey back, the seas and lands he'd seen from on high and the constellations which his beating wings had brushed.

The audience wanted more when he fell silent. One of the nobles asked why only one of the three sisters had snakes mixed in her hair.

Their guest answered, "That a good question. What happened is this: Medusa had a very beautiful body which attracted the lust of many nobles. The crown of her beauty was her hair: this I was told by one who had seen her then. Poseidon, ruler of the sea, made love to Medusa in the temple of Minerva. The chaste daughter of Jupiter covered her face with the aegis, but she didn't allow the profanation to go unpunished: she changed the Gorgonean hair into filthy snakes. Today Minerva also wears the serpent countenance on her breast to terrify her enemies."

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Metamorphoses VI:5-145
Arachne
translated by David Drake



Engraving of
Arachne and
Minerva to
illustrate
Metamorphoses
VI:1-145 by the
17th century
German artist
Johann
Whilhelm
Bauer

Pallas turned her attention to the matter of Arachne, a woman of Maeonia, who claimed to be Pallas' equal in weaving. Art, not birth, had made Arachne famous. Her father, a Colophonian named Idmon, dyed wool with pigment from the clams of Phocaea; her mother had died, but like her husband she'd been of the lower classes.

Arachne was known throughout the Lydian cities for her skill though she'd been born in a little hut and lived in village of Hypaepa. Often nymphs left the vineyards of Tmolus to see whatever wonderful piece Arachne was weaving, and often water sprites rose from the ripples of the Pactolus to watch.

It wasn't just the beauty of the finished articles that drew them: such was Arachne's skill that when she first balled the raw fleece, or she tightened the thread with her fingers, or she carded the wool, or touches of her thumb spun the thread onto spindles, or even when she hooked up the nap--all these things displayed what she'd learned from Pallas. Yet she herself refused to own Pallas her mistress, saying, "Let her compete with me! If she wins, there is no forfeit I will refuse!"

Pallas disguised herself as a gray-haired old woman, hobbling along with the aid of a staff. To Arachne she said, "Old age brings some things of value: experience is only gained by years, so don't ignore what I tell you. Limit your ambition to being the best weaver among mortals, but give place to the goddess. Entreat her pardon for your rash boasting, for I know she'll absolve you if you apologize."

Arachne glared fiercely. She threw down the spindle she'd just taken up and scarcely restrained herself from a slap. Furiously she cried to the disguised goddess, "You senile, crazy old fool! Save your platitudes for the daughter you suckled, if you have one! I have full confidence in myself, nor have your words caused me to change my mind. Why doesn't the goddess herself come to me? Does she fear the contest?"

"She comes," said Pallas, doffing the trappings of age to reveal her glory.

The nymphs and Mygdonian women immediately bowed to her godhead. Arachne alone stood fearless, though she flushed--and a moment later the flush that marked her cheeks paled. Thus the sky becomes violet at the first touch of dawn but then blazes white with the risen sun.

Arachne held to her course, steadfast in her desire for triumph as she rushed to her ruin. Nor did the daughter of Jupiter relent; she too prepared for the contest with no further warnings.

Without delay they set up their looms facing one another, stretching their cords on the beams. They fixed the beams to the yoke and combed the warp, inserting the woof and speeding the pointed shuttles with their fingers, then banging down their combs with quick blows.

Both work quickly with their skirts gathered up, moving with practiced skill that belied the difficulty of their tasks. Here one places threads dyed Tyrian purple to form shadows of subtle hue. Thus when the sun strikes a rainbow from the clouds, filling heaven with its great curve and scattering a thousand gleaming colors, the transitions are beyond the grasp of the human eye. Each thread seems to be the same color as the ones beside it, yet the differences at either end are pronounced. Here and there a thread of dense gold gleams as they weave ancient themes on their looms.

Pallas depicts the Areopagus of Athens and the contest to name the city. With Jupiter in their midst the twelve gods sit in awful majesty on their heavenly thrones middle, each one recognizable as an individual. She portrays Jupiter as regal, and she depicts the sea god standing as he strikes the rock with his long trident so that the sea leaps in through the triple wound: his gift to Athens.

On her own image Pallas places the shield, the sharp-pointed spear, and the helmet; the head of Medusa is her breastplate. She is thrusting her spear into the ground to bring forth the gray-leafed olive and its fruit. The gods marvel at her, and Victory crowns her work.

So that boastful Arachne should understand the cost of mad arrogance, Pallas adds four punishments in the corners of her fabric, each in a cartouche of its own color. One shows Rhodope and Haemus, now frozen mountains in Thrace but once living beings who claimed to be gods. Another corner displays the wretched fate of the Queen of the Pigmies: Juno defeated her in a contest and turned her into a crane, forcing her to wage war on her own people. Pallas also limned Antigone, who once strove against the consort of great Jupiter. For this royal Juno turned her into a stork, nor were Ilion nor her father Laomedon able to help her. Nay, she donned white wings and clatters her beak. In the final corner is

Cinryas bereft, weeping as he lies on the temple steps and tries to embrace them, for those stones had been his daughters.

The theme of Pallas' border is the peaceful olive, thus bounding the tapestry with her own tree.

Maenoian Arachne wove Europa carried away by the false bull; you might think both the bull and the sea were real. The girl seems to look back at the land she's leaving forever, calling to her friends and drawing up her legs to keep her feet from the leaping waves.

She showed Latona, gripped by the thrusting eagle; she wove Leda with her legs spread beneath the wings of the swan; and she added Jupiter in the guise of a satyr filling the womb of Nycteus' beautiful daughter Antiope with the seed of twins. Jupiter was Amphitryon when he took you, Tiryinthian Alcmena; gold when he raped Danae; fire when he sported with Asopus' daughter Aegina; a shepherd when he diddled Mnemosyne, and a sparkling serpent to Proserpina.

Arachne wove you also, Neptune, as a snorting bull astride Aeolus' daughter Canace. You were in the guise of Enipeus when you impregnated Iphimedia, a ram when you seduced Theophane, and the blonde-haired Mother of the Grain felt you in the form of a stallion. Viper-haired Medusa bore the winged horse after you trod her in the form of a bird, and Melanthe knew you as a dolphin. In all these woven scenes, the places and individuals were recognizable.

Phoebus was shown wearing now the wings of a falcon, now the hide of a lion, and finally as a shepherd when he dallied with Macareus' daughter Isse. Liber was shown impregnating Erigone in the form of a grape, while Saturn as a stallion begat two-formed Cheiron.

Arachne left the ends of her warp as a delicate fringe, while her border showed ivy interwoven with flowers.

Hers was a work whose merit neither Athena nor Envy could deny. The masterwork goaded the goddess into blond fury: she shredded the fabric and its catalogue of the gods' sins. Then, snatching a branch from an olive growing on Mt. Cytorus, she lashed Arachne's face thrice and a fourth time.

The miserable girl couldn't bear the shame; she went and hanged herself. With a hint of pity Pallas said to the dangling corpse, "Live--but for your sins, continue to hang. Your whole line will pay the same punishment."

Having spoken, Pallas sprinkled Arachne with magic herbs. At the touch of this dire elixir, Arachne's hair fell off and with it her nose and ears. Her head shrank, and then her whole body became small. Instead of legs, her wizened fingers projected from her sides, and the rest of her became all belly--from which nevertheless she spins thread and as a spider continues the work of her loom to this day.

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Metamorphoses VI 146-312

Niobe

translated by David Drake



Engraving of
Niobe by 17th
century
German artist
Johann
Whilhelm
Bauer to
illustrate
Metamorphoses
VI:146-312

All Lydia was in an uproar about Arachne's punishment, and rumor raced through the cities of the wider world. Niobe had known Arachne before their marriages, in the days when she was a girl in Maeonian Sipylus. Nevertheless the punishment of her compatriot didn't warn Niobe to give place to the gods and to hold her tongue when speaking of them.

Niobe had many reasons for pride: her husband Amphion was a great musician; They were both of noble lineage; and they ruled the great kingdom of Thebes. Haughty though she was about all these things, her children were a still greater source of pride. Niobe would be remembered as the most fortunate of mothers, had she not thought so herself.

Manto, a descendent of Tiresias and who also could see the future, staggered through the streets of the city under the goad of divine inspiration, crying, "Daughters of Thebes! Gather to offer frankincense to Latona and her two offspring. Pray to Latona with laurel bound into your hair, for thus she orders you to do through me."

The Theban women obeyed at once, plaiting their hair with laurel fronds before burning incense before the temple as they prayed. To them came Niobe, surrounded by her brilliant band of attendants and splendid in her gold-shot Phrygian garments. She was as lovely as her anger allowed her to be, graceful, and her long hair spilled over both shoulders from her shapely head.

She stopped before the temple, surveying the throng with haughty eyes. "What madness," she cried, "makes you prefer gods who are merely names to me whom you can see? Why do you throng Latona's altar instead of burning incense to me? My father was Tantalus, the only mortal who ate at the tables of the gods! My mother is the sister of the Pleiades. My grandfather great Atlas bears the starry firmament on his shoulders, and my other grandfather is Jupiter, whom I glory also to claim for my father-in-law. The people of Phrygia bow to me, I direct the palace of Cadmus, and the walls of Thebes which my husband built are under my rule and his, along with all those who dwell within them. Wherever you glance in our mansion, the wealth will dazzle you. My face is worthy of a goddess.

"Then add to that the fact I have seven daughters and as many sons, all of whom are about to marry! Ask yourselves now: have I not the right to be proud? Who would dare prefer Latona, a daughter of Coeos the Titan, to me? Why, the very Earth once denied her a place to give birth! Not sky nor land nor the seas would receive this fine goddess of yours! She was exiled from the whole world, wandering miserably till she reached the floating island of Delos and said, 'I will lodge on your soil while you bob on the waves.' Here she became mother of two--a seventh part of what my womb brought forth!

"I am happy indeed--who would deny this? And I will remain happy--who doubts this either? The magnitude of my blessings will keep me safe! I am too great for fortune to harm; though I lost much, more would still remain. Even if some were removed from the vast crowd of my sons, I would still have more than the two which Latona calls a throng! Why, she's almost bereft even now! Take the laurel out of your hair and quit this foolish worship!"

And so the women of Thebes stopped and changed their dress as the queen ordered; but they continued to whisper prayers to Latona under their breath.

Latona was indignant. On the peak of Mt Cynthos she said to her offspring, "Behold me, your proud parent, who would not yield place to any goddess but Juno--now I am asked to doubt my own divinity. I will never again be worshipped, oh my children, unless you come to my defense.

"Nor is that the only cause of my anger: Niobe adds to her abuse a boast of the crimes of Tantalus. She claims you aren't the equal of her offspring, and she even calls me bereft! Indeed, her tongue proves that she's foul Tantalus' true heir."

Latona would've gone on to beg them, but Phoebes said, "I've heard enough. Time spent talking just delays retribution." Phoebe said the same thing. Plunging swiftly through the air, they took their stand on the roof of the palace of Cadmus, wrapped in cloud.

Below them a broad plain stretched almost to the walls of the city. The wheels of chariots and the hard hooves of exercising horses hammered the turf. Some of Amphion's sons were riding there, using saddleblankets of Tyrian purple and golden reins. Ismenus, the first contents of his mother's womb, was guiding his foaming horse in a tight circle when he cried, "Woe is me!" and snatched at the arrow springing from his breast. The reins fell from his dying hand and he slipped off the right side of his

mount.

Sipylus, the second son, lashed his reins when he heard a quiver rattle as an arrow was removed. He knew what was coming and reacted like the shipmaster who sets all his sails to catch the present light breeze in a desperate attempt to outrun the storm clouds bearing down on him. Nonetheless the inexorable missile pierced the back of his neck as he fled, and the bare iron point stood out from his Adam's apple. Because he was leaning forward, he tangled in the mane as he pitched over the horse's neck, then stained the earth with his hot blood.

Unlucky Phaedimus, and Tantalus who was his grandfather's namesake, were concluding their exercise as usual on the wrestling ground. They'd locked their arms as they struggled breast to breast. The arrow driven by the taut bowstring pierced them both as they strove. The boys groaned together and flung their convulsing bodies to the ground. Together also their eyes rolled up and they breathed out their lives.

Alphenus saw the slaughter. Weeping and beating his breast, he ran to lift the cooling limbs in his embrace--and doing so, he toppled in turn; for Delian Apollo had ripped his heart out with a lethal arrow. As the missile exited, the barbs took with them part of his lung. His blood spurted into the air, carrying his soul with it.

Demasichthon, though too young to shave, received multiple wounds. First he was shot through the cartilage of the knee. While he was trying to pull out the crippling arrow, another drove through his throat to the fletching. Blood fountained in a high, glittering arc from the latter wound, leaving a red mist in the air.

The last victim, Ilioneus, raised his arms in useless prayer and cried, "Great company of heaven, spare me!" for he didn't know his quarrel was with one god alone. Bow-bending Apollo was moved, though he could not recall the arrow. Nevertheless the missile that slew the boy made only a slight wound instead of slamming through his heart.

Word of the disaster came to the palace; the grief and tears of those who'd seen what happened compelled the mother to believe the truth of her ruin. She was stunned that the gods could do this, and furious that they had the right to do it. Amphion, the boys' father, threw himself on his sword, ending his grief and his life with the same stroke.

Alas, how much the present Niobe differed from the one who'd driven the crowd away from Latona's altar. She stumbled through the city, her face upturned: hating the gods, but an object of pity even to her enemies.

Niobe threw herself on the cold bodies, giving her last wild kisses to her sons. Raising her bloody arms to the heavens she cried, "Feed on my grief, cruel Latona, feed on it! Fill your breast with my misery! Sate your bestial soul as I cry during seven funerals--brag and boast, my conquering enemy! Yet why do you consider yourself the victor? For more offspring remain to me in my misery than you have in

your triumph! Despite so many funerals, I am still your better!"

So she spoke, and as she did so the thrum of a bowstring terrified all--all but Niobe alone, for she had the courage of despair. Her daughters stood in black raiment beside the pyres of their brothers, their hair loosened in grief. One grabbed the shaft of the arrow piercing her vitals; she fell across her brother and died with her lips kissing the corpse. Another girl, trying to console her miserable mother, fell suddenly silent. She doubled up, concealing the wound that slew her.

A third fell vainly fleeing; a fourth died on the body of her sister; a fifth died hiding; the sixth died in frantic terror.

With six girls sent to death with varied wounds, the last alone remained. Her mother tried to hide the girl in the folds of her own garment. "Spare this one, my youngest!" she cried. "I demand to keep this part of what I had!" And as she pleaded, the one for whom she pleaded died.

Bereft, the mother sat among the lifeless bodies of her sons, her daughters, and her husband, clawing her cheeks with her nails. No breeze disturbed her hair; her face grew bloodless; her eyes remained set in her sad face. Nothing in her appearance seemed alive.

Niobe's feet froze. Her organs congealed into stone. Nevertheless even as a statue she wept while a whirlwind tore her off to the land of her birth, where the marble continues to weep.

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Metamorphoses IX: 324-393

Dryope

translated by David Drake



Dryope:
Nuremberg
engraver
Virgil Solis
(1514-
1562),
Frankfurt
1563

Then Iole said to her mother-in-law Alcmene she grieved, "The changed appearance of one who's not a member of your family moves you, mother. What if I described the awful fate of my sister to you? Although tears and grief choke and almost silence me...."

My sister Dryope was the most renowned for beauty of the women of Oechalia. She was the only child of her mother--father got me on another woman. Apollo, who rules Delphi and Delos, had raped her of her virginity, but Andraemon married her and was happy with his wife.

There's a lake whose margin rises like the seashore, crowned with a grove of myrtle. Dryope came here with no premonition of her fate--which was even more unjust, because she had come to bind wreaths for her friends the nymphs. She carried as a sweet burden on her bosom her little boy, not yet a year old, who sucked her warm milk.

Not far out in the shallows grew a water lotus, spreading bright purple flowers in hope of seeds. Dryope plucked the flowers and gave them to her son to amuse him. I was there with her and would've done the same thing, but I saw the blood dripping from the flower and the stem quivering with tremulous horror. Only then--too late!--did the men in the fields tell us that the nymph Lotis, while fleeing the lust of

Priapus, had changed her form into this one while keeping the same name.

My sister didn't know that. When in terror she tried to run back to the nymphs she worshipped, her feet clung by roots. She struggled to tear them loose, but her soles wouldn't move. Bark slowly grew up from her feet and little by little covered her legs. When she saw that, she tried to tear her hair with her hands--and her hands sprouted leaves. More leaves covered her whole head. Her boy Amphissos--for this is the name her father Euytus had given the boy--felt his mother's breasts growing hard, and her milk ceased to flow at his kneading.

I was only a spectator at my sister's cruel fate, unable to help her. I embraced her trunk and branches, trying as hard as I could to delay their spread. Ah, I wished the same bark would engulf me.

Her husband Andraemon and her wretched father ran toward us, bewailing Dryope. In answer to their wails, Dryope held out the lotus. They kissed wood still warm with life and clung to the spreading roots of the tree she had become.

All of my dear sister but her face had become a tree. Tears dripped from her miserable body onto her fresh leaves. While her lips could still form words, she flooded the air with complaints of this nature: "If a victim can ever be believed, I swear by the gods that I did not deserve this terrible harm. I am punished without crime! I lived an innocent life. If I lie, then let drought wither my leaves, let axes cut me down and my wood be burned!

"Take this infant from his mother's branches and give him to a nurse. Let him often drink milk and play beneath this tree. When he is able to talk, let him greet his mother and sadly say, 'My mother hides beneath this bark.' Let him avoid the lake nor pluck flowers from a tree, and let him treat all fruits as the bodies of the gods.

"Farewell, dear husband, and you my sister and my father. If you remember me, keep my limbs from the wounds of pruning hooks and my leaves from the teeth of the herds.

"But since I can no longer throw myself at your feet, brush aside my limbs and come to my kisses. While I am still able to be touched, hold out my little son to me. I can say no more. Over my white shoulders the thin bark climbs till it shrouds the very top of my head.

"Take your hands from my eyes! The bark will cover my dying face without need for you to offer that duty."

With those words her lips ceased to move. For a long time the branches of her changed body remained warm.

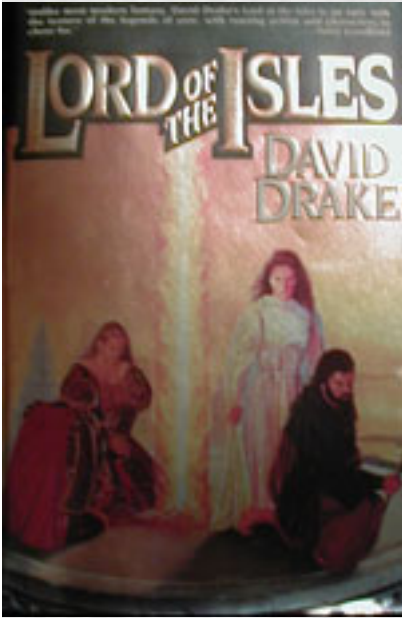
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LORD OF THE ISLES was my chance to get back to writing fantasy. It now seems an obvious thing to have done, but it sure took me a long time to come to that realization.

Andrew Lang's *Color Fairy Books* were a staple of my reading as a child, and when I entered my teens and could buy books for myself I was just as interested in fantasy as science fiction. Robert E Howard's heroic fantasy stories were a lot of the reason I started writing myself, and when I was seventeen I read *The Lord of the Rings* for the first time. (I've reread the work frequently).

It's my belief that heroic fantasy forms a broad arc, with Howard being one pole and Tolkien the other. The works of the two men differ in emphasis but are extremely similar at the core level. Both writers affected me and my writing a great deal.

For my first fifteen years of writing, I sold as much fantasy (generally heroic fantasy, but some modern horror as well) as I did SF. My first novel, a heroic fantasy, came out a few months after my first book, a linked collection of military SF.

The latter, *Hammer's Slammers*, helped to create the genre of modern military SF. The novel, *The Dragon Lord*, wasn't an embarrassment but it sure didn't set the world on fire. Publishers asked me for more military SF, and I obliged. Military SF was never the majority of what I wrote, but it remained the thing I was known for and the thing that publishers wanted from me.

Occasionally I wrote a fantasy, because I like fantasy. None of them sold particularly well (and indeed, I didn't expect *Old Nathan* to sell. I wrote the book as homage to my late friend Manly Wade Wellman, and Jim Baen--bless his kindly heart--published it as a favor to me.)

Then came a contraction of the SF market generally and of military SF in particular. The latter had been

so hot a genre that quite a number of opportunists had gotten into it despite their lack of knowledge of the military and/or skill at writing.

I'd seen this coming (the downsizing of the US military had by itself removed millions of potential readers from barracks where they had a great deal of time on their hands), but I couldn't get anybody to listen to me. I got very frustrated that even when I wrote books that weren't military SF, the covers and blurbs told readers that they were military. (See the discussion on [Northworld](#) for an extreme example.)

It occurred to me that I could write a heroic fantasy, this time slanting it toward the Tolkien end of the spectrum instead of the Howard end as I had with *The Dragon Lord*. That portion of the market seemed to be holding up well (unlike Adventure SF), and my editor at Tor was Robert Jordan's editor (and wife).

I discussed my plan with Tom Doherty, Tor's publisher. He thought it was a great idea but suggested one change: I'd intended to use Atlantis as a setting. Tom pointed out that none of the series which had done really well had real-world settings; and OK, Atlantis wasn't exactly real, but--

I don't generally argue with a publisher, especially when (as in this case) he's one of the best marketing people in the business. I set my novel in The Isles, which are Not Atlantis.

The research for *Lord of the Isles* was wonderful fun. I based the religion on that of Sumer--for the heck of it, no real reason except that I had the background to do it and most people wouldn't. It's not as well known as, say, the Celtic milieu. I based the culture of the Isles more or less on that of medieval and early modern England, but with a heavy admixture of the Classical Mediterranean.

I owe a particular debt to Clark Ashton Smith, whose fantasy stories I find extremely effective. Smith is best known for his florid language, but in truth he didn't have a good grasp of the words he used. (For somebody who fully understood his wide vocabulary, read ER Eddison.) Where Smith shines (for me) is in the vividness and inhumanity of his conceptions. Many of scenes in the Isles series are stolen from or at least suggested by Smith's stories.

Having said that, the tone of the Isles series and of all my work differs greatly from that of Smith's fatalism. My characters always try, though sometimes they die trying.

Lord of the Isles was by far the longest book I'd written to that point, but it wasn't unusually complex for me. *The Jungle*, though only a short novel, used three viewpoints and two interlocking timelines. Let me tell you, that was complex. Likewise the Northworld novels, an SF series set in a fantasy milieu in which time itself was one of nine variables, were extremely complex. The interwoven viewpoints in *Lord of the Isles* were braided in a relatively simple fashion.

I've always worked to make every story and novel self-standing, whether or not it's in series. *Lord of the Isles* had to have its own beginning, middle and end. It does and so do each of the later volumes in the series. This isn't anything new: I've done the same with the Hammer series over a run stretching back to

1973.

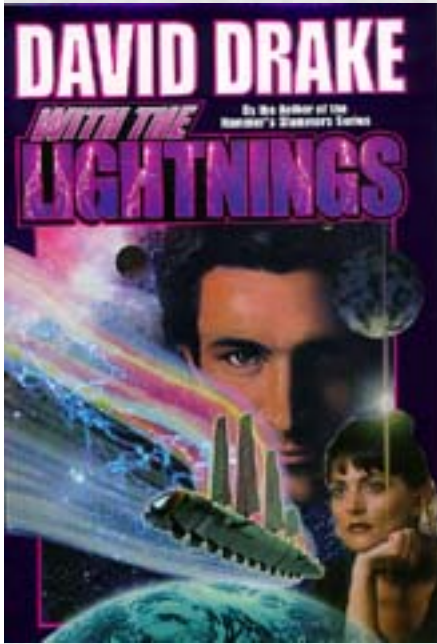
Tor pushed *Lord of the Isles* hard and effectively. I'm delighted, not only because it's always nice to have something that works but because the success broadens the range of what I'm permitted to do. I don't want to write only heroic fantasy, but I love the genre and it does my soul good to be able to write it part of the time.

--*Dave Drake*

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The question I'm most often asked about *WITH THE LIGHTNINGS* is, 'Who the hell is Cassian'? Cassian is a mistake; or rather, a series of mistakes.

I used 'Leary Daniels' as the name of the hero of my untitled novel and was proceeding happily with the writing until Jim Baen called. He very strongly didn't like the name Leary.

We had a discussion. I *did* like the name Leary Daniels, but I need a better reason than that before I go to the wall with my publisher, editor, and friend.

The discussion then turned to alternatives. Between us we came up with 'Cassian Daniels', which neither of us liked but both figured would do. I had a novel to write and I wanted to get back to it.

I finished the book, by now titled *With the Lightnings*, and sent it to Jim as disk copy. A little while later he called again. He'd been thinking about the name. He still didn't like Leary Daniels, but he liked Daniel Leary a lot better than he did Cassian Daniels. So did I. (Mind you, I liked Leary Daniels even better, but that may be just stubbornness.) Jim said he'd do a global search and replace on his electronic copy, and I figured I'd catch any glitches when I did the page proofs.

A few months later Jim asked me to do flap copy for *With the Lightnings*. (I usually do the copy for my Baen titles; Jim correctly believes that the author knows best what the book is supposed to be about.) The covers were duly and very attractively printed. I still hadn't seen page proofs.

The proofs came, but instead of the usual loose sheets I received one of the Advance Reading Copies, the perfect-bound 'book' which went out to reviewers in the same mail. I opened it and found that Jim had sent the wrong electronic text to the typesetter. In this version the hero's name was still Cassian Daniels. I called and told Jim what had happened.

This was not a fun phone call for either of us. Because the covers were already printed, we didn't have the option of leaving the hero 'Cassian Daniels', so the typesetter had to do the global search and replace--and neither I nor the reviewers saw the results. All things considered, the typesetter did an excellent job; but one 'Cassian' got through, and all the reviews had the hero's name wrong. (Including the reviews quoted as cover copy on the paperback. Sigh.)

Welcome to the high-tech world of publishing, my friends.

A question that I get less often than 'Who the hell is Cassian?' is, 'Have you read Patrick O'Brian?' Darn right I have: I've read Patrick O'Brian's novels and I love them. Some reviews have referred to my Leary/Mundy series as an SF version of Hornblower. That's not correct; I did an SF version of the Aubrey/Maturin series, Patrick O'Brian's superb knockoff of Forester's Hornblower. (If you want an SF version of Hornblower, Dave Weber and David Feintuch both do excellent but conceptually distinct takes on that paradigm.)

I write a lot of military SF. *With the Lightnings* is something quite different: space opera. When I was 13 I encountered Poul Anderson's Flandry series which started in the pulps. Those tales and not, say, *Starship Troopers* and *Dorsai!* stood as godparents to *With the Lightnings*.

It was marvelous fun to write. I've done a sequel (*Lt Leary, Commanding*) and hope to do many more. I hope Patrick O'Brian would have approved.

--*Dave Drake*

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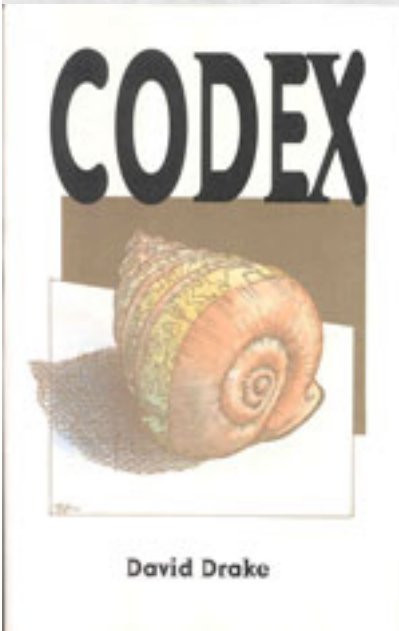
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--Dave Drake

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Though this was published (by the Sidecar Preservation Society) in both hardcover and saddle-stapled editions, it's actually a short story which I drafted in 1967 but didn't bother to type into submission form. (My webmaster typed it for this edition, and I gave it a title--something else I hadn't bothered with in 1967.)

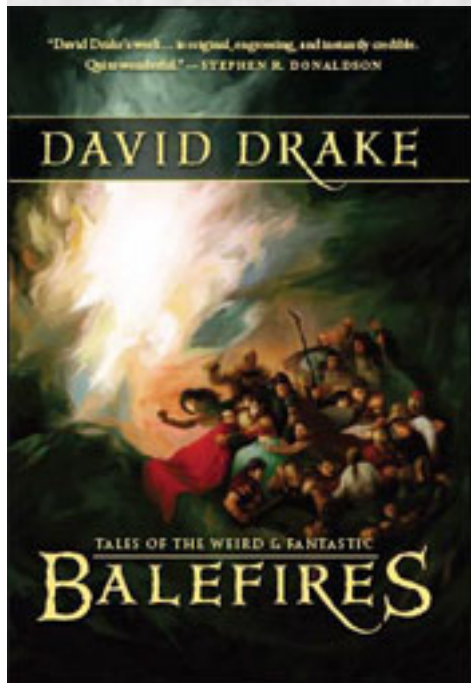
I didn't edit the story for publication (except to guess at the meaning of illegible words). The result is a slice of what I was when I began writing for publication.

--*Dave Drake*

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- *Awakening*
- *Best of Luck*
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- *Blood Debt*
- *Children of the Forest*
- *The Master of Demons*
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- *The Hunting Ground*
- *The Red Leer*
- *The Shortest Way*
- *The Song of the Bone*

--*Dave Drake*

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The Hammer's Slammers Handbook

by John Lamshead & John Treadaway

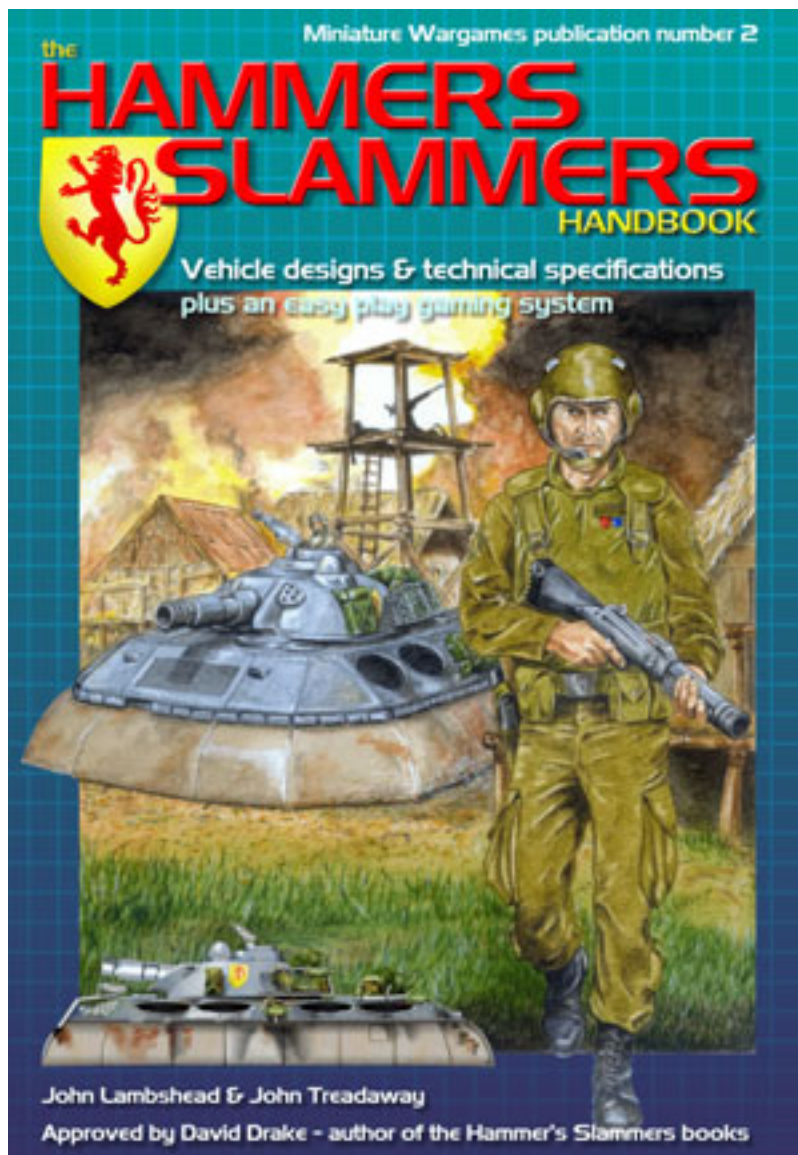


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ENGLAND Travel Narrative/April, 2004

David Drake

[England Travel Photos](#)

April 18: We left for RDU Airport at 3 PM for a 6 PM flight. Better safe than sorry, and I was nervously reading various things to keep from thinking about what was ahead. (Basically, the nebulous discomfort. I'm not a good traveller.)

Just before leaving, Jo checked the weather channel. It said we could expect seven days of rain. John Lamshead e-mailed that we should have a fast flight because a gale had just blown in from the southwest. I sighed and said we were going anyway.

We got aboard a full USAir 737 with no real problems, though security was badly worried by what turned out to be my tube of toothpaste. Was it the first time somebody had brought toothpaste through their fluoroscopes? (I seem to be one of the people who invariably bothers airport security. I've for years stripped off all metal so that I don't set off the magnetic detectors, but they always get concerned about some utterly innocent thing.)

The Airbus 330-300 at Philadelphia was jammed (overbooked) also--they were asking volunteers to go the next day. The RDU flight had been forced to circle Philadelphia a couple times so by the time we arrived at the international gate our row had been called. Airbus aisles are wider than those of a 737, and both going and coming Jo and I had seats in an outer (two-seat) row; which, as these things go, was better than it might've been.

We'd packed very lightly for the trip, limiting ourselves to carry-on only. Most international flights I've taken with checked luggage have had a problem--something doesn't arrive with me (and a number of times nothing at all arrived). I took two extra pairs of slacks (one of them a lightweight nylon pair that rolls up very small), ten t-shirts, ten pairs of socks, a heavy long-sleeved silk shirt, a heavy wool sweater (handmade by an Icelandic housewife; a purchase on a previous trip); a nylon poncho (a Christmas gift from Tor) and a rain hat which I'd gotten for Belize. This was sufficient for our purposes (which didn't include formal dining, though the silk shirt was adequately dressy.)

For personal items I'd gotten a moderate-sized belly pack, having learned not to trust cargo pockets alone in Belize. In it I carried documents, money, my digital camera and the book I brought for the trip--Gregory of Tours *History of the Franks*. I'd read it decades ago (actually, I read most of it in Latin, a *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* folio volume, as an undergraduate), but it's the sort of work you can always find new material in. I took the old (mass market) Penguin edition, which fit neatly.

My camera was a Canon A70. I went digital (having resisted) because of the problems getting film through airports. I had a 256M card in it and carried a 128M card as backup. I wound up filling the first

with 227 photos, and took five more with the smaller card. I'd bought a new set of NiMH batteries for the camera and charged them fully for the trip.

I considered but didn't take a computer to download the photos into. It struck me as too much of a hassle for the number of pictures I would take. (Remember, I'm the guy who gets hassled over a toothpaste tube.)

I'm happy with the gear. I would do exactly the same thing again.

To my amazement I slept about four hours on the flight. I think it helped a great deal. I wasn't as cripplingly stiff as I expected to be either.

April 19: We deplaned in Gatwick. Customs and immigration were no problem--in contrast to my past experiences with Canada and the US, for what it's worth. We followed directions to the bustling baggage and waiting area, where I looked for John Lambshead. He'd told me he'd be wearing a red yachting jacket, which I visualized as something semi-formal along the lines of a blazer. There was a man in a red nylon windbreaker, who turned as I followed him wondering--and recognized me. British English is *not* the same.

Thence to the car which he'd rented to drive us around in. I'd given him *carte blanche*, but he wasn't happy with the Nissan Primera he'd gotten. It appears to have the body of an Altima but a stiffer (and quite good) suspension and a smaller engine. John drives with skill and determination. The Nissan has a wide turning circle, gauges in the center of the dash instead of in front of the driver, and a peaky engine that frequently lugged when he tried to accelerate as he'd have done in his own Vauxhall (which apparently has a broader powerband).

He took us to the hotel he'd booked for us, the Maidstone Hilton. It's a relatively new place, built about ten years ago when the Channel Tunnel was completed, but could've passed for much older (in a good way). The walls are brick, the roof tiled, and there was quite a pleasant central courtyard with awnings and external gas heaters.

Parenthetically, gasoline is much more expensive in England and cars tend to be lighter, more efficient, and have smaller engines than US models. (1.6-1.8 liter displacements are normal.) However natural gas from the North Sea fields is much cheaper than gasoline and is used widely in external heaters to heat open (unroofed) courtyards.

I also saw many more SUVs in Britain than I'd been led to expect. Pickup trucks are very rare (I only recall seeing one), but that appears to be a response to frequent rainfalls rather than a desire for efficiency.

After we'd checked in and showered, John picked us up for lunch at a pub--the White Rabbit (I honestly don't know whether it was technically in Maidstone--as I think it may have been--or a closely

neighboring community). It was converted from the officers' billet of the 7th Dragoons when that regiment was eliminated. It was a friendly place with parking and good food. I had an open-faced sandwich of bacon, mushrooms and other good things under melted cheddar cheese. (Parenthetically, we ate well at every meal in England, and unfortunately I gained a few pounds.)

We then headed for Leeds Castle, where we met John's wife Val and their younger (16-year-old) daughter Kirsten who's studying for the exams which under the English system will decide her academic future. (She's holding up well under what must be enormous stress.)

It'd been warm and sunny when we left the hotel. I'd worn my raincape on whim but hadn't bothered with my hat. It clouded up and spattered most of the later afternoon; not serious, but the hat would've been a better idea.

Leeds is a picture-perfect castle in lovely grounds. There were peacocks in the trees and a (fenced and gated) duckery on the entrance path. It's of Norman construction, entered through a fortified mill (of which only one wall remains, showing the arrow slits), to an outwork, then the mott and bailey. The entrance to the house proper is through the dog collar museum, showing four hundred years of dog collars. (The British reputation for eccentricity is earned.)

In the wine cellar John noted that the breweries have been suffering lately as the British are becoming a nation of wine drinkers. The interior is quite attractive and remains in active use as a conference center. It's a secure location where (say) a G7 conference can be protected by a relatively small number of security people. That's what it was built for nearly a thousand years ago, after all.

I noted with interest that the owners ca. 1800 were connected with the Fairfax and Culpepper families, nobles who left their mark in Northern Virginia and with whom George Washington was closely associated. The last private owner (it's now in public hands), Lady Baillie, had a large portrait of the 19th century adventuress Lola Montez in her sitting room. No one was sure why.

We had tea and scones in the tea shop, and chatted very pleasantly among the five of us. The Lamsheads are bright, friendly people whom it's a delight to be with.

Then to the aviary, which specializes in good-sized, colorful birds (and a kea, which isn't very colorful but was neat to see in the flesh. Feather.) It's quite noisy; John mentioned a colleague called him while he was standing there and wondered which country he was in (as it's a cell phone, that wasn't certain). There was also a maze, but we didn't try it as John wasn't sure of the time it would take.

We went back to the hotel. We didn't bother with dinner. I found the business court, hoping there'd be a computer for guests so I could check webmail to see how things were at home. There wasn't, but a very nice staff person let me use hers for the purpose. The English keyboard is subtly different from the US version, which made the task difficult--particularly, I suppose, for those trying to decipher my notes. All was well, or adequately well.

I tried to read a bit in the courtyard but the book kept dropping from my hand as I fell asleep. I crashed and slept like a log.

April 20: We got up and had breakfast in the hotel. I felt stiff but not as bad as I feared, and we seemed to have avoided jet lag.

John picked us up at 10 AM and took us into Maidstone (the county town) so I could cash traveller's checks. I expected to use credit cards for most things, but I got \$800 cash (413 pounds; the dollar is very weak) to pay John for the car and so both of us had money for taxis, post cards, etc.

We started out at John's bank, Barclay's, but the lady there sent us to a travel agency in a nearby shopping precinct. I'd gotten American Express checks. Barclay's handled Visa checks and the other high street banks were Master Card, but to cash mine without a fee required going to the travel agents. (Not a problem, just a comment.)

We visited a Games Workshop store on the way to the car. This is the largest of the miniature wargames companies and is listed on the London Stock Exchange. They're very heavily promoting Lord of the Rings material, which for a time had even outsold their own Warhammer games.

From Maidstone we headed north through the Green Belt over back roads. After WW II it became obvious that London would absorb the whole region if it were permitted to grow unchecked. With the support of all parties, a Green Belt in which no new houses could be built was set up around the city. There are working farms in the area, but they draw most of their income from tourism. Houses--or anything that could be rebuilt internally as a house--are very expensive. The area is green and lush and lovely, though of course the region beyond it is now a bedroom for London.

We saw a fox cross the road--probably no more unusual than seeing a deer where we live, but neat for visitors. There were--here and generally--vast fields of rape in golden flower; probably what the EU is paying for this year in the incredibly (and criminally) inept Common Agricultural Policy. (Still, it was nice to see why the golden-haired Rapunzel was named after the field of rape growing outside her mother's window.)

On the way we got gas. The Primera requires high test (another penalty for a high performance engine), so it cost me just under \$50 to fill the tank. The owner, by the way, pumped the gas--it wasn't self service--in a coat and tie; he had an upper class accent.

Our first stop was Penshurst Place, originally owned by the Sidneys. Elizabethan history isn't my period, but I'd heard of Sir Philip Sidney, the courtier-poet and one of the people who make aristocracy sound like a good idea. (Very shortly I'll be discussing the Sackvilles, a useful antidote.)

Penshurst is much larger than Leeds Castle and has very extensive formal gardens. The sections are

arrayed according to a variety of styles: early, Italian, French, and the later English style pioneered by Lancelot Brown, nicknamed Capability. Near the entrance is a blind garden--a garden of odors and for all I know textures--which won an award at the Chelsea Flower Show.

Entrance to the house itself was through the Banquet Hall, the original Great Hall. It'd been modified over the centuries by closing the vent in the center of the roof and adding fireplaces.

In the crypt below was a display of militaria from the later owners. These included Lord Gort, who took the BEF to France in 1940, then--after Dunkirk, which can't be called a victory but was certainly a brilliantly managed defeat--commanded Malta against very serious German attempts to capture it. (One of the gardens is a Union Jack, but only the red [tulips] had come into bloom when we arrived.) The displays included Gort's field tea service, including a cigarette lighter to start the gasoline stove to heat the tea kettle.

Looking down on the Hall (literally--through a squint, a hidden window) was the ladies' salon. The variety of items on display in these two rooms included 15th century trestle tables, 16th century paintings, clocks (one dating back to 1520), armor (including leather helmets from Cromwell's Ironsides), guns--mostly matchlocks but with a few firelocks (fusils) mixed in, and (which particularly struck me) a gaming table from 1740 with a petit-point top.

We left the house by the Lime Walk--that is, a corridor of linden trees--and went to the Toy Museum which turned out to be an unexpected lot of fun. There was a copy of the first ABC book (which was American, the guide pointed out), many varieties of coloring book (often martial, with bold Britons running Frenchmen through), paper theatres (one with the sets of Sleeping Beauty), dolls, toy soldiers, skittles, Noah's Arks (some carved by French prisoners during the Napoleonic Wars).

There were also spellicans, the British equivalent of pick-up-sticks. They differ by having complex carvings on one end instead of being simple poles, and also in being made of ivory. (Which, I'll admit, took me aback. Sometimes very simple objects have an impact that no number of words can match.)

Because it was late, we didn't try to see Hever Castle but instead stopped at Sissinghurst, a 14th century manor with gardens laid out in the late 1920s by Vita Sackville-West. I correctly recalled her as being a member of the Bloomsbury Group; in fact she was Virginia Woolf's lover. Her husband, Harold Nicolson, was an associate of Oswald Moseley but broke with the latter when he founded the British Union of Fascists in 1932. Nicolson later became a Labour MP (!) and a member of Churchill's wartime cabinet.

I suspect it was in an attempt to claim proletarian sympathies that the gardens were opened to the public in 1938. The charge--a shilling--raised 25 pounds, which wasn't money the couple would've bent to pick up off the floor.

The brochure quotes Sackville-West as follows: "These mild gentlemen and women who invade one's

garden after putting their silver token into the bowl ... are some of the people I most gladly welcome and salute." Either the folks editing the brochure were unaware of the snobbery (they note as well that Sackville-West referred to the visitors as "shillingses") or they approved it.

While I obviously didn't warm to the couple, the gardens they built were wonderful. A four-story structure--which I believe is a folly, built to look old, but may actually have been the gatehouse of a building demolished in the 18th century--has Sackville-West's library and study, and from the parapet a view over a wide region.

Below, sheltered nooks allowed early rhododendrons--including a lovely violet one--to bloom, along with many other flowers. (I liked the wallflowers, here and elsewhere in England. I'd heard of them but hadn't previously seen them in the... hmm; cytoplasm?) Bluebells were out this week, here very strikingly.

I was particularly taken by an Italianate feature: two yew hedges planted within 30" of one another, forming a narrow aisle across a path. At the end of the aisle was a bust.

There are writers whose work I greatly respect despite my feeling that they're reprehensible human beings. I guess I can apply the same standards to gardens and their designers.

We met Val and Kirsten at the White Rabbit for dinner and further pleasant conversation, thence to the hotel. While we could've seen most of the same things had we come to England on our own, we probably wouldn't have--and it wouldn't have been nearly as much fun.

April 21: We got up in a drizzle. I checked e-mail again and gave the office staff signed bookmarks, which thrilled them. People in general think writers are a bigger deal than I think writers are.

John took us through the towns of Medway and Rainham, pointing out the flower boxes at intersections. These are paid for by taxes. Americans wouldn't consider it value for money; the British do. It isn't a matter of who's right: the cultures are different, in this and many other ways.

As an aside, John was an ideal guide: intelligent, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic. The trip was many times what it would've been without his hospitality.

We followed a section of the Pilgrims' Way, leading to Canterbury. 'The Bull' is a common name for old pubs. It refers not to the animal but to the Papal Bull the innkeeper had purchased to permit him to traffic with pilgrims. The area is also where Tolkien came from, and the gnarled treeroots twisting out into sunken lanes certainly suggest a possible genesis for the ents.

We passed the 11th century church in Rainham, on Watling Street--the Roman road running through the region in a northwestern diagonal. These evidences of antiquity are omnipresent in Kent, a very different thing from what 'old building' meant when I was assistant town attorney in Chapel Hill. I don't really

have a frame of reference for it.

We then stopped in Gillingham, on the shore of the River Medway. What I'd thought were water towers were actually the gasometers which feed North Sea natural gas through the whole region. There's a replica of a beacon identical to those used in series to warn of invasion from before the Armada till after Napoleon, and a view across the marshes to Sheerness. This is the region where Beowulf was composed and very probably set; on a gray morning, one can see why.

Thence to Cooling Castle and Cooling Church, way off the tourist routes. Both are made of Kentish rag, flint nodules chipped from the chalk matrix. The castle's small and mostly ruined, but very picturesque. Wallflowers grew from it and the crows wheeled about. The parish church is nothing special--but it was the setting for the opening of *Great Expectations*: Pip meets Magwich for the first time in Cooling churchyard. As I learned shortly in Rochester, this is very generally Dickens country.

We then went via back roads to Upnor Castle on the Medway shore, past apple trees which are common in the region. For some reason, they're invariably polled here. (I didn't meet any orchardists to ask why.)

Upnor Castle lies just downriver from Chatham Dockyard. When the Dutch under de Ruyter attacked the British fleet laid up in the Medway in 1667, Upnor was the only place the British fought back.

Seeing the situation first hand suddenly brought the utter failure of the Stuarts home to me. Charles II, who was in French pay, went to war with the Dutch to aid France. This I knew. The Dutch attacked and burned or captured the British fleet at anchor; this too I knew.

What I hadn't fully appreciated was that the British fleet wasn't manned because Charles was spending his French bribes on whims rather than paying sailors, and that de Ruyter didn't launch a hit and run attack but rather spent three days coming up river, systematically burning all military and naval installations without facing any resistance. Finally at Upnor Castle somebody shot back, and de Ruyter turned around--carrying with him the British flagship. The Dutch weren't really driven away, they just decided not to press their luck.

Charles II is a very romantic figure, but he wasn't just a bad king: he was in the literal sense a traitor to his country. A visit to Upnor Castle made me understand what forty years of study hadn't taught me.

Then to Rochester, where wandering around the downtown we saw Dickens' summer house (moved from neighboring Gad's Hill) and many other buildings whose signs noted that Dickens used them in this or that book. (It's a tourist town, of course.) The gatehouse in which Edwin Drood lived is among them.

Rochester Castle is the oldest stone castle in England. King John captured it by undermining, but the fallen tower was rebuilt on a sturdier foundation. The castle is ruined in the sense that all the floors and woodwork are gone, leaving only the walls and the passages built into them--but those remains are massive and awe-inspiring. The view of Rochester from the battlements is marvelous.

Here as with Cooling Castle I very much wished my son Jonathan could've been along (work and parenthood made that impossible). He particularly likes castles, and these were some honeys.

Rochester Cathedral is adjacent to the castle. It's the oldest English Christian church (as opposed to Roman Christian church in what is now England). It's impressive in itself, and had a particular fillip for me: there's a plaque in the wall to Colonel Chard, who as Lieutenant Chard commanded the scratch force holding Rorke's Drift against the Zulus after the disaster of Isandhlwana.

Late but enthusiastic, we then headed for Chatham Dockyard where we met Val and Kirsten. This is a huge area with many displays, in the open and in the covered docks. Perhaps most interesting to me was the sloop *Gannet*, built in 1878 and here restored. This is precisely the sort of vessel which made up the bulk of the North America/West Indies Squadron when Mrs. Brassey visited Bermuda in 1881. I'm using that situation (and those colonial policing vessels) as the matrix on which I'm writing *The Way to Glory*--the fourth RCN space opera, about 80% complete at the point we left for England.

I ran into something here that made me do another doubletake (this kept happening to me in England). There was a large picture of Chatham Dockyard in 1777-8, basically a landscape view. I examined it with mild interest. Suddenly I realized that I wasn't looking at a photoprint as I'd thought, but rather the five-by-seven foot painting itself.

The last thing we viewed was the Commissioner's Garden. It wasn't in itself impressive, but I got a very powerful vision of a Commissioner pottering about in his garden. There was a very old (half-rotted) tree which (after studying the guidebook) turned out to be a 400-year old mulberry. Oliver Cromwell sat beneath it as he watched his troops capture Rochester.

Then to dinner in an upscale restaurant with the Lambsheads. On the way, John pointed out the monument to Gillingham sailor Will Adams, whom Clavell used as the hero of Shogun, and a palm tree growing beside a house. Palms don't flourish in Kent (as they do in his home country, Cornwall), but they grow. It's hard to believe that we're in the same latitude as Labrador.

And to the hotel after another thoroughly delightful and informative day.

April 22: We headed for London, getting a taxi into the train station (Maidstone East) without difficulty. The train to Victoria was more or less on time.

The landscape along the route is a very prosperous one. The farms have horses, cows, and at least one herd of deer. Crops are largely hops, apples, and the omnipresent rape (which is processed into rapeseed oil, AKA canola oil, by the way).

I was struck by the fact that most buildings have chimney pots. There were a few in Dubuque when I was growing up, but I've rarely seen them since. (Incidentally, coal fires--and thus the need for chimneys--were replaced by electric grates in London in the late '40s, so the chimney pots became a

matter of historical record. Which was fortunate, of course, because they're back in use now for gas fires.)

Roofs are generally tiled, and even those that're shingled have tiles covering corner seams. Brick appears to be the most common building material, though I won't claim to have made a scientific survey.

From Victoria we took a taxi to our hotel, the Holiday Inn Kensington. It's located close to the Natural History Museum where John works and is reasonably located for many of the other places we hoped to visit. The room was comfortable, though it had twin beds rather than a queen sized as I'd have preferred.

The best feature of the hotel was the garden behind the building. There's a single open space common to it, St Stephen's (C of E) Church, and a third structure whose identity I couldn't determine. There are several large sycamores, a number of fruit trees (in flower; this was a very good time for flowers, though John says May is even better), and extensive flower plantings. It was an excellent place for me to sit and relax, a thing I really need to do daily if I'm to keep it between the ditches.

After checking in we went just down the street to the Victoria and Albert Museum (of the decorative arts). I'd been there in 1977 but Jo thinks she was out shopping that day and I'd gone alone.

I couldn't find the pair of six feet tall vases of blue john--fluorspar from Derbyshire, which the Romans called myrrhine and valued highly--I'd seen in 1977, but there were some blue john candlesticks with a legend explaining that the material had gone out of fashion till the mid 18th century. Then French craftsmen began importing it, and British craftsmen started using it again also. It's a striking material, which I first learned of in an Arthur Conan Doyle story: *The Terror of Blue John Gap*. (Though the story has nothing to do with the mineral; a cave bear climbs out of a cavern and wreaks havoc until a local sportsman shoots it with his express rifle. Karl Wagner swore he hadn't read Doyle's story when he wrote *Two Suns Setting*.)

While decorative arts don't have the same fascination for me that I find in, say, tanks, there were any number of striking items that I jotted down and may well use in my fiction. As a few examples: a silver tabletop engraved with Venus giving Aeneas his shield, trimmed with tortoiseshell; a cabinet set with thirty-odd painted glass plaques which reminded me of the decoration of a carousel; testimonial silver, sculptures two feet high of camel riders and elephants....

And so much more, of course.

It was late afternoon by now, so we went next door to the Museum of Natural History and Jo called John Lamshead from the information desk. He came down and gave us a behind-the-scenes tour.

The original building--John's office is in the addition, the Darwin Centre--is in a way as striking as any of the exhibits. When we were there in 1977 it was black with a century of soot; it was cleaned in the '80s and is stunningly beautiful, the stone richly decorated and picked out with layers of contrasting

blue. I took many pictures of it this time, but the massive edifice should be seen to be fully appreciated.

The Darwin Centre contains the Spirit Room where... well, the NHM has a total of sixty to eighty million specimens total; the millions preserved in alcohol are kept here. It's the largest such collection in the world.

Each department set out a number of jars in the corridor for easy view, while the enormous ranks of other specimens are visible through the glass walls. I noted that those responsible had obviously picked striking items: entomology had huge spiders and centipedes, for example. The fellow in charge of mammals had a sense of humor: if you read the card on one specimen, you learned it was a brown rat which had been found dead outside the old Spirit Room (in a rat-infested building which had been the cause of numerous complaints).

We viewed the working labs. The NHM does analysis for people who want not only the truth but the truth in an unimpeachable fashion. They're expensive, but nobody argues with their findings. If you already know the answer (for example, your oil spill did no permanent damage to the environment), or you really want *to* know the answer whatever it is, they're the choice.

I learned something about studying nematodes. I won't go into detail, but they're very small and you spike them with a titanium harpoon under strong magnification. John said on one project he looked at 10,400 of them, and a PhD student working there was already up to 12,000 while studying the effects of the 1st Gulf War on the Persian Gulf. (The museum is hoping for a repeat order, of course. The way our foreign policy decisions are trending, Gulf War aftermaths may turn into a cash cow for the foreseeable future.)

We then went down to the tank room where large specimens are kept and processed. (For example, stranded porpoises--which are generally killed by French fishing boats and wash ashore dead rather than being stranded.)

I was interested to learn that one of the main problems is the fumes from the goodness-knows-how-many gallons of denatured alcohol in which the specimens are preserved. Before a big tank is opened, the fumes are drawn off with an extractor; otherwise there's a risk not only of fire but of the person involved being knocked unconscious. The large dissection table has not only a drain but a downdraft system.

John showed us how to use the Underground and pointed out what turned out to be a very good Italian restaurant, where we ate before walking back to the hotel. There we found a new problem--the lights wouldn't go on. I started for the desk but met a maid on the way; she showed me the slot you put your room key in to arm the lights.

This is a perfectly good design--it means guests don't waste electricity by leaving the lights on while they're gone--but nothing in the room explained that nor had the staff mentioned it on check-in. As I get

older, stupid failures to give necessary information strike me increasingly as grit in the bearings of existence. We were paying about \$275/night for our room, so they might've been a little more forthcoming.

Still and all, another full and informative day.

April 23: Up and breakfasted in the hotel as usual, then got day-pass tickets to the Underground and went off to the John Soane House on Lincoln Inn Fields, which Jo had found while reading John Morton's *In Search of London*. Soane was a neoclassical architect working in the sixty years around 1800. The house was his working base and his legacy in both figurative and literal senses: he left it to the nation on the proviso that it and the collection be kept as they were.

The result is unique and wonderful. Soane had two of the finest Hogarth sets of oils, *The Rake's Progress* and the Election series (which Jo says Dickens mined directly for a segment of *The Pickwick Papers*). He also had some striking Canalettos and an unusual piece by Turner (who was a personal friend and fishing companion).

The house itself, though, is the greatest wonder. The best-known Soane work is the exterior of the Bank of England, but his real genius was in creating usable, externally lighted, spaces of very limited compass. This is something I'd never thought about because nowadays electric lighting makes it unnecessary. Soane's house shows his principles at work. A domed lantern above the striking staircase (a flattened oval) lights the interior; there are windows onto the interior courtyard, and internal walls have glass panels and mirrors in corners to open up and expand rooms.

Soane's library was extensive and a real, working collection rather than books-by-the-yard to create a glamour of learning. (Actually, I was struck by how similar the impression was to my own library-- though the subjects differ.) Soane was self-taught (a brickmason's son); almost everything I saw was in English or French, though the folio Pliny may well have been Latin.

In addition to the books were the rooms of specimens--statues, plaques, sections of moldings and columns, and other decorative features. This wasn't (as I'd thought from the description) a collection for its own sake: Soane used the items as a library of design, putting his apprentices to drawing and measuring them as he had done himself in learning his trade.

His tour of Italy in 1778-80 had been greatly influential on him. A number of items reflected this directly, including a model of the Temple of Vesta (which he adapted to a corner of the Bank of England) and his own painting of men digging in a bath vault, both from Hadrian's villa at Tivoli. I'd recently set the opening of *Master of the Cauldron* (the sixth Isles fantasy, due out in November) in that ruined vault; for that reason and others I found myself unexpectedly in harmony with Soane.

Among other items, an 1820 sculpture (I didn't recognize and don't recall the name of the artist) of Camadeva and his mistress riding on a crocodile caught my fancy. That may show up in my future

writing; it was just too neat to pass by.

Because his collection of paintings and drawings was so extensive, Soane layered them on hinged panels. The piece that most impressed me was on one of the back panels: a painting (by an employee) of Soane's greatest accomplishment, the Bank of England--as a ruin in a thousand years time.

Soane was a determined and often abrasive fellow who didn't allow weakness in himself nor make allowance for it in others; but in my terms, he was a man. I have no greater praise to offer.

I bought quite a number of books, on Soane and the contents of the house. It's the only place we visited where I felt a need to do that (though of course I did get many individual guidebooks).

When we'd dropped things off at the hotel, we headed for the Wallace Collection. I'd been remiss in my planning for this one. A friend had mentioned how much she'd enjoyed it. Jo checked Morton, who called it 'a mini Louvre' and described it as being on the edge of the streets and squares around Oxford Street. I misheard that as 'on Oxford Square', which I found in *London A-Z*, and we set out.

In fact it's on Manchester Square some distance away, which we learned when a helpful lady on her way shopping saw us looking puzzled. It was just a frustration, not a big problem--as the lady said, "You're obviously strong walkers."

The trip was interesting in an odd way, though. On the Central Line of the Underground I was watching the map across the aisle when somebody behind me said, "Everybody in the car, show me a valid ticket for this train." I didn't think much about it, just dug the ticket out of my pocket and held it out--my concern was getting to the right stop, not whether I'd paid for the trip.

Then I looked at the fellow: craggy features, about 30, short hair, and wearing a polo shirt over jeans. He had no discernible body fat and the muscles of his bare arms had muscles of their own. He was holding a book bag by the strap: I suspect the only thing in it was a Browning Hi-Power, because that's what the SAS carries. He sure as hell wasn't a transport inspector, and if the Metropolitan Police have anybody that fit, they're unique among the world's police forces.

He got out at Notting Hill Gate. I don't know what was going on, but something certainly was.

Parenthetically, British security struck me as professional and unobtrusive. What passed for security at US airports was neither of those things.

We eventually found the Wallace Collection. A large number of students were lunching on the lawn in front, but the building wasn't unpleasantly crowded.

The huge Bouchers looking down on the entranceway create the initial impact. Their cotton-candy classicism does nothing for me. Still, there were paintings to virtually any taste, mine included. (A

woman told me she'd come for the Lucien Freuds, but that exhibition had ended a few days earlier. I must have looked startled, because she then said, "Or aren't you familiar with his work?" I assured her that I did know of Lucien Freud's work, and I *certainly* hadn't come to see more of it.)

Frans Hals' *Laughing Cavalier* is in the Wallace. There are a number of Turners, though I believe most of them were in a room that was closed for lack of staff to watch it. I was interested to run across a couple David Roberts paintings. I'd never seen his work apart from his extensive series of paintings of sites in the Holy Land (which I've used for terrain settings in my fiction).

I found quite a number of paintings evocative and jotted down notes for possible story use. Two in particular struck me: Poussin's *Dance to the Music of Time*, (an allegory which I completely--but usefully--misread, as I learned from the booklet I bought regarding it); and a Watteau titled *A Fete in the Park* in which a number of cavaliers and ladies walk and dally in an open woodland. Thus far any number of paintings in the building--but there was also a larger-than-life-sized nude female painted in silver-gray, watching unnoticed from the top of a ruined wall. Is she Love? Lust? A ghost from a former age? Darned if I know, but she stuck in my memory.

One final piece deserves comment: a miniature painting of Emma, Lady Hamilton, garbed as a Bacchante. From the picture she was a plump, pretty woman, but not to my mind a captivating beauty. Her husband, the Duke of Hamilton, bequeathed it to her lover Admiral Nelson in 1803.

The courtyard is under glass and serves an excellent tea with Devonshire clotted cream. This differs from butter by being thickened on low heat instead of being churned.

On our way back toward the hotel we stopped to view the dinosaurs and mammals in the NHM till closing time. Then for a salad (we ate well in England, but we didn't get as much roughage as we would've at home) and pizza in the same restaurant as the night before, and to the hotel to write up more notes.

Saturday, April 24, the day of Salute and the venue at which the Hammer's Slammers wargame rulebook would be launched, my reason for being in England. It turned out to be a darned good reason.

I was nervous, and initially there were frustrations: some of the Underground lines were closed for repairs so John Lamshead was late, and then we misconnected at the Underground station (Gloucester Road). There were two entrances, and we picked different ones to meet at.

We got to the Olympia 2 convention center at last, and then things got amazing. Ground Zero Games, the outfit which makes the Hammer's Slammers figurines (OK, toy soldiers in 15 and 25-mm sizes) was set up beside the entrance. I walked in, met Jon Tuffley and his staff, and was completely bowled over when they handed me a professionally-painted 25-mm figurine of *me* in a Hammer's Slammers uniform (with sub-machine gun). I couldn't have been more surprised if the whole hall had started singing, "For he's a jolly good fellow."

John Treadaway, the book's graphic designer, basically runs Salute. He'd set things up with the publisher, Pireme (Iain Dickie) facing the entrance; GZG kitty corner across the aisle; a display of professionally-painted vehicles and figurines to the left of Pireme with the artist, Kevin Dallimore, working on more; and to Kevin's left, Old Crow (Jez) who casts the vehicles. I was given 15-mm vehicles, which I hadn't seen before. (They were hot out of the molds.)

Furthermore, John T had come up with the notion--understand, I knew *nothing* about this--of giving everybody a 25-mm David Drake if they bought the rules book. Thus people went across the aisle from Pireme and saw the figurines for sale as they waited for their freebie.

I signed the bookmarks I'd brought; they proved an even better icebreaker here than they do in bookstore appearances. John L (who wrote the text and rules) enthusiastically discussed the playing system. We made a good sales team, and the professional models in front of us were stunning.

Iain had made up some starter packs: rules, four vehicles in 15-mm scale, and a quantity of Slammers and opposition figurines. The package cost 57 pounds, and he sold all fifteen that he'd brought. So did all the vehicles Old Crow had in stock and a sufficient number of figurines to make Jon Tuffley very happy. The launch was a triumphant success.

A word about the display models. Kevin is an amazingly skilled artist, but the Slammers vehicles in bare metal went beyond that. Jez dusted the inside of his molds with powdered aluminum, then cast the resin on top of it. Kevin buffed what was actually a metal finish before doing the detail painting (rust on the skirts, oil stains, dirt, etc). Even I could see the difference in comparison to vehicles which'd simply been (expertly) painted.

A number of people asked me if it was strange to see my mental images as physical reality. In fact it's stranger than that, because I had only the sketchiest images before the start of this. I didn't really look at the tanks and ACAVs I was riding in 1970: I was looking *from* them, watching for problems at the tree line. It wasn't till John T started asking me questions that the visuals coalesced.

I met a lot of fans who knew me through their interest in wargaming, not SF. There were a few Americans also, mostly military personnel. They're real people doing a real job; and the fact they're my fans helps convince me of the thing that I never quite believe: I'm real too.

Jo went off with Val to Kensington Palace and Garden in the afternoon. John T took me around the whole show. It's huge--three levels full of stands and people--but in the order of 5K people rather than the 50K I was afraid of. (It's Olympia 2, not the combined complex.)

Salute is basically a trade show where wargamers come to buy and sell books and equipment, but there are club displays and also demonstration games put on by manufacturers. I won't try to describe a fraction of the displays, but there was an amazingly detailed one of an action in the British breakout

from Normandy in 1944; a multi-level game (run unusually by a group of women) involving flying pigs and armed sheep; a club from Dortmund, Germany, with a game based on the 1942 battle for Henderson Field on Guadalcanal; and the one that absolutely blew my mind: the 1644 Battle of Naseby in the English Civil War, done in 6-mm scale at one to one. That is, there were 3000 individually painted figures on a board about six feet by twenty.

I picked up a few books and took a few pictures--none that really do justice to the displays, I'd have to say. I had a remarkably good time and got many positive strokes. The team involved in the Hammer's Slammers game couldn't have been nicer or more pleasant to be around.

John and Val had to go back to Kirsten, so Jo and I found another good restaurant (also Italian, as it chanced) and had dinner. When we wandered out I found an internet cafe (for the first time in my life) and learned that all was still well. (We have pets and I worry about them.)

April 25: We had an adventure. When I was 14 or so I'd read of the concrete dinosaurs built by Waterhouse Hawkins in 1854 when the Crystal Palace was moved from Hyde Park to SE London (technically in Kent, as a matter of fact). They still exist, and I decided to go see them.

This doesn't look difficult in *London A-Z*, but London is a *huge* city. More important, the SE is a poor area (Jo pointed out that you could judge the district's economic status by the fact that closed shops were covered by locked steel shutters--unlike those of Kensington) and the Underground doesn't run to it. John L got me a (surface) railway timetable, however.

The problem was that not only the Underground but the rail net was being worked on. We were put out at Balham to take a bus the rest of the way. We were completely befuddled, but so were the Londoners caught in the same bind. The transport officials in Balham gave short, non-communicative, answers.

But the bus came and very slowly trundled its way toward Crystal Palace. It was a lengthy journey, but not uninteresting. Eventually we were put out near the station where we'd have normally gotten off the train.

Which left the problem of how the hell to get into the grounds, to where my webmaster, Karen, had determined the dinosaur court to be. Crystal Palace has a huge soccer stadium, and the grounds are separated from the train station by chain-link fence. We walked, asked questions, walked more, and eventually got to where we wanted to be.

Which was well worth the considerable effort. There were more, and more varied, critters than I'd realized. Besides the dinosaurs they included Ice Age mammals looking much like modern restorations, and labyrinthodont amphibians restored as viciously toothed toads instead of salamanders as they'd be today. For that matter, I hadn't realized there was a hyleosaur (a European dinosaur akin to the North American stegosaur) as well as the iguanodonts being threatened by a megalosaur. I wonder if the hyleosaur isn't mentioned because the restoration is basically accurate, while Hawkins (and Richard

Owen, his expert) got the other two dinosaurs wildly wrong.

I took many pictures and basically had a wonderful time. (I also got a picture of a moorhen nesting on a branch in one of the site's water features.) We went through the restored maze (the only hornbeam maze in England!) and then took the bus slowly back to Balham and the train.

We wound up walking from Victoria because the crowded Underground made Jo too uncomfortable to ride. We got briefly off course but managed to find Cromwell Road eventually.

On the way to the hotel we stopped at the NHM and stayed till closing, going through among others the invertebrate and some of the mineral sections. Much of the museum has been modernized with interactive displays and lots of bill-board type information, teaching the visitor about (say) primates or evolution. The mineral sections are old-style, with ranks and ranks of specimens in glass cases.

I think the old way is better. The modernized sections do nothing that can't be done better and more easily with books or on-line. Nothing but a museum case will show you the variation in a hundred specimens of aragonite. (But I'm personally conservative, which I'm sure biases my attitude.)

I finished the 256M card in my camera here and changed it for the 128M card I brought as a backup. The batteries (four AAs) held up fine.

We relaxed in the room, then went out to find another (as it chanced) Italian restaurant. We got there at 6:30, which appears to be early for England as we had the place to ourselves till we were almost ready to leave. One of the specials was squid, which of course I had; and quite good it was.

Despite the predictions, the weather in Kent was occasionally drizzly and that in London warm and sunny. We couldn't have asked for better, though we'd have managed regardless.

April 26: We'd packed the night before, so it was just a matter of carrying our bags to the Gloucester Road Underground station to catch a cab (which was impossible in front of the hotel at 9:30 AM). We arrived at Victoria and got the Gatwick Express, expensive but very simple and therefore worth what it cost. There was no problem with British security, and the flight (though full) was on time and without incident. A Trans-Atlantic flight isn't ever going to be my idea of a good time, but I read the illustrated biography of John Soane and have no complaints about anything till we arrived in Philadelphia. Then it got unpleasant.

Passengers are dumped off with minimal direction and proceed through lengthy corridors and slide belts. No one from US Airways or the airport itself was present to give guidance. We suddenly arrived at Security, though we hadn't been out of security since arrival in Gatwick. I was instantly told to take off my shoes--which hadn't been necessary in Britain--and was the subject of lengthy concern, this time over my antique shaving kit (from which I'd removed the razor blade). I guess it's my karma; perhaps in a former life I was an unusually stupid and officious security person.

After another lengthy walk carrying our baggage, we got to the gate for the flight back to RDU. The flight left at 5:30 PM; it was 4:30 in Philadelphia, according to the way I'd reset my watch (back five hours from London). I handed the clerk our boarding cards, deeply thankful that we'd made it in time.

The clerk typed silently for a while, looking unhappy. He then tore up our boarding cards, telling us we'd missed the flight. We could get on the 7:20 PM flight.

I was flabbergasted and horrified. I protested that it was 4:30 and the flight shouldn't have left for another hour. He then actually looked at our tickets for the first time and told us he'd thought we were on a different flight, that he'd reissue our boarding cards. I had a vision of Emily Littela reincarnated as a flaming queen, saying, "Never mind."

He then took serious offense when I said, calmly but disgustedly, that his actions were in keeping with the callous disregard the rest of the US Air staff in Philadelphia was showing for its passengers. Without wishing ill to another human being, I hope he's treated in the fashion he treated us after he gets off an 8-hour flight.

The flight to RDU was unexceptionable. We caught the shuttle to the lot where we'd left the car. Jo drove us home, which was sparkingly clean--our housesitter had outdone herself.

It was a wonderful trip, but it's good to be back.

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NEWSLETTER 39: June 1, 2007

Dear People,

The exciting news this time is that I've roughed out a complete plot for *The Gods Return*, the final part of the Crown of the Isles trilogy and of the Lord of the Isles series. Here a little background is useful.

For quite a while I wrote very long plot outlines. The plot for what became *The Dragon Lord* (my first novel) was 16K, and I eventually worked up to 26K for *Servant of the Dragon* (with a couple more coming close to that length). Recently I decided that this was a misapplication of effort; that I'd do better with a sketchier outline and slightly more time spent in development each day of writing the rough draft.

The outline for *When the Tide Rises*, my most recent RCN space opera, was only 4,200 words. That's somewhat misleading, as when I got to tricky sections I usually did a separate outline of 2-300 words before beginning to write.

Because *The Gods Return* is such an important book, I went back to a fuller process. I've got 12.5K in the outline so far and I'll probably add another 500-1,000 words to the final (developing sections from the viewpoint of the villains). I don't want it to look to anybody as though I thought I could skimp on the capstone of the series.

Incidentally, don't anybody take what I'm saying above as my recommendation for how other authors should prepare to write novels. This is what *I* do; it works for me. Now, I *do* think that many writers would benefit from having at least a sketch plot showing the scenes of their novel in sequence (the sketch of *Gods* was five pages), but Stephen King and Cecelia Holland are examples of very, very good writers who work in a completely different fashion.

In publishing news, the paperback of *The Way to Glory* is out from Baen. Finally out, in fact; the hardcover was published two years ago and has been out of print for a while.

Though the paperback market's collapsed, it remains much more important to me than it is to most authors (very possibly because I'm popular with folks in uniform). I think it'd have been a good idea to've brought *Way* out sooner than this... but if you recall what was going on with Jim Baen last year (and I recall it very vividly), you can understand why strictly commercial matters might've slipped through the cracks of everybody's mind.

The Mirror of Worlds, the second book in the Crown of the Isles, is out in hardcover from Tor in July. There are trilogies whose middle book sags. My middle books do not sag. (None of my books sag. There are many different ways to write a good novel; the particular virtue I claim for *my* novels is that Things Happen Throughout.)

Incidentally, one plot element of *The Fortress of Glass*, the first book of the Crown of the Isles, shocked (and angered) a number of readers. Folks, this is a *trilogy*; you have to read the whole thing to see where I'm going with it. I honestly don't think that you'll be dissatisfied with the final result (which I've just plotted in detail).

Speaking of *The Mirror of Worlds*, it's available for download as an electronic ARC from Baen's Webscriptions [<http://www.webscription.net/>] either separately or as a package with *Balefires*, my collection of (mostly early) fantasy/horror short stories from Night Shade. The downloads are in

standard formats without encryption (DRM; I hate the term as much as I hate the concept).

Note that both these titles are from publishers other than Baen Books. I believe this is a harbinger of the future: other publishers are noticing that Baen has an electronic distribution system that works and are cutting deals with Baen to use it.

That isn't quite what happened in my case, though: I simply asked the hardcopy publishers if they minded me doing this for advertising. (That was a courtesy, not a requirement, since I own my electronic rights. For me, courtesy *is* normally a requirement. I wish that were more generally true.)

I say 'for advertising.' That was how Jim conceived websubscriptions and their various electronic spin-offs. By now there's a respectable amount of money to be made, but my focus is (properly, I think) still on the advertising aspect.

I realized how true that was when I looked at my Baen royalties a couple weeks ago and realized there wasn't an accounting for the Isles series novels that've been sold electronically for the past several years. It turns out that some of the money had been sent to Tor by mistake, but mostly nobody else'd paid any more attention to it than I had. It'll be coming to me at some point in the future, but it isn't anybody's priority. (We're not talking about a fortune, though it's into five figures.)

This shows also how much Baen Books is a family. I asked if I should've been paid something, and immediately people started digging to correct what turned out to have been an error. No going through channels, no defensive behavior, no anger on anybody's part. Just, "Oops, we'll get to that." I like that sort of relationship.

I've mentioned *Balefires* in previous newsletters; I'm going to mention it again because it's truly a lovely book. I'm blessed to have it on my shelves. (The electronic version includes the 20-odd page bibliography which my webmaster created for the limited hardcover. You don't get my signature on the eARC, though.)

I mentioned in a recent newsletter that a Russian cactus magazine was going to use my photograph of a crested saguaro. They did, and it's up at <http://www.cultivar.ru/N38/saguaro-e.htm>.

There's now a picture of the Triangle Baenish Dinner and a recent picture of me with grandson Tristan and son Jonathan on the website [<http://david-drake.com/album.html>].

There's another Ovid lyric up [<http://david-drake.com/ovid/amoresII-8.html>], and also the section of the *Metamorphoses* dealing with Daedalus [<http://david-drake.com/ovid/daedalus.html>]. I noted with surprise that Brueghels' painting *Landscape with Fall of Icarus* (the subject of Auden's poem *Musee de Beaux Arts*) is not an illustration of Ovid but rather a response to this section. The common people of Brueghels' world are untouched by the wonders which leave their counterparts in Ovid thunderstruck.

I don't know that these translations do much for other people, but they certainly teach me a lot. The next one may take a while, however, because I'm working on Juvenal's 14th Satire.

My notes to *Balefires* reminded me of this piece, and it's been decades since I seriously translated Juvenal. (I think the most recent time may've been when I was giving Karl Wagner background for *The Dark Muse*.) Not only is Juvenal tricky, the work is 330 lines long. In order to translate I read each text carefully, then go through again making a rough translation, and then do a couple edits. It's a lengthy process, but it's the only way I can be sure of doing the job as well as I'm capable of doing.

I apply the same standards to my fiction, of course: it'll never be perfect, but it'll be as good as I can make it with a full plot and multiple edits. I just got confirmation that the process works, at least in my terms.

Jennie Faries, Baen's in-house graphics designer and my friend, called my attention to the Text Stats feature on Amazon. (Karen, my webmaster, explains that you find it by hovering over a book image that has the "Search Inside" option.) It calculates various measures of difficulty for books on the Amazon site.

I have (and use) a very broad working vocabulary, and I don't think anybody would claim that I write down to my audience. Despite that, my work falls very much into the easy-to-read-and-understand range of all the scales.

The measure that most struck me was the average of syllables per word. I asked Tom Doherty and David Hartwell (Tor publisher and my Tor editor; both of them friends and well familiar with my work) to guess what the figure would be for my fiction. They individually guessed an average of 3 syllables/word.

The actual figure was 1.4/1.5 syllables/word on my recent fiction, a lower ratio than 80% of all books on Amazon (which I assume includes children's books). Achieving that clarity is every bit as hard as it is to translate (for example) Ovid's description of Arachne's tapestry, and I'm very darned proud to have done it.

(Well, I'm proud of both, but there are a lot of people capable of translating Ovid well. Nobody else can write a David Drake novel.)

Now, go off and do well the things *you* want to do, while I start writing a fantasy novel!

Dave Drake

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NEWSLETTER 38: March 25, 2007

Dear People,

These newsletters aren't on a fixed schedule exactly, but I shoot for bimonthly. I was late getting one out last summer, what with being in England and life more generally. (Well, to be precise, it was death rather than life that was the problem.) This one's a bit early, because I just finished a novel.

But before I get into that, a correction: David Hartwell's little magazine dealing with poetry was *The Little Magazine*, not *Poetry* (which was a different little magazine dealing with poetry). David's little magazine dealing with SF is *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, which I recommend to your attention [<http://www.nyrsf.com/>].

And while I'm recommending things, *Breakfast in the Ruins*, a critical study/memoir/musing on SF by Barry Malzberg is out or on the cusp of being out from Baen Books. This is an enormous expansion of *The Engines of the Night* from 1982. There are worthy critics in SF (most of them are unworthy, but there are exceptions), but what Barry has done here is a unique blend of history, philosophy, and autobiography.

I'm very pleased to have been involved (I was sort of the editor as well as sort of the agent) with the publication of *Breakfast in the Ruins*. (They didn't send me a set of the proofs. They should have.)

Back to *When the Tide Rises*, the RCN space opera I just turned in to Baen Books; it ran to a hair over 125K including the front matter. It's slotted for March, 2008, and is to have a Steve Hickman cover (which pleases me enormously).

Tide is largely based on Lord Cochrane's memoirs of commanding the Chilean and Brazilian navies during their revolts against the colonial powers, but I mean that in the broader sense. That is, I've taken specific items of business from Cochrane, but the *feel* of the situation is actually more important.

This, by the way, is why I read more memoirs than secondary history. Understanding what people thought they were doing (and why they thought they were doing it) is much more valuable to a fiction writer than a simple list of facts and deeds.

Some things remain constant throughout history--for example, people in a brutal job like active-duty soldiering will become callous if not necessarily brutal--but many other responses differ according to the cultures of the people involved. The assumption that everybody has the same hopes and aspirations as Americans do causes many problems for US foreign policy.

My books may be cynical, but they're not as unsophisticated as Richard Cheney and they're almost always based on historical precedent. *When the Tide Rises* is another example of that.

The next bit of excitement is that *Balefires*, my fantasy/horror collection from Night Shade [<http://nightshadebooks.com/>], is due to ship in April. I can't swear to the publication date, but it seems solid.

It's a beautiful book. This feels weird to me. I've had a lot of books by now from major houses, sporting splendid art by the best people in the field. The two *niciest* books I've had are from Night Shade: the second volume of *The Complete Hammer's Slammers* (the first isn't chopped liver either) and *Balefires*. I don't know why it seems that way, but it does.

Forty years ago I dreamed of some day having an Arkham House book of my own, like Ramsey Campbell and Carl Jacobi; then Mr Derleth died. Those who ran the company after Derleth quickly threw me overboard (and in the case of the late Jim Turner, tried to club me with an oar. I've never figured out why he disliked me so much).

Balefires is a better package than ever came out of Arkham House (and I've got all the Arkham House books published during Mr Derleth's lifetime, so I have a right to make the statement). I'm very lucky.

Besides leather binding and a limitation page (every one of which I signed legibly, I'll have you know), the limited edition of *Balefires* has a bibliography of my US-published fiction and non-fiction, created by my webmaster, Karen Zimmerman. (Karen tells me that a version of it will go up on my website at some point also.)

I'm amazed at the fact of the bibliography (a very complex task, as you might imagine); and I guess I'm also amazed at what I've managed to accomplish in forty years. Believe me, it wasn't the result of planning on my part. It just sort of happened.

Besides stories of mine that aren't available much of anywhere else, *Balefires* has 12K of story notes. In their own small way, they're my equivalent of *Breakfast in the Ruins*: history, autobiography, and a little philosophy as well. In writing this I realize that Barry and I think about the same questions, which is why we've been friends for many years.

The Mirror of Worlds, the second book in the Crown of the Isles fantasy trilogy, is due out as a Tor hardcover in July, 2007. Donato's cover is possibly even better than Donato's previous covers for me. (I've said this before. With a cover this good, repetition is not only justified but required.) Incidentally, there will be a new map, because the Isles have become the Land (as those of you who've read *The Fortress of Glass*, now out in paperback, know).

I'm preparing to plot the concluding volume of the trilogy, *The Gods Return*. Well, as I write this--less than 24 hours after shipping off *When the Tide Rises*--I'm actually waiting for my brain to stop spinning. I know where the book will go and roughly how it's going to get there, but I'm going to

understand the 'how' in detail before I start writing.

The next thing up is to read the second volume of Nonnos while taking extensive notes. I found to my surprise that reading classical historians wasn't helpful to me in plotting fantasies (though Dio in particular is very fertile ground for my space operas), but classical poetry gives me a lot of useful business.

Lest you wonder--because I've already been asked this a couple times--I do have a four-volume fantasy series in mind to follow the Isles series. I haven't discussed it with Tom Doherty and David Hartwell yet, but I will as I near completion on *The Gods Return*. I have my fingers crossed.

A Hammer's Slammers miniatures game was launched in 2004. There's now a volume of supplemental material [<http://www.hammers-slamers.com/details2.htm>], written and illustrated by John Treadaway (who did the graphics for the initial volume and also the interior art on the Night Shade Hammer series). John's art (and the photos of models painted by Kevin Dallimore) are just amazingly good.

There are two new Ovid translations up on the website! (Well, it excites me.) Besides a lyric I did the opening 75 lines of the *Metamorphoses*, mostly because I'd already done the Four Ages of Man which immediately follows [<http://david-drake.com/ovid/beginning.html> and [amoresII-7.html](http://david-drake.com/ovid/amoresII-7.html)].

There are also a few new photos on the album page [<http://david-drake.com/album.html>].

It turned out to be much more interesting than I'd remembered (I've read the whole work, but not in thirty years). In the opening, Ovid attempts real, scientific, cosmogony instead of discussing 'the Gods' as actors in little skits based on myth. I don't think the subject really interested him any more than it does me, but he felt it ought to be there; and by translating his discussion, I was forced to confront the same issues.

The result is unlike any of my previous translations. That in itself would've been a good reason to do it. The actual reason was whim, because until I got into the process I didn't know how interesting it would be.

Speaking of the website, Pair (the host) changed its software recently and our FAQ form stopped working. We didn't know about the problem till we got a polite query from a reader--who then informed me that I would have to answer to God for the bad language in my books. As I said, he was polite.

I'll close with some musing on storytelling and memory, both subjects which are very important to me. I exercise daily (nothing fancy; just a set of stretches followed by a lap around our twenty acres). I used to listen to BBC News while I did that. BBC taught me a great deal about the way the world works, but unfortunately I found that I was becoming dangerously depressed. My wife Jo got me some tapes of old radio dramas (which I'd listened to when I was a kid) and I began to exercise with them

instead.

One of the series I listened to was *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet*. I remembered only one actual show, however: a villain has paralyzed Tom in the Venusian jungle as a tyrannosaur bears down on them. The villain runs into his space ship. The tyrannosaur ignores Tom, who's perforce motionless, and instead tears apart the ship to get the villain whose movement drew its attention.

I recently got recordings of many Tom Corbett shows, and to my delight these included the one I remembered. It's from early 1952, so I was six when I heard it initially.

To my amazement, it's much less vivid than I recalled it being. Because it's radio, Tom (who's paralyzed, remember) couldn't provide a real-time viewpoint (as I remembered). Even so, the description of events is largely in conversation between third parties days afterwards instead of being in as much immediate detail as was possible.

Does this mean my six-year-old self was a better storyteller than the pros? No, I don't think so--because the story *did* stick with me in its essential details for 55 years. But something exceptional was going on; I'm just not sure what it was. Or is.

Time to take Nonnos off the shelf, I guess. I'm exhausted but about as happy--well, content--as I ever am. I hope all of you can say the same.

Dave Drake

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NEWSLETTER 37: February 3, 2007

Dear People,

As a brief opening note, my webmaster has just informed me that this newsletter is going out to more than a thousand recipients. That doesn't really prove anything--but it pleases me.

I guess the big news is that *The Complete Hammer's Slammers*, volume 2, is out from Night Shade. I haven't (at this writing) seen it myself, but friends have gotten their copies. The dust jacket painting is an excellent job by John Berkey. (Artwork/covers which I mention in this newsletter are all on the website at <http://david-drake.com/news.html>.)

This volume contains the four short Hammer novels and a new story (*The Day of Glory*), which I wrote for the tsunami relief anthology *Elemental*. I'd intended the story to be collected for the first time here in *HS2*, but Night Shade's publication date slipped and the date for *Other Times Than Peace* from Baen Books didn't slip.

Besides the fiction, *HS2* has a new afterword in which I offer my personal take on the ethics of writing professionally, and an erudite introduction by David Hartwell. I'm honored that David expended the considerable effort to write the intro, which pointed out things in my writing of which I hadn't previously been aware. (I'm not, I assure you, an unconscious writer. On the other hand, it's hard to get outside yourself.)

There's twenty-odd years of my life in *HS2*. I'm glad to be able to say that I'm proud of it.

Speaking of years of my life, Night Shade is proceeding at a good rate on *Balefires*, a collection of my fantasy stories, some of them very, *very* early. (My first four published stories are in the volume.) A draft of the Richard Pellegrino cover (based on Goya) is on the web site; I find it very effective.

For a variety of reasons (one of them being that Karen, my cybrarian/webmaster, wanted to try new software) the limited edition of *Balefires* will include a bibliography of the US appearances of my work (as well as British appearances when that happened to be the first publication, as was true of a number of stories in the '70s).

The result, twenty pages long in manuscript, is as complete as we could make it, though I'm sure there're things we missed. (As a matter of fact, I forgot to list one story that's actually included in *Balefires*. I caught that mistake, but goodness knows what I didn't catch.) It was an odd trip back through forty years of what's not only my work but my pleasure and my refuge from the bad places in my head.

It also strikes me that I'm a very lucky person. Well, I realize that every time I get introspective;

which isn't terribly often, but it happens.

The Tor reprint of *Bridgehead* is now out. In the past, most reprints of my early titles were done by Baen Books. Tom Doherty decided he wanted to do these at Tor, which was fine with me: Tor had bought the books to begin with, after all. Mind, Jim Baen had acquired both *The Forlorn Hope* and *Bridgehead* while he was at Tor, and they were long out of print; but they're still Tor books if Tom wants them so far as I'm concerned.

A lot of writers and most agents seem to regard publishers as The Enemy. There are certainly publishers with whom I would expect to have an adversarial relationship--so I avoid them. I know that things can go wrong even between friends, but if you start from an assumption of friendship you've got a much better chance of having a pleasant working life. I've been with both Tor and Baen from before either house published its first book.

My Tor editor, David Hartwell, has always done things besides work for major publishers. For many years he published a little magazine (a technical term) called *The Little Magazine*. In 1988 he folded *The Little Magazine* (with regret) and began to publish the *New York Review of Science Fiction* [<http://www.nyrsf.com/>], also a little magazine.

NYRSF has always been eclectic. There are reviews, generally literary, of books which tend also to the literary side of the field; essays on or by writers who're generally the sort to be guests at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts; notes on pulp writers (I've contributed a number myself); and wholly unexpected stuff. I was fascinated by a recent essay comparing *Trilby* with an earlier literary *Trilby* which clearly influenced George DuMaurier's novel.

I mention *NYRSF* here because the February issue has a long interview with me, two essays by me, and a third on me by my friend Mark Van Name. This is not a big deal; but it's an awfully big deal in my head and heart, coming at a very good time for me.

I'm continuing to progress on the next RCN space opera, *When the Tide Rises*. For the past month and more I've been in the mid-book stage; in other words, I've been feeling that I'm writing crap, that my career's doomed, and that I'm a complete waste of space as a human being.

None of those things is objectively true. I *know* they're not true. In fact the book's going well, and scene by scene (when I give them the first-pass edit the morning after I write them) I'm really quite pleased with what I'm doing. Dunno why I'm more depressed at the moment than I usually am, but I *am* sure that there's no objective cause (of which I'm aware) for how I feel.

But if you wonder where characters like Ilina and Adele Mundy come from--well, I didn't have to look far to find a model.

Since I've mentioned *Tide*, let me make two corrections in what I said regarding Lewis Carroll's

poetry in the most recent newsletter. First, a fan pointed out that the title comes from *The Lobster Quadrille*, not from *The Walrus and the Carpenter*; and second, *I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls* is the first line, not the title, of *The Palace of Humbug*.

Occasionally somebody will ask to reprint a picture from my website--once a giant ammonite, another time a Spanish cedar, and a couple people wanting the woodcut of Ovid. This always makes me feel good. I did something (or in the case of Ovid, my webmaster Karen did something) that total strangers considered exceptionally well done.

And it's happened again: an online Russian magazine on cacti, *Cultivar*, will be using my picture of a crowned saguaro [<http://david-drake.com/leprecon.html>]. I just wish I could find the CD which has the higher resolution image from which the one on the website was reduced.

There's no new Ovid, I'm afraid. I intend to do the opening 75 lines of the *Metamorphoses* (leading up to *The Four Ages of Man*), but I got buried in the middle of my novel and haven't gotten around to that yet. There are parts of Ovid which I like better than other parts, but there's no part I've read with the care required by a translation that hasn't taught me something as a writer.

I continue to think frequently about Jim Baen. Oh, I don't mean I'm pining over him; it's more a matter of not thinking of him as dead. We talked so frequently for so many years that the conversations play back regularly when I'm musing on something else. (Writers spend a lot of time looking into space. I like to call that process 'musing', but 'zoning out' would probably be as accurate a description.)

Once when he was in a down mood, Jim said he suspected that science fiction was really just a branch of aviation fiction. In the '20s and '30s aviation had been exciting and full of promise; in the '40s it'd been triumphantly important. The '50s began the process of homogenization, and now people flying are treated with contempt while crammed into miserable conditions.

I can't pretend that I didn't see evidence to support Jim's thesis; he was genuinely a visionary, and not all his visions were pleasant ones. But you know, there's still sport aviation: the folks who go up in ultralights, or who build their own kit planes, or who fly the spouse and the next door neighbors to the coast for a fish dinner just for the hell of it. There are still people who fly for fun, probably as many as the total number of those who flew in 1930.

In Baen Books, Jim created a haven for people who read and write SF because it's fun, not because it's good for them or because it's an efficient method of putting dollars in their pockets. In other words, the SF equivalent of sport aviation. I wish he were still around so I could say that to him.

But whether or not Jim still exists in a spiritual sense (that's not my line of country), he's *certainly* still making me think. And Baen Books is still here, helping people have fun... and very quietly, without being heavy-handed, making people think as well. That's a legacy that very few people could claim.

Back to a space opera!

Dave Drake

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NEWSLETTER 36: Thanksgiving, 2006

Dear People,

I've completed a rough plot for the next RCN space opera, *When the Tide Rises*, and've gone over it to make little tweaks. I haven't keyed in those last changes yet; that'll be the final stage before writing the novel. As usual, that step--committing to about six months of demanding daily work--scares me. Sure, I've done it before; and sure, I'll do it this time.

But first I thought I'd do this newsletter.

The title comes from *The Walrus and the Carpenter* by Lewis Carroll. I was surprised to find the stanza there, but Carroll's verse has many extremely evocative flashes. I recall Fredric Brown commenting (in *Night of the Jabberwock*, I believe) that the first stanza of *I Dreamt I Dwelt In Marble Halls* was terrifying, making the rest of that minor poem a great disappointment.

Back to business: Donato's final art for *The Mirror of Worlds*, the second book of the Crown of the Isles fantasy trilogy, is complete and stunning, as usual. He's amazingly good. The painting is illustrative of the book, but that doesn't matter to me particularly: the purpose of the cover art is to sell the book to people who will like the book, period. The cover of *The Fortress of Glass* (which isn't an illustration) accomplishes that end just as well as this one (which is). Both are posted at <http://david-drake.com/news.html>.

Donato has a lot of different ways of doing his job superbly. I find him not only a great benefit to the books his art appears on but also an inspiration to me not to get into a rut.

I said in September that I thought the release of the second volume of Night Shade's *The Complete Hammer's Slammers* was going to slip from the announced November. That's even more true now, but the Berkey cover art [<http://david-drake.com/news.html>] is in and I've gone over the proofs. The book should be out very soon, if not this month.

Actually, I went over 60% of the proofs. I found a few problems with layout but only three or four actual copyediting errors in 300 pages. I decided that my time was better spent working on my plot than reading the remaining proofs. I've never in my long experience of publishing seen proofs so clean. Night Shade doesn't do everything the way major publishers do, but they do some things better. It's a pleasure to deal with them.

Night Shade is also doing my horror/fantasy collection *Balefires*. The contents are almost all in their hands now (I need to copy *The Song of the Bone* and mail it off), so the current release date of April, 2007, seems workable. (I suspect that'll turn out to be ballpark rather than chiseled in stone; but I also suspect the proofs will be clean and the production of very high quality.)

My webmaster, Karen, is doing a detailed bibliography for the limited edition (and I suppose for the website). I've written an amazing amount over forty years. (And I'm not dead yet.)

Tor brought out the new edition of *The Forlorn Hope*. It's nearly identical to the second edition, which was darned similar to the first edition. The new Tor edition of *Bridgehead* ought to be out realsoonnow too.

I don't feel that I'm any different from the person who wrote those books 25 years ago, but I am; and in most senses, I'm a much better person. (I'm a better writer, too, but my mistakes as a writer aren't the things that wake me up in the wee small hours.)

I've mentioned the Donato covers on the Isles series, but I've also had some excitement with Steve Hickman's art. Out of the blue arrived an extremely sturdy packing case (my second thought, while opening it, was that Steve owns a power screwdriver and I do not). In it was a birthday gift from Baen Books and Steve together: the framed cover painting for *The Way to Glory*.

But that's only half the neat stuff. When Toni took over as publisher of Baen Books, she asked me if I'd like additional contracts. I said I wouldn't, because a few weeks before he died Jim had pushed me into a three-book contract over my protests. (I still had two books on the previous three-book. I don't like to get too far ahead, and I didn't need more money this year.)

After the fact, I realized that there are ill-natured people who would claim (and possibly even believe) that I'd refused to do a new contract with Toni out of dissatisfaction. (For the record: I regret Jim's death a great deal, but I am very satisfied with the new management of Baen Books.)

I still didn't need more money this year, so I proposed something else. Jim had commissioned Steve Hickman to do a cover for *The Northworld Trilogy*. Steve did a wonderful painting, but it wasn't suitable for the book. Jim bought the original (I think as a kill fee) and cobbled together a book cover from portions of two other artists' work in a great hurry. I asked for the Hickman painting as my on-signing advance for another book, and Toni cheerfully agreed.

For a picture of me with both paintings at my birthday party and a picture of me with Steve at Constellation in Huntsville (a fun con with a trip to the Rocket and Space Center) and two more paintings for books of mine, see <http://david-drake.com/album.html>.

Since I'm mentioning new images on the website, Jim's family decided to get a stone for him. Pictures of the stone are at <http://david-drake.com/baen.html> and of Toni, me, and Comet with the stone (and with the oak tree, which is all I'd want for myself) are at <http://david-drake.com/album.html>.

At Conestoga (in Tulsa) I was interviewed by/with MT (Matt) Reiten, who was recently back from Afghanistan. The podcast of that interview is now up at <http://www.sftulsa.org/conestoga/2006/11/07/>

program-18-david-drake-mt-reiten/.

Conestoga has an unusually high percentage of newbie and wannabe writers. Matt is one of the two I met whom I believe has what it takes to really go places.

I've done two more bits of Ovid [<http://david-drake.com/ovid/amoresII-6.html> and <http://david-drake.com/ovid/4ages.html>], another lyric and the Four Ages of Man from the *Metamorphoses*. I was struck on rereading the latter that the first evidence Ovid gives of a Golden Age is that there are no lawyers. In this context, remember that Ovid (like me) was trained as a lawyer rather than a litterateur.

Which brings me to the thought with which I'll close. I got an update request from *Contemporary Authors*, asking me among other things to state the most surprising thing I'd learned as a writer. I realized it was this: critics and academics are dazzled by literary technique, which leads one--led me--to assume it was important to a writer's career.

In fact, general readers don't care about technique. They want story, *plot*. A writer who doesn't start with a good story will fail commercially, no matter how skilled his or her technique is.

I don't mean that technique isn't important to me: it's hugely important. That's why I do multiple drafts, for pity's sake! But this polish, these subtleties of vocabulary and phrasing, don't increase my sales by any noticeable degree.

As quick evidence of this (without any emotional loading), consider Vergil, possibly the most technically skilled writer of all time. After two millennia we're still discovering new things about Vergil's style. When I was an undergraduate, scholars had just noticed his alternation of ictus and accent on the penult of each line, and I'm sure someone up on recent scholarship would have a similar new-found wonder to relate.

But Vergil's *Aeneid* isn't and never has been as popular as Homer's *Odyssey*, which is storytelling at its highest level. If you doubt me, go to Amazon and count the number of English translations of each.

This is a good thing to keep in mind for those of you who write or want to write. For those of you who're just readers--well, you already knew it, didn't you?

My report on our trip to England in August is up at <http://david-drake.com/england2006report.html> and the photos are at <http://david-drake.com/england2006.html>.

Happy Thanksgiving, friends!

Dave Drake

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NEWSLETTER 35: September 22, 2006

Dear People,

Having gotten off cycle (not that there's officially a schedule, but there sorta is in my head), I thought it'd be useful to do a little newsletter now that I have a moment to do so. The major news (and the reason I have a moment) is that I turned in *The Mirror of Worlds* to Tor through my editor David Hartwell.

You can think of *Mirror* as either the eighth novel of the Isles fantasy series or the middle book of the Crown of the Isles trilogy. In passing, I know that the middle book of a trilogy often sags; it appears that the author's just filling pages to bridge a gap from an exciting beginning to a blazing climax. Trust me: this one doesn't lack action, nor does it lack its own beginning, middle and end.

Having said that, it really is the second book in the trilogy. You could read it alone, but it'll have more impact if you've read *The Fortress of Glass* first.

Oh, and Donato's doing the cover again. I've seen the rough [<http://david-drake.com/news.html>]. The layout is as good as his always are, and since his execution is as good as that of any artist working today, I have high hopes for the final.

It occurs to me to mention a point that's never come up when I'm asked about writing. When I'm writing a scene, I almost always have a picture of the setting (or sometimes the animal involved) sitting open beside me. These may be paintings or photographs, and the photography can be either from a book or something I took myself.

I don't mean I copy details exactly (because I'm always in my solo work creating fictional settings; when I've collaborated with other people, I've occasionally used real-world settings). Nonetheless, looking at--as one example--Thomas Cole's *A Notch in the White Mountains Called Crawford Notch* gave me not only the exact background I wanted but also two dead oak trees and a distant woman in a red garment.

I found it by leafing through a volume of Hudson River School paintings (the catalogue of an exhibition I'd been privileged to see a few years ago). The scene was *right*; and it was only later that I learned the little cabin in the foreground (which doesn't appear in my novel) had been occupied by the family wiped out by an avalanche as Hawthorne describes in his story *The Ambitious Guest*.

Does that matter? Probably not very much. But everything about writing is incremental. The story's written word by word and read in little increments also, even if the reader is skimming. Creating something that's solid in my mind, even if the details don't appear in my prose, adds--I think--something. And since the business is all a matter of tiny somethings, then every bit of this sort is that much in my favor.

And again, this may be my equivalent of the pair of socks the fighter pilot always wears when he goes up. It makes me feel a little more confident, and that counts for something even if all my friends think I'm a superstitious twit. (In fact I don't believe they think that, though they may be dissembling very well. They tend to be *kind* people.)

Some Golden Harbor, the fifth RCN novel, came out as a Baen hardcover. For those who're wondering, I'm jotting notes toward the next book in the series (though at the moment this is primarily a way to keep my brain from spinning completely out of control at the end of a novel).

The reprint of *The Forlorn Hope*, a non-Hammer military SF novel, is out from Tor. It's been OP for at least a decade and was getting hard to find. The book has an interesting history, for which (and for commentary on most of my older titles) see the bibliography page of my website. It will be interesting to see how Tor does with reprints compared to what Baen does.

Night Shade still hasn't sent me the proofs of volume 2 of *The Complete Hammer's Slammers*, which makes me suspect the November, 2006, release date is more than a little optimistic. On the other hand, I've gotten queries from the copyeditor, so I know that it really is under way.

As for *Balefires*, the collection of fantasy/horror stories from Night Shade, I don't know any more than I did in Newsletter 34. It's slotted for March, 2007, but I'm not absolutely sure even of the contents.

There've been little updates to the website, but the only striking one is the home page image of me at Stonehenge in August. Goodness, but we had a wonderful time on our trip to England!

Enough people have asked me why there was nothing from me in the Jim Baen tribute in *Locus* that I'm going to be explicit. While Jim was in the ICU I got a chatty e-mail from a stranger on the *Locus* staff, telling me that Jim Baen wasn't likely to recover from his stroke so they were getting together a tribute issue. He then gave me the subjects and length of the note they wanted from me.

I replied him more politely than I might've done that in the event it became necessary, I would write the obituary Jim asked me for, and that *Locus* was welcome to reprint it. I would not be doing anything *for* the magazine, however, because they had displayed open contempt for Jim throughout his career.

They chose not to run anything by me if they couldn't have an exclusive.

Doggone, I really miss Jim. But that's not news, is it?

Podcasting is still rather *Terra Incognita* for me, but I did another podcast interview recently, this time on the subject of being a writer [<http://shouldwrite.blogspot.com/>]. The interviewer, Mur Lafferty, is a friend of Dan Breen, my friend and first reader. This particular podcast is sent without compression, so it's a huge file (don't even think about it unless you have broadband).

It is, however, rather interesting. I first asked Mur why *she* wanted to be a writer so that I could see where she was coming from. That wound up telling her things about her own motivations which she'd been concealing from herself.

I'm a person who takes stock of things around my birthday, and I turn 61 on the 24th of September. It was hard losing Jim this year, but losing one close friend underscores the fact that I have wonderful friends and family around me still. Other than what goes on in my head, life is very good indeed. I hope the same is true for every one of you.

All best,
Dave Drake

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NEWSLETTER 34: 22 August 2006

Dear People,

My wife Jo and I are back from a wonderful and exhilarating week in England with our friends, the Lamsheads. It was an experience. I gathered an enormous amount of information (I took 378 photos with my camera and a few with Jo's when I was between sets of batteries) which will color everything I write henceforth, and I also had a tremendous amount of fun. We were *on* pretty much constantly so I'm exhausted and a little flaky. Actually, it feels a lot like finishing a novel.

Incidentally, we ate quite well, mostly in pubs we chanced across. As a typical example, the lamb's liver and bacon on a bed of mashed potatoes I had at the Globe and Rainbow on the way from Scotney Castle to Bateman's (Kipling's house) was delicious and so tender that I didn't need my knife. English food has an undeservedly bad reputation.

Our return coincided with the terror alert in which the British banned books and newspapers from trans-Atlantic flights. As best I can tell, they were attempting to prove they could be just as stupid as American authorities. Note that the ban on reading material wasn't an over-reaction: it had no bearing whatever on the problem and was therefore simply hysterical. (Preventing anyone with an Islamic name from flying would've been an over-reaction.)

I hope to put a few of the photos on my website and to work up my notes into a proper travelogue, but my first priority is to finish *The Mirror of Worlds*, the second book of the Crown of the Isles trilogy. The rough draft's 80% complete, but life has been interfering rather badly with my writing this summer.

Other Times Than Peace, my collection of Military SF stories (broadly interpreted) is out as a Baen hc. The cover's by Kurt Miller whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Deep South Con in Raleigh last month. <http://david-drake.com/news.html>]

I just received copies of *Some Golden Harbor*, the fifth RCN novel. It's a September, 2006, Baen hc so it ought to be in stores realsoonnow. Steve Hickman did the cover. <http://david-drake.com/news.html>]
It's a fun series. And on that subject:

ANOTHER EXCITING POSTCARD OFFER!

I have postcards with the cover of *Some Golden Harbor*. These can be mailed on an ordinary 24-cent postcard stamp. I will send you a signed postcard if you send a 24-cent stamp and an address sticker to me at:

David Drake

PO Box 904
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Incidentally, *Harbor* got a very positive *Publisher's Weekly* review, which I appreciate; but the reviewer referred to the RCN as the *Royal Cinnabar Navy* instead of the Republic of Cinnabar Navy. Given that the internal politics of the oligarchy running Cinnabar is a major aspect of the series, this isn't just me being pedantic... but I don't suppose it really matters.

I deeply believe that I should use all my care and intelligence to structure the backgrounds and plots of my stories--but readers aren't required to notice this. It's my job to give them stories which they appreciate, not their job to appreciate my care. I keep reminding myself of this; and I keep wincing nonetheless when they (for example) say *Royal* in place of *Republic*.

The first volume of Night Shade's *Complete Hammer's Slammers* has been selling very nicely. (Thank you all.) The second volume (which will collect the four short novels, with an excellent introduction by David Hartwell and a new story and afterword by me) is due out in November, 2006. I haven't seen either proof pages or the cover painting, so I suspect publication may slip a month or two as the first volume did; but *HSI* was worth the wait, and I expect this will be also.

Speaking of Night Shade, they'll be publishing *Balefires*, my fantasy/horror collection, in March, 2007. This is an expanded version of the volume that was planned for Fedogan and Bremer in 1998. After talking to the folks at F&B during World Fantasy Con in 2005, I agree to leave the book with them on their assurance that it'd be out at WFC 2006. Further catastrophes ensued. They weren't anybody's fault, but--it's been eight years. I transferred the rights to Night Shade.

The Night Shade version has 24 stories and a total of 12,000 new words of introductions. All my old fantasy/horror pieces are included, along with two very recent ones. Eight stories have never been reprinted.

Going over the contents was an interesting experience. These stories and a moderate additional number of similar ones could've been my entire writing career; indeed, they *would've* been my career if *Hammer's Slammers* hadn't taken off so unexpectedly. Oddly enough, I might've won a few awards along the way in that alternate reality.

I'm glad to have the life and success that I do, but I probably wouldn't have thought of myself as a failure if *Balefires* were the capstone of my career instead of a sidelight to it. The older I get, the more convinced I've become that we don't really pick our futures: we just live them.

Tor informed me (when I asked) that they intend to reprint *The Forlorn Hope* in September, 2006, and *Bridgehead* in December, 2006. They'll continue to be pbs (they were paperback originals) with the original cover paintings (according to what I'm told). Those of you who've been looking for an opportunity to replace the copy of *The Forlorn Hope* that you've worn to death (and a number of folks

over the years have said as much), your chance is coming.

I did a podcast for Stephen Euin Cobb, operating as The Future and You [<http://www.thefutureandyou.libsyn.com/>]. He broke the discussion into a number of segments and is mixing it on his show (June through August thus far) with other interviews (some with Baen authors).

Podcasts aren't my preferred method of listening to things (I keep forgetting to turn the sound on, for example). If you're less computer-challenged than I am, you might find this interesting.

My friend Jim Baen died in June, as most of you will already know. We had his funeral, so to speak, in the middle of July. He and his mom (whose cremains had been in a bag on Jim's TV set) are now sprinkled around the base of a huge oak in the grove beside my house. [<http://david-drake.com/baen.html>]

Jim and I were friends for a very long time; I'm glad to have him as a closer neighbor. I wouldn't say it makes me think of him more often than I otherwise would, though, because I'm not sure that's possible.

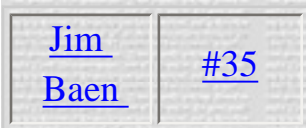
You know, this would've been (for me) an overscheduled summer even if things had gone well in general. Jim's death and the associated business were about as bad as it gets for me mentally, and coming back from England in the midst of a terrorist threat wasn't a good experience either.

But I'm back. I'm in good health, I have my work; and while no one and nothing will ever replace Jim, I have other close friends.

Life is good despite the glitches. I hope all of you can say the same when you really sit down and look at things.

All best,
Dave Drake david-drake.com

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last updated 22 September 2006 by webmaster@david-drake.com

My friend Jim Baen passed away peacefully and with dignity at 5 pm yesterday, June 28, 2006.

Dave Drake

Jim

Jim Baen called me on the afternoon of June 11. He generally phoned on weekends, and we'd usually talk a couple more times in the course of a week; but this was the last time.

In the course of the conversation he said, "You've got to write my obituary, you know." I laughed (I'll get to that) and said, "Sure, if I'm around--but remember, I'm the one who rides the motorcycle."

So I'm writing this. Part of it's adapted from the profile I did in 2000 for the program book of the Chicago Worldcon at which Jim was Editor Guest of Honor. They cut my original title, which Jim loved: *The God of Baendom*. I guess they thought it was undignified and whimsical.

The title *was* undignified and whimsical. So was Jim.

James Patrick Baen was born October 22, 1943, on the Pennsylvania-New York border, a long way by road or in culture from New York City. He was introduced to SF early through the magazines in a step-uncle's attic, including the November, 1957, issue of *Astounding* with *The Gentle Earth* by Christopher Anvil.

The two books Jim most remembered as formative influences were *Fire-Hunter* by Jim Kjelgaard and *Against the Fall of Night* by Arthur C Clarke. The theme of both short novels is that a youth from a decaying culture escapes the trap of accepted wisdom and saves his people despite themselves. This is a fair description of Jim's life in SF: he was always his own man, always a maverick, and very often brilliantly successful because he didn't listen to what other people thought.

For example, the traditional model of electronic publishing required that the works be encrypted. Jim thought that just made it hard for people to read books, the worst mistake a publisher could make. His e-texts were clear and in a variety of common formats.

While e-publishing has been a costly waste of effort for others, Baen Books quickly began earning more from electronic sales than it did from Canada. By the time of Jim's death, the figure had risen to ten times that.

Jim didn't forget his friends. In later years he arranged for the expansion of *Fire-Hunter* so that he could republish it (as *The Hunter Returns*, originally the title of the Charles R Knight painting Jim put on the cover).

Though Clarke didn't need help to keep his books in print the way Kjelgaard did, Jim didn't forget him

either. Jim called me for help a week before his stroke, because Amazon.com had asked him to list the ten SF novels that everyone needed to read to understand the field. *Against the Fall of Night* was one of the titles that we settled on.

Jim's father died at age fifty; he and his stepfather didn't warm to one another. Jim left home at 17 and lived on the streets for several months, losing weight that he couldn't at the time afford. He enlisted in the army as the only available alternative to starving to death.

Jim spent his military career in Bavaria where he worked for the Army Security Agency as a Morse Code Intercept Operator, monitoring transmissions from a Soviet call sign that was probably a armored corps. One night he determined that 'his' Soviet formation was moving swiftly toward the border. This turned out to be an unannounced training exercise--but if World War III had broken out in 1960, Jim would've been the person who announced it.

Jim entered CCNY on the GI Bill and became a Hippie. Among other jobs he managed a Greenwich Village coffee house, sometimes acting as barker as well: 'Come in and see tomorrow's stars today!' None of the entertainers became tomorrow's stars, but that experience of unabashed huckstering is part of the reason that Jim himself did.

Jim's first job in publishing was as an assistant in the Complaints Department of Ace Books. He was good at it--so good that management tried to promote him to running the department. He turned the offer down, however, because he really wanted to be an SF editor.

In 1973 Jim was hired at *Galaxy* and *If* magazines when Judy-Lynn Benjamin left. He became assistant to Ejler Jakobson, who with Bernie Williams taught Jim the elements of slash and burn editing.

Unfortunately, this was a necessary skill for an editor in Jim's position. The publisher wasn't in a hurry to pay authors, so established writers who could sell elsewhere preferred to do so. *Galaxy* and *If* published a lot of first stories and not a few rejects by major names. Material like that had to be edited for intelligibility and the printer's deadline, not nuances of prose style.

Apart from basic technique Jim had very little to learn from his senior, who shortly thereafter left to pursue other opportunities. Jim's first act as editor was to recall stories that his predecessor had rejected over Jim's recommendation. When in later years I thanked him for retrieving the first two Hammer stories, Jim responded, "Oh, David--Jake rejected *much* better stories than yours!" (Among them was Ursula K LeGuin's Nebula winner, *The Day Before the Revolution* .)

Ace Books, in many ways the standard bearer of SF paperback publishing in the Fifties, had fallen on hard times in the Seventies. Charter Communications bought the company and installed Tom Doherty as publisher. Tom hired Jim to run the SF line. The first thing the new team did was to pay Ace's back (and in some cases, *way* back) royalties. By the time the famous SFWA audit of Ace Books was complete, the money had already been paid to the authors; a matter of some embarrassment to the SFWA officers

who were aware of the facts.

Ace regained its position as an SF line where readers could depend on getting a good story. (To Homer, that was the essence of art; not all writers and editors of more recent times would have agreed.) As well as pleasing readers, the Ace SF line made money for the company; unfortunately (due to decisions from far above the level of publisher) SF came to be the only part of the company that *did* make money. Tom left Ace in 1980, founded Tor Books, and hired Jim to set up the Tor SF line.

Which Jim did, following the same pattern that had revived Ace: a focus on story and a mix of established authors with first-timers whom Jim thought just might have what it took. It worked again.

In fact it worked so well that when Simon and Schuster went through a series of upheavals in its Pocket Books line in 1983, management decided to hire Jim as their new SF editor. Jim thought about the offer, then made a counter-offer: with the backing of two friends, he would form a separate company which would provide S&S with an SF line to distribute. S&S agreed and Baen Books was born.

Jim used the same formulas with his new line as he had at Ace and Tor, and again he succeeded. If that were easy, then past decades wouldn't be littered with the detritus of so many other people's attempts to do the same thing.

Even more than had been the case at Ace and Tor, Jim was his own art director at Baen Books--and he really directed rather than viewing his job as one of coddling artists. Baen Books gained a distinct look. Like the book contents, the covers weren't to everyone's taste--but they worked.

Jim had the advantage over *some* editors in that he knew what a story is. He had the advantage over *most* editors in being able to spot talent before somebody else had published it. (Lois Bujold, Eric Flint, John Ringo and Dave Weber were all Baen discoveries whom Jim promoted to stardom.)

Furthermore, he never stopped developing new writers. The week before his stroke, Jim bought a first novel from a writer whom Baen Books had been grooming through short stories over the past year.

The most important thing of all which Jim brought to his company was a personal vision. Baen Books didn't try to be for everybody, but it *was* always true to itself. In that as in so many other ways, the company mirrored Jim himself.

When Jim called me on June 11, he told me he was dying. *I* thought he was simply having a bad interaction among prescription drugs. Though the stroke that killed him occurred the next day in hospital, Jim was right and I was wrong--again.

After that opening, Jim said, "I'm just going to say it: we've known each other all these years and you seem to like me. Why?"

That's a hell of a thing to be hit with out of the blue. Jim had always known that he was socially awkward and that he not infrequently rubbed people the wrong way, but it wasn't something we discussed. (And it's obviously not a subject on which I could be of much help.)

If I'd been a different person, I'd have started out by listing the things he did right: for example, that I'd never met a more loving father than Jim was to his children (Jessica Baen, 29, Jim's daughter with Madeline Gleich, and Katherine Baen, 14, Jim's daughter with Toni Weisskopf). Being me, I instead answered the question a number of us ask ourselves: "How can you like a person who's behaved the way you know I have?" I said that his flaws were childish ones, tantrums and sulking; not, *never* in my experience, studied cruelty. He agreed with that.

And then I thought further and said that when I was sure my career was tanking--

" *You* thought that? When was that?"

In the mid '90s, I explained, when Military SF was going down the tubes with the downsizing of the military. But when I was at my lowest point, which was very low, I thought, "I can write two books a year. And Jim will pay me \$20K apiece for them--"

"I'd have paid a lot more than that!"

And I explained that this wasn't about reality: this was me in the irrational depths of real depression. And even when I was most depressed and most irrational, I knew in my heart that Jim Baen would pay me enough to keep me alive, because he was that sort of person. He'd done that for Keith Laumer whom he disliked, because Laumer had been an author Jim looked for when he was starting to read SF.

I *could not* get so crazy and depressed that I didn't trust Jim Baen to stand by me if I needed him. I don't know a better statement than that to sum up what was important about Jim, as a man and as a friend.

--Dave Drake

<http://david-drake.com/baen.html>

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NEWSLETTER 33: May 13, 2006

Dear People,

The Fortress of Glass, first book in the *Crown of the Isles* trilogy, is now out as a Tor hardcover with the most lovely cover painting ever put on a novel. (This cover and the other things I mention in this newsletter are at my news page, <http://david-drake.com/news.html>.) At least stare at the dust jacket for a while. Donato has done consistently marvelous work for my books (starting with *The Voyage*), but this is a new high point.

The *Crown of the Isles* is a true trilogy that'll close the Isles series. The previous six books have been self-standing: that is, you should be able to pick up any of them without knowing there were or will be additional books and have a complete experience, just as you would if you read a randomly chosen Poirot novel by Agatha Christie.

I intend this final trilogy to be a very different animal which will encourage (if not exactly demand) the reader to read the three volumes in order. I'll complete aspects of the action within each individual book, but there'll be continuing themes arcing across the trilogy. I won't wrap those up till the end.

I changed my technique because fantasy readers apparently prefer trilogies to open-ended series of the type which I write in space opera (the RCN series) or military sf (the Hammer series). I don't know why that is, but I'm not required to know. I am required to tell stories that people want to read if I expect that people will read me (a fairly obvious fact which nonetheless seems to have escaped quite a number of writers).

Tor is pushing *Fortress* pretty hard. This is really good but it involved me going on tour for a week, one of my less favorite things. For those of you who want an inside view of the romance of being a jet-setting writer, I did a trip report at <http://david-drake.com/booktour.html> (linked from the news page.)

The tour has a happy ending: I'm home and busily at work on *The Mirror of Worlds*, the second volume of the *Crown of the Isles*. (Some of you may recall that the planned title was *The New Land*. I changed it.) As of this writing I've got 35K in draft, and the book is proceeding at a good rate.

Not only is *The Fortress of Glass* out, *Master of the Cauldron*, the previous book in the Isles series, has appeared in paperback. It too has a fine Donato cover with a strong central image. Throughout my career I've been fortunate with my covers, but never more so than on the Isles series.

The next two Drake hardcovers from Baen will be the collection *Other Times Than Peace* and the RCN space opera *Some Golden Harbor*. I've read the proofs on both volumes.

The stories in the collection include two of the three most recent Hammer stories, but there are also earlier works including several from the 1970s when I was just starting to write seriously. In fact I wrote

Safe to Sea in 1972, before the first Hammer story, though it wasn't published till 1988. (Joe Haldeman took it for one of the collections of military sf he headlined for Marty Greenberg; Joe stopped doing the collections and I headlined several; then I stopped doing them, but now Joe is headlining military sf again for Marty. The more things change, the more they stay the same.)

I have ambivalent feelings when I think back to the '70s. I'm successful now beyond what were then my wildest dreams. Actually, at the time I didn't dream about becoming a full-time writer, let alone a successful one. That would've been like dreaming I'd become the Dalai Lama: it just wasn't something I thought could happen in the world I lived in.

But thirty years ago, my nearly complete ignorance meant that almost everything was possible. Knowledge brings with it limitations. While I've fought ignorance, particular my own ignorance, all my life, I nonetheless regret losing a lot of my innocent hopefulness.

Reading the proofs of *Some Golden Harbor* was a completely good experience. I worried about the novel all the way through the process of plotting and writing, because I was experimenting with new things. I didn't have a body of work to assure my subconscious that of course it was all going well.

But it did go well: the proofs convince me of that. The next time I try these techniques, I'll have an underlying confidence that of course I can use them effectively.

Which means, based on my past history, that I'll push myself in a different way. Sure, I may fail, but I learn things from my failures too. A writer can either grow or die, and I'm not ready to die yet.

The trade paperback of *The World Turned Upside Down*, the anthology Eric Flint, Jim Baen, and I edited, should be appearing right about now (I've got my author's copies). These are the stories that made the three of us SF professionals. I can just about guarantee that we've included things which you haven't read, and I will guarantee that we've included stories which you'll be glad to reread now. Get this book for yourself, but besides that give it to friends with a bright 13-year-old in the family.

Eric and I also edited *Transgalactic*, a fat collection of AE Van Vogt's work. It'll be coming out from Baen in October as a paperback (or possibly trade paper; I should check) with a nice Eggleton cover. The first SF books I bought for myself were a novel by Andre Norton and *Mission to the Stars* (AKA *The Mixed Men*) by Van Vogt. The latter's in this volume, along with the complete Clane of Linn sequence and the two ezwal stories (*Cooperate or Else*, and *The Second Solution*).

Van Vogt, better than anybody else I can think of, managed to hint at infinite possibilities. That was never a common talent, and it's virtually unknown in current fiction. (I certainly don't suggest it's something I do myself). You ought at least to be exposed to it, and *Transgalactic* is a good (and inexpensive) place to get that exposure.

I don't have any new Ovid translations on the website, I'm sorry to say. The book tour was a huge

disruption, and the proofs of Harbor arrived just as I started to get back to proper work: writing. Still, I've started to type up a rough translation of Echo and Narcissus and hope to finish it before long. It's not that crowds are baying at the website's little electronic doors for my translations, but it's one of the ways that I keep my mind flexible.

Besides, I'm amused at the frequency with which I shock people when I mention my translations. I spent far longer as a classics major than I did as a soldier, and it's good to remind folks of the fact from time to time. Okay, the Aeneid wasn't as intense an experience as Cambodia, but it was an important experience for me.

Now to get back to *The Mirror of the Worlds*, where Cashel is meeting a perfectly nice girl who's been dead for ages longer than she herself can remember.

All best,
Dave Drake

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last updated 18 June 2006 by webmaster@david-drake.com

Newsletter #32 mailed out March 8, 2006

Dear People,

Time appears to fly whether or not you're having fun. Since the most recent newsletter (31) I've been working on the plot for *The New Land*, the second book of the Crown of the Isles trilogy. That isn't a problem in itself--I've done a lot of plots by now--but during the initial process of gathering material I don't appear to be going anywhere.

I have a long track record to prove that my system works, but my intellectual side (which controls most of my writing and my life more generally) keeps pointing out that from the outside I look like I'm sitting on my butt, reading books and jotting down notes without any particular bearing on the job at hand. And believe me, my intellect is completely separate from the subconscious which runs this stage of writing.

By the time you read this I'll have completed my rough plot (since I assume Karen, my webmaster, won't send out the newsletter if I suddenly die instead of finishing. Hey, there's a lot of asteroids up there and one might have my name on it). I'm feeling much perkier. This state of mind will last a matter of days or weeks till I'm far enough into the novel to realize that I've lost any talent I ever had and that this novel will be a disaster. Living in my head is a constant barrel of laughs.

Incidentally because *The New Land* was planned as part of a trilogy, I knew where it was going--had to go--before I started the plot. This turns out to make the task significantly harder. Normally I have nothing more detailed than, 'and the good guys win' as a goal, which gives me a welcome degree of flexibility.

There's been a major Good Thing (besides the outline) since Newsletter 31: Volume 1 of *The Collected Hammer's Slammers* is out from Night Shade. It contains all the short fiction in the series, in order of original publication. (This arrangement makes as much sense as any would.) It's a beautiful book [see <http://david-drake.com/news.html>].

Now--I've had lots of books over the years, many of them from major publishers with large print runs and significant advances. This is a big book for Night Shade, but they're a small press; and while I think I did get an advance, I'm sure it wasn't a large one. *HS1* is a much bigger thing in my mind, I find to my surprise, than it has any right to be.

As best I can tell (yes, it's my own head; that doesn't mean I fully understand what's going on in it), my enthusiastic reaction stems from the fact that the Hammer stories and I (because I wrote them) have been vilified for more than 30 years. Seeing the series in a nice package with a quite wonderful introduction by Gene Wolfe, one of the most rightly respected literary figures in the field, is a kind of validation I never dreamed I'd get.

Indeed, I'd have said I didn't need validation. That's true in the technical sense: being abused by reviewers who've never been at the sharp end has never changed what I write or how I write it. But even if I didn't need to be told I wasn't a moral leper after all, it feels awfully good.

The book tour on *The Fortress of Glass* is well into the planning stage. Check <http://david-drake.com/news.html> which will be updated as information comes in. If any of you want to drop in and get stuff signed, I'd be delighted to see you. (Hmm; and I need to decide which bit of *Fortress* to read at the places which want a reading.)

Speaking of *Fortress*, there's a SciFi Wire interview at <http://www.scifi.com/scifiwire/index.php?category=5&id=34321> Well, there was: I'm not sure how long they stay up.

Also from Tor is the pb of *The Master of the Cauldron* with its wonderful Donato cover. I've got my copies, so it should be in stores realsoonnow.

All my Tor titles with electronic versions are going to appear as Baen Webscriptions [<http://www.webscription.net/>]. This is due in no small measure to Geoffrey Kidd, who did the scanning and proofing on a couple and was the conduit to Baen Books on all. Thank you, Geoffrey.

Jim Baen puts books up without encryption (which I've been told to call DRM, a stupid acronym for a stupid concept). Baen Webscriptions can be read on any browser than can get you to the site. It apparently doesn't compute in an accountant's mind that ease of using Jim's system might have something to do with Jim's electronic income being well into six figures and everybody else's electronic income being squat.

Given that we live in a world where people blow up places of worship in the name of religion, I guess this degree of narrowness shouldn't surprise me. I think it's all right for me to be sad, though.

Tor doesn't have its own Webscriptions program. My books are going up on Baen because I asked Tom Doherty. Tom is a very smart man.

On my website proper, there's an additional Ovid translation (*Amores* II-5). I expect my next translation project to be the Echo and Narcissus section from the *Metamorphoses*, but I've only given the text a quick read-through thus far.

There was almost a new home page picture. I was a little doubtful about this. I've seen too many author photos from the '30s and '40s, in which the subject has posed in a tweed suit with a pipe or in a checked flannel shirt with an axe, to be really comfortable with the use of props in pictures. (Yes, among others I'm talking about my friend Manly Wade Wellman and about my benefactor August Derleth, who bought my first stories.) But--

A bookseller asked if I'd sign bookplates for her; sure, I said. (I always say that.) But this time instead of using a commercial product, she wanted to create personalized bookplates with Photoshop. She asked if I still had the pictures I took of my Damascus-steel dagger for Gary Ruddell when he painted the cover of *Dagger*.

I didn't, but I had the dagger and a camera with a timer. It was cold and windy, so I put on my motorcycle jacket (normally I'd have been wearing a ratty nylon bomber jacket under a photographer's vest; but then, normally I wouldn't have been holding a long custom dagger).

The result was an interesting picture. It won't, on reflection, be on the home page but you can find it in the gallery [<http://david-drake.com/album.html>]. I'm still the same saintly, even-tempered person that I've always been, however.

On what is non-news rather than news, I've told people that Tor would be reprinting *The Forlorn Hope* after many years out of print. It turns out that nowadays Tor can't just do this just because I tell them they have my permission to do so: they need a formal amendment to the original agreement (which of course lapsed long since). Given that agreement was made about 25 years ago, I'm not surprised that they can't find a copy. Nobody who knows me would be surprised that I can't find a copy. (I have other virtues, but most days I can't find my ass with both hands.)

So nothing has happened on the reprint for a very long time. I'm probably going to ask Tom if he'll let Baen Books have *Hope* and other OP titles. That will require a phone call to Jim--period.

I remember when things were as easy with Tor. (Yes, I'm old. But some changes aren't for the better.)

And finally, a note on *Jim Baen's Universe*, the new on-line magazine. The system is ready to take your subscription now [<http://www.baens-universe.com/>], though for present subscribers will get an electronic ARC rather than the finished product."

JBU provides a fat volume of extremely good original SF and fantasy stories. I think it's worthy of support by everybody who likes short form fiction in our genre. Take a look at the writers involved and make your own decision.

Now, back to that plot....

All best,
Dave Drake

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last updated 19 March 2006 by webmaster@david-drake.com

Newsletter #31 mailed out New Year's 2006

Dear People,

You can take this newsletter as sort of a little placeholder while I catch my breath between major projects. I did polish and turn in *Some Golden Harbor*, the 5th RCN novel. It's scheduled as a Baen hc for September, 2006. The excellent cover by Steve Hickman is at <http://david-drake.com/news.html>.

Some Golden Harbor is quite different from earlier volumes in the series, by the way. That fact is neither good nor bad in absolute terms, but it's very good that I keep stretching myself instead of doing the same thing over and over again. That means that sometimes I'm going to fall on my face--but I learn from my failures also, which makes my later work better. (Well, I think it does. And I'm the one who gets to make the decision.)

And speaking of stretching, I did a Hammer novelette, *The Darkness*. After initial publication in *Jim Baen's UNIVERSE* (of which more later), it'll be collected in the third and final volume of *The Complete Hammer's Slammers* from Night Shade Books (also of which more later). It's a very complex story which I wouldn't have been able to write ten years ago. Every day in every way I am becoming better and better.... (As a writer, that is.)

Jim Baen's UNIVERSE is a new on-line SF magazine edited by Eric Flint. The first issue comes out in June, but we are ready to take your money now. Go to <http://www.baensuniverse.com/> and subscribe now before what we hope is going to be a big rush when the major advertising goes out.

The first of the three Night Shade Hammer volumes has slipped to January, 2006, (from the scheduled December, 2005), but it really is at the printers. There's a PDF image of the cover layout which you can download at <http://david-drake.com/news.html>; the art is by John Berkey. Personally I like the yellow palette (very similar to that of the original Hammer's Slammers in April, 1979), though it's startled some of those who've seen it.

The introductions to the three Night Shade volumes, by Barry N Malzberg, Gene Wolfe, and David Hartwell, appear in the October, 2005, issue of *The New York Review of Science Fiction* (issue # 206). Information on ordering copies is available at <http://www.NYRSF.com>.

It's a matter of enormous pride to me that folks of such literary stature took the time to write these intros. In addition to being award-winning writers, Barry and Gene are both veterans, while David as well as being a major editor is a scholar whose doctorate is in Medieval English Literature. Their approaches to my work are thus different, but they're equally remarkable. I'm very conscious of the honor.

I should mention that I wrote an essay on *The Year of the Sex Olympics* by Nigel Kneale, for Horror: Another 100 Best Books, edited by Steve Jones and Kim Newman. I recommend the book (just out) and

its predecessor (Horror: 100 Best Books) as expansive overviews of what quirky, intelligent literary people find evocative. In the current volume, for example, I note that KW Jeter is as big a fan of George Gissing's 1891 novel, *New Grub Street*, as I am.

My next project is *The New Land*, the second volume of The Crown of the Isles Trilogy. I'm staring at my rough setting, figuring out where to start. I'm going to read some Polybius and/or some Dionysius of Halicarnassus, hoping to kick off trains of thoughts that'll give me business for the novel. The puzzling thing is that the ancient historians seem to give me better backgrounds for space operas and Military SF than they do fantasies set in a milieu very similar to that of the historical one (albeit where magic is more effective than it is in the real world). I'm not sure what that should be.

Which brings up a point: I used to get very depressed because I couldn't understand how I plot and then develop a complex novel. Due in large measure to a discussion with my friend Mark Van Name, this no longer bothers me. (Well, it doesn't bother me much.) I've come to accept the fact that I do plot and develop novels successfully. It isn't my job to analyze how I go about that, so it shouldn't concern me that I can't analyze it.

Still, it'd be nice if I had a little more of a glimmering of where I'm going with this one. Oh, well. I will before long.

As a general comment, 2005 was a very stressful year for me and a thoroughly bad year for a lot of people. I hope all of you have a kinder, gentler 2006; and I hope I do too.

All best,
Dave Drake

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last updated 25 January 2006 by webmaster@david-drake.com

Newsletter #30 mailed out Thanksgiving 2005

Dear People,

As of last night I've finished the rough draft of *Some Golden Harbor*, the fifth RCN space opera. The initial word count was 130,307 words, not my longest book but not a short one either. I've got quite a lot of editing work left, but I regard the real effort of a book to be writing the rough draft, so I relaxed a good deal when I typed -30- last night. I think the book works, though I'll know better when I've gone over the complete text for the first time. (And maybe I'm not the one to say anyway.) Steve Hickman's cover is up at <http://david-drake.com/news.html>.

Writing this one was unusually hard because of the interruptions (which can be boiled down to the statement that I have a life as well as work). Stopping in the midst of my plotting to write a Hammer story for the Tsunami relief anthology, now titled *Elemental*, was one of those interruptions. You can see the cover (a very nice one) at <http://david-drake.com/news.html> and the book can be preordered from Amazon for an estimated shipping date of May 2006.

Volume 1 of *The Collected Hammer's Slammers* has an estimated release date of December, 2005, the nice people at Night Shade swear. A previously uncollected Hammer story (*A Death in Peacetime*, the one I wrote for *Oceans of the Mind*) will be in this volume.

The cover art is by John Berkey, an excellent artist (I think of him in particular for covers he did for Gordy Dickson's Dorsai series at Ace). I haven't seen the cover, though. (Vinnie DiFate had to back out of the commission at the last minute, so Night Shade may be cutting things pretty close.) The interior halftones by John Treadaway are extremely good.

Other Times Than Peace, a new Military SF collection, will be a Baen hc in August, 2006. The cover (by Kurt Miller) is at <http://david-drake.com/news.html>. Personally I like it.

The Fortress of Glass, first volume of The Crown of the Isles, will be an April, 2006, Tor hc. I've commented on the Donato cover (<http://david-drake.com/newsarchive/news29.html>) before, but a painting this good deserves more than one mention.

The pb of *Master of the Cauldron*, the sixth book of the Isles series, is being released a month earlier (March, 2006). There'll be a \$3.99 edition of the first book in the series, *Lord of the Isles*, also. Tor is treating me very well.

The Crown of the Isles sequence, by the way, will be a true trilogy rather than three self-standing novels. My taste is for the latter (and the form is normal in, for example, the mystery genre). Fantasy readers prefer story arcs continuing over several volumes (or in the really successful series, story arcs continuing over an indeterminate number of volumes).

I don't regret experimenting with a true series as opposed to a trilogy format, but neither do I have a problem with acknowledging that I was wrong (or at least idiosyncratic in my tastes). Book two of Crown, *The New Land*, will stand squarely on *The Fortress of Glass* and itself will directly underpin book three, *The Gods Return*. Mind, I hope somebody picking up one of the later volumes solo will be able to have a good time with it, but this is a real change for me.

Many people, myself among them but particularly Editor Eric Flint, have been devoting a great deal of time to Jim Baen's UNIVERSE, a new online magazine. The intention is to create an SF/fantasy magazine that emphasizes story values and pays real money. Release date for the first issue will be June, 2006.

The top Baen authors involved--Dave Weber, John Ringo, Eric himself, and me--are subsidizing Universe by working for less than the published rates (and in some cases for free) because we believe in the concept, but the authors lined up for the first issue include a number of men and women who've never before worked for Baen Books. (Eric will be releasing a Table of Contents realsoonnow.)

As of this writing, we're not quite ready to take money. I'll let you know when that changes.

As for things a little farther down the pipeline, I had a discussion with Philip Rahman, publisher of Fedogan and Bremer, at World Fantasy Convention last month. Philip assures me that my fantasy/horror retrospective, *Balefires*, will be out by WFC 2006 in Austin, Texas. I don't give the date as a certainty (as I pointed out to Philip, I'd heard similar things before), but personally I believe it. The hope is to have art by Richard Corben, but Mr Corben's agreement with F&B was made some time in the past also.

And a comics studio doing business as Dabel Brothers Pro has licensed both Hammer's Slammers and Lord of the Isles for graphic novels. Their existing lines include adaptations of Robert Jordan and George RR Martin, so they're real. They do good work, but it's early days on these particular projects.

I've got a couple of additional Ovid translations up, linked from <http://david-drake.com/ovid.html>, including the lengthy description of Phaethon's disastrous outing in Dad's car. Part of that text is remarkable for the facility with which Ovid works geographical names into his verse. That of course doesn't come out in my prose translations (and is in any case a sort of game, like acrostic verse). When I got into the project, however, I was pleasantly surprised at how many vivid, colorful images I found. (Note, for example, the swans of the River Cayster in modern Anatolia.)

Also new on the website are my comments on *The Sharp End* (<http://david-drake.com/sharpend.html>) Writing them made me understand why I've waited so long to do so. It's also driven home the realization that I have an enormous amount to be thankful for, in this season and all.

Speaking of the website, my webmaster determined in July that a captured PDF file of the entire website would contain 550 printable pages. Some of those pages--from the album galleries, for instance--would show only a single picture, but even so it translates to a lot more information than I would've guessed.

The Chase-Harper company makes high quality motorcycle gear. They recently sent me a bandolier, which is an absolute delight for carrying my money, keys, etc, on my bikes. There was no accompanying note explaining why it'd been sent, but I assume it was at the behest of a fan. If you are that fan, thank you very much. I'd have bought one years ago if I'd known how handy it'd be.

A final note. At WFC Jason Williams of Night Shade told me that he'd spoken to an editor at the Science Fiction Book Club and that the club intended to do an edition of *The Collected Hammer's Slammers*. My first thought was, 'That can't be true.'

And you know, twenty years ago it certainly wouldn't have been true. Times have changed in a number of ways:

I think the Hammer stories have moved closer to the mainstream simply because television coverage has made more mainstream Americans aware of what war really is.

I think the attitude that soldiers are evil because war is evil has waned from its general acceptance in the '70s and often later. (My worst experience with it was a personal attack at a convention by Thomas Easton of Analog, but he and Jane Fonda had plenty of company.)

And I think that simply because the earliest stories of the series were written in 1973, they've achieved a degree of classic status which is something the SFBC has always supported. My first SFBC purchase was Triad by AE Van Vogt combining three novels from the '40: *The Voyage of the Space Beagle*, *Slan*, and *The World of Null-A*. The first of those was much more recent in 1960 than the earliest Hammer stories are today.

(And by the way, those Van Vogt novels repay reading today. They're part of our common heritage as well as being works by an exceptional storyteller.)

My next project will be a Hammer story for UNIVERSE, but first I have *Some Golden Harbor* to edit. And right at this very moment, I'm going to pause and take a deep breath.

Happy holidays to all of you!

Dave Drake
david-drake.com

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last updated 2 January 2006 by webmaster@david-drake.com

Newsletter #29 mailed out 5 September 2005

Dear People,

I've got dustjackets for *The Fortress of Glass* (due out from Tor in April, 2006). The jpg on my website [<http://david-drake.com/news.html>] is impressive, but the real thing is even better. Donato's art is beautiful, simply beautiful. I told him that I could imagine this one being hung in the Royal Academy in 1880, with Burne-Jones gnashing his teeth as he looked at it.

Tor is also bringing out a \$3.99 edition of *Lord of the Isles*, with a \$4 rebate (from Tor) if you send in proof of purchase from *The Fortress of Glass*. This is obviously a marketing ploy intended to increase sales for the series as a whole as well as for the new book--

But you know, my reaction on hearing about it was to think, "How very nice!" And it was a nice thing, besides being a calculated business activity.

There are writers who have very difficult relationships with their publishers; and indeed, there are publishers with whom I would have a very difficult time. But I don't work for them. I genuinely like the people I do work with, and they give every evidence of liking me as well. I think more people would be happy if they put a high premium on having business associates they could like and respect.

Speaking of work, I'm about midway on *Some Golden Harbor*, the next RCN space opera. It's going fine in objective terms, but unfortunately what goes on in one's own mind isn't objective. Probably because of the considerable disruptions during the plotting and now the writing itself, I'm back in a mindset I'd managed to get myself out of during the past several books: "What I'm writing is crap; I used to be able to write but I've lost it; I should go back to driving a bus."

It doesn't stop me, of course. I have my plot and I continue to execute it. But I hope the next book (an Isles fantasy, *The New Land*) will see me perkier in mid-book.

I mentioned disruption, but I didn't mean the writing was disrupted by bad things alone. My wife and I went to Yosemite for a week, hiking among wonderful scenery and seeing sequoias (which are *amazing*.) We stayed an extra day in San Francisco; my friend Alan Beatts squired us around, and then I signed at his store. (The signing was more fun than any similar event of my experience.) In all, a wonderful vacation--

But it broke my rhythm, and the proofs for *The Fortress of Glass* were waiting when I came. They took another four days of concentration before I could return to the novel. I'm back to work in normal fashion now, but my mindset isn't all it might be.

This is an interesting problem, by the way. If I simply sit at home and work, I'll be as content as I'm ever

likely to be--but I'll also be effectively dead. I take great pleasure in the new experiences I force myself to try, but they disrupt my routine and thus make me depressed. Well, more depressed.

I guess it boils down to something I realized a long time ago: life involves trade-offs. The trick is to get the balance right for you as an individual. I'll continue to work on it, and there are a few pictures (out of many) of a really neat trip to Yosemite and San Francisco up at <http://david-drake.com/california.html>

Another of the things waiting for me on my return was a dun from the IRS for a considerable amount of money. I took it to our tax attorney, who sorted it out ably.

Turns out the IRS had applied one of our estimated tax payments to somebody else's account. After I had jumped through sufficient hoops and had supplied the IRS with bank records, they admitted I didn't owe anything. Apart from the attorney's fee (well earned) and a week of hassle doing one of my least favorite things, I'm back where I would've been if the IRS had been staffed by decent, competent human beings. Compared to the response to Hurricane Katrina, this is pretty small potatoes, but I won't pretend it helped my mood.

I was interviewed (basically about sword and sorcery fiction) at <http://www.swordandsorcery.org/interviews.asp> The result is there for those who're interested.

I've sold another collection of military (well, militarish) short stories to Baen Books under the title *Other Times Than Peace*. 'Sold' is kind of a misnomer. In my reprint deals with Jim, I take no advance and he promotes the books with more enthusiasm than is normal for reprints. Royalties on the titles add up quickly since there's no advance to be paid off.

I regard anything I get from reprints as money found in the street; but you know, there's quite a lot of money to be found there with a publisher like Jim. (And note what I said above about working with people whom I like and respect.)

I don't have any new translations from Ovid up since the most recent newsletter. I completed a draft of the (quite long) Phaethon section of the *Metamorphoses*, but I haven't taken the time to go over it because I've been concentrating on *Some Golden Harbor*. I'm beginning to think that I should make it a priority as a way of settling my mind, though. Translating Latin has been my stabilizer of choice for over 40 years now, and it may be time for another dose. No promises, but if you check the Ovid section of the site regularly you may find an additional 400+ lines one of these days.

For the heck of it, I'll mention something that involves me only as unpaid agent. My friend Barry Malzberg wrote a unique commentary on SF in 1982--*The Engines of the Night*. There are a number of good memoirs of the field by writers, and any number of dissections by academic outsiders (there may be good examples of this genre also, though I haven't run into them). Barry did a third thing: he created a work that is part memoir, part fiction, and part criticism--but all from an intelligent, intensely personal, insider's viewpoint.

Engines has been out of print for a long time. I told Barry that if he would expand it by interweaving more recent material (his fascinating essay on working in the fee department of Scott Meredith Literary Agency as an obvious example), I would venture to sell it for him. When Barry agreed, I brought the property to Jim Baen--who took it without hesitation.

This was what I expected would happen. Baen Books has been the leader in bringing classic SF stories back into print, and Barry has been the most important support Jim and Eric Flint have had in doing so. Those with a narrow view of Jim and his company may be surprised to learn that Baen Books is Barry Malzberg's publisher, but Jim, Barry and I consider it natural. We think it's pretty funny too, I'll admit.

That's a cheery note, so I think I'll let it end this newsletter. I hope to be a lot perkier when I do the next one.

All best,
Dave Drake
david-drake.com

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Newsletter #28 mailed out 4 July 2005

Dear People,

I certainly haven't been as efficient as I feel I ought to be, but I'm now hard at work on my next RCN (Leary/Mundy) space opera. The working title is now SOME GOLDEN HARBOR, from the same stanza of Tennyson in which the previous working title (*In Sunless Gulfs*) appeared. (And by the way, my note referred to the poem as *The Nineteenth Century*, which drove me nuts because I couldn't find it again in the [complete] *Poems and Plays*. Thanks to my webmaster, I now know that the real title is *Prefatory Sonnet: To the Nineteenth Century*. Some things are harder than they ought to be.)

The plot took a while, a lot longer than I was comfortable with. Dropping the novel plotting just as things were beginning to jell in order to write a novelet for the tsunami relief anthology was not just a break of the time spent writing: it seems to have set me back to square one on the novel plot. I didn't expect that, because I'd been compiling data which was still there when I finished the novelet. Mentally, though, I'd wiped my novel files and had to start over: my working notes are simply a record of my mental processes, not the purpose of those processes.

On the credit side, I plotted the novelet in less than 24 hours and wrote the piece itself very quickly (for me). And you know, I'd do the same thing again (and probably will have to one of these days) under similar circumstances. My reasons for stopping everything to write the novelet were valid and remain valid.

A very long time ago I learned a lesson that applies to life generally but especially to writing: the task isn't more important to other people because of what it costs the person doing it. If you want to do it, do it--but don't complain that other people don't appreciate the great effort you put in. The effort doesn't matter to them, and it *shouldn't* matter. They see the result.

What took time with the plotting wasn't finding enough incident to fill a book, but rather to trim the series of incidents down so that the book would be of what I consider manageable size. I started out with 37 chapters, then whacked out and combined scenes to bring it to 31. That's the number of chapters in the most recent RCN novel, *The Way to Glory*, so on the face of it I'd gotten to where I wanted to be.

The thing is, *The Way to Glory* was longer than I'd been shooting for, and I'm absolutely certain that I'm going to have chapter creep as I begin writing. (The climactic battle gets two sentences of plot. I don't expect it to be that simple.) So I went in again and reduced what I had to 26 chapters. This is not simply a matter of incident: it involves the number of characters and the geography of the setting. It would've been much simpler to write the book I'd originally plotted, but I wouldn't have been happy with the structure. (I have that problem with *The Sharp End*. The book's a favorite with a lot of people, but I grimace whenever I think about it.)

What I'm saying, basically, is that *Some Golden Harbor* will be the book I choose to write. Nobody's forcing me to stretch myself, in this way or any way, and I suspect I'd sell about as many books if I didn't. I'd find it harder to like myself, though, and I've got enough problems in that direction already.

Eric has finally finished *The Dance of Time*, the sixth and final Belisarius book, though he's going to give it one more continuity pass. (Checking how many troops were with Great Lady Sati, that sort of thing.) It's an extremely good book and brings the series to a satisfying conclusion. (Not before time, of course.) The cover is well drawn by Alan Pollack [[see http://david-drake.com/news.html](http://david-drake.com/news.html)] and the book's scheduled as a February, 2006, Baen hardcover. (The cover on my website is a rough layout--the art won't change but the type could.)

The Fortress of Glass, the first book of The Crown of the Isles trilogy which will conclude the Isles series, will be out in April, 2006, as a Tor HC. I haven't seen the cover (which doesn't necessarily mean there isn't one yet) but Donato's doing this one too; he's a superb artist. I'm looking forward to it.

The first volume (of three) of the limited edition HC of the Complete Hammer's Slammers is due out from Night Shade Books [<http://www.nightshadebooks.com>] in December, 2005. This is a hard date, but I can't at this moment tell you when the other two volumes are scheduled. The series will have interiors by John Treadaway, black & white renderings (including some half-tone effects) of his color work for the Hammer's Slammers miniature wargame book [[see http://david-drake.com/hswargame.html](http://david-drake.com/hswargame.html)]. They are really good.

Don Hoban, a steel craftsman trading as Rainforest Armory [<http://www.rainforestarmory.com/armory/>] is planning to do a series of licensed weapons from the Isles series. In the course of our discussions I mentioned that the weapon Chalcus uses is a real yataghan that I'd gotten in a roundabout fashion. I sent him pictures of it. He asked about the writing on the blade. As it chanced, a friend with some Arabic was visiting that weekend. He took a look at it and carried home a photo enlargement of the cartouche for further study. All we're sure of at this point is the date: 1792/3 (CE, that is; AH 1207), but that's *much* older than I dreamed it was.

I have the blade largely because it belonged to my friend Manly Wade Wellman late in life, but I now realize that it had a long existence before it came into his hands. It was a good choice for Chalcus.

Speaking of Manly, his widow Frances left me all her personal effects in her will. This included a file of Manly's manuscripts and correspondence. Since the bulk of that material had been sold to Brown University during Frances' lifetime, I donated the remainder to Brown as well. I felt the papers should all be in one place for the use of scholars. (I don't think Brown is at present a very good place for manuscript collections, to be honest, but that's another question. Frances badly needed the money at the time, and Brown offered it.)

I just got a notice from Brown, informing me that my generosity to Brown has qualified me as a Wriston Associate. If you see my name 'in a special honor roll' to that effect, don't be misled. I find this

extremely funny. (My wife and I do give to the U of Iowa; that's real.)

I did another Ovid lyric, a short one [<http://david-drake.com/ovid/amoresII-3>]. I'm working on--I have largely roughed out--the section of the *Metamorphoses* covering the Fall of Phaethon, but it's going to be a while before I'm ready to put it up. (Writing a novel intervened.) It's a very striking, colorful piece and not especially difficult Latin, but it's over 400 lines. The sheer bulk takes time, not so much to translate (as I say, it's not difficult) but to smooth into a form worthy of the original. Ovid was a remarkable craftsman, and he deserves care from a translator equal to that which he lavished on the original.

There's one more convention on the news page [<http://david-drake.com/news.html>]: Conestoga in Tulsa in July of 2006. I agreed without thinking about Trinoc-con (I was worried about our annual beach trip), but I managed to miss both by the grace of God. I'm not very organized, I'm afraid.

The signing at Borderlands Books in San Francisco is set now for August 17, 2005, at 7 pm. I would be delighted to see people there, and I'll sign any books I'm asked to. (well, anything I was involved with; I won't be signing copies of *The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me*, though I *have* a signed copy.)

The postcard offer from the previous newsletter got a good number of takers, so I will repeat and expand it here. If you send a 37-cent stamp and an address sticker (ideally self-stick on both) to: Drake/PO Box 904/Chapel Hill, NC 27514 I will send you a signed oversized postcard with the cover either of *The Way to Glory* or (your choice) *The Far Side of the Stars*, the previous RCN space opera. (I found a packet of the latter while searching for something else.)

Now, back to work. I've got a good start on *Some Golden Harbor*, but there's well over 100,000 words yet to write.

All best,
Dave Drake
david-drake.com

To subscribe, unsubscribe or change your e-mail address, e-mail webmaster@david-drake.com

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Newsletter #27 mailed out 1 May 2005

Dear People,

Promptly on finishing the seventh Isles novel, *The Fortress of Glass*, I got to work plotting an RCN novel. (My working title is a tag from a Tennyson poem, 'In Sunless Gulfs' which is quite fitting. The gulfs aren't those of space, by the way, but rather those at 3 am.) Things were going quite well. I got some interesting perspectives from Dionysius of Halicarnassus on political events in Central Italy at the beginning of the 5th century bc. I was considering them in the light of both the American and Spanish civil wars--

At the moment I dropped everything, not my favorite practice, to write a Hammer story for a tsunami relief anthology. I'd met one of the editors--she works for Ingram's, the huge book distributor. When she asked if I'd contribute something, I said sure. It's a small thing to do, and I need two more uncollected stories for the Night Shade volumes (about which more later).

I meant, "After you've sold the idea to a publisher." Apparently other people didn't have that mental proviso, however, because three weeks ago I got a note saying that they had nine stories in with three more coming in April; how was mine doing? Mine wasn't, of course, but it did: I shipped it off yesterday, *The Day of Glory*, at 10.3K. I think by now the editors actually have a contract (from Tor) in hand, but that's somebody else's problem.

Let me emphasize: a lot of the writers in this anthology are bigger names than I am. They're not wannabes, they're major professionals who're more trusting of the way publishing works than I am. I stand chastened for my cynicism.

I'm now back to plotting. The theme I'm working around this time is tyranny, by which I mean tyranny in its ancient sense. Was Coriolanus (the real man, not the fictional Patrician of Livy, Dionysius, and Shakespeare) actually plotting to do what Aristodemus had done in Cumae a few years earlier?

Occasionally reviewers comment on the arcane politics of my novels. I don't make it up, people: I just think about what the historical data means. Sometimes I wish that this was a more common practice at high levels of government, but... well, I'm just telling stories, right?

I've gotten in the correction pages on *The Fortress of Glass* which is vaguely planned for Spring release. I'll let you know more when I know more myself. Tor may do a low-priced edition of *Lord of the Isles* to coincide with launch of the new one (itself the first of The Crown of the Isles, a three-book story arc), and I'm going to suggest that we put *Lord* up in the Baen Free Library.

Parenthetically, writing a fantasy whose title begins with Fortress wasn't the smartest move for somebody who's written an SF thriller whose title is Fortress. Sorry. With Robert E Howard, everything

was Black. Still, the Castle of Glass (The Fortalice of Glass? The Glass Redoubt?) just didn't have the same ring.

The Night Shade Complete Hammer's Slammers project proceeds, though the first book may be delayed. That isn't a surprise--I was partner in a small press; believe me, I know about delays--but the reason was unexpected. Night Shade has gotten a distribution agreement with Diamond, the major comics distributor, which won't be fully operational till September. They may delay release of volume one of the Hammer series till then to take advantage of the new deal. Everything is still in flux. I'm looking forward to the books.

The Way to Glory is, however, out as a Baen hc as planned. Steve Hickman really outdid himself on the cover painting of this one. I haven't yet seen a copy of *The Enchanter Completed*, a pb edited by Harry Turtledove, with my Sprague deCamp pastiche *A Land of Romance*, but it should be out momentarily.

There may eventually be bookmarks for *The Way to Glory*, but what I have at the moment are oversized (7"x5") postcards. I am therefore instituting the first ever David Drake Postcard Offer. Anyone who sends me an address label and a 37-cent stamp (they're too big to go on 23 cents) will get a postcard with the cover to *The Way to Glory* on one side and the other three covers miniaturized with a certain amount of advertising matter on the back. I'll sign it over my name, the way I would the title page of a book. [PO Box 904, Chapel Hill NC 27514]

I would appreciate self-stick labels and stamps, but I'll manage with whatever you send. (Assuming this is something people actually want.)

As I know to my sorrow from many questions through the FAQ form on my website, there have been serious problems with the way Tor (actually a subcontractor used by Tor) has handled audio rights on the Isles series. There is no audio version of *Master of the Cauldron*. Tom Doherty, in disgust, reverted all audio rights to me in a major policy change. I didn't ask for or expect this result, but it's been *very* frustrating being screwed over by incompetents whose faces change but whose IQs do not rise.

Eric Flint is completing *The Dance of Time*, the sixth and concluding book of the Belisarius series. It's going well and will be a great weight off his mind and mine both. I would expect it to be scheduled very quickly after completion, but that's not in our hands.

On the website I've added commentary on The Square Deal [<http://david-drake.com/deal.html>]. I may get around to writing up some of the newer books--I guess I ought to, as a marketing ploy if nothing else; but marketing has never been a major purpose of the website. At core I'm an antiquarian. I guess that comes out in what I discuss.

Also new to the site are pictures from Shevacon and from Millennicon. Sort of a balloon theme to them, oddly enough. [linked from <http://david-drake.com/news.html>]

Besides my convention appearances already up on the site, my wife and I are planning to hike in Yosemite in August. I hope to do a signing at Borderlands Books in San Francisco, probably on August 17th. I'll give more details when I have them, but that'll be my first signing on the West Coast since... I guess the Northwest Book Fair quite a number of years ago.

Recently Karen Zimmerman, my wonderful webmaster, ran a stats program to determine what search strings people used to reach the website. She may shortly put up a little section on that (maybe even with pie chart), but a number of things struck me on a cursory glance. A plurality and possibly a majority of those arriving at the site are looking for me or some work of mine. The next largest group, however, are people looking for Ovid and particularly for a translation of *Amores*. I've apparently become a pony for second-year Latin students. That makes me feel good.

There were also several folks looking for *The Chickens*, an anonymous poem that I put under Early Influences. (I'd memorized it long before I could read.) I'm glad it's there for others who want to reread it. (My friend Rana Van Name gave me the copy of The Golden Book of Verse I now have, replacing the one from my childhood.)

Now, back to thinking about ancient history and space opera....

All best,
Dave Drake
david-drake.com

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Newsletter #26 mailed out 1 March 2005

Dear People,

The big news is that I've finished the rough draft of *The Fortress of Glass*, Volume 1 of *The Crown of the Isles*. For those of you who've come in late, I'm doing a trilogy (*The Crown of the Isles*) to cap my Isles fantasy series.

There've been six Isles fantasies thus far, but *The Crown of the Isles* amounts to more than merely three more books in the series: it's a true trilogy, with the action extending over the whole three-book arc. The previous six books (and all my other novels) have been completely self-standing, so this is (for me) an enormous change.

Frankly, it makes me uncomfortable. As I neared the end of *Fortress*, I felt a nagging unease which I finally realized was because there were plot issues that weren't going to be resolved with the final chapter of the book. This is deliberate--and I think the correct thing for fantasy readers in general--but it's not what I personally prefer. My intellect is struggling with my emotions, and while the intellect wins with me--always--I pay the price for it in the wee small hours. (Sometimes I suspect a biography of me would be subtitled *The Writer as Basket Case*; though I'm not sure I'm unusual as writers go.)

Still, I have a draft of 144,029 words, and I think they're good words for the most part. They'll be better when I send them to Tor after several edit passes, but they'll still be the first volume of a three-book arc.

I suspect I ought to warn people: one of the issues that won't be resolved till the third volume (*The Gods Return*) is going to make a lot of readers uncomfortable. For what it's worth, I'm not very pleased with it either; but it's necessary, and it will be resolved. Just not for a while.

My Hammer story, *A Death in Peacetime*, is supposed to be out this month in the on-line magazine *Oceans of the Mind* [<http://www.trantorpublications.com/>]. According to the editor, the military issue will be distributed over the second weekend of March 2005. Single copies can be obtained there at \$4.00 each.

I've never used an on-line magazine myself, and my request for information from the editor apparently showed too much ignorance for him to understand what I was asking, but if you go to the site maybe it'll make more sense to you than it does to me. It's a good story--and it's one I haven't been able or willing to write until now. (I've had a number of requests over the years to write it. Well, to those of you out there who asked how Joachim Steuben died: here it is.)

The World Turned Upside Down is out from Baen Books and will be an SF Book Club release as well. This is a huge collection of stories which made Jim Baen, Eric Flint, and me SF readers and later SF professionals. I strongly recommend it to you. (Which you've not heard me say about anything I wrote,

remember.) The cover and table of contents are on the news page (<http://david-drake.com/news.html>).

Speaking of Eric, he's at work on *The Dance of Time*, the sixth and final volume of the Belisarius series. It should be finished in weeks rather than months. It's been a long wait, but it's going to be over and you can bug us about other things instead. (Honest to goodness, we both work very hard; but there's just two of us, and publishers sometimes have opinions at variance with those of our most vocal fans. That's certainly been the case in the present instance.)

The Way to Glory will be out in May as a Baen hc. The cover (also on the news page) is stunning, a Steve Hickman to equal his for *Lacey and His Friends* from lo! these many years ago. I'm very pleased with the book. Sample chapters are up at <http://www.baen.com/scheduleXML.asp>. Eric is also putting up snippets in one of his conferences on the bar (Mutter of Demons) and in the Authors conference. I'm told that Joe Buckley has collected these on his site as well. I'm very pleased with the RCN Leary/Mundy series and this one in particular.

In May also will be *The Enchanter Completed*, a pb collection of stories in honor of Sprague deCamp edited by Harry Turtledove. It contains my novelet, *A Land of Romance*. Sprague was a formative writer for me; I hope and believe my pastiche is worthy of the man who gave us *The Undesired Princess* and *Solomon's Stone* and *The Stolen Dormouse* and--well, you get the idea. (Hey, I like *The Stolen Dormouse*.)

I don't think I mentioned last time (as I meant to) that there's a nod to the Hammer series in the online cartoon *Schlock Mercenary* <http://www.schlockmercenary.com/> October 13-18, 2004. I was sent this by a couple friends even before somebody posted it on Baen's Bar. I'm amused.

On the website, there've been a couple new FAQs, including one on the relationship between my Honorverse novella *A Grand Tour* and the RCN series, which I thought I'd done a couple years ago. (Sorry.) And some more Ovid, including my response to the South Asian tsunami (a translation of the description of *Deucalion's Flood* from the *Metamorphoses*) and Amores II:2. There's a picture of Tristan in my high chair at the same age as me in 1947 at the top of the album page [<http://david-drake.com/album.html>].

I plan to be at Millennicon [<http://www.millennicon.org/>] in March and Libertycon [<http://www.libertycon.org/>] at the end of July. Cons I'm planning to be at are usually up on my website [<http://david-drake.com/news.html>], but a friend suggested I might mention them here too.

If you see me and want to say, 'Hi,' just do. I'm very approachable; albeit a lot more nervous in public than you probably think I am.

Incidentally, I was asked to be GoH at Mile-High Con in Denver in October and cheerfully accepted. That brought to mind the fact that I haven't been to many (maybe any?) West Coast Cons. If I got

invitations from that end of the country, I would at least think seriously about them.

The *Fortress of Glass* has gone smoothly, perhaps as smoothly as any novel of mine of comparable length. Oddly enough, that's resulted in me being really tired. Normally there are glitches that prevent me from working a portion of the time and make me very frustrated. That didn't really happen this time, so there were none of the usual enforced breaks. I'm therefore in a good mood but utterly exhausted.

Writing's an odd business, but nobody drafted me and told me I had to do it. That's a thing I recall when I hear some writers whine about how hard it is. Yes, but you're not pulling guard at three am in the rain, wondering if that sound you just heard was the bolt of an AK closing. Considering the options, my life is very good; and I do consider the options quite frequently when I listen to the news.

I may wish we had better leaders, just as I wished in 1970 and before; but our troops in the field are as good as any in the world. I'm proud to have been one of them a very long time ago.

All best,
Dave Drake
david-drake.com

To subscribe, unsubscribe or change your e-mail address, e-mail webmaster@david-drake.com

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Newsletter #25 mailed out 6 December 2004

Dear People,

The draft of *The Fortress of Glass*, the first volume in The Crown of the Isles Trilogy, is moving along very happily. I've got some 55K roughed out at this moment. The work is proceeding more steadily than I recall a novel doing in the past, though this is utterly subjective and really doesn't mean anything more than 'I'm feeling pretty good.'

Regardless, it's a pleasant change from decades of feeling in the middle of whatever I was working on (whether short story or novel) that it was absolute dreck, that I'd lost whatever talent I'd once had, and that people would find it less exciting than a phone book. I don't know why I feel more positive about my work than I did for so very long a time. I'm certainly glad of the change.

For those of you who've read the Early Influences section of the website, I'll mention that the evil minions (well, one batch of evil minions) of *The Fortress of Glass* are effectively the Terrible Ones from *The Angry Planet* by John Kier Cross [<http://david-drake.com/early.html>]. That's quite a book. In fact, the book itself was more frightening than the monsters, who were pretty darned frightening themselves. That's a thought worth considering.

Master of the Cauldron, the sixth Isles fantasy, is out from Tor in hardcover [<http://david-drake.com/news.html>]. It has what I think is the best of the many excellent covers Donato has done for me. It isn't the most complex and subtle art that he's done--*Goddess of the Ice Realm* [also on the news page] is probably that--but it has a strong central image of Ilna.

A majority of fantasy readers are female, and my books have generally had strong female characters. (Not as a marketing ploy--the same was true of the early Hammer stories, whose initial readership was overwhelmingly male.) A woman in the cover painting gives that information to potential readers who aren't familiar with my work, though, so I'm very glad to have this one.

Speaking of *Goddess*, it's out from Tor in pb. It remains my favorite of the series, though anecdotal evidence suggests that fans consider *Servant of the Dragon* and *Master of the Cauldron* as the best. There's no accounting for taste (and I apply that to my opinion as well as the opinions of others).

I'm back to where I was before the lady ran into me in September. The bike is repaired and I'm wearing my replacement jacket and helmet, paid for by the nice people at Nationwide. (Seriously, I've heard bad things about Nationwide but my personal experience with them was very good indeed.) It had never occurred to me that there could be technological improvements in leather jackets, but my 2004 jacket has a high-tech liner that really does retain heat better than the simple quilted liner of the 1986 version of the same jacket.

Having said that, the reason one wears a leather jacket is so that what rubs along the pavement if you get

off your bike abruptly is leather, not you. I've replaced two jackets in the course of 30 years of riding motorcycles.

Mountain Magic, a Baen pb with a short novel by Eric Flint and Ryk Spoor, Henry Kuttner's hilarious Hogben stories, and my *Old Nathan*, is out now. Gary Ruddell is a splendid artist, but the cover of this book won't be going in his portfolio.

The World Turned Upside Down should be a January, 2005, hc from Baen Books. I've gushed about the book in past newsletters, so I won't repeat myself here. Read what I said before--or better, order the book now and read it as soon as it comes in.

I should be getting proofs of *The Way to Glory*, the next RCN (Leary/Mundy) space opera shortly. It's due out from Baen in May, 2005. Steve Hickman is doing the cover. He called to say how much he liked the book (he's a fan of Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey/Maturin series, which I used as a model for the interplay of my lead characters). I don't know what effect Steve reading the book will have on the art--the covers of *Lt. Leary, Commanding* and *The Far Side of the Stars* are both fine. (He says he's going to go back and read the earlier books now, including the first--*With the Lightnings*--for which David Mattingly did the art.)

Also in May, 2005, is the Baen pb *The Enchanter Completed*. It's a collection of pastiches of Sprague deCamp's work edited by Harry Turtledove and includes my novelet *A Land of Romance* (which is also up on my website: [<http://david-drake.com/texts/romance.pdf>]).

Sprague was in many ways the Golden Age writer who had the most influence on me as a writer. He was also a perfect gentleman in every contact I had with him or observed him having with others. Recently I've been struck by the degree to which a person gains long-term benefits by being courteous. Sprague was always that. I try to be, in part from memory of Sprague.

Speaking of the website, two more of my translations from Ovid are up (*Amores I:15* and *Amores II:1*). The more I read him critically (which I have to do for a proper translation), the more I'm impressed by his craftsmanship.

On the other hand, I read a recent work discussing Ovid's *Fasti*, a late work which tends to be passed over. The author makes a convincing argument that Ovid wasn't writing a star manual badly but rather using stellar devices to counterpoint praise of Roman triumphalism. I accept that, but the author also appears to believe that absolutely every aspect of the work is deliberate. The *Fasti* is (all right, are) of epic length, composed in exile on the Black Sea without (as Ovid states explicitly) the reference works that he needs to do the job properly.

The thing is, writers are human beings. I think to a considerable degree academics fail to understand that, though it's equally wrong to assume there's no art in something because you personally don't see the art. (Which was the error I made when I read the *Fasti* forty years ago.)

Twice recently I've been interviewed at conventions, focusing on the '70s--not only the start of my serious writing career but also my involvement with Whispers magazine and Carcosa. There turned out to be a lot of stuff that was new to the audiences and some that was new to the interviewers also. I'd already done for the website a discussion of *Whispers*, Stu Schiff's magazine that kept short fantasy alive during the '70s [<http://david-drake.com/whispers.html>], but there was nothing about Carcosa, the publishing company founded by Karl Wagner, Jim Groce, and myself. I decided (after prodding) to write an account.

It isn't finished yet. It's barely started. I kept getting angry. I do intend to write an account, as dispassionate as I can make it, but I'm not there yet. Please bear with me (particularly those of you who rightly told me it was something I ought to do).

There are more convention pictures, a recent picture of me with Jonathan and Tristan, [<http://david-drake.com/album.html>] and the usual general cleanup on the news and FAQ pages.

It's been an interesting year. There were plenty of downs in it, but right at the moment I seem to be personally up. I hope that's true for most of you, too; and happy holidays.

Now, back to slaughtering ravening plants.

All best,
Dave Drake
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Newsletter #24 mailed out 28 August 2004

Dear People,

Well, the end of September got interesting. I turned 59 on September 24; that was as expected. And I finished the plot outline for *The Fortress of Glass*, the first volume of the Crown of the Isles trilogy; that too was expected.

What I didn't expect was that a woman in an econobox would try to pull into the left lane to get around a stopped bus without bothering to check whether a writer on a motorcycle was already in that lane. I laid on my horn, the only thing I could do (I was alongside her when she started to pull out); and she kept right on going.

Physically it wasn't a big deal: I've got bruises and road rash from hitting the asphalt at about 25 mph, but I've known people to get much worse hurt by slipping on the stairs. I wear protective gear, which the lady's insurance carrier was happy to replace: a Hein Gericke jacket and a premium helmet are a *lot* less expensive than what they were covering would be.

Mentally, it wasn't a good thing: it put my mind back in a place I've been trying to get out of for thirty-odd years. When the lady began shouting at me that it was my fault, there could've been very bad results for both of us.

Still, that didn't happen. I rode the bike to the shop (carefully, since most of what should've been on the right side wasn't there any more), came home, and resumed work on my plot. I guess I'd tell somebody else that they ought to go to the ER (which is what the police and paramedics were telling me), but I knew that work was what I needed. My physical condition wasn't anything like the problem that my mental state could've become.

The mass market of *Goddess of the Ice Realm* (Tor, August 2004) is out and is very attractive. This is the fifth Isles fantasy. The sixth, *Master of the Cauldron*, is a Tor November release. I haven't seen copies myself yet but booksellers have gotten Advance Reading Copies (what we used to call bound galleys; I guess they changed the name because nowadays they use page proofs instead of true galleys). The cover is lovely with a central female character (thank you, Donato!).

Mountain Magic, an October paperback original from Baen, should be out by the time you see this. It has a new short novel by Eric Flint and Ryk Spoor, my Old Nathan stories, and all four Hogben stories by Henry Kuttner. They are possibly the funniest things which that very good, often very funny, writer ever wrote. Buy the book for them.

(Technically there are five Hogben stories, but the first isn't SF and isn't very good at all. Speaking of which, I'm not going to comment on the cover of *Mountain Magic*.)

I have an ARC of *The World Turned Upside Down*, a huge anthology edited by Jim Baen, me, and Eric Flint. (That's how the names were supposed to appear. I'd suggested reverse alphabetical, since Eric did about two-thirds of the work. Nobody seems to know why my name's first, at least on the ARC; it shouldn't be for a lot of reasons.)

Folks, this is a truly wonderful volume. Buy it. Give it to smart 13-year-olds. Read and reread it. I'm about as proud of this one as I am of any book with my name on it.

I took a break from plotting my Isles fantasy to write an 8,000-word Hammer story, *A Death in Peacetime*, for an on-line magazine named *Oceans of the Mind* [<http://www.trantorpublications.com/oceans.htm>]. (I'll bind the story in with the first of the three volumes of Hammer stories from Night Shade Books, too.) I still don't have a contract from the publisher, but he's located in Delray Beach, Florida. I sent it to him just before Hurricane Charlie and we're working on Hurricane Jeanne as I write this. I figure I'll cut him some slack. (Thinking about it, I hope he isn't somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean right at the moment.)

Because this is for an on-line mag, I won't put a PDF copy up on my own website as I normally would. The story's about the murder of Joachim Steuben; many people over the years have asked me to write that one. I finally figured out how to do it in the course of telling a story that I wanted to tell. I'm pretty pleased with the result.

Speaking of the website, I've translated a couple more Ovid lyrics which Karen has put up (linked from <http://david-drake.com/ovid.html>). There are a couple of pictures from my 59th birthday dinner on the album page, and we added a link to an article about me published in June by the Iowa Alumni Association (linked at the bottom of <http://david-drake.com/iowa.html>).

And a second Hammer's Slammers miniature wargaming book is getting under way. This will have expansion rules by John Lambshead; more Tables of Organization and Equipment for potential enemies; lots more art by John Treadaway; and a Hammer timeline by the two Johns in combination, with me looking over their shoulders in bemusement.

I understand the need (from a wargame viewpoint) of a timeline, but I'm writing *stories*--not history. In the late '60s a fan created a timeline for Poul Anderson's fiction, merging the previously-separate universes of Dominic Flandry and Nicolas van Rijn. Poul bought into the idea; mistakenly, I believe, and to the detriment of later work. I will look over the Hammer timeline and the two Johns will make as good a job of the available facts as can be made, but I very explicitly won't be bound by it.

I guess I'll close with a conclusion I came to on reviewing my recent accident. I haven't driven a car since some time in the late '80s (when I had to take Larry Niven and his luggage to the airport). I've never kidded myself about the danger of riding a bike. Even if you do everything right, there's a chance that somebody in a car will screw up bigtime and hit you. That's exactly what happened to me this time.

But you know, I wouldn't be either as alert or as physically healthy if I didn't ride a motorcycle daily. It's darned good exercise for both body and mind. Something like this (or something much worse than this) could happen tomorrow or any time in the future, and if it does, it does.

No matter how I live my life, some day I'm going to die. Until then, I'm going to live the life I want to live. I wish you all the same resolution.

Dave Drake
david-drake.com

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Newsletter #23 mailed out 1 August 2004

Dear People,

I've read the proofs of *Master of the Cauldron*, the sixth Isles fantasy, and seen the excellent cover Donato did for it. It'll be out as a November, 2004, Tor hc, and is also a Baen Websubscription title: that is, the book is being released in installments in a variety of electronic forms (none of them encrypted) to people who have signed up for the month's releases.

Don't ask me precisely how it's done because I've never done it myself, but lots of people do and I'm assured that it's very easy. If this (Websubscriptions, that is) seems like something you'd be interested in, go to Baen.com and take a look. (Me, I'm entirely a dead tree person. My house is the Trees' Graveyard.)

The combination of a Tor hardcover coming out as a Baen electronic release is a first. It was possible because Tom Doherty and Jim Baen have been friends of each other and of me for a long time. I wanted to try it because it's a form of advertising, increasing interest in the book among people who spend a lot of time on-line and are in a position to spread the word if they like what they read. I suppose there'll be some payment to me also for the electronic publication, but that's a trivial consideration compared to the word of mouth advertising.

I should mention that this is a handshake deal for all three parties. Tom asked me to send him an e-mail outlining the plan so that he could agree for the record in case he was hit by a truck. I did so, but the three of us trust one another and trust our mutual ability and willingness to work out any glitches.

There are writers who go where the money looks best for the current project. That's fine--more power to them. But I continue to work with people I trust implicitly, because then I can focus on what I want to do: writing books. For me at least, this works much better than trying to maximize short term gain would.

I've also sent in the final version of *The Way to Glory*, an RCN (Leary/Mundy) space opera, to Baen Books. It'll be a May, 2005, Baen hc release. Steve Hickman is doing the cover, as he's done for so many of my books over the years. I haven't seen it yet, but we'll (that is, my webmaster Karen will) put up a .jpg when we have one.

The pb of *Goddess of the Ice Realm*, the fifth Isles fantasy, is out from Tor now. I think it's my favorite of the series, but that doesn't appear to be a universal reaction. I get the impression--this is merely anecdotal evidence, of course--that *Servant of the Dragon* would probably be the favorite of fans who feel strongly enough to comment. There really is no accounting for taste, my own or that of humanity in general.

And the pb of *The Far Side of the Stars*, the third RCN space opera, is due out from Baen as a December release (which means probably the end of October). There's a comfortable spread between the two

paperbacks, which there wasn't between the hardcovers of those titles. There are pitfalls for a writer who works for two houses. (Note that I waited three months after I had *The Way to Glory* effectively complete before I turned it in. Fool me once, shame on you....)

Masters of Fantasy, edited by Bill Fawcett and Brian Thomsen, is out now as a Baen hc. It contains my short story *The Elf House*, an Isles fantasy (featuring Cashel and effectively set between the end of *Goddess of the Ice Realm* and the beginning of *Master of the Cauldron*. It's the story's only printed appearance (though you can read it on my website) and I have no present plans to use it elsewhere. It's a tight little piece, completely self-standing, and I'm proud of it as a piece of craft.

The anthology itself is sort of a companion to *The Warmasters*, stories (or in at least one case, a novel excerpt) set in the individual author's fantasy worlds. It's a nice concept, but I'm less impressed by the execution.

Mountain Magic, an anthology of backwoods fantasies--a new short novel by Eric Flint and Ryk Spoor, the Hogben stories by Henry Kuttner, and my Old Nathan--will be an October pb from Baen Books. (I had the date wrong in the previous newsletter, which understandably distressed Mr. Spoor.) You should get the volume for the hilarious Hogben stories if nothing else--this is the first time they've been collected, and none of them have been in print for way too long.

By the way, because of our contract with the agent for Kuttner's stories, these will not be offered as websubscriptions (at least now that somebody told Eric and me that they'd mistakenly been put up). The complete John the Balladeer stories by Manly Wade Wellman will fill the electronic gap. These are wonderful stories too but they're more generally available, so buy the tree version of *Mountain Magic*. (And I say this as the owner of my late friend Manly's literary estate.)

My Sprague deCamp pastiche, *A Land of Romance*, will finally be coming out in *The Enchanter Completed*, a May, 2005, Baen pb edited by Harry Turtledove. (My novelet is up on the website also.)

Sprague's fiction was a huge influence on me when I started reading SF. When I became a writer myself, I became friendly with him. Sprague and I differed on many of the things we valued, but he was the epitome of politeness and gentlemanly reserve. I prize those virtues, and I hope I embody them to a degree.

Night Shade Books has been doing well-produced hardcovers of things that I'm very glad to see in print (including the newly-discovered third Captain Volmar space opera by Clark Ashton Smith). I've worked with them in the past, over their five-volume series of Manly's fantasies (initially by helping Frances Wellman and later as the owner of the estate) and as a facilitator of their reprints of Karl Edward Wagner's Kane stories.

Now they've proposed a three-volume series of all the Hammer's Slammers stories to date. This had more of an effect on me than I would've expected it to. Apparently in my head I felt that limited editions

were for other people. Anyway, I'm enthusiastically behind the project.

The current plan is for the first volume to contain all the fiction below the length of a short novel, with the interstitial material from the original *Hammer's Slammers* (my first book) and probably graphics of vehicles developed by John Treadaway between the stories. I've written an essay (probably an afterword) for the volume, and Gene Wolfe has written a wonderful introduction. (Most people forget that Gene is a Korean War veteran. He doesn't forget that, any more than I forget Nam.)

The second volume will be the four shorter novels: *At Any Price*, *Counting the Cost*, *Rolling Hot*, and *The Warrior*. Dave Hartwell has agreed to write an intro for that one. The two most recent novels, *The Sharp End* and *Paying the Piper*, are planned for the third volume, along with an intro by Barry Malzberg.

Some of you will have noted that the intros are being written by people who are better known for their impeccable literary credentials than for their associations with action/adventure fiction. Homer would've been non-plussed by the notion that an action/adventure story can't have literary merit, but that attitude has been prevalent in Academe for a long time. I'd like to see it change.

Right now I'm doing detailed plotting on the next Isles book as well as very general plotting for the whole trilogy covered by the present contract. As I said in Newsletter 22, I'm going to write a real trilogy this time instead of three self-standing novels involving the same characters.

Things are falling into place, but believe me there's a lot of work left to do. I have the feeling that I'm in a grain elevator while it's being filled, and if I climb as fast as I can I may possibly avoid being buried. Everything's under control, though--at least it always has been in the past at this point in the process, even though I can't pretend it's under conscious control yet.

And you know, I love what I'm doing. I don't mean there aren't glitches, though they tend to involve the business side more than the job. The writing itself is the only thing besides my own behavior which I can control. If it's wrong, that's my fault; and if it's right, well, that's me too.

This is the reason that although I'm generally very easy to deal with (I don't complain about bad covers or lack of promotion or late checks, for example), I go ballistic when some copy editor changes a word or phrasing that was right the first time. This is one of the things that fall on the business side. (I'm sure the irritation is good for me at some level. Like my riding a motorcycle instead of driving a car, it prevents me from becoming soft and sitting around eating lotus all day.)

Apart from updating the books on the news page, the major change on the website is that I've added another Ovid lyric [<http://david-drake.com/ovid/amoresI-12.html>]. I hadn't done that in too long. And I may do another one shortly as well, as it certainly wrenches my mind out of the circles it spins in while I'm working into a very complex plot.

Actually, that brings up something worth mentioning. Plotting the Northworld trilogy was an extremely difficult task for me a decade ago. I spun my wheels for months before I was able to find a way into the project, even though I had the advantage there of working with preexisting stories.

Nowadays I take it for granted that I can plot Isles novels with four separate interlinked threads. Any one of them has a more complex structure than the whole Northworld trilogy did. Sure, plotting them is work, but filling sandbags is work too; I know how to do both things. The wonderful thing about being a writer is that you never run out of new things to learn or ways to do an old thing better. I'm proud of things I wrote ten, twenty, thirty years ago; but I'm a better writer now than I was then.

My webmaster, Karen Zimmerman, has moved from Iowa City and the U of Iowa Libraries to Indianapolis and the IUPUI library. She continues to be the main reason the website is clean and efficient, easy to use even for those of us on phone lines.

As an example of what her skill means, our website turned out to be the target of choice for people doing Google searches to find an image of Ovid. This was true not only of high school and college students doing projects for Latin class, but also for a researcher doing a segment for The Discovery Channel. Karen immediately checked the provenance of our image so that those asking would have something better to cite than david-drake.com (although to our amazement they were apparently willing to do that).

As an aside, for heaven's sake do not get information on something you care about from television. There's a lot of good stuff available on TV, but the guy from TDC was wrong on two basic statements about Ovid in his explanation of why he wanted the image. The Discovery Channel is, I would've said, one of the better TV sources.

Back to plotting! Though I might pause to rough out another of Ovid's *Amores*.

Dave Drake
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Newsletter #22 mailed out 17 May 2004

Dear People,

This is just a short note to say that I'm back from England and happily in my nest again. It was a wonderful trip. Those who want a travelogue with a few pictures can find them at <http://david-drake.com/englandreport.html>.

Since the formal purpose of the trip was to attend Salute, the big one-day miniature wargame show, and to launch the Hammer's Slammers wargame book there, that's worth a few extra comments. First, Salute's large but still much smaller than the monstrous thing I'd been dreading: ca 4,500 attendees, not 50-60K.

That's still a lot of people, mostly male, and beer was available on the premises. Nonetheless there was absolutely no interpersonal tension. The atmosphere was simply very pleasant.

Everybody was remarkably nice to me personally. I met a number of fans of my work who'd gotten into it through wargaming, not SF. I boggled at some of the layouts, particularly one of the Battle of Naseby containing 3,000 individual figures. I bought a few books.

And I pitched the game book and game starter packs with honest enthusiasm. All the dealers involved with the project went home smiling at their profits.

I'd chosen to wear a Blackhorse T-shirt (11 th Armored Cavalry Veterans of Vietnam and Cambodia) for the event, since without that association I wouldn't have written the Hammer stories (or much of anything else, I suspect). While walking around the three levels of stalls and demonstrations, I chatted with a former staff officer of the Blackhorse after it was reflagged as the Opposition Force unit at the National Training Center (Ft. Irwin.) It wasn't until I signed a bookmark that he realized I was the author of books he'd read and liked.

I had a good time in England, and a particularly good time at Salute.

Two weeks later I was in Phoenix for Leprecon (there are a few pictures at <http://david-drake.com/leprecon.html>.) I may have been a little logy there because of all the travel, but it was a comfortably low-key convention. Apart from a non-SF event in Seattle a few years, Phoenix is as far west as I've been since I was stationed in El Paso for language school in 1969. Some people brought a *lot* of books for me to sign, which I take pleasure in doing. (Having been at the other kind of signings rather too often, especially when I was starting out.)

Now I'm back to work on *The Way to Glory*, the fourth RCN (Leary/Mundy) novel. I'm in the midst of the climactic space battle, with plasma cannon blasting and projectiles of various sorts racing lethally across the void. Writing scenes like this is rather like choreographing a production number: there are an awful lot of separate pieces which have to mesh perfectly together.

So far, so good, I think; but I also thought I'd take a break and do this newsletter.

The Way to Glory, by the way, will be out as a Baen hc in May, 2005, with a Steve Hickman cover. And speaking of Hickman covers, when I got back from Phoenix I found the original cover for *Lacey and His Friends* waiting for me, a present from Jim Baen. This is one of Steve's best paintings; one of my best covers; and one of the best covers *anybody* ever did for an SF book, in my opinion. Jim's been a good friend for a long time, but I don't recall either of us having done anything recently to have justified such a gift.

Donato Giancola was at Leprecon also. He'd just finished the cover for *Master of the Cauldron*, the sixth Isles fantasy (due as a Tor hc in November, 2004). I haven't seen the finished art yet, but Donato had the sketch and it should be a very strong cover. (With a central female character, by the way.)

Donato, by the way, has recently sold a number of paintings--including earlier wonderful covers he did for the Isles series--to a man who also collects paintings by John W. Waterhouse and Bouguereau. I've been very fortunate with my covers over the years, but never more so than in my association with Donato.

I just got copies of the Baen pb of *Grimmer Than Hell*, a collection of some of my harshest (and best) SF short stories. It'll probably be in stores in a couple weeks. You know, I'm still the person I was when I wrote those stories... but thank goodness, I'm not *only* that person. Now.

There've been a few updates on the website besides adding the England travelogue and some photo pages. I think the only things of real interest are the photos of the professionally painted 25-mm vehicles and Slammers figures. (<http://david-drake.com/hswargame.html>)

I really have to do a new chunk of Ovid, perhaps the section dealing with the Erymanthean boar which (like the Niobe section) highlights Ovid's skill at characterization with a line or two. Well, after I finish a novel, I guess.

And now, back to that space battle!

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Newsletter #21 mailed out 12 April 2004

Dear People,

My wife and I leave for a week in London and Kent on Sunday, April 18, which is the real news (and it hasn't happened yet). I'm having my usual pre-trip jitters. I don't worry about planes crashing--I've never been on one that did. But I sure have had a lot of other awkward things happen, including getting places without my luggage. One of those places was Adana, Turkey, which wasn't great; but in 1970 I arrived at Oakland Army Receiving Station without my dufflebag, and that was a good deal worse. I had visions of arriving in Nam in my Class A uniform but unshaven. (To be honest, I can't say it made me more depressed than I already was; and the bag did catch up with me in Oakland.)

Still, I'm looking forward to seeing things, including friends I've made by phone and e-mail but whom I've never met. If any of you are at Salute, the big miniature wargaming show, on April 24, please do look me up. I'm supposed to have a table (though I expect to wander some of the time). Other than that, we'll probably be traipsing about a variety of castles, Roman ruins, and museums. (The Soane, a tiny little thing, is supposed to have two sets of Hogarth oil paintings. More on this in the next newsletter, I hope.)

The Hammer's Slammers miniature wargame book is to be launched at Salute. It's got various graphics (for the people who want to know what the tanks and combat cars really look like, this is as close as I and a very skilled designer, John Treadaway, can come to what was in my head), and (by John Lamshead) a capsule background and playing system (a cavalry skirmish game) with other hints for wargaming. I'm looking forward to seeing the completed package myself. (See <http://david-drake.com/hswargame.html>)

Apart from that... well, I guess the major thing is that Baen Books will be running *Master of the Cauldron*, the sixth Isles fantasy, as a November webscription title even though the hardcopy will be published the same month by Tor. I believe this is a first in publishing. It was my idea, but both publishers--Tom Doherty and Jim Baen--are behind it as an experiment.

My thinking is this: there are very few places nowadays where somebody can buy a book on impulse. Independent distributors have been merged in a fashion that effectively ends the drugstore bookrack as a way of hooking somebody by whim. The chains destroyed independent bookstores, and the chains are now phasing out their mall stores in favor of freestanding bookstores. That's fine for somebody who's going out to buy a book, but it doesn't grab somebody who's getting light bulbs or a sweater and happens to see a book that might be interesting.

Will giving folks a chance to see the book cheaply on-line (or free--my friend Eric Flint is putting up snippets of *Master* at regular intervals on Baen's Bar, and a Barfly is collecting the snippets on his site) do that? Dunno, but I'm going to try. I may very well wind up as road kill, but I'm not going to stand still

watching the headlights bear down.

The new three-book contract with Tor is signed and the money's in the bank. These will be Isles fantasies, but I'm going to write a genuine trilogy this time instead of three novels in series. That is, each book will have a beginning, a middle, and an end; but they'll build directly from one to the next rather than each recapitulating the pattern of the previous books of the series.

Personally, I'd rather have three single novels with the same characters than a true trilogy, but the latter (a story arc extended over three novels) appears to be what most people want. I don't argue with reality. (And it's what Tolkien, the bedrock of the genre, wrote.)

If the books go the direction I'm sketching now, the series (as it exists at present) will end with book nine. We'll see. (And hey, I learned in 1970 not to take anything for granted. Especially not that you'll wake up tomorrow.)

The fourth RCN novel, tentatively titled *The Way to Glory* (from Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*) is moving quite happily toward the climactic battle. I won't be turning it in till September (to avoid the sort of scheduling problems that occurred when *The Far Side of the Stars* came out on top of *Goddess of the Ice Realm*), but it's going well. I'm having fun with it, and I have about 100K in draft.

Speaking of which, the pb of *Goddess of the Ice Realm* is due out from Tor in August. It's got a lovely cover, probably the best art ever on a cover of mine. Let me assure everybody that the novel has my usual mix of strong female characters, even if none of them show up on the cover.

On the editing front--though I should note that Eric did the lion's share of the work on these--*The World Turned Upside Down* is a Baen hardcover for January, 2005, and *Mountain Magic* will be a paperback original in October, 2004.

World is a huge, fat volume [TOC listed on the [news page](#)] of the stories that Eric Flint, Jim Baen, and I read when we were young and which turned us first into SF readers and now SF professionals. I don't believe there's been a book really to compare with this since Boucher's *A Treasury of Great Science Fiction Stories* in 1959.

Because of the editors' age, none of these stories are recent. Do you need to read them? Well, wearing a particular type of shoe isn't going to make you play basketball like Michael Jordan; similarly *The World Turned Upside Down* isn't a passport to a career in SF. But reading this book *will* show you how Eric, Jim, and I learned what a good story was, and we've all three got respectable records in putting that knowledge to work.

Mountain Magic is just fun. Eric read Henry Kuttner's Hogben stories (which have never before been collected) and wanted to get them back in print. He also wanted my Old Nathan stories in print. (*Old*

Nathan (<http://david-drake.com/nathan.html>) is the book I point to when somebody calls me a Military SF writer; and yes, I'm that too.) And Eric had a notion for a short novel of his own (which he wound up writing with a protege, Ryk Spoor) with a similarly backwoods setting. Thus the volume.

There'll be an oddity in the publication of this one: for reasons concerned with Kuttner's agent, the Hogben stories won't be in the webscription volume. Instead we're running *John the Balladeer* by Manly Wade Wellman. I don't regret getting the John stories out in another form--they're quite wonderful and Manly was a close friend--but if you haven't read the Hogben stories (and most people nowadays haven't), they are side-splittingly funny.

Incidentally, we don't have electronic rights to a few of the stories in *The World Turned Upside Down* either. We'll probably run additional Keith Laumer in the webscription to replace them.

As for other news, I expect to be attending Leprecon in Phoenix May 7-9 as GoH. The folks running it are not only nice people (which is the norm for the cons I've attended) but are also organized, which is another thing entirely. (And no, I don't intend to carry a bell and call, "Unclean! Unclean!" in a sepulchral voice.)

In March I had a very good time at SheVaCon, particularly the group familiarization shoot at a nearby range. (Well, all right, it wasn't that near.) It involved a couple dozen people with 60-70 guns of many varieties. I shot some for the first time (including loading and firing a matchlock, which is *much* easier and faster than I'd been told) and also shot Armalite variants like those I'd gotten to know pretty well at one time. There were a number of attending writers and editors who're friends as well as colleagues, and a lot of fans of the sorts of thing I write. (A few photos are up at <http://david-drake.com/shevacon04.html>)

In passing I'll mention that the tone of Southern cons like SheVaCon and Liberty Con is different from those of the Northeast, but it was at a Boskone in Copley Plaza that I passed a fellow in Star Wars costume walking down the hall with a Sterling sub-machine gun. "Christ!" I said, turning. "That's a Sterling!"

"Yep," he said, marching down the hall; surrounded by people who didn't have a clue that the sucker was real.

That's the same convention from which I have a less happy memory: Tom Easton, the *Analog* reviewer, venting his spleen at Nam vets during a panel he was moderating, by making me (on his right) the example of pornographic violence in SF and Joel Rosenberg (on his left) as the example of the proper way to depict violence. I hadn't met Joel till that panel, but he earned a right to my first-born when he immediately said, "Everything I know about writing violent scenes I learned by reading David Drake."

Well, that's not really news now, is it? That was fifteen years ago. But perhaps it's worth mentioning to remind people who've forgotten or chosen to forget that not so very long ago veterans were pariahs to

people like Tom Easton.

Wish me luck getting to and from England, people. I'm looking forward to being there, if not to the 'trip' portion itself.

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Newsletter #20 mailed out 1 February 2004

Dear People,

I mentioned in Newsletter 19 that I was going back to Tor for a new contract now that I've turned in *Master of the Cauldron*, the sixth Isles fantasy. Following robust negotiation (never unfriendly, but all concerned are aware that this is a business) the new three-book contract is being drawn up.

The short version is that I get less money than I asked for (but a lot more than I need), and Tor has sweetened the deal in a number of ways. Probably the biggest from my standpoint is that I retain sub-rights this time. That (particularly in the case of British rights) is significant money, but possibly more important is the greater peace of mind it provides me. Tor doesn't have its own sub-rights department: the work is done by the St Martin's department; and not very well done, as I've had a great deal of reason to know over the years.

Another item which may turn out to be the biggest change of all is that I have permission to put my complete novels up on my website and (if I can swing it with Jim Baen) also run them through Baen websubscriptions. I think this will greatly increase word of mouth and on-line sales of the books. Amazon ranked my Baen space opera *The Far Side of the Stars*, available electronically from me and Baen both, much higher than the fantasy from Tor, *Goddess of the Ice Realm*, which couldn't be previewed electronically (and I'm convinced that's what it is; previews, not alternative viewing).

Keep your fingers crossed. Mine would be except that I'm doing a lot of typing.

Because the other thing that's happened since #19 is that I've drafted over 20K words on the next RCN space opera (which I think will be either *The Path of Duty* or *The Way to Glory*, from a Tennyson poem; but I don't swear either will be the final title). We got snow, a lot for the NC Piedmont (which is why I live here; I grew up in Iowa and know perfectly well what snow looks like). I stayed home and worked. (If I have a philosophy of life, it might be when nothing else works, work works.) I don't suppose my opinion at this early stage of a book counts for much, but I like what I've got.

On to other stuff. The Sidecar Preservation Society has published *Codex*, a short story which I wrote in 1967. (Actually, this happened at WFC over Halloween, but I forgot to mention it in #19.) It's available in two editions, a chapbook and an extremely limited hardcover. If you feel this is a must-have, I may have more information on availability in a few weeks or check with dealers and if you're at a convention where Fedogan and Bremer has a table, talk to the folks there. (They're neat people regardless.)

The Reaches is out as a Baen hc with a very striking Hickman cover. This is the omnibus of *Igniting the Reaches*, *Through the Breach*, and *Fireships*, hard-edged space operas which I did for Ace in the mid-'90s. (I'll say a bit more about *The Reaches* below.)

And the paperback of *The Warmasters* is out from Baen, a novella each of Dave Weber, Eric Flint, and me. My piece and Dave's are otherwise available, but Eric's is not. I think it's worth the pb price to read Eric's *Islands*.

I mentioned in #19 that *Seas of Venus* will be out in pb from Baen as a March release, which means it'll be hitting the stores realsoonnow (I think).

I've gotten the cover flats for the pb of the collection *Grimmer Than Hell*, a Baen release for June 2004. Some people would say these stories are my best work (and I might agree); but be aware that the title is proof that I believe in truthful presentation.

And I also got the cover flats for the pb of *Goddess of the Ice Realm*, which turns out to be a July 2004 release from Tor. This seems to be a very short time after the hardcover; as with so much of the business, I'm not sure what's going on.

Also due in July 2004 is the Baen hc *Masters of Fantasy*, which has my Isles short story *The Elf House*. (The story's available in PDF form on my website.) It's a fun little story, but the thing I like best about it is that it proves I can write a real short story (under 6K) in a setting which I normally visit in the form of 200K novels.

Eric Flint and I have almost finished acquiring stories for *The World Turned Upside Down*, a notion that the two of us and Jim Baen got: a collection of the stories that blew us away when we first started reading SF. There are some things that most SF readers will find familiar (*Black Destroyer* by AE Van Vogt, for instance) but also some that are less well known than they ought to be (again for example, *Code Three* by Rick Raphael).

We haven't been able to get all the stories we wanted (dealing with some copyright holders or their agents has been troublesome), but it'll be about a quarter million words and *very* good value for the money. It's due out as a Baen hc in January, 2005.

I mentioned Baen publication of *The Reaches*. The Science Fiction Book Club will also be bringing out its edition in March. I don't normally mention SFBC editions--if you're a member, you know; if you're not, it doesn't matter to you--but this particular case has significance to me.

At the time the original books of the trilogy came out, the SFBC wouldn't have touched them (and indeed, had never taken anything of mine except *Dagger*, in that case because it was part of the Thieves' World series). Now they're featuring the reprint.

I've changed somewhat since the mid-'90s, but these very harsh novels haven't been edited at all (well, I got rid of suction cups in vacuum. Sorry 'bout that). I think the major reason *The Reaches* is acceptable now when it wasn't before is that the world has changed a great deal--particularly since 9/11. The world-view I gained in Viet Nam and Cambodia is suddenly intelligible to a much wider audience.

Frankly, this isn't a way I wanted to become mainstream.

There isn't much new material on the website except for my comments about *Codex* . I still don't have more Ovid up. Frankly, in my current state I'm more drawn to reread Juvenal.

Things are actually going extremely well in my real world; that isn't entirely true of what goes on in my head. Those of you who know something about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, either from study or in less fortunate ways, will understand what I mean when I say that sometimes it's very dark at 3 am. I'm keeping it between the ditches.

Hang in, people. That's what I'm doing. Now back to (maybe) *The Way to Glory* !

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Newsletter #19 mailed out 26 November 2003

Dear People,

Well, this may not go out before December but I'm drafting it in November--just before Thanksgiving where we're expecting the traditional extended family gathering, this year of fifteen people. (And we really *are* over the river and through the woods for most of our friends. They will not, however, be coming by sleigh unless something really unexpected happens.)

I finished *Master of the Cauldron*, the sixth Isles fantasy, at 170K words. I'm pleased at the way the four plots weave together, and there are some answers for those of you who've been wondering how it is that Cashel and Ilna have the powers they have. (My favorite of the series is still *Goddess of the Ice Realm*, for the exceptional villain and plot twist.)

Speaking of *Goddess*, it and the latest RCN space opera, *The Far Side of the Stars*, are out in hardcover from Tor and Baen respectively. Apart from the value of the stories themselves, *Goddess* has the best yet of my many good covers, and *Far Side* has the CD-ROM collecting an enormous amount of stuff (see earlier newsletters or <http://david-drake.com/news.html> for the actual contents.)

There's a caveat on that, however: the actual distribution of *Far Side* was well beyond the Simon and Schuster estimate, so the hardcover is going back to press unexpectedly. The second printing will not have the CD (the dust-jacket is being reprinted also to delete references thereto).

The fact that distribution exceeded expectations is a Good Thing, by the way, though it doesn't speak to absolute numbers. If you live long enough, you'll have a mix of good and bad things happen to you. Tor pushed *Mistress of the Catacombs* very hard, getting large numbers of books into stores just in time for September 11, 2001 and (as a very minor negative in a generally bad time) a sudden drop of 30% in book sales. (I would be even happier now if something as good as 9/11 was bad happened to the world also.)

Master of the Cauldron was the final book of my present Tor contract. I went to World Fantasy Con braced to get bad news when I talked to Tom Doherty and Dave Hartwell (publisher and editor) as to whether they would be giving me a new contract.

Apparently I was the only person in the world who thought Tor might not want more books from me. My concern was utterly and completely without foundation, literally irrational. There will be three more books in the Isles series, and if I shift to a different series then (I did considerable plotting on a totally separate fantasy series, an end-stopped trilogy like the *Reaches* series, at the time I was plotting *Lord of the Isles*), it will probably be by my decision rather than that of the publisher.

I felt much better to hear that. Irrational fears aren't any less uncomfortable than real ones, and I spend

rather more than enough time depressed as it is.

I don't have any idea when *Master of the Cauldron* will come out; maybe Fall of 2004, maybe much later. (Donato Giancola says he's going to try to do an even better cover than what he did for *Goddess* . That's a very tall order. On the other hand, he's the man to do it.)

The next project will be a fourth RCN space opera: Jim Baen's request perfectly matched my desire. I don't have a clue as to anything about the plot at the moment. As a matter of fact, my brain is mainly making soft humming noises. I'm sure something will eventuate.

The paperback of *Paying the Piper* has arrived (and is probably hitting the stands right about now). I've always written things besides Military SF, but it's Military SF where I made my name; and very possibly it's the subgenre in which I have something unique to offer.

The Reaches Trilogy , the combined trilogy based on events similar to those in the life of Sir Francis Drake, will be a January, 2004, hardcover from Baen. Reading the galleys was an interesting experience. Those are very good books, but my head is in a much better place than it was when I wrote them. It may be that the concept of Hitting Bottom has significance for more than drunks.

The mass-market of *Seas of Venus* is scheduled for March, 2004, from Baen. I'm glad to have the book's two short novels (*Surface Action* and *The Jungle*) out again to make explicit my debt to CL Moore and Henry Kuttner, whose work I was playing off therein.

The mass-market of *Grimmer than Hell* is due out from Baen in June, 2004. In passing, I've noticed with interest that the degree to which a reader is affected by the Lacey stories (included in the volume) is directly connected to the degree that reader is concerned about the ramifications of the Patriot Act. That stories written 25 years ago have contemporary significance is--given what the stories are--rather unfortunate, I'm afraid.

I had my usual good time at WFC--that is, it would've been a good time even without learning that my career was in fine shape. By now I have a number of friends, mostly in the dealer's room, whom I see only at WFC.

I have one comment about panels: repeatedly I saw writers, usually newbies, using the panel introduction to tout whatever it was they'd sold. I consider this bad form and counterproductive. If you say, "I'm Joe Smith and I've sold seven short stories," which is what I did in 1975 on a WFC panel (well, I said, 'Dave Drake'), you've given the audience all they need *for the panel* . If you're intelligent and interesting on that panel, they may well go out and look up your stories. (That's how I became a Terry Pratchett fan.)

Consider the audience and the probable effect of your actions on that audience. Trying to sell people on your work by (generally inept) marketing on panels is likely to convince the professionals in the

audience (particularly the editors) that you're at best a puppy and very probably a fool.

On the website there's a new section making explicit the fact that I was born and bred in Iowa and that I'm very proud of it [<http://david-drake.com/iowa.html>]. There are also photos from a recent convention--including me reading *The Little Golden Book of Poetry* to an audience of 4-year-olds, which was kinda neat [<http://david-drake.com/icon.html>]. Karen is in the process of cleaning up the website and has started by breaking the photo album into Recent Photos [[album.html](#)] and Photo Archives [[photoarchives.html](#)]. Weve also added a Google site search function on the home page.

I've been so buried with finishing *Master* that I haven't done much else. I've redrafted *Amores* I:10 but haven't polished it yet. I hope to get to that realsoonnow, but to tell the truth I'm exhausted. Writing long novels really is work.

In closing, I guess I'll share one further observation I made at WFC. The convention committee decided that all World Fantasy Award nominees from past years (as well as the present) should get lapel pins in the form of award miniatures. Roger Turner, who executed the charge and fronted the considerable expense himself, was giving out pins at the con. I got two pins from 1976, as a short-story nominee and as partner in Carcosa (which won the non-pro publisher award).

It struck me that in the 1970s, I could imagine winning awards but never dreamed I'd become a full-time freelance writer. By 1981 I was a full-time freelance writer, but it was inconceivable that I would win awards.

Now I don't want anybody to misunderstand what I'm going to say next: awards and critical recognition are Good. But I personally rank awards as a bad third in a hierarchy in which Having Many Readers and Making a Lot of Money are in a close race on top. (I put having readers above having money; but if I didn't have the money, I'd probably feel otherwise.)

There are pieces of mine-- *Northworld* , for example--which might've gotten awards if they were written by somebody else. The problem is that to be award worthy, I believe I 'd have had to *not* write other things which are very much a part of me also.

Othinn gave up an eye in order to gain wisdom. I might do the same. But I wouldn't cripple myself for the sake of awards.

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Newsletter #18 mailed out 15 September 2003

Dear People,

I'm going to start off with the plan (and fervent hope) that the final book of the Belisarius series, *The Dance of Time*, will be finished in a year--September, 2004. Eric and I are both aware that it's been too darned long.

The situation's been exacerbated by the fact that the third book in the series, *Destiny's Shield*, is OP. That volume was snakebit, primarily by the fact that Jim Baen changed to doing the series in hardcover with it. That was a good decision, but it had bad short-term consequences: sales and sell-through both dropped (to rise again with the next book in the series). I don't pretend to understand the mechanism by which that happened, but it did.

The obvious answer is to bring the early volumes back in omnibus form as Jim did with the General series. I'm unwilling to allow that until we have the final volume out. Jim has been pulling Eric off *Dance* to do other projects for some while now. Eric and I are planning to fight for the chance to finish the series. (I won't tell you how long the outline's been complete.)

Actually, this might be a good place to mention a pet peeve of mine: people (not infrequently reviewers) who say, "You should've done this instead of that with your book/series/career," without realizing there might be considerations of which the speaker knows nothing.

To give one example that can stand for many: Karl Wagner and I edited Manly Wade Wellman's John stories into *John the Balladeer*. Manly had written a number of stories for *F&SF*, then revised them for publication as *Who Fears the Devil?* which Arkham House published as a novel. At that time he added a number of interstitial pieces, short-shorts of a page or two each. Most of these were published in a block in *F&SF* just before book publication.

In *John the Balladeer* these short pieces are collected in two blocks, those from *F&SF* and the rest, instead of being run between stories. A number of people have complained about this arrangement--which in a strictly literary sense is less good than splitting the short shorts between longer stories.

But this isn't a strictly literary world. Arkham House had a well-deserved reputation for being litigious, going back to its founder, Mr Derleth, who bragged to me about having hired the meanest lawyer in the county to threaten anybody who complained about the way he conducted his business or personal affairs. Arkham House claimed rights in perpetuity to *Who Fears the Devil?* We'd gone back to the original stories, not the edited versions, but I felt there was still a risk Arkham House would sue Manly's widow (for whom we were getting the stories back in print) if we copied the AH arrangement of the stories. So we pointedly didn't.

It doesn't seem to occur to folks in general that if Karl and I did something that made no sense on the known facts, that perhaps they didn't know all the facts. It's easier for them to shake their heads at our amazing foolishness.

Having delivered myself of that polemic, there really is news. *Goddess of the Ice Realm*, the fifth of the Isles fantasies, is out in stores. I've never had a more beautiful book. I think it's also the best-written of the series, but that sort of thing is entirely personal taste (and the author is just another person at this point).

Renaissance Audio, the audiobook arm of St Martins, is doing (or has done?) a 50% abridgment of the book. I really miss Brilliance, which did the first three books (and I still get angry at the incompetent stupidity--two different things--of the Tor sub-rights department, which doesn't appear to have improved recently), but the folks from Renaissance appear to be real pros themselves.

I'll be doing a couple local signings on *Goddess*. The tour through Ohio and Kentucky I was told to expect won't eventuate because the NYC blackout paralyzed the Tor publicity department. (That was their explanation, at any rate.) Because I prodded, I may be going to Chicago (I was born in the Midwest, after all) later, but I don't have any certain information. I'll post whatever I learn (and if there's something real, I may send out a mini-newsletter.)

I'm of two minds about all this. I find touring very uncomfortable, but it's my job and I do my job regardless. Our power was out for six days last December from an ice storm, so I know how unpleasant it is... but I averaged a thousand words a day longhand during that period.

As I write this, I haven't seen copies of *The Far Side of the Stars*, the third RCN (Leary/Mundy) space opera, but they might well arrive today. I do have the CD-ROM to be bound with it: The Drake Disk. The contents are listed on my website at <http://david-drake.com/news.html>, but it's basically all of my books that Baen Books had in electronic form, plus *Lord of the Isles* courtesy of Tom Doherty of Tor, plus some other neat stuff (including Manly's *John the Balladeer*)--and a complete audio version of *The Far Side of the Stars*.

The fact that it's complete is due to Jim's webmaster, Arnold Bailey, and Jim's managing editor, Danielle Turner. The team doing the audio production missed the deadline as a result of shooting themselves in the feet several times in succession. Danielle got the extra time from Simon and Schuster, and Arnold produced a complete (and cleaned-up) master in an unbelievably short time.

The Reaches--the combined Baen volume of the trilogy *Igniting the Reaches*, *Through the Breach*, and *Fireships*--has a great cover by Steve Hickman. It'll be a January hardcover. I did commentary for the bibliography section of the website and then adapted it as an intro to the combined volume. (See <http://david-drake.com/reaches.html>)

Incidentally, on the subject of how publishing really works, it took a year from my formal request to get

a reversion on the out of print volumes from the original publisher. I'd have defended on grounds of laches if they'd protested the reprint, but of course it wasn't a subtle plan on the publisher's part--it was just somebody in an office not getting around to doing her job. (I'm tempted to wonder if the NYC blackout paralyzed her....)

The paperback of *Paying the Piper*, the latest Hammer book, is due out from Baen in December. I find I like the (identical) cover and layout better on the pb than I did on the hardcover. Maybe I've just gotten used to it.

March, 2004, brings the Baen paperback of *Seas of Venus* (which had been in trade paper). This includes *The Jungle* and *Surface Action*, my two short novels set in the Kuttners' pulp Venus, and the travelogue of my family trip to Belize.

Apart from that, I'm charging forward on the sixth Isles fantasy, *Master of the Cauldron*. It's going well, but I'm still about 40K short of completing the rough draft. There'll be several edits after that, but the process speeds up then. Edits (though a brutal job) can be done in long stretches. I just can't write raw text for twelve hours a day.

My wife Jo and I will be at Salute, the British wargame convention, on April 24 at the Olympia in Kensington, London. (I'm told it's the same venue as the London Motor Show--wargaming is big business in Great Britain.) The team creating the Hammer's Slammers miniatures and book have done a marvelous job, and it'll be good to meet them. They asked if they could provide me with a table to sit at and meet fans while not wandering, and I cheerfully agreed. I don't have much conception of what it'll be like, but I guess I'll learn.

On the website front, I've put up more Ovid. (I should mention that I glanced over my translation of *Amores* I-10 and was very dissatisfied with the opening. I may have to redo the whole thing. The Eurotas is a river, not a strait, for pity's sake!) Our web page on the Hammer's Slammers wargame includes links to the painted miniatures and pages from the Handbook (<http://david-drake.com/hswargame.html>). My webmaster, Karen, is working on a way to note my connections with Iowa but that may not happen for a bit.

I hope this finds all of you well; and now I will get back to those 40K words I need to write. All best,

Dave Drake
david-drake.com

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last updated 15 September 2003 by webmaster@david-drake.com

Newsletter #17 mailed out 3 July 2003

Dear People,

One of the interesting things about a publisher like Jim Baen--and thinking about it, since Don Wollheim died I don't believe there's anybody else who is like Jim--is that whimsical notions can very easily become concrete. Indeed, they may even make money--not by Tom Clancy standards, but enough that nobody's out of pocket for having fun and doing a Good Thing.

The most recent started when Eric Flint called to bounce some potential reprint projects off me before he took them to Jim: what did I know about this author, what did I think of this notion--that sort of thing. As often in the past, I was simply an information resource on what would be Eric's projects. He then went to Jim with his refined list.

Jim accepted one idea, shot down the rest for perfectly valid reasons ranging from, "I can't sell that," to "I can't stand the guy's prose," (hey--it's Baen Books, not Conglomerate Corporation). And then Jim proposed one of his own: Eric and I together would edit a collection of the stories that made a difference in our young lives when we first read them. The working title is THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN (and no, the sub-title isn't *Great Tales of Failure and Defeat*). Eric and I jumped at it.

So... it's early days yet, but we've roughed out something over a quarter million words. Eric's convinced a big book is a real benefit for reprint collections, and it was similar big volumes of the 1950s that were my introduction to *Golden Age SF*.

Jim is not only Founder of the Feast but has made a couple excellent suggestions already. We've incorporated them and I personally expect more to come. (If we can get Jim to agree, he'll be listed as co-editor with us.) We won't be able to get all the things we want, of course, but it'll still be an impressive volume.

The whole advance is going into permissions, though of course that doesn't mean we're paying a heck of a lot for any of the 25 (plus or minus) stories. This may turn out to be a problem with Heinlein; but as I say, it's early days.

The main difficulty is finding some of the authors, their heirs or assigns, to get permissions. Which is where y'all come in: I'm looking for family of Robert Ernest Gilbert, an occasional SF writer of the 1950s. Mr Gilbert lived in East Tennessee, and I believe I read a belated death notice for him in *Locus* in the 1990s.

Anyway, that's the fun part of a writer's life. This writer's life, anyway.

Well, that's unfair, because I have a good time writing also. *Master of the Cauldron*, the sixth Isles

fantasy, is up to 55K in draft at the point I stopped to do this newsletter. It's going well, and I'm feeling reasonably perky about it too.

And that's not a small thing, because for the past three weeks our architect/builder and his wife have been repainting the interior of our house. Nothing major, just a decade of wear and tear, but the degree of disruption to me working at home is considerable. Not infrequently I've gone to get the reference book I need for the next scene (I normally work with a picture in front of me. Hmm; it just occurred to me that most people may not be aware of that) and find that I can't get under that tarp just now.

Nam vets are used to finding field expedients, however. For example, I used one of Gurney's Dinotopia paintings (which I could find) as a reference rather than Gurney's own inspiration, Spring by Alma-Tadema.

Goddess of the Ice Realm, fifth of the Isles fantasies and due out from Tor in September, 2003, exists in the form of bound galleys. I've gushed about Donato's wonderful cover repeatedly. Go look at the image [<http://www.donatoart.com/monthlyframeset.html>] and gush for yourselves.

Tom Doherty doesn't want me to post entire books on line, so I'll just put three chapters up on the website [<http://david-drake.com/goddess1-3.pdf>]. (If any fans are really, really, desperate, drop me a line via the FAQ form.)

And over at Baen the third RCN (Leary/Mundy) space opera, *The Far Side of the Stars*, is due in October with an excellent Steve Hickman cover [<http://david-drake.com/news.html>]. Steve has few peers as an SF artist: his one problem in cover work has been using a palette too subtle to give eye-catching contrasts at a distance. This one is great art and a great cover; I couldn't be happier with it.

The Far Side of the Stars will have a CD-ROM bound in containing an audio version of the novel read by Jim's sales manager, but I can't give you a better guess at the contents than what I listed in Newsletter #16 [<http://david-drake.com/news16.html>]. The audiobook takes a lot of room and it still hasn't been completed. Some of the collaborative items may get squeezed out.

Jim is perfectly happy for me to post my books on line (it's about the best advertising there is, he and I think), so my webmaster will begin doing that in chunks at <http://david-drake.com/farside1-3.pdf> (linked from the news page.) Feel free to pass it on to anybody you think might like to try my fiction before they plunk down their twenty-five bucks.

In January, 2004, Baen Books is reissuing *Igniting the Reaches*, *Through the Breach*, and *Fireships* in one hardcover volume as *The Reaches Trilogy*. These are space operas based on the life of Francis, later Sir Francis, Drake. I'm proud of these and they're artistically of a very high level, but I'd like to add a few provisos:

1) I postulated a future in which war had brought Mankind to the brink of extinction. The civilization that returns is based on individual craftsmanship, not mass production (although that's clearly returning by the end of the series). Some readers, faced with stories in which the characters fly starships but fight (some of them) with single-shot rifles, were not only baffled but infuriated.

2) I got very much into the mindsets of the latter 16th century, a very ideological period. None of viewpoint characters are ideologues, but the books are deeply steeped in ideology that modern readers may find not only foreign but distasteful.

3) Finally, I'd intended the series to be light space opera, the sort of thing I later did in the RCN series. Space opera they are, but they're very hard, harsh books. Through the Breach in particular is a more realistic view of what war does to a citizen/soldier than Redliners was.

I'm more self-aware now than I was when I wrote the series, but I'm honestly not sure whether more than chance was involved in my choosing to write *Through the Breach* in first person, which is nearly unique in my fiction. (The only other example I can think of is *The Tank Lords*.)

So.... *The Reaches Trilogy* contains good writing and is an intelligent exegesis on *The Age of Exploration*; but it's not everybody's book.

The paperback of *Paying the Piper* is due out from Baen in December, 2003. People who followed Gulf War II will, I think, agree that I got the mobility and firepower of an armored task force right. The VC who survived when the Blackhorse swept down on Bien Hoa Airfield and cleared it during the Tet Offensive already knew that; but very few VC did survive that experience.

February brings the Baen mass market of *The Warmasters*, novellas by Dave Weber, Eric Flint and me with a strikingly bad cover misattributed to Gary Ruddell on the hardcover. The painting was done by David Mattingly, and I hope they correct the credit this time. (They didn't when I told them before.)

Then in March there'll be the Baen mass market of *Seas of Venus*, my two shortish novels set on the Kuttners' pulp *Venus: Surface Action* and *The Jungle*. It also has a printed version of my account of my vacation in Belize, available electronically at <http://david-drake.com/belize.pdf>.

The website has a few changes. There are a couple more of Ovid's lyrics up, and a picture of me as Ovid declaiming (my translation of) Amores I:6 at Jennie Faries' birthday party [<http://david-drake.com/ovid.html>]. As well as being a graphic designer working for Jim, Jennie has a degree in costume design and likes to give theme parties. I want everybody to know that I wove my ivy chaplet with my own hands, and that the strands are now rooting in water. (No ivy died in the making of this costume....)

We've got (meaning Karen has put up) snapshots of the wargame miniatures (see earlier newsletters) at <http://david-drake.com/hswargame.html>. These are unpainted and the vehicles don't have their metal

parts, but it'll give you a notion of what they look like.

And there've been a few housekeeping changes on the FAQ page, nothing major.

Now it's time for me to get back to what is major: writing the final three-quarters of a Big Fat Fantasy. Best to all of you!

Dave Drake
david-drake.com

To subscribe, unsubscribe or change your e-mail address, e-mail webmaster@david-drake.com

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last updated 11 July 2003 by webmaster@david-drake.com

Newsletter #16 mailed out 6 May 2003

Dear People,

The occasion for this newsletter is that I've completed the plot for the sixth Isles fantasy, tentatively titled MASTER OF THE CAULDRON. If I weren't writing this newsletter, I'd be telling myself that I ought to dive into the book right now... and frankly, I think I'd be better for a day's break, which I won't take if I don't have 'something to do in the meantime'.

This is pollen season and by choice I spend most of the time outside. Foreign proteins in my system (a virus can do the same thing) tend to leave me depressed and/or snappish. A focus on writing is my way of asserting control over my emotions. It worked pretty well when I was freshly back from Nam, too.

Speaking of being snappish, here's an assertion sent to Jim Baen (with copy to my webmaster) and my reply:

Date: Fri, 02 May 2003 14:33:30 -0500

To: jim@baen.com

From: Milton Austin <draustin@orbitel.com>

Subject: David Drake, "Ranks of Bronze", and Foreign Legions

Cc: webmaster@david-drake.com

Dear Sir,

David Drake's introduction to the book Foreign Legions gives no credit to Jerry Pournelle's books Janiserries and Tran (which Pournelle wrote with Roland Green.

Since BAEN published Tran, this seems like a big omission.

Sincerely,

Milton Austin

Date: Fri, 02 May 2003 16:32:55 -0400

Dear Mr Austin,

I still have the postcard Jerry wrote me in 1977 when he began to write Janissaries, congratulating me on my short story Ranks of Bronze published two years earlier.

I will not say anything intemperate, but I am surprised that a moron who cannot read a copyright date is able to type on a computer keyboard.

Jim, please have this exchange posted on the Bar.

Sincerely,

David A Drake

Attorney at Law

For some reason I'm not-infrequently accused of plagiarizing Jerry; I recall one objection that the General series was stolen from *The Mercenary*. (No, both Jerry and I have read Procopius.) When I do steal from other writers (as examples from off the top of my head Clark Ashton Smith, Lord Dunsany, and Dashiell Hammett) I try to acknowledge the debt explicitly. But not Jerry Pournelle. (And by the way, he'd had *Janissaries* in mind before he read *Ranks of Bronze*; I just happened to get into print before he did. It's really dangerous--and potentially libelous--to assume direct borrowing by one from another.)

I now know more about the contents of the CD-ROM to be bound in with THE FAR SIDE OF THE STARS. They are supposed to include electronic versions of *The Tank Lords*; *The Northworld Trilogy*; *Redliners*; *Old Nathan*; *With the Lightnings*; *Lt. Leary, Commanding*; *Cross the Stars*; *Killer* (with Karl Edward Wagner); *Paying the Piper*; *Seas of Venus*; and *Grimmer Than Hell*. And thanks to Tom Doherty of Tor, there'll be an ASCII version of *Lord of the Isles*. If things work out, *The Sea Hag* will be there too.

Hmm, and probably *The Far Side of the Stars* itself.

In addition to those (what I count as my books) there will be the books done from my outlines by Steve Stirling (the whole General series in the form of *Warlord* and *Conqueror*, and also *The Reformer*), and Eric Flint (the Belisarius series to date: *An Oblique Approach*, *In the Heart of Darkness*, *Destiny's Shield*, *Fortune's Stroke*, and *The Tide of Victory*, plus *The Tyrant* to complete *The Reformer*).

There should also be anthologies containing something of mine: *More Than Honor*, *Foreign Legions*, and *The Warmasters*.

I've asked that Eric Flint's *1632* be added, mainly because I like it a lot (it has nothing to do with me). In addition Jim is planning to run abbreviated versions of the disks that were bound in with Dave Weber's and John Ringo's latest books. (I assume that will include all the electronic books therein, but I frankly haven't asked.)

My webmaster Karen is scanning *John the Balladeer* by Manly Wade Wellman for inclusion. The John stories are some of the best American fantasies. They moved me long before I met Manly and are an influence of my writing.

There will be an audio version of *The Far Side of the Stars*, read by Jim's sales manager. (She read the audio version of John Ringo's *Hell's Faire* also, by the way.) There's also six minutes of me sweating blood to do an acceptable reading of the book's front matter. I'm not a performer, and the process cost me more than any benefit I expect other people to derive from the result. But it's there.

Portions of the Hammer's Slammers miniature wargame book to be published later in the year in Britain by Pireme will be included. We won't run the game rules, but as much other material is complete will be there. I'm really looking forward to photos of the painted 25-mm figures and vehicles myself.

A time-slice of my whole website will be there. Among other things this will provide notes for a lot of the electronic books on the disk.

Finally there's an oddity: a seven and a half minute targeting video from a Spectre gunship over Afghanistan. Some of you will have seen it (or portions of it) before, but I thought it was something that would interest a lot of my readers.

I've done little intros to *John the Balladeer*, the miniature material, and the targeting video.

I don't swear any of the above material will be present. It's supposed to be. In publishing (heck, in life) that isn't a guarantee.

There haven't been many changes on the website. We have the draft cover for the game book up, along with some pictures my webmaster took of the unpainted figures and vehicles just to give you a rough idea. [<http://david-drake.com/hswargame.html>] I'll replace those with something better as soon as I have it. (But I'm not going to try to paint them myself!)

I also have some more Ovid up. Putting my translations on view makes me take the sort of pains on them which a craftsman as good as Ovid deserves. (That doesn't make them good translations; though in their way, I think they are.)

As for forthcoming books, Tor will be bringing out *Goddess of the Ice Realm* in September (I've gushed over Donato's cover already), and Baen will have *The Far Side of the Stars* in October with a striking Hickman cover. The paperback of *Paying the Piper* will appear in December, which seems late to me (but I have my own work to keep me occupied).

A Baen hardcover (Megabook) of *The Reaches Trilogy* is scheduled for January. In March the paperback of *Seas of Venus* should appear, and I guess I should mention the paperback of *The Warmasters* is due out. There probably isn't anything else of mine before June at the earliest.

Hmm. It occurs to me that most writers wouldn't need to add that last line.

I haven't done additional notes for books in my bibliography for a while. If there's anything people want to see, drop me a line through the FAQ form. (I'll say up front that I don't intend to discuss collaborations with Janet Morris.)

One final note. This newsletter isn't about current events, and that isn't going to change. I will say,

however, that the troopers who had the skill and balls to make the dash to Saddam International Airport and then to make a Thunder Run through Baghdad have my unstinting respect. I am glad--I am proud--to have been in a very small way in their lineage.

Dave Drake
david-drake.com

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Newsletter #15 mailed out 5 March 2003

Dear People,

I've shipped off the third RCN (Leary/Mundy) novel, *The Far Side of the Stars*, to Jim Baen. That isn't the title you'd seen before... and I won't bore you with how many iterations that you *didn't* see that the book went through before we (Jim and I) agreed on this version.

Characters' names and book titles are important to Jim, but I don't always agree with his choices. I will note, however, that my working title for my first book was *Tanks Don't Cry*. The fact that Jim retitled it *Hammer's Slammers* may be why I've got a writing career today.

The Far Side of the Stars is due out in October, 2003, from Baen Books. Steve Hickman's doing the cover, but I haven't seen it yet. Steve has done a number of my covers, including that for *Lacey and His Friends* which is among the best SF covers anybody has ever done. I'm looking forward to the new one.

The book is 140K, a sizable work though not as long as the Isles series fantasies (about which more in a moment). I'm really very pleased with the way it came out. The opening looks like picaresque (there's nothing wrong with that, of course), but most of the bits and pieces turn out to be important at the climax. This didn't surprise me, exactly--I mean, I had a lengthy plot intended to lead to precisely that result--but it's always neat when I read the finished product and think, 'Hey! That really worked!' As I did this time.

Jim is binding a CD-ROM in with the hardcover. It will include all my Baen titles which exist in electronic form (I don't know what that is at this point, but God willing and the creeks don't rise I'll get the information for a later newsletter), and also *Lord of the Isles*, the first book of the Tor fantasy series (though this may lack the italics; Tor had it only in ASCII and I didn't have it in any electronic form due to my familiar problems with computers).

I called Tom Doherty with my heart in my mouth to ask about using a Tor book on the Baen CD. I don't like to ask friends for something that they don't want to give me, and Tom hadn't wanted me to offer my books free on my website (which is why there'll only be sample chapters of *Goddess of the Ice Realms* up shortly). To my delight, he agreed with me and Jim that this is a great marketing idea for Tor. (Note that there are still publishers who agree with John W. Campbell that publishing isn't a zero-sum game.)

Another thing planned for the CD is portions of the *Hammer's Slammers* miniature wargame book which will (we hope) be coming out later in the year from Pireme Publications in Britain. As well as the first troop figurines, I've now received prototypes of a tank with both normal (one-man) and command turrets, and also a combat car. These are in resin, made by Old Crow, and will have metal parts (tribarrels and suchlike) by GZG who's making the figures.

The day job of the guy running Old Crow is to make miniature movie sets and architects' models. To say that these are good--even in the white, completely unfinished--is like saying Robert Heinlein was a good SF writer. I'm more pleased than I can put in words.

There'll be some pictures on the CD, probably in rough paint jobs (the sort of thing a wargamer would provide for his units) and the text of the game book. The bulk of the illustrations probably won't be included because they simply won't be finished in time. To make up for the limited art, John Treadaway (who's doing the book's graphics) may be able to include lots of background information for which there won't be room in the printed version.

Besides those things--and by the way, if there's something one of you thinks ought to be there that I haven't mentioned, e-mail me and I'll consider it--I'm still hoping there'll be novels by Dave Weber and John Ringo. I know people have bought my books because they read something of mine on a Weber/Ringo CD, and I'm very much among those who believe good writers are all on the same side. We have no enemies except the bad writers attempting to copy us.

The next project is an Isles fantasy. After a discussion with Mark Van Name--a prelude you may have noticed before--I talked to Tom Doherty about writing slightly shorter Isles fantasies. The problem with a 200K book isn't that I can't write it (I've done so five times already) but that I can't write one and another, different novel of substantial size in the same year.

It's really good for books in a series to come out annually, but it's absolutely necessary for my sanity that I intersperse books of different sorts--picked from epic fantasy, military SF, and space opera--rather than do one kind straight. That requires the books to be slightly shorter--say about 160K for a fantasy and 120K for a space opera--to fit in a year's work.

(So why did I just turn in a space opera of 140K? Well, Mark and I had our discussion after I'd already conceived the plot, and the particular structure of *The Far Side of the Stars* required greater length to avoid imbalance.)

We'll see how it works. Keep your fingers crossed, and know that mine are.

I was informed last week that Tor has moved *Goddess of the Ice Realm*, the next Isles book, up to September, 2003. That was exactly what I was told some three months ago, leading me to wonder what happened in the interim and what may happen tomorrow. Welcome to the highly-organized world of publishing. The Donato cover continues to be just amazing. [<http://www.donatoart.com/monthlyframeset.html>].

Oh--let me correct a mistake I made in Newsletter 14. Donato painted the cover with Garric and the Isles series in mind, but he's selling prints on his website under a *Lord of the Rings* title as a marketing device (of which I heartily approve; I want somebody as good as Donato is to make as much money as possible).

Night Shade Books has just published *Sin's Doorway*, the fourth of five planned volumes collecting almost all the fantasy of my late friend Manly Wade Wellman. I strongly recommend that those of you who don't know Manly's work to take a look at some. He was probably the best writer in *Weird Tales* after the deaths of Lovecraft and Howard in 1936. (I wrote the introduction to this volume, but Manly's work is its own recommendation.)

There haven't been any major changes to the website, though I added a FAQ about the genesis of *A Grand Tour*, my novella in Dave Weber's Honor Harrington universe. There's another of Ovid's lyrics up. (I don't know if anybody else reads my translations, but putting them out in front of God and everybody keeps me rigorously honest.) And there are several pictures from Con DFW, where people were awfully nice to me.

My webmaster, Karen Zimmerman, notes that the newsletter is up to 600 subscribers. This is therefore a good time to mention how much I appreciate her work, since the newsletter and the site itself were entirely her inspiration.

Best wishes to all 600 or so of you!

Dave Drake
david-drake.com

To subscribe, unsubscribe or change your e-mail address, e-mail webmaster@david-drake.com

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Newsletter #14 mailed out 26 January 2003

Dear People,

Normally these newsletters focus on my writing. There's writing news in this one too, but the major item is the birth of my first grandchild, Tristan David Drake--8 pounds, 8 ounces, at 6:03 PM EST, January 25, 2003. There are no guarantees in this world (well, there's one; but reports regarding Elijah and a few others suggest even that isn't certain), but if Tristan takes after his parents Jonathan and April, he'll be a credit to society and the species.

There's a picture on the website linked from <http://david-drake.com/news.html>. There isn't a lot of variation in babies, but thus far Tristan looks much as Jonathan did at a similar age; which augurs well for the future.

As for writing, I'm at well over 100K on THE FAR SIDE OF HEAVEN, the third RCN (Leary/Mundy) space opera and am nearing the climax (a blazing space battle, as you may have surmised). It's scheduled for October, 2003, hardcover release from Baen Books; Steve Hickman's doing the cover.

It occurs to me that people who know something about book production may be surprised that a book which isn't complete in rough draft (and which I'll give two more edit passes) has been scheduled already. That's partly because Jim Baen has never believed in keeping a big inventory--it costs him money, and he believes (I think correctly) that books get stale. But it also means that Jim and his staff take it for granted that a finished book will appear when I say it will. (I might die--after all, I ride a motorcycle--but I won't become so distraught over personal problems that I can't keep my promises.) I'm glad to have that reputation, an unusual one among writers.

Jim is planning to bind in a CD-ROM containing basically all my Baen titles. If Tom Doherty agrees, I'll have *Lord of the Isles* there too. I've also suggested sticking in one of Dave Weber's Honor Harrington novels and John Ringo's *A Hymn Before Battle*. Neither Dave nor John writes precisely what I write, and as people we're rather more different than that. Having said that, a Venn diagram of Drake, Weber, and Ringo readers would have a lot of common ground. Using CD-ROMs as samplers for the subgenre strikes me as to everybody's benefit (but Jim, Dave, and John will make the final decision).

GODDESS OF THE ICE REALM, the fifth Isles fantasy, is scheduled as a Tor hardcover for September, 2003. Donato has just completed the cover. This has to be seen to be believed, so I suggest you look at it on either my site [<http://david-drake.com/news.html>] or his [<http://www.donatoart.com/monthlyframeset.html>].

The painting is unique in my experience. There are covers with a lot of figures in them (*Queen of Demons* is an example), but I've never before seen a cover that was made up of figures the way a jigsaw puzzle is made up of pieces. It's also as good a depiction of what an ancient battle must have been like as anything since The Battle of Alexander, the 1st century AD mosaic copy of a Greek painting found at

Pompeii.

One proviso: though there are no women on the cover, the novel has same mix of male and female characters as earlier Isles books (with Ilna being the one who sounds most like me). (For what it's worth, *Hammer's Slammers* were co-ed from the beginning also.)

My campaign of feeling upbeat about my writing as I go along appears to be working. I finish a day's text and think, 'Well, that's not bad at all,' instead of 'Jeez, this is as dull as a phone book!' which was more normal in the past. Mind, I worked effectively despite being very depressed about the quality of what I was doing, but my head was rarely as good place to be in.

The change seems to help. I won't say that I'll ever be confused with Pollyanna, but being relatively perky is nice.

A bit of personal information (though involving writing). An ice storm knocked out power for millions of people in our region in December. (Ice brought down treelimits--remember, this is 'The Land of the Long-Leaf Pine'--across just about every power line.) Our power was off for six days. I hadn't drafted fiction longhand since 1987 when I got my first laptop computer, but I pulled out a legal pad and resumed. By the time the power came on, I was seven thousand words closer to completion. I'm very fortunate in being a person who calms himself down by working.

The Hammer's Slammers miniature project proceeds apace in Britain. I've now received the first 25-mm figure for approval (which I enthusiastically gave it) and a bag of tiny little weapons. The detail is incredible. GZG will begin selling them fairly soon, though the sales website [<http://www.gtns.net/gzg/>] didn't have pictures when I looked at it. The vehicles (from Old Crow, but I believe GZG will be filling orders) are moving right along also, though here I've only seen jpgs. The game book with rules and history which Iain Dickie will bring out has a complete text by John Lamshead and I believe complete--and excellent--text layout by John Treadaway, but is waiting for the figures and vehicles which will be photographed for the visuals. A reasonable release date is Christmas, 2003.

I'm much more excited about this than I'd have expected to be. The people I'm working with--heck, the people who're doing the work--are amazingly good. I haven't done any miniature wargaming myself since 1966, but I'm delighted by the skill and enthusiasm of the folks involved.

As for books coming out--*Killer* is in stores, and I've received copies of *Grimmer Than Hell* and *Warlord* (the first of two General omnibus volumes) long enough ago that they're probably available also. *Conqueror*, the second General volume, is due a month later (but I haven't seen it yet).

The website hasn't changed a lot. There've been a few edits and updates on the FAQ and News pages.

There are two short pieces up: one is [The Elf House](#), which will be in Fantasy Masters, from Baen Books and edited by Bill Fawcett. That volume is waiting for Dave Weber to write his story. Since Dave's first

boy was just born and he's simultaneously back from Cambodia with the pair of lovely little adopted girls, that may be a while in the future.

The other is [A Land of Romance](#), which I wrote three years ago for a DeCamp festschrift which Harry Turtledove is editing for Baen. The last remaining story has just been delivered, so the volume--*Aide deCamp*--will be out in the foreseeable future. Harry and I were independently referring to the book as 'the DeCamp Festschrift' but Jim's cooler marketing head prevailed.

I'm also determined to put up my translation of Bacchus and the Sailors from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* up shortly. I drafted the section while I was at the beach with my extended family but hadn't until now taken time to edit it into final form.

Translating Latin and pistol shooting in the sideyard (we have 23 acres) are the two ways I... hmm; bring myself out of the focus I get while writing. That's important to me, since I want to be a man who writes rather than a really efficient writing machine. Shooting--the holes don't lie; they're either in the black or they're not--and serious translation take a great deal of concentration, enough to bring me back from writing. Reading and even socializing aren't effective at that.

In Newsletter 12 I offered people signed bookmarks (courtesy of Baen Books) if they sent a self-addressed stamped envelope (ideally more than seven inches long) to:

Drake
Box 904
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Thirty-odd people responded, and there've been a smattering since then of folks who apparently read the back newsletters and saw the offer. (I'm familiar with the phenomenon: in 1961 I answered an Arkham House ad in a 1950 issue of *Weird Tales* that my English teacher loaned me. In a way, I guess that ad was the start of my writing career.)

I've still got thousands of bookmarks, so I'll repeat the offer now.

Now, I have a novel to finish and I guess a grandson to see. My best to all of you.

Dave Drake
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last updated 26 January 2003 by webmaster@david-drake.com

Newsletter #13 mailed out 6 November 2002

Dear People,

As a general rule, these newsletters are about my writing life. That isn't going to change, but the main reason for this particular newsletter is something I didn't myself write.

My friend Mark Van Name was put in charge of a David Drake roast at a local convention. Mark checked with me first; I doubtfully agreed. As I told Mark, nothing anybody could say would embarrass me as much as the fact it was going on at all. (I don't think most of the people who do surprise tributes realize the impact they have on the subject. I recently watched a tape of Patrick McNee's appearance on *This Is Your Life* [from ca 1980]. McNee, a professional actor, was taken completely aback and was in tears during part of the event.)

The core of the presentation was books Mark and our friend Jennie Faries mocked up--new lines for the expanding Baen Books, to be kicked off by David Drake in his trademark style. These are screamingly funny and demonstrate.... Well, let's just say that there are jokes that only those who know me very well will get, in addition to jokes that had total strangers laughing their heads off. I recommend people check them out at <http://david-drake.com/roast/>, though if you're on a phone-line modem they'll take a while to download.

As an aside, Jim Baen (who of course was on the roast panel, though he didn't know about the books ahead of time) stared at the cover for the Western. "There's no cut line!" he said, pointing to the tank inserted into a Frederick Remington painting. "Well, of course not," said Jennie, who does cover design for real Baen titles as well. She thinks it's easy. Jim, who's seen a lot of Photoshopped covers, knows better.

As for my own work, I've started the third RCN space opera under the working title *The Far Side of Heaven*. I'm having a good time with it so far, and I expect that will continue throughout the process (though the outline for the last third of the book is schematic rather than detailed; that is, Colorful space battle here rather than 500 words of detailed choreography covering the maneuvers of two squadrons).

As a result of a conversation with Mark, I got an insight into why I'm frequently depressed about my writing progress. The one part of existence that I try to control is my prose, and I don't really understand the way I make things work. But I don't need to know how I do it; by this point I should be comfortable in the awareness that my fiction does work, that the pacing and characters of the current project will be as competent as they've been all the many times before in the past decade or two, and that the situations and responses will ring true to the people who've been at the sharp end themselves. That last is a really big one with me.

So I proceed, still pretty much in the dark but not so greatly concerned that somehow this time I've dug a

tiger trap in my own path. It feels pretty good.

Apart from that, I'm just back from World Fantasy Con, the premier professional gathering of the fantasy/SF field. I spent money in the dealer's room as usual, and I listened to some panels. The programming was generally pretty unfortunate, but there was a very interesting discussion on the Punch and Judy show followed by a performance the next day; both greatly impressed me.

And there was the business part. I'm not--and I'm not going to become--a squeaky wheel, but the fact I don't get feedback from my Tor editor during the year allows me to imagine all sorts of awful things happening with my career. At WFC I see the publisher, Tom Doherty, and come away reassured for another year. Tom's been a friend for many years, and it's a pleasure--I suspect a mutual pleasure--to talk business with somebody who won't bullshit.

I'm tough--trust me on this--but I'm just as paranoid as the next writer, and I'm prone to depression anyway. I don't think the people I work with have been generally aware of those aspects of my character. I had a discussion with my editor at the con, so the situation may change in the future.

Besides Tom, I had dinner with folks from Del Rey who had a really interesting proposition. I was flattered, but I turned it down because it would've involved me getting my head deeply back into Viet Nam. That wouldn't be comfortable, and I'm not entirely certain it would be survivable.

As a particularly nice side-benefit of the trip, my webmaster had found that the Minneapolis Institute of Arts was hosting American Sublime, a traveling show focusing on the Hudson River School. The centerpiece was the entire five-painting series by Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire*. (The series doesn't have a heck of a lot to do with the stated theme of the show, but believe me I'll make an exception this time.) It was quite wonderful to see the paintings themselves--I'd been trying unsuccessfully to find even reproductions of the series.

As for what's new in the way of my books, *Seas of Venus* and the paperback of *Mistress of the Catacombs* are in stores now. The only thing I can think of to add to what's in Newsletter 12 (which you can check in the archive) is that I've seen the cover for *Conqueror*, the second and final omnibus in the General series. It is a quite remarkably silly piece of art, complete with the Fantasyland Castle in the background. The text--of the third, fourth and fifth paperback volumes of the series--is fine; and I can only hope that people want the books for the text which Steve Stirling ably wrote from my outlines.

Apart from the roast covers, there've been no revisions to the website. I've got a fair amount of Ovid in draft, but I still haven't gotten around to polishing my translations for display. (I've actually been translating Valerius Maximus for my own pleasure, but I won't put that on line. I don't share Valerius' naive belief in virtue and religious observance, but it's oddly heartening to read someone to whom the issues were really that simple.)

Back to Adele Mundy, as Mistress Sand briefs her on a mission in which she--and Daniel Leary--will be

operating as private citizens rather than officers of the Republic of Cinnabar Navy....

Dave Drake
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Drake Newsletter #12--September 9, 2002

Dear People,

I've finished *Goddess of the Ice Realm*, my fifth Isles fantasy. That is I did my three edits and sent the book in. My Tor editor, Dave Hartwell, read the manuscript completely through (yes, he did) and suggested about a dozen changes. Most of these were of the 'you said this a couple chapters back' variety, which I appreciate; it's something an outside reader can do better than the author.

Two points were more significant. Dave wanted a little more bulk at the climax and suggested a couple ways of achieving it. The suggestion was probably valid--I'm really too close to know for certain--so I added another 500 words in my own fashion and worked over the scene besides.

The other suggestion (and neither of these are big in an absolute sense) was to trim a scene in which Garric is addressing a new police force. Dave said it was OK line by line, but it was boring in total. My feeling is that everybody shows his fantasy hero being heroic; I like occasionally to show my hero also being a king, which tends to be a very different thing. I hope my readers will give me two pages out of 650 in which to indulge my whim.

Dave allowed me that. Tor accepted the novel and promptly paid me (which is something worth mentioning about both my publishers, Tor and Baen; and is by no means true of all publishers, from what I'm told by other writers.) The best current guess on a publication date is November 2003.

By the way, Donato is doing the cover again. I'm really looking forward to seeing it. He's a simply wonderful artist.

I cycled down by doing a short story in the Isles universe for a Bill Fawcett project, which last I was told will be titled *Masters of Fantasy*. It's for Baen Books and was originally described to me a fantasy companion to *The Warmasters*, but things have a way of transmuting in the publishing world.

The story was an interesting exercise. I've written a million words in the Isles series, but this a) had to be understandable to people who hadn't read any of the novels; and b) had to be complete in 5-6K words. I wrote it in 5,700 (on my tombstone you can carve He was a professional).

I think it's a pretty good story, though not as flashy as some of the things I've done. The title's *The Elf House*, and Cashel's the viewpoint character. As for when it comes out--well, the book's still waiting for Dave Weber's story. Those of you who know Dave's writing commitments can join me in a chuckle at that. (Come to think, I'll ask Karen to put the story up on the website: Linked from the News Page.)

The next project will be an RCN (Leary/Mundy) space opera. I've jotted down the first hundred words of a plot germ. It doesn't sound like much to me either, but I have to start somewhere. When I know what

my next project is, I get that sort of germ--the equivalent of a hygroscopic nucleus--and then read lots of things and take notes from them. Business falls into place around that first bit, and eventually I start writing the plot itself. (Believe me, I'm not saying everybody ought to work like that, but it's the way that works for me.)

The paperback of *Mistress of the Catacombs* is out (Tor, September, 2002), and by the time you read this the trade paperback *Seas of Venus* (Baen, October, 2002) should be appearing. The latter reprints *Surface Action* and *The Jungle*, two short novels set on the Venus of Kuttner and Moore's 1943 *Clash by Night*. We--Jim Baen and I--decided to bind in the travelogue of my family trip to Belize in 2001 also. Bob Eggleton's cover, the layout by my friend Jennie Faries, and Jim Baen's production give *Seas* a lush, garish look, perfect for the stories themselves.

In passing let me note that the look would've been right for the March, 1943 issue of *Astounding* with *Clash by Night* also, but the magazine was in a severely proper phase at the time. Instead of dreadnought battleships blasting at one another, the cover shows prim figures walking past a memorial; it's boring art and doesn't communicate the contents of the wonderful Kuttner/Moore story. If that's what respectability means, then give me raffish every time.

Oh--I should mention that when the outside typesetters put *Surface Action* together from a combination of scanned text and old floppies, they got a chapter out of order. This is no big deal--that's why there are proof pages, after all, and I caught the problem immediately when I went through them. The Baen websubscriptions, however, are (and are stated to be) uncorrected files--electronic galleys, in effect--so the chapters there were still out of place. I assure you that the printed copy is correct.

I've just shipped off corrections to the proofs of my military (mainly) SF collection *Grimmer Than Hell*. This was an interesting experience, as I hadn't reread the stories since they were first published--mostly between ten and twenty-five years ago. (A parenthetical: a passing reference to cars in *Nation Without Walls* dates the story to within a few months of right now. When I wrote the story, it was set 25 years in the future. I didn't change the text of the reprint.)

I was struck by two things. First, the craftsmanship of the stories is generally of high quality. (*Coming Up Against It* in particular isn't an especially good story--it's a straight-ahead shoot'em-up--but it was written to be bound in with a computer game. It was precisely the right thing for the purpose I wrote it.) Second, my head was in a very bad place for a long time after my body came back from Nam.

These are grim stories, and they're bitter, cynical stories. They aren't, however, despairing stories: the characters keep going on, even though there's often no obvious point in doing so. If any of you are in the place I was when I wrote them, then the best I can say is to keep going on because sometimes there turns out to be a door to somewhere better after all. My own door opened when I wrote *Redliners*, which is basically the second half of the tale that began with the first six stories in *Grimmer Than Hell*, the ones I did for The Fleet shared universe.

As for the website itself: I've done a note on Redliners for the bibliography page; it seemed fitting. There's some more Ovid up--I translated the story of Dryope from the *Metamorphoses*. (I've got handwritten roughs of still more Ovid, but they need several more passes before I'll be ready to show them to the world.)

There's a new home page picture, one of me wearing a Monty Python t-shirt while relaxing outside at ConGlomeration; there are more ConGlomeration photos linked from the News section. It was quite a nice con, with a really remarkable masquerade. I spent a little time in the gaming room since the Hammer's Slammers miniature game book seems to be on track. Miniature gaming is another world, but it's a positive one--like embroidery or butterfly collecting--which I find pleasing to be around even when I don't understand much of its intricacy.

There are two online fan discussion groups of, I'm told, different types. (Karen may insert a description here if she likes. I won't say the whole business is Greek to me, because I've got a little Greek.) I'm not personally involved with either site, but Karen will look in from time to time. One is a yahoo e-mail group; the other is a pair of bulletin boards. There are instructions for signing up on both posted on the FAQ page.

Apart from that, the site has been updated in lots of little ways. They keep creeping up on me. For example, *Goddess of the Ice Realm* is the 54th book I've written or co-written. (Jennie Faries noted that *Seas of Venus* was her first book but probably my fifty-fourth; I told her that I didn't count *Seas* in my list because it was mostly a recompilation from previous books.)

The news section has a general listing of what's coming out through March, 2003, so I'm not going to run through a batch of titles here. (At the website you get the cover art too, where it's available.) There's also a photo added to the Album page sent me by a chaplain deployed out of Bagram, showing him reading *All the Way to the Gallows* aboard a C-130. I'm awfully proud that a lot of vets and active service people read my stuff.

On the motorcycle front, I'm frustrated by Kawasaki. It appears that the Concours has serious internal problems caused by the dealership in Burlington not doing work I was paying them to do. Kawasaki of America insists it has no responsibility for service performed by a Kawasaki dealer at the shop to which the Kawasaki of America website directed me. I'm not going to sue the dealership because the best result from that would be the shop itself carrying out the repairs; if they can't change filters, then I damned well don't want them replacing my cam shaft. And I'm not going to sue Kawasaki of America for injurious reliance either. I practiced as an attorney for eight years; if I wanted to spend my time suing people, I'd still be a lawyer. I'd rather pay for the work and get on with my life.

But if you're considering buying a Kawasaki, you might keep my experience in mind.

On the good side, my Suzuki GS500E is a lot of fun and seems an awfully solid bike. I guess I should've gotten a Suzuki Bandit instead of a Kawasaki Concours, but I've made worse mistakes by trusting

people in the past.

Besides--problems that go away when you throw money at them aren't real problems. Rereading the stories in *Grimmer Than Hell* reminded me very forcefully of that. I'm very lucky.

I use bookmarks to break the ice with total strangers at cold signings--that is, signings where I'm sitting in the front of a store with a pile of books. I was running low on Tor bookmarks, so when Baen Books decided to send me to the Southern Festival of Books in October I asked Jim for more bookmarks. I now have a slew of them, designed by Jennie to Jim's specifications. (The front is great--a vertical slice of the Redliners cover. The back, with four little covers and a 30% mask of my face--where I wanted a blank--to sign on, strikes me as busy, but Jim's the boss.)

Anyway, I have spiffy bookmarks. If any of you want a signed bookmark, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

Drake
PO Box 904
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

The bookmarks are seven inches long, so if your SASE is shorter than that the bookmark will arrive folded. Neatly folded, I hope.

Back to plotting! Or at least, back to thinking thoughts that I hope will later lead to plotting.

Dave Drake
david-drake.com

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Newsletter #11 mailed out 27 June 2002

Dear People,

I've finished the rough of the fifth *Isles* book, which still has the working title *Goddess of the Ice Realm*. This may yet change. Those who've read previous newsletters may note that the only things that've remained constant are the concept of cold and a feminine noun. I firmly turned down an acquaintance's suggestion of *The Frigid Bitch*, however.

I have a lot of editing yet to do, but for me the difficult part of a book is writing it. Not plotting, not editing: slogging forward, day after day, writing. I find a lot of similarities between writing and filling sandbags. (And let me emphasize, there are right ways and wrong ways to fill sandbags, too.)

I plan my next project to be a third RCN (that is, Leary/Mundy) space opera. I don't have a clue as to what I'll use for the armature of that one, but I figure to dive back into Greek historians when I've finished editing *Goddess* into shape. Maybe Dionysius of Halicarnassus this time....

The other big positive news recently is that the miniature wargaming book is a go. John Lamshead (who's the British Museum's man on marine nematodes and a wargamer) pitched the proposal to Iain Dickie who publishes a gaming magazine. (All the people involved in this--except me--are British, as miniature gaming is quite a big business in the UK.) Mr Dickie accepted the book project on very satisfactory terms. (In Newsletter 10 I said there was no money in this. I turn out to have been wrong.)

JL is at work on the text including game rules. John Treadaway (a graphics designer and wargamer) has already completed some of the vehicle visuals as well as unit patches. My job in this will be a forward and to oversee the prose and graphics. (Well, I wrote the books to begin with; but that was in the past and I tend not to value very highly what's over and done with.)

I'm involved with lots of books which're coming out shortly. From Baen, the hardcover Hammer novel (three closely linked novellas) *Paying the Piper* is in stores now. Well, some stores. You know what I mean.

From Tor, the paperback of *Mistress of the Catacombs* will be an August release. They didn't send me the cover flats, so I don't know if the layout has been improved over that of the hardcover. Donato's art is wonderful, but until I saw the British design I thought the art didn't make a good cover. It can make a wonderful cover, but that may require a British designer.

The *Foreign Legions* paperback--with the title legible--is due out in September from Baen. (All the rest of these are from Baen Books.)

In October--all the rest of these are Baen--comes *Seas of Venus*, a trade paperback reprinting *Surface*

Action and *The Jungle* (both involving naval battles on a watery Venus). This was the first cover my friend Jennie Faries designed for Baen, by the way. (She did the design, not the art, which is by Bob Eggleton. If you think design doesn't make a difference, though, compare the American and British covers of *Mistress of the Catacombs*.)

The Tide of Victory, the fifth (and second to the last, we promise) Belisarius novel, written by Eric Flint from my outline, is an October paperback.

In December comes the paperback reprint of *Killer*, by me and Karl Edward Wagner. This one differs somewhat from the previous versions. Jim Baen read the book for the first time last month (he commissioned it in 1984) and found he liked it a lot, most of the way through. When he got to the part that Karl actually wrote (instead of Karl moving around photocopied sections of my rough draft, which is what most of the mss he handed in consisted of) however, Jim went into the sort of rage that I've previously only heard from him on matters involving Bill Clinton or the Democratic Party more generally.

Neither Jim nor I is either Gay or politically correct (trust me on this). But--

I'd written a scene in which the hero uses a child molester as bait for a monster. Karl changed that to a scene in which the hero graphically tortures a Gay to death for no obvious reason and no plot purpose whatever. Jim said he was going to excise that scene and a number of other bits in the last 20% of the book. I'm about to go over his edited version.

The new cover is by Patrick Turner. It's an excellently rendered horror cover (which is one of the ways you can validly read the book. Though it's also SF--and for that matter, historical fiction.)

In February, my collection *Grimmer than Hell* will be one of the hardcovers. It includes the three Lacey stories and a bunch of my Military SF that's never been collected--particularly the set of six stories from *The Fleet* shared universe and the two from its follow-on *Battlestation* shared universe. (Bill Fawcett and I co-edited both series.) The cover art is by Steve Hickman at absolutely the top of his form.

The second February hardcover will be *Warlord*, an omnibus of the first two of the General series, written by Steve Stirling from my outlines. The remainder of the series (three volumes as published, two as originally written) will be a March hardcover, *Conqueror*.

Steve and Baen Books parted company in a less than amicable fashion; the series is coming back in print as a result of constant pressure by regulars on Baen's Bar (the Barflies). I think this is a good result, but I kept out of the matter. So far as I'm concerned, it's *Baen* Books, and Jim has a right to run his company any way he pleases so long as he pays on time (which he most certainly does).

Changes in the website haven't been extensive since the April newsletter. There's another of Ovid's lyrics up (and two more in rough that I probably won't polish till I've sent in the final of *Goddess*). I did notes

on *Dagger* (my Thieves' World novel) for the bibliography page. And there's FAQ explaining why 'Platt' is often the name of a really despicable character in my books. (One querent said he'd found more than twenty examples.)

In other news, my wife and I visited Natural Bridge, Virginia, for our 35th anniversary. I first saw pictures of the site when I was about three years old, but I'd never been there. Before the opening of the West in the 1850s, Niagara Falls and Natural Bridge were the natural wonders of America that people discussed and painted, so seeing it is a part of history as well as geology.

And I've been having internal engine problems on my 2001 Kawasaki Concours. I may be having worse problems with the Raleigh Kawasaki dealer, but that hasn't been determined yet with certainty. (And yes, I've talked to a friend in the Kawasaki US headquarters.)

This isn't without an upside, however. I bought a Suzuki GS500E for transportation till the Concours is dealt with. It turns out to be a lot of fun (though one friend commented, "You still on that sissy bike?"). It's a light twin like nothing I've ridden in twenty years, but it's sprightly and is quite comfortable at 80 mph on suitable roads. It doesn't have as much carrying capacity (I'm not big myself, but it was nice when I had some option other than a knapsack for hauling heavy packages) and the lack of flywheel effect takes some getting used to (if you don't know what I mean, don't worry about it).

I hope all of you are well; and I hope to get the multiple edit passes on *Goddess of the Ice Realm* (or whatever it turns out to be) done in a reasonable length of time so that I can write the next thing....

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Newsletter #10 mailed out 6 April 2002

Dear People,

I'm about midway into the rough draft of the fifth book of the Isles series, under the working title *Goddess of the Ice Realm*. I say 'working title,' but it isn't written down anywhere (well, I guess it is now) and it may well change or change back. (The previous version was *Caverns of the Ice Queen*, but that meant two Queens out of five titles. It could still happen, though.)

Midway through a book doesn't sound very exciting, but these are very long books (for me) and I'm trying to cheer myself up by noting that I really am getting somewhere. In the middle of any fiction project, I feel that my story is deadly dull and that it'll bore any reader to tears. After I'm done, it never seems as bad as it does when I'm in the middle, but the problem is getting there. The middles of long novels last a lot longer than do those of a short book.

I really am getting there, however!

There've been several odd things of a positive nature recently. We (specifically, my webmaster Karen) got an e-mail from a junior editor on the Boca Raton newspaper. They were doing a feature on sea monsters and wanted to use the picture (from the website) of me standing beside the giant ammonite in the museum at Drumheller. We said sure and Karen sent the lady a high-res jpg of it.

If any of y'all live in Boca Raton, I'd be interested in knowing whether the picture really did run. They were supposed to send us a copy, but I've dealt with newspaper people before so I'm not surprised nothing has come. They're always on deadline, and you're no longer the story.

And then there's the University of Iowa Book Drop. This is a vending machine in the U of I Main Library set up to dispense handmade books with the profits funding library projects. It's been quite successful. The folks behind it decided to expand to signed paperbacks by Iowa authors. (I count as an Iowa author because I was born and raised there.) I and an Ottumwa IA romance writer donated books for the drop. (For more detail, see <http://david-drake.com/bookvending.html>.)

I was glad to help, because I have a great deal of affection for the U of I Library. I worked there as an undergraduate, making ninety-five cents an hour as a book page, and wrote my first story (*Denkirch*) at library tables. When I sold *Denkirch*, I calculated that if I'd simply worked additional hours as a book page rather than writing, I'd have doubled my income for the period.

The third item is the Friedman quote. A friend of mine was reading *Hidden Order*, an economics text by David Friedman. He came upon the following:

... *Only a few of us have enough willpower, when a new Dick Francis or the latest volume*

of a David Drake series comes out in hardcover, to wait for the paperback.

Friedman is a respected economist in his own right and the son of Milton Friedman, a Nobel laureate in economics. This is a Good Thing, and the quote will be appearing on various of my books (at least for Baen).

But what it proves is that one intelligent person is a big fan of my work. Heck, many more than one such person has written or spoken to me over the past long while. I'm reminded of the fuss back when I was a kid and JFK said he liked the James Bond novels. So did I, and so did a lot of other people--but the president's comment said more about his reading taste than it did about the intrinsic merit of Fleming's work.

I know that, and I keep telling myself that. But it still feels good.

I'm involved with a lot of books that will be coming out shortly (which isn't quite the same as saying a lot of my books are coming out shortly). *The Tyrant*, written by Eric Flint from my outline, is a March hardcover from Baen Books. Eric did an excellent job of a difficult task, writing the second half of my outline as a self-standing novel which could nonetheless be read as the sequel to *The Reformer*, written by Steve Stirling from the first half of my outline. Jim Baen will probably issue them together at some future point, but you can read either without knowing it's part of the whole. *The Tyrant* has an excellent Gary Ruddell cover.

The Warmasters, edited by Bill Fawcett, is an April hardcover from Baen books. It consists of an Honor Harrington novella by Dave Weber; a novella from the Belisarius series, but plotted and written by Eric Flint alone; and *Choosing Sides*, my Hammer novella, which will be the opening segment of *Paying the Piper* (which I'll get to in a moment). The cover is by David Mattingly, but it's misattributed on the flap to Gary Ruddell (which I can imagine displeasing both artists).

The only portion of *The Warmasters* that isn't or won't shortly be available in single-author form is Eric's *Islands*; which, however, is excellent. I think it's worth the price of the book, at least when it comes out in paperback.

Speaking of paperbacks, the paperback edition of *Foreign Legions*, the shared universe based on my *Ranks of Bronze*, will be out in September from Baen. The only difference from the hardcover is that the cover title will be red instead of the green type on green background (as chosen by a managing editor, now departed, who felt the lack of contrast and legibility was very artistic. She may well have been right about that....)

By the way, *The Excalibur Option*--Dave Weber's expansion of his *Foreign Legions* novella--was a February Baen hardcover.

Paying the Piper, a Hammer novel in the form of three self-standing novellas, will be a Baen hardcover.

(It is a novel, by the way; unlike the original collection *Hammer's Slammers*, which was a group of stories set in a common universe.) The cover's by Larry Elmore (and no, those aren't exactly the way I visualize my combat cars, but the purpose of a cover painting is to sell the book to a reader who'll like what's inside, not to act as an engineering drawing).

My webmaster has put up the three novellas which comprise *Paying the Piper* on the website as I finished them, but I think she's taken them down now. Baen's websubscriptions program will be running the book (maybe already is? I don't keep up with this) in early electronic form for those who can't wait but missed the website appearances.

Seas of Venus will be out as a Baen trade paperback in October with a really spiffy Bob Eggleton giant octopus on the cover. The volume contains the two short novels I set in the Venus of Henry Kuttner and CL Moore's *Clash by Night: Surface Action* and *The Jungle*. I've also included my Belize travelogue (in slightly edited form); that's on the website with pictures. (The Introduction is online at <http://david-drake.com/dwintroduction.html>.)

And having mentioned *Clash by Night*, a formative story for me, let me note that *Dogs of War*, a reprint Military SF anthology which I edited, was a January mass market release from Warner's. It contains *Clash by Night* and a lot of other stories which I think are particularly good.

Boy, talk about breaking news: Eric Flint just phoned to tell me Baen Books will be reprinting the General series by Steve Stirling from my outlines. The regulars on Baen's Bar (the Bar Flies) have been bugging him till he agreed. I have no idea when or in what format, but for all you people whom I told the series probably wouldn't be reprinted--I was wrong.

Jim Baen prodded me mildly to get the Lacey stories back in print. The problem is that the three stories in the series total only about 25,000 words and I very much don't want to get back into that mindset. That got me thinking about stories that fit the tone of the Lacey pieces, and I remembered the series I did for the Fleet shared universe.

The collection's title is *Grimmer Than Hell*, and trust me as to its accuracy. Besides the Lacey stories and the six from The Fleet, it includes the pair from the Battlestation shared universe, the stories I did for *Drakas!* and *Armageddon*, and a never-published piece I wrote for a computer game a decade or so ago.

As I put the collection together, I realized that the Fleet stories are really the precursors of *Redliners*. That is in many ways my best book and in addition was cathartic both for me and (based on comments from veterans) for a lot of other people who've seen the elephant. Thank goodness I wrote the Fleet stories, because if I hadn't I might never have written *Redliners*; and if I hadn't done that, I'd be in a less good place mentally today.

There've been a number of little changes to the website. More Ovid--the Perseus section of the

Metamorphoses and an amusing lyric--has gone up. I've corrected the caption to the picture of me with *Bockscar* in Dayton: that isn't the casing of a bomb like the one idropped on Nagasaki but a later nuclear weapon in front of me. And there's a few more pictures, including one of Jim Baen, Mark Van Name, and Jennie Faries (a friend of mine who's now doing some of the cover and brochure design for Baen Books) at dinner in a very good local steakhouse. (Thank you, Jim.)

The miniature gaming book on Hammer's Slammers is on hold while John Lamshead, who'll be writing the scenarios, deals with marine nematodes (his day job). John Treadaway, the modeler, is the third partner in the project. (Well, really, I'm the third partner--they're doing the work.) Two top miniature companies, Old Crow and Ground Zero Games, have offered to build free models for the project to our specifications so long as they can sell the line to the public as 'approved by David Drake'. GZG has further offered to do spaceships for us and provide a license for their space war rules, Full Thrust, on the same terms.

There's no money in this, but it's fun. It's also the way communities--and capitalism--are supposed to work. I'm pleased to be a part of it.

A fan has started a David Drake e-mail group at yahoo.groups.com. (To subscribe, send e-mail to redliners-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.) I have no direct contact with this; that is, I won't be participating or even lurking. The fellow asked me to mention it in a newsletter, which I'm now doing. I hope that if any actual questions arise, though, somebody will ask my webmaster so that she can forward them to me.

Now back to writing *Goddess of the Ice Realm*; at least I really *think* that's going to be the title....

Dave Drake
david-drake.com

To subscribe, unsubscribe or change your e-mail address, e-mail webmaster@david-drake.com

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last updated 6 April 2002 by webmaster@david-drake.com

Newsletter #9 mailed out 13 January 2002

Dear People,

I've started the actual writing of the fifth book in the Isles series (AKA Big Fat Fantasy Five). My working title is *Caverns of the Ice Queen*, but a part of me is leaning toward *Empress of the Ice Realm*. I'll listen to any opinions y'all want to offer.

Thick novels are a lot of work. I've told Tor that I hope to hand this one in on August 1, 2002. I'd like it to be sooner, and I'm sure they'd like it to be sooner; but it takes a while to get things right.

I've talked to writers who're furious because their editor didn't catch a logic lapse that a fan or reviewer mentioned, or because the copyeditor didn't correct their typos and misspellings. So far as I'm concerned, those things are part of my job. The book doesn't go in until I'm satisfied with it, and so long as the publisher prints what I sent he won't hear complaints from me. My Tor editor, Dave Hartwell, didn't read all of *Queen of Demons* and only read the first two chapters of *Servant of the Dragon*. I take that as a compliment.

Mind, when the publisher doesn't print what I send in, I get very bent out of shape. Read the FAQ on my website regarding *Servant of the Dragon* for an example.

Apart from that, *Paying the Piper*, a Hammer novel, is scheduled for July hardcover release by Baen Books. The excellent Larry Elmore cover and the final section of the novel (a short novel in itself, *Neck or Nothing*) are live on my website now. I think Jim will release the whole book in pieces in the Baen Webscriptions (for which see Baen.com).

The Tyrant, Eric Flint's development of my outline for the book to follow *The Reformer* (which Steve Stirling wrote), is complete and will be a Baen March hardcover. This is what I call the General Follow-On series (okay, I said it was what I called it, not that it was a good name) in which Raj Whitehall and the supercomputer Center are implanted in the minds of people on other planets to reverse the effects of the collapse of galactic civilization.

The first of the series was *The Chosen* (by Steve, who wrote the original General series as well); *The Reformer* followed; and now that *The Tyrant* is out of the way, Eric will at some future date do the fourth book (which has an Egyptian background). My title was *The Rebel*, but I don't swear that'll be on the book. (The working title of *The Tyrant* was *The Redeemer*). It's possible that Eric will decide to develop the novel outside the series framework.

(Look, if you think this is complicated, you should talk to Marla at Baen about keeping my various contracts straight. Me, I just write books.)

Dogs of War, the reprint anthology of military SF which I edited for Warners, is out now in paperback. The stories are very good, but I do want to emphasize that they're all reprints. The only new material is my introduction and my end notes to each story. Those of you reading my newsletters will understand what I mean when I say that the new material has a personal touch, but I don't know that this is a sufficient reason to spend your money if you're already familiar with the stories.

I've had a number of questions about why there's no audiobook version of *Mistress of the Catacombs*. The short answer is that Tor screwed up and didn't offer the book to Brilliance (which did excellent jobs on the first three volumes of the Isles series). The woman handling subrights for Tor was incompetent (as I know from some personal dealings I'd had with her a couple years ago). They finally fired her, but she didn't leave any records. The new person didn't pick up the ball which the old one had dropped.

I find this very depressing, the more so because my personal agent made the initial sale to Brilliance (on *Lord of the Isles*), but Tor in the negotiations on further books in the series absolutely insisted on taking over audiobook rights. Which they then pissed away. Welcome to the romantic world of publishing....

Tor didn't send *Servant of the Dragon* to Peanut Press (the e-book publisher), either. When a reader brought that to my attention, I dug out the files (which wasn't quite as simple as it sounds, because they were in DOS and I don't have a machine that'll handle DOS any more) and asked my wonderful webmaster to check them over before forwarding them to Peanut Press. For those of you who care about incunabula, the electronic version is as I wrote it--not as reset by Tor and published in hardcover without proofing.

In terms of weirder news, the Hammer series turns out to be a cult favorite in British miniature wargaming circles. (This is a much bigger business in the UK than it is here; the excellent Osprey series of historical battle and uniform handbooks is written for miniature wargamers.)

There's even a Hammer's Slammers website: <http://www.salute.co.uk/slammers3/index.htm>

The site's unauthorized in the sense that they put it together without my knowledge, but it's an incredible piece of work. (If you look at the site, remember that the figures are 25-mm--one inch--high. I can't imagine painting at that degree of detail.) The folks involved got in touch with me and we're working on an official miniature book and regimental history. (That is, they do all the work and I say, "No, the turret ought to be bigger in relation to the hull," and the like.) I find this puzzling but kinda neat. We'll see what transpires.

There've been a few minor changes to the website. The bibliography page has been updated and reorganized a bit. The news page is updated whenever there's a new item to add, so you can check it frequently between newsletters.

For relaxation I've continued translating chunks of Ovid and putting them up on the website when they're polished. I started to say, "This has nothing to do with my work," but in fact I find that it has a

fair amount of direct influence on my fiction as well as keeping me sane. (All right, my friends have just chuckled. Keeping me between the ditches, let's say.) The latest additions are *Amores I:1-3* and *Amores 11b* linked from <http://david-drake.com/ovid.html>.

Ovid was a remarkably skilled craftsman who has taught and continues to teach me technique. Besides that, the stories he tells in such an evocative fashion frequently tweak something in my mind. I've just done a rough translation of the last couple hundred lines of *Metamorphoses*, Book IV--the portion dealing with Perseus. I picked it for the description of the sea monster coming for Andromeda, but the appended sequences dealing with Perseus and Atlas, then with Perseus and Medusa, also made me think, "You know, I could use that...."

And so I shall, God willing and the creeks don't rise. Let's hope 2002 has all the good stuff of last year and not the rest, shall we?

Best to all of you. Now, back to the sea monster which is about to attack Prince Garric....

Dave Drake
david-drake.com

To subscribe, unsubscribe or change your e-mail address, e-mail webmaster@david-drake.com

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last updated 13 January 2002 by webmaster@david-drake.com

Newsletter #8.1 mailed out 3 December 2001
[Newsletter 8 never made it through the mail queue.]

Dear People,

I started the first iteration of this newsletter by saying that I didn't plan to say much about September 11. At this point I'm going to say a little more, but I'll repeat my two points from the first version:

First, I don't know that we're good in the absolute sense--I certainly didn't feel that what I was doing in Viet-Nam was good--but I'm as certain as I can be that the other side in this one is evil.

Second, I'm proud as I never have been before of having served in the US armed forces. Thomas E. White, the Secretary of the Army, has said that the professionalism and camaraderie the 11 ACR when he served with the unit in Viet-Nam (before I was there in 1970) was the turning point of his life. I guess I echo his sentiments.

I'm going to say a bit more because of the following exchange through the website's Frequently Asked Questions form. This is the full text, unedited:

name: Malcolm Duncan

question: While I "volunteered" for the draft in 1970 I never served in Vietnam. I have read many of your books, mostly the "Bolo" series. My question is what is your personal opinion of the current war against terrorism? Do you feel that it is a just war? A winnable war? Are we able to trade-off freedoms for security? Is America in any danger of becoming as evil as our enemies? Your thoughts are very important to me.

Dear Mr Duncan, I think we can and should bring down the Taliban regime, given that they're harboring terrorists. Doing so will cause great harm to a lot of ordinary Afghans who only want to be allowed to grow their opium in peace. Tough. I don't think we're going at the job the right way, because we're too afraid of second order consequences when we should be focused on the primary objective (see above).

Sincerely, Dave Drake

I'm sorry I asked, you heartless, bloodthirsty bastard. I guess that your bloodlust wasn't satisfied by killing all those innocents in Vietnam, now you want to kill them in Afganistan, too. It will be my distinct please never to read one of your books again.....and may you get a fan letter laced with anthrax.

To be more specific about my belief, I think that when you're fighting a war you need to deal with first things first. Instead we dicked around for three weeks, bombing infrastructure targets (which in Afghanistan is a grim joke) and Taliban training camps (which were either empty or misidentified

villages). We avoided bombing Taliban concentrations facing the Northern Alliance because the NA are bad people and we wanted to create a broad-based Afghan government instead of putting thugs like Rashid Dostum back in power. When we did bomb Taliban positions, we attacked only foreign units--not units of native Afghans.

The result of this was that we did no good and killed a fair number of civilians in error. (Mixing cluster bombs and similarly-colored food packets was a particularly graphic example of what happens when you try to fight a war nicely. War isn't nice.) The Afghan Taliban had no reason to defect, and the foreigners couldn't defect--they have no place to go.

We finally started bombing the hell out of the thickest Taliban concentrations, targeting Afghans as well as foreigners. Taliban resistance collapsed, primarily because most of those fighters who could defect, did. (I've seen both an Arc Light and a Daisycutter go off. Trust me: nobody who's seen either of those wants to be under the next one.)

I wish we'd done it three weeks sooner and avoided the extra civilian casualties, but I'll take the present result. I sincerely hope a broad-based democratic government takes root in Afghanistan, but I'm not holding my breath: The region's written history goes back to Alexander the Great, and it hasn't ever in the past had such a government.

On a more personal note--I ride a motorcycle. I don't expect to die of anthrax in a fan letter.

Our previous webhost, Invite Internet Services, moved its operations from Baltimore to Denver. The process wasn't seamless--the site was down for several days and e-mail through the site out for longer than that--and Invite's new software was different, complex, and without good on-site instructions. On the credit side, the support staff was unfailingly responsive, though sometimes the response was, "Sorry, we lost your files."

We--me and my wonderful webmaster, Karen Zimmerman--intended to stay with Invite. That changed when we tried to send out the first version of this newsletter. Invite had introduced a scripting error in Majordomo which made this impossible.

We--Karen--talked to them. They stopped being responsive or even particularly polite. They still haven't fixed the error which they gratuitously created. I don't like either stupid people or incompetents, and Invite seems to have rather more than its share of both.

david-drake.com is now hosted by Pair.com.

The book tour on *Mistress of the Catacombs* is over and I survived. So did everybody in contact with me, though there were a couple times I was thankful for having developed a great deal of control over the past several decades.

The way a tour works is as follows: I flew to a place. A media escort picked me up at the airport and took me to where I was supposed to be. Sometimes this was to a hotel, but I might go directly to a formal signing or we might stop off to do stock signings. That is, we'd go into a bookstore. Generally the escort would have contacted the manager to see if they had copies of my books (realistically, every general bookstore in the country has something of mine). Occasionally we simply saw a store as we were driving past and stopped in.

Apparently not all writers are willing to sign paperbacks, and some writers insist that the store have enough of their books 'to make it worth their time'. I figured that the only reason I was going on this trek was to make store managers happy, and it sure was more worthwhile to sign a few books than to sit in my hotel room wishing I were home or dead, either one. Most stores had at least twenty individual titles and most of the staff I came in contact with were really happy to have me come by.

My preferred technique is to sit on the floor in the SF section signing madly while the escort puts 'Signed copy' stickers on the books. Managers generally wanted me to sit in the cafe and have the staff carry books to me. I avoided that where possible. In the first place, it isn't an efficient way of doing the job. Second, it feeds into the notion that 'I'm special,' which isn't true and which I've seen destroy some talented people--my friend Karl Wagner among them. And third, while I'm sitting on the floor in the section I've got a good opportunity to sell books to people who are likely to be interested in them (given that they're there to begin with).

A number of the escorts came from marketing backgrounds. I was pleased that they universally volunteered that I was an amazing salesman. It doesn't come naturally to me, but I figure it's my job at these things; and I've always tried to do my job the best way I could.

Stock signings generally require the help of the escort since I don't know where the stores are (though I did drop in on a Borders I saw across the street when I was on my own in DC). Most of my escorts were really wonderful: pleasant, competent, and prepared. And I should add that Tor put me up in luxury hotels, most of which were as comfortable as I'm likely to be away from home.

That isn't, unfortunately, very comfortable. Once I was given the choice of a smoking room or waiting for a non-smoking room to be cleaned. I wanted a place to dump my gear and rinse off immediately before going to a signing, so I took the smoking room. I regretted my choice for the next couple days of sniffing, but it was my choice. And there were oddities like the hotel in Nashville where there was country music everywhere, including a CD going in my room when I arrived. (A note told me I could take the CD and have the price added to my bill; not bloody likely!) There were benches around the fountain out front, however, and the sound of plashing water covered the music playing under the porte cochere behind me as I finished editing *Neck or Nothing* on hardcopy. And in Cleveland, when I ate in the hotel restaurant (as usual; I don't care much about food and the last thing I wanted to do was spend effort going out to eat) the dinner was excellent but the whole process took two hours. (No, they weren't busy. But as my friend Mark says, not everybody is competent.)

Considered as an alternative to jungle busting on a tank, this was idyllic. Considered as an alternative to being home with my family, friends, and books... well, it's over.

I did two radio interviews on the tour. The lady in Columbia, SC, arrived late for a live interview and had lost her briefing notes. Fortunately I'd picked up the sellzine *Explorations* while doing a stock signing in a Barnes and Noble. She used the review therein as briefing notes and it went pretty well. The guy in Cincinnati was absolutely first rate and had even read most of *Mistress* before the taped interview. His show also airs in Fayetteville, NC--Ft Bragg, the 82nd Airborne, and the place I did my basic training, so we talked about the Hammer series and military SF part of the time.

The formal signings were a mixed bag. For the most part the store staff had done their jobs, though the woman in the Davis-Kidd in Memphis put me in the garden section to cold sell and had only one copy of *Lord of the Isles* in the store. (The other seven had sold in the past week and she hadn't bothered to reorder ahead of my arrival). She and the first staff member I talked to when dropping in on the B&N in Charlottesville--who was just short of discourteous--were the only bookstore people I'd rather not have dealt with.

Some times it just didn't work out, though. This was a tough period to get people to go out to book signings, even when the store really tried. In those cases I signed a lot of stock and generally met a fan or two who'd gone to considerable effort to get there. (In Jackson, TN, a fellow had driven from Memphis to see me. He hadn't known about the earlier Memphis signing, which didn't surprise me.)

But there were good numbers at many of the superstores, and it genuinely is a pleasure to answer fans' questions. Mall stores invariably sat me at a table to cold sell (a sit and sell), and thanks to experience and the bookmarks Tor provided me with I do that well too.

I mostly flew from city to city. This wasn't any more fun than you'd think, especially since I was on one-way tickets which meant I and my carry-on baggage were sometimes handsearched. US Airways cancelled a flight without telling me or the travel agent; that was a glitch, but I got there. And I'm home now. (I keep coming back to that, don't I?)

I had free time, and some of the escorts were great local guides. I've now seen the chipped walls of the SC Statehouse, damaged by Sherman's shelling, and the burial place of Governor Wade Hampton for whom my friend Manly Wade Hampton Wellman was named. ('Manly' came from the name of the uncle who rode under General Hampton in the Civil War.) I've seen the Nashville Parthenon (which I've wanted to see for thirty years or more) and the Opryland Hotel which was unexpectedly amazing. I saw James Madison's house and 2700-acre estate near Charlottesville. I visited the Phillips (where I saw Renoir's *The Boating Party*, a wonderful piece) and Corcoran museums in DC (and was amused at the latter to see an exhibition of nature photographs, some of whose 'artists' chose to deliberately distort their work so that they wouldn't be compared to somebody like Ansel Adams who was a good photographer. One woman actually photographed islands with her lens underwater.)

And while I was in Ohio, my friend John Squires took me to the Wright-Patterson Air Force Museum. There I found myself oddly nostalgic, both over the wonder weapons of my childhood (for example the Matador cruise missile of 1955) and Vietnam Era hardware. The oddest of the latter was the Daisycutter, a 15,000 pound jungle clearing bomb which really got our attention when one unexpectedly went off nearby in War Zone C a long time ago. (I note with amusement that Daisycutters have recently made headlines when a few were dropped for psychological purposes in Afghanistan. If you want to see what one looks like, check <http://david-drake.com/album.html>)

Was it worthwhile? Well, it's always worthwhile to help people sell my books. Furthermore, I told Tor that I would do anything they wanted me to do to help them, and of course I'm going to do what I said I would. It wasn't in the main a whole lot of fun, but I've had worse experiences.

While on the tour, I finished editing the last section of *Paying the Piper*, a Hammer book tentatively scheduled as a Baen hardcover for July, 2002. The first two sections, *Choosing Sides* and *The Political Process*, have been up consecutively on the website; the third, *Neck or Nothing*, is now up.

Eric Flint has completed *The Tyrant*, the sequel to *The Reformer* which Steve Stirling did from the first half of my outline. It's good that he's nearing completion, because Baen Books has it scheduled as an April, 2002, hardcover. (I don't know why they did things in that order; they just did.)

Dogs of War, a reprint military SF anthology which I edited with Marty Greenberg doing the business side, will be a January, 2002, pb release from Warner Aspect. I clarified some things in my own head while writing the introduction and notes for the volume; for that at least it was a worthwhile project for me.

I've used Latin to settle and center me ever since I was a freshman in college. This past year has been a pretty disorienting one in many fashions (not all of them bad; but as a friend once said, good stress is still stress). I've been reading Ovid, mostly his lyrics (which are manageably short sections); and this time I've been doing written translations to keep myself honest. I've shown the translations to a few close friends, some of whom have suggested that I put them up on the website. For the heck of it, I'm doing so now. (<http://david-drake.com/ovid.html>)

My birthday is September 24, and I normally have a pig-picking to celebrate sometime close to that date. This year because of the tour the party was late--October 21--but the weather couldn't have been nicer or the pig more tasty.

I thought as I listened to about fifty people sing 'Happy Birthday' that I'm incredibly lucky to have a lot of friends. There are other ways to be, but this is the one that works for me. There are some pictures up on the website, and there may be more shortly as my friend Ken Warren has sent those he took.

And thanks to the generosity of my extended family, I now have a complete set of *Amazing*. As my friend Mark says, "You have to know something about collecting to realize how difficult this is to

achieve, and possibly how stupid it is."

Now that I've caught my breath, I'm starting on the fifth book in the Isles series. The present working title is CAVERNS OF THE ICE QUEEN, but that may change. (It's accurate, though; I know where I'm going with this one, although I'm still trying to work out the route.)

Forward, and best to all of you!

--*Dave Drake*
david-drake.com

To subscribe, unsubscribe or change your e-mail address, e-mail webmaster@david-drake.com

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last updated 3 December 2001 by webmaster@david-drake.com

Newsletter #7 mailed out 1 September 2001

Dear People,

It's been a very busy couple months; a great time in general with a lot of unique experiences; but also completely exhausting.

The main thing that happened was a ten-day family trip to Belize. I got a huge windfall last year when Mattel bought the electronic game rights to the Hammer series. While I'm not somebody who pisses money away (I don't *like* Porsches, quite apart from the question of whether I want to drive a car at all), this gave me the means to do something I've always dreamed of: see ancient cities rising out of the jungle.

There are two places where these exist: Central America and Angkor Wat. The latter stopped being a tourist destination at about the time I was visiting eastern Cambodia on the back of a tank, so that meant Mayan sites.

My son Jonathan likes castles. He and his wife April had been planning a trip to Ireland to see castles but bought a house instead. They enthusiastically assured me that Mayan pyramids would be an adequate alternative, so they came along with me and Jo.

There are lots of ways to visit the region. We booked a tour organized by International Expeditions through a travel agent. IE has a website, but when Jo last year did an on-line search she determined that there were no tours to Belize available in the Summer (when April, a school teacher, would be free) and suggested that Jonathan and I go alone in February (which wasn't acceptable to me). Most people are more internet-savvy than I am (I didn't even try searching for us myself), but I'd still suggest that money paid to a travel agent was well spent.

The choice of Belize was, frankly, political. I follow international affairs closely enough that I knew I didn't want to put money into Guatemala, and I had similar qualms about the feudal oligarchy running southern Mexico. Honduras was a possible, but Belize was actually a place I could feel good about.

The tour did spend two days at Tikal--probably the most impressive Mayan site that's been cleared--across the border. I'm glad to have been to Tikal, but everything I saw in Guatemala reinforced my preconceptions about the country.

I've got a full (11,400 word--including misspellings, typos, and editing errors, because I'm trying to finish a book) travelogue on the website (*see* <http://david-drake.com/belize.html>) for download in PDF format for people who want a blow-by-blow account, but the short version is that it was a wonderful trip. Things I saw and learned during those ten days will be with me for the rest of my life and will crop up in everything I write from now on.

In addition to the jungle and the ancient ruins that brought me to Central America, I found the birds unexpectedly wonderful. I'd realized that rain forest birds were colorful, but I hadn't appreciated that so many of them were huge: orioles and woodpeckers twenty inches long, nine-inch flycatchers--that sort of thing. In addition, the birds were generally unconcerned by humans being close by staring at them (this was particularly true of the raptors).

After a week at Holden Beach, NC, with the usual group of friends (relaxing, but still a wrench from my comfortable routine), I was off to Calgary for Con-Version. It was a very pleasant, low-key convention and I was positively impressed by the Canadian writers I met there.

I was mildly amused by the enthusiasm many of them displayed for getting Arts Council grants, however. My own feeling is that Samuel Johnson wrote nothing worth remembering--and several things that were an embarrassment--after he took a government pension from the Bute administration, and the reputation of Stanislas Lem might have aged better had he not made himself a toady for a brutal regime. I got a chauffeur's license and drove a bus to support myself before my writing (unexpectedly) started to provide a living, and I continue to think mine was the better choice.

The high point of Calgary was visiting the nearby Royal Tyrell Museum, where the director, Phil Currie, gave us a behind-the-scenes tour of what is arguably the best dinosaur museum in the world. There was a 6-foot diameter ammonite; a picture of me with it will be on the SF Book Club's advertising for their edition of *Mistress of the Catacombs*. (For those of you who haven't read the Isles series, giant ammonites are among the catalogue of villains.) I hope I can get Tor to use it as a flap photo on later volumes of the series as well. (See <http://david-drake.com/calgary.html>)

Upcoming is a very extensive book tour. The times and places are listed on the website (<http://david-drake.com/news.html>); basically a circle through the South and eastern Midwest during the end of September and beginning of October. This is a Really Good Thing: Tor is flying me between points and providing media escorts to get me where I'm supposed to be (those of you who know me well are aware that my sense of direction is conspicuous by its absence, and I haven't driven a car in a very long time).

Having said that--my idea of a good time is sitting with my keyboard or reading something. I'll be delighted to see any of you who get to a signing when I'm in your area, and I'll do a good job meeting the public and doing the various media things that're being set up (I have in the past). But I'm going to be very, very glad to be back home, working on the next book in peace and quiet.

Mistress of the Catacombs is really out, by the way. I saw copies hot off the presses on August 15 when I was signing at a B&N in Raleigh, but those had been drop shipped from the printer. A friend's store in Seattle got its copies last week, and today I got a box of them myself. It's a well-made book and an attractive one, though I regret the passing of the color map endpapers (presumably in the cause of economy). The map is inside, half-toned.

I'm continuing to chunk away at my next book, a collection of linked Hammer stories. My working title is *Paying the Piper*, but this could change. I'd originally intended it to be five 20K novellas. The first piece was 31K, the second was 46K, and I'm now at something under 30K on the third which I expect to conclude the volume... in another 20,000 words or so.

My Hammer pieces tend to be more tightly-written than most of my fiction, and I'm a tighter writer in general than most (this isn't necessarily a virtue, but it's a fact.) I think people will get their money's worth from the volume. Anyway, we've put (Karen Webmaster has put) the second of the pieces, *The Political Process*, up in PDF format alongside the first in the News section for free download. We've taken down my story and Mark's story from *Foreign Legions* since the book's been out for some while now.

Apart from that there've been some minor changes to the FAQ page; pictures have been moved or removed; there're some pictures from Calgary; and I added a commentary on *Bridgehead* in the bibliography section. (And there's the lengthy Belize section, of course.)

The other thing that I should mention is that our web hosting service, Invite.net, migrated the site from servers in Baltimore to a set in Denver. The operation was supposed to be seamless, but of course it wasn't. The site was down for several days, and the attached webmaster e-mail was out intermittently for longer than that. If you had problems getting through, that's why.

Concurrently (but so far as I know coincidentally) Earthlink (where I have my personal account) was having problems also. I could receive but not send messages, and my webmaster (also on Earthlink) could do neither, though if she accessed her webmail through my Earthlink account she could both send and receive. I was therefore able to receive messages telling me my website was down--but I couldn't respond to them, let alone do anything about it. This was very frustrating to me. Having said that--I'm just back from Central America. There are people in this world who have real problems. I'm not one of them. I hope the same is true for all of you and yours.

--Dave Drake
david-drake.com

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last updated 1 September 2001 by webmaster@david-drake.com

Newsletter #6 mailed out 9 July 2001

Dear People,

Rather than being an account of things that've happened, a lot of this newsletter is about what's in store for the next few months. (Assuming the asteroid doesn't strike, of course. I learned a long time ago the truth of the adage, 'Man proposes, God disposes,' and I live in that knowledge.)

Some things *have* happened, however. Tor Books flew me to New York City on June 6 and put me up for the night in the Carlton, formerly the Savile, a really nice Grand Hotel which has been fully modernized. A startup outfit called Bookstream is doing videos of authors to be streamed on the web by outlets like Amazon. If you click on the cover of a book, instead of getting simply a bigger cover you get a lot of information and four or five short clips of the author answering interview questions.

This is brand new: the producer (Steve) explained that their initial problem had been that the retailers said, "Well, that's interesting. Line up some publishers and come back to us." While the publishers said, "Well, that's interesting. Line up some retailers and come back to us." Tor is one of the first to gamble with the idea, taking five author slots--of which I'm one.

The Bookstream people are extremely professional and a delight to work with. The interview and filming took place in Steve's large apartment on 24th Street rather than the uptown studio as originally planned. Street sounds--particularly garbage trucks backing and a pile driver--complicated the process, but there was the benefit of having Tim, a 47-year-old Eastern Box Turtle (Steve's pet of twenty years) racing about. She (hey, it's hard to sex turtles!) was one fast little turtle, let me tell you.

Steve complimented me on my website, saying that it stood well above the others he'd checked for the project in terms of providing useful information in an accessible fashion. I told him that the design (and the fact there was a site to begin with!) was a result of the skill of my webmaster. Karen's background is in instructional technology, so her emphasis is on providing information to the user instead of glitz that shows how clever the designer is.

After the taping (the result is supposed to be ready in time for the mid-September release of *Mistress of the Catacombs*), I went to the Tor offices in the Flatiron Building; I'd never been there before. The elevators are individually quite small. I got out of mine on the 14th floor, vaguely wondering where I went next, and nearly collided with Tom Doherty--my closest friend in the firm, and coincidentally the publisher--who was getting out of the next cage. He zipped me into his office on the apex of the triangular building with a gorgeous view over Madison Avenue and 23d Street. My editor, Dave Hartwell, and folks with whom I'd been working for years but who were just names to me, came in and chatted as we were having coffee. Amy Crump from publicity then guided me around the rest of the suite.

Tom's office is spacious, with trophies and neat shelves of recent Tor titles. The rest of Tor Books looks a lot like my own work areas: piles of books, papers, and goodness knows what stacked most of the places there are. Dave is Tor's out-of-copyright western editor, so I went off with Owen Wister, Johnston McCulley, and Clarence E Mulford titles stuffed in my cargo pockets.

After a conversational lunch with Tom, Dave, and Stephanie Lane (who's as much a pleasure in person as she's been to work with by phone over the years) I flew back home.

NYC has in the past been one of my least favorite places. My most recent trip there had been in the late '80s and was not a good experience for reasons which were not entirely the fault of the city. I told the Tor publicity people that if their studio was in Viet-Nam, I'd return there with just as much enthusiasm. In the event it was so nice a trip that I'd say that averaging it and the last previous made my NYC visits pretty decent.

In addition to the Bookstream project, Tor is sending me on an honest-to-goodness author tour for *Mistress*, flying me between cities in a circuit of the Southeast and Eastern Midwest. The dates and places (subject to change, I suppose) are up on the website under News, and any changes will be plugged in as soon as we know them. This is really a Good Thing; but I gotta tell you, it sure makes me nervous. I'm a pretty retiring person, and I'm going to be in public mode for several weeks straight.

On Friday, July 13, I'm taking my wife Jo, our son Jonathan, and Jonathan's wife April, to Belize for ten days. I've always been fascinated by ancient jungle-covered cities. That means Mayan sites in Central America; Angkor Wat in Cambodia stopped being a viable alternative for a family vacation at about the time I was in the general area riding a tank. I'm really looking forward to this. I'll answer accumulated e-mails when I get back, but I'm not taking a computer into the rain forest. (My son the techie is taking one, to download pictures from his digital camera; I'll let you know how it works out.)

I finished the second of the four Hammer novellas for my next Baen title. This one is 45K and titled *The Political Process*. I'm hoping to have the finished plot of the third done before we leave for Belize so I can stare at it thoughtfully in between howler monkeys and bushmasters. (Well, we're supposed to see howler monkeys; and romantic that I am, I'm hoping for a bushmaster also.) The first of the series, *Choosing Sides*, is up on the website now for free download.

Apart from that, the new Baen paperback of *Ranks of Bronze* ought to be out realsoonnow. And Warner's has the reprint military SF anthology *Dogs of War* scheduled for January, 2002. I did the intro to the volume and afterwords to all the stories while I was in NYC--which is a good thing, because when I got back my editor Betsy Mitchell said there was a rush on it. As an example of the real world of publishing, Marty Greenberg and I had completed everything to do with the collection before boilerplate contracts made it through the Time-Warner legal department.

I should have more to tell you after we get back from Belize--and pictures, I hope. Till then, hang in and think positive thoughts.

--Dave Drake
david-drake.com

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Newsletter #5 mailed out 31 May 2001

Dear People,

The period between this and the immediately previous newsletter has been... interesting. The big one is that my Dad, Earle Charles Drake, died after a very abrupt decline. He'd have been 87 on July 5.

Dad was a good and gentle man; I, though I'm not gentle and don't claim to be good, was very fortunate to have been raised by him. His college degree was in chemistry, but his job all his life was making things, mostly production lines, function. As an adult I realized when I watched him work that he'd formed my own work habits: an enormous litter of parts and tools around him, and a creation of meticulous craftsmanship in the middle. My tools are photos and reference books, but I work in the same mess and have the same love of my craft as Dad did of his.

There's an SF link of sorts to Dad. He couldn't get into the military because his astigmatism was so bad so he spent during WW II as a civilian employee of the Navy, installing radar on sub-chasers at Boca Raton. Isaac Asimov was also a civilian Navy employee (a chemist at the Philadelphia Navy Yard). In Asimov's memoir, he mentions with pride being promoted from classification P2 to classification P3.

Out of curiosity I asked Dad what his classification was. Chuckling, he told me: P8. He was the Navy's highest rated civilian employee on the East Coast during the war. The country and the free world were lucky to have Dad and men like him; and I was very lucky indeed. May he find peace with the God he always believed in.

I'm 30K into the second novella for the Hammer volume that'll be my next book. I'd hoped to have finished it by this time, but life intervened. The novella's moving pretty well, though.

At the moment I've halted to read the proofs of *Mistress of the Catacombs*. These are very clean-- a wonderful contrast with the way *Servant of the Dragon* was butchered. I'd really like to be writing instead of reading the proofs, but I figure it's my job to make each work as smooth as I can. It occurs to me, however, that with the two books of mine which were worst harmed by production departments-- *Servant*, as I mentioned, and *The Tank Lords*--the production people ignored my corrections also.

I don't go to many conventions; I'm generally most comfortable when I'm sitting in front of my word processor or reading a book. Therefore when I say that I had an enormously good time at Libertycon in Chattanooga over Memorial Day weekend, it means something. I relaxed for the first time in a month (mind, it'd been an exceptionally bad month).

While Libertycon isn't a literary convention in the sense that you'll hear papers on *The Five Levels of Discourse in the Novels of Julian May* (no, I'm not making that up), the fans who come to it are overwhelmingly readers of prose SF and fantasy. In the two hours following the opening ceremonies, I

signed more books than I ever before have done in a single period. Some of that was a simple result of having written a lot of books (one fellow had three boxes, which was fine with me), but there were also a whole lot of people in line.

A particularly nice aspect of Libertycon was meeting Eric Flint and Gary Ruddell for the first time. Gary's first cover for a book of mine was *Dagger* in 1988. (I sent a photo of the Damascus-bladed dagger I used as the model for the one in the novel, and Gary painted it with a slight embellishment on the ricasso.) Jim Baen's present to me in 1996 (when he came to Kipling's house in Vermont to celebrate my birthday) was Gary's cover for *Redliners*. And the cover Gary did for *The Enchanted Bunny* is in many ways the most wonderful piece of art associated with any work of mine (he painted it on a board to get a proper 14th century feel).

As for Eric--well, I've collaborated in many different fashions with different people. Some experiences were good, some were not. I've never had a collaborator who made the experience happier than Eric does, every single book.

In addition to normal convention activities--all of which were fun and well handled; Tim Bolgeo and his crew are very experienced in running cons--there was an hour of talk radio with Eric and Gary. The host--whose name I don't recall; the show was *Fred*, because he'd been told he needed to name his show--was excellent, a real craftsman with a wide knowledge base, and we had a good time.

We then went to a pistol range where a number of the organizers supplied guns for those of us who'd flown in and therefore couldn't bring our own. I hadn't done any centerfire shooting in far too long, and a number of the guests had no experience with guns at all. The instruction for newbies was friendly and helpful, the variety of weapons was interesting (I'd never fired a .44 Magnum before. It wasn't unpleasant--but let me tell you, being beside somebody firing a ported .44 Magnum was *damned* unpleasant), and the event a lot of fun for all concerned.

Later on long-time Southern fan Hank Reinhardt, the founder of Museum Replicas (and the intended of Toni Weiskopf, Executive Editor of Baen Books), gave a demonstration of what swords really do. He first whacked at a steel helmet, then used the same blade on fresh pork shoulders with and without mail coverings. Hit cleanly, the sword sheared through the bone. (I should mention that Hank, though 67, is also one strong son-of-a-bitch.) I got a chance to whack also. This was a very informative experience.

A group of us visited the Chickamauga Battlefield Sunday afternoon. To me the most striking realization was that though there's a large cleared stretch the length of the park with many contemporary guns set up facing one another across it, the scrub forest behind the displays probably closely resembles the actual terrain in which the battle was fought. You basically can't see ten yards into it. Having spent some time in a war zone with similarly short sight distances myself, I can appreciate how confused the conditions were--and how utterly horrible it was for the poor bastards involved in it. Not that I can think of any wars that I wouldn't describe as horrible.

Thanks to my skilled webmaster, Karen Zimmerman, there are pictures of most of these events up on david-drake.com (linked from the news page). It was a genuinely fun weekend. (<http://david-drake.com/libcon.html>)

Foreign Legions, *The Tide of Victory* (a Belisarius novel written by Eric from my outline), and the paperback of *Lt. Leary, Commanding* are out. The new edition of *Ranks of Bronze* should be out within the month. And *Mistress of the Catacombs* chugs happily toward its September release by Tor. Now, if I can just get my life back to normal for a while so that I can finish the Hammer book and start the next Isles volume....

Till next time, be well.
--Dave Drake

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Newsletter #4 mailed out 11 April 2001

Dear People,

1) Probably the most interesting thing--in the Chinese sense--that's happened to me since the most recent newsletter is that I've started using Word for Windows instead of Word 5 for DOS. The A drive of my last working DOS machine died, so I couldn't get material off it in a fashion I could e-mail or send by disk.

I've always told people that I could convert to Windows whenever I had to--and I did. Furthermore, it was a lot better to convert in the middle of a 31K novella than it would've been in the middle of a 210K novel--the situation that would've obtained a few months earlier. Having said that, it was pretty stressful, especially dealing with design features in WfW which make it much easier to make text vanish forever than it used to be under DOS. I question whether there's one serious writer in a thousand who considers that a beneficial change.

It'll make it a lot easier to replace computers in the future, though. Right now I'm happy as a clam, using a Pentium 90....

2) I'm at work on the next project, a thematically linked collection of Hammer novellas for Baen Books. The first of these, *Choosing Sides*, is complete at 31K; it'll be part of MASTERS OF WAR, a Baen original anthology packaged by Bill Fawcett along with an Honor Harrington novella by Dave Weber (which is supposed to be done by the end of April) and a Belisarius novella by Eric Flint which will be done when life and the Baen Free Library give Eric a moment.

I figure my collection will be four novellas. I know the subject of the remaining three and am pretty well along with the plotting for the second one (working title *Task Force*; I don't have a title for the whole collection yet). They're all based on incidents in the Eastern Mediterranean during the late 3d century BC. This is an interesting period (and well documented, though not well known to general readers) while the Hellenistic kingdoms were breaking up and Rome, though an influence, hadn't yet taken the region under direct rule.

For my underlying background I've used the Rhodes-Byzantium War of 219 BC, but some of the incidents come from Egypt, the Seleucids, and Macedonian operations in the Peloponnese during the period. A love of history means you never have to invent situations....

3) The other project I've been working on--to the degree it counts as work--is a military SF anthology for Betsy Mitchell at Warner Aspect. She called Marty Greenberg, asking him to get me to do a reprint anthology based around *Liberty Port*, the novella I did for her when she worked for Jim Baen. I had that put together in 24 hours, and then scrambled a bit over a problem Marty raised regarding electronic rights. Warner's insists on buying them while the agent for Kuttner and for Matheson refuses to sell

them. This strikes me as an extremely silly thing to fight about, but we solved the problem by providing slightly different contents for the e-published and print versions of the anthology.

The cover artist will be the wonderful Donato Giancarlo who did my *Queen of Demons*, *Servant of the Dragon*, and *The Voyage*. Virtually everything is complete, save that Warner's hasn't sent Marty a contract so that he can acquire the reprint rights. There in a nutshell is modern publishing.

4) Speaking of Donato, he turned in a stunning cover for *Mistress of the Catacombs* (the fourth Isles book, due from Tor in September). It's up on my site now, along with the first three chapters of the novel in PDF. (You can also find those chapters in HTML on the Baen, not Tor, site. Tom Doherty, Jim Baen, and I are all friends and have a sense of humor.)

5) Also added to the site are comments on *Birds of Prey* and a discussion (I think under Personal) of my involvement with Stu Schiff's Whispers magazine. (<http://david-drake.com/whispers.html>) At some point I expect to put up the most recent novella in PDF--probably when *Foreign Legions* comes out in June and I take down Mark's and my novellas from that shared-universe anthology.

6) This past weekend (April 5--10) I was at Jersey Devil Con in South Plainfield. The folks there couldn't have been nicer, but it was possibly the most disorganized con I've ever been to. (Generally cons manage to put the names of panel participants in the program book; not here.) It was nonetheless a good time, for me and I think for all attending.

The main reason I decided to go was that my first contact (by phone) with Manly Wade Wellman was when I called to ask if his 1950 *Weird Tales* story *The Pineys* was based on a real folktale. He told me it was, but that he set the story in the Sandhills of North Carolina where he was living when he wrote it. The folktale was from the Jackson Whites, descendents of Hessian mercenaries, living in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey where he'd lived previously. I was feeling nostalgic about Manly at the time the GoH request came--I really miss him--and agreed. The Friday of the con, friends took me to the Pine Barrens and we wandered around. It was really a wonderful day; and there's a picture of me with a tree near Batsto in the News section.

7) By the way, the article on Jim Baen and the Baen Webscriptions did come out in the March 21, NYT Business Section. I was really glad to see Jim get some of the recognition he deserves for being a true innovator.

I guess that's all for now. I'm going back to plotting a novella....

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Newsletter #3 mailed out 15 February 2001

Dear People,

I finished *Mistress of the Catacombs*, the fourth fantasy in the Isles series. Like the others, this one is a hair over 200,000 words. I'm completely wrung out.

I experimented this time by using a sketchier outline, one of approximately 12,000 words instead of 20-26,000 like the outlines of the first three books in the series. It worked quite well, though I did pause to do something more detailed when I got to notes like, **THEY BREAK THALEMOS OUT OF PRISON. PART ONE.**

I'd planned to put the whole novel on my website for free download. My feeling is that nobody's going to print out a 644-page manuscript to read unless they're real fans. Those are the people you want talking up your work early, and they'll probably buy the book when it's available anyway.

I still think that's the case, but I asked my publisher, Tom Doherty, and got a resounding, 'No!' Tom feels that having the book available on line dilutes sales of the printed version. We both have the same desire--to sell as many copies of *Mistress of the Catacombs* as possible--and I bow to Tom's expertise on what will sell books. There's nobody better in the business since Judy-Lynn Del Rey died.

I knew that Scott Card had been putting his Tor novels up on line, though, so I asked Tom about that. Scott had indeed done so--without telling Tor what he was doing. When Tor learned, they had a discussion with Scott and he stopped doing it. I'm much more puzzled by a writer putting his books on line without telling his print publisher than I am at the print publisher frowning on the practice (though I still think Tom is wrong.)

(If anybody really, really, really needs to see the book before it hits the stores, send me an e-mail. We'll discuss it.)

What is (are) on line now are the novellas Mark Van Name did and I did for FOREIGN LEGIONS, the shared universe built around my novel *Ranks of Bronze*. (The other three novellas are by Eric Flint, Steve Stirling, and Dave Weber.) The website is giving me all sorts of new experiences--the latest being downloading Adobe Acrobat Reader so that I could read my own story on the site. I can't imagine that anybody receiving this newsletter is less computer literate than I am, so the stories are available to anybody who wants to click.

Other additions to the site since the most recent newsletter are comments on *The Hunter Returns* and *Starliner*, and pictures of Jim Baen at the new home of Baen Books near Wake Forest, NC. (My wife Jo and I went there for dinner Christmas Eve.) One of the shots is a Twofer, Jim holding the cover art for *The Tide of Victory*, the fifth book in the Belisarius series written by Eric Flint from my outlines.

Speaking of Eric, he has a very nice new website at <http://www.ericflint.net>. The Java script on some of the special effects--little spinning doohickies--may give you problems loading, but the content and general ambiance are well worth the effort.

Christmas brought me the remaining two issues of *Air Wonder Stories*; there's a picture of me holding issue #1 (July, 1929) in the News section now. I've started to read *Science Wonder Stories* (later to become *Wonder Stories*) from issue #1 (June, 1929). I couldn't explain the attraction of pulp fiction to anybody who doesn't feel it themselves and I'm under no illusions as to the quality of the stories (mostly very bad indeed); but I take both pleasure and comfort in the pulps.

The next project is a series of five linked Hammer novellas for Baen Books. I woke up yesterday morning realizing that I was about to finish *Mistress of the Catacombs* and that I didn't have a clue as to what the plot of my next project would be. I immediately realized it was time to get out my Polybius (in translation; my Greek allows me to correct a translator's misuse of a military term, but I'm sure not reading the whole text in the original) and start taking notes. That sort of politico-military history is exactly the right background for my military sf (which this will be) and space opera (like *Lt Leary, Commanding*).

So I can't tell you the plot or setting of the next book--but I'm working on it.

I hope this finds all of you well; and I hope that when my wheels stop spinning wildly, I'll find myself well also.

All best,
Dave Drake

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Newsletter #2 mailed out 8 December 2000

This is mostly notice of some updates to the website proper. I've added two sets of comments to the Bibliography, to *The Jungle* and *Surface Action*. Having this newsletter has prodded me to fill in the gaps on the website after too long a delay.

There's also an additional FAQ on why the HC of *Servant of the Dragon* is so poorly typeset. Running through that sequence of events made me scratch my head, and I *know* it happened that way. The heck of it is, I could've done a similar litany of disaster regarding the initial PB printing of *The Tank Lords*. The number of ways things can go wrong in publishing, even when most of the people involved are competent and honest, is pretty remarkable. I'd say I've been around long enough to have most of them happen to me already, but frankly I'm not sure that's true.

In the news section, there are now pictures of Jim Baen at dinner the Friday after Thanksgiving. Baen Books is now formally located in Wake Forest. I have yet to get up there--I've been writing a Big Fat Fantasy, after all--but when I do I'll add pictures of the new Baen home to the site. As an aside, I've only visited my publishers' offices once in New York, back in the '80s. NYC isn't my sort of place. Thank goodness.

My webgoddess Karen has also swapped the home page picture with one of me on my new bike (and a color-coordinated shirt). I suggested that she run one of herself on the deck of the *Lexington* in Corpus Christi near the FAQ Form, but whether she does so or not is her own decision.

On to business matters. FOREIGN LEGIONS, a series of novellas set in the universe of my 1986 novel *Ranks of Bronze*, will be coming out in HC from Baen Books in June. The individual pieces are by Eric Flint, Steve Stirling, Dave Weber, Mark L Van Name, and me. I also did a little intro, and we added the original short story which Jim Baen published in *Galaxy* a lifetime ago.

There's an interesting mix of stories. Eric and Steve used my characters from the original novel. I used different characters from the same Roman legion as in the original. Dave in a manner of speaking reprised the original novel but used a shipload of 14th-century Normans. And Mark did a near-future piece, a hard-boiled suspense story that's quite different from all the others.

In passing, Mark's story and Eric's can't both happen in the same universe. That was understood before we started. My only rules were that the story fit in the universe of the original novel, and that it be the best story the writer could create in that milieu. The book's been a long time in process, but I think the result is worth the blood I, Mark, and the Baen production staff sweated over it.

By the way, Baen Books will reissue *Ranks of Bronze* in August with a new cover. You can check out the art for both books in the website news section.

I'm moving forward on *Mistress of the Catacombs*, the fourth book in the Isles series. I've sent off the first two-thirds of the rough draft to Donato Giancarlo, the artist who did the wonderful covers for *Queen of Demons* and *Servant of the Dragon* (and also on *The Voyage* some years ago, by the way). It's moving well, but these fantasies are very long books for a guy who started out writing 3,000-word short stories.

I hope you all have a pleasant holiday season and a great 2001. Now, back to work on *Mistress*....

***** STOP THE PRESSES--Or whatever one calls breaking news in the electronic field. I mentioned in the earlier newsletter that the new owners of Mattel Interactive had cancelled the *Hammer's Slammers* electronic game after paying me the entire advance. Apparently they've rethought their decision and the game is back on. I'm simply bemused, but it does occur to me that the change may have occurred because they learned they'd already sunk \$200K into the project, plus whatever engineering they'd done on their end. As developments occur, I'll keep you posted.

All best,
Dave Drake

To subscribe, unsubscribe or change your e-mail address, e-mail webmaster@david-drake.com

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Newsletter #1 mailed out 14 November 2000

What I hope to do in these occasional newsletters is put out items of possibly general interest, including updates to the website. Of these there have been two:

In the NEWS section is a picture of my new bike, a 2001 Kawasaki Concours. In a bit I hope to have more pictures of it up, probably including one on the home page. The bike is extremely similar in all respects to the 1986 model it replaces--which is why I got it. (<http://david-drake.com/news.html>)

And in the BIBLIOGRAPHY, there's now a link to Old Nathan. I intend to do notes to most of the titles in due course, but I've got to admit it's been a while since I made the previous addition. (<http://david-drake.com/nathan.html>)

I've mentioned to individuals (though I haven't put it up on the site) that The Learning Company, a division of Mattel, bought electronic game rights to the Hammer's Slammers series. Mattel has sold the division (which was bleeding the parent corporation white) and the new owners have cancelled the Slammers project. While I won't claim this is exactly good news, my wonderful agent Kay McCauley got all our money up front. Mattel was the second company to pay me for game rights to the series. If a third organization would like to send me money, I would be more than happy to entertain offers.

Many of you may know that L Sprague DeCamp just died. While I don't think it's a matter for my website, I did an appreciation of Sprague for Locus and can forward it to any of you who'd like to see it.

The weekend before Halloween I was at World Fantasy Con, this year in Corpus Christi. I'm not comfortable at cons, but WFC is one I go to more often than I miss it. It's the paramount professional gathering in the f/sf field, and since I go to NYC rarely (I think about five times in my whole lifetime) I think it's important for me to meet publishers and editors on occasion to remind them that I'm a real person.

There were several high points for me this year. Bob Brown, a dealer from Seattle and a friend now of many years' standing, had the March and April, 1924, issues of Weird Tales in mint condition. A fellow had been cleaning out his mother's basement after she went into a nursing home. He'd brought in some old Outdoor Lifes, some 1908 World's Fair brochures--and these, which Bob is offering at \$2500 apiece.

I had dinner one night with Tom Doherty and Gene Wolfe. Somehow--I believe it was one of the women at the table who asked something--the three of us started talking about our experiences in the army. Gene and Tom were Korean War vintage; my exposure was Viet Nam. It was the same (horrible) army for all of us, though. The dinner and the company were both memorable in a very good way.

And I moderated a panel on the question of whether a commercially successful book can ever get critical

acclaim. It was... an interesting panel. Afterwards two of the panel members, Ed Bryant and Steve Donaldson, congratulated me on doing a good job; and Ed added that it had gotten people's blood flowing. There are no truths in a business like that, but everybody on the panel spoke honestly and more directly than you often hear from people in public. I'll call it a win.

On November 5, I went to the International Fortean Organization Convention, Fortfest. I've been interested in the paranormal even before I first read Charles Fort's work, and that was at age 15. I got even more of personal interest from this Fortfest than I usually do. As usual, I find the data more compelling than I do the explanations and analyses offered (which is not to say that the latter are false, just that I generally don't believe that they're true).

Among the neat stuff this year was a fellow named Phil Imbrogno who's been studying megalithic structures in the Hudson Valley (and has a new book out on the subject). The official archeological explanation, that these are colonial storage chambers, would be silly even without the obsidian dagger Imbrogno found in one of them (though colonial reuse is virtually certain). On the other hand, I don't feel it's any more necessary to believe the structures prove Celtic visitations to North America in the 3d millennium BC than I think the ruins of Zimbabwe were left by King Solomon's miners.

Marty Cain, a landscape artist with her MA and MFA from my alma mater, the U of Iowa, discussed her use of dowsing in siting her own work and in interpreting European megaliths. This was an extremely interesting talk to me, because Cain is demonstrably smart and competent--and is basically from a different planet from mine. (Hers is a much nicer planet.)

A lot of what I heard at Fortfest will make its way into my fiction. More important than the direct connections, however, are the many ways that the discussions made me think. Next year when Fortfest is announced I'll post the data on my website. Those of you who happen to be in the DC area might find it worth your while to attend.

So much for this first installment. All best,
Dave Drake

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Dave's Photo Album Page from his Trip to England, August 2006

Dave's [Travel Narrative](#) in HTML format



Me and the mirrored sundial gnomon at Doddington House.



Jo and I at Stonehenge, showing the low 'barrier' which separates visitors from the stones.



Jo and John on the outer mound of Old Sarum, showing the ditch and inner mound.



Looking up from the entranceway to Bovington at the tank overhanging the parapet.



The 38-cm mortar originally mounted on a Tiger chassis.



England finally gets it right: the Comet as used by the 3d Royal Tank Regiment in 1945.



The canvas hull and propellers of a Dual-Drive Valentine.



Dinner in Wareham, with wallflowers in the background.



The house where John Halifax, Gentleman, was written, with the Lambsheads' Vauxhall Astra in the foreground.



Monitor M 33 with the Invincible in the background.



John and Jo viewing the 7-inch Armstrong breechloader (a pivot gun) on the stern of the Warrior.



A smARTcar.



The movie set with tractor and Morgan in place.



Looking across Capability Brown's artificial lake at Sherborne, toward the folly on the opposite slope.



Me with a cardoon. My cap was reversed because I'd been taking pictures and the bill got in the way; it wasn't a deliberate attempt to look like more of a dork than I usually do.



A topiary bird in front of Hever Castle.



Looking from the upper level of the loggia across the lake at Hever Castle.



Some of the reconstruction going on at Canterbury Cathedral.



The site of Thomas a Beckett's murder.



Scotney Castle.



Kim and Kirsty at the artfully demolished West Wing of Scotney Castle.



The entrance to Bateman's.

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ENGLAND : August 5-13, 2006

David Drake

[England 2006 Travel Photos](#)

Our flight was out in the afternoon of Saturday the 5th. I slept very badly the night before. In part that was a result of the hot night, but I felt extremely nervous. It'd been a hell of a summer already and travel is very stressful to me. Not coincidentally, when I got off the plane returning me from Oakland (following the long flight back from Bien Hoa) on January 15, 1971, I said, "I'll *never* get on another plane!" I've flown many times since, of course; but the impulse remains.

There was no difficulty getting to the airport or through security. I packed mostly clothes in what could've been a carry-on bag but which I checked. On the flight I carried a limp leather attaché case with my computer and books to read. I carried my clipboard and plot outline, but I didn't expect to do real work (nor in fact did I, to get ahead of myself by a bit). The books included both of CJ Sansom's mysteries set in the reign of Henry VIII, good books and an extremely good choice for this particular trip.

The plane was an American Airlines Boeing 777, direct from Raleigh-Durham to Gatwick. There's plenty of headroom and carry-on space. Seating (in tourist) was nine-abreast with two aisles: 2-5-2; the pitch between rows of seats was very short. I had an aisle seat in a right-hand pair.

A seven-hour eastward flight at night is extremely uncomfortable for me. I mostly read but tried to doze some also. Without any success, I would've said, but in fact I must've gotten a little sleep. I hadn't expected it to be a good time, so I wasn't disappointed.

We landed at Gatwick a trifle early and found our luggage without incident. I was feeling surprisingly perky (there may've been a degree of relief at simply not being on a plane for a while involved in that).

We then waited for John Lambshead, who was a bit delayed. My only concern about that was that we might be in the wrong place. (I have a tendency to be in the wrong place.) I stood by the luggage reading while Jo moved from one possible entrance to another in a large, crowded, two-level hall. After not too long she came back with John, who'd been doing fine till he ran into a traffic jam right at the airport. There was an unusual number of armed security people and they were stopping cars. (This became significant a few days later.)

The three of us walked around Rochester till the time we hoped the room would be ready. I took more pictures of the castle (we'd gone into it in 2004) and we looked again at Dickens' sites before heading for our hotel, the Bridgewood Manor. It's the highest-rated hotel in the area, but the fact makes me wonder if somebody'd been paid off (I'll get to that). That the room still wasn't ready wasn't their fault.

Wireless internet (which worked in the lobby but not, as claimed in the rooms) was overpriced, but I bought time because I was really concerned that the wheels had come off something. Besides, I'd decided that it simply didn't make sense to skimp. The total cost of the trip was so much higher than any incidentals that it'd have been foolish to worry about another ten bucks.

All was fine back home, at least so far as anybody was telling me. Like I said, though, it's been a hell of a summer and my concerns weren't wholly unreasonable.

While we were sitting out in the hotel's courtyard (a consistent feature of the British hotels I've been in, and one I much appreciate), a propeller-driven plane flew over and I looked up as always. It was a Spitfire, which definitely was not as always. During the next hour I saw two more Spitfires (or maybe the same Spitfire twice more) and a Merlin-engined Me-109. (For those of you who care, the Spanish under Franco built Me-109s but powered them with the Rolls-Royce Merlin engine instead of the German Daimler-Benz. These (now in private hands) are the only Me-109s still flying.)

It turned out there was a Battle of Britain celebration going on. The local man sitting at a nearby table having a lager while his wife used the hotel's spa (it was their anniversary) explained that Biggin Hill (the regional command center) was only five miles from where we were. You really can't stumble over a rock in England without uncovering history.

We got into the room and took quickie showers before John returned at 1 pm. I got out my socket adaptor in order to recharge my laptop. The adaptor fit the British socket perfectly--but the laptop cord had a three-wire grounded plug which wouldn't fit the two-wire female side of the adaptor, which I had been too dimwitted to check before we left the US.

John ran us back to his house, where we met his wife Val (again) and their elder daughter Kim for the first time. He had a variety of plug adaptors himself (since he travels a good deal for the Natural History Museum and for the UN), but none of them took me forwarder.

It suddenly struck me that the cord from the wall to the converter was separate--and the female (converter) end was identical in all units. John had a laptop. I could borrow his cord to recharge my laptop until I could buy one at a computer store. This sounds very silly--it was a trivial thing, after all; there's no end of internet cafes in Britain --but it lifted my mood to a remarkable degree. Stress, of which this summer had a sufficiency, has a tendency to intensify my emotional spikes. Having my spirits rocket for a change was a very good thing.

We--Jo and I aren't heavy and Kim is decidedly slim, so the three of us fit fine in the back of a Vauxhall Astra--then went to Doddington House to visit the gardens. They were having some sort of an affair in the house proper; when John finally found a member of the household to pay, she told him not to worry about it.

The gardens were attractive, with a rockery that was being rebuilt, an aisle of coastal redwoods (I didn't

see any last year in Yosemite , but I now have rectified that gap in my experience) and an unusual sundial whose gnomon is a mirrored pyramid. Jo got a nice picture of me reflected in it as I chatted with John.

We all had dinner at the White Rabbit, a Medway pub where we'd eaten very well on the previous trip. I had the lamb shank, which was delicious, and everybody was happy with their dinner. Good food, good ambiance (the building was original the HQ of a territorial regiment and has lots of military prints on the walls), and excellent company.

Thence back to the hotel. Jo crashed at once, but I deliberately stayed up till 8 pm to switch my biological clock. I finished the CJ Sansom novel I'd started on the plane, wrote up the day's notes, and only then went to bed. I was out as soon as my head hit the pillow.

Monday, August 7 : I slept for twelve hours and got up at 8 am , completely on schedule for the rest of the tour. This is John's plan (from a great deal of experience with international conferences and trips to the US more generally involving nematodes); it works perfectly for me.

I skipped breakfast (which came with the room) because I'd eaten a great deal the previous day. I've managed to break myself of the habit of eating things because I've paid for them already. There are more costs than simply monetary ones, and I find making money easier than I do taking inches off my waistline.

John picked us up at 9 am and we set off for Stonehenge . He was expecting traffic jams at one point or another, but we kept moving well though there was some congestion. The Vauxhall cruises very comfortably at 90 mph (the British, unlike the Canadians, post road speeds in English rather than metric form) and John's a very good driver. (We were rarely passed, but our speed wasn't at all out of line with the norm.)

One other comment on driving (in my case riding, of course) in England . When I left NC, gas was approximately \$3/gallon. In England when I arrived, gas was approximately 3 pounds/liter. The pound was at \$1.80 (according to my credit card conversion rate) and a liter is 21/20 of a quart. (Regular gas in Britain is 93 octane, however, and 99 is available for those who drive a Lotus or the like.)

We reached Stonehenge in late morning and parked. The lot was surfaced with a perforated rubber mat, and the buildings were 1960s prefabs. While this doesn't bother me in the least, the presentation for a site in all respects comparable to the Pyramids is less impressive than (for example) the Wright Memorial on Ocracoke Island .

John pointed out Iron Age barrows north of the parking lot. I photographed them. Throughout the trip I took pictures of anything vaguely interesting, whether or not the subject struck me as 'important.' I don't know what will seem important next week, next year, or for the next book. I do know that in most cases I won't be seeing the place or thing again. A digital camera (Canon A70) and several cards (1G, 256M,

and 128M) were more than sufficient for my needs, but I'd have been wiser to carry more batteries. Live and learn.

We walked up the slope and I saw Stonehenge for the first time. It was 'fenced' shortly after our first visit to England in 1977. I expected high cyclone fencing between the stones and visitors. In fact there were only ring posts supporting a low nylon rope inside the asphalt walkways.

The site is unique. We walked around, chatted, and took many, many pictures. (One of them which Jo took is at present the home page for my website.)

John commented that current belief is that the site was for incubation (that is, receiving dream visions) by priests, probably including blood sacrifices; the astronomical correspondences which Gerald Hawkins found are chance. Both the night sky and Stonehenge are very complex structures, so that merging them will create random similarities. Another generation will probably find another truth. What won't change is the wonder of the site itself.

We then set off southward through farming country toward the Bovington Tank Museum . Not far along John's cell phone rang (his ring-tone is the *Buffy* theme, by the way) and when he winkled it out of his pocket (something of trick harnessed into the seat in a small car) it turned out to be John Treadaway, the graphics artist on the *Slammers* miniature game; he's also doing the interiors for Night Shade's *Complete Hammer's Slammers* volumes.

While I was chatting with JT, JL pointed an Iron Age hill fort out to Jo and they decided to pull over on a side road. There was a sheep path up the slope, and a proper stile (steps over a fence)--the first one I've ever seen in the flesh (well, wood) though the word is one I remember from the earliest children's books.

We hiked up the outer wall (I got some pictures of the combine harvester operating across the road; I'm from Iowa , after all). There were attractive wildflowers and I learned that sheep poop and rabbit poop are extremely similar. The pellets of former are larger, but not enough larger that I'd have been sure of the identification had they not both been present to compare.

There was a deep ditch inside the wall and then an even higher mound with a brush-covered barbed-wire fence at the top. The slope was steep, but the sheep path continued. John and I really wanted to get on and see the tanks, but Jo scrambled down and up; from the fence she could see parked cars, so we agreed to see if we could find a way in. We hopped back into the car, returned to the main road, and almost at once found the formal entrance to Old Sarum, a World Heritage Site. (Full marks to John for recognizing its significance from the back without signs or guidebook, and to Jo for persuading a couple of tank-obsessed males to swerve from their course.)

The earthen walls date from about 400 bc , but there's speculation that at a much earlier date the regional chief who controlled the site of Stonehenge had his base here. It became a major center of Norman control after the Conquest, with a castle and cathedral on the Iron Age mound, but when the water

supply began to fail in the 13th century the site was gradually abandoned. The buildings were largely destroyed so that the stone could be reused to build Salisbury (whose cathedral is clearly in view when one looks north from the mound). Old Sarum remained as a Rotten Borough, however, returning a member to Parliament until 1832 despite the fact it was virtually uninhabited by the 18th century.

I'd read about Rotten Boroughs, of course, but I'd never really put them into context until I stood within one. Yes, this was an 18th century abuse; but on Taiwan into the past decade seats in the assembly were held by members of the ruling party (the KMT) whose constituencies were on the mainland, providing an 'electoral' basis for the dictatorship of Chiang Kai-Shek and his successors.

As a matter of much greater shame to me as an American, our government insisted the Khmer Rouge were the legitimate government of Cambodia after they'd been chased into the jungles and ruled nothing that they couldn't steal at gunpoint. The Khmer Rouge had murdered a million or so of their own people, but to accept their ouster would mean giving their UN seat to the real government--which was backed by the Vietnamese and was therefore unacceptable to the US State Department.

Putting our action in the context of normal human behavior rather than viewing it as some monstrous aberration which could only occur in Washington, DC, made it a little easier to fathom. Mind, it's still normal behavior only for pretty despicable humans.

After the unexpected and thoroughly worthwhile stop at Old Sarum, we raced off to Bovington which we found without difficulty. I was doing much of the navigation during the week, by the way. It was easier than I was used to because distances were so much shorter than those of the US. (To quote John from some while ago, "Americans think a hundred years is a long time. Englishmen think a hundred miles is a long distance.")

After driving through the base for a time (because Bovington is still the training base for the Royal Tank Corps) we found the museum. It's basically a hangar or at any rate a hangar-sized building, broken into halls with partition walls (and with a pair of Challenger tanks outside). We proceeded to the WW I hall.

But before we even got there I realized that the presentation was a long step beyond that of many museums. The entrance corridor takes a sharp bend and narrows; the lighting is dimmed. I realized there were manikins dressed in German uniforms cowering in the corridor beside me. Then I looked up and saw the nose and port sponson of a Mark I tank (a male with a pair of 6-pounder cannon instead of a female armed only with machine guns) sticking out over the parapet, dragging barbed wire with it: the corridor had become a trench, and I was seeing what would've been the last view many German soldiers had of the world in the latter half of WW I.

Bovington is amazing. The British invented the tank and by being on the winning side in WW II had their pick of German equipment as well. (You don't go to Germany if you want to see a Jagdtiger, for example) That much I knew and I wasn't disappointed: just inside the hall is Little Willie, the proof of concept demonstrator which showed to the British government that armored boxes running on treads

developed by the Holt Tractor Company (which later became Caterpillar Corporation) were a practical possibility.

There were all manner of WW I tanks, though not the German A7V. I recall reading that the only existing one was melted for scrap iron at the beginning of WW II; typical chimp behavior, which like most such hurts the person doing it at least as much as the person being done to. (One may reasonably doubt that Hitler regretted invading Poland because he learned the British had destroyed a unique museum exhibit.)

There were also all manner of between-war tanks (and armored cars). It reminded me of pictures of Eocene mammals, all manner of extremely odd creatures which can only be explained as nature (or in this case, military tinkers) experimenting wildly with a new concept. (Every European country seemed to have the equivalent of a Carden-Lloyd Tankette, a vehicle without any real military purpose so far as I can see.)

The most striking (if not the most important; that's Little Willie) exhibits were late-war German vehicles in the WW II hall. I've mentioned the Jagdtiger (of which only about 20 were built), but there were both variants of the King Tiger, an ordinary Tiger, a Jagdpanther, and a Panther. I took a hundred photos, trying to get explanatory signs with the vehicle itself (many of them were new to me). This had a negative result that I've noticed in other instances where I was taking pictures: I wasn't really seeing objects, I was framing them in my view finder (incidentally, I use the view finder, not the screen on the back of the camera). I was sure (and puzzled by the fact) that there wasn't a Panther on display... until I saw my pictures and saw that I'd gotten two good images of one.

The 38-cm rocket mortar that'd been fired from a Tiger chassis to reduce Sebastopol was there, but dismounted. I suspect that the Germans themselves have removed the tube as I believe the weapon was *only* used at Sebastopol .

Allied vehicles weren't really as well represented as the captured equipment. In part this is because we--particularly the US --rationalized production on a few standard models which were here. (The Sherman , the Grant, and the M10 Tank Destroyer.) The best US tank of the war (and arguably the best tank of the war, bar none), the M26 Pershing, isn't at Bovington. (It virtually wasn't in the war either, unfortunately, due to the culpable stupidity of the US Ordnance Department with the enthusiastic support of General Patton.)

The British had more models, in part because they didn't really get it right until the Comet appeared just too late for the Battle of the Bulge, but most of them aren't at Bovington. There was a good collection of the Funnies, the specialist vehicles developed for the Normandy Invasion, though: the Churchill Crocodile (a flame tank), flail conversions for mine clearance (the one on display is a Sherman but other chassis were also used), and a Dual-Drive Sherman and Valentine, both which used propellers and a canvas floatation hull to swim ashore on the beaches.

There was also an example of the most important conversion of all, the Sherman Firefly, a US tank fitted (with a great deal of difficulty) with the British 17-pounder gun which could knock out the heaviest German armor. The tank was still a deathtrap--the Sherman's tendency to burn when hit gave it the nickname Zippo in American usage and Tommy Cooker for the British--but it was a deathtrap with teeth.

Later vehicles were less well represented, though the Israelis had obviously supplied a good number of Soviet models of the '50s and '60s, captured from Arab armies. There was a US M46 tank with the same hull and main gun as the M48s I rode in Viet Nam, and various later British tanks (including stages in the evolution of the excellent Centurion).

We finished going through the halls just before closing. I hit the gift shop but found it a bit of a disappointment. I'd hoped for a good catalogue of Bovington's holdings, but there was nothing of the sort. I picked up an interesting memoir (of a platoon leader of a flail tank unit), but most of what was on sale were Osprey guides and the like which can be bought in any hobby shop in the world.

We then headed southeast to North Poole, near Southampton and Portsmouth (our next day's target). We stopped at a pub on the way for a drink and some chips, but they weren't open for meals till 6 so we continued on to Wareham. Here at the Duke of Wellington (pub) we all had very good pork in mustard sauce, with potatoes and vegetables. We ate in the courtyard. As in 2004 I noted how attractive wallflowers (growing here in the brickwork) are and wondered why we don't see them in America

Incidentally, smoking indoors in restaurants is prohibited in England (as in much of America). The degree to which this is enforced varies. The middle-aged man leaning on the bar smoking here was almost certainly the manager.

We were parked across the street from the house in which Mrs Craik wrote *John Halifax, Gentleman*, in 1857, and I have pictures to prove it. (I now have a vague urge to read the novel.)

John had a booklet giving directions to all the Premier Travel Inns in the UK. They're a chain of moderately-priced clean, comfortable places--far more to my taste than the Bridgestone Manor, as it turned out, and much better value as well (a completely different question). In this particular case the directions made a simple thing impossible until we ignored them and followed street signs. (There's an attractive flower box in a roundabout in North Poole; we got a good chance to see it on the three or four circuits we made at intervals.)

Here I borrowed the wall-to-converter cord of John's laptop and found it *does* work on my Compaq. This relaxed me to an irrational degree. All was well at home, which also helped. We live in our heads, writers to perhaps a greater extent than the general population. Anything that makes *my* head a better place is greatly to be welcomed.

We sat at an outside table and chatted about WW II aircraft on a cool, pleasant evening; then to bed after

an amazing day.

Tuesday, August 8 : Up betimes and ate an overpriced full breakfast in the hotel. (They didn't offer a continental breakfast here; restaurant arrangements vary within the Premier chain.)

We reached Portsmouth and found a parking deck with no difficulty, then walked to the Navy Yard. An M 29-class monitor from 1915 (two 6-inch guns) is near the entrance, waiting for restoration. The carrier *Invincible* is nearby also, awaiting scrapping. I will note without comment that the *Invincible* was pivotal to British victory in the Falklands war; and that the *Warrior* from 1860, the first display we came to inside, survives only because she was being used as a fueling barge during the decades. All other ships of her period were scrapped for a pittance.

And the *Warrior* is marvelous. She was the first modern warship: iron hull, breech-loading armament, armored belt, and steam engines driving screw propellers. The only thing she lacked was a rotating barbette turret. (Several of the heavy weapons--7-inch rifles--were pivot guns which could be warped by hand over bronze tracks inlaid on the deck to bear through a number of gunports each.)

Despite being so innovative, Jo correctly remarked that from the outside the *Warrior* looked very similar to Nelson's *Victory*, moored nearby. She had a full complement of masts and yards, a requirement for Imperial service at the time she was built. The steam engines of 1860 were neither efficient nor trustworthy, and Britain hadn't yet created the infrastructure of coaling stations necessary to support steam warships operating across the whole world.

There was a small-arms demonstration (given by a fellow who was obviously a retired RN petty officer) while we were there. One of his comments summed up the world of 1860 with the sort of brutal truth that academics often avoid: "We didn't get a great empire by being gentle and polite. We got it by being extremely aggressive."

No naval power of the day could challenge Britain. When heavy guns were used in action (and the *Warrior*'s were not), it was for shore bombardment (Chinese forts or the city of Alexandria, Egypt) rather than against other warships. The *Warrior*'s crew of 680 were equipped for colonial policing duties, generally on shore. She carried 380 muskets and about a thousand cutlasses as well as swords and Colt revolvers for the officers.

In a way, I think visiting the *Warrior* was for me the high point of the whole wonderful trip. Hers is basically the world in which my RCN space operas are set, since my tastes and talents don't lie in fleet actions like Trafalgar and the Cape of St. Vincent. I took many, many photographs.

Then to the *Victory*. She was the most highly developed example of a sailing battleship from the period when sailing battleships were used in war, and of course she's the ship which Nelson died commanding on the most important naval action between Lepanto and Midway.

But the real workhorse of 18th century navies was the two-deck 74-gun ship, not massive three-deckers like the 100-gun *Victory* or the 120-gun *L'Orient* which Nelson's 74s destroyed in the Battle of the Nile. (Extra credit for readers who, without searching, can give the name and author of the poem beginning, "The boy stood on the burning deck...") I'm glad the *Victory* survives. I kind of wish the *Captain* or the *Vanguard* (74s serving as Nelson's flagships at St Vincent and the Nile) were around also, though.

I didn't take as many pictures on the *Victory* as I would've had not the batteries in my camera pooped out. Jo loaned me her camera and I got some, but I was more sparing with borrowed equipment than I would've been with my own.

After leaving the *Victory* we adjourned to a coffee shop to snack. I found AA batteries as well. (The first shop I checked at was out of them; I--correctly--felt a complete fool for not bringing an 8-pack with me from the US .)

We then went to the *Mary Rose* , Henry VIII's flagship which capsized in 1545 and is being cleaned and preserved with enormous care and effort. She's in a huge sealed, heated, dimly-lit compartment and is being sprayed with preservative. An unfortunate side effect is that the double-glazed windows to the viewing gallery are fogged to bare translucence. I took away an impression of great height--and respect for the painstaking personnel working to prepare her.

A matter that puzzles me is that I've been told (second hand, but the original source was an archeologist involved in preserving the ship) that the low-grade PEG used since 1994 as a preservative is now known to dissolve the wood instead of preserving it. None of the materials (written and audiotour) at the site discuss this, though they do mention the change of preservative in 2003. I'm not sure whether I misinterpreted what I was told or if this is a case where people who made an honest (though serious) mistake are hoping to be quietly dead before the general public learns of their blunder.

We visited the RN Museum after the *Mary Rose* and found it sort of whimsically interesting (if that makes sense). Among things that amazed me were several of Geoff Hunt's original paintings from the covers of Patrick O'Brian's novels. They were simply there, hanging on a wall; apparently to encourage the purchase of prints. (One was *The Reverse of the Medal*; I recall them being about 18x30", but don't quote me on that.)

Associated with the museum was the best bookshop I found during the trip. Consistently I bought any written material I found that might be useful to me in my work. There was a lot of it here, including *Destroyer Captain* by Roger Hill, a memoir of his WW II service. This proved (when I read it after returning home) not only informative (his was one of the escorts pulled away from convoy PQ17 when the shore staff panicked in the belief the *Tirpitz* planned to attack. The escorts thought they were about to make a suicidal attack on a German battleship, and the crews of the merchant ships being left to die cheered them--in the same belief) but harrowing. Hill is unpretentiously frank about his problems with PTSD.

We relaxed in downtown Southampton after leaving the museum. There's a sky needle, but the wait to go up was 45 minutes and none of us had a lot of energy by then. I changed dollars to pounds at a *very* bad rate (\$2.25/pound) at a kiosk, but at least Jo and I had pocket money. We headed back toward North Poole but stopped in Wimbourne Minster to dodge the evening rush hour. We were a bit early for supper, so we walked around the town viewing the cathedral and interesting old houses. John compared house prices with those of Rainham. (Nothing in Southern England is cheap, but Wimbourne Minster is a bit less outrageous than the Medway Towns.)

One large edifice had a variety of Tudor embellishments; it was now very upscale (judging from the cars) housing. We found a sign explaining that it'd been built as a grammar school in 1849... fake Tudor, but real early Victorian. It raises the question of what is historical. (I'm over sixty; the question has a certain amount of personal application.)

Parked beside us in the lot was a smARTcar, one of several I noticed on this trip. It's a stubby little thing (you can park several of them crosswise in a normal parking space) that reminds me of the BMW-Isetta bubblecars which I'd thought were extremely neat in the late '50s. John said he believed the company was Swiss owned but that the cars were built for them by one of the major manufacturers. They were efficient but expensive. I took a couple pictures.

It turns out (if you were wondering) that they were indeed developed for Swatch, though the manufacture is in Germany and Daimler-Chrysler owns the company now. The cars are very expensive and have lower gas mileage than a Toyota Prius; the venture has lost money every year of operation.

Having said that, smARTcars are *awfully* cute, and I saw one belting down the motorway between Rochester and London at the speed of other traffic. Roger Penske, a name I respect, is planning to import them into the US shortly. Still, I'll probably stick with my motorcycles.

A German TV production team was filming a Rosemary Pilcher novel in town; we saw crews with boom mikes as a woman in an upstairs room (1st floor in British parlance, I suppose) carried on a conversation with someone in the street. In a plaza not far away was a bookshop, which unfortunately was closed; the note on the door referenced the filming. I thought the owner was appearing as an extra. A red Morgan was parked in front of the building.

There was a cart of books by the door, though--the sort of low-priced stuff that bookshops leave on the honor system (as the contents aren't worth stealing). I found *Five Plays* by AA Milne, which I thought might be amusing. (I've read some of Milne's non-Pooh stuff, but you don't see it often in the US .) There wasn't a price marked, but I looked around for a can or a slot in the door to drop a pound or two in.

At this point I noticed the fellow in a turtleneck and dark glasses watching us. "Is this all part of the film set?" I asked. It was. I stuck Milne back in the tray. A little later a tractor blatted up to join the Morgan, but we didn't see the actual filming take place. I'll probably control my vague urge to read a Rosemary

Pilcher book, but I may see if somebody on-line has the Milne volume.

Dinner, in the garden behind a pub, was for me an excellent chicken in cream sauce. The British system is to hold your credit card behind the bar till it's time to pay, by the way. It seems a reasonable way to prevent folks from stiffing the house.

Thence back to the hotel where we again sat outside and chatted. It was another remarkable day.

Wednesday, August 9: We got up bright and early--John's specifics against jet lag work extremely well--and set straight out for Sherborne Castle, figuring to get breakfast in the tea shop. Despite a couple wrong turnings and a large truck in front of us, we reached Sherborne right at 9 am --and learned that it didn't open until 11 am, by which time we needed to be heading south to meet Val.

I would cheerfully have paid somebody, but since that wasn't an option we simply wandered around outside. (I regret the discourtesy, but we'd come an awfully long way.) Though there's an interior tour during visiting hours, it's the grounds that we'd really come for.

The house had been built by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1594. There's a stone seat overlooking the old road where he sat smoking his pipe and watching the traffic to and from Dorchester passing just below him. (Supposedly a servant, startled at his master's new fad, doused Raleigh with the pitcher of beer he was bringing out, thinking he'd caught fire.)

In the 1750s the then Earl of Digby hired Capability Brown to reshape the property according to the tastes of the day. This was a massive undertaking which included grading the slope from the house down to an artificial 50-acre lake.

It didn't stop there, however. There's a real ruined abbey in the rising woodland across the lake. Shortly after Brown had finished, the Earl hired a local stonemason to build a false ruined tower (a folly) onto the existing abbey wall. He liked the effect so much that the next year he had the mason come back and add crenellations to the wall itself.

On the grounds but walled off from them (and separately administered by the National Trust) is a real castle, also ruined: it'd held out for several days against Cromwell in 1645, so he destroyed it to avoid having a similar problem later. (Not a stupid man, Cromwell.) It wasn't open yet either, so we contented ourselves with taking pictures over the wall.

The walk along the stream below the lake was very attractive. Indeed, Sherborne was a nice place to spend a morning generally.

On our way out we stopped to take a closer look at the field gun standing as a gate guard. The British aristocracy really does take its military responsibilities seriously. (And while I'm as ready as the next working-class American to comment on the blunders of titled fools, Penshurst Place--which we saw in

2004--was the seat of Lord Gort, who prevented disaster at Dunkirk and then at Malta.) This gun, a 75-mm Model '97, was marked as having been captured from the Turks in 1915. Turkey didn't have an indigenous arms industry in the early years of the 20th century, so the Turks bought from Europe. The French 75 was the best available at the time.

We headed for Chichester with plenty of time, so we stopped for a heavy breakfast--we hadn't eaten since the night before--along the way. The restaurant was one of the few we ate at which didn't appear to have been a pub originally; rather, it was an adjunct to a large farming operation.

I asked the manager--that sounds more fancy than proper for the very family operation--if there was a drop box where I could mail some postcards. There was a brief discussion, ending when one of the women eating at the next table said she'd mail them from her home. (Thank you, unknown British woman.) This was typical of the genuinely nice people we met consistently on our trip.

We (by car) and Val (by train) reached Chichester at the same time, but it took us some while and phone calls (presumably across the small train/bus station) to find one another. Jo and I had the same problem finding John in 2004 at the West Kensington tube station; perhaps it has something to do with the English air. We then bundled into the Vauxhall and drove to the Roman palace at Fishbourne.

The site is very large and fascinating, but 'palace' is misleading. Fishbourne was a very provincial place, a villa built after the Roman Conquest. It's a very important *archeological* site, but it wasn't an important *Roman* site in its own day.

Fishbourne become an administrative center by the late 3d century as systems broke down and magnates took increasingly governmental roles in the prelude to feudalism; but the notion that it was built for an allied British king is a hopeful guess, and the extensive mosaics are of no particular artistic merit. (They're clumsy, generally simple, and some of the designs are truncated because the workmen laying the tesserae got the dimensions wrong.)

Fishbourne is precisely the sort of rural center that I've used frequently, both in stories set in Roman times and for settings derived from those originals. (There's one in *Mistress of the Catacombs*, for example; but I've done similar things in my SF.) Seeing the site taught me things that I hadn't realized from extensive reading about villas (including Fishbourne itself).

For example, mosaics were laid directly on the ground instead of on a bed of concrete or a raised floor of planks. If the ground wasn't firm--one room of the villa had been built over an old rubbish pit--the floor quickly began to ripple. Eventually the owner would have a new floor laid over the old one with a layer of fill to level it temporarily. The rubbish pit was repaired with more extensive fill and a new design over the central hole; the floor must've looked rather like a sunken bathtub immediately before.

The docents and the guidebooks referred to the Greek Key design. I was trying to figure out what that was, when suddenly the light dawned: they were talking about the Greek letter Chi, χ , which looked

like an X and was pronounced Kee. I was a little disturbed by this realization, because it suggests that the written materials hadn't been edited with the care I would've expected.

Fishbourne was destroyed in a fire toward the end of the 3d century AD. There's no sign of fighting, but the timing suggests that the fire may be connected to the reconquest in 293 AD by Constantius Chlorus of the British Empire of Allectus (who'd taken over at the assassination of Carausius, who'd declared himself emperor in 290 ad . An invasion could cause all manner of disasters which have nothing to do with battle. A few of the obvious possibilities are deserters, slaves getting drunk after the master flees with the money chest, or tenant farmers burning rent records.

The present Fishbourne site has extensive gardens. Though they aren't exactly historical recreations, they focus on Roman plants. I was particularly taken by the lush purple blooms of the cardoon, which I now know is a relative of the artichoke and (by the Romans) eaten in the same way.

We then drove to Arundel to see the castle. Which indeed we did--it's a huge thing in the middle of town--but we got there just after the 4 pm closing. (John later learned that it's really a 19th century recreation, the equivalent of Colonial Williamsburg.) Since we were there, we wandered around the heart of Arundel.

An art gallery had Chagall prints for sale. Across the street was a computer shop where I bought my own converter cord. (The shop assistant was a little puzzled; it isn't, of course, the sort of thing that's normally sold separately. "A fiver?" I said, pulling out the bill. "Done!" he said.) And we found quite a nice used bookshop where I got *Wildlife in a Southern County* by Richard Jeffries (though the author isn't listed on the volume) and Jo found a Dr Doolittle she didn't have. I'd planned to read the Jeffries on the flight back to the US , but we'll come to that. They had one of my books also--one of the Isles series, as I recall. I signed it for them and gave them a bookmark.

We then headed toward Havant where we were booked for the night, figuring to pick up dinner on the way. We ran into some difficult traffic and had to change plans a couple times. We passed through Bognor Regis, where George IV died. We agreed that George summed up the place with his last words: "Bugger Bognor!"

In looking at the map--maps; we were using three of various sorts--I noticed Emsworth nearby and suggested we head there because of the connection of the name with Wodehouse (though the Earl of Emsworth and Blandings Castle weren't located on the south coast). In any case we got a very nice dinner (mine was organic lamb, which always makes me wonder if in some places lamb is silicon based). Emsworth is near the Goodwood, where cars as well as horses race. The pamphlet on Vintage Car racing made me think of watching GP races at Indianola and Elkhart Lake in the mid '60s, vintage indeed by today.

And, reading a biography of Wodehouse after our return, I learned that Wodehouse lived at Emsworth early in his writing career. Though I didn't know it at the time, the town of Emsworth really was a

Wodehouse location and probably provided the name (though not the location) of the owner of Empress of Blandings.

Thence to another Premier Travel Inn, with large clean rooms in a pleasant hilltop location. The picnic tables set up outside the associated restaurant sloped significantly, but by rotating one so that I leaned forward rather than sideways I wrote and read comfortably outdoors (where I prefer to be).

Thursday, August 10 : up and read outside at the (slightly relocated) picnic table. When the rest of the group arrived, we went further down into the restaurant proper and had a very pleasant Continental breakfast and chatted.

The news (which John and Val had listened to) wasn't reassuring. There was some sort of flap on and the government had banned all carry-on luggage from aircraft. I figured that with luck this would've sorted itself out by Sunday, but it'd be what it'd be.

John mentioned another nematode team off the west coast of Scotland on the old research vessel *Discovery*, whose engines failed. They began to drift toward the rocky lee shore. Lifeboats from the nearby coast guard station were circling them, and a Nimrod search and rescue aircraft was overhead. While this was going on (and before the cursing engineers got the engines started again), the nematode team was standing on the deck and singing over and over, "*Abide With Me* ."

When I got up to pay for breakfast, I found I didn't have my business credit card. John paid for the meal while I rushed back to the room hoping that I'd set it down on the dresser when we arrived the night before. I had, thank goodness. It was a stupid mistake to have made, but all it cost me was a few minutes of stark terror.

Thence to Hever Castle, the family seat of the Bullen (now more commonly Boleyn) family, and thus connected with Henry VIII through his association with both Ann and before that her sister. After Henry executed Ann, the castle became the marriage portion of Anne of Cleves who lived here after Henry divorced her in turn.

On the way I noticed that the trees to either side of local roads in Britain are notched to allow cars, but they aren't cut flat vertically as they are in the US . There are no utility lines flanking the roads, so trimming just forms a square conduit high enough for vehicles.

The topiary in front of Hever Castle was really amazing; I particularly liked the sculpted ladybugs. I also found the clematis growing in and through the yew hedges attractive. I suppose it was a planned effect, but if an accident, it was a happy one.

As usual I got all the available guides on the assumption that I won't be back and the incremental cost is negligible. Here that meant booklets on both the castle and on the extensive gardens in the rear.

Hever, like many other sites in England, didn't permit photographs of the interior. I understand the wish of the proprietors to maximize their income, but generally the available printed material doesn't cover as much as I'd like. (That wasn't the case here, for reasons I'll get to.)

Entrance is through an attractive enclosed half-timbered courtyard. In the lobby were displayed two (not a pair of) postillion's boots, armored with wood and heavy leather to protect the inside leg of postillions riding the right-hand horses of a team. They're very similar in design and purpose to motocross boots.

There wasn't any obvious reason for postillion's boots to be displayed here rather than anywhere else, but in fact I'd never seen or even heard of such items before in my life. They by themselves made the visit to Hever worthwhile.

The castle had been in a run-down condition before it was bought and rebuilt by Lord Astor in 1903. I realized what that meant as I listened to a docent describing the first ground-floor room we entered, mentioning that the carved railing around the upper level was modeled on one at King's College, Oxford. When I prodded her, she admitted that the room had been a kitchen in Tudor times. It'd been completely built and furnished by Lord Astor in accordance with his archaizing tastes. In fact, apart from the fabric of the walls, it was as phony as the Rockefellers' Colonial Williamsburg or the Vanderbilts' Biltmore House. One wonders if there's something genetic bursting out in the need for palaces by the offspring of Anglo-American robber barons.

In the staircase to the second (well, first in British parlance) floor is a watercolor showing the castle before renovation. It was basically a very large equipment shed (or tack room). I'm not blaming Astor for what he did; but the result is no more Tudor than the Luxor Casino is Egypt. There wasn't anything I wanted to photograph.

In the long hall upstairs is a series of tableaux of various scenes from the life of Henry VIII, concluding with the execution of Ann Boleyn. It was odd to be reading CJ Sansom's descriptions of Thomas Cromwell before breakfast and seeing a costumed manikin of Cromwell in the afternoon.

Letters and a prayer book used by Ann Boleyn are on display upstairs as well. Hever Castle has a lot of real history in it, though the ground floor interiors aren't part of it.

I was put off by the phony pretension of the castle interior, but the gardens were marvelous. They were in a variety of styles but didn't claim to be anything but magnificent, and they were.

They're picked out by antique statuary placed in appropriate settings. I was particularly taken by the Roman style garden which reminded me of photographs I've seen of Tivoli, and by the lakeside loggia and piazza in the style of the Italian Renaissance. The latter are used to stage Shakespearian plays--and work very well for the purpose, John and Val say.

Pictures are allowed outside the castle, and I took many. While I'm not able to identify trees and flowers

with any ability (despite efforts and many opportunities to improve), I've come to very much like gardens. The grounds of Hever Castle are among the most attractive that I've seen.

We headed back to Rochester but stopped near Hever for dinner at another upscale rural pub, the Wheat Sheaf. The food was excellent as was the case every time we ate on this trip. (Well, there were a couple of hotel breakfasts that should either have been better or a lot cheaper, but breakfast is just fuel for a day of sightseeing.)

I don't remember eating well during our 1977 trip to England --with the exception of a magnificent Full English Breakfast which Jennie Campbell cooked for us when we stayed overnight with her and Ramsey in Liverpool . I think that's a combination of factors, including the fact that we were on a tight budget. I don't believe that saved us very much money (the places we ate on this trip were all reasonably priced), but by focusing on inexpensive we got cheap.

And of course we didn't have native guides in 1977 to the degree that we did in John. We were in the tourist areas of London seeing tourist things on a packaged tour, and that didn't bring us to places like the Wheat Sheaf.

And yet again--29 years is a long time (though I swear it doesn't feel like a long time). John says that changes in English culture and demography have caused rural pubs to become restaurants rather than primarily drinking spots in order to survive. The standard of dining today may simply be better than it was in 1977. In any case, if you like plain food extremely well prepared, you'll be pleased at what Southern England offers.

Back to Rochester and Bridgestone Manor, not a place where I expect to stay on further visits. The Ethernet in the room still didn't work, and the wireless worked only in the lobby. It turned out that because the room (though the hotel was new) was very short of outlets, the cable box had been unplugged to allow use of the coffee maker. (You got the choice of one or the other.)

Premier Travel Inns do much better. The fact that they're also much cheaper is less important to me, but it's nice to have.

As it turned out, I didn't need an internet connection: no major wheels had come off. On the other hand, things most certainly *could* have gone wrong; I'd have worried both about the pets and the Baen situation if I hadn't been able to connect.

Friday, August 11 : Again, I got up and read Sansom outside for a bit before John arrived. These moments of down-time, completely by myself, are something I need in order to function. Among other things, it makes it difficult for me to stay at somebody else's house (or for that matter, to have a house guest myself). I don't mean I can't handle that--just that it adds a bit to my stress level.

We stopped at John's house again to pick up Val and to look at the cover of *Lucy's Blade* , John's first

novel, which he'd found on the Amazon website. It's an excellent piece of work; I guessed (correctly) that it was by Clyde Caldwell.

John was very excited. It made me think of all the covers I've had--probably a couple hundred all told. Most of them were good, and some have been extremely good. A good one still pleases me, but the utter delight that John was displaying--that I can't muster any more, not since I saw the art for *Hammer's Slammers* back in 1978. Maybe it does feel like a long time after all.

We zoomed off to Canterbury, Jo and I in the back because I don't need legroom for comfort (headroom is another matter, but the Vauxhall did much better than the back seat of many larger American cars). (John and Val apologized, but she gets carsick in the back and so far as I was concerned it was their car.)

The center of Canterbury is very touristy, though not in a bad way. We went first to the cathedral, which surprised me even before we entered. It's built of very soft yellow limestone, similar to the Niobrara Chalk I grew up with in Dubuque. We used blocks of that local stone for a retaining wall in front of the house which dad built, but I would've said it was too soft to use for a building.

Having seen the cathedral, I'm even more strongly of that opinion. The exterior fabric is in the process of reconstruction and probably has been in the process of reconstruction from a generation or two after it was built. I noted for example that the statues in one of the porches were being replaced; they'd been replaced in the 1890s also, and the features which'd weathered completely away were those of the benefactors of that date rather than those of Norman nobles.

The interior held much of great historical significance; I was particularly struck by the tomb (being renovated) of the Black Prince and by the place where Becket was murdered (marked by a slab on the floor and above it by a sconce of swords, a work of art which reminded me of a steel asterisk). I'm very glad to have seen the cathedral, but I feel toward it as I do toward Westminster Abbey (which we saw in 1977): it would've been wrong not to visit when the opportunity arose, but it wasn't one of the great emotional moments of this trip.

For lunch we sat on street benches and to dine on packaged sandwiches and bottled water from Marks and Spencer. We then tracked down the local museum with more difficulty than four very smart people should've had.

The Canterbury Museum was a creation of World War II. Hitler got the bright idea that bombing tourist sites was the way to win the war. (All I can find to say in favor of the notion is that his next idea, invading the Soviet Union, was even worse.) The cathedral wasn't much damaged, but a bomb did excavate extensive Roman remains well beneath the present city. (In 1983 we viewed a Carolingian palace in Frankfurt which'd come to light in similar fashion a few years later.)

There's a little gift shop at street level and stairs down to the museum itself. Some attractive Roman mosaics have been left *in situ* (separated from the visitors' area by windows). As at Fishbourne, they

were laid directly on the ground and have therefore settled into humps and dips less level than most American front lawns.

Kneeling to peer at the mosaics is a professorial, pipe-smoking manikin whom accompanying photo captions identified as Sheppard Frere. He was headmaster of a nearby boys' school and took charge of the excavations, parlaying the experience into a chair at Oxford. I was delighted to see this because Frere's *Britannia*, which I'd carried with me to Viet Nam, had a lot to do with my interest in Roman Britain and things Roman more generally. It truly is a small world.

We headed back through the drizzle (the weather, which'd been unseasonably warm when we landed at Gatwick, had shifted to cool and wettish) and called John Treadaway to see if he'd like to come down from London to have dinner with us. He was delighted, so we arranged to meet at our hotel (easy to find) and then for him and his partner Jerry to follow us to the White Rabbit (which isn't so easy for a stranger).

The plan was for us to pick up a rental car in Rochester on the way back. That would give us two vehicles the next day to proceed with the entire Lambshead family. We got to the dealership, started the paperwork--and learned that the car itself was at a distant location (on the way to Canterbury, in fact; we'd gone past it) and effectively inaccessible on a rainy rush hour. This was very irritating, but England doesn't have a monopoly on stupid people who don't communicate.

JT and Jerry (Jere? I've never seen her name spelled) arrived with no difficulty on his 1300-cc Yamaha sport tourer. JT and I use motorcycles as our primary transportation. We've owned Kawasakis in the recent past but have gone back to brands that work better for us (in my case a Suzuki Bandit 1200). We're both very pleased not to be riding Kawasakis.

JT and Jere have matching Chase-Harper bandoliers like the one a fan/friend sent me for my birthday. I mentioned in a newsletter how handy it was, and they got them on my recommendation. (They're pleased too.)

Dinner was a delight. I recall both Kirsty and Kim being along, but I'm probably wrong because we had only the one car. The back seat of the Vauxhall is comfortable with three (so long as they're the size of me, Jo, and either Lambshead daughter) but I don't think you can put six in the vehicle unless one is curled up in the trunk. (Well, the boot.) In any case, it was good food and good conversation with really good people. A fit ending to another marvelous and informative day.

Saturday, August 12 : John arrived in the morning with two bits of good news. First, JT and Jerry had gotten safely home (last we'd seen they were taking the wrong road off a roundabout in the rain and heading for some place other than SE London). Second, John had found a rental car at another garage.

We went to his house and picked up Val, then got the car: a Ford Focus with a 1.6 liter engine. It's very similar to the US model, though the engine is smaller and more highly stressed. (Regular gas in England

is 93 octane, so even econoboxes can have what by US standards are high-performance engines.) The trunk/boot is huge by European standards, there's plenty of interior room, and the car performs well though it's not as quite peppy as John's Vauxhall (which has factory tweaks). In all, a good choice for a rental after the disappointing performance of the Nissan when we were here in 2004.

We went as a small convoy (Val and the girls in the Vauxhall, John carrying us in the Ford) to Scotney Castle, which I'd never heard of. It's a deliberately picturesque delight. That is, the site began in 1380 as a real moated castle with four round towers. In the 1640s much of the castle was pulled down and a new 'modern' dwelling was built from the fabric of the castle; one tower was retained, however, simply for looks.

Finally, in the 19th century most of the 17th century wing was pulled down for material to build the current house on higher ground overlooking the original site (which of course is surrounded by water and not terribly healthful). Part of the wing was left as a folly. The family owned successful ironworks and didn't lack money for its whims. More important (and far rarer), the successive owners had taste. One was himself a noted watercolourist, and family friends included major artists (including Henry Moore, one of whose statues stands near the boathouse).

The result is welcoming, peaceful, and altogether wonderful. I took many pictures, so many that I ran my camera batteries flat again (I should've brought an 8-pack in Portsmouth when the rechargables pooped out; live and, apparently, learn in a depressingly slow fashion).

The new house wasn't open, but there were docents in the living quarters which remained in the original dwelling (it'd become the bailiff's residence when the family moved up the slope). There's an honest-to-goodness priest's hole, used for several years by an English Jesuit, one of a group whom the Spanish crown inserted in England claiming to be survivors of a ship wrecked during the 1591 attack on Cadiz. (The written description is rather disingenuous, implying that priests were persecuted at the time for their Catholic faith. In this case, the individuals were agents of a foreign power bent on the subjugation of England and the enslavement of her people--as Spain was attempting to do in Holland then also.)

Some whimsical family oddities were on display also. I was particularly taken by a model of the original castle made from bottle corks. It'd been finished in 1906 by an male family member who was by then 85. It makes one think about personal legacies. (I'm not objecting to his choice; he left *something* that remains a century later, which very few people can claim.)

We had a heavy, very good meal in (as usual) a rural pub, The Globe and Rainbow in (if I wrote it down correctly) Kilnhurst. While there I leafed through a booklet listing National Trust houses and gardens in Surrey, Sussex and Kent . There I found Bateman's, Kipling's house from 1902 till his death in 1936. I checked it against the roadmap (I have embarrassingly little notion of where things are in England) and found to my surprise that it seemed to be close.

John checked and, equally surprised, agreed that it *was* close. Thence to Bateman's!

Distances are tricky in England, especially when you're *way* out in the sticks (the Kiplings moved here in part to dodge tourists). Jo and I rented Naulakha, the house the Kiplings had built near Brattleboro, Vermont, over the week of my 51st birthday. That had a lot of good memories (my sister and her guy, Jim Baen, and the Van Name entourage stayed with us during parts of the period); it was interesting to compare the two experiences.

To a degree the houses are very different. Naulakha was built of wood as a writer's residence, looking down a slope to the Connecticut River; Bateman's was stone with the date 1634 over the entrance and lay at the bottom of the valley of the River Dudwell. Both made me feel extremely comfortable, however. A house has no more important attribute than that.

Bateman's is as Kipling left it, which wasn't the case with Naulakha. The walls are decorated with work by major artists (including Whistler, Poynter, and Philip Burne-Jones) as well as plaques by Kipling's father illustrating several collections of stories set in India .

The study where Kipling wrote contains his working library; this reminds me a great deal of my own library, just as the concepts underlying the design of Naulakha reminded me of those dictating the design of the house my wife and I built. (This doesn't mean that I'm like Kipling, I think, but rather that Kipling and I were writers with similar tastes.) I noted with amusement that he had a complete set of the works of the journalist/naturalist Richard Jeffries, whose *Wildlife in a Southern County* I'd bought in Arundel to join the Jeffries titles I'd found in the US.

There were very knowledgeable docents in every room. The fellow in the study recited a number of poems in the room where they'd been written, identified the wolverine-pelt rug (I had no idea the darned things were so big!), and pointed out the photo of Dr Jameson over the mantel. Jameson had led the disastrous (and I would've said stupid) raid into the Transvaal in 1895 in an attempt to spark war between Great Britain and the Boer Republics . He was, I was amazed to learn, the subject of Kipling's famous poem *If* . (I like and respect both Kipling and his work. There are, however, subjects on which we would've differed.)

They didn't allow photos inside Bateman's, which was a pity. I got batteries (actually, I got two sets as the first quartet was dead out of the box) and took a few pictures of the exterior. Only a few, though, because it'd begun to drizzle.

Before we entered the main building, we'd seen the garage with Kipling's blue 1928 Rolls-Royce (his sleigh is similarly displayed at Naulakha). We did not, and after the fact I regret this, walk to the bottom of the garden to see the old mill which was the setting for one of his most savage political allegories, however. Well, I'm not dead yet.

We motored severally back to the Medway, in my case at least happy and exhausted. Because of our large midday meal, we didn't get together again in the evening (though Jo and I snacked in the hotel bar). Packing wasn't difficult, and I was hopeful that the regulations about carry-on luggage wouldn't be as

absurdly draconian as the news suggested.

Sunday, August 13 : John arrived in the Focus (our luggage fit in the Vauxhall, but with more of a struggle than in the rental Ford required) and got us to Gatwick with no traffic problems. The interior of the terminal was a zoo, however.

The first task was to get to the American Airlines desk, which was on the far side of a huge room filled with people standing in lines to check into other airlines. I took the lead and marched forward, saying, "Passing through," loudly at each new mob.

Have I mentioned that I'm uncomfortable in large groups of people (which is agoraphobia, not claustrophobia as most people seem to think)? It's all right if I can either lose myself in reading or keep moving. Here I kept moving. We reached the proper line and learned that no, the new regulations *were* just as absurdly draconian as the news said: only travel documents could be carried aboard. No food, books, paper, or medicines; pens were being confiscated by some security people.

The situation was more the result of Labour Party politics than of international terrorism. Blair, the prime minister, had lost all authority and was likely to be replaced as head of the party by his enemy Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Blair's ally, a political hack named John Reid, was Transportation Minister. Reid planned to run against Brown and decided to show himself as Doing Something about the Terrorist Threat. Because Brown is a stupid man, his choice of what to do was stupid also.

I thought about it. I was wearing many layers of clothing with pockets. I poured aspirin and caffeine pills into various pockets, a few in each, and clipped a blue disposable pen in the breast pocket of my blue shirt. It was in plain sight, if anybody happened to look. I stuck the camera card into my hip pocket, under my handkerchief; I preferred not to trust my 378 photos to the high-power X-rays used on checked baggage. If there was a problem, I'd deal with it.

This whole business hit me at an irrational level. I got through it by deciding that the army hadn't broken me in two years, so I wasn't going to let security people do it in one day. The army had come pretty close, though, and I'm still not healed from that. Still, they weren't going to shoot at me this time.

The security people were trading off jobs at ten-minute intervals; there were multiple stages of screening. I watched a pair of blue-uniformed personnel walk past with automatic rifles (RO 80s) rather than the MP-5 sub-machine guns I'd expected. Thinking about it, I decided that penetration of 5.56 ball ammo was probably less than that of the 9 mm from the MP-5, but I still grimaced to think of using a weapon like that in a crowd of civilians.

I chatted cheerfully with the security man while I was patted down and had no problem. Jo was carrying a toothbrush and toothpaste: these were confiscated.

We then proceeded to the gate and waited in the corridor for it to be opened. There was an internet kiosk there. I sat in it and wrote notes and letters on the back of various travel documents since I didn't have a book to lose myself in. (You weren't allowed to buy books or newspapers inside the security cordon. Did I say John Reid is a stupid twit?)

They opened the gate, and to my utter amazement we were searched again. Men and women were separated. I had no problems, but Jo's screener tried to take her watch. (Steal her watch, I suspect. Well, there are crooks in America too.) Jo refused and the woman gave up to look for a more pliable victim.

We then boarded our 777. I like the aircraft, but this time my seat was in the center of the five-abreast middle section. I'd drunk quite a lot of fluid in the gate, since I've learned how dehydrating a long flight can be. There is a corollary to drinking a lot of fluids: I made three trips to the john in the course of the flight, changing aisles each time to limit the amount of trouble I was giving two people each trip. Oh, well.

I continued to write my notes, which a stewardess noticed. "You have a pen!" she said. "Yes, ma'am," I agreed. She said she needed to take it for examination.

I surrendered the pen, figuring that a show of reasonableness was my best available response. She returned it in a few minutes. I have a vision of a conclave of stewardesses staring at a blue medium-point Jimmie, discussing whether it could hold a bomb.

That's the trouble with hysteria, of course. If you have someone screaming, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" it's very hard even for reasonable, reasonably intelligent people (and all the stewardesses I've met have been both those things) to keep their mental equilibrium.

I usually read books instead of using the in-flight entertainment, but under the circumstances I explored it. There were several music channels that was interesting, and the videos included sitcoms and a BBC sampler that I found delightful. The common thread of the block was cars, a subject I'm interested in; getting to see Top Gear with Jeremy Clarkson was the silver lining in a generally foolish and unpleasant business.

An amusing aspect of the flight was that we had to fill out landing cards. On the flight in the other direction, the stewardesses had been issued 30 ballpoint pens for passengers to use and return. They'd only gotten four of them back, so they were distinctly short. I loaned mine to other people in my block of seats, some recompense to them for sharing the row with somebody who kept getting up to pee.

We landed at RDU at 4:50 pm local time. The hassle wasn't as bad as it'd been in 2004 when our Port of Entry was Philadelphia, though it involved yet another search. We took our bags to the shuttle, which took us to our car in the long-term parking lot, which took us home where all was well.

Despite bureaucracies, it was a wonderful, wonderful trip.

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Trip to Yosemite and San Francisco, August 2005



Dave demonstrating his environmental feelings in the Mariposa Grove of Sequoias.



Dave at the Clothespin Tree, completely natural and far more striking than the California Tunnel Tree.



The tour company, Backroads, was upscale without being stuffy. This is a portion of the spread of cold cuts to be made into lunch for the hike to Sentinel Peak.



Sequoias have a unique majesty.



El Capitan, photographed from Taft Point.



Mirror Lake. In past years the stream below this point was dammed to 'improve' the picturesque view. In its present natural state, it's a place of remarkable beauty and tranquility.



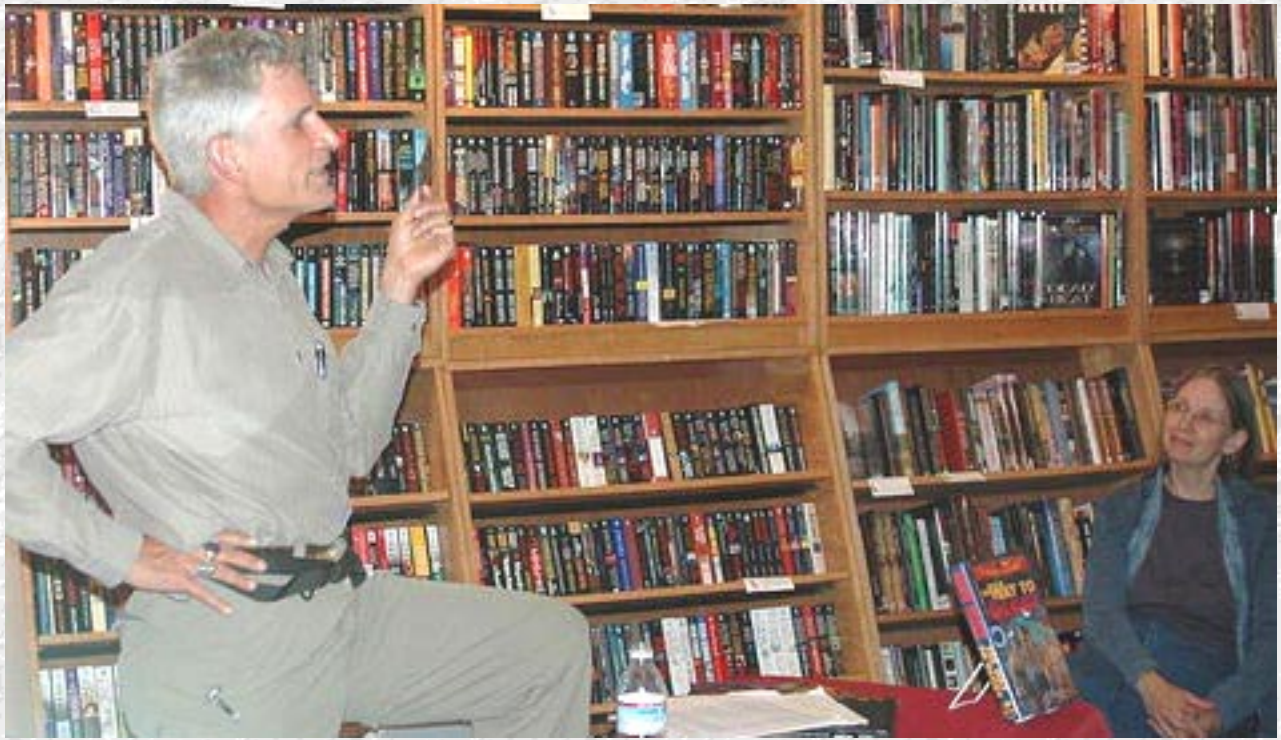
Dave and Jo at the base of the Wawona Tunnel Tree, which fell in 1969.



Dave and Alan Beatts of Borderlands Books at Corona Heights

The following pictures were taken by Jeremy Lassen at Dave's reading and signing at Borderlands Books in San Francisco, August 17, 2005.





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Millennicon, Cincinnati, March 18-20, 2005

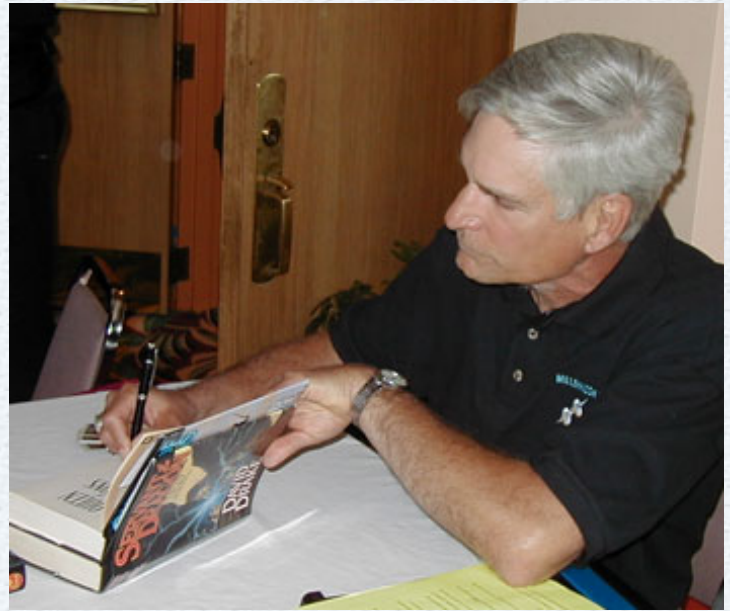
Cheryl Whitmore, GOH Liaison, with Dave



Autographing GOH mousepads



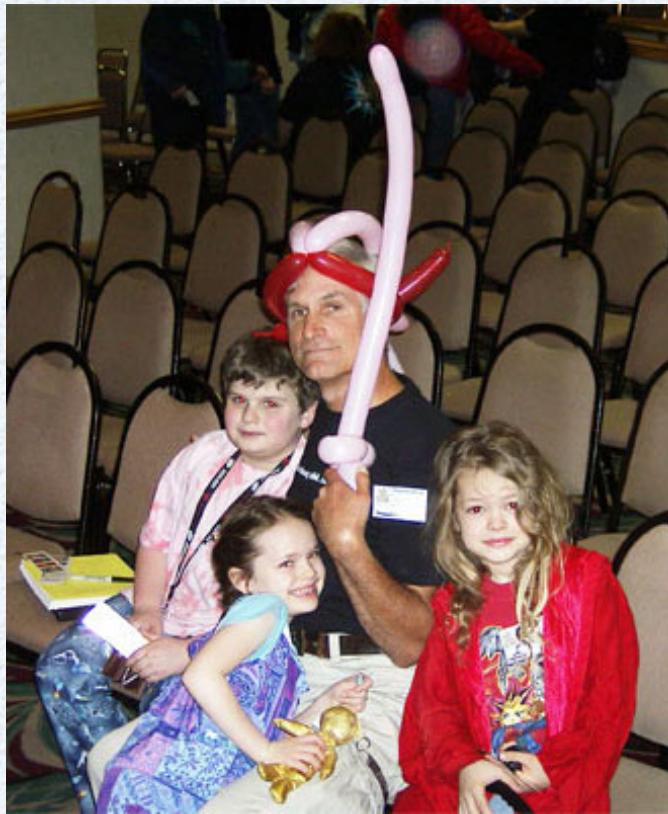
Book Signing



Cutting the GOH Cake with Dan Ryan, Con-Suite Director



Dave with Juanita Coulson



*Dave, being very careful not to move while children at the convention present him with their balloon sculptures.
Photo courtesy Phillip Conrad.*

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SheVaCon, Roanoke VA, February 25-27, 2005



*Chris Runnalls, Dave, and the balloon sculpture Chris made of the Oracle Tree from *The Far Side of the Stars*. (I couldn't imagine how she'd do it, but she could.)*



Dave with Mike Williamson's Enfield.



Dave grinning with linstock, preparatory to touching off the 2" mortar.



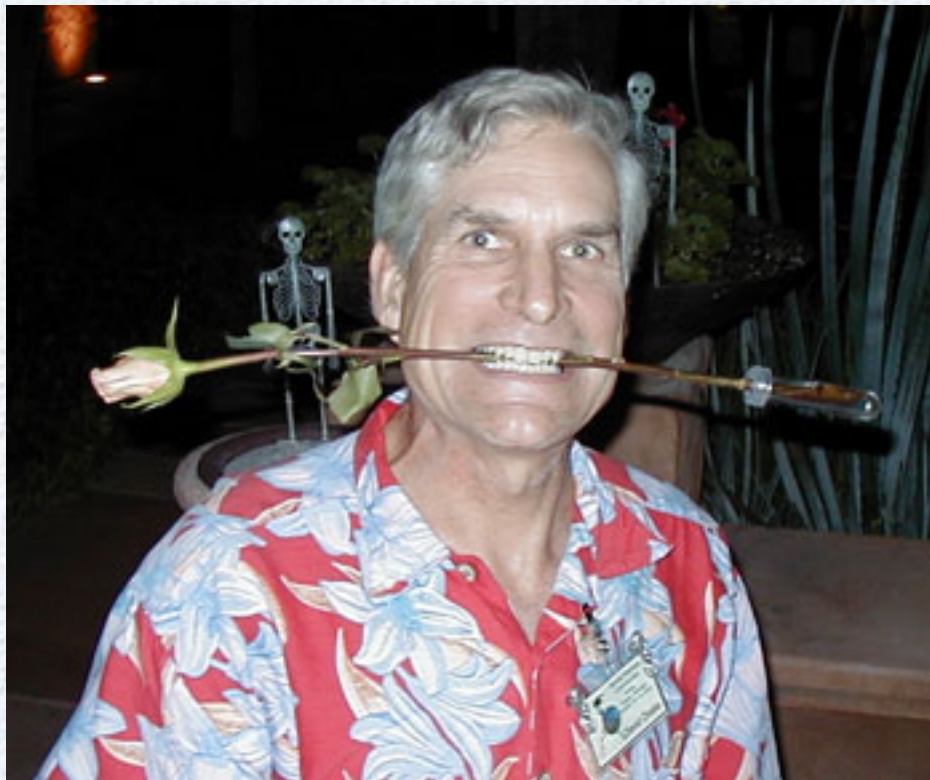
Other crew members tamping the powder charge in the 2" mortar

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World Fantasy Con, Tempe AZ, 28-31 October 2004



Dave, Stu Schiff and Alan Dean Foster



Cecelia Holland and Dave



The first signing of Master of the Cauldron...and look at those shirts!



F. Paul Wilson, Bob Brown and Stu Schiff



Stu Schiff, Bob Brown, David Hartwell and Dave



Dave, Karen Zimmerman, Tatania and Tom Doherty

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Albacon, Albany NY, 8-10 October 2004



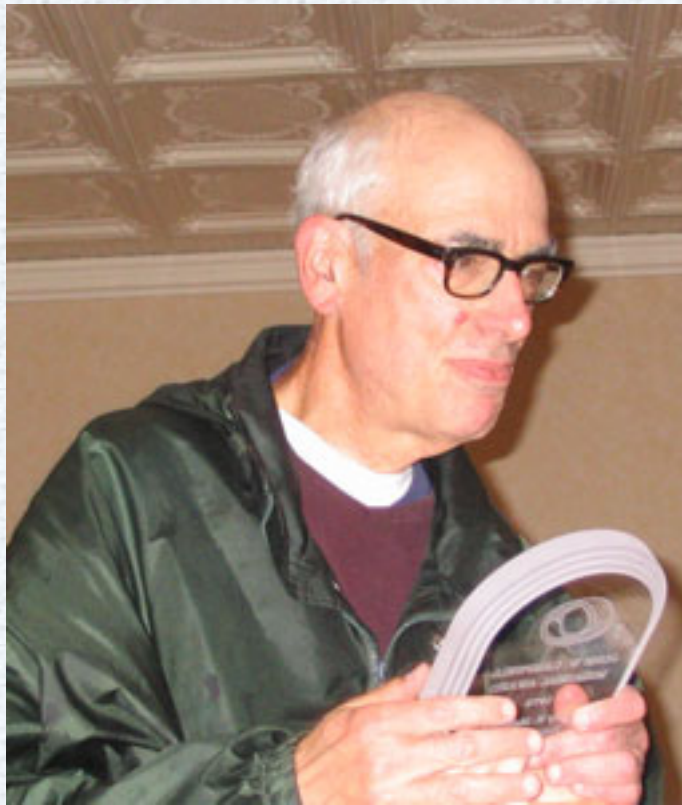
New York trees beginning to show fall colors



Signing stock at the Flights of Fantasy Bookstore



David Kyle, Dave and Barry Malzberg



Barry Malzberg receives a plaque for his 1973 John W Campbell Memorial Award, granted for his 1972 novel Beyond Apollo



Barry Malzberg, John Morressy, F. Brett Cox, David Hartwell and Dave on a panel "The World Turned Upside Down"



David A. Kyle joins the panel

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Leprecon 30, Phoenix AZ, 7-9 May 2004



Alan Gutierrez with Dave, who's signing copies of books for which Alan did the covers.



Donato Giancola (artist on the Isles Series) and Dave



Dave signing books. Phoenix is as far west as he's been in many years, so there were a number of people with several boxes of books.



Dave taping an interview in the Dragon Page studio with Mike Mennenga and Evo Terra.



A crested saguaro in the Desert Botanical Garden.

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Dave's Photo Album Page from his Trip to England, April 2004

Dave's [Travel Narrative](#) in HTML format



The entrance to Upnor Castle on the Medway River



Rochester Cathedral from the battlements of Rochester Castle



The Gatehouse in which Edwin Drood lives (in Dickens' last novel)



The composite sloop Gannet, built in 1878



John, Kirsten and Val Lamshead with Jo Drake aboard the Gannet



The 400 yr old mulberry tree in the garden of the Commissioner of Chatham Dockyard



The Natural History Museum



The Battle of Naseby (1644), set up at Salute in 6mm scale, with all distances in scale



The mosasaur at the Crystal Palace Dinosaur Court



Leeds Castle



Dave on the parapet of the folly at Sissinghurst



John Treadaway and Dave at Salute



Iain Dickie, Dave, and John Lamshead at the Hammer's Slammers display at Salute



Jez from Old Crow Models and Dave



Dave with miniature Dave



Miniature Dave

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SheVaCon, Roanoke VA, February 27-29, 2004



Dave with Eric Flint



Dave, Ray Chatterjee and Karen



Karen, Kevin Apland (who took the pictures below of Dave at the shooting range) and Dave



Dave with a (Rumanian) Kalashnikov. The first time he'd fired one, as they were banned in the Blackhorse which was trained to react to the sound of foreign weapons. Sounding like an AK-47 was a real no-no.



Dave with an M1A identical to the (semi-auto only) M14 he trained with in 1969 and hadn't handled since. (Incidentally, he is wearing ear plugs.)

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ICON, Cedar Rapids IA 10-12 October 2003



Guests of Honor: Gregg Parmentier, Dave, Lee Seed, Rusty Hevelin



Joe Haldeman and Dave



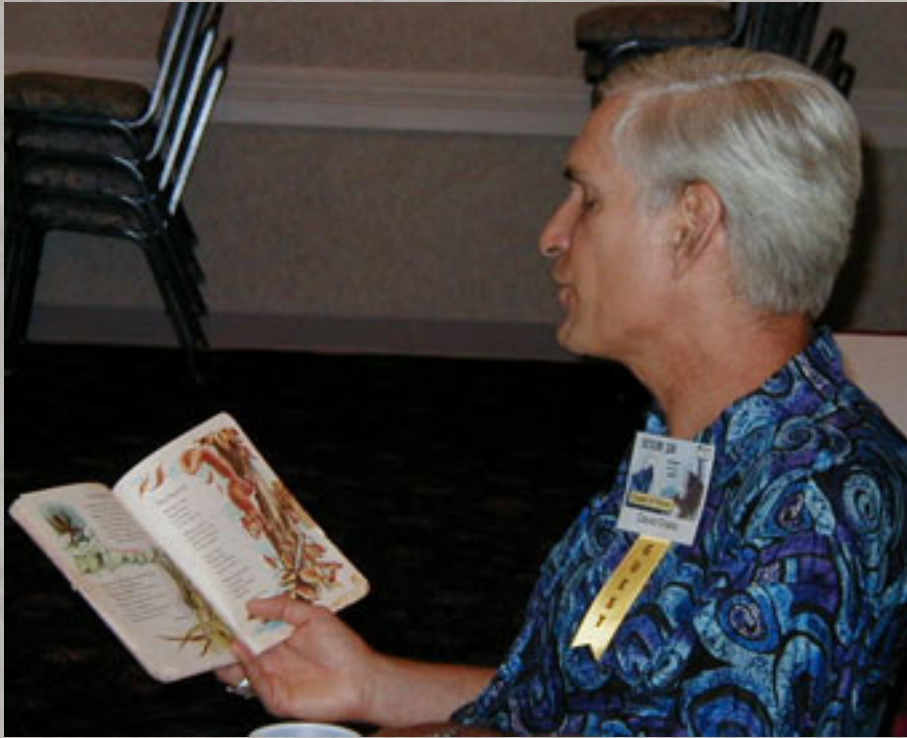
Dave and Rusty discuss pulps



Judging the Bulwer-Lytton Contest

AND

Dave reads to the children:





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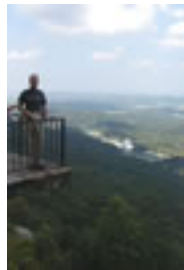
LibertyCon 16

Chattanooga TN July 25-27, 2003

Click on thumbnail for larger view



Wyman/Dave



Rock City



Radio Interview



Radio Interview



Dave shoots



Karen shoots



Baen's Bar



Chatting



Dave/Toni



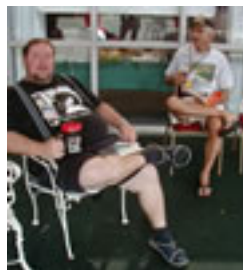
Signing



Panel



McDades



Uncle Timmie

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Dave's Photo Album Page from ConDFW, Dallas, February 21-23, 2003



Richard Weber, Thomas W. Knowles, Aaron Alston and Dave discuss how accurately the military is depicted in fiction.



Carlie and Clyde Howard, with Dave and *The Voyage* open to the dedication to them.



Lynn Abbey and Dave talk about librarians as fictional characters



Dave, Thomas W. Knowles, Aaron Alston and John Steakley on a panel on career-blighting errors, which had the audience roaring with laughter.



Signing in the Dealer's Room



Autograph session

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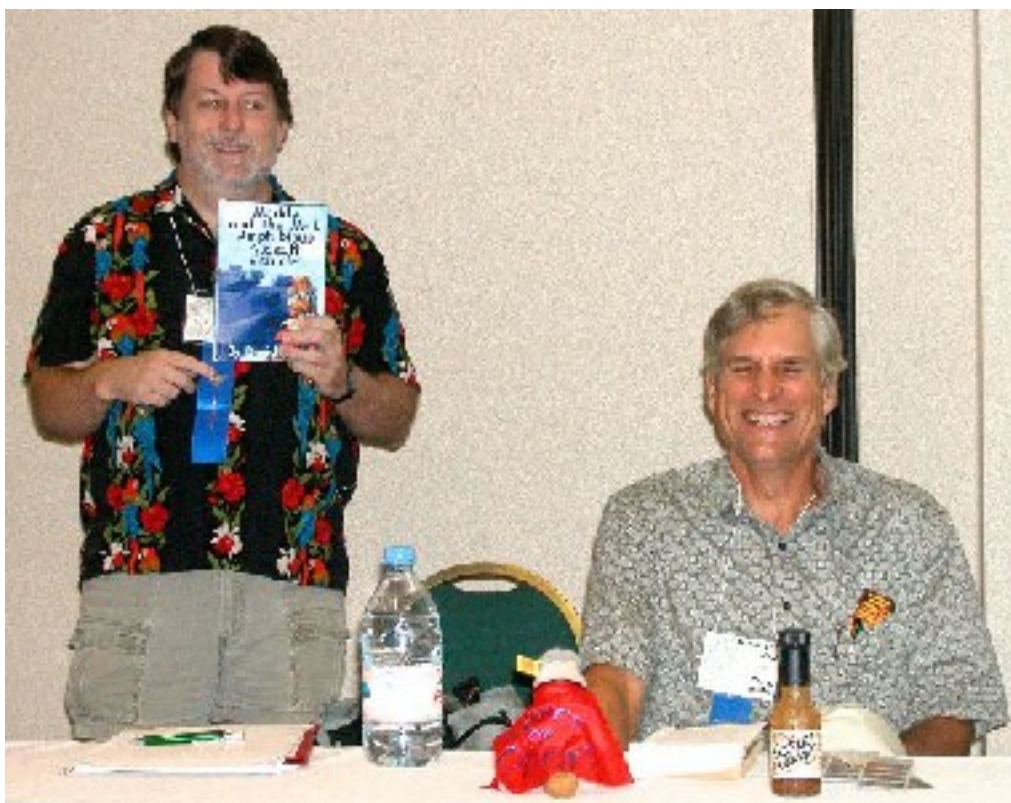


Jonathan and Tristan January 25, 2003



Three generation of Drakes February 5, 2003

Joke Covers at Dave's Roast



At Trinoc-con on Sunday, October 6, 2002, my friend Mark Van Name presided over what was billed as a David Drake Roast but was really a tribute. I was very embarrassed at the idea beforehand, but it turned out to be one of the funniest hours of my existence.

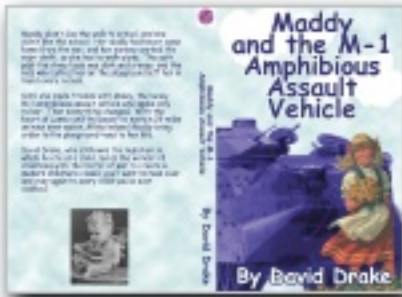
Besides the usual sorts of comments from Mark, Jim Baen, and Dan Breen on the panel (and offerings from more distant friends), Mark and our friend Jennie Faries (who does real cover design for Baen Books) mocked up the covers for David Drake volumes kicking off new lines for Baen Books. I don't think I've laughed so hard since the first time I watched *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

There are jokes in the copy that very few people are going to get, but the whole room found them side-splittingly funny. People may have different favorites--mine was probably the western, Jim especially liked the children's book, and my son thought the parenting book was a scream--but 'favorite' in this company is a matter of first among equals.

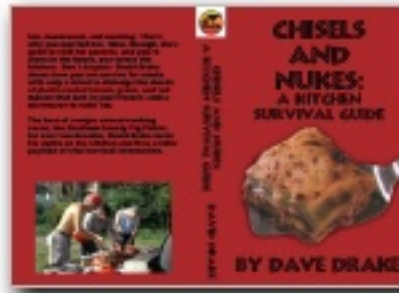
Oh, and I should probably mention that all the author photos are real. The one on the thriller is me smiling at my birthday cake, I swear to goodness....

These are not real Baen books; but you know, I'll bet if I wrote *Maddy and the M-1 Amphibious Assault Vehicle*, Jim would publish it....

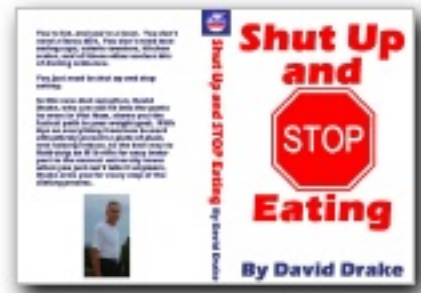
Click on the images to see the larger covers



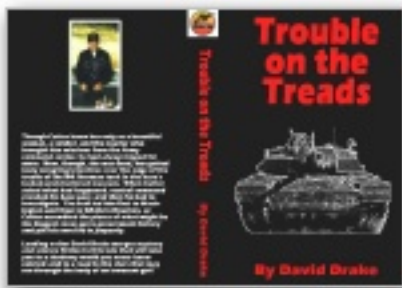
Children
834 X 600
175 KB



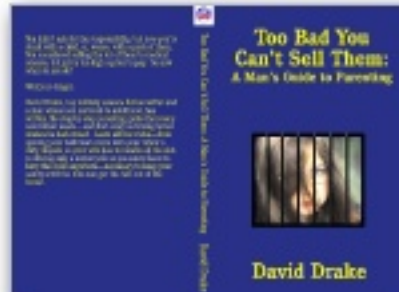
Cookbook
488 X 600
144 KB



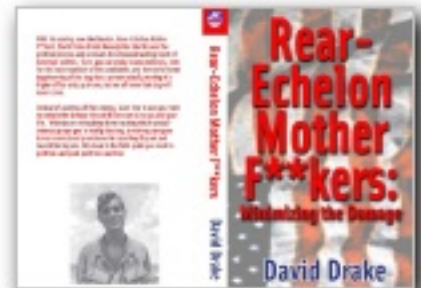
Diet
863 X 600
128 KB



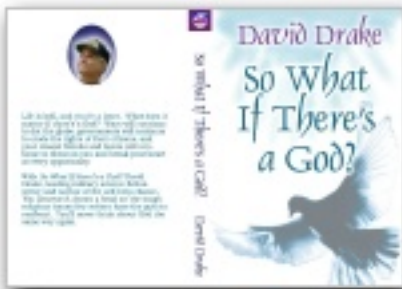
Mystery
854 X 600
141 KB



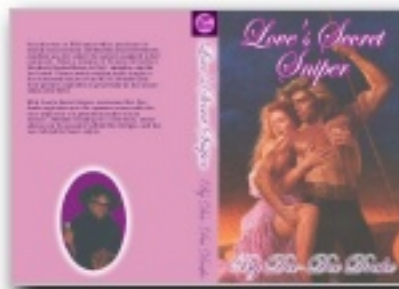
Parenting
948 X 700
154 KB



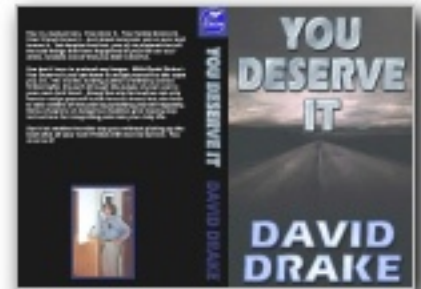
Political
989 X 700
201 KB



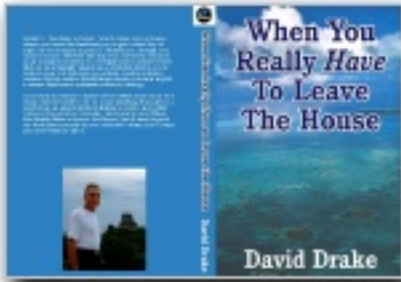
Religious
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118 KB



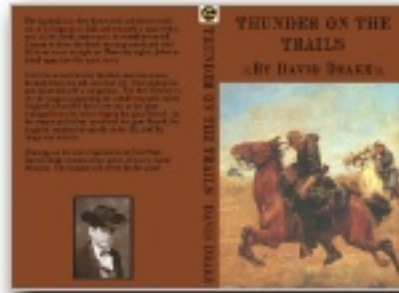
Romance
1011 X 700
212 KB



Self-help
981 X 700
179 KB



Travel
1017 X 700
256 KB



Western
970 X 700
194 KB

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Dave's Photo Album Page from ConGlomeration 2, Clarksville IN August 16-18, 2002



Matt Harpold, Artist Guest of Honor, Dave, and Andy Offutt, Master of Ceremonies



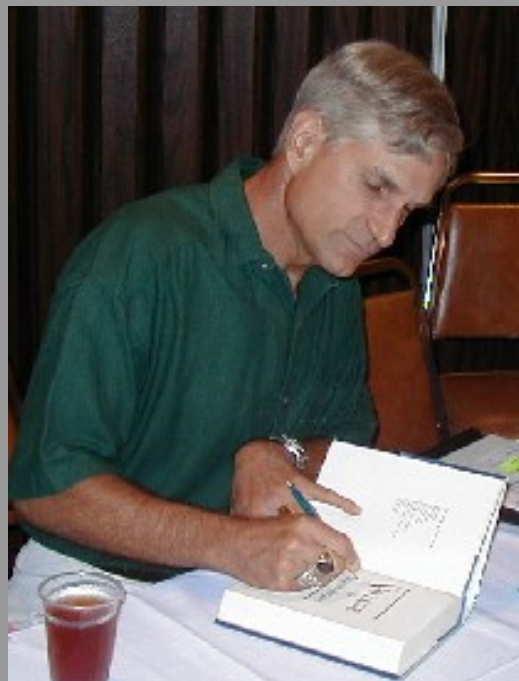
Signing program cover flats



Signing for Jessica



Signing for a Ghostbuster



More signing!

Judging the Masquerade



Dave, Matt Harpold and Anna Dennis



There will always be Marines
Keith Dollinger, Nils Mikkelsen, Keith Bratcher, Dave, and Tony Thompson



From Clarksville
with the
Louisville
skyline in the
background

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Dave's Photo Album Page from his Trip to Belize, July 2001

[Dave's trip narrative in pdf format \(65K\)](#)



At Lamanai



A howler monkey in the wild



Jonathan (and April) between Lamanai and the Belize Zoo, downloading digital pictures to his laptop on the bus.



A tapir in the Belize Zoo



Landing a crocodile



Swimming at Pook's Hill



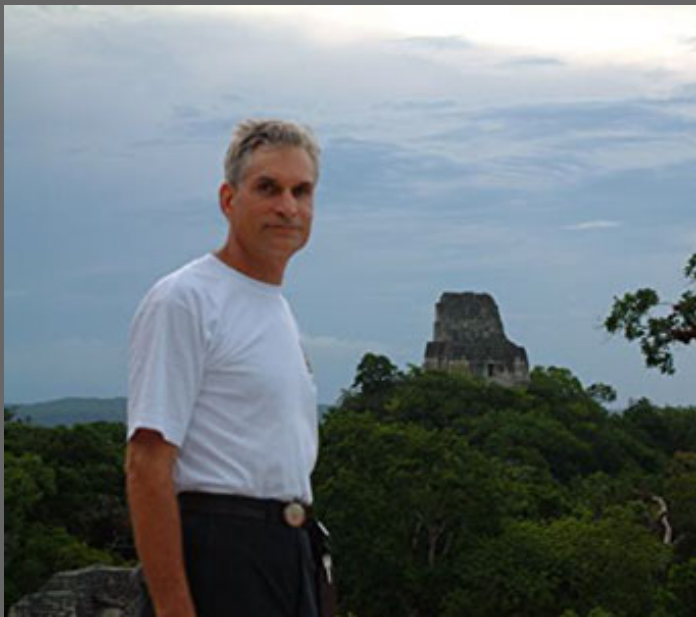
The entrance to Barton's Creek Caves.



Staff member at Green Hills Butterfly Farm changing and feeding Blue Morpho caterpillars (daily task).



Dave on the Palace at Tikal, photographing the ball court



More Tikal



Spanish cedar tree at Tikal

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A visit to the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology, Drumheller,



Alberta



Dave with giant ammonite: the real Great Ones of the Deep from the Isles series



A group interviewed on an Early Morning Breakfast tv show: Con President Paul Bushell, show host David; science guest of honor Bill Brooks, Dave, and Jessica Holder representing SCA.





Thanks for the gift from the Con organizers!

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Dave's Photo Album Page from LibertyCon 15, Chattanooga TN May 25-27, 2001



A cake!



At Chickamauga Battlefield



Webmaster Karen on left, Toni Weisskopf from Baen Books on right



At the radio interview



Eric Flint, Dave, Gary Ruddell



Shooting!



Signing...



and more signing...



John Ringo, Eric Flint, and Dave on panel



Eric Flint, Master of Ceremonies



Judging the masquerade was a blurry prospect - Debbie Hughes, Gary Ruddell, Dave, and Dean Erickson



Hank Reinhardt demonstrates sword slicing



Hank and Eddie



John Ringo



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The Hammer's Slammers Handbook by John Lamshead & John Treadaway

Introduction by David Drake

Miniature wargaming involves moving figurines of soldiers and vehicles across contoured terrain against one or more opponents doing the same thing. Rules of varying complexity cover movement and combat. Figurines (OK, toy soldiers) are molded in many scales, but for ground combat 25-millimeter--that is, a human figure is roughly an inch high--provides a good balance between detail and awkwardly large playing surfaces.

Miniature wargames have a long and honorable history. The Prussian general staff used a variation (sand table exercises) to teach tactics, and H. G. Wells developed a set of rules. (By the way, Wells' rules leave a good deal to be desired. Battles played according to them tend to devolve into squads creeping through alleys behind a field gun.)

In Great Britain, miniature wargaming is big business. Most of the gaming-related materials which one sees in the US--Osprey books and Warhammer 40K, for example--are spillovers from British industry. A British wargamer, Dr. John Lamshead (in his day job he's the man you see to learn about the home life of the marine nematode) contacted me. From him I learned that the Hammer series has a cult following in Britain even though the books have never been well distributed there.

With my enthusiastic approval, John and another wargamer, John Treadaway (a graphics designer who already had a Hammer's Slammers website), put together a proposal for a Hammer's Slammers wargame book and associated figurines. Pireme Publications (<http://www.miniwargames.com/>) bought the proposal; the book itself should be out around Christmas, 2003. Ground Zero Games are casting the miniatures and metal details for the vehicles, while Old Crow are molding the vehicle hulls and turrets from resin. (<http://www.oldcrowmodels.co.uk>)

This section from The Drake CD includes much of the text from the book. The game rules themselves aren't included, but there are tables and specifications which wouldn't fit in the printed version. In addition there's as many of the graphics, both drawings and photos of painted figurines, as were available before this text had to be put to bed.

I couldn't be happier with the results. These are the concrete expressions of the men and equipment which were often much fuzzier before John Treadaway and I spent a great deal of time refining them.

Dave Drake
david-drake.com

[NEXT](#)

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The Hammer's Slammers Handbook by John Lamshead & John Treadaway

Extracts From The Hammers Slammers Handbook By John Lamshead

The Human Galaxy

*We are done with Hope and Honour, we are lost to Love and Truth,
We are dropping down the ladder rung by rung;
-- Kipling*

The theoretical scientific principles behind faster-than-light travel were discovered in the late second millennium but practical experiments demonstrating their utility were not undertaken until the early third millennium. Star probes were successfully launched by the middle of the millennium and increasingly they actually made it home with live crews who reported the discovery of many Earth-like planets. This period was sometimes known as the Second Age of Exploration after the mid-second millennium on Old Earth. The Second Age of Exploration was followed by the Second Age of Colonisation, as interstellar travel became cheaper and more reliable.

A new land grab developed amongst the stars. Initially, the richer terrestrial states and corporations planted most of the colonies, usually for economic purposes, commonly to exploit some key mineral or biochemical resource. These were mostly well financed but rigidly controlled by the parent body. Poorer nations bankrupted themselves to colonise for reasons of political prestige, the same motivation that led dictators of second millennium starving nations to build battleships, international airports and six lane motorways through the bush. Included in this second, poverty-stricken wave were political and religious fanatics who left Earth to build paradise among the stars. Second wave colonisation was under-capitalised and the failure rate was enormous. The result was invariably impoverished, class-ridden rural societies clinging by their fingertips to existence. Finally, there was a third colonisation wave funded by the richer, more successful colonies themselves. These enterprises were often multicultural adding ethnicity to the potential for conflict.

It's a commonplace observation that history repeats itself, first as tragedy and then as farce. Many a postgraduate thesis has been hung on the assertion that galactic and terrestrial colonisation do or do not resemble each other. If one considers the ancient Spanish and English Empires it is clear that there were two quite separate types of colonies. The first was where a rich but militarily and organisationally weaker civilised state was conquered and looted, as in Mexico or India. No convenient alien race has yet been discovered to fill this role.

The second form of colonisation was the occupation and expansion into an empty land as largely happened with the English expansion into North America and the Spanish into South and Central America. Such colonies have always been a financially losing proposition. They absorb massive resources from the host nation and promptly rebel as soon as they become economically profitable. A

sole imperial power might with great effort have hung on to its colonies but in human space there were always rivals for power and so the scene was set for conflict.

And the galaxy burned.

Extract from *The First Galactic Empire*, Theodore Bose.

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The Hammer's Slammers Handbook by John Lamshead & John Treadaway

The Mercenary Regiments

*And that is called paying the Dane-geld;
but we've proved it again and again,
that if once you have paid him the Dane-geld,
you never get rid of the Dane
– Kipling*

It's a truism that human beings have never needed much in the way of technology to kill each other but it is equally true that it never hurts to have better weapons than one's potential opponents provided, and here is the rub, one knows how to use them. Many of the bush wars that burned across the galaxy occurred in impoverished, disorganised, politically corrupt, class structured colonies. Where armies existed, the troops were undertrained, badly armed and demotivated. The officer class tended to be, if anything, even worse, commissions and promotions being generally dependent on political or family connections.

Few colonies possessed the resources to manufacture anything but the most basic military equipment. Of course, better equipment could be purchased, often at some economy-breaking percentage of a colony's GNP, but was then handed to troops who had little idea how to service it, let alone use it in combat. Peasant communities were littered with immobile and inoperable prestigious military toys. There were a number of examples of low-tech armies slaughtering nominally superiorly equipped forces; a machete that cuts has many advantages over a laser rifle that fails to fire because the owner did not know to keep the mirrors clean. The classic example was on Sargon's World where the Bushmen massacred the beautifully tailored and equipped army of the Third Prophet before sacking his city. Grass still grows in the streets of what was Templetown.

A better solution was to hire professional soldiers who brought and operated their own equipment. A peasant community could, by putting itself in a debt that their grandchildren would still be paying, hire an elite regiment for a matter of weeks or months. But at least this way they would have grandchildren, losing meant impoverishment, cultural annihilation, economic slavery or even genocide.

Mercenaries can be defined as military units that are hired for a limited period of time and come complete with their own officers and equipment. This rules out situations where foreigners are co-opted either voluntarily or forcibly into a national army and armed and officered by national citizens. Other than that it is rather difficult to generalise about the mercenary regiments. Some were regular military units of a Terran or Colonial state hired out for political or financial gain. Others, although recruited primarily from a single state, especially the officer cadre, were organisationally and financially independent of that state's government. At the other extreme were cosmopolitan units that had no connection with any particular state or world.

The relationship between mercenaries and their employers is always fraught. The hosts tend to regard their employees as a bunch of unprincipled, armed thugs who are leeching off them in their moment of greatest need and whose loyalty is suspect. After all someone, possibly the enemy, might come up with a better employment offer and business is business. It has not been unknown in history for mercenaries to change sides at a critical moment.

For their part, the mercenaries tend to treat their employers with open contempt. After all, if they had any balls they wouldn't need to hire troops. This attitude is not helped by the fact that the only locals most of the troops are likely to meet are the hustlers and the whores who hang around the army camps.

However, the real problems arise when the fighting ends. It occurs to the civilians that the mercenaries are now the strongest power in the land and it occurs to the mercenaries that the civilians might think their pay now an unnecessary expense. The situation can be even worse if the mercenaries' side lose. Any armistice deal is unlikely to include clemency to foreign mercenaries, let alone back pay.

In the late 3rd Millennium, mercenary warfare was so prevalent that it was commercially viable to set up a Bonding Authority of merchant banks to oversee mercenary contracts. The Authority grew out of Felchow & Sohn in Bremen, the first merchant bank to see the lucrative opportunities of war as a business. The system worked by clients depositing a bond of money at the Authority which was released to the mercenaries provided they satisfied their contract, which was to fight not necessarily to win, or if the client broke their end of the deal. The Authority itself prepared and enforced the contracts, mercenary units that reneged were declared outlaw and hunted down and destroyed.

In the short term, the Authority 'civilised' the endless bush fires across the galaxy, sharply reducing the incidence of atrocities either by or to the mercenaries. In the long term, by making war just another form of acceptable business, albeit a highly profitable one, the Authority had a devastating effect on galactic development. The whole commercial system was winding down as resources were diverted from infrastructure development into weapons and soldiers. In many ways this was more devastating than the wars themselves as planet after planet spent the bulk of its GNP on servicing military debts.

The Great Crash was entirely predictable.

Extract from *War and Finance, a History of Merchant Banking* Sarah Loyd

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The Hammer's Slammers Handbook by John Lamshead & John Treadaway

The Men Behind The Guns

*Then it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, 'ow's yer soul?"
But it's "Thin red line of 'eroes" when the drums begin to roll,
the drums begin to roll, my boys, the drums begin to roll,
O it's "Thin red line of 'eroes" when the drums begin to roll.
– Kipling*

The poverty stricken agricultural societies scattered across human space made fertile recruiting grounds for the mercenary regiments. They tended to leave with as many troopers as which they arrived from every planet they fought upon regardless of losses. Regiments generally preferred farm boys as recruits to the urban slum dwellers of Old Earth or the more urbanised colonies because they had fewer psychological problems; oddly enough sociopaths, psychopaths and gangsters tend to make bad soldiers.

Farming families in the agricultural colonies tended to be large despite the high infant mortality rate; children were needed to work the farm. However, eventually only one offspring and spouse could inherit or the farm would have to be split into uneconomically small units. The options for younger sons were limited. A trooper's monthly pay in one of the elite regiments was higher than a year's salary for an agricultural labourer. Troopers also got access to medical care and pensions if they survived. The death rate among the dirt-poor farmers did not compare particularly favourably with soldiers.

Finally, soldiering had a certain romantic wickedness to it. The image of a swooning exotic girl on every planet just ready to be bowled over by a likely lad in a uniform stuffed with money to spend held a considerable attraction, at least for the male recruits.

If a recruit was lucky, they ended in an elite mechanised regiment where they fought protected by the thickest iridium armour, the best electronics and the most powerful guns the galaxy had ever seen. They also received an education, maybe for the first time in their lives. If they were unlucky, they spent their days as paramilitary policemen in ill fitting uniforms, that sometimes still bore bloodstains from the previous owner, gunning down rioters in shantytowns.

Officers in the regiments came from a variety of backgrounds. If the unit was mono-ethnic, the officers might be drawn from the traditional upper classes. Sometimes they were businessmen, protecting their investment. In the best regiments where results counted more than fashionable accents, officers were promoted from below.

As long as business was good, and there was never enough productive farmland to go round, the recruits came whatever their reception.

Extract from *Psychology Of A Hired Gun*, Fin Sao

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The Hammer's Slammers Handbook by John Lamshead & John Treadaway

Weapons Of The Late 3RD Millennium

*Gold is for the mistress – silver for the maid –
copper for the craftsman cunning at his trade.
'Good!' said the Baron – sitting in his hall,
'But Iron – Cold Iron – is master of them all.'
– Kipling*

Firepower

The most effective weapons of the late 3rd Millennium were powerguns. They worked on the principle that metallic atoms of a fixed linear magnetic orientation could be converted directly into energy by the application of heat, pressure and intersecting magnetic fields. Powerguns used cartridges of copper-cobalt aligned in a wafer of microporous polyurethane. Powerguns released a flash of energy and plasma that struck in straight lines at light speed. Short iridium barrels were used to protect the firer from scatter. The barrels were cooled with liquid nitrogen but even so had limited life spans.

Powerguns came in all sizes from 1-2 cm infantry weapons to 15-25 cm heavy tank guns. Starships and planetary defence systems used similar weapons of up to 100 cm diameter. Quick-firing guns of 1-3 cm could be manufactured and these were commonly grouped into multi-barrelled, anti-personnel and air defence weapons, gatlings or calliopes. One tactical quirk is that powergun shots released all their energy on the first thing they hit, even soft cover could be protective to a target, at least for the first shot. Powerguns were expensive and difficult to manufacture but were the standard Terran military weapon.



*Fig. 3. Heuvelman IA17, 2cm Infantry
Powergun with magazine tube waiting to be loaded (John Treadaway)*

High intensity lasers were utilised in much the same way. They had less destructive power than powerguns, were expensive to manufacture, and were more delicate but they had one major advantage for colonial warfare in that they did not require ammunition.

Kinetic energy weapons of various sizes, from infantry weapons to heavy tank guns, and various levels of sophistication were still employed. There were too many variants to discuss here but they break down into simple, cheap, solid propellant ammunition, the more effective wire-fired liquid propellant rounds, and complex electromagnetic rail or coil guns that fired penetrators at flat hypervelocities. The most sophisticated versions of the latter fired osmium fletchettes down squeeze cone-bore barrels made from a single synthetic diamond crystal. These hypervelocity guns had higher penetration than powerguns but less destructive impact. They were not cheap and could only be manufactured by technically advanced cultures such as the Gorgon Cluster.

Artillery weapons, which includes guns, rockets and missiles, could fire a wide variety of ordinance over considerable distances. Loads included anti-personnel cluster rounds (firecrackers), anti-armour rounds with seeker heads, ground penetrators (bunker-busters), biochemical warfare rounds, nuclear warheads (if the enemy was foolish enough not to be protected by nuclear suppresser fields), electronic warfare rounds, reconnaissance rounds and even good old high explosive & shrapnel. Artillery was truly devastating if it penetrated the opposition's air defences.

Artillery was such a potentially puissant weapon that competent armies carried air defence guns that could shoot artillery shells out of the air before they deployed their bomblets. A variety of small to medium sized multi-barreled gatlings or calliopes were used in conjunction with sophisticated automatic detectors and targeting devices.

Some remarkably simple weapons were in common use even in the most sophisticated forces, for examples grenades, grenade launchers and buzz bombs. Buzz bombs were simple, unguided, short range, anti-armour rockets of a wide variety of designs. They were an infantryman's personal artillery and could penetrate any armour. They gave tankers sleepless nights as they could not be decoyed or shot down. An armoured vehicle's only hope was to prevent the infantryman getting close enough or to use automatic strip mines. These were claymore-type devices positioned along the sides of armoured vehicles that sprayed shotgun-like blasts of shrapnel. They could be set to fire automatically if the vehicle sensors detected infantry or incoming buzz bombs. Hypervelocity unguided rocket-penetrators were used in the anti-tank role precisely because they were too fast to intercept either by gunfire or stripmines but these weapons required stable launch bases of greater mass than an infantryman's shoulder.

Combat Vehicles

Military combat vehicles could be wheeled, tracked or hover craft. Wheeled vehicles were by far the simplest and cheapest to manufacture and maintain. Their disadvantages were limited all-terrain ability and limited weight capability, which precluded anything other than light armour although surprisingly large weapons could be fitted, provided the recoil was not too high. Light weight limited designs to armoured personnel carriers and armoured cars. Wheeled combat vehicles were always horribly vulnerable to mines.

Tracked vehicles offered considerably better terrain capability than wheeled and could carry considerably more weight. Their disadvantages lay in complexity and cost. Tracks could also be an endless maintenance problem. The most sophisticated tracked vehicles used electromagnetic suspensions that floated the body independently of the transmission but the cost and sophistication of such armoured fighting vehicles was not much less than a hover vehicle.

The elite armed forces used hover transmission vehicles. These required large power supplies, usually fusion motors, but could carry high weights allowing heavy armour. They were expensive, sophisticated vehicles with complex computer controlled tiltable multi-fans pressurising a plenum chamber. They had excellent terrain crossing ability, the lighter vehicles had sufficient power to weight ratio to cross open water and some with no armour could even fly (should the driver be tired of life).

A variety of armour types was employed. The most common heavy armour was cast iridium, which gave a good all round performance. Various steel and sapphire composite heavy armours were also used. These sacrificed some protection against kinetic energy penetrators for robustness to powerguns and shaped charges. High tech lighter armours included ceramic-iridium composites and titanium-aluminium alloys. Some armies still made do with steel, which at least had the virtue of being cheap and usually could be manufactured locally.

It is worth noting that no combat aircraft were seen over late 3rd Millennium battlefields. Sophisticated automatic detection and targeting systems coupled through AIs to heavy hypervelocity and light speed long-range weapons made an airman's lot a very unhappy one. Heavily protected hyperspeed aerospace fighters were used to deliver ordinance from low orbit but these are best considered to be a form of strategic artillery.

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The Hammer's Slammers Handbook by John Lamshead & John Treadaway

Hammer's Slammers

*If wars were won by feasting, or, victory by song,
or safety found in sleeping sound, how England would be strong!
But honour and dominion are not maintained so.
They're only got by sword and shot, and this the Dutchmen know!*
– Kipling

Background

The armoured regiment usually known by its nickname of The Slammers started as the Friesland Auxiliary Regiment, raised to fight on Melpomone, an agricultural colony under the control of Friesland. Friesland had originally been a speculative colony set up by Dutch entrepreneurs. When its GNP matched that of Holland, it declared UDI and bought out the shares of the original cartel at 2 cents on the Euro. Like most colonies, Friesland was heavily class-stratified with the ruling families of the Great Houses drawn from the ranks of those that had owned key resources in the original colony.

Friesland was stable and prosperous, so it could afford the finest military equipment from the arms industry on Earth. However, its military suffered from the twin disadvantages of a severe lack of combat experience and the fact that entry to the military academy and promotion in the officer corps depended to a great degree on family connections. These problems proved critical when Melpomone rebelled.

Melpomone produced a cash crop, the bluebright plants whose biochemistry was the source of a popular stim-drug. Bluebright farmers got wheat-prices for a crop that made the owners of Friesland shipping and chemical companies very rich. Twelve regiments of regulars failed to put down the inevitable rebellion.

Colonel Hammer was Executive Officer of the prestigious Guards Of The Republic, one of the handful of men who had achieved rank in the regiment on professional merit rather than aristocratic lineage. To his contemporaries' horror, he volunteered to leave the Guard to outfit and command a regiment of foederati recruited from soldiers with combat experience from all over human space. The Slammers did what the regulars could not do, crushed the rebellion and incidentally earned themselves a reputation for ruthless efficiency in the process.



*Fig. 4 Uniform Insignia and name tape
from a Slammers combat uniform
(John Treadaway)*

It was always understood that the Auxiliary Regiment would be disbanded when the rebellion was over and its troopers granted Friesland citizenship as a reward. However Secretary to the Council of State Tromp, who ran Friesland, regarded promises made to foreign mercenaries as worthless and resolved to execute the Slammers now their usefulness had ended. To this end, he landed a full armoured regiment of Guards on Melpomone to control the Starport and disarm the mercenaries.

The Slammers launched a lethal set piece attack on the Starport, annihilating the Guards in 13 terror-filled minutes of firepower. The next day the Slammers lifted in rented freighters and began their career as a high-end mercenary unit. They were perhaps the first but they were not to be the last.

A well-deserved reputation for pitiless competence followed Colonel Hammer's Slammers over nearly three decades of near continuous warfare. Friesland itself was not immune to the political instability that dogged human space. President Smol of the Council had been little more than Secretary Tromp's puppet and after the Secretary's unfortunate death at Melpomone various factions manoeuvred for control. Van Vorn finally assumed the Presidency arousing simmering hostility from a faction led by Counsellor Theismann.

Thiessman eventually rebelled when Van Vorn declared himself President-For-Life and the Counsellor hired the Slammer's to make him Dictator. Van Vorn poisoned himself after the Slammer's broke the Iron Guard at New Wageningen. Unfortunately, Thiessman walked into a stray round leaving Hammer to assume the Presidency. He legitimised his position by marrying Lady Anneke Tromp, daughter of the late Secretary Tromp, and the Slammers were out of the mercenary business. The regiment was now officially the 1st Brigade of the Friesland Defence Force.

Hammer's Slammers Order of Battle

Headquarters (Alpha) Company

Colonel Hammer, staff officers, satellite launch & maintenance, finance, security element (153 personnel)

Maintenance

3 tank transports, 6 combat car transports, all on stretched chassis ACV's, 2 large and 4 smaller 'dozers (212 personnel)

Communications

(143 personnel)

Medical

24 line doctors and 36 others including a full field hospital (60 personnel)

Supply - including mess & quartermaster

(143 personnel)

Intelligence

3 command cars with mechanical intelligence teams (84 personnel)

Transport

288 ACV Trucks (312 personnel)

Combat Car Battalion

144 combat cars, 48 command cars in 8 companies of 4 line platoons, each platoon has 6 vehicles - 5 combat cars and one command car (800 personnel)

Tank Battalion

64 tanks, 4 command tanks, 4 companies of 4 platoons plus command tank, each platoon has 4 tanks - (144 personnel)

Infantry Battalion

Battalion Command, 4 companies of command element plus 4 platoons, each platoon has a command element and four ten man squads equipped with skimmers plus 3 ACV jeeps carrying a mixture of support weapons, mostly 100mm mortars (808 personnel)

Artillery Battalion

18 self-propelled rocket assisted howitzers, 3 batteries of 6 launchers, plus 3 command cars and 6 ammo haulers - (162 personnel total)

Replacement Battalion

10 tanks, 25 combat cars, 40 skimmers and 100 ACV trucks (1500 personnel)

Regimental Personalities

Colonel Hammer

Alois Hammer was born into a moderately prosperous professional family on the Dutch-culture independent colony of Friesland. His father was an insurance loss adjuster and his mother a nurse. He spent considerable time with his maternal grandfather who had been an NCO with a Flemish mechanised regiment on Old Earth and had fought in the Surawak Emergency. Hammer was a bright but not exceptional student. His grandfather had fought alongside a cousin of one of the Great Houses of Friesland and called in an old favour to get Hammer admitted to the Friesland Military Academy.

Hammer was single minded in his pursuit of a commission, it is true to say that he was respected rather than liked at the Academy. Alois Hammer turned out to be one of those few individuals who show military genius. He distinguished himself as a junior officer at the Sheroba debacle and the invasion of Lyon. Although his professional ruthlessness appalled his fellow officers, who considered themselves gentlemen, it soon came to the notice of his political masters who used him for special tasks.

As a reward for services to the Friesland Council, Hammer was promoted to Executive Officer of the Guards of the Republic, the first 'commoner' to achieve such a distinction. The appointment was not a success. The amateur gentlemen of the officer's mess deeply resented the admittance of an 'oik' with no social graces who was utterly uninterested in horse racing and had unsettling, unorthodox views on soldiering.

At the time Friesland was attempting unsuccessfully to enforce its political control over Melpomone with its valuable bluebright extract. Despite overwhelming military superiority on paper, the line regiments of Friesland showed a depressing inability to cope with the unorthodox guerrilla tactics of the rebels.

Hammer volunteered to be colonel of the Auxiliary Armoured Regiment of mercenaries recruited to do what Friesland soldiers shied away from. The Auxiliary Regiment was highly successful in crushing the rebellion and coalesced into an elite unit. Their methods were effective but brutal involving hostage taking and the gassing of rebel villagers.

The battle for the Melpomone Starport demonstrated that Hammer was a master of set piece armoured engagements and this tactical talent was demonstrated repeatedly over the next three decades. However, Melpomone Starport also showed that Hammer had two further skills, for military strategy and political infighting. Individuals who have all three skills are extremely rare and they tend to leave their mark on history; these are the Caesars.

Danny Pritchard

Pritchard was born on Dunstan, an agricultural planet that grew wheat to feed the industrial planets of Hagener, Weststar, Mirage and Jackson's Glade. The industrial worlds set up a cartel to keep wheat

prices low. Pritchard's life changed when warfare erupted between the Scots and Hindi settlers on Weststar. The Hindi agent for the cartel on Dunstan recruited a battalion of Dunstan farm boys and shipped them in a grain freighter's hold to Weststar. Danny flipped a coin with his brother Jig and lost; he shipped out that day.

Jig never inherited the farm, five years later his tractor overturned crushing the cab. Danny was lucky; the Slammers landed on Weststar the same day as the freighter and needed replacements after the heavy attrition on Lost Dreams. They bought the Dunstan recruits as a job lot. Seven years and seven contracts later Danny Pritchard was Sergeant-Commander of a tank platoon in the attack on Foster's regiment at Starhome. The tanker showed promise as a leader and was given a commission after a two-year crash course in the Grüningen Academy on Friesland.

Pritchard was promoted to Captain for his skilful fighting retreat in the face of superior forces on the Messenine Plain at Hellenika. On Kobold, Captain Pritchard was the officer that Hammer trusted to carry out a complex political deception on Barthe's Company before crushing the regiment in a tank assault. Kobold was a defining moment in Danny Pritchard's career as it was here he began to have severe doubts about his career choice, appalled by the casual way soldier's civilian's lives were expended in the pursuit of political objectives.

After Kobold, Pritchard was promoted to major and appointed S-3, the Slammer's Operations Officer. He fulfilled this role for five years right up to the incorporation of the Slammers in the Friesland Defence Force. He then resigned his commission and married Margritte DiManzo who had been his commo tech when he was a company commander in tanks. Pritchard served Friesland and President Hammer as Minister of Reconciliation and then Interior Minister. On Colonel Hammer's death of old age Pritchard succeeded him as President.

Joachim Steuben

Major Steuben came from the highly civilised ancient colony of Newland. Steuben was a classic sociopath. It was not that he was wicked or mentally ill but simply that he lacked any ability to empathise with anyone else and there was a hole in his thinking where most people have a conscience. In the wrong circumstances, logic could cause him to commit acts that most people would find evil. Steuben also happened to be a natural gunfighter. He was a slender attractive man, always immaculately dressed in hand-tailored clothes, who made no secret of his homosexuality. This appearance sometimes led stupid people to try to bully him. After one duel to many, where he killed the son of the city governor, Steuben found it expedient to leave Newland. He drifted across the galaxy, living on inherited wealth until he was recruited into the Auxiliary Regiment of Friesland.

After several attempts by the rebels on his life plus some unsavoury non-combat incidents with some of his troopers, Colonel Hammer decided he needed a disciplined security detachment of military police. In the urbane, educated, utterly ruthless Steuben, the Colonel found just the man to lead them. The security detachment grew to four combat car platoons, known officially as A Company, and to the rest of the Slammers as 'The White Mice'.

Steuben was completely loyal to Hammer, as only a lonely man can be to his first love, and would carry out almost any act to protect his Colonel's interests. It is believed to be Steuben who assassinated Secretary Tromp and Councillor Theisman. Loyalty turned to jealousy as Hammer came to need and rely on many other people when Colonel Hammer of the Slammers became President Hammer of the Friesland Republic.

Joachim Steuben started to become a dangerous embarrassment when he threatened to kill Danny Pritchard and became sexually jealous of Hammer's wife. He was reported killed by a pistol blast in the back; no one was arrested for the crime.

Campaigns

In two decades the Slammers carried out almost 50 operational combat contracts. There is not space to list them all here so only a few of the most significant are discussed.

Melpomone Starport

The Melpomone Starport was held by a Friesan Armoured Guard Regiment who were supposed to disarm the Slammers and execute them. The Slammers put in a set piece attack on the Starport, shelling the port with firecracker round. As the Guards used calliopes to shoot down the shells, Slammer tanks in the hills above the port smashed the AA guns with long-range tank shots. More long-range shots incinerated the Guard's artillery vehicles while firecrackers scythed down unprotected Guard troopers. Guard tanks tried to reply, shooting long range at vehicles hull down in the hills but Slammer tanks that had worked their way in to the Starport perimeter smashed the Guard tanks and combat cars at close range.

Starhome

The planet Thrush is home to a whole series of religious memorials created by a long disappeared alien federation. Two religious factions struggled for control. One group hired Colonel Foster's Infantry to hold Starhome, one of the larger alien artefact temples against the other group who hired the Slammers. The armoured regiment took Starhome from Foster's Regiment and the rebels, unfortunately smashing most of it in the process. The famous quote from an unknown Slammer is that "We had to destroy Starhome to save it".

Curwin

On Curwin the Slammers put down a rebellion of local farmers for the shipping companies. This was a nasty grinding guerrilla war that ended when the shippers' money ran out and the Slammers shipped out.

Liberty

The single inhabited continent of liberty was divided into two states, Placida and Armstrong, concentrated on the east and west coasts with volcanic ash and lava flows in between. Both states were prosperous on rare metal mining and could afford to invest considerable monies in destruction. A series of vicious mechanised battles were fought across the wastes until an armistice was agreed. Some

Slammer tank companies took 60% losses in single engagements.

Plattner's World

The various city-states on Plattner's World grew rich exporting a natural anti-ageing drug. The people of the outer states, The United Cities gathered the tree moss from which the drug was extracted and it was shipped out by Solace in the central upland, the only place where a Starport could be built. The planet Nonesuch encouraged Solace to put the port fees up while paying for the United Cities to hire the Slammers when civil war broke out. Despite hiring a number of regiments, the United Cities lacked the strategic facilities to organise the various regiments that they had hired and were losing to the better coordinated Solace forces when the Slammers carried out one of the most incredible blitzkriegs in armoured history. They abandoned the defence, formed a series of all arms battle-groups and struck cross country at the heart of Solace, the starport which supplied all the Solace regiments. Capturing the port ended the war at a stroke. This campaign is obligatory study-material at every military academy in the galaxy.

Kerwi

On Kerwi the Slammers fought for the Kingdom of Marshall against the electromagnetic tanks of the Lightning Division hired by the Kingdom of Ganz. Expensive high-tech armoured vehicles hunted each other through valleys and mountain passes dominated by medieval castles.

Pohweil

A shipping cartel made a grab for the government of Pohweil, which was controlled by the farmers' cartel. The shippers hired mercenaries to besiege and capture the capital. They would have done it too, if the farmers hadn't hired the Slammers to blast a corridor through to the capital. The opposing mercenaries tried to ambush the Slammer convoys without much success, after that it was all over bar the mopping up.

Sulewesi

Sulewesi was colonised by two waves of Malay settlers. The first owned everything, the second wanted a cut, so flames lanced the desert. The rebels hired the high-tech veteran `Brasilians so the government hired the Slammers, with a number of cheap regiments to fill the gaps on both sides. The sand-swept deserts of Sulewesi were the perfect theatre for armoured warfare and the Slammers and Brasilians duelled, slashing the lesser regiments to shreds.

Kobold

Kobold was a joint colony of Francophone Aurore and Flemish Friesland. The French dominated the colony, oppressing the Flemish settlers and inciting a rebellion. The settlers hired the Slammers and the French hired three well equipped Francophone regiments, the Alaudae, the Phenix Moirots and the Compagnie de Barthe. Aurore and Friesland came to a compromise and rehired the four regiments to keep order. Unfortunately, Col Barthe and the Aurore Government planned a double cross, smuggling powerguns to the French settlers. Eventually, Barthe pushed his luck and the Slammers pounced. Powerguns flamed the Kobold forests until the Compagnie de Barthe was crushed.

Prosperity

Prosperity Conservatives, equipped and operating from Terran Enclaves based around two starports in the north of the continent, ran a successful insurgency against the corrupt Nationalist Government who theoretically controlled the rest of the continent. The government hired the Slammers to break the rebellion.

The Slammers rapidly ascertained that Conservative operations depended on a constant supply of reinforcements and weapons down from the Terran Enclaves. The regiment interdicted the neutral zone, The Strip, shutting off the arterial supply to the insurgents in the south. Nationalist forces, beefed up by security detachments of Major Steuben's White Mice, began to get on top of the Conservative Action Movement (CAM) so the Conservatives gambled all on a single push, the Autumn Offensive.

Nationalist defectors slaughtered their officers and loyalist colleagues, and seized barracks with their all-important armouries. Thousands of weapons and ammunition were passed out to Conservative sympathisers. In some cases where even their officer corps had been subverted, entire battalions went over to the Conservative side. Large, well-armed formations of Conservative Regulars burst out of the Terran Enclaves and attacked the Nationalist units lining The Strip.

On The Strip, Slammer artillery hogs obliterated concentrated Nationalist formations and the survivors were mopped up by Slammer mechanised armoured detachments. In the south, the Conservatives achieved considerable success. All over the nationalist cities, military formations disintegrated without a fight, were overrun, or sat tight in fortified positions and screamed for someone else to come and rescue them. CAM units threatened to capture the provincial capital of Kohang on the southern coast precipitating the collapse of the Nationalist Government.

Twenty-seven Conservative units of company or battalion strength besieged the Government Compound in Kohang. On paper, the Provincial Governor had at his disposal 3,000 armed police and 6,000 soldiers organised into ten battalions of light infantry, although many had deserted or were ignoring orders. The 12th and 23rd Infantry Divisions under General Halas from Camp Fortune near Kohang were ordered to break the siege but seemed unable to organise themselves to advance. The 4th Armoured Brigade, based at Camp Victory to the south west of Kohang, did manage to mount an attack but soon bogged down in a series of ambushes.

By chance, the Slammers had a maintenance facility at the Nationalist military base Camp Progress in the central highlands to the south. The Slammer component at the base was commanded by Captain June 'Junebug' Ransom who was ordered to put a scratch column together from whatever armour and personnel she had available and break the siege of Kohang.

Camp Progress came under attack from a Conservative line battalion at the start of the Autumn Offensive. The Slammer detachment, consisting of a reduced company of six combat cars and a single troop of three tanks, put in an immediate counter attack destroying the attackers; Conservative losses were in excess of 60%.

Captain Ransom was given immediate orders to form a scratch-built jock column from the troops and equipment she had immediately available and relieve Kohung with her five remaining combat cars and three tanks. The column was ambushed right outside the camp in a troop recreation town called Happy Days. All the Slammer vehicles successfully traversed the town, annihilating a Conservative company en passant.

Ransom crossed the Padma at Adako Beach, a hamlet of twenty or thirty buildings built on the confluence of the Adako Creek and the Padma destroying a company of Conservative mobile infantry before they could debuss from their trucks. Her column then crossed the bridge at la Reole after breaking through the besieging Conservative lines. One tank was lost to friendly fire and another fell through the damaged bridge into the river.

The panicking Conservatives instructed the 1st of the 4th Nationalist Armoured Brigade, who had rebelled, to intercept Ransom's remaining vehicles at Kawana. The 1st had around 20 light tanks with 10 howitzer tanks in support. Ransom with one heavy blower tank and five combat cars annihilated the traitor company in a pincer attack, losing her life in the process. The column relieved Kohang and the heart had been ripped out of the rebellion.

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The Hammer's Slammers Handbook by John Lamshead & John Treadaway

Extracts From The Hammers Slammers Web Page By John Treadaway

<http://www.salute.co.uk/slammers3/index.htm>

The M2 "Blower" Tank



*Fig. 2. Icarus Industries M2A1 AFV, "Herman's Whore".
Combat laden and with field modifications (John Treadaway)*

Manufacturer: Icarus Industries, Terra

Mass: 170 tonnes

Hull Dimensions: Length 11.2.m; width 6.95m; height (to top of turret) 2.8m

Armour: Cast Iridium

Power Source: Fusion bottle

Propulsion: 8 fans feeding into steel plenum chamber

Top Speed: 120kph

Max Lift: 0.1 metre

Amphibious: No

Crew: 2

Offensive Systems: Main gun 20cm powergun, secondary weapons 2cm tri-barrel powergun & ground penetrator rockets

Defensive Systems: Anti buzz bomb strip mines (ADS), mine-clearing net launcher

Artificial Intelligence: Extremely high

In Use With: Hammer's Slammers

Icarus Industries, of Hamburg, Terra, make one of the most powerful tanks employed by state armies or mercenary companies. In terms of overall performance, they have the best combination of speed, armour and firepower available anywhere and are much sought after by those organisations that can afford to use them.

The M2 series of heavy tanks has been in continuous production with Icarus for over twenty years. It has

'reached the end of its production run' several times in the last decade but - without a definite replacement finalised – the M2 will be in use for many years to come and may still be in production for the next decade. Certainly it will continue to be upgraded both by the original manufacturer and independent suppliers.

The M2 "Ursa" was designed as a replacement for the earlier M1 of the same name. Since the introduction of the M2, the M1 is sometimes referred to as the Ursa Minor and the M2 as the Ursa Major. In the line they are both simply referred to as "Blowers".

The M1



Fig. 5. Icarus Industries M1A6 AFV, "Snow White".

Firing the 20cm main weapon.

*Model by Ground Zero Games, Painted by Kevin Dallimore,
photography John Treadaway,
copyright South London Warlords)*

This vehicle was a heavy tank of a previous generation. Slab sided and efficient looking, the M1 was armoured with a steel-faced sapphire and composite sandwich. Over 1 metre thick on the turret and frontal armour this offered protection against most current weapon systems up to an including 10cm power guns. Being one of the first AFV's fitted with a 15cm powergun, the M1 was a 'heavy hitter' compared to competitive vehicles of the time. Massing at over 130 tonnes and with eight 1.3 metre fans providing thrust into a steel, inward slanting plenum chamber, the M1 could travel at 120kph. Defensive measures included a flechette machine gun fitted to a small commander's turret, later replaced by a 1cm auto powergun. ADS strips covered the frontal and side arcs with static, ceramic 'stand off' plates on the rear of the vehicle.

Variants included a turret-less tank destroyer version (the M11) mounting the same main weapon but in a lower chassis with extra frontal armour and the M46 20cm Rocket Assisted Howitzer, which uses a much lighter variant of the hull M1 hull. The M46 is in use with various standing armies and mercenary units. Because of its modular construction, the M1 chassis is still very popular with maintenance crews and the design flexibility enables it to be utilised in a number of different configurations. The M46 has only four fans and lift is reduced commensurately but – with a lighter turret – the overall combat weight, depending on model, is between 40 and 60 tonnes so performance is only slightly degraded.

The final M1 variant – the M1A6 – has a mass of 145 tonnes with extra armour packs, an anti mine net pod fitted into a new frontal armour panel, a 2cm tribarrel in a new commander's cupola (having dispensed with the mini turret) and all round ADS. Top speed has been reduced to 100kph and many consider the vehicle overloaded, however, until the arrival of the M2 series, the M1A6 was one of the most potent tanks in service and will continue to feature on TOE's for a considerable period of time.

The M2

Starting afresh, Icarus planned the M2 as an entirely new departure with a hull manufactured from a one piece casting of solid iridium with the turret formed in a similar process. This threatened to increase the all up combat weight to over 170 tonnes and – even with new and very powerful 1.5 metre turbine fans fitted – a speed of 120kph was only attained by making the plenum chamber from plain armoured steel rather than the planned steel faced, beryllium and iridium lattice re-enforced material that had been specified at the design stage.

Combat trials were made of the M2 with a 15cm Power gun, as fitted to the previous M1 series. This proved the concept and a small batch were manufactured in this configuration. The first major variant was the M2A1, which was up-gunned with the 20cm powergun as its main weapon.

Again to save weight, the M2 dispensed with the commanders 'mini turret' fitted to the M1 design and all marks have a simple cupola with a 2cm tribarrel fitted as standard.

The heavy, domed turret which accounts for 38 tonnes of the vehicles weight, spins on frictionless magnetic bearings. One person can spin the turret by hand, given sufficient time, and there are crank handles deployed internally to achieve this, although in practice this is only ever performed in the workshop: the gearing is such that over 600 turns of the handle are required to turn the turret through 360 degrees!

The main weapon, whose barrel is 3m long, has a short breech assembly which is fed by 20cm plastic ammunition discs from a 20 round 'ready magazine' however the vehicle itself carries over 800 rounds in total. Although it would induce excessive barrel wear, the ready magazine can be emptied in well under a minute. To reduce this deterioration in the integrity of the barrel tube, rapid fire is usually reduced to a 'double tap' often used to push through friable or non-compacted defences.

Mine clearance is achieved with a similar unit to that fitted to the other vehicles from the same manufacturer although the system designed for the M2 is the largest fitted to any non-specialist mine clearing vehicle. A large, 12cm tri-rocket mortar drags an explosive mesh 'net' to a distance of around 500 metres and, with a width of between 5 and 20 metres, clears a path around 400 metres deep (starting 100 metres or so from the vehicle bow). This 'net' is then detonated clearing a mine-free path in front of the vehicle. Combat use has shown this system to be almost completely effective.

Because of the increase in efficiency of the 'Booster' – the artificial intelligence suite - the M2 has a crew of just two (reduced from 3 on the M1). The driver's position is almost central at the front of the hull, just forward and left of the turret front with an access hatch and vision aids. The turret has a cupola with similar vision aids on the roof for the commander/gunner. The single crew person turret is fitted with a large stowage basket at the rear, as – despite their size – the M2 series is not spacious internally.

As with most applications of the 2cm tribarrel, it is fitted on a curved pintel mount, with the magazine feed tube coming up through its swivel. There is a conical shaped sensor array on the roof of the turret usually with at least one radio aerial – this is usually painted red on Hammer's tanks as a close identification aid.

The M2 series are powered by a Westal AE5 fusion power plant at the hull rear which lifts its 170 tonnes mass on eight armoured fans (hence the name 'Blowers') with shielded oval intakes in 'shoulders' on the upper hull. Speeds of up to 120 kph can be achieved on paved surfaces.

The M2 has insufficient power to lift more than 15cm on the power of its fans alone and generally skims above the terrain using 'ground effect'. In addition, the vehicles mass – like the M1 before it – precludes the crossing of deep water.

Other Models

The M2 has spawned a number of variants. As already detailed, after the initial M2, the M2A1 was the first to be fitted with the 20cm main powergun.

The M2A2 was an experimental vehicle and carried a rather less massive turret than the A1. The shape was unusual having a 'scooped out' area to either side of the main weapon – a high intensity 5cm powergun. These scooped out sections carried armoured binnacles, each housing 8 guided anti-armour missiles. The rationale was that although the 5cm weapon had insufficient penetration to destroy another tank in the same class – except at virtually point blank range – it was quite capable of knocking out APC's and combat cars over a considerable distance.

The fitted missile load employed the 'Kestrel' ATGW, which used missiles with internal AI system. The field usage of the M2A2 was problematic, however, with the AI often being fooled by non vehicle based targets and counter measures. In addition, although the 5cm weapon has a proven track record, its use against heavy targets was unsatisfactory. The Kestrel is still employed on lighter AFV's but the M2A2 is

rarely seen in combat.

The M2A3 has a smaller turret than any of the previous models and is fitted with a 17cm, ruby wave-guide laser. With those adherents of lasers as main tank weapons, the A3 was very popular.

The latest model of the M2 is the M2A4. This is fitted with the latest AI suite and the steel plenum chamber strengthened with the beryllium and iridium lattice re-enforced material that had been originally planned. The fan units are more efficient with a second layer of blades so performance is retained at a similar level to previous models. The power system is upgraded with a second smaller Westal AE7 fusion bottle to supplement the primary unit. A new technology has been developed by Icarus for polishing the interior of the barrel on the L14 20cm powergun increasing its life-span by 50% and extending its tolerance to rapid fire. Main weapon ammunition stowage has been reconfigured to make it safer in the event of a hull breach although this – and the extra fusion bottle - has reduced capacity to 600 rounds.

Last in this list of improvements on the M2A4 are a pair of 12cm Ground-penetrator rockets mounted in the rear hull and fired through the plenum chamber. Guided by the vehicles sensors and AI the vehicle can be positioned by the 'Booster' over tunnel systems or underground chambers and the penetrators fired directly downwards into the soil. The weapons will travel up to 3m in average soil densities, although this is reduced to 1.5m in rocky ground. When arriving at the AI/Sensor guided anticipated target depth – perhaps an open space or a concrete slab – the warhead will detonate.

An up armoured version of the M2A4 has recently entered service. It's likely classification is the M2A4UA (for 'Up Armoured'). This has an additional belt of armour around the turret affording it a rather more squat and angular appearance. The armour is comprised of a spaced layer of iridium and ceramic cells designed to disrupt the warheads of incoming missiles and buzzbombs.

Command Tanks

Two variants of specialist Command Tanks are made: the M2A2F and M2A4F. In both cases, a larger turret is fitted, less domed and more slab-sided. This has space for two extra crew – a commander and a comms operator. Overall weight is almost identical to the regular model at around 170 tonnes. This is achieved by thinning the iridium turret walls to around three quarters that of a gun tank. Weapon fitment of the F models is the same as the A2 and A4 respectively although main round storage is 500 on the A2F and 400 on the A4F. Two cupolas are fitted to the turret, with a side hatch for the comms officer, but only one tribarrel is fitted. The M2A4F carries no rocket penetrator rounds.

In the Pipeline

Icarus are rumoured to be working on a 25cm powergun equipped, non turreted, tank destroyer based on this chassis but are hampered by the lack of a suitable weapon. The only available gun has a very low rate of fire and an extensive upgrade to the standard liquid nitrogen cooling system will need to be

implemented if the weapon is to meet the manufacturer's specifications.

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Slammers Artillery

Colonel Hammer's regiment uses only self propelled artillery. They have experimented with (and rejected) calliopes for anti-artillery work (relying on tribarrels and the 20cm powerguns fitted to their M2 Blowers instead) The infantry carry both buzz-bombs – shoulder launched rocket propelled grenades – and grenade launchers for localised bombardment fire. However, the ballistic delivery systems used by the regiment fall into one of three types (only two of which are now currently in service): the L71 10cm mortar mounted in an A21 Jeep, the M18 15cm and the M46 20cm rocket assisted howitzer

Mortars

The semi-automatic, breech loading 10cm L71 mortar (produced by FN of Friesland) is the weapon of choice for the Slammers. This fires from a 4 round clip which is inserted into a hopper mounted above the breech. The weapon can fire all four rounds in under six seconds. A larger weapon from the same manufacturer (the L86) with a more complex breech and a capacious hopper holding two clips (of the same 10cm calibre rounds) was trialed but, ideally, needed to be carried by a larger vehicle or deployed from the vehicle itself in static positions. This did not meet the infantry support requirements of the regiment and so was rejected in favour of the L71.

When in use, the rear seats and cargo area of the jeep is designed to be folded flat to enable one crew member to load and the other to fire the weapon. Tactically, the weapon is often loaded and then fired by one crew member, leaving the driver to move the vehicle as soon as all four rounds are in the air, the objective being avoidance of counter battery fire.

Rounds available for the L71 include HE, white phosphorus, self-forging anti-armour, airburst mini-cracker, targeting, illuminating and practice.

15cm Hogs

The M18 15cm rocket assisted howitzer is based on an M6 or – more usually – an M9 combat car chassis. There is little effective difference in performance or use between the two options, the armour package performance is similar because, to make more internal room on the M9, the iridium liner in the fighting compartment is not fitted. The M18/6 is a slightly smaller vehicle than the M18/9 but both have similar internal layout and storage arrangements. The fighting compartment is reduced to just under 1 metre in height and a flat hull top built directly onto that. This holds the turret ring for the 2.2 metre tall turret, manufactured from aluminium and ceramic composites. The turret has two, full height, horizontally split doors at the rear which, when in use, are often left open: the lower as a ramp and the upper as overhead splinter protection. This increases crew comfort and facilitates ammunition replenishment.

Whilst the M18 is an effective system, the 15cm AL22 weapon has an effective range of only 80 kilometres with standard rounds, although this is increased to 95km with the smaller warhead/extra range propellant combination. All shells have an initial rocket motor fuelled by powdered beryllium with an oxidising agent (boron fluoride) but after a short period of time (depending on load this can be anything from 7 to 10 seconds) the rocket cuts off and the ramjet sustainer motor activates.

Rounds available for the M18/6,9 (AL22) are coded with coloured bands around the olive drab casing (with a white booster stage) and include:

Round type	Colour bands (number and size)
Nuclear (often known as "Red Pills")	one red, one white
K3 (gaseous, non persistent nerve agent; some times known as "Bitter Pills" because of the smell left by the nerve agent)	two black
HE	one brown, one white
Solid Targeting	one grey, one white
Incendiary (white Phosphorus and time-fused zirconium pellets)	two white
Illuminating/star shells	one green, one white
SFASAA (self forging, active-seeking, anti-armour)	one purple, one white
Cluster munitions ("firecrackers")	one blue, one white
Practice	one pink, one white
Practice, extended range	one pink, one black
SFASAA (self forging [depleted uranium], active-seeking, anti-armour), Extended range	one purple, one black
HE, extended range	one brown, one black
Solid targeting, extended range	one grey, one black
Flechette	one thick orange
AFPFDS	one thick blue

These latter two rounds are designed for anti-personnel and anti-armour direct fire deployment respectively. They are rarely employed and used very much as a 'last resort'.

Shells weigh between 80kg (K3) and 110kg (solid targeting) and the ready drum of ammunition can be discharged within 20 seconds. Crew for both the M18/6 and M18/9 is six (including two drivers) but not all can be carried in the vehicle itself. Two crew ride in the turret with a driver in the M18's front

compartment, and three more (two and a driver) in a support vehicle (usually an M9A4C). Although 10 rounds are carried on the primary vehicle in a ready drum, with 10 more stored in the turret, and a further 20 in the support M9, ammunition haulers are used to support the M18 on the move. Often M5's or similar, these can carry over 120 rounds plus vehicle and weapon spares and are equipped with loading conveyer belts to assist the crew.

The M18 and its variants have now been superseded in use in the Slammers by the M46, although the weapon is widely used elsewhere.

20cm Hogs

The M46 is in use with a few standing armies and mercenary units. It is over all a rather larger vehicle than the M18 as it uses a lighter variant of the M1 tank hull as its 'donor' vehicle. Some of the M46's are new builds but many are conversions from refurbished M1 chassis'. The M1 is well suited to this kind of role because of its flexible, modular construction. The M46 has four fans removed from the basic hull, reducing the number to four and the space afforded by this change in running gear is put to good use with crew seating and ammunition storage. The rear hull is reduced to just under 0.5 metres in height and a large turret ring for the spacious 2.5 metre tall turret sits upon that. Manufactured from aluminium and ceramic composites, the turret gives protection from shell splinters and small arms fire to its crew.



Fig. 6. Icarus Industries M46 20cm "hog" "Strawberry bitch" - Rocket Propelled Artillery ACV with infantryman from the Thunderbolt Legion. (Model conversion based on a vehicle by Ground Zero Games, painted by John Treadaway. Figure by Denizen Miniatures, painted by Graham Green and photography John Treadaway, copyright South London Warlords)

The gun requires eight persons in total, all of whom can be accommodated on the move in either the turret (with some discomfort) or six in the turret and the last two in a pair of seats up front, next to the

driver. The turret has two, full height, horizontally split doors at the rear which, like the M18, when in use are left open with the lower door as a ramp and the upper as overhead armour.



*Fig.7. Icarus Industries M46 20cm "hog" "Strawberry bitch" - Rocket Propelled Artillery ACV.
(Model conversion based on a vehicle by Ground Zero Games, painted and photographed by John Treadaway, copyright South London Warlords)*

Combat weight, depending on model, armour packages and ammunition stowage, can vary between 40 and 60 tonnes and manoeuvring ability and cross country performance is only slightly degraded from the other "blower" vehicles it accompanies; this is due more to having a higher centre of gravity than because of any particular degradation of power to weight ratio.

The AL27 20cm weapon mounted on the M46 chassis uses a similar technology to the smaller, 15cm AL22. Ammunition is kept in a 6 round ready drum that can be emptied in 15 seconds. Sustained fire rates are around ten rounds per minute.

The effective range is 130 kilometres with standard rounds, increasing to 170km with the extended range driver motors (with a commensurate loss of warhead mass). All shells have the same type of rocket motor fuelled by powdered beryllium and ramjet sustainer combination as the AL22. Velocity is around 880m per second depending on warhead type.

Rounds available for the AL 27 are similar to the AL22 but significantly larger, weighing between 110kg (K3) and 180kg (solid targeting). AL27 20cm rounds have the same colour markings as the 15cm rounds with two additions.

Round type	Colour bands
LOLDCOM (low orbit, limited duration, communication packages of satellite clusters, known as "Constellation")	two silver
LOR (a limited duration, low orbiting reconnaissance satellite)	two gold

Both of these rounds lack the ramjet sustainers but are completely rocket powered in two separate stages. They can inject their payloads into orbits of between 25 and 45 kilometers, depending on atmosphere densities and other combat related factors (anticipated life-span, low observability requirements etc).

22 rounds are carried on the M46 hull. Accompanying M5 (or similar) support vehicles carry 80 rounds plus vehicle and weapon spares.

The M46, in various configurations, has superseded the M18 in service with Hammer's Slammers.

Developments

There has been some development of a 'hardened' or 'combat ready' version of an artillery piece by Icarus Industries. Based on an M2 chassis, with full armour suite and a lower, more heavily armoured turret than its contemporaries, this has been designed to operate at the combat front line.

The weapon mounts an AL27 20cm weapon and a cupola mounted 2cm tribarrel for defence, plus a full ADS package. Its major disadvantages in trials seem to centre around a lack of crew and ammunition space. Three crew – driver, gunner/commander and loader - as dictated by the available space and configuration, fire the weapon. It is reloaded from a ready magazine under the turret that holds only 19 rounds. Replenishment requires a team of 6 extra crew in a support vehicle (an M5) with another 44 rounds and enough 'non-combat down time' time to load the magazine through the rear of the turret. So far no one has actually found a combat requirement for this vehicle – initially named the M2-20C – and then purchase some.

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*Fig. 8. Infantry Skimmer, (F.N., Friesland)
Model by Ground Zero Games,
painted by Graham Green,
photography John Treadaway,
copyright South London Warlords)*



*Fig. 9. Panzerkampfwagen 47 "Panther II"
(Henschel, Terra The Compagnie de Barthe).
Model by Ground Zero Games,
Painted by Kevin Dallimore,
photography John Treadaway,*

copyright South London Warlords)



*Fig.10. Panzerkampfwagen 60 "Maus"
(Henschel, Terra as used by a number of planetary forces) opens fire.
Model scratch built/conversion by John Treadaway,
Painted by Graham Green,
photography John Treadaway,
copyright South London Warlords)*



*Fig. 11. P6 "Egalite 1" APC, (Panhard, Terra) opens fire.
(The Compagnie de Barthe).
Model by Ground Zero Games,
Painted by Kevin Dallimore,
photography John Treadaway,
copyright South London Warlords)*



*Fig. 12. Pan8_rear - Rear view of P8 "Fraternite" APC,
(Panhard, Terra, The Compagnie de Barthe).
Model by Ground Zero Games,
Painted by Kevin Dallimore,
photography John Treadaway,
copyright South London Warlords)*



*Fig. 13. Turret commander P8 "Fraternite" APC,
(Panhard, Terra, The Compagnie de Barthe).
Model by Ground Zero Games,
Painted by Kevin Dallimore,
photography John Treadaway,
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A LAND OF ROMANCE
by David Drake

The marketing bullpen at Strangeco Headquarters held seventy-five desks. Howard Jones was the only person in the huge room when the phone began ringing. He ignored the sound and went on with what he was doing.

It was a wrong number--it had to be. Nobody'd be calling seriously on a Sunday morning.

Dynamic 25-year old executive.... Howard sucked in his gut as he typed, not that there was much gut to worry about. *Ready to take on adventurous new challenges....*

The phone continued to ring. It could be the manager of one of the Middle Eastern outlets where they kept a Friday-Saturday weekend, with a problem that only a bold--a *swashbuckling*--marketing professional like Howard Jones could take on. Did Strangeco have a branch in the Casbah of Algiers?

The company slogan circled the ceiling in shimmering neon letters: IT'S NOT A SANDWICH--IT'S A STRANGEWICH! SLICES OF KANGAROO, CASSOWARY, AND BUFFALO IN A SECRET DRESSING! STRANGEWICH--THE HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE!

The phone *still* rang. Howard's image staring from the resume on the screen had a stern look. Was he missing his big chance? The caller could be a headhunter who needed the hard-charging determination of a man willing to work all the hours on the clock.

Howard grabbed the phone and punched Line One. "Strangeco Inc!" he said in what he hoped was a stalwart tone. "Howard Jones, Assistant Marketing Associate speaking. How may I help you?"

"Oh!" said the male voice on the other end of the line. "Oh, I'm very sorry, I didn't mean to disturb anybody important."

Sure, a wrong number. Well, Howard had known that there wouldn't really be a summons to a life of dizzying adventure when he--

"I'm at Mr Strange's house," the voice continued, "and I was hoping somebody could come over to help me word an advertisement. I'm sorry to have--"

"Wait!" Howard said. He knew the call couldn't be what it sounded like, but it was sure the most interesting thing going this Sunday morning. It *sounded* like the most interesting thing of a lifetime for Howard Albing Jones.

"Ah, sir," he continued, hoping that the fellow wasn't offended that Howard had bellowed at him a moment ago. "You say you're calling from Mr Strange's house. That would be, ah, which house?"

"Oh, dear, he probably does have a lot of them, doesn't he?" the voice said. "I mean the one right next door, though. Do you think that you could send somebody not too important over to help me, sir?"

Howard cleared his throat. "Well, as a matter of fact, I wouldn't mind visiting the Strange Mansion myself. But, ah, Strangeco staff isn't ordinarily allowed across the skyway, you know."

"Oh, that's all right," the voice said in obvious relief. "Mr Strange said I could call on any of his people for whatever I wished. But I really don't like to disturb you, Mr Jones."

"Quite all right, mister...," Howard said. "Ah, I'm afraid I didn't catch your name?"

"Oh, I'm Wally Popple," the voice said. "Just come over whenever you're ready to, Mr Jones. I'll tell the guards to send you down."

He hung up. Howard replaced his handset and stared at the resume photograph. That Howard Jones looked very professional in blue suit, blue shirt, and a tie with an insouciant slash of red. Whereas today--Sunday--Assistant Marketing Associate Jones wore jeans and a Fuquay School of Business sweatshirt.

Howard rose to his feet. Daring, swashbuckling Howard Jones was going to risk entering the Strange Mansion in casual clothes.

A transparent tube arched between the third floors of the Strange Mansion and Strangeco Headquarters to connect the two sprawling buildings. When Strange occasionally called an executive to the mansion, the rest of the staff lined the windows to watch the chosen person shuffle through open air in fear of what waited on the other side.

Shortly thereafter, sometimes only minutes later, the summoned parties returned. A few of them moved at once to larger offices; most began to clean out their desks.

Only executives were known to use the skyway, though it rumor had it that sometimes Robert Strange himself crossed over at midnight to pace the halls of his headquarters silently as a bat. Now it was Howard Jones who looked out over cornfields and woodland in one direction and the vast staff

parking lot in the other.

The skyway was hot and musty. That made sense when Howard thought about it: a clear plastic tube was going to heat up in the bright sun, and the arch meant the hottest air would hang in the middle like the bubble in a level. Howard had never before considered physics when he daydreamed of receiving Robert Strange's summons.

The wrought iron grill at the far end was delicate but still a real barrier, even without the two guards on the other side watching as Howard approached. They were alert, very big, and not in the least friendly.

Muscle-bound, Howard told himself. *I could slice them into lunchmeat with my rapier!*

He knew he was lying, and it didn't even make him feel better. Quite apart from big men *not* necessarily being slow, this pair held shotguns.

"Good morning!" Howard said, trying for 'brightly' and hitting 'brittle' instead. "I have an urgent summons from Mr Popple!"

Christ on a crutch! What if this was some kid's practical joke? *Let's see if we can scam some sucker into busting into the Strange Mansion! Maybe they'll shoot him right where we can watch!*

Howard glanced down, which probably wasn't the smartest thing to do now that he wasn't protected by the excitement of the thing. At least he didn't see kids with a cell phone and gleeful expressions peering up expectantly.

One of the guards said, "Who're you?" His tone would have been a little too grim for a judge passing a death sentence.

Howard's mind went blank. All he could think of was the accusing glare of his resume picture--but wait! Beside the picture was a name!

"Howard Albing Jones!" he said triumphantly.

"Nothing here about 'Albing'," said the other guard.

The first guard shrugged. "Look, it's Sunday," he said to his partner. Fixing Howard with a glare that could've set rivets, he said, "We're letting you in, buddy. But as Howard Jones, that's all. That's how you sign the book."

"All right," said Howard. "I'm willing to be flexible."

One guard unlocked the grating; the other nodded Howard toward a folio bound in some unfamiliar form of leather, waiting open on a stand in the doorway. The last name above Howard's was that of a regional manager who'd been sobbing as he trudged into the parking lot for the last time.

The first guard pinned a blank metal badge on Howard's sweatshirt, right in the center of FUQUAY. "Keep it on," he said. "See the yellow strip?"

He gestured with his shotgun, then returned the muzzle to point just under where the badge rested.

An amber track lighted up in the center of the hallway beyond. The glow was so faint that it illuminated only itself. Focusing his eyes on it meant that Howard didn't have to stare at the shotgun.

"Right," he said. "Right!"

"You follow it," said the guard. "I'll take you where you're supposed to go. And you *don't* step off it, you understand?"

"Right," said Howard, afraid that he sounded brittle again. "I certainly don't want you gentlemen coming after me."

The other guard laughed. "Oh, we wouldn't do that," he said. "Pete and me watch--" he nodded to the bank of TV monitors, blanked during Howard's presence "--but we ain't cleared to go wandering around the mansion. Believe me, buddy, we're not ready to die."

Howard walked away, holding a fixed smile until the amber strip led him around a corner. He risked a glance backwards then and saw that the light was fading behind him. He supposed it'd reappear when he was time for him to leave.

He supposed so.

Howard hadn't had any idea of what the inside of the Strange Mansion would be like. There were a thousand rumors about the Wizard of Fast Food but almost no facts. Howard himself had envisioned cathedral-vaulted ceilings and swaying chandeliers from which a bold man could swing one-handed while the blade of his rapier parried the thrusts of a score of minions.

There might be chandeliers, stone ledges, and high balconies on the other side of the blank gray walls but that no longer seemed likely. The corridor surfaces were extruded from some dense plastic, and the doors fitted like airlocks with no external latches.

The amber strip led through branching corridors, occasionally going downward by ramps. The building sighed and murmured like a sleeping beast.

Howard tried to imagine the Thief of Baghdad dancing away from foes in this featureless warren, but he quickly gave it up as a bad job. It was like trying to imagine King Kong on the set of *2001*.

The strip of light stopped at a closed door. Howard eyed the blank panel, then tried knocking. It was like rapping his knuckles on a bank vault, soundless and rather painful.

"Hello?" he said diffidently. "Hello!"

The corridor stretched to right and left, empty and silent. The amber glow had melted into the surrounding gray, leaving only a vague memory of itself. What would the Count of Monte Cristo have done?

"Hello!" Howard shouted. "*Mister Popple!*"

"Hello," said the pleasant voice of the girl who'd come up behind him.

Howard executed a leap and pirouette that would have done the Count--or for that matter, an NBA forward--proud. "Wha?" he said.

The girl was of middle height with short black hair and a perky expression that implied her pale skin was hereditary rather than a look. "I'm afraid Wally gets distracted," she said with a smile. "Come around through my rooms and I'll let you in from the side. The laboratory started out as a garage, you know."

"Ah, I was told not to leave..." Howard said, tilting forward slightly without actually moving his feet from the point at which the guide strip had deposited him. After the guards' casual threats, he no longer believed that the worst thing that could happen to him in the Strange Mansion was that he'd lose his job.

"Oh, give me that," the girl said. She deftly unpinned the badge from Howard's sweatshirt and pressed her thumb in the middle of its blankness, then handed it back to him. "There, I've turned it off."

She walked toward the door she'd come out of, bringing Howard with her by her breezy nonchalance. He said, "Ah, you work here, miss?"

"Actually, the only people who work here are Wally and the cleaning crews," the girl said. "And my father, of course. I'm Genie Strange."

She led Howard into a room with low, Japanese-style furniture and translucent walls of pastel blue. It was like walking along the bottom of a shallow sea.

"Have you known Wally long?" Genie said, apparently unaware that she'd numbed Howard by telling him she was Robert Strange's daughter. "He's such a sweetheart, don't you think? Of course, I don't get to meet many people. Robert says that's for my safety, but..."

"I've enjoyed my contact with Mr Popple so far," Howard said. He didn't see any reason to amplify the truthful comment. Well, the more or less truthful comment.

Genie opened another door at the end of the short hallway off the suite by which they'd entered. "Wally?" she called. "I brought your visitor."

The laboratory buzzed like a meadow full of bees. The lighting was that of an ordinary office; Howard's eyes had adapted to the corridors' muted illumination, so he sneezed. If the room had been a garage, then it was intended for people who drove semis.

Black silk hangings concealed the walls. Though benches full of equipment filled much of the interior, the floor was incongruously covered in Turkish rugs--runners a meter wide and four meters long--except for a patch of bare concrete around a floor drain in an outside corner.

"Oh, my goodness, Mr Jones!" said the wispy little man who'd been bent over a circuit board when they entered. He hustled toward them, raising his glasses to his forehead. "I'd meant to leave the door open but I forgot completely. Oh, Iphigenia, you must think I'm the greatest fool on Earth!"

"What I think is that you're the sweetest person I know, Wally," the girl said, patting his bald head. He blushed crimson. "But just a little absentminded, perhaps."

"Mr Jones is going to help me advertise for a volunteer," Wally said to the girl. "I don't see how we can get anybody, and we really *must* have someone, you know."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr Jones," Genie said, offering her hand with mock formality.

"Ah, Howard, please," Howard said. "Ah, I have a position with Strangeco. A very lowly one at present."

"That's what my father likes in employees," Genie said in a half-joking tone. "Lowliness. My step-father, I should say. Mother buried two husbands, but Robert buried her."

Howard shook her hand, aware that he was learning things about the Wizard of Fast Food that the tabloids would pay good money for. Remembering the uneasiness he'd felt while walking through the

mansion, he also realized that the money he'd get for invading Strange's privacy couldn't possibly be good enough.

An area twenty feet square in the center of the lab was empty of equipment. Across it, beyond Wally as Howard faced him, was what looked like an irregular, razor-thin sheet of glass on which bright images flickered. If that was really the flat-plate computer display it looked like, it was more advanced than anything Howard had heard of on the market.

"Well, Mr Popple...," Howard said. If the conversation continued in the direction Genie was taking it, Howard would learn things he didn't think he'd be safe knowing. "If you could tell me just what you need from me?"

"Oh, please call me Wally," the little man said, taking Howard's hand and leading him toward the thin display. "You see, this piece of mica is a, well, a window you could call it."

Wally glanced over his shoulder, then averted his eyes with another bright blush. As he'd obviously hoped, Genie was following them.

"I noticed that shadows seemed to move in it," Wally said, peering intently at what indeed was a piece of mica rather than a high-tech construction. Hair-fine wires from a buss at the back touched the sheet's ragged circumference at perhaps a hundred places. "That was six years ago. By modulating the current to each sheet separately--it's not one crystal, you know, it's a series of sheets like a stack of paper and there's a dialectic between each pair--I was able to sharpen the images to, well, what you see now."

Howard eyed the display. A group of brightly dressed people walked through a formal garden. The women wore dresses whose long trains were held by page boys, and the men were in tights and tunics with puffed sleeves. They carried swords as well, long-bladed rapiers with jeweled hilts.

"How do you generate the images, Wally?" Howard said. "This isn't fed from a broadcast signal, is it?"

"They aren't generated at all," Genie said. "They're real. Show Howard how you can move the point of view, Wally."

Obediently the little man stepped to the computer terminal on the bench beside the slab of mica. On the monitor was a graph with about thirty bars in each of the two superimposed rows.

Wally touched keys, watching the mica. A bar shrank or increased at each stroke, and the picture shifted with the jerking clarity of a rotated kaleidoscope.

"Hey!" said Howard as what he thought was a lion turned and raised its feathered head. Its hooked beak opened and the long forked tongue vibrated in a cry which the mica didn't transmit. "That's a chimera!"

"I thought so at first," said Genie, "but they're supposed to be part goat too."

"I don't think it's anything that has a name in our world," Wally said, making further small adjustments. "Of course the people seem to be, well, normal."

"Not normal where I come from!" Howard said. Except maybe in his dreams. "And what do you mean about *our* world? Where's that?"

He pointed. The image tumbled into a scene of vividly-dressed gallants fencing while a semicircle of women and other men watched. The duellists were good, *damned* good, and they didn't have buttons on their swords.

"Robert thinks it's fairyland," Genie said. Her tone was neutral, but Howard heard emotion just beneath the surface of the words. "He thinks Wally's a wizard. Robert also thinks he's a wizard himself."

"Your father has been very generous in supporting my researches, Iphigenia," the little man said, glancing toward but not quite at Genie. "I wish I could convince him that these effects are ordinary science--"

He paused and added self-consciously, "Ordinary physics, at any rate. I'm afraid my researches have been too empirical to qualify as proper science. But the underlying laws are physical, not magic."

The mica showed the dim interior of a great hall, the sort of place that Howard had imagined the Strange Mansion might be. A troupe of acrobats capered on the rush-strewn flagstones, executing remarkable jumps and all the time juggling lighted torches.

Gorgeous men and women watched from tables around the margins of the hall, and over the balcony railings peered children and soberly-dressed servants. At the center of the high table was a grave, bearded man wearing a crown. He held a crystal staff in which violet sparks danced.

Beside the king, occasionally rubbing its scaly head on the back of his carved throne, was a dragon the size of a rhinoceros. It didn't look exactly unfriendly, but its eyes had the trick of constantly scanning in every direction.

"I...," said Howard. "Wally, this is wonderful, just completely amazing, but I don't understand what you want me for. You've already succeeded!"

The image shifted again. Instead of answering, Wally gazed with rapt attention at the new scene. A spring shot from a wooded hillside to splash over rocks into a pool twenty feet below. Butterflies hovered in the flowery glade; in the surrounding forest were vine-woven bowers.

"Wally built the window on his own," Genie said in a low voice. "What Robert is interested in is opening a portal into... here."

She nodded toward the mica. A couple, hand in hand, walked toward the pool. The man knelt, dipped a silver goblet into the limpid water, and offered it to the lovely woman at his side. She sipped, then returned the cup for him to drink in turn.

Wally shuddered as though he'd been dropped into the pool. He tapped his keyboard several times at random, blurring the image into a curtain of electronic snow.

He turned to Howard and said, speaking very quickly to focus his mind somewhere other than where it wanted to go, "Mr Strange felt that if we could see the other place, we could enter it. A person could enter it. He's correct—I sent a rabbit through the portal last week—but I don't think anyone will be willing to go when they realize how dangerous it is. That's why I need you to help me write the advertisement for the volunteer, Mr Jones."

This was going to work better if the little guy was relaxed... which probably wouldn't happen as long as Genie Strange was in the same room, *that* was obvious, but Howard at least had to try to calm him down.

"Howard, Wally," Howard said, patting Wally on the shoulder. "Please call me Howard. Now, what's dangerous about the trip? Do you wind up wearing a fly's head if things go wrong?"

"No, it wasn't that, Mister—ah, Howard," Wally said, pursing his lips. "The problem occurred later."

He adjusted the values on his display again, bringing the image of the royal entertainment back onto the mica. A young girl danced on the back of a horse which curvetted slowly, its hooves striking occasional sparks from the flagstones. It was pretty ordinary-looking except for the straight horn in the center of its forehead.

Seeing that Wally wasn't going to say more, Howard raised an eyebrow to Genie. She shrugged and said, "I didn't see it myself—Robert won't let me in here while the tests are going on. But all that really happened is that the rabbit hopped out, perfectly all right, and a lizard ate it. The same thing could have happened anywhere."

"The lizard stared at the poor rabbit and drew it straight into its jaws, step by step," Wally said without looking at the others. "It knew it was doomed but it went anyway. I've never in my life seen anything so horrible."

Then you don't watch the TV news a lot, Howard thought. Aloud he said, "It was a basilisk, you mean? Not just a lizard?"

"It was a lizard," Wally insisted stubbornly. "But it wasn't a lizard from, well, this world. It was horrible, and there are any number of other horrible things over there. It's really too dangerous to send somebody into that world, but that's the only way we can get... things."

"Well, an assault rifle ought to take care of any basilisks that come by," Howard said reasonably. "Or dragons either, which is more to the point. Basilisks aren't supposed to be big enough to eat people."

He sighed. "I hate to say this, Wally, but science always seems to win out over romance. I *really* hate to say it."

"But that's just what I mean, Howard," Wally said despairingly. "I had a leash on the bunny so I could pull it back, but it didn't pass through the portal. The leash was still lying on the floor when the bunny disappeared. The volunteer won't be able to take a gun or even clothes, and I really don't believe he'll be able to bring the scepter back for Mr Strange."

"Robert thinks that purple scepter gives the fairy king his power," Genie said, her hands clasped behind her back as if to underscore the restraint in her voice. "Robert wants someone to go through Wally's portal and steal the scepter."

With absolutely no feeling she added, "Robert sacrificed a black hen the night Wally sent the rabbit through. He did it over the drain there--"

She nodded toward the bare concrete.

"--but you can still smell the blood caught in the pipe. Can't you?"

"Now, Iphigenia," Wally said, blushing again. "Your father has his ways, but he's been very generous with me."

Howard's nose wrinkled. He'd noticed a faint musty odor, but the room was so ripe with the smells of electronics working--ozone, hot insulation, and flux--that he hadn't given any thought to it. He still wasn't sure that what he smelled was rotting blood rather than mildew or wet wool, but now that Genie'd spoken he wouldn't be able to get other notion out of his mind.

"Wally, you're a genius!" the girl said so forcefully as to sound hostile. "You could go anywhere and find somebody to fund your work! I only wish you had."

Wally turned and looked her in the face for the first time. "Thank you for saying that, Iphigenia," he said, "but it isn't true. I went many places after I first saw what the mica could do, and they all sent me away. Your father thinks I'm a magician and he's wrong; but he doesn't call me crazy or a charlatan."

A door--the door that the light had led Howard to--opened. Robert Strange, identifiable from the rare photos that appeared in news features but much craggier and *harsher* in person, stepped through. He wore a long-sleeved black robe embroidered with symbols Howard didn't recognize, and through the sash at his waist he'd thrust a curved dagger of Arab style. Hilt and scabbard both were silver but decorated with runes filled with black niello.

"Who are you?" Strange demanded, his eyes fixed on Howard. His voice was like scales scraping on stone, and his black pupils had a reptilian glitter.

The news photographs hadn't shown the long scar down Strange's left cheekbone. There were many ways he could've been cut, but only one reason Howard could imagine that a man with Strange's money wouldn't have had the scar removed by plastic surgery: pride. It was a schlaeger scar, a vestige of the stylized duels with heavy sabers that still went on secretly at the old German universities. The purpose of a schlaeger bout wasn't to defeat one's foe but rather to get the scar as proof of courage and disregard for the laws which banned the practice.

Mind you, Howard was pretty sure that Strange's opponent had left his share of blood on the hall's floor as well.

"He's a--" said Genie before either Howard or Wally could speak.

"Iphigenia, go to your quarters at once," Strange said in the same rustling tone as before. He didn't speak loudly, but his voice cut through the buzz of electronics as surely as a mower would the flowery meadow that Howard thought of when entering the room. "You disturb Master Pople. I've warned you about this."

"But there's nobody else to *talk* to!" Genie said. Though she complained, she walked quickly toward the door of her suite.

Strange returned his attention to Howard. "I said," he repeated, "Who are you?"

"Mr Strange, I asked M--that is, Howard to help me--" Wally said.

"I'm the volunteer you requested for your experiment, sir," Howard said without the least suggestion of a quaver in his voice. "Wally here--Mr Pople--noted that the agent won't be able to carry a gun into the other realm, so my skill with a rapier is crucial."

"You know how to use a sword?" Strange snapped.

"Yes sir," Howard said, standing very straight and keeping his eyes on the tycoon's, hoping that would make him look open and honest. Even though Howard was telling the truth about the fencing, Strange's whole tone and manner made it seem that everything he was being told was a lie.

Besides considering that Strange might have him shot as a spy, there was the possibility that the Wizard of Fast Food would demand Howard duel him to prove his skill. Beating Strange would be dangerous--rich men were self-willed and explosive if they didn't get what they wanted. Losing to Strange might be even worse, especially since Howard didn't imagine he'd have buttons on his swords any more than the folk on the other side of the mica window did.

"Since I'm an employee of Strangeco," Howard continued, visualizing the Thief of Baghdad dancing over palace walls while monsters snarled beneath, "my devotion to you is already assured."

"You work for me?" Strange said. Then, as if he could remember each of the thirty thousand Strangeco employees world-wide, he said, "What's your name?"

The door swung *almost* shut behind Genie. "Howard Albing Jones, sir," Howard said.

"Assistant Marketing Associate in the home office," Strange said. *My God, maybe he did know all thirty thousand!* "Devoted, are you? Pull the other leg, boy! But that doesn't matter if you've got the guts for the work."

"Yes sir, I do," Howard said. He cleared his throat and went on, "I think I could honestly say I've been training all my life for this opportunity."

"You practice the Art also, Jones?" Strange demanded, the hectoring doubt back in his voice.

"The Black Arts, I mean. That's what they call it, the pigmies who adepts like me crush under our heels!"

"Ah, I can't claim to be an adept, sir," Howard said. He couldn't *honestly* claim to be anything but a guy who occasionally watched horror movies. As far as that went, he knew more about being a vampire than being a magician.

"No?" said Strange. "Well, I am, Jones. That's how I built Strangeco from a corner hotdog stand into what it is now. And by His Infernal Majesty! that's how I'll rule the world when I have the staff of power for myself. Nothing will stop me, Jones. Nothing!"

"Mr Strange, I'm your man!" Howard said. He spoke enthusiastically despite his concern that Strange might reply something along the lines of, "Fine, I'll take your kidneys now to feed my pet ferrets."

"If you serve me well, you won't regret it," Strange said. Unspoken but much louder in Howard's mind was the corollary: *But if you fail, I won't leave enough of you to bury!*

"Master Popple, can you be ready to proceed in two hours?" Strange asked. When he talked to Wally, there was a respect in his tone that certainly hadn't been present when he spoke to Howard or Genie.

"Well, I suppose..." Wally said. He frowned in concentration, then shrugged and said, "I don't see why not, if Howard is willing. I suppose we could start right now, Mr Strange."

"It'll take me the two hours to make my own preparations," Strange said with a curt shake of his head. "I respect your art, Master Popple, but I won't depend on it alone."

As he strode toward the door, Strange added without turning his head, "I'll have a black ewe sent over. And if that's not enough--we'll see!"

"Now hold your arms out from your shoulders, please, Howard," Wally said as he changed values on his display. Howard obeyed the way he would if a barber told him to tilt his head.

Waiting as the little man made adjustments gave Howard enough time to look over the room. Much of the racked equipment meant nothing to him, but his eyes kept coming back to a black cabinet that looked like a refrigerator-sized tube mating with a round sofa.

"Wally?" he said, his arms still out. "What's that in the northeast corner? Is it an air conditioner?"

"Oh, that's the computer that does the modulations," Wally said. "You can put your arms down now if you like. I used a Sun workstation to control the window, but the portal requires greatly more capacity. I'd thought we'd just couple a network of calculation servers to the workstation, but Mr Strange provided a Cray instead to simplify the setup for the corrections."

"Oh," said Howard, wondering what a supercomputer cost. Pocket change to the Wizard of Fast Food, he supposed.

"Now if you'll turn counterclockwise, please..." Wally said. "About fifteen degrees."

Howard wore a cotton caftan that came from Genie's suite. She'd brought it in when Howard protested at standing buck naked in the middle of the floor with security cameras watching. Howard was willing to accept that the clothes wouldn't go through the portal with him, but waiting while Pete and his partner chuckled about his masculine endowments was a different matter.

Not that there was anything wrong with his masculine endowments.

Genie didn't stay, but Howard knew she was keeping abreast of what went on through the part-open door. He wasn't sure whether he was glad of that or not.

The mica window looked onto the glade where Howard would enter the other world if everything went right. Occasionally a small animal appeared briefly--once Howard saw what looked very much like a pink bass swimming through the air--but Wally had chosen the site because it was isolated. There was only so much you could get from leaves quivering, even if they did seem to be solid gold.

The carpets, layered like roof shingles over the concrete, weren't the neutrally exotic designs Howard had expected. Some had stylized camels and birds, sure; but one had tanks, jets, and bright explosions, while peacock-winged devils capered as they tortured people against the black background of the newer-looking rugs.

Around where Howard stood was a six-pointed star drawn in lime like the markings of a football field. Howard would've expected a pentacle, but he didn't doubt Strange knew what he was doing.

All Howard himself was sure of was that he was taking a chance at adventure when it appeared. If that was a bad idea, then he hoped he wouldn't have long to regret his decision.

It might be a very bad idea.

"There," said Wally. "There's nothing more I can do until we actually begin building the charge. Then I may have to--"

Robert Strange entered through a pedestrian door set in one of the six vehicle doors along the outside wall. The black sheep he led looked puzzled, a feeling which Howard himself echoed.

"You're ready, Master Popple?" he asked.

"*Ey-eh-he-e*," said the sheep. Strange jerked the leash viciously. The cord looked like silver, but it was functional enough to choke the sheep to silence when Strange lifted his arm.

"Yes, Mr Strange," Wally said. "I'm a little worried about Howard's mass, though. Eighty-seven kilos may be too much."

"Too much?" snapped Strange. "If you needed more transformers, you should have said so!"

"Too much for the fabric of the universe, Mr Strange," said Wally, as mild as ever but completely undaunted at the anger of a man who scared the living crap out of Howard Jones. "I really don't want to go to more than thirty kilowatts."

Strange sniffed. "The subject's ready?" he said. "You, Jones; you're ready?"

"*Ey-eh-he?*" the sheep repeated, rolling its eyes. Her eyes, Howard assumed, since Strange said he was fetching a ewe. The tycoon's daggerhilt winked in the bright laboratory lighting.

"Yes, sir!" Howard said.

Strange grimaced, then bent and tied the leash around a ring set in the drain. He turned his head to Howard and said, "You know what you're going to do?"

"Sir, I'm going to enter the other land," Howard said. "I'll take the scepter from the king of that land and return here to you with it."

As a statement of intent it was concise and accurate. As a plan of action it lacked detail, but there wasn't enough information on this side of the portal to form a real plan. Howard was uneasily aware that his foray, even if he wound up in a dragon's gullet, would provide information so that the next agent could do better.

"All right," Strange said. "Give me a moment and then proceed."

There were drapes bunched among the wall hangings. As Strange spoke, he drew them along a track in the ceiling to separate his corner of the room from Howard and Wally. The ewe bleated again.

"You may begin, Master Popple," Strange called, his voice muffled by the thick fabric. He broke into a musical chant. The sounds from his throat weren't words, or at least words in English.

"You're ready, Howard?" Wally said.

Howard nodded. His throat was dry and he didn't want to embarrass himself by having his voice crack in the middle of a simple word like, "Yes."

Wally rotated a switch, cutting the ceiling lights to red beads among the dimming ghosts of the fluorescent fixtures. The sheet of mica, bright with the daylight of another world, shone like a lantern beside the little man as he typed commands.

There was a reptilian viciousness to Strange's voice, and the sheep was managing to whimper like a frightened baby. The hair on Howard's arms and the back of his neck began to rise. For a moment he thought that was his reaction to the sounds coming from beyond the drapes, but as the fluorescents cooled to absolute black Howard saw a faint violet aura clinging to three racks of equipment.

Wally was generating very high frequency current at a considerable voltage. Howard decided he didn't want to think about *how* high the voltage was.

Wally muttered as he worked. Though Howard could see his lips move, the words weren't audible over the hum of five transformers along the outside wall. The opening between Genie's door and the jamb was faintly visible.

The air spluttered. Howard felt a directionless pull, unpleasant without being really painful. Violet light flickered through the mica, a momentary pulse from the world across the barrier.

Strange shouted a final word. The sheep bleated on a rising note ending in so awful a gurgle that Howard pressed his hands to his ears before he remembered that moving might affect Wally's calculations. The ewe's hooves rattled on the concrete; the curtain billowed as the animal thrashed.

Howard would've covered his ears even if he had thought about Wally. The sound was *horrible*.

Wally typed, his eyes on the computer display. He'd sucked his lower lip between his teeth to chew as he concentrated. The transformers hummed louder but didn't change tone.

Howard felt the indescribable pull again. In the other world the violet haze formed again, this time in the shape of a human being.

A blue flash and a *BANG!* like a cannon shot engulfed the lab, stunning Howard into a wordless shout. He clapped his hands, a reflex to prove that he was still alive.

The air stank of burning tar. Dirty red flames licked from one of the transformers on the outside

wall. Howard drew in a deep breath of relief. He immediately regretted it when acrid smoke brought on a fit of coughing.

Strange snatched open the curtains, his face a mask of cold fury. The ewe lay over the drain, her legs splayed like those of a squashed insect. Her eyes still had a puzzled look, but they were already beginning to glaze.

Wally changed values at his keyboard with a resigned expression. Howard looked for a fire extinguisher. He didn't see one, but he walked past Wally and turned the main lights back on. The transformer was smoldering itself out, though an occasional sizzle made Howard thankful that the floor was covered with non-conductive wool.

"What went wrong?" Strange said. "I know that the transformer failed; *why* did it fail?"

"The load was too great," Wally said simply. "We very nearly succeeded. If we replace the transformer--"

"We'll double the capacity," Strange said. "We'll make another attempt tonight, at midnight this time. I never thought you were careful enough with your timing, Master Pople."

"Sir, I don't think it would be safe to increase output beyond--" Wally said.

"We'll double it!" Strange said, his tone a rasp like steel grating on rib bones. "If we don't need the extra wattage, then we won't use it, but we'll use as much as it requires!"

He looked disgustedly at the dagger in his hand, then wiped the blade on the curtain and sheathed the weapon. He strode past Howard and Wally to the hall door; Howard watched him with a fixed smile, uncomfortably aware that instinct tensed him to run in case Strange leaped for his throat.

The Thief of Baghdad might've had a better idea. On the other hand, Howard didn't remember the Thief of Baghdad facing anything quite like Robert Strange.

Strange thumped the hall door closed; it was too heavy to bang. At the sound, Genie's door opened a little wider and the slim girl returned. She grimaced when she saw the ewe. It'd voided its bowels when it died, so that odor mingled with the fresh blood and burned insulation.

"Are you all right, Wally?" she asked. "And you, Howard. I'm not used to there being anybody but Wally here."

"I'm sorry you had to see that, Iphigenia," Wally said with a perturbed glance toward the ewe. "You really shouldn't have come in until the crew has cleaned things up."

"Wally, I've lived with Robert for fifteen years," Genie said bluntly. "There've been worse things than the occasional dead animal. I was worried about you and Howard."

"It just tickled a little," Howard said. If he let himself think about events in the right way, he was pretty sure he could make the last ten minutes or so sound more heroic than they'd seemed while they were happening.

"There wasn't any risk, Iphigenia," Wally said. At first he didn't look directly at her, but then he raised his eyes with an effort of will. "Ah--I really appreciate your concern, but right now I have something important to discuss with Mr--with Howard, that is. Can you, I mean would you...?"

"All right, Wally," the girl said, sounding puzzled and a little hurt. She nodded to Howard and walked to her room with swift, clean strides. This time the door shut firmly.

One of the vehicular doors in the outside wall started up with a rumble of heavy gears. A team of swarthy men, beardless but heavily mustached, stood beside a flatbed truck. They entered, paying no attention to Howard and Wally. One lifted the sheep over his shoulder and walked back to the truck with it; his three fellows started disconnecting the wrecked transformer. They talked among themselves in guttural singsongs.

"Will you come here please, Howard?" Wally said, showing no more interest in the workmen than they did in him. He adjusted the mica screen to show the spring again. "I, ah, have a favor to ask you."

A couple--not the same ones as before--sat on the pool's mossy coping, interlacing the fingers of one hand as they passed a cup back and forth with the other. Wally tightened the focus so that their mutually loving expressions were unmistakable.

"Yes, Wally?" Howard prodded.

"The water of this spring appears to have certain properties," Wally said. He looked fixedly at Howard to avoid watching the couple who'd begun to fondle one another. The statuesque blonde lay back on the sward and tugged her partner over her without bothering to walk to the privacy of the nearby bowers. "You'll have noticed that."

"I sure notice something," Howard said. He wasn't sure how he felt about the show: it was real people, not actors. Well, actors were real people too but they knew they were going to be watched.

The workmen hoisted the transformer by hand instead of bringing in a derrick for the job. It must weigh close to half a ton. They walked out and slid it onto the truck bed, forcing a squeal from the springs.

Wally grimaced and blurred the image to bright sparkles within the mica sheet. "If I succeed in opening the portal to the other world, Howard," he said, "you'll have a very difficult job to gain the king's scepter. I don't believe in magic, not here or there either one, but the animal guarding the king appears formidable."

"The dragon," Howard said. "Yeah, it does."

If Howard let himself consider the details of how he was going to get the scepter, it'd scare the spit out of him. By limiting his thoughts to vague swoops across the hall on a handy rope, followed by a mighty leap from a balcony-level window, he was managing to keep his aplomb.

"And of course we're not sure it'll be possible to bring inanimate objects through the portal in this direction, since we can't do it while going the other way," Wally continued with a solemn nod. He started to refocus on the spring, then snatched his hand back from the keyboard with a blush.

"I understand all the difficulties and dangers you'll face, Howard," Wally said. He stared in the direction of Genie's closed door; he looked as if he was about to cry. "Regardless, I'd like you to do me a favor if you can. I'd like you to bring me a phial of water from the spring we just looked at. I... I'd be very grateful."

You poor little guy! Howard thought. Aloud he said, "Ah, Wally? I'll do what I can--"

Which might not be a heck of a lot. *If* Howard arrived, he'd be bare-assed naked and in the middle of a bunch of guys with swords they knew how to use. Not to mention the occasional dragon.

--but you know, it isn't that hard to, ah, meet girls." He paused to choose the next words carefully. "Lots of times just being around one for a while is enough to, you know, bring the two of you together. If you play your cards right."

The truck drove off with a snort of diesel exhaust as the garage door began to rumble down. The corpses of the sheep and transformer lay together in the bed of the vehicle.

"I've never played cards at all, Howard," the little man said with a sad smile. "I guess this is hard for a handsome young man like you to understand, but...."

He turned his head away and wiped his eyes fiercely.

"Hey, that's all right, Wally," Howard said, patting him on the back. "Sure, I'll take care of that if there's, you know, any way to do it. No problem."

Compared to the rest of the assignment, that was the gospel truth.

"Thank you, Howard," Wally said through a racking snuffle. "I'm, well, I'm lucky to have met a real hero like you in my time of need."

Only faintly audible through the heavy doors, another big truck was pulling up outside. A relay clicked and the machinery began to rumble again.

"I feel sure we're going to succeed," Wally added. "If we have to double the field strength, well, that's just what we're going to do. No matter what!"

Wally sounded a lot more cheerful when he made that promise than Howard was to hear it.

With the six new transformers in place, the line almost filled the outside wall. On that side only the curtained-off corner--they were already drawn--didn't have machinery squatting on it. Howard could still smell burned insulation. He'd never thought he'd be thankful for a stink like that, but it covered other possible reminders of the afternoon's experiment.

Wally looked at Howard and tried to force a grin. His expression would've been more appropriate for somebody being raped by a Christmas tree.

"Hey, buck up, buddy," Howard said. "We're going to be fine!"

Funny, but telling the lie made Howard feel that the words might possibly be true. Logically he knew a lot better.

The door hidden behind the curtain opened. Howard heard a *clink* over the hum of machinery as something hard brushed against the raised lintel. He wondered what animal Strange was bringing in to sacrifice this time. Howard had expected a heifer or maybe an elephant, but Strange would've had to raise the vehicular door to bring in animals that big.

Strange stuck his head out between two curtain panels. "Are you ready to proceed, Master Pople?" he asked. He held the curtains together so that all Howard could see was the throat of his garments. He seemed to be wearing the same silver-marked black satin as in the afternoon.

"I believe--" Wally said. He caught Howard's terse nod and continued, "Yes, we're ready, Mr

Strange. It'll take ninety seconds from whenever we start to build the field."

"Start now, then," Strange said curtly. He drew the curtains tight behind him and began to chant. His words had considerable musical power despite being complete gibberish. That was also true of opera, of course, so far as Howard was concerned.

Wally tried to smile again, then busied himself with his keyboard. The mica window looked onto the glade, empty save for trees and the flitting passage of a bird whose plumage was as purely blue as the summer sky. Howard watched the scientist, and he watched images on the mica; but more compelling than those, he listened through the curtains at his back to the sound of Robert Strange's voice chanting.

Howard felt the hairs lift from his body. Where those of his chest touched the loose caftan they tickled like the feeling at the back of a dry throat that you can't seem to swallow away. Violet haze blurred the air beyond the mica.

Genie Strange screamed.

Howard turned. The door to Genie's room was closed--closed and latched. The drapes around Strange and his activities bulged outward.

Genie hopped through and fell, dragging a section of the velvet down. The scarf used to gag her had slipped out of her mouth; it was the only garment she was wearing. Her wrists and ankles were tied together behind her back, but she'd managed to undo the cord that'd bound her to the drain.

Robert Strange, his face as hard and contorted as that of a marble demon, stepped out behind her. He grabbed a handful of Genie's black hair with his free hand.

"Hey!" Howard said. There was a bank of equipment between him and the Stranges. As gracefully as if he'd been practicing all his life, Howard took two running steps, planted his right palm on the rack, and leaped over with his legs swung off to his left side. Even the Thief of Baghdad would be impressed--

Until the caftan's billowing hem caught the chassis full of plug-in circuits on top of the rack. As Howard's legs straightened, the tightening cloth spilled him like a lassoed steer. Strange looked at him without expression.

Howard sprang up. The torn caftan, bunched now around his ankles, tripped him again.

Strange lifted Genie's head, avoiding her attempts to bite him. He poised the curved dagger in his right hand over her throat. Howard grabbed the sides of the rug on which he'd fallen and jerked with all his strength, snatching Strange's feet out from under him.

"You...!" shouted Strange as he toppled backward. Genie'd tossed her short hair free of his grip, but he didn't lose the dagger in his other hand. It was underneath when the Wizard of Fast Food hit the concrete.

The chassis that Howard'd dragged to the floor with him was popping and spluttering, but he wasn't prepared for the flash of violet light that filled the interior of the lab. It was so intense that Howard only vaguely noticed the accompanying thunderclap. He heard Wally cry out and turned.

Wally wasn't there. His clothing, from brown shoes to the pair of reading glasses he wore tilted up on his forehead, lay in the middle of the hexagram. The hundred and twenty-three pounds of Wally Pople had vanished.

Except for an image in the mica window.

Howard lifted Genie before he remembered that her stepfather and the dagger might be of more immediate concern. He looked back.

He'd been right the first time. Strange's face was turned toward Howard. He looked absolutely furious. He'd managed to thrash into a prone position while dying, but the silver hilt projecting from the middle of his back showed that dying was certainly what he'd done.

The transformer on the far left of the line shorted out. The one next to it went a heartbeat later, and when the third failed it showered the room with blobs of flaming tar. One of them slapped the mica window, and shattered it like a bomb.

"Can you please untie me, Howard?" asked the girl in his arms. "Though the way things are starting to happen in here, maybe that could wait till we're outside."

"Right!" said Howard. "Right!"

He paused to shrug off what was left of the caftan; it had started to burn as well. Somehow he couldn't get concerned about what the guards thought of him now.

Because he and Genie were going to be gone for at least three weeks and a fourth besides if the Chinese authorities agreed to open Tibet to Strangeco--which they would, Howard Jones wasn't called

the Swashbuckler of Fast Food for nothing--Howard stopped by the mansion's former garage for a moment. He liked to, well, keep an eye on how things were going.

He'd had the big room cleaned and nearly emptied immediately after the wedding, but he still smelled the bitterness of burned insulation. He supposed it was mostly in his mind by now.

Genie'd wanted to tear the garage down completely since it held nothing but bad memories for her, but she'd agreed to let Howard keep the room so long as he'd had the door into her old suite welded shut. She wasn't the sort of girl to object to the whim of the man who'd saved her life; besides, she loved her husband.

Howard went to the skeletal apparatus on the one rack remaining in the room. Three hair-fine filaments were still attached to the top edge of a piece of mica no bigger than a quarter.

Howard bent to peer into it. If you looked carefully at the right times, you could see images in the mica.

The focus wandered. Howard hadn't tried to adjust the apparatus himself or let anybody else take a look at it. Mostly all there was to see was snow, but this time he was in luck.

The peephole looked out at the spring where couples used to cavort. Wally was there with his entourage, checking the generating turbine he'd built to power the first electric lights in his new home. If Howard understood the preparations he'd seen going on in the royal palace last week, telephones were about to follow.

When Wally turned with a satisfied expression, Howard waved. He knew the little fellow couldn't see him, but it made Howard feel he was sort of keeping in touch. Wally walked out of the image area surrounded by courtiers.

Howard checked his watch and sighed; he needed to get moving. He'd promised the company fencing team that he and Genie would at least drop in on their match with Princeton. After Howard instituted morning unity-building fencing exercises throughout Strangeoco, a number of the employees had become fencing enthusiasts.

Howard took a last look at the pool in the other world. He'd never seen Wally take a sip of the water, and it didn't seem likely that he ever would.

After all, a powerful wizard like Master Pople had to beat off beautiful women with a stick.

GODDESS OF THE ICE REALM
by David Drake

DEDICATION

To Andre Norton, whose books have been the first contact many readers have with real Science Fiction; and whose books have been a training manual, sometimes an unconscious one, in story values for would-be SF writers.

I'm one of those readers and writers both.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As usual, my first reader Dan Breen has worked to make this a better book. Dan isn't always right, but he's always worth listening to.

I didn't have an exceptional number of computer adventures with this one, but there were still occasions when the familiar conclave of Mark Van Name, Allyn Vogel, and my son Jonathan muttered things like, "I've never seen that happen before...."

A number of people provided me with background material for *Goddess*. Two who were particularly helpful were Marcia Decker and my British editor, Simon Spanton.

My webmaster, Karen Zimmerman, has been of inestimable value.

And finally, a general thanks to the friends and family, in particular my wife Jo, who bore with me as I focused, getting increasingly weird--as usual--until I finished the job.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

As is the case with most of my books, a good deal of the background to *Goddess of the Ice Realm* is real. The general religion of the Isles is Sumerian, though in some cases I've interpolated cult practice from the Late Roman Republic where we simply don't know the Sumerian details.

The magic, which is separate from religion in virtually every culture and in at least my fiction, is that of the Mediterranean Basin during the Classical Period. The words of power, technically *voces mysticae*, are the language of demiurges who act as intercessors between humans and the Gods.

I prefer not to voice the *voces mysticae*, but I have done so in conjunction with the audiobook versions of the Isles series. So far as I can tell, there was no ill result. On the

other hand, I've also dropped loaded firearms without anything bad happening--that time. I don't recommend doing either thing.

The works of literature imbedded in *Goddess* are Latin classics. Rigal equates with Vergil; Celondre with Horace; and Pendill is Ovid, whom I find to bountifully repay the close readings I've been giving him this past year.

Dave Drake

PROLOGUE

The blue and crimson flickers were as pale as the Northern Lights. They quivered through the ice of the high domed ceiling, along the struts and down the heart of the thick crystalline pillars on which it rested. The creak and groan of the vast structure filled the half-dark like the sound of moonlit surf. The ice was alive, but it was coldly hostile to all other living things.

In the hall below were things that looked like men but were not, and things that could never have existed save here or in nightmare. Lower still, beneath the transparent ice of the floor, monstrous shadows glided through the phosphorescent water.

She sat on a throne of ice in the center of the hall, white and corpulent. In the air before Her, wizardlight twisted and coiled; and as it moved, the whole cosmos began to shift.

The ice groaned....

CHAPTER 1

"I think the rain's going to hold off after all," said Garric, eyeing the sky to seaward where clouds had been lowering all day as the royal fleet made its way up the western coast of Haft.

If it didn't, well, he wouldn't shrink. For most of his nineteen years he'd been a peasant who herded sheep and worked in the yard of his father's inn, often enough in the rain. But now he was Prince Garric of Haft, making a Royal Progress from Tisamur, through Cordin, and to Carcosa on Haft. He was here to convince the folk living in the West that there was a real Kingdom of the Isles again and that they were part of it. It's hard to impress people in a downpour; all they really care about is getting under cover as soon as the foreign fools let them.

"Ah, you can believe that if you wish, your highness," said Lobon, the sailing master of the *Shepherd of the Isles*. His voice mused through a mouthful of maca root which oarsmen claimed gave them strength and deadened the pain of their muscles. "What *I* say is that we'll have a squall before we've settled half so many ships into their berths."

He nodded glumly toward the harbor mouth ahead. "That's if Carcosa even *has* berths for a hundred warships. We're at the back of beyond!"

"Carcosa can berth a hundred warships," Garric said, a trifle more sharply than the sailing master's comment deserved. "A thousand years ago when Carus was King of the Isles and Carcosa was his capital, the harbor held as many as *five* hundred."

Lobon was a skillful judge of winds, currents, and the way to get the best out of even a clumsy quinquereme like the *Shepherd*, but he'd been born on the island of Ornifal. He was just as much of an Ornifal chauvinist as a landowning noble like Lord

Waldron, commander of the royal army.

Garric came from Barca's Hamlet on the east side of Haft. All the time he'd been growing up, Carcosa was the unimaginably great city that held all the wonder in the world. And besides Garric's own background--

"Aye, lad," said the ghost of King Carus, alive and vibrant in Garric's mind. *"Five hundred ships in harbor--but only when I wasn't off on campaign with them, smashing one usurper or another. And that was most times, till the Duke of Yole's wizard smashed me instead and the kingdom with me. But you'll do better, because you know not to solve all your problems with a sword!"*

Garric smiled at the image of his ancient ancestor. He and Carus could have passed for son and father: tall and muscular with a dark complexion, brown hair, and a quick smile unless there was trouble to deal with. Carus had never fully mastered his volcanic temper, a flaw that'd proved fatal as he'd said. But--

If I'm doing better, Garric said in his mind's silence, then in part it's because I have your skill to guide my swordarm when a stroke is required.

"I wouldn't know about what went on before my time," muttered Lobon. He spat over the stern railing, threading the gobbet between the helmsman at the starboard steering oar and one of Garric's young aides. The helmsman remained unconcerned, but the aide jumped and smothered a curse.

Generally an aide was somebody's nephew, a second son who could run errands for the prince and either rise to a position of some rank at court or be killed. Either would be a satisfactory outcome, since a family of the minor nobility couldn't afford to support another son in the state his birth demanded.

This youth, Lord Lerdain, was an exception. He was the heir presumptive of Count Lerdoc of Blaise, one of a handful of the most powerful nobles in the kingdom. Lerdain's presence at Garric's side made it more likely that Lerdoc would remain loyal.

Lobon understood Garric's glance toward Lerdain. He scrunched his face into a smile and said to the aide, "Don't worry, boy. I've been chewing maca root since before your father was born. I won't hit you less I mean to."

His face shifting into a mask of frustration, he added, "Not room to swing a cat aboard this pig, there's so many civilians aboard. Ah--begging your pardon, your highness."

"I understand, Master Lobon," Garric said with a faint smile. "We'll be on land shortly... and I fully appreciate your feelings."

The *Shepherd of the Isles* was as large as any vessel in the royal fleet. She had five rows of oars on either side and a crew of nearly three hundred men. Despite the quinquereme's relative size, she was strictly a warship rather than a yacht intended to carry a prince. Garric's personal bodyguard, twenty-five Blood Eagles, took the place of the *Shepherd's* normal complement of marines, but he and the dozen members of his personal entourage were simply excess baggage so far as the ship's personnel were concerned.

"Though as for being civilians..." Garric added mildly. "I think you'd find I could give as good an account of myself in battle as most of the marines the *Shepherd's* shipped over the years."

For his formal arrival in Carcosa, Garric wore a breastplate of silvered bronze and a silvered helmet whose spreading wings had been gilded. If the sun cooperated, Prince

Garric would be a dazzling gem in a setting formed by the polished black armor of his bodyguards.

Garric's armor this day was for show, but the sword hanging from his belt had a plain bone hilt and a long blade of watered steel. There was nothing flashy about the weapon; but swung by an arm as strong as Garric's, the edge would take an enemy's head off with a single stroke.

"Yes *sir*, your highness!" Lobon said, looking horrorstruck to realize what he'd said to his prince. To avoid a further blunder, he stepped forward on the walkway and bellowed through the ventilator, "Timekeeper! Raise the stroke a half beat, won't you? This is supposed to be a royal entry, not a funeral procession!"

Obediently the flutist in the far bow of the oar deck quickened the tempo of the simple four-note progression on his right-hand pipe; the other pipe of the pair continued to play a drone. The rate at which the oars dipped, rose, and feathered forward increased by the same amount. In time the *Shepherd* would slide marginally faster through the water, but a quinquereme was too massive to do anything suddenly. Even the much lighter triremes which made up the bulk of the fleet accelerated with a certain majesty.

"*The trouble is, lad,*" said the image of Carus, "*you don't act like a noble and they treat you like the folks they grew up with. Then they remember who you really are and they're afraid you'll have them flayed alive for disrespect to Prince Garric of Haft.*"

I'd never do that! Garric thought in shock.

"*No more would I,*" Carus agreed, "*though I showed a hard enough hand to enemies of the kingdom. But there's some in your court who'd show less hesitation over executing a commoner for disrespect than they would over the choice of a wine with their dinner.*"

"I don't belong here," Garric whispered, but he didn't need the snort from the ghost in his mind to know that he did indeed belong. The Kingdom of the Isles, wracked by rebellion and wizardry, needed Prince Garric and his friends more than it needed any number of the courtiers and Ornifal landowners who'd claimed to be the government of the Isles for most of the thousand years since the Old Kingdom collapsed in blood and chaos.

Thought of his friends made Garric look toward the bow where his sister Sharina, his boyhood friend Cashel, and the wizard Tenoctris leaned against the railing. Like Garric they were mostly concerned with keeping out of the way. This was a particular problem for the women since they'd dressed for arrival in Carcosa in spreading court robes of silk brocade: cream with a gold stripe for 'Princess Sharina', sea green for the aged wizard. In a manner of speaking, Tenoctris was much older than the seventy years or so she looked: she'd been flung a thousand years into the future--and onto the beach at Barca's Hamlet--by the same wizard-born cataclysm which had brought down the Old Kingdom.

Sharina wore a fillet, but the golden flood of her hair streamed out beneath it. She was tall--taller than most men in Barca's Hamlet--and blonde unlike anyone else in the community. Her mother Lora had been a maid in the palace in Carcosa when tall, blond Niard, an Ornifal noble, had been Count of Haft through his marriage to Countess Tera....

Even a brother could see that Sharina's willowy beauty would be exceptional in any company. "But I know a prettier woman yet," whispered Garric, and smiled wider to think of Liane bos-Benliman. She'd be meeting him here in Carcosa for their wedding.

Sharina felt the weight of her brother's glance. She turned and waved, her smile like sunlight.

Tenoctris and Cashel turned with her. The old wizard was cheerful, birdlike, and as doggedly determined as any soldier in the army. Cashel was almost as tall as Garric, but he was so broad that he didn't look his height unless you saw him with ordinary men. Mountains would crumble before either Cashel or his sister Ilna, aboard the two-decked patrol vessel following the *Shepherd*, ever failed their duty. Sharina was fortunate to love a man so solid and so much in love with her.

There's never been a man luckier in his friends, Garric thought as he smiled back. Then he turned and waved to the small woman in the stern of the patrol vessel astern.

"And never a better time than now," Carus said, *"for the Kingdom of the Isles to have friends--and luck!"*

When Ilna saw Garric wave, her first thought was, *What does he mean by that?*

Then, feeling foolish--feeling more of a fool than she usually did--she waved with her right as her left held the cords she was plaiting. The movement was polite and a little prim, the way Ilna os-Kenset did most things.

Garric didn't mean anything by it. He was just making a friendly gesture to a childhood friend who didn't, after all, mean very much to him.

Near Ilna--and on a deck-and-a-half patrol vessel like the *Flying Fish*, anyone could be described as near everyone else aboard--Chalcus talked with Captain Rhamis bor-Harriol, a nobleman younger than Ilna's nineteen years. From what Ilna had seen of the captain during the voyage up the western shore of the Isles, he was a complete ninny.

That didn't matter, of course; or at any rate, it didn't matter any more than if Rhamis was being a ninny in some job on shore. The *Flying Fish's* sailing master took care of navigation and the ordinary business of the ship, limiting the captain's responsibilities to leading his men in a battle. In Ilna's opinion, ninnies were quite sufficient for *that* task.

"Is something wrong, Ilna?" Merota asked from Ilna's elbow, unseen till the moment she spoke. The nine-year-old was, as Lady Merota bos-Roriman, the orphaned heir to one of the wealthiest houses on Ornifal. Ilna was her guardian, because... well, because Ilna had been there and nobody else Ilna trusted was available.

The girl was related to Lord Tadai, who acted as chancellor and chief of staff while Garric was with the fleet and those who held the posts officially were back in the palace at Valles. Tadai would've taken care of Merota, but to Tadai that meant marrying the child to some noble as quickly as possible. Merota was young? All the more reason to pass the trouble of raising her on to somebody else.

Ilna and her brother Cashel had been left to raise themselves after their grandmother died when they were seven. Their father Kenset had never said who their mother was; he'd kept a close tongue on the question of where he'd been when he went off adventuring. The only task Kenset applied himself to after coming home with the infants was drinking himself to death, and at that he quickly succeeded.

Ilna and Cashel had survived--survived and prospered, most would say. They were honored members of the royal court, after all. But Ilna wouldn't willingly see another child deal with what she'd gone through herself. If that meant she had to take responsibility for the child, well, she'd never been one to shirk responsibility.

"Nothing's wrong with the world, Merota," Ilna said. She smiled faintly and corrected herself, "Nothing more than usual, that is."

Which is enough and more than enough! she thought, but it wasn't the time to say that, if there was ever a time.

"And as for myself, I'm in my usual state," she continued, still smiling. "Which is bad enough also, I suppose."

When Ilna had last glanced at Merota, the girl was amidships with Mistress Kaline, the impoverished noblewoman who acted as her governess. Mistress Kaline was still there, lying flat over the ventilators--the *Flying Fish* had no amidships railing--and looking distinctly green.

Ilna's stomach flopped in sympathy, but she'd learned early in the voyage not to eat until they'd made landfall for the night so that she could digest on solid ground. The patrol vessel was agile and quick in a short dash, but it pitched, rolled, and yawed in a fashion that Ilna didn't have words to describe. It wouldn't have been her choice for the ship she wanted to travel on, but she'd never wanted to travel in the first place.

The rest of Garric's staff was aboard quinqueremes or the three-banked triremes that made up most of the fleet. The bigger ships were equally crowded, but they were a great deal more stable. Chalcus had picked the *Flying Fish* because it was similar to the pirate craft he'd commanded in the days before he met Ilna; and since Ilna had picked Chalcus, that was the end of the matter so far as she was concerned.

Chalcus caught Ilna's eye; he bowed to her and Merota with a flourish before resuming his conversation. Chalcus was no more than middling height. He looked slender from the side, but his shoulders were broad and he moved with the grace of a leopard. If you looked closely at his sharply pleasant features, you saw the scars; and when Chalcus was stripped down to a linen kilt like the sailors, you could see he had scars of one sort or another over most of his body.

From taste and habit Ilna dressed plainly, in unbleached woolen tunics and a blue wool cloak when the weather required it; Chalcus by contrast was a dazzle of color whenever circumstances permitted. Today he wore breeches of red leather, a silk shirt dyed in bright indigo, and between them a sash colored a brilliant yellow with bee's pollen which matched the fillet binding his hair. Ilna knew that the nobles gathered on the quay to meet them would think Chalcus looked like a clown; but they wouldn't say anything, at least not the ones who took time to note the sailor's eyes and the way use had worn the hilt of his incurved sword.

"I do hope Mistress Kaline won't still be sick when we're introduced to Count Lascarg," Merota said in a carefully polite voice. "She'll never be able to live down the embarrassment if that happens."

Ilna looked sharply at her ward, thinking for a moment that she was serious. Then Merota's angelic expression dissolved in a fit of giggles.

"Yes," Ilna said, allowing herself to smile minusculely before her face stiffened again into its accustomed sternness. "But if necessary we'll both help her stand. I've found it settles me to hold on to others."

She didn't care for Mistress Kaline as a person; but then, she didn't care for very many people. Ilna had continued to employ Mistress Kaline after Merota became her ward, in part because the stern old snob did in her way truly love the child, but also because Ilna was more afraid of her own power than she was of anything else in this

world or beyond it. It would be easy to dismiss the governess who'd sneered at Ilna as an orphan with no culture and no forebears... but for Ilna, it would have been equally easy to weave a pattern that would rip Mistress Kaline's soul straight to Hell.

That way lay damnation. It was a path Ilna had once travelled, and from which she would never fully be able to return.

"You're really all right, Ilna?" Merota asked softly.

Ilna reached down with her right hand and squeezed the girl's. Sometimes Merota acted younger than her nine years, but at others it seemed that she was taking care of Ilna instead of the other way around.

"Yes, child," Ilna said, deliberately resuming the pattern she'd been knotting from the hank of short cords she kept in her sleeve. "I've made some bad decisions in the course of my life, and I'll probably make more mistakes as I get older. But in the main, the pattern's not one anyone has a right to object to."

Ilna glanced at the fabric her fingers were knotting while her mind considered other, less pleasant, things. Her pattern in coarse twine would calm those who looked at it, raise their spirits or cool their anger. Ilna didn't weave *charms* any more than the sun was a charm because it warmed those on whom its rays fell. What Ilna wove had the same natural certainty as the wind and the rain, as daylight and death.

She put the finished fabric in her right sleeve, then took a fresh hank of cords out of her left and began again. The patterns were just a way of occupying her fingers; the work didn't calm her, exactly, but her irritation was more likely to come to the surface if she *wasn't* doing something.

A trumpeter signaled from the flagship, the five-banked monster to the right of Garric's. Captain Rhamis looked as startled as a mouse surprised in the pantry. "What's that?" he cried on a rising note. "What're we to do, Plotnin?"

Before the sailing master could answer, Chalcus laid a hand on the nobleman's shoulder and spoke reassuringly. A trireme pulled ahead, but nothing else about the fleet's stately progression changed. Rhamis bobbed his head, rubbing his hands nervously together.

Ilna smiled at an idle thought. She gave her completed patterns to oarsmen and soldiers, common people. She'd been around the rich and powerful enough in recent days to know that they had problems also, but somebody else could worry about them. Ilna would take care of her own first.

She'd always had a talent for fabrics. As a young girl she'd woven so skillfully that the other women in the borough surrounding Barca's Hamlet brought Ilna the thread they'd spun and instead of weaving themselves took a share of the profits from the cloth she finished. That as much as her brother's early strength explained how two orphans had survived in a community which, while not unkind and fairly prosperous as peasant villages went, had no surplus for useless mouths in a hard winter.

Ilna's talent was natural or at least passed for it, but when Ilna left Barca's Hamlet she'd taken a wrong turning that had led her to Hell. She'd met what looked like a tree there. The skills the tree had taught her gave Ilna the power to let or hinder souls, to change a heart or steal a life. She'd used her new abilities for what she thought at the time were her own ends but which she knew now were the purposes of Evil alone.

While Evil ruled her, Ilna had done things that she couldn't forgive and which couldn't be put right. She knew that she'd never be able to make amends for the evil she'd

done casually, callously, if she spent the remainder of her life trying.

So be it. Ilna would try anyway, in small ways, in all the ways that she could. Eventually she'd die with her job undone. She assumed death would end her responsibilities. If it didn't, well, she'd deal with what came then.

Chalcus sauntered back from where he'd been talking to the captain. His stride anticipated the deck's motion with the same unconscious ease that Ilna's fingers demonstrated when weaving. The *Flying Fish* was short, narrow, and relatively high. She carried fifteen oarsmen in the upper tier on either side with ten more below them in the center where the hull was wide enough--barely--for them to work. Chalcus said the design made the patrol vessel nimble and fairly fast, but she wobbled like a slowing top.

"There's a shipload of Blood Eagles gone ahead to make sure things are safe for Master Garric," Chalcus said, hooking a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the trireme which was already driving through the harbor entrance. "Not that the lad showed much need to be protected the times *I've* seen him with a sword in his hand."

Ilna wasn't a seaman, but she could judge patterns like few other people: the men on the trireme's flashing oars were strong and willing, but their timing wasn't as smooth as that of other vessels in the fleet. The bodyguards were picked men, but they weren't picked *oarsmen*.

She smiled again, recognizing a familiar truth. Every task has its special skills, rowing and weaving no less than the sweep of words that poets use, or that wizards speak for other purposes.

Merota took Chalcus' left hand in hers and began to sing a her clear soprano, "*Lord Lovel he stood by his ship so fine, a-rigging her snow-white sails....*"

The sailor himself had taught Merota the ballad along with many others. For a wonder this one wasn't as bawdy as those the child usually chose to sing in public. Perhaps she didn't think any of the folk aboard the *Flying Fish* would care; except for Mistress Kaline, perhaps, but as sick as the governess looked, probably not even her.

At another time Chalcus would have joined in with the child, singing about the nobleman who came back from a long voyage just in time for his true love's funeral, but the admiral's trumpeter sounded another signal. "Chalcus!" Lord Rhamis called, trotting up the deck toward them. "What do they want us to do?"

Chalcus slipped his hand from Merota's, tousled her hair, and gave Ilna a quick nod of regret before turning back to the dithering captain. Chalcus was determined that the ship he'd brought Ilna and Merota aboard should proceed smoothly, or at any rate without needless embarrassment. It was a responsibility he'd accepted without having sought it, much as Garric was ruling a kingdom though Ilna was sure that he'd have been happier helping his father run a village inn and reading the verses of Old Kingdom poets in his free time.

Garric's big ship began to draw ahead of the other vessels. Prince Garric of Haft would enter the harbor in solitary state, with the rest of his mighty fleet following at a respectful distance.

Ilna's fingers wove twine. She knew that Merota was speaking, but for the moment she didn't have attention to spare for the child.

Being a prince was a great burden, she was sure. Ilna didn't care about 'the Isles' as a thing in itself; but she cared about people because it was her duty to care about people, and she knew that the people of the Isles were far better off with Garric ruling the

kingdom than if he hadn't been.

A prince deserved a wife worthy of him; a well-born, well-educated, beautiful woman like Liane bos-Benliman. It was far better for everyone that Garric should marry Liane than that he throw himself away on a peasant girl who couldn't write her own name; even if the peasant happened to have a talent for weaving.

"Ilna?" called a child's voice from far away. "Please Ilna, what's wrong?"

And Ilna's fingers knotted a pattern that would bring warmth and calm to the man she offered it to.

"It's more like standing on the seawall at Barca's Hamlet than it's like being in a boat," Sharina said, looking down at the sea almost a dozen feet below the level of the deck on which she stood to the left of Cashel and Tenoctris. Foam boiled back as the *Shepherd's* bronze ram dipped and rose minusculely at the thrust of the oars. The water was gray today; all Sharina could see in it was an occasional bit of weed churned up as the quinquereme's huge weight slid past.

"We're moving," said Cashel simply. "I don't think I'll ever get used to that. I don't mind, but it's not like being on solid ground."

Sharina laughed. "Cashel," she said, "so long as you're around, *everything* seems solid."

She hugged herself to him, a great, warm boulder. He didn't respond--they were in public, after all--but he smiled as he continued to watch the approaching shore. The great stone moles which extended Carcosa's fine natural harbor had survived the thousand years of neglect following the collapse of the Old Kingdom. One of the lighthouses which originally framed the entrance remained also, streaming a long red-on-white pennon to welcome the fleet, but the other had fallen into a pile of rubble.

The lighthouses had been built in the form of hollow statues: one of the Lady wearing the crescent tiara of the moon, the other of the Shepherd holding the sun disk. Celondre had written a poem when the lighthouses were dedicated, likening them to the children of King Carlon, the hope of the Kingdom's future.

Sharina's arm was still around Cashel's waist. She felt it tighten involuntarily, drawing her to Cashel's solidity in an inconstant world. She'd first read Celondre's verse as a child in Barca's Hamlet where she and Garric were tutored by their father Reise. The twin statues, decorated with gold-washed bronze, had seemed the most wondrous objects in the world, and the kingdom when Celondre lived and wrote was the next thing to paradise. She'd never dreamed that some day she'd see the statues herself.

But these weren't the shining triumphs of a child's imagination. One had fallen and time had so worn the other that Sharina couldn't be sure which deity it was meant to represent. The twin children Celondre praised in the same lyric had both died within a year: the boy had drowned on a sea voyage, while the girl was carried off by a fever. Carlon had died old and bitter, withdrawn from the world and his duties to the kingdom; and a generation later, when the forces which turned the cosmos rose to their thousand-year peak, the Golden Age had fallen in mud and slaughter.

And those forces were rising again....

"Is anything wrong, Sharina?" Cashel asked. He'd felt her tremble, so he shifted his quarterstaff to his right hand in order to put his left around her. His strength was more reassuring than stone walls or a sheet of iron.

"No, nothing that we can't take care of," she said, sorry to have caused the big man to worry. "I was just thinking about a poem Celondre wrote a thousand years ago."

Cashel nodded. Sharina knew that he wouldn't understand what she meant, but now he knew that it wasn't anything he needed to be concerned about. If it was about books, then there were plenty of other people around to take care of it. "Well," he said, "that's all right, then."

In Barca's Hamlet, few people could read or write well. Reise came from Valles on Ornifal, the royal capital, and had been unusually well-educated even there. He and the children he'd taught were unique exceptions. Cashel and Ilna were almost completely illiterate--able to spell out their own names, and that with difficulty. As best Sharina could judge, Cashel regarded books much as he did the depths of the sea: they were vast, hidden reservoirs of the strange and wonderful.

Tenoctris glanced at Sharina, leaning over the bow railing to see past Cashel's bulk. The old woman raised an eyebrow in friendly question at the concern she'd heard in Sharina's voice.

"Celondre wrote a poem about the lighthouses," Sharina explained, embarrassed to have brought the matter up. "And now they're, well...." She waved her hand at the timeworn figures.

Tenoctris nodded, seeming to understand more than the younger woman had actually said. "I never visited Carcosa in my own day," she said. "It must have been marvelous. But what I think is important, dear, is the direction of things. A thousand years ago Carcosa and the kingdom were greater than either is now, but they were on the verge of ruin. Today we're rebuilding. It'll be a long time before we--"

She gave a quick, flashing grin.

--before your children's children will have built a city as great as Carcosa was when Carus reigned, but we're going in the right direction."

So far we've been going in the right direction, Sharina thought, because that was the whole of her fear. But she didn't say that aloud, because as soon as the words flashed into her mind she saw how silly she was being. *So far* was all you could say about anything, ever. Life was temporary; sun and rain and the seasons came and went and returned. Sharina's task was to help Garric and all the other people on the side of peace and order to succeed for as long as she lived.

Wizards like Tenoctris directed onto human affairs the forces which turned the very cosmos and which waxed and waned on a thousand year cycle. Their peaks were neither good nor evil in themselves, but they gave greater scope to wizards who attempted evil--and greater effect to the mistakes of wizards whose pride was greater than their knowledge.

As if responding to Sharina's thought, Tenoctris smiled wryly and said, "If all we had to worry about were a handful of conscious evildoers, life would be much simpler than it is in the present world of fools, wouldn't it? Though--" she frowned at her own comment "--I'm being needlessly unkind."

Tenoctris was the first to admit that she wasn't a powerful wizard, even now when powers were far greater than they'd been for a millennium. But she didn't make mistakes; and so far as Sharina was concerned, Tenoctris had every right to condemn the powerful fools whose blundering imperiled the kingdom.

A sailor--a petty officer wearing a broad leather belt over his kilt instead of a rope

tie like the common seamen--ran out on the jib, shading his eyes with a hand as he peered into the sea ahead of them. He rode the ship's dips and risings with the practiced grace of a courtier making gestures in accordance with palace etiquette. He must have seen--or not seen--what he expected, because he turned and bellowed sternward, "Aye, we're clear, Master Lobon!"

"Such a lot of people," Cashel said, shaking his head in pleased amazement as his eyes swept the moles. "I never knew there were so many people in all the world."

The wealthy nobles of Carcosa would be on the quay to greet Prince Garric formally, but the common people had come out also. The nobles' retainers would keep them away from the quay, but by standing on the long, curving arms which enclosed the harbor they got an earlier view of the visitors. There were thousands of them--many thousands. Even as a shade of its former self, Carcosa remained a great city.

"Waiting to see us," Cashel marveled aloud. He grinned broadly. "Well, waiting to see Prince Garric. And that's just as amazing a thing as, well, all the rest."

He gestured clumsily with the arm that encircled Sharina, indicating the pomp and glitter of the royal fleet: flags and bunting, soldiers in gleaming armor; a hundred bronze rams glinting across the western horizon as the ships approached the harbor, and the sea running in jeweled droplets from the blades of thousands of feathering oars. The commander of the *Shepherd's* Blood Eagles was trying to array them, though the deck even of a quinquereme was so narrow that only two could stand abreast. Sailors hopped over the ventilator gratings above the oarsmen, cursing the soldiers but going on about their tasks regardless.

The spectators started to cheer while the fleet was still a quarter mile from the mole. The sound was faint at first, from only a few throats and attenuated by distance; but it built, and soon the whole crowd was cheering. Scarves and sashes waved, improvised flags to greet the prince.

"I wasn't sure they'd be glad to see us," Cashel said. "An army coming, after all; an army from Ornifal."

"They're cheering for Prince Garric of *Haft*," Sharina reminded him. "The people who've held power in Carcosa, Count Lascarg and his cronies, may not be happy to see us, but the common people are proud that a man from Haft rules the kingdom for the first time in a thousand years."

"I guess the count'll keep his mouth shut if he has a problem," Cashel said. He spoke with a hint of quiet anticipation. Cashel was for the most part a gentle man; Sharina didn't remember him ever having started a fight. But he'd never quit one either while there was an opponent left who wanted to keep going.

"Yes," said Sharina, thrilled to be reminded of the other side of her fiance, the part that was never directed at her. "I think he'll be *very* quiet."

She cleared her throat, then added, "And I think that the people cheering know that even if Garric were a tyrant, they're better off ruled by a bully who's in Valles most of the time than they are with the gang right in their midst."

"Prince Garric..." called the crowd on the mole. They were shouting in unison now so that Sharina could make out their words. "Prince Garric..."

"Garric's not a bully," Cashel said, his voice a soft rumble. His muscles had stiffened, and his thick hickory quarterstaff quivered slightly in his right hand. "And if the people running Carcosa *are* bullies, well, so much the worse for them now."

Sharina felt a surge of pride: in her brother, in her friends, and in the Kingdom of the Isles that they and she were bringing back to life, so that there would be peace and justice for people like the ones cheering them on; peace and justice for the first time in a thousand years.

No matter what wizards or usurpers tried to do to stop them!
"Prince Garric of Haft!" the crowd called.

Cashel stood by the forecastle rail, careful not to rest his weight on it. The hoardings were canvas over a wicker backing, and salt had dried the wood of the frame timbers, leaving long splits. The structure was meant to keep head seas from combing over the prow, not to support the weight of a man Cashel's size.

Cashel could no more swim than he could fly. If he fell overboard he'd try to grab an oar as the ship drove past him, but he'd just as soon not put the question to the test.

For display when they entered Carcosa, the fighting tower was set up in the bow. Its walls were canvas-covered wicker --they were painted to look like stone--but the cross-braced frame was of timbers as sturdy as any to be found on the ship. It had to be to take the recoil of the balista mounted on top.

Today the weapon wasn't cocked, of course. Instead of serviceable iron the head of the bolt in the weapon's trough was of brass polished to look like gold. The four crewmen wore plumes on their helmets and dangled silver gorgets across their linen corselets. The padded linen gave them some protection but was flexible enough they could crank the windlass to draw back the balista's arms.

Sharina seemed cheerful again. Her hand was on Cashel's left shoulder as she stood in companionable silence, which suited him fine. Until he'd left Barca's Hamlet less than a year ago, he'd spent more time with sheep than with humans. Since then he'd learned that many folks thought that unless people were talking there was something the matter. For the life of him, Cashel couldn't understand that.

Cashel was pretty much pleased with the world and with his part in it. That was mostly the case with him. He supposed that was because he didn't have big problems like Garric, who had to keep the kingdom from crashing into ruin and taking everybody's lives and hopes with it.

All Cashel needed to do were simple things like keeping safe whatever he'd been told to take care of. Once that'd meant sheep; now as apt as not it was a person, and that was all right too. He squeezed Sharina gently with his left hand, just reassuring himself that she really was there.

The only trouble that Cashel'd ever found too big for him was when he'd fallen in love with Sharina os-Kenset. She was beautiful, a scholar like her brother, and she'd inherit half the inn--making her by the standards of the borough a wealthy woman. Cashel had known that she was far too good for him.

And so she was: he remained sure of that, as sure as he was that she loved him anyway. Cashel couldn't imagine why, but when he woke every morning he thanked the Shepherd for granting him a gift greater than any he would have dared to ask.

Sharina leaned forward slightly, lost in her own reverie; the railing creaked. Wicker alone would be strong enough to support her weight--though tall, wasn't a blocky mass like Cashel--but his grip tightened reflexively. She patted his hand reassuringly and eased back to humor him.

Thought of the way salt dried wood made Cashel glance at his quarterstaff, a wrist-thick shaft of hickory, seven feet long and as straight as a sunbeam. He'd made the staff himself as a boy, taking one perfect limb as his payment for felling the tree for a neighbor. He'd shaved and polished the wood, and in the years since he'd continued to wipe it down with wads of raw, lanolin-rich wool whenever he had the opportunity. The staff had taken hard knocks and given harder ones; but today its surface remained as ripplingly smooth as a wheel-turned jug.

Sea air had painted a tinge of rust over the quarterstaff's black iron buttcaps, but that could wait till they were on land again. If Cashel wiped them now, they'd rust over again in less time than it'd taken him to clean them. He'd have liked to rub the hickory, though, but doing that would've meant taking his arm from around Sharina's waist. The quarterstaff, trusty companion though it was, didn't need his attention *that* bad.

Cashel looked past the girl nestled against his shoulder. Their ship--Garric's ship--was two full lengths ahead of the rest of the warships. Following them was a second line, of light craft like the one Ilna travelled on with her beau Chalcus and also of triremes used for transport. Those had only one bank of oarsmen with the rest of the space in the narrow hulls given over to cargo and soldiers who hadn't been trained to pull an oar--another kind of cargo so far as the sailors were concerned.

To count the ships Cashel would've needed a bag of dried peas, like he'd have used to tally a flock of sheep. There were many times more ships than he had fingers, though. Sharina was right: if Garric said jump, Count Lascarg would ask "How high?"

He felt his skin prickle; an itchy feeling like the first hint of sunburn after a day's plowing. Cashel's brows knitted in a frown. It wasn't sunburn today; and the other thing that gave him that sort of feeling was wizardry close by.

"Tenoctris?" he said, disengaging himself from Sharina without bothering to explain. "Are you working a...?"

But he could see that she wasn't, so he didn't bother to finish the question. If not Tenoctris, then...?

The wizard sat down cross-legged more forcefully than could've been good for her old bones. She had a satchel of books and the paraphernalia of her art--Cashel carried it for her when the two of them were together--but she didn't bother with it now. Instead, she took a split of bamboo from the sleeve of her court robe and drew a pentacle with it on the soft pine deck between her knees.

Using the bamboo where a less-cautious wizard would use a specially-forged athame, she tapped the flats of the pentacle murmuring, "*Cbesi niapha amara....*" in time with her beat. A spark of crimson wizardlight winked into existence in the center of the symbol, waxing and waning as she spoke.

Cashel shifted his body slightly to hide Tenoctris as much as possible from the sight of nearby sailors. He trusted the old woman's skill and instincts both; but for most people, wizardry was as surely to be avoided as the plague. Nobody'd object aloud to what a friend of Prince Garric was doing, but the business would make people who saw it uncomfortable or worse. Cashel didn't want that if he could help it.

Sharina spread her court robe with both hands, providing an even better screen than Cashel's bulk. Her eyes looked questions, but she didn't speak. She knew that Cashel or Tenoctris would tell her if there was something she needed to know, and she didn't want to distract them from what might mean everybody's life or death.

"I don't see anything," Cashel said quietly. "It just doesn't feel right."

"*Ialada...*," Tenoctris said. "*Iale.*"

The spark suddenly cascaded into a shape or series of shapes, like a wall of damp sand shivering to repose; an instant later it blinked out. Tenoctris dropped her wand and swayed, her frail body drained by practicing her art. Cashel steadied her with his left hand.

Some people believed that wizards merely waved their wands and their wishes took form effortlessly; those folk had never seen real wizardry. Cashel's muscles allowed him to lift weights that few other men could manage, but his feats didn't become easy simply because they were possible. Similarly, a truly powerful wizard could move mountains or tear chasms in time--but that work had a cost.

Tenoctris looked up. "Garric's in danger," she said, forcing the words out in a whisper. "I can't see what--there's a wall my art can't penetrate. But it's something terrible, rushing toward Garric."

"*Sound the alarm!*" Sharina called. Her clear voice rang over the grunt of hundreds of oarsmen and the *thump* of their bodies slamming down on their benches at the end of each stroke. "*We're being attacked!*"

"Watch her!" Cashel said, releasing Tenoctris so that he could grip his quarterstaff in both hands. Sharina would hold the old wizard if she still needed help to keep upright. As for Cashel himself--

He stepped past the women and leaped outward to the long wale supporting the rowlocks for the uppermost banks of oars. The narrow deck was clogged with Blood Eagles slipping the gilt balls from their spearpoints, turning them back from ceremonial staffs into weapons. Rather than force his way through the soldiers, Cashel was going around.

"Keep clear!" he bellowed, running like a healthy young ox heading for water after a day of plowing. The wale creaked, and the quinquereme itself wobbled as Cashel's weight pounded along so far outboard.

The young aide at Garric's side began to hammer on the rectangular alarm gong set in a framework on the stern railing. The boy's eyes were open and staring.

"*Keep clear!*"

CHAPTER 2

"*Sound the alarm!*" Garric said. He didn't know what was going on, but he drew his sword with no more than a whisper against the iron lip of the scabbard.

Cashel was running sternward, so the danger wasn't in the bow. Garric turned, looking past the high, curving sternpost. The hundred and twenty-seven ships of the royal fleet were arrayed behind the *Shepherd* in order as good as that of so many soldiers at drill. He didn't see any danger, neither in the water foaming past in the oar-thresh nor in the sea to the horizon or the clouds above it. Rain perhaps, but from this sky it would be warm and slow, not gusts with lightning slashes.

There was danger somewhere. The warning must have come from Tenoctris, and she didn't make mistakes.

The trumpet and coiled horn on Admiral Zettin's *Queen of Ornifal* blew together, the raucous call that signaled fleet action. Zettin was commander of the fleet just as Lord

Waldron commanded the royal army: Garric could give orders to either man and expect them to be obeyed before they were fully out of his mouth, but the prince didn't get involved in the mechanics of maneuvering ships or battalions.

The prince had other matters to take care of. At the moment, the most important was learning what was the matter.

"Clear the yards, you stupid scuts!" Master Lobon shouted to the sailors who'd gone aloft for show. "Action stations, don't you hear!"

Wiping his face with the end of his red sash-of-office, he snarled--to the gods, not to any of the humans nearby, " Sister take me, the mast's raised! Won't that be a fine thing if we have to ram?"

King Carus took in the world through Garric's eyes, but he analyzed what he saw with the mind of the foremost man of war who'd ever ruled the Isles. A glint on a hilltop that Garric assumed was merely a quartz outcrop was to Carus a possible ambush; the tension in a courtier's posture might precede an assassination attempt. Carus had personal experience of those threats and a thousand more--

But he saw nothing of concern in the surrounding seascape.

"Your majesty--" Zettin called through a speaking horn from the stern of his flagship. Water spewed up as his oarsmen laid into their looms with renewed vigor, trying to close the gap they'd allowed to open between them and Garric's ship.

"Your majesty?" called the captain of the Blood Eagles aboard the *Shepherd*. He held his men in a double rank facing both sides of the ship. Their spears slanted forward, the points winking, and their left arms advanced their shields slightly.

Lerdain was saying something also, though Garric couldn't hear him through the racket of the gong he hammered. Garric pointed at the youth and bellowed, "Enough! Let me think!"

Lerdain froze. Garric knew he wasn't being fair--the lad was only doing what he was supposed to--but there wasn't time to worry about that. The gong continued to vibrate on a note that drilled all the way to Garric's marrow. He tore it from its mountings with his left hand and hurled it into the sea. Water danced briefly as the bronze block sank through the waves.

Cashel hopped onto the quarterdeck, brushing the end of the rail as he went past; it broke. "Tenoctris says you're in danger but she doesn't know what from!" he said, turning to face outward. His hands were on either side of his quarterstaff's balance, ready to swing or stab, whichever the situation called for.

"Well, at least I know where I stand!" Garric said, turning so his back was to Cashel's.

With my friends, and with a sword in my hand. What better place was there?

He and the warrior king in his mind laughed amid the shouts and the horn signals.

The gong's rich note echoed between sea and sky. *They could hear it in Barca's Hamlet*, Ilna thought, and didn't chide herself for exaggerating as she usually would've done.

As the first note sounded, Chalcus began to survey the horizon. He didn't unsheathe his sword or razor-sharp dagger, but he was as tautly poised as a drawn bowstring.

"Ilna, what's the bell?" Merota said, only a child again as she tugged on Ilna's

outer tunic. Merota had seen a great deal of horror in her short life. She'd come through it, and given a moment to compose herself she'd come through this as well; but the sudden clanging shocked her into panic. "What's going to happen?"

Chalcus spun and pointed his left index finger at the child's face. "You!" he said. "Crouch under the sternpost behind Glomer, that's as safe a place as there is. *Now!*"

"Yes, Chalcus," Merota said, scuttling past the frozen helmsman to obey. When she'd huddled behind the flutist who blew time for the oarsmen, she began bawling her eyes out.

"Mistress?" Chalcus said softly; his eyes on Ilna's, his muscles rigid as iron but not moving, not yet. Trumpets and horns called; the oarsmen looked up through the ventilators in frightened surmise, and half the sailors on deck were shouting something to someone or everyone. Captain Rhamis tugged Chalcus' tunic much as Merota had done Ilna's, and for much the same reason.

Ilna looked down at the cords she'd been knotting and in their pattern saw the answer to the question Chalcus hadn't put in words. Even strangers could have read the coarse fabric, though they'd have called it a feeling, an impression. To Ilna there was no more doubt than there was in the direction of dawn.

"From there," Ilna said, pointing northwest with her outstretched left arm. She hadn't woven the pattern consciously, but a part of her mind had provided the information she was going to need. "An enemy, coming for Garric. Fast!"

Chalcus' gaze followed her arm. Ilna herself could see only swells and troughs; the sea was a little rougher than earlier this morning before the clouds darkened. The sailor shaded his eyes with his hands stacked, looking through the narrow slit between left palm and the back of his right hand.

Chalcus turned to the helmsman. "Bring us along the *Shepherd's* side," he ordered crisply. Then, loud even against the clamor all around them, he shouted, "Glomer, play a sprint!"

Glomer was the flutist. Ilna had marveled to see that within a day of boarding the *Flying Fish* in Donelle, Chalcus had known the name of every sailor aboard the vessel. Indeed, she was sure he could give an appraisal of each man's strengths and weaknesses as clear as she herself could've done about the folk of Barca's Hamlet where she'd lived all her life.

"Hawsom--"

The stroke oar, a swarthy man with huge shoulders and an opal the size of Ilna's thumbnail in the septum of his nose.

"--every man of you on the benches, put your backs into it like never before! We're going to save our prince, that's what we're going to do!"

He pointed to Glomer, seated where the upper bank of oarsmen could see him. The men down in the belly of the ship had little enough air, let alone a glimpse of the outside world; they took their cue from the men above them. "*Play*, I said!"

The flutist had been sounding a dirge as the fleet proper marked time while Garric's ship drew ahead. Now he swung into a jig; the high notes from the double-flute's short right-hand pipe syncopated the lower tones of the left. Together the rowers breathed deeply, then drew back on their oars with the deliberate motion of men well used to hard work and willing to continue till they dropped.

The ship moved ahead. It didn't leap like a kid in springtime, for though small

compared to the quinqueres it was still a massive object, but it accelerated noticeably. "No!" cried Rhamis, reaching out to grab the flute. "Our orders are to keep back from--"

Chalcus caught the captain by throat and swordbelt. Rhamis barely had time to squawk before Chalcus flung him over the side.

"Row!" Chalcus cried to the oarsmen. "It's not your lousy lives you're saving, it's Prince Garric's!"

A coil of rope hung from a post on the afterdeck; it had something to do with the sails, now furled, Ina supposed. She lifted it, judged her distance, and made sure one end of the rope was still attached to a cleat. Finally she spun the coil toward the floundering captain. It opened as it flew through the air, then splashed in the water in front of Rhamis; he had just enough presence of mind to seize it before it and he both sank.

Ina turned again. The captain would've been no great loss; but small goodnesses were worth doing, if they didn't get in the way of larger ones... like saving Garric.

"Pull, you sailormen!" Chalcus called over the flute's skirl. "There's a devil from Hell after your prince, but we'll have something to say about that!"

Ina stepped into the far stern, behind Glomer's stool, and offered her left hand to Merota huddling there. By squinting to the northwest she could see but a seeming oiliness on the surface, the track of something moving swiftly underwater toward Garric's huge vessel. The *Flying Fish* continued to accelerate, but the other thing would be there ahead of them.

"Pull!" and the men pulled with the strength of the damned grasping for salvation; but it would not be enough....

Cashel waited, ready but not really tense. If there'd been more room on the *Shepherd's* stern, he'd have given his quarterstaff a few trial spins to loosen his joints; there wasn't, so he'd make do when the time came.

The helmsman at the port steering oar looked seaward instead of keeping his eyes on the sailing master for orders the way he should've done. He suddenly screamed and lunged away from the railing, slamming into Cashel and bouncing back as though he'd run into the mainmast.

"Here we go!" warned Cashel, bringing his staff around in front of him despite tight space. He clipped the shoulder of the helmsman, now scrambling away on all fours. The fellow yelped, but the contact didn't slow the staff's motion--which was all that mattered to Cashel at the moment.

The creature came straight up from the water with its huge jaws open. The pointed head was two double-paces long, ten feet as city folks would put it. The teeth were longer than Cashel's middle fingers. Those at the front of the jaw were pointed, while teeth farther back became broadly saw-edged.

"*A seawolf!*" Master Lobon cried, but Cashel had seen seawolves, great marine lizards, when they came ashore on Barca's Hamlet to snatch his grazing sheep. This creature had a smooth hide instead of a reptile's pebbled skin; and besides, this thing's head was as long as a big seawolf's whole body.

This was a whale, but not one of the sluggish, comb-toothed monsters which browsed on shrimp at the edge of the Ice Capes. This was a meateater like the seawolves, only much, much bigger.

Still rising, the whale twisted to angle its gaping jaws toward Garric. The railing splintered. Instead of striking as he'd have done with a smaller opponent, Cashel stuck his staff vertically into the beast's maw.

He acted by instinct, but his instinct was correct--as it generally was in a fight. The whale's jaws slammed down but not shut, because the thick hickory didn't flex at the creature's bite. Its bunched jaw muscles only drove the staff's iron ferrules deeper into its own tongue and palate. From its throat came a hiss like a geyser preparing to vent.

The whale started to slip back into the sea, dragging Cashel with it. He wrapped his legs around the stanchion to which the steering oar was attached, continuing to grip the staff with both hands.

The quinquereme listed, dragged over by the weight of the whale. Blue fire rippled through Cashel's muscles; he wasn't sure whether human strength or the wizardry that sometimes filled him allowed him to keep his grip, but he knew that if he let go the monster would find another, better way to attack. Cashel would anchor the whale so long as his staff held and his strength held, and neither one had ever failed him yet.

Garric hacked twice, leaving bone-deep cuts in the whale's jaw, but the creature's head was so large that a sword couldn't do it real damage. Instead of a third cut he stabbed, slanting his long blade through the underjaw and out through the black-veined tongue. Cashel saw the tip of pattern-welded steel glittering in a spray of blood, but even the blade's full length was unable to reach the monster's vitals.

A Blood Eagle hurled his spear into the whale's skull, just behind the eye. It was a good cast, but the point stuck less than a finger's length into dense bone; the spear fell into the sea. Three more spears drove uselessly into the whale's shoulder.

The whale's nostrils were on the top of its head, in front of the rear-set eyes. They voided a miasma of stale air and rotten flesh, then drew in a fresh breath with the roar of a windstorm.

Cashel was hanging over the sea as the oak stanchion creaked between his legs. Huge as the whale's head seemed, it was small in comparison to the snake-slim body. Far in the depths, Cashel saw the creature's flukes lashing in an attempt to pull itself away from the staff it couldn't spit out.

Very soon the quarterstaff would break, or Cashel would lose his grip on it, or the post would tear loose from the ship's hull. Whatever happened after that would no longer be the concern of Cashel or-Kenset.

Sharina let go of Tenoctris and rose to her feet. The old wizard still sat cross-legged, but she'd reached up to grip the bow railing to steady herself. Now that Sharina's hands were free, she reached under her loose-fitting court robes and drew the Pewle knife she wore concealed under the silk.

The knife's blade was heavy and the length of her forearm. The back was straight but the cutting edge had a deep belly. It was the knife carried by Pewle Island seal hunters, a weapon and every sort of tool all in one package. The knife and her memories were all Sharina had left of Nonnus, the man who'd guarded her through the fringes of Hell and who had died still guarding her.

When Sharina knew him, Nonnus had been a hermit dedicated the Lady; earlier as a mercenary soldier he'd done things he never spoke of, but which Sharina had heard others whisper of him. She kept the Pewle knife for his memory; but in times like this, it

was also a weapon that the bravest enemy would think twice before facing.

Garric's platoon of black-armored bodyguards had rushed to put themselves between their prince and the monster which had leaped toward him from the sea. Small chance of that: Garric stood firm-footed on the sloping deck, using both hands on his sword hilt to hack at the huge head.

The soldiers' weight made the ship list even more; water was gurgling through the lowest oarports, and the commotion below decks meant some of the rowers were about to abandon their benches. The sailing master was screaming at the sailors on deck to run out on the starboard wale to balance the load before the ship foundered.

Sharina had been hearing the click of ratchets against pawls from the fighting tower behind her, but it wasn't until the captain of the balista crew shouted, "She's ready! Swing her round!" that she realized the sound was capstans drawing back the balista's arms. She looked up.

The crewmen were rotating their weapon to point back over the *Shepherd's* deck. Even with the sail furled the mast and cordage would interfere with their aim, but some part of the monster rising like a gleaming black crag beside the vessel should be clear.

The captain stooped to aim, disappearing from Sharina's viewpoint on the main deck. The bolt's bronze head, cross-shaped to smash instead of stabbing cleanly, winked as the captain adjusted the weapon's bearing. Instead of shooting, he rose with a troubled look while his crewmen waited expectantly.

"Shoot!" Sharina screamed. "Shoot or it'll pull us under!"

Over the shouts and clash of metal, Sharina heard the deep groan of the ship's timbers working. The monster's weight was twisting the hull like a bad storm.

"Mistress, I can't!" the soldier cried in agony. "Mistress, I might hit the prince!"

The fighting tower's notched crenellations were eight feet above the deck, higher than Sharina could reach but well within reach if she jumped. She sprang up without thinking further, catching the lip in her left hand and swinging her legs over the upper railing. Her robes got in the way, but that didn't stop her.

There wouldn't have been room for her on the narrow platform if her muscular body hadn't slammed one of the crewmen aside. The Pewle knife was still in her right hand.

"Is it aimed?" she shouted to the captain, his face only inches from hers. He stood with the release cord in his right hand. ""Will it hit the thing?"

"Yes, but mistress--" the man said.

Sharina jerked the cord out of his hand. She started to whisper a prayer to the Lady, but the Lady brought peace and good harvests; she had no place here. Instead Sharina murmured, "Nonnus, help me and help my brother...."

She didn't bother bending so that her eyes could follow the line of the bolt; she didn't have the skill to second guess the captain, nor the time either. She pulled the release cord.

When the trigger claws released the thumb-thick bowcord, the balista's arms slammed forward against the leather-padded stops on the frame. The double *Bang!* shocked a cry from Sharina; she'd seen balistas and catapults in use before, but she'd never been so close to one when it loosed.

A crash like that of a wedge splitting oak rang on top of the balista's release. Sharina looked toward the stern. The bolt was buried to its wooden vanes in the monster's

head where the left eye had been. The impact had distorted the whole long skull like the hull of a rammed warship.

Garric staggered backward, unharmed. None of the thronging soldiers had been touched. *Nonnus, may the Lady show you the peace you did not find in life.*

As her eyes took in the scene, the patrol vessel with Ina aboard drove into the monster's body alongside the *Shepherd*. The bronze ram bit deep with a sound like an axe chopping into a hog's carcass, but so much louder that it overwhelmed all other noise.

The creature's nostrils spurted a mist of blood high in the air. The patrol vessel's mast cracked and tilted forward, breaking some of the decking ahead of the mast step. The *Shepherd* shook violently; Sharina might've stumbled over the wooden battlements if a balista crewman hadn't steadied her.

The patrol vessel continued to slide forward, pulling the monster along with it. Timbers crashed and the *Shepherd* rolled upright with a shudder. The great jaws spasmed open as the carcass rolled onto its back.

Cashel was flying through the air, still holding his quarterstaff and gripping a broken post with his legs. Sharina didn't have time to cry out before he landed in the sea thirty feet from the quinquereme's stern.

CHAPTER 3

Cashel couldn't feel anything, not even the water when he bellyflopped with a splash that would've been immense under most circumstances. Since the sea still roiled with the creature's death throes, he guessed nobody'd notice even that.

He plunged beneath the surface. The cold shock of the sea hadn't revived him, but not being able to breathe did. He tried to flail his arms and realized he was still holding his quarterstaff. He let go with one hand and paddled. Though he still couldn't feel anything and he knew he was very weak, his face lifted into the air again and he was able to gasp in a breath.

Like the whale, Cashel thought and might've laughed, but his nose dropped underwater. Breathing salt water seared his lungs worse than near suffocation had moments before. He kicked to the surface again, knowing that he'd shortly drown.

The water was red with the whale's blood and blotched with crimson froth. The monster lay on its back between Cashel and the *Shepherd*, floating low. Rhythmic spasms rippled down the creature's belly muscles; its underside was a pale contrast to the blotched gray-black of the upper surfaces.

A huge flipper Cashel lifted, then slammed back into the sea only inches from Cashel's face. He grabbed it instantly. He could feel bones beneath the slick, gristly surface.

The whale would probably sink also; Duzi, he could see that it was already sinking! But it didn't sink quite as fast as Cashel alone--all bone and muscle, with no fat to buoy him up in the water--so he clung to it and waited.

He might be rescued after all, though he didn't care much. Struggling with a monster the size of a ship had burned all emotion out of him. How long had the fight gone on, anyway?

Because Cashel lay so close to the whale's carcass, all he could see of *The Shepherd* was its mast top. The ship had continued on ahead after Cashel and the whale

tore loose, swinging in a wide circle to port. It was so big that it kept going for a long time, even after the oars'd stopped.

Cashel could see and hear fine, and his muscles did what he told them--though not nearly as well as he expected. The numbness in his body was passing too, though of course all he could really feel now was pain.

Something was going on to Cashel's other side also. He'd have to turn his head to see what it was. With a real effort of will--it meant ducking his face underwater again--he did.

The *Flying Fish* was nosing back toward the whale, its prow smeared with blood and its ram skewed upward. Cashel had a vague recollection of the little ship hitting the whale at the moment everything let go in his mind and the world around him. Now its oars were backing to bring it to a halt in the crimson water.

Ilna stood in the bow with a coil of rope in her hand. "Can you catch if I throw this to you, brother?" she called. Her voice would've sounded unemotional to somebody who didn't know her as well as Cashel did.

"I can catch," he croaked, the first words he'd spoken since he shouted a warning as the whale arched up from the depths. Ilna tossed the coil underhanded, landing it in the water so close that Cashel could've grabbed it with his teeth if he'd needed to.

He used his right hand instead, letting go of the whale's flipper. Just then Ilna's man Chalcus dived off the bow, stripped naked and holding the end of another coil of rope.

"I'm all right!" Cashel said, but Chalcus cut the water cleanly and didn't reappear for the long moments. Ilna didn't look worried so Cashel figured things must be all right, but where *was* the fellow? A sailor on deck continued to pay out rope; a second coil was spliced onto the first.

The *Flying Fish* halted, drifting slowly toward Cashel. Ilna'd tied her rope to a stanchion, but Cashel wasn't quite ready to clamber up the ship's sheer side. The fight with the whale had taken a lot out of him; almost more than there'd been. He tried to remember exactly what'd happened after he thrust the staff into the monster's jaws, but it wasn't so much a blur as tiny broken pieces of a scene painted on glass.

Sailors at the stern of the *Flying Fish* were dragging a fellow dressed like an officer from the sea at the patrol vessel's stern. Had he fallen from the *Shepherd* the way Cashel had? There might've been more things going on than just the whale, too.

"Hoy!" somebody shouted. Cashel turned his head. Chalcus stood on the whale's twitching body, spinning the end of his rope overhead; it must have been lead line, loaded to sink quickly to check the depth. He'd gathered a triple loop in his left hand. "Ready?"

"Read--" called the sailor on deck. Chalcus loosed the line in an arrow-straight cast that took it into the hands of the waiting sailor. As soon as the fellow caught it, Chalcus jumped feet-first into the sea and bobbed up beside Cashel.

Cashel had begun to shiver. Not from the water, he thought; the sea wasn't nearly as cold as nights he'd watched his sheep through storms of early winter with no shelter but his sodden cloak. He'd strained even his own great strength; it'd be good to get some food in him, if he could keep it down. Or at least a mug of ale to sluice the foul dryness out his mouth. Right now it tasted like an ancient chicken coop.

Con conversationally Chalcus said, "We'll be towing our prize in with us; the harbor's not so far, after all, and I've never seen or heard of a creature like this one. Have you,

friend Cashel?"

"I never saw anything like it," Cashel muttered. "It's a whale, but it's nothing like the ones that pass in spring by Barca's Hamlet."

Talking helped; he suddenly understood why Chalcus paddled beside him in the bloody water, chatting like they were relaxing on a sunlit hillside. The sailor's tone was cheerfully mild, but his eyes missed nothing. If Cashel suddenly lost consciousness, Chalcus would grab him before he sank and keep him up till he could be hauled on deck like a netful of cargo.

"Neither have I seen its like," agreed Chalcus. "Nor heard of such, more to the point, for my dealings have been more in southern waters and the east than in these western wastes."

He grinned wickedly. His arms floated motionless on the surface, but his legs must be windmilling to keep him so high in the water. Chalcus' nude body looked like a deer skinned at the end of a hard winter. There was no fat on his scarred frame, none at all. His muscles stood out like the individual yarns of a hawser.

"Though perhaps I shouldn't say that, you being a western lad yourself," he added.

Cashel shook his head. "I'm from Barca's Hamlet," he muttered. "I don't know anything about oceans. As for Carcosa, if we get there--"

"Indeed, we'll get there, lad," the sailor said, bobbing like a child's toy in a puddle.

"--all I could say about it is, I've passed through the city and I was glad to get to the other side."

The mild banter was bringing Cashel back from the abyss his struggles had taken him to the edge of. He was aware of himself as a person again. Raising his head, he tried to find Sharina; the huge carcass was still a quivering wall between him and the *Shepherd*.

"Come on, you lazy buggers!" Chalcus bellowed at the crew of the *Flying Fish* as they tugged on the rope he'd tossed them. They were using the light line as a messenger to draw an anchor cable around the whale just behind the flippers. "The sun'll have set before we've got this brute to land, and where's the honor if folk can't see our trophy?"

"Can you really carry this on the *Flying Fish*?" Cashel asked, pitching his voice low so that no one on the deck above would hear the question. "It looks to me like it's as heavy as the whole ship."

"Aye, as heavy and more," Chalcus agreed. "But we'll be all right towing the toothy devil, so long as he doesn't sink; which may happen yet, if they don't make that hawser fast some time soon. I think perhaps I..."

He looked sidelong at Cashel, judging how far he'd recovered.

Cashel laughed, snorted salt water from his nostrils, and laughed again. "I think I'm ready to go aboard, Master Chalcus," he said. "I may not have all my strength back, but I think what remains will prove an aid to hauling that rope."

He looked at his sister on the deck above. "Ilna?" he said. "See to it that this line is snubbed off, will you? I'm coming aboard, and I don't look forward to spilling myself in the water again because something slipped!"

Cashel tugged to test the line himself, then walked up the side of the vessel using his left hand on the rope to steady him. Oh, yes; he was ready for work again!

Sharina swung down from the fighting tower's battlements with a great deal more

care than she'd displayed climbing it. She'd sheathed the Pewle knife; it hadn't been required as a weapon but its smooth steel weight had settled her mind at a time she needed that. Now that she had leisure and both hands, she worried that her billowing robes would catch a projection and she'd break her neck as she fell.

"Mistress?" said the balista captain as he bent to grab her hand. "Princess, I mean! Let me--"

"No!" Sharina said. As if she didn't have enough problems already!

She dropped to the deck with no problem except that her robes flew up. She smoothed them and looked around to see if anybody was laughing at her. They weren't, of course: quite apart from her being Princess Sharina of Haft, everybody aboard the *Shepherd* was too shaken to laugh at anything for the moment.

Tenoctris had a hand on the railing, but she'd recovered to her normal state of indomitable fragility. She said, "Your Cashel is really quite remarkable. What he did just now was...."

She shook her head, then grinned wryly and added, "*Our* friend Cashel, and very definitely the world's friend Cashel. The wizard who made that attack won't have expected anyone to be able to block it. *Quite* remarkable."

"Yes, he is," Sharina said, a smile of contentment spreading over her face. She hadn't had time to be frightened till it was all over. Before she hopped down from the tower, she'd seen Cashel catch his sister's line. Now with the *Flying Fish* at a wobbly halt beside the monster, there was nothing to worry about.

"Was it a demon, Tenoctris?" she added, then frowned. "*Is* it, I mean. It's still there, after all."

"Not a demon," Tenoctris said, shaking her head. "It's an animal, but one that doesn't belong in this world or time. The wizard who could bring such a thing so far could have opened the way for a demon, of course; but demons are hard to control. Generally impossible to control. Though there's no end of fools with more power than sense who might have tried it anyway."

The old wizard smiled with a mixture of humor and disdain for those who had the great powers which she lacked, but who themselves lacked her judgment and knowledge. Sharina stepped close and hugged Tenoctris. She was inexpressibly glad to have a friend who *understood* the powers which were threatening to overwhelm the Isles.

The forces which turned the cosmos were neither good nor bad; but when they were at their peak, human evil and human error had an immense capacity for causing destruction. Mistakes as much as malice had shattered the Old Kingdom; similar mistakes and malice could grind the slowly-rebuilt civilization of the present too deep into the mud to ever revive.

"Sharina?" Tenoctris said, touching the back of the girl's wrist.

Sharina came to herself again; her fingers had knotted so tightly that her nails were cutting the backs of her hands. "Sorry!" she said with a bright smile. "I was thinking about things that we're not going to let happen."

"No, we're not," agreed Tenoctris approvingly. She patted Sharina's wrist again before looking over the scene around them.

The fleet that'd been arrayed like pieces on a chess board was now clumped like a crowd watching a street fight. At least a dozen warships were close enough that Sharina could've flung a stone aboard them. Officers shrieked to their own crews and to the

Sister-cursed idiots! on other vessels. She heard oars break as ships fouled one another, and the chance of accidental ramming must be making the sailing masters scream.

Sharina gave faint smile. She was an excellent swimmer; needs must, she could strip off her robes and make it to shore. She smiled even more broadly. If she had to pull Tenoctris along with her, she could manage that too.

Horns and trumpets began to call, issuing orders instead of just adding to the noisy chaos. Flutists blew time to the rowers, and on a trireme from Third Atara--not all the royal fleet was from Ornifal--a drummer beat a similar rhythm. The clot of ships edged apart, their prows pointing again toward the harbor mouth.

Big as quinqueremes were, they carried more of their weight above the waterline than a merchant captain would think was safe or even sane. The *Shepherd's* deck wobbled when Garric and his entourage of Blood Eagles started forward. He grinned as Sharina raised her hand in greeting.

"We're heading for the harbor along with the whole First Squadron," Garric said conversationally, nodding toward the Admiral Zettin's flagship. "I don't know that we'll be any safer with ten other ships around us than when we were going to enter in lonely majesty--"

He grinned again. For the moment he was the brother Sharina'd grown up with, not the prince ruling the Isles with a quick mind and hard hand. Garric was both those things, of course; but when he was being a boy, Sharina could let herself be somebody younger and perhaps happier than the princess in court robes.

--but Admiral Zettin made it clear that the only way I'm going to get rid of my escort is to sink every one of them. He's a former Blood Eagle, you know."

"And he's got the right bloody idea," the captain of the bodyguards aboard the *Shepherd* muttered out of the side of his mouth.

Garric glanced at the man, paused, then smiled. "Yes, I think maybe he does," he said.

The *Shepherd* got under way again. The five banks of oars stroked together to get the rhythm, their blades barely rippling the sea's surface. On the next stroke they bit deeper and the vessel shuddered, though Sharina wouldn't have been able to say that it'd resumed forward motion.

"There won't be another attack today," Tenoctris said with a nod of certainty. "No matter how powerful the wizard who attacked you may be, he won't be able to follow that very easily. Though he *is* powerful. He is, or she is, or it is. And clever as well."

"That's good to hear," Garric said, in the absent fashion that people mouth pleasantries that aren't going to change their behavior in the least. "That there won't be another attack for a while, I mean."

He touched the pommel of his sword, and Sharina smiled brightly because at the same moment her fingers were outlining the hilt of the Pewle knife beneath her robe. They were brother and sister, and their instincts were the same. "Of course it leaves the ordinary business of dealing with Count Lascarg and the factions in Carcosa. That'll be unpleasant enough."

The *Shepherd* was moving at a walking pace; other warships stayed close by either flank. The harbor mouth drew rapidly closer. The sailing master shouted to the starboard vessel, "Watch yourselves, Capsana! We don't have a portside rudder any more!"

"Should we be leaving Ilna and Cashel?" Sharina said, bending over the rail to look toward the patrol vessel still wallowing beside the monster's carcass. Its oars had just begun to move again. "Are they damaged?"

"The *Flying Fish's* in fine shape, better than we are," Garric said. "Master Chalcus, who appears to have taken command--"

There was cynical humor in his smile. Sharina judged that Chalcus would take almost anything he chose to, and apparently her brother shared that opinion.

"--has decided that he wants to bring the whale to the quay in order to amaze folk. He's something of a showman, that fellow, but I think he's earned the right."

Garric's expression sobered. "As have you, sister," he added. "You saved my life when you shot. And Cashel's too."

"The crew--" she said, nodding her head to indicate the men in the fighting tower above "--cocked and aimed. But they were afraid they'd hit you. I was afraid too, but I knew that if I didn't take the chance...."

Garric nodded, grim and far older than his nineteen years. "Yes," he said. "The risk you don't take is the most dangerous one of all."

He cleared his throat, looking toward the harbor. The *Shepherd* and its consorts were passing through the entrance, the lighthouse and its time-wrecked twin were to the left and right of them. The crowds on the mole had fallen silent when the monster attacked; now they resumed cheering. The docks of the inner harbor were covered with spectators wearing their brightest and most expensive garments.

"Well," Garric said, hitching up his sword belt. "Count Lascarg won't try to swallow me whole. But I don't mind telling you, sister, that I'd be happier if Liane were here to keep me from making some terrible blunder in etiquette. Father gave us a wonderful education in the classics, but he didn't teach us how to behave when meeting counts."

"No," said Sharina. "But I doubt that matters. Lascarg will know how to behave when his king comes with twenty thousand soldiers at his back."

And as she spoke, she realized that Garric wasn't the only one who'd changed. That wasn't the observation of Sharina os-Reise, the girl who'd grown up in a village inn. She gave her brother a smile--of a sort.

Carcosa's harbor was huge, more a lake than an anchorage to Garric's eyes. Barca's Hamlet had only a rocky, steeply sloping beach. Above that stood a seawall, built during the prosperity of the Old Kingdom and the only reason winter storms hadn't washed the village away during the past thousand years.

This harbor was magnificent: stone quays framed slips where merchant vessels of a thousand tons could lie. To the south were stone ramps where the crews of warships could drag their fragile vessels out of the water and pillared sheds to house those same warships safe from the weather.

"*It's a ruin!*" King Carus said, the thought despairing and out of keeping for a spirit to whom wrath and laughter were common but sadness almost never. "*Oh, lad, I did this with my haste and my anger. Would I'd never been king so I wouldn't have to see this!*"

As Carus spoke, Garric saw the harbor through his ancient ancestor's eyes. The harbor should've been thronging with merchant ships from every port in the Isles; instead

there were less than fifty--

“*Thirty-nine*,” snapped Carus. He had a warrior’s eye for numbers and location.

--vessels above the size of a rowboat. Half of what had been harbor was now a marsh, silted in where the Olang River entered the bay from the north; it hadn’t been dredged in a thousand years.

And why should it have been? Even constricted, the harbor had room to anchor many times the present traffic. The sheds that had sheltered half a thousand triremes, the fleet that had scoured pirates and usurpers from the Inner Sea, were half fallen; not one retained its roof of red tiles.

The city beyond, rising in terraced steps up the hills surrounding the harbor, was a half-populated wasteland to eyes that remembered Carcosa when it ruled the Isles. This Carcosa looked as though it had been sacked by an enemy... and so it had, Garric knew from Gostain and Wylert and the other historians of the Dark Age that had succeeded the Old Kingdom. The city had been sacked a score of times, but the worst of the damage that'd thrown Carus into despair was caused by time, not human enemies: a thousand years, overpowering the hand and will of men.

“We’ll build it again,” Garric whispered under his breath. “Or our grandchildren will.”

“Garric?” Sharina asked, not so much concerned as... interested. She knew Garric shared his mind with his ancestor, though he doubted she understood how complete the intertwining of soul with soul was.

“I was just thinking about how much work we have before Carcosa’s back to what it once was,” he said, telling the truth if not quite the whole truth.

Count Lascarg and the chief folk--the most richly dressed, at any rate--of Carcosa stood six feet above the level of the docks which lowlier residents thronged. “Did they build a reviewing stand?” Sharina asked, her eyes narrowing.

Garric viewed the scene superimposed with Carus’ memories. “No,” he said. “That was the base for the statues of the Twelve Nymphs who guided King Car to the place the Lady had blessed for his new colony.”

He smiled without humor. “The statues were bronze,” he added. “I suppose after the Collapse, some warlord or another decided he needed coinage more than he needed art--or the Lady’s blessing either one.”

The *Shepherd* slowed as the sailing master and his petty officers snarled orders to the crew. Only one bank of oars was still moving and even those stroked slowly, just to keep steerage way. The rest of the squadron held station; the nearest ships were so close that Garric found it hard to tell who was shouting what.

“Are they all so angry?” Sharina said. She’d wrapped her arms around her torso, hugging herself unconsciously. “They sound as if they were.”

Garric put an arm around his sister’s shoulders. The gesture’d probably raise eyebrows among the spectators used to the formality of court etiquette. Nobody’d say anything to Garric--and if they did, they’d find themselves swimming in the harbor faster than they might think possible.

“They care about their duties,” he said. “The officers, I mean, though the men do too. They’re nervous that things’ll go wrong, and the Shepherd knows how much there is to go wrong maneuvering like this.”

Sharina reached up to squeeze his hand, then relaxed. They eased apart. “They’re

pretending to be angry because they're frightened?" she said with a grin. "Well, I guess that's a good choice for soldiers. Fighting men."

Blood Eagles from the trireme which'd entered the harbor ahead of the rest of the fleet had cleared the quay below where Lascarg's party waited. The black-armored guards stood facing the crowd with their shields locked. Gilded wooded balls turned their spearheads into batons for the occasion, but when the monster attacked Garric had seen how quickly how quickly the blunts could come off.

"Hold up there!" a man bellowed from the water. "Don't let this ship dock till you've taken me aboard! Do you hear me?"

The petty officer conning the quinquereme from the bowsprit looked down, spat, and said, "Keep clear of Prince Garric's ship, pretty boy, or you'll swim back to land where you belong."

Sharina understood at the same time Garric did. "That's--" she said.

"Right!" said Garric, squeezing between two sailors and the stanchions bracing the butt of the bowsprit. He grabbed a rope coiled from the railing and bent over the side. Lord Attaper, the Blood Eagles' commander, stood in a skiff which two paddlers--armored infantrymen like himself--were trying desperately to balance.

Garric snubbed his end of the rope and tossed the coil. Attaper caught it, then dragged himself and the skiff six feet across open water to the quinquereme's bow. As he started to climb the ship's side, the lead oar swung forward and swatted his legs away; he dangled like a toy on a string, pulling himself up hand over hand.

Two of the guards on the *Shepherd* hauled their commander aboard; Attaper was cursing with a fury Garric wouldn't have expected in the man. Planting himself on the deck before Garric, Attaper said, "What happened here? I heard there was an attack! I knew I shouldn't have gone ashore! Didn't I tell you that?"

Lord Attaper was a stocky man in his forties, taller than most, and extremely fit for someone whose duties were largely administrative. All the Blood Eagle officers were nobles, generally younger sons from minor houses, but they and the men they commanded were also veterans who'd been promoted to the royal bodyguard as a reward for exceptional service in the regular regiments.

Garric sometimes wondered how much of a reward it really was. The Blood Eagles got higher pay, fancy armor, and the right to swagger in any military company... but their casualty rate was several times that of the other regiments, especially now that they had to guard a prince who was determined to lead from the front. There was no lack of recruits to fill vacancies, though.

"And after all, boy," whispered the image of Carus in his mind, *"you're no more the man to tell them they're fools to go where it's hottest than I was. Good soldiers like to serve with a leader they can respect, and these are some of the best."*

"Good morning, Lord Attaper," Garric said. He kept his tone mild--he wanted to shout back, a natural reaction like the snarling anger of the ship's nervous officers--but he knew this was a time to quietly remind Attaper who was the prince and who was the servant. "We went fishing on our way into harbor; Master Chalcus is following with the catch. Now I have business with local dignitaries, so--"

"It's too dangerous for you to go ashore here if there's already been one attack!" Attaper said. "We'll--"

"Lord Attaper!" Garric said. "My duties as prince require me to greet local

dignitaries. Hold your tongue now, or you'll find your duties will involve running the Valles city administration five hundred miles from here."

Attaper paused, his face blank. Then he gave Garric a grim smile and an officer's salute, crossing his right forearm over his chest with the fist clenched. A regular soldier would clash his spear against his shield face instead. "I understand, your majesty," he said.

The *Shepherd of the Isles* bumped against the dock. The starboard rowers had shipped their oars to keep from breaking the shafts, and the deck crew had hung straw-stuffed leather fenders between the outrigger and the stonework. Despite the crew's skill, Garric heard the ship's timbers complain. Lightly-built warships weren't intended to be tied up against stone quays; every extra ounce had been pared from the *Shepherd's* hull to increase her speed and the endurance of her oarsmen during battle.

"If you're agreeable, your majesty," Attaper said in a formal voice, "my men will conduct the locals past you as you stand on the dock, rather than you climbing the plinth to join them."

Garric smiled with a mixture of humor, amusement, and pride. "Thank you for the suggestion, Commander," he said with equal formality. "I believe your plan will be more consonant with the dignity of the Prince of Haft."

A pair of Blood Eagles on the dockside were struggling to a makeshift boarding bridge between the quay and the quinquereme's deck. It'd started life as a door and wasn't long enough to reach the deck safely because of the outrigger for the upper banks of rowers.

Instead of waiting for the soldiers to figure out an answer, Garric stepped on the outrigger and hopped up to the dock. The ship shuddered, rolling to boost his departure. Sharina had Tenoctris to look after, so she stayed where she was.

Attaper swore--under his breath this time--and followed Garric. Drawing his sword, he bellowed to an officer wearing a captain's red plume, "The prince will receive them down here. Start our distinguished hosts moving!"

Two aides--they'd been clerks of Lord Tadaï--came quickly toward Garric. Attaper raised his bare weapon by reflex.

"Please!" one of the aides said. Both carried notebooks of thin boards hinged with leather straps. "We're his highness' nomenclators! We have to be at his side to tell him who he's meeting!"

"Let them pass, milord," Garric said, again irritated by the bodyguard's caution; the nomenclators could scarcely have looked more harmless if they'd been mice scurrying on a pantry floor.

He remembered what he'd just said to Sharina, though, and kept his tone level. Whatever his rank now, Garric knew very well that he was nervous about meeting those who'd been his distant rulers while he'd grown up in Barca's Hamlet.

"The first will be Count Lascarg," the aide on Garric's right murmured. His index finger marked a place in the notebook, though he didn't bother referring to it. "His twin children, the honorable Tanus and Monine, were to accompany him, but they don't appear to be present."

The Blood Eagles had started the line of dignitaries moving before Attaper bothered to ask Garric about the plan. That was all right; good subordinates had to be able to take initiative--within limits.

Count Lascarg's scabbard was empty and a guard walked to either side of him. They were more likely to have to support the count than to restrain him: he was a tired old man, overweight and--Garric had served in his father's taproom since childhood--more than half drunk.

Lascarg knelt before Garric, bracing himself with his hands to keep from falling over. He looked up, avoiding Garric's eyes, and said in a rusty voice, "Your highness, I offer the loyal submission of Haft to the Kingdom of the Isles."

"Rise, Lord Lascarg," Garric said. "The officials who've preceded me have made arrangements to allow you and your personal servants quarters in the west wing of the palace. So long as you remain there until I've made permanent dispositions, I can guarantee your safety. Of course you're to take no further part in the government of the island."

"Of course," Lascarg muttered. He didn't sound regretful; perhaps he was even relieved. He rose to his feet more easily than he'd knelt and walked away straight-backed.

Garric watched him go without expression. Lascarg had been commander of the Household Troops the night riots in Carcosa had led to the death of the Count and Countess of Haft; afterwards Lascarg had seized the throne himself. That didn't prove he'd been behind the riots in the first place, but the best that could be said was that the Household Troops hadn't protected their employers as they were sworn to do.

Garric wouldn't have had much liking or respect for Lascarg under any circumstances, so nothing important changed when Garric had learned that Countess Tera was his real mother. He'd been born the night she died, and Reise had carried the infant to Barca's Hamlet on the opposite coast with his wife and her own newborn daughter.

The next dignitary through the wall of Blood Eagles was an older man in priestly robes of the traditional gleaming white. Instead of the bleached wool which priests in Valles wore in at least the affectation of modesty, this man's garment was of silk trimmed with ermine.

"Lord Anda, Chief Priest of the Temple of the Lady of the Sunset," said the left-hand nomenclator, "and head of the congregation of the Lady on Haft."

Anda knelt before Garric with the deepest respect, but as he did so he looked over his shoulder with a sneer of triumph toward the next person in line. He said, "The prayers of the servants of the Lady are always with you, your highness."

"He and Lady Estanel, Priestess of the Temple of the Shepherd of the Rock, nearly came to blows over precedence!" the other aide added in shocked amazement.

"Can you imagine that? Of course the priests of the Lady have precedence!"

"Rise, Lord Anda," Garric said. "My friend Lord Tadai will shortly discuss with you the means by which the office of the Chancellor in Valles will improve its oversight of the temples here on Haft."

"In fact if you have a moment, your highness..." Anda said, rising smoothly. He had the sharp features and bright eyes of a falcon. "My associates and I have a proposal which you as a Haft native yourself will find very--"

"I do not have a moment," Garric said, suddenly so angry that his vision blurred. "Lord Tadai will instruct you."

The priest opened his mouth to speak further. Garric felt his right hand fall to his sword hilt. If the whale's attack hadn't drained him so completely....

Lord Anda was too good a politician to push on where he could see there was no

hope. He bowed and smiled, passing back through the guards with his dignity undiminished.

Carus was a calming presence in Garric's mind. The ancient king knew more about gusts of rage than most men did. Garric's anger didn't frighten him. "*Just priests being priests, lad,*" the ghost murmured. "*Part of life, like rain running down the inside of your cuirass.*"

"Lady Estanel is next," a nomenclator said. "She entered the priesthood after the death of her husband, a major landowner to the south of Carcosa."

The priestess of the Shepherd was short and round. The collar of her white silk robe was trimmed with sable, and her magnificent ivory combs were arranged to give the impression of a tiara.

She curtsied with supple ease; though fat, Lady Estanel was obviously in good health. "We servants of the Shepherd are delighted to greet you, Prince Garric," she said. "We look forward to discussing methods to reform the current religious situation with you."

"Your discussions will be with my agent, Lord Tadai," Garric said; he heard his voice coming from a thousand miles away. "And milady? You'd best arrange matters so that I *don't* have to get involved, because you'd like that result less than anything Lord Tadai tells you."

Garric couldn't see the priestess' expression through the red haze that clouded his vision, but she passed on quickly. He felt a touch on his right elbow. He turned. Sharina was there. Though relief made him stagger, he could see clearly again.

Attaper must have signaled to the guards, because the line of dignitaries in embroidered brocade stayed on the other side of the black shields. A good bodyguard observes *everything*, and Garric didn't guess he'd ever meet anyone better than Attaper.

"I'm a little dizzy from the voyage," Garric called with a cheerful smile toward the waiting nobles. "A moment, please, and I'll be with you."

He turned again and muttered into Sharina's ear, "We weren't god-ridden in Barca's Hamlet, you know that. A pinch of meal and a sip of ale to the household altar at meals--for the people who could afford that. And we gave when the priests from Carcosa came around with the statues for the Tithe Procession every summer. But we worshipped the *gods*, and these people are just politicians. Politicians who think they'll make me one of them!"

"Yes," said Sharina, holding his wrist as she scanned the nearby spectators with a harsh expression. "Well, they're not going to do that."

Garric looked at the crowd also, really for the first time. He'd been too concerned with the dignitaries on the raised plinth to think about the rest of the folk waiting. Those close by were retainers of the nobles. They stood in discrete blocs of six to twenty-odd men--all men, of course--wearing their employers' colors as cockades. They weren't openly armed, but Garric knew their caps had metal linings and there were truncheons--if not swords--concealed under their tunics.

He'd expected that; there'd have been similar men at a levee in Valles or Erdin or any other community in the Isles big enough to have a range of wealth and therefore rivalry. What he hadn't expected was that the two largest groups would be those of the priesthoods, big scarred men in white tunics. The Lady's gang carried censers on the end of three-foot metal rods, while their rivals held similar rods bent into the shape of a

shepherd's crook.

"If any of them saw a sheep in their life, it was as roast mutton," Garric grated under his breath.

Then he straightened, smiled, and said, "Lord Attaper, I've recovered from my indisposition. I'll be pleased to meet the rest of those waiting to offer their respect to the kingdom."

Still grinning, he added to Sharina in a voice only slightly less audible, "You know, sister, for the first time since I became...."

He gestured with his palms upturned. Prince, regent; leader. It didn't matter what word he used or if he didn't bother to speak; Sharina understood.

"Anyway, for the first time I'm really looking forward to making changes in the way a government works!"

Garric laughed aloud. His sister laughed with him, squeezed his hand again, and then stepped aside so that the horrified nomenclators could resume their duties.

"Look, you fine folk of Carcosa!" Chalcus called from the bow to the crowd filling the waterfront. "Come look at the dreadful monster which your prince vanquished without so much as mussing his hair! Ah, the kingdom is blessed indeed to have such a ruler as Prince Garric of Haft!"

"Ilna?" said Merota with a troubled frown. She was shouting so that Ilna, holding her hand in the prow of the *Flying Fish*, could hear her. It was a measure of Chalcus' lungs that much of the crowd was able to understand him over the noise not only of civilians but from the crews and equipment of the royal fleet as it docked.

"Yes, child?" said Ilna, turning to face Merota so that the girl could see her answer. Ilna didn't like either to shout or to be shouted at; a poor orphan gets enough of the latter early on.

Chalcus now openly commanded the *Flying Fish*. Captain Rhamis huddled amidships with a cloak over his soaked garments; water dripped from the tip of his scabbard to pool on the deck beneath him.

The harbor had scores of unoccupied docks, though many were only rubble cores which'd lost their facing stones. Instead of bringing the patrol vessel to one of them, however, Chalcus had anchored half a stone's throw out from the shore where more people could see it.

The crew, released from the oarbenches, was hauling the great carcase alongside and lashing it to the *Flying Fish* with a second loop. The whale had begun to sink even before they'd entered the harbor; water was filling the body cavity through the hole the ram had smashed.

Ilna smiled grimly. Chalcus was too fine a showman to lose his wondrous attraction because of inattention.

"Is Prince Garric really as great a man as Chalcus, Ilna?" Merota asked in her high, piercing voice.

The question so shocked Ilna that she burst out with a gust of loud laughter. Merota gaped: Ilna's reaction was almost as unusual for her as a fit of crying would have been.

Ilna's expression settled. A fit of crying was the other alternative. She'd always considered showing emotion to be a sign of weakness; but she'd never denied that she

was subject to weakness, either.

Rather than raise her voice, Ilna lifted Merota to speak into the child's ear. Ilna was slightly built--all the bulk in the family had gone to her brother Cashel--but she did much of her work with double-span looms, which often as not she set up by herself. She took her physical abilities for granted.

"Garric is a great man, child," Ilna said. "The kingdom is lucky to have so wise and strong a leader, and Garric's friends are lucky too. As for Chalcus...."

She looked toward the bow. Chalcus stood on the railing, gesturing extravagantly as he described the way Prince Garric had winkled out the monster's brains with one thrust of his mighty sword and then had used his pommel to crush its ribs.

Ilna smiled. It was a lie and she *hated* lies, but from Chalcus' lips it sounded like one of the ballads he and Merota sang. It was a pattern of the sort that Ilna wove into her fabrics, one that made the listeners a little happier and the world around them better by some small amount as well.

"Chalcus is a great man also," she said. "But in a different way from Garric. As I am different from Princess Sharina, say."

"But you don't *love* Garric, do you?" Merota demanded.

Ilna laughed again. *The choice is to cry, and that's not a choice.* "I don't know what you mean by love, child," she said, squeezing Merota before she set her back on the deck.

Because she was looking toward the city to avoid meeting Merota's eyes or those of anyone else nearby, Ilna saw the procession enter the harbor area and make its way toward the waterfront where Garric stood. The escort was a platoon of Blood Eagles. They moved forward despite the crowd, using their shields to push people aside and their knob-headed spears to convince those who didn't want to be pushed.

Despite feeling miserable and empty, Ilna smiled wryly. The Blood Eagles had been set a task; they were doing whatever was necessary to get it done. Ilna could appreciate their attitude.

The guards had been sent to Barca's Hamlet. There they'd waited for the arrival of a party from Ornifal to make landfall and come overland to Carcosa. Ilna couldn't see the people in the party who were on foot because the escort's plumed helmets blocked her view, but the two chief members rode horses.

Could you carry a horse on shipboard all the way from Valles to Barca's Hamlet? But of course you could, if you were important enough; and this pair was important.

The middle-aged man rode stiffly. Ilna recalled that he'd been clumsy with any physical task when he was Reise the Innkeeper in Barca's Hamlet. He was Garric's, *Prince* Garric's, father. He was coming to Carcosa at his son's call to direct the nobleman who'd have the title of Vicar of Haft and Agent for the Prince.

The dark-haired woman beside Reise was supple and perfectly at ease. She looked about the crowd with the pleased smile of a goddess blessing her worshippers. Though she'd had a long voyage and a difficult trek across the island to reach Carcosa, she was more beautiful than any other woman Ilna had seen.

She was Lady Liane bos-Benliman, the woman whom Prince Garric was to marry.

I don't know what you mean by love, Ilna repeated in her mind; and hated herself for the lie.

THE FAR SIDE OF THE STARS
by David Drake

DEDICATION

For Tristan David Drake

The previous four generations of the family have read voraciously, so I hope he'll carry on the tradition.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dan Breen continues as my first reader, making my prose better than it would be without him.

Dorothy Day and Evan Ladouceur have been addressing specialized continuity problems in this one, and my webmaster Karen Zimmerman not only helpfully read my drafts but also archived them. (After you've killed as many computers in the middle of projects as I have, you learn not to take chances.)

Speaking of which, my son Jonathan got me going again when I *did* kill a computer. I can't claim to have consciously raised my own techie, but it seems to work very well if you have the time. I'm reminded of the Neolithic hunters who set their axeheads in split living branches, so that when the wood regrew it gripped the stone perfectly.

Clyde Howard helped research bits of information that I *knew* I had but couldn't put my finger on till he'd provided them.

My friend Mark Van Name made an observation that allowed me to write this book (and I expect future books) in a greater state of contentment than ever before. I don't think it makes the prose better, but it's certainly an improvement for me.

Writers aren't easy to live with, and I may be more difficult than most. My wife Jo manages, and she feeds me very well besides.

My thanks to all of you.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

One of the problems when you're writing of either the past or the future is 'How much should I translate?' I don't mean simply language: there's a whole complex of things that people within any society take for granted but which vary between societies. (But language too: I had somebody complain that the Arthurian soldiers in *The Dragon Lord* talked like modern soldiers. My reaction to this was that I could write the soldiers' dialogue in Latin, but the complainant couldn't read it; and if I'm going to translate into English, why on Earth wouldn't I translate into the *type* of English the same sort of men speak today?)

Weights and measures are a particular problem. I don't assume that the world of the far future will use the weights and measures of today, but I'm quite certain that my inventing new systems will do nothing desirable for my story. (There are people who're really happier for a glossary of made-up or foreign words. I'm not, though I'll admit I still occasionally murmur to myself, "*Tarzan bundolo!*")

In the RCN series Cinnabar is on the English system and the Alliance uses Metric, simply to suggest the enormous complexity I expect will exist after Mankind spreads among the stars. (Well, I certainly hope we'll spread among the stars, but I won't pretend I'm sanguine about our chances at the moment.)

Communications protocols are very roughly based on those of the 2nd Squadron, 11th ACR, during the period it was—I was—under the command of LTC Grayle Brookshier. There were a lot of stories about squadron and regimental commanding officers. The stories about Battle Six were all positive.

I think I should comment on the background of this novel also. Today physical travel is easier than ever before, and television takes us literally anywhere. The world is generally accessible to most people, and as a result it's becoming homogenized. I don't insist that this is a bad thing, but it's a major change from the situation of a generation ago, let alone that of a hundred years in the past.

In the late 19th century a party of Russian nobles bought a South Seas trading schooner from its owner/captain, hired as captain the former mate (a man named Robert Quinton), and for several years sailed the Pacific from Alaska to New Zealand, from Kamchatka to Diamond Head. They hunted, bought curios, visited ancient ruins, and viewed native rites in a score of localities.

This sort of experience was available only first-hand and only to the exceptionally wealthy (or their associates like Quinton, who wrote a memoir of the voyage). Today anybody who watches PBS and the Discovery Channel can see everything those aristocrats saw, or at any rate as many of those things as survive.

I've tried as one of the themes of *The Far Side of the Stars* to give the feel of that former time, when travel was a risky adventure possible only for the few. While I'm glad that many--myself included--can share the world's wonders today, I do regret the passing of the romance of former times and the fact that maps no longer have splotches marked *Terra Incognita*.

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CHAPTER 1

Adele Mundy wore for the first time her white Republic of Cinnabar Navy dress uniform. The sleeves had the chevrons of a warrant officer, the lightning bolt of the Signals Branch, and a black ribbon of mourning. She paused to check herself in the mirror in the entryway of her townhouse.

Three generations of Mundys had lived in Chatsworth Minor, ever since the family became so politically prominent that Adele's grandfather replaced their previous townhouse in Xenos with these imposing four stories of brick, stone, and ornate carvings. Adele had grown up here, but she'd been off-planet continuing her education as an archivist the night sixteen years ago when the Three Circles Conspiracy unraveled and

gangs arrived to carry off the remainder of her family for execution.

She'd never expected to see Chatsworth Minor--or Cinnabar--again. When she learned that the heads of not only her parents but also her 10-year-old sister Agatha had been displayed on the Speaker's Rock, she hadn't wanted to *see* any relic of her previous life.

She smiled faintly into the mirror. Times change, but people change as well. The stern-looking naval officer with splashes of medal ribbons on the bosom of her tunic wasn't the reserved girl who'd left Cinnabar for the Academic Collections on Bryce just in time to save her life. They shared facial features and a trim build, that was all.

Or almost all; because both the officer and the girl lived with the bone-deep certainty that they were Mundys of Chatsworth. Adele's parents had been egalitarians and members of the People's Party, but there'd never been any doubt in their minds that the Mundys were first among equals... and no doubt in their daughter's mind that whether she was a scholar or a street-cleaner, she was a Mundy. There'd been times after her parents were killed and their property confiscated for treason that Adele believed a street-cleaner probably lived better; but that didn't change anything that *really* mattered.

Adele's servant Tovera--if servant was the right word--glanced at her mistress briefly in the mirror; her eyes flicked on, never resting anywhere very long. If Adele was prim, then Tovera was so colorless that casual observers generally paid her less attention than they did the wallpaper. For the funeral she wore a gray dress suit of good quality, also with a mourning ribbon. Her only other ornamentation was a blue-and-silver collar flash that proclaimed her a retainer--the sole retainer at the present time--of the Mundys of Chatsworth.

Tovera missed little but cared about even less; perhaps she cared about nothing except whatever task she'd been set or had set herself. Having Tovera around was much like carrying a pistol with a trigger as light as thistledown.

The pistol in the sidepocket of Adele's tunic was so flat it didn't bulge even a dress uniform. Its trigger was indeed light.

Smiling again Adele said, "I didn't have to check myself, did I, Tovera? You'd have told me if something was wrong."

Tovera shrugged. "If you wanted me to, mistress," she said. "I don't imagine we'll attract much attention at this affair."

Adele adjusted the set of her own black ribbon. "No," she said, "I don't suppose we will. But Daniel loved his Uncle Stacey, and I wouldn't care to fail Daniel."

I'd rather die than fail Daniel... But she didn't say that aloud, and Tovera wouldn't have cared anyway.

Adele glanced at the footmen, waiting patiently as she'd known they would be, and then to the doorman. The house servants wore Mundy livery, but unlike Tovera they were employed by the bank which on paper leased the townhouse. That was one of the perquisites which had fallen to Adele by virtue of her friendship with Lt. Daniel Leary, RCN; the son of Corder Leary, Speaker Leary to his associates even though he'd given up the speakership of the Assembly years before.

"I believe we're ready, then," she said. The doorman bowed and swung open the front door of softly gleaming beewood cut on what had been the Mundy country estate of Chatsworth Major. With the four footmen ahead of her and Tovera trailing a polite pace behind, Adele stepped into the court.

Times indeed change. Speaker Leary had been primarily responsible for crushing the Three Circles Conspiracy--and Adele's family--into a smear of blood... but it was his influence acting through the agency of Daniel's elder sister Deirdre which had returned the townhouse to Adele's ownership when she decided she wanted it after all. Ligier Rolfe, the distant cousin who'd taken possession of the truncated estate after the Proscriptions, probably didn't to this day know what had happened to ownership.

The tram stop was at the mouth of the court, now quiet, which had acted as an assembly room when Lucius Mundy addressed his supporters from the fourth floor balcony of Chatsworth Minor. Political power had never meant anything to Adele; indeed, so long as she had enough to feed her and the freedom of a large archive in which to indulge her passion for knowledge in the abstract, she didn't care about money. Even so it pleased her to think of how furious her cousin's wife, Marina Casaubon Rolfe, must have been when she was evicted from a house to which the mere wealth of her merchant family would never have entitled her.

Tovera must have noticed her expression. "Mistress?" she asked mildly.

"Do you remember Mistress Rolfe?" Adele said.

"Yes," Tovera said. "A fat worm."

"I was recalling," Adele explained, "that she saw fit to insult a Mundy of Chatsworth."

Tovera didn't comment. Perhaps she smiled.

Servants lounging at the entrances of other houses fronting on the court rose and doffed their caps, standing with their heads bowed as Adele passed by. In Lucius Mundy's day, all these houses had been owned by supporters of the People's Party. They'd suffered accordingly, but those who bought the properties in the aftermath of the Proscriptions were generally social climbers like Marina Rolfe. To them Adele's return gave the neighborhood the cachet of a real aristocrat's presence; they'd made very sure that their servants were properly obsequious.

Adele couldn't imagine what her neighbors made of the fact that Mundy of Chatsworth was a naval officer; and a warrant officer besides, a mere technician instead of a dashing commissioned officer like her tenant, Daniel Leary. Aristocrats were allowed to be eccentric, of course.

"Mistress?" Tovera said again.

"Am I eccentric, Tovera?" Adele asked, glancing over her shoulder.

"I wouldn't know, mistress," Tovera said. "You'd have to ask someone who understands what 'normal' means."

Adele grimaced. "I'm sorry, Tovera," she said. "It's not something I should joke about."

As Adele and her entourage approached the stop, an east-bound tram pulled onto the siding. Another monorail car clattered past on the main line, heading west toward the great roundabout in the center of Xenos. By law only the Militia, the national police, could own aircars within the municipal limits of the capital; the likelihood that a touchy rival aristocrat would shoot down a private aircar passing overhead made the law more effective than merely legal sanctions could have done.

Many of the great houses had their own tramcars which teams of servants set on the rail when their master or mistress chose to go out. Adele had a respectable nest egg in the form of prize money gathered while under the command of Lt. Leary, but she couldn't

have afforded such an establishment even if she'd seen any use for it.

She'd gotten used to taking care of herself; she preferred it that way now. She had Tovera, of course, but it was easy to forget that Tovera was human.

A footman ran ahead to engage the tram that'd just stopped, saving Adele the delay before another car arrived in answer to the call button in the kiosk. At this time of day that might be as much as half an hour. The funeral was being held at a chapel near Harbor Three, the great naval base on the northern outskirts of Xenos. Adele had allowed enough time--of course--but she preferred to be a trifle early than to miss the start of the rites because of a run of bad luck.

Adele Mundy had seen a great deal of luck in her 32 years. Quite a lot of it had been bad.

The man who got off the tram wore a hard-used, one might almost say ragged, RCN 2nd class uniform, gray with black piping. It was the minimum standard of dress required for off-duty officers in public, though given its condition--there were oil stains on the left cuff and a mended tear on the right pants leg--the powers that be in the Navy Office might have been better served had the fellow donned clean fatigues instead.

The recent armistice between Cinnabar and the Alliance of Free Stars had led to the decommissioning of many ships and the consequent relegation of officers to half-pay status. For those who didn't have private means, half-pay was a sentence of destitution. This was obviously an unfortunate who couldn't afford to maintain his wardrobe--

"That's Lt. Mon," Tovera murmured in her ear.

"*Good God, it is,*" Adele blurted under her breath. She'd unconsciously averted her eyes in embarrassment; poor herself for most of her adult life, she had no desire to wallow in the poverty of others.

Such concerns didn't touch Tovera any more than love or hate did. The man coming toward them was a potential enemy--everyone was a potential enemy to Tovera--so she'd looked carefully and thus recognized Daniel's first lieutenant.

"Good afternoon, Mon!" Adele called, stepping through the line of footmen who'd deliberately placed themselves between her and the disreputable-looking stranger. "What are you doing here? Have you completed the *Princess Cecile's* repairs already?"

"Mundy?" said Lt. Mon. "Thank God I found you. Is Captain Leary here as well? I need to see him soonest. I *must* see him!"

Mon was a dark, close-coupled, morose officer in his early thirties. His technical skills were above the high average of RCN officers, and his doggedness made up for his lack of brilliance. Mon had neither family wealth nor the interest of senior officers to aid him, so his advancement in the service had been embitteringly slow.

Adele respected Mon but she didn't particularly like him. She doubted that many people regarded him as a friend.

Mon's saving grace was the way he'd reacted when Daniel Leary gave him his first taste of honor and prize money. There were officers--many officers--who'd have been envious of the lucky younger superior who swept from success to success while they plodded in his wake. Mon by contrast had shown only gratitude and utter loyalty.

"Daniel's at the Stanislas Chapel," Adele said. "Commander Bergen died, and Daniel's in charge of the arrangements. We're headed there now, but, ah..."

The tramcar began to chime in mindless irritation at being held at the stop. Adele glanced at the vehicle but held her tongue; her frustration was with the situation, not one

more noise in a city that was full of them.

Mon glanced down at his uniform. "Oh, this?" he said, flicking the stained cuff. "Oh, that's all right. I've got my Whites in storage at Fastinelli's. I'll pick them up and go straight to the chapel--it's only a stop or two away from Stanislas."

He started back into the tram; the footman holding it in place stepped across the doorway to block him. "No, no, that's all right Morris!" Adele said. "My colleague Lt. Mon and I will travel together to the chapel. He'll change when he gets there."

They all boarded, the footmen first to clear space for their mistress--though the only others in the car were a disconsolate couple wearing shapeless blue robes. They cowered at the far end. Xenos was the capital not only of Cinnabar but of the empire which Cinnabar ruled. The city drew tourists, workers, and beggars from more worlds than even an information specialist like Adele Mundy could determine without checking the handheld data unit in a discrete thigh pocket on all of her uniforms, even these Dress Whites.

Adele smiled wryly. She'd be less uncomfortable stark naked but holding her data unit than fully clothed without the unit. Yes, she supposed she was eccentric....

The monorail whined away from the stop, then jolted onto the main line. They'd switch to a northbound line three stops on instead of going west to the main transfer point at the Pentacrest.

She wondered if the foreign couple had a real destination or if they were simply riding the cars for want of other occupation. They didn't look the sort to bury themselves in study as Adele Mundy had done when she was a lonely orphan in a foreign land.

"Ah, Mon?" she said, voicing another awkward topic that thought of poverty had brought to mind. Fastinelli's was the large-volume naval clothier's located near Harbor Three. Strictly speaking the firm didn't have a storage facility, but it did loan money against items of uniform which were surplus to the requirements of temporarily embarrassed officers. "Since you've just landed and won't have collected your pay yet, can I offer you a small loan for your storage fees?"

"What?" said Mon, obviously surprised. Whatever he was furrowing his brows over, it didn't seem to involve settling with the pawnbroker at the end of the tram ride. "Oh. Oh. Thank you, Mundy, quite decent of you, but I'm all right. Count Klimov gave me a drawing account to arrange stores."

Adele's eyes narrowed minusculely. "You did just land, didn't you, then?" she said, knowing that her tone was thin with a justified hint of displeasure. The lieutenant was obviously concerned about something, but that didn't justify what by now amounted to rudeness in ignoring her initial polite question. "You brought the *Princess Cecile* back to Cinnabar, that is?"

Mon stiffened, then scrunched his face with embarrassment. "Yes, mistress," he said. "Your pardon, please, for being distracted. Yes, we completed repairs to the *Princess Cecile* four weeks back. I brought her directly from Strymon in accordance to the orders that reached me while she was still in dry-dock. We landed at Harbor One a few hours ago, and I came to see Lt. Leary as soon as I'd rendered my accounts to the harbormaster."

"Harbor One?" said Adele, puzzled at mention of the lake northwest of Xenos where the first human colony ship landed. Early in Cinnabar's history Harbor One had sufficed for both her commercial and naval traffic, but those days were long past.

Commercial transport had shifted to Harbor Two on the coast a hundred and twenty miles from the capital, while the RCN had built the vast artificial basin of Harbor Three for its operations at the close of the First Alliance War seventy-five years before.

"Why yes, mistress," Mon said. "The *Princess Cecile* is being sold out of service. I assumed that you--that Lt. Leary, at least--had been informed of that?"

"No," Adele said. "Daniel doesn't know that. I'm quite sure he'd have said something."

She sat back on the tram's bench, staring in the direction of the scratched windows while her mind grappled with what Mon had said. She felt the same disbelieving emptiness as she had when she learned that her family had died during the Proscriptions.

The words were simple, the concept quite understandable. The *Princess Cecile* was a foreign-built corvette, badly damaged in battle off Tanais in the Strymon system. You could never trust a ship after structural repairs, and there were many conservative RCN officers who didn't believe you could really trust a hull built on Kostroma in the first place. Now that Cinnabar and the Alliance were at peace, it made better sense to dispose of the *Princess Cecile* rather than bear the expense of maintaining her in ordinary.

Oh, yes, Adele could understand the reasoning. The analytical portion of her mind also understood why the heads of the Mundy family and their associates were displayed on Speaker's Rock when their conspiracy came unravelled.

But in both cases, Adele's stomach dropped into a frozen limbo while her mind spun pointlessly around the words and their implications.

The *Princess Cecile* was simply a small warship. Adele had first seen her less than a year ago, when she was a Kostroman corvette overflying a banal national parade. The *Sissie* was cramped and uncomfortable even at the best of occasions, and much of the time Adele had spent aboard her had involved danger and discomfort well beyond anything she'd previously experienced in a life with more than its share of squalid poverty.

And yet....

A year ago Adele Mundy had been a lonely orphan eking out an exile's existence in a third-rate court whose ruler affected to be an intellectual. Her title was Court Librarian, but her duties were those of a performing seal. Now she had her nation and even her childhood home back. She had the whole RCN for a family, and in Daniel Leary she had a friend who would stand with her to death.

None of these things were the *Princess Cecile*; but they had all come about through the *Princess Cecile*.

"Mundy?" Lt. Mon said in a worried tone. "Are you all right?"

Adele opened her eyes--she didn't recall having closed them--and gave Mon a crisp smile. "Yes indeed, Mon," she said. "A little sad, perhaps, but I'm on my way to a funeral, after all."

Mon nodded solemnly, looking out at the six- to eight-story buildings along the tram route. The top floors were luxury suites with roof gardens; the ground level was given over to shops, often with the owners' apartments on the floor above. In between lived ordinary people, bureaucrats and lieutenants with families larger than their incomes; librarians and mechanics and off-planet beggars jammed a dozen to a room. Lived and in their times died, because everything died.

Rest in peace, Princess Cecile. You too were a friend.

"Retired Rear Admiral Aussarenes and wife," said the buzzy whisper in Daniel Leary's left ear. A member of the staff of Williams and Son, Undertakers, sat in the back of a discrete van parked across from the Stanislas Chapel. She checked everyone in the receiving line against a database and passing along the information over a radio link. "*He commanded the Bourgiba when your uncle was its third lieutenant.*"

Not its third lieutenant, Daniel corrected mentally. Her *third lieutenant*. A ship was female, even when she was a cranky heavy cruiser with a penchant for blowing her High Drive motors--as Daniel remembered well from the stories Uncle Stacey and his cronies told in the office of the repair yard while his sister's young son listened agog. Williams and Son specialized in society funerals, but the RCN was a very specialized society.

"Good morning, Admiral Aussarenes," he said aloud. "Uncle Stacey would've been honored to know that you and your good lady have come to pay your respects. May I present you with a ring in remembrance of the occasion?"

He offered the velvet-covered tray. The bezel of each silver ring was a grinning skull surrounded by a banner reading COMMANDER STACEY HARMSWORTH BERGEN, RCN.

Aussarenes took a ring and tried it for size on the little finger of his left hand. He walked stiffly, apparently as the result of back trouble. "I don't need a ring to remember Lt. Bergen," he said in a rasping, belligerent voice. "A damned troublesome officer, I don't mind telling you. Apt as not to be up on a mast truck when he was supposed to be on the bridge!"

"Darling," his wife muttered in the tone of exasperated familiarity. "*Not here.*"

"Well, he was!" the admiral snapped. He looked up and met Daniel's eyes. "But he was the best astrogator I ever knew. When Bergen conned us, even the *Bitchgiba* could show her legs to a well-manned battleship if the course was long enough."

"Thank you, Admiral," Daniel said with a broad smile. "My uncle knew his limitations, but he appreciated praise when he was due it."

"Aye," said Aussarenes as Lady Aussarenes surreptitiously tugged his arm. "I hear you learned astrogation from him, boy. That's well and good, but mind that you stand your watches too!"

They passed into the chapel. Daniel continued to smile as he offered thanks and a remembrance ring to the next person in the receiving line, a man whose firm supplied antennas and yards to Bergen and Company. Perhaps a smile wasn't the proper expression for a funeral, but it was more natural to Daniel's ruddy face than a solemn frown.

Besides, the turn-out for the event was remarkable both for the number and the rank of the attendees. Commander Stacey Bergen was the greatest pathfinder and explorer in Cinnabar history. He hadn't gotten the recognition he deserved during his life, but the splendor of his funeral made up for that--at least for his nephew.

"Senator Pakenham and her husband, Lord William Pakenham," Daniel's earpiece whispered. Daniel wouldn't have recognized the hatchet-faced woman with a rotund, very subdued man in tow, but he recognized her name as that of the chair of the Senate's committee on external relations. Pakenham wouldn't have known Uncle Stacey

from Noah's bosun, but she was here paying her respects in company with quite a number of the Republic's other top political figures--because they wanted to please Corder Leary.

Speaker Leary hadn't attended the funeral of a man he'd always treated as a poor relation--which Uncle Stacey was, truthfully enough, for all that their partnership Bergen and Associates ran at a profit. Perhaps he was avoiding the awkwardness of meeting the son who hadn't spoken to him in the seven years since their violent argument ended with Daniel enlisting as a midshipman in the RCN. Nevertheless he'd used his influence to add luster to the funeral of the brother-in-law he'd despised in life; and for that Daniel would thank him if they chanced ever to meet again.

"*Captain-of-Space Oliver Semmes*," said the undertaker's man over the radio link. "*Naval aide to Legislator Jarre's delegation*."

For a moment Daniel's mind failed to grasp the implications of the unfamiliar rank and the green-and-gold uniform of the trim little man bowing to him. His first thought was: *Some wealthy landowner wearing the comic-opera uniform of the company of fencibles he commanded by virtue of his rank in his borough.*

No, not comic at all: this was the dress uniform of the Fleet of the Alliance of Free Stars. Daniel didn't know his enemies' honors well enough to identify most of the medals on Semmes' tunic, but he recognized the lavalier dangling from a white and silver ribbon as the Cross of Freedom, which was neither a trivial award nor a political one.

"Captain Semmes, it's a pleasure to see a distinguished member of your service," Daniel said. "Commander Bergen would have been deeply cognizant of the honor."

He cleared his throat while his mind groped for the correct words. It wasn't a situation he'd envisaged dealing with. Uncle Stacey had indeed viewed all Mankind as a single family striving together to rediscover and populate the universe... but that wasn't the official position of the RCN, nor the personal opinion of Lt. Daniel Leary; and it *certainly* wasn't the viewpoint of Guarantor Porra, who ruled the so-called Alliance of Free Stars with an iron fist and a security apparatus of legendary brutality.

"Ah... may I offer you a ring in remembrance of Commander Bergen?"

Semmes picked up a ring between thumb and forefinger, moving with the precise delicacy of an automaton. "I was privileged to meet your uncle once, Lieutenant," he said, cocking his head sideways to see how Daniel took the revelation. "On Alicia that was. My brother and I were aides to Frigate-Captain Lorenz, and Commander Bergen was surveying routes from Cinnabar to the Commonwealth."

"Ah!" said Daniel. Lorenz was a man whose reputation had spread well beyond the Alliance, a swashbuckling officer as renowned for feats of exploration as he was notorious for greed and utter amorality whenever he wasn't under the direct eye of his superiors. "Yes, that would have been almost thirty standard years ago, would it not?"

"Twenty-seven," Semmes agreed with a nod, fitting the ring he'd chosen onto his finger and holding it out to examine it critically. "We were most impressed by Commander Bergen's skill--as an astrogator."

He met Daniel's eyes squarely. "He was not a fighting officer, though, was he?" Semmes went on. Daniel might have been imagining the sneer beneath the bland assessment. "Your uncle?"

Daniel nodded crisply. "No sir, my uncle was *not* much of a fighter," he said. "Fortunately, the RCN has never lacked for officers to supply that particular deficiency."

He gestured the Alliance officer on into the chapel; not quite a dismissal, but an unmistakable hint. "Perhaps we'll meet again, Captain Semmes," he added.

"He's the sort who'd try to swim off with fifty feet of log chain back in Bantry," Hogg muttered into Daniel's ear from behind. "Thinking about it, something along those lines might happen right here in Xenos, young master. Eh?"

The voice from Williams and Son was identifying the next man in line as the recording secretary to the Senate committee on finance--quite an important fellow as Daniel well knew. Daniel had other business that was more important yet.

"Hogg," he said, turning to fix his servant with a baleful eye, "there'll be none of that, even in jest! An officer of the RCN cannot--and I will not--have a servant who acts like a street thug!"

"Begging your pardon, master," said Hogg. He sounded at least vaguely contrite, for all that he met Daniel's glare with level eyes. "It shan't happen again, I'm sure. I was a might put out by the fellow's disrespect for Master Stacey, is all."

Daniel nodded, forced up the corner of his lips in a smile, and returned to the receiving line. "A pleasure to see you, Major Hattersly," he said. The recording secretary had a commission in the Trained Bands. "May I offer you a ring in remembrance of Commander Bergen?"

The trouble in dealing with Hogg was that he wasn't so much of a servant as the tough older brother who'd raised Daniel in the country while Corder Leary busied himself with money and politics in Xenos. Daniel had a countryman's instinctive love for Bantry, the family estate. Money was useful only to spend, generally on friends, and as for politics--well, young Daniel had spent days watching the colony of rock covies on the banks of Tule Creek. So far as he was concerned, they were not only far more interesting than his father's associates, they were on average a good deal smarter.

Corder Leary didn't think often about his son. Deirdre, the elder of his two children, was stamped from the mold of her father and absorbed his tutelage with a flair of her own. Daniel's mother was a saint--everybody agreed that, even her husband, which was perhaps the reason he only saw her on the few times a year when he was in Bantry for other business. But a saint doesn't have the temperament or the skills to handle a very active, very *male*, child... and Hogg had both in abundance.

Mistress Leary would've been horrified to learn not only what Hogg had taught the boy but even more by the way Hogg disciplined him. She never did learn, however, because one of the things Daniel learned from Hogg was how to be a man and not go blubbering to his mommy when he got clouted for doing something stupid.

Daniel didn't want to face the task of covering for a retainer who'd misguidedly scragged a high representative of a power with whom Cinnabar was for the moment at peace. He'd deal with the situation if it arose, though, because he was a Leary and understood his duties to his retainers... another thing he'd learned from Hogg.

Besides, Daniel hadn't been any happier than Hogg was to hear the implied sneer at Uncle Daniel's lack of credentials as a warrior. Particularly since the gibe was justified.

"*Admiral and Lady Anston*," said Daniel's earpiece. "*He's head of the Navy Board, but he has no connection with Commander Bergen that I can find.*"

Great God almighty! Daniel thought. He had a momentary fear that he'd blurted that aloud in the face of the head of the RCN--though Anston had heard worse and said worse in his time, there was no doubt about that.

He'd been a fighting admiral and a lucky admiral; the two in combination had made him extremely wealthy. Instead of retiring to spend the rest of his life indulging whatever whim struck his fancy--porcelain, politics, or pubescent girls--Anston had for the past eighteen years turned his very considerable talents to the organization and preservation of the Republic of Cinnabar Navy.

As head of the Navy Board he kept the RCN out of politics and kept politicians of every stripe out of the RCN. Everybody knew that naval contracts were awarded to the suppliers who best benefited the RCN and that ships and commands were allocated according to the needs and resources of the Republic--as determined by the head of Navy Board.

Anston was a florid man in his mid sixties. He ate and drank with the same enthusiasm he had fifty years earlier when he was a midshipman running up and down the rigging of his training battleship. Some day he'd die. That would be a worse blow to the RCN and the Republic than anything the Alliance had managed in the past century of off-and-on warfare.

But Anston was alive now, the most important man in the RCN and one of the most important in all Cinnabar; and he'd come to Commander Bergen's funeral.

"Good morning, Admiral Anston," Daniel said. An analytical part of his mind watched the proceedings dispassionately. It noted that Daniel's voice was pleasant and well modulated, and it marvelled at the fact. "Uncle Stacey is greatly honored to see you here."

"Is he?" said Anston, grinning grimly at Daniel--one spacer talking to another. "Well, I wouldn't know about that, boy; I leave those questions to the priests. I do know that I used the route Lt. Bergen charted through the Straw Pile to reach the fullerene convoy from the Webster Stars before it met its Alliance escort. The profits paid the RCN's budget for a year and didn't do me personally so badly either, eh, Maggie?"

He beamed at his wife, as near a double to him as their different sexes would allow. Her pants suit was covered with lace and ruffles--but all of them black, so from any distance she was merely a pudgy older woman instead of the clown she'd have looked in contrasting colors. "Josh, don't call me Maggie in public!" she said in a furious whisper.

Anston clapped her on the buttock. Lady Anston affected not to notice, but the admiral's aide--a lieutenant commander of aristocratic bearing--wincd in social agony.

"What was Semmes saying to you?" the admiral demanded in a lowered voice. "He came calling at my office--for courtesy, he said. I was out and I'll damned well be out any other time he comes by!"

"Nothing that matters, your lordship," Daniel said. Behind him, Hogg grunted agreement with the admiral's comments. "He met Uncle Stacey on Alicia, when the Alliance expedition under Lorenz arrived just after the government had signed a treaty of friendship with the Republic."

"I guess he wouldn't forget that," Anston said with an approving guffaw. "They had no idea we were operating within ten days Transit of there--and we wouldn't have been except for your uncle's nose for a route where nobody else could see one."

"Josh, we're holding up the line," Lady Anston said, glaring at Daniel as though he and her husband were co-conspirators in a plot to embarrass her.

"Well, Commander Bergen isn't complaining, is he?" the admiral said in a testy

voice. Then to Daniel he continued, "Listen, Lieutenant. The Senate doesn't want a war with the Alliance so it pretends there won't be one. I don't want a war either, but I know sure as the sun rises that war's coming. Coming whenever Guarantor Porra decides it's in his interest, and that won't be long. You needn't worry about being put on half pay--you're the sort of young officer the RCN needs even in peacetime. And when it's war, you'll have a command that'll raise you up or use you up, depending on the sort of grit you show. On my oath!"

The admiral passed on into the church, guided to the front by one of the corps of ushers provided by Willams and Son. The rhythms of his wife's harangue were intelligible even though the words themselves were not.

"*A navy warrant officer*," said the undertaker's prompter. Then, testily, "*She should have been directed to the gallery via the back stairs!*"

"Hello, Adele," Daniel said, gripping Mundy's right hand with his and clasping his left over it. "By God, I'm glad you could see this! They've turned out for Uncle Stacey, by *God* they have! He'd be so proud to see this!"

Adele nodded with her usual neutral expression. Tovera, as pale as something poisonous from under a rock, stood just behind and to the side of her mistress. Daniel had a fleeting vision of the scene when an undertaker's functionary tried to shunt Adele to the gallery as a person of no account; he grinned broadly.

"Daniel," Adele said, "Lt. Mon's back with the *Princess Cecile* and seems in a desperate rush to see you. He'll be here for the service as soon as he changes into his dress uniform."

"Ah?" Daniel said, letting his left hand drop to his side. He met Adele's gaze calmly. She didn't show emotion as a general rule, but they were good enough friends that he could see when the emotion was present regardless. "I'll be glad to see him, of course--but what's wrong?"

Adele cleared her throat. "He says the *Sissie* is to be sold as excess to RCN requirements," she said. "I gather it will happen very soon. In a matter of days."

"Ah," Daniel said, nodding his understanding. "They must have a buyer, then. I regret the matter, though of course I understand the advantages to the Republic."

"Of course," Adele agreed. "I'll see you after the service, then. Back at the house, I suppose?"

Daniel nodded, though he wasn't really listening. All he could think of for the moment was the light of the firmament blazing about him as he stood on the deck of his first command--the RCS *Princess Cecile*.

"Come along, mistress," Hogg said. "I'll sit you down in front."

"I *hardly* think--" said the chief usher, a severe figure imbued with a mincing, sexless aura of disapproval.

"That's right, boyo," Hogg snapped, "you hardly do. Put a sock in it while I take the master's friend down t' the best seat in the house!"

Hogg and Mundy disappeared into the nave of the chapel; the chief usher fulminated at an underling.

"Good morning, Captain Churchill," Daniel said to the next in line, an old man wobbling in the grip of a worried younger relative. Churchill had been a midshipman with Uncle Stacey.

The fabric of the universe distorting around the gleaming prow of the Princess

Cecile, *under the command of Lt. Daniel Leary....*

CHAPTER 2

Between wheezes for breath, the undertaker snarled at the troupe of actors wearing death masks of Stacey Bergen's famous ancestors in the rear yard of the chapel. Adele considered taking out her data unit to determine whether the large, elderly man--tall but definitely overweight besides--was Master Williams proper or the Son. The urge was wholly irrational so she suppressed it, but it would've taken her mind off the past and the future; and off death, at least for the moment, which is what it seemed to Adele that the past and future always came down to.

She smiled. She knew other people viewed life differently, though she'd always suspected that they hadn't analyzed the subject as rigorously as she had.

The undertaker had finally sorted the actors to his satisfaction. The clowns in the initial group started off down the boulevard singing, "*Stacey came from the land where they understand...*"

The females wore caricatures of RCN uniforms and the males were in grotesque drag. Mind, some of the prostitutes Adele had seen plying their trade successfully outside Harbor Three were scarcely less unattractive. The RCN had high standards in many respects, but she'd come to the conclusion it was any port in a storm when it came to sexual relief after a long voyage.

"... *what it means to fornicate!*" sang the clowns to the music of the flutes some of their members played.

The actor playing Commander Bergen was next in the procession, walking ahead of the discretely motorized bier which a member of the undertaker's staff guided. Torchbearers, statuesque women in flowing garments, flanked him.

Adele had listened without comment to the discussions Daniel and the widow held as to what age the actor was to portray his uncle. They'd finally decided on the man in his prime forty years ago when he'd just returned from the first of his long exploring voyages in the *Beacon*. The actor wore mottled gray fatigues with senior lieutenant's pips on his collar; and he walked with a slight limp, miming the result of a fall on a heavy-gravity planet and the spinal injuries which eventually left Stacey confined to a wheelchair.

"*Where even the dead sleep two in a bed...*," sang the clowns. The masked 'ancestors' followed them out of the courtyard in pairs, moving at a stately walk while the clowns capered and mugged for the spectators lining both sides of the street to the crematorium. A funeral of this size was not only entertainment for the poor, it was news for all Xenos.

The Bergens were an old but not particularly distinguished house; Stacey, who had retired from the RCN as a commander, was typical of his family. Today his lineage had been improved by leading military and political figures of the past. The families involved would never have lent the death masks without pressure that could only have come from Corder Leary.

Adele'd never met Daniel's father and hoped never to meet him; that would save her the decision as to whether or not to shoot the man responsible for her parents' death. But no one had ever accused Speaker Leary of doing things halfway.

"... *and the babies masturbate!*" sang the clowns.

"Mistress Mundy?" murmured a voice in her ear; one of the undertaker's functionaries. "Come, please. The living family is next."

Adele followed the little man through the crowd gathered inside the courtyard gate. He was polite as befit anyone dealing with people of the rank of those waiting, but he squeezed a passage for her with the authority of a much bigger fellow indeed.

"You and Mistress Leary will follow Lt. Leary with the widow," the fellow said, depositing Adele, frowning in doubt, beside Deirdre Leary. Daniel's elder sister wore a tailored black suit of natural fabrics. The rosette on her beret was cream-and-rose, the Bergen colors.

"Ah, Deirdre," Adele said. "Yes, of course you'd be here."

Deirdre Leary had requested when she met Adele that they deal with one another by first names. Referring to their relationship as informal would've been stretching the word beyond its proper meaning, though. Adele respected the other woman, but she felt the two of them had as little in common as they did with the chlorine-breathing race of Charax IV. She presumed that Deirdre reciprocated her feelings.

Adele was irritated with herself for not having expected Daniel's sister to be at the funeral. Speaker Leary's two children were, after all, the deceased's closest relatives by blood. And for that matter, Adele had almost nothing in common with Daniel either--on paper.

The last of the actors passed through the gate. The undertaker spoke to Daniel, making shooing motions with rather less ceremony than Adele thought was due the man who was paying for this affair. Supporting the widow, a countrywoman who'd cooked and kept house for the retired commander and who had never said a word in Adele's hearing, Daniel stepped into the street.

Adele's eyes narrowed. How much *was* this costing, anyway? She had a scholar's disregard for money, but Daniel's attitude was more that of a drunken spacer... which of course he was, often enough. Lt. Leary'd been a lucky commander, but even the captain's share of prize money didn't overwhelm the needs of a 23-year-old officer who demonstrated the same enthusiasm for living as he did for taking his command into the heart of the enemy's fire.

The undertaker turned to Adele and her companion. His mouth, open to snap a brusque order, closed abruptly. He bowed low to Deirdre.

Adele started forward, matching her pace to Daniel and the widow. It struck her for the first time that the bill--or at least the whole bill, knowing both that Daniel was stiff-necked and that he had very little conception of what things really cost--might not be going to the nephew after all. She looked at Deirdre but said nothing; there was really nothing to say, after all.

The crowd in the street had a carnival atmosphere quite beyond the traditional life-affirming bawdy of the clowns in the lead. Adele heard spectators identifying members of the procession, herself included, to their children and companions. She couldn't imagine how they were able to do that until she heard a hawker in the near distance call, "Get your programs! Every famous personage, living or departed, listed here with their biographies!"

Deirdre glanced over with a dry smile. "Surprised?" she asked.

"Gratified, rather," Adele said. "I don't think there's anything that could have

made Daniel happier. Since he got his first command, at any rate. You arranged it, I presume?"

"I was acting on instructions," said Deirdre. "My principal will be pleased that you think matters are going well."

Deirdre's principal would be her father--and Daniel's.

The three-block avenue from the Stanislas Chapel to the crematorium was through public land which had been a floodplain before the Market River was first channelized, then covered. On a normal day there'd have been people doing outdoor gymnastics and running on the tracks around both halves of the property. A maze of kiosks on the north side catered to shoppers of all varieties. The booths were dismantled every dusk, leaving commercial activities to prostitutes of both sexes. Since Harbor Three lay just the other side of the perimeter fence, trade in the hours of darkness was also brisk.

This morning everybody in sight had come to watch the funeral procession. She smiled wryly. Turning to Deirdre she said, talking over the crowd noise, "Commander Bergen actually deserves this pomp for having opened so many trade routes for the Republic... but his actions aren't the reason this is happening, are they?"

Deirdre shrugged. She was dark-haired and reasonably attractive in business clothing. If she'd put the effort into her looks that most women seemed to, she could look stunning. Adele doubted that Daniel's sister felt any need to bother. Money and power would bring her any men she wanted, and the likelihood was that Deirdre shared with her brother a complete disinterest in what the partner of a night chose to do the next morning.

Adele couldn't object. She herself wasn't interested in a partner at all.

"It depends what you mean by 'his actions'," Deirdre said, meeting Adele's eyes with a level gaze. "The fact that he was a good friend and teacher to Corder Leary's son certainly has something to do with it."

"Yes, I see," Adele said, nodding crisply.

"But since we're on the subject of business...", Deirdre said. "Do you know what my brother intends to do as heir to Commander Bergen's share of the shipyard? The Republic's present state of peace with her neighbors will limit the opportunities open to a young naval officer, I should think?"

Adele faced front, her expression cold. Her first reaction was shocked amazement; then the humor of it struck her and she chuckled aloud. They *had* been talking business, as Deirdre viewed the world, after all.

Everything could be refined down to business if you looked at it the right way. The cost of the most elaborate funeral in a decade was on one side of the ledger; Adele didn't know, couldn't *guess*, what Deirdre put in the other pan of the balance, but she knew there had to be something.

"I haven't discussed the future with Daniel," she said, wondering if the other woman would find her smile insulting. It wasn't meant to be; not entirely, at least. "He's been quite busy with funeral preparations, of course. Based on what he's said to me in the past, I don't imagine that he's interested in becoming a Cinnabar businessman, however."

In all truth, Adele couldn't imagine her friend as anything except an RCN officer. Perhaps she was unduly influenced by the fact she'd only known Daniel for a year in which naval duties had absorbed him... but the uniform fit him perfectly. If anyone could be said to belong to the Republic of Cinnabar Navy in war or peace, it was Lt. Daniel

Leary.

Her smile quirked wryly. Perhaps the same was true of Adele Mundy, who'd found a family which respected her talents and which was willing to use her just as hard as it used her friend Daniel.

"A shipyard can't simply be left to the workmen to run," Deirdre said. Her voice was thinner than it had been a moment before. Nobody likes to have her nose rubbed in the fact that someone else sees no value in what she holds dear; for all that Deirdre must have known before she raised the subject that Adele had no more interest in business than Daniel did. "Unless there's a suitable manager in place very shortly, the silent partner will demand that Bergen and Associates be sold up. I can understand my brother having other priorities--"

She probably couldn't understand, any more than Daniel could have understood Deirdre's preoccupation with wealth and political power; but it was the polite thing to say.

"--but he's trustee for Uncle Stacey's widow during her life. That will surely affect his decision?"

The crematorium was a low, cast-concrete building, modeled on a pre-Hiatus temple; there were Corinthian pilasters across the front. The actor dressed as the deceased took his place to one side of the square bronze door flanked by the torch bearers, while the attendant locked the bier against the opening.

The coffin was closed; the last six months had ravaged Stacey beyond what his nephew was willing to display to the world. A touch of a button would roll it through the door into the gas flames.

The clowns had split to either side of the crematorium and waited behind it, still wearing their costumes but talking among themselves in low voices. Their parts were played, but their dressing rooms were trailers behind the chapel, inaccessible until the crowd dispersed.

The troupe of ancestors seated themselves on the triple semicircle of folding chairs, each with a pole holding a card with the name of the character the actor represented. An usher guided Daniel and the widowed Mistress Bergen to their place on the left behind the actors; another usher gestured Adele to Deirdre to the right.

Adele looked across the lines of age-blackened death masks to Daniel Leary, who beamed with pride and the joy of life. Beside and behind her, ushers were arraying the other mourners--admirals and cabinet ministers and merchant princes.

She looked at her companion. "Deirdre," she said, "your brother will fulfill his duties to the widow in the fashion that seems best to him. I can't guess what that will be; I'm not Daniel. But--"

She felt herself stiffen to even greater rigidity than usual, and her voice honed itself to a sharp edge.

"--I would be very surprised if it crossed his mind that he should take up the partnership that his father used to degrade Uncle Stacey. And if Daniel did consider that, I would be merely one of his many friends to tell him that the notion was absurd. Am I sufficiently clear?"

Music, an instrumental version of a martial hymn, boomed from speakers beneath the front corners of the crematorium. The coffin began to rumble forward.

"Perfectly clear," Deirdre said. "I'll report your thoughts to my principal."

The bronze door sprang upward and shut behind the coffin; an instant later, Adele felt the throb of the concealed gas flames. Deirdre leaned closer to continue in Adele's ear, "For what it's worth... Speaker Leary doesn't respect very many people. I believe that he'll be more pleased than not that his son is one of those few."

Attendants had opened side gates so that spectators could disperse through the park as well as going up the avenue to the chapel the way they'd come. Daniel took off his saucer hat and mopped his face and brow with a handkerchief. He could barely see for sweat and the emotions that'd been surging through him during the morning.

"It went well, Uncle Stacey," he muttered under his breath. By God it had! All Cinnabar had turned out to cheer the Republic's greatest explorer off on his final voyage.

Maryam Bergen had left on the arm of Bergen and Associates' shop foreman, an old shipmate of her husband's and, not coincidentally, her brother. A mere workman couldn't be part of the official mourning, of course, but the foreman and most of the other yard employees had been given places just outside the fence where they had an unrivaled view.

"Here you go, master," Hogg muttered, offering Daniel a silver half-pint flask. He'd already unscrewed the jigger measure that covered the stopper. He eyed the dispersing crowd, wearing an expression of the same satisfaction that Daniel felt.

"What is it?" Daniel said as he plucked out the cork.

"It's wet and you need it," Hogg said. "Just drink."

Not precisely what a gentleman's gentleman would have said, but Daniel was a *country* gentleman which was a very different thing from the citified version. He took a swig of what might have been cherry brandy and certainly was strong enough to fuel an engine.

The actors playing Stacey's ancestors had joined the clowns behind the crematorium. They'd handed the deathmasks to footmen from the families which'd provided them and were removing their costumes; attendants folded the chairs on which they'd been sitting.

The man who'd impersonated Stacey was talking to the undertaker. He was the contractor as well as the principal performer, for the undertaker handed him a purse. He weighed it in his hand and bowed.

Adele stood alone just beyond the ranks of chairs. When she caught Daniel's eye she nodded, turned, and walked away. Tovera, who must've been watching from the other side of the fence during the ceremony, trailed her mistress closely.

Daniel smiled in appreciation. Adele wouldn't intrude, but she hadn't wanted to leave without saying goodbye.

"Lt. Leary?" said a voice at his elbow. Daniel turned abruptly and found the principal actor beside him. "My name is Shackleford, Enzo Shackleford. I trust our performance was to your taste?"

It was disconcerting to see the fellow still in uniform but without the mask and wig, for his wild white hair was utterly unlike anything a spacer would wear. In a cramped, weightless vessel, such strands would've drifted in all directions.

Daniel swallowed the swig of brandy that'd been in his mouth when the man startled him. Part of it went down the wrong pipe; he sprayed it onto the sleeve of his Dress Whites that he got over his mouth and nose in time.

Hogg muttered and snatched the kerchief from Daniel's cuff to mop at the liquor. It would've made better sense to sneeze on the actor's utility uniform....

Shackleford pretended his attention was fastened on matters of supernal interest on the horizon. "A most gratifying house, if I may say so, Lieutenant. A turn-out that would've done honor to the most respected admiral or statesman. I was pleased to be in charge of the performance."

"Your pardon, Master Shackleford," Daniel managed through spasms; the strong brandy burned like spattering thermite on the soft inner tissues of his nose. "Yes, yes, you did splendidly."

"I like to think that the Enzio Shackleford Company gives value far above our small additional increment of cost compared to just *any* self-styled thespians," Shackleford said with an airy gesture of his hand to indicate they both were true aristocrats. "Allow me to provide you with my card, sir."

He did so with a flourish that suggested he performed card tricks when nothing more lucrative offered itself.

"You may have occasion at any moment to require similar services," Shackleford continued. "How well it has been said, 'We know not the day and hour of our passing.' In your moment of grief, sir, do not fail to call on the first name in posthumous impersonations--the Enzio Shackleford Company!"

Daniel frowned, trying to imagine who else might die for whom he'd be responsible. Adele, perhaps? Though she was at no obvious risk unless catastrophe struck the *Princess Cecile*, in which case the vessel's commander was unlikely to be in a position to arrange the funeral.

Thought of the *Princess Cecile* lowered a gray curtain over Daniel's mind; he took a long, deliberate drink from the flask, drawing its contents far down. He'd been tense throughout the day, afraid that some mistake would turn the proceedings into a farce. He'd felt no sadness, though; this had been a celebration of Stacey's life and--as it turned out--a triumph. The flesh, frail even in life, was now ash; but the name of Commander Stacey Bergen was on the lips of everyone in Xenos.

Uncle Stacey's glorious send-off was past, and now present reality was intruding on the euphoria of the afternoon. Daniel had Admiral Anston's word that the Admiralty would find him a command; that counted for more than a signed and sealed commission from anybody else. The thought of the *Sissie* being gutted and turned into an intra-system tramp, though--that was troubling.

Gutted--or simply bought by a breaker's yard for her masts, electronics and drives. Though the boom in trade that came with peace should give all spaceworthy hulls enough value to spare the *Sissie* that final indignity for a few years further.

Daniel took another drink. When he lowered the flask empty, he saw Lt. Mon coming toward him against the grain of the departing crowd.

In general terms he was glad to see Mon, who'd been as satisfactory a first lieutenant as Daniel could imagine serving under him: competent, careful, and brave--though that went almost without saying in an RCN officer. No few of those who wore the uniform were pig stupid, but cowards were as rare as saints. Besides those professional virtues, Mon was loyal to Daniel beyond what could be expected of a human being.

On the other hand, if Mon was coming to moan about having to feed his large family on half-pay when the *Sissie* went out of commission, well--Daniel would

sympathize, but at another time. For now his grief was for the corvette herself.

"Sir!" Mon said, clasping Daniel's hand. "Thank God you're on Cinnabar. I had nightmares of you being off on an embassy to Kostroma or the Devil only knew where!"

Mon's dress uniform fit poorly--he'd lost weight since he last wore it, which might have five or more years in the past--and he hadn't taken time to update his medal ribbons. Daniel let a smile of satisfaction touch his lips: the citations Mon had won in the brief time he'd served under Lt. Leary would have made the cabbage patch on his tunic much more impressive.

Quite apart from the fit of his uniform, Mon looked dreadful. At the end of the brutal run to Sexburga, 17 days in the Matrix without a break, everybody aboard the *Princess Cecile* looked like they'd been dragged through a drainpipe... and even then, Mon had been in better shape than Daniel saw him now.

"I'm here, right enough," Daniel said with a note of deliberate caution, "but as you can imagine, Mon, I have a good deal on my plate right at the moment. Perhaps later...?"

"Sir," Mon said. His face screwed up in despair and frustration. "*Daniel*, for God's sake. I need help and I don't know where else to turn!"

"Ah," said Daniel, nodding in understanding. "Well, I hope I always have a few florins for an old shipmate."

He reached for the wallet that'd be attached to the equipment belt of the 2nd Class uniform he usually wore on the ground. His Whites used a cummerbund rather than a belt and had no provision for carrying money or anything else of practical value.

"Hogg?" he said, trying to hide his irritation in forgetting the situation. "Do you have ten--that is, twenty florins you can let me have until I'm back in my rooms?"

"Sir, it's not *money*...," Mon said. He straightened and looked around, suddenly a man again and an RCN officer. "Look, can we go somewhere and talk? This is...."

He shrugged; Daniel nodded agreement. Standing in the open among attendants sweeping up the debris of a funeral simply wasn't the way to discuss anything except the weather.

"Right," Daniel said. "The last time I looked there were bars just down the street. We'll find a booth and see how I can help you."

He gave Mon his arm and they started up the avenue, by now almost empty of mourners. Though there was no lack of bars this close to Harbor Three, they weren't the sort of places that an officer usually entered wearing his dress uniform.

Still, if Daniel kept his intake to only a few drinks--or anyway, a moderate amount--then he shouldn't have to replace his Whites because they were dirty; or they were bloody; or they'd been torn completely off his back in a brawl that'd started the Lord knew how. And if he did have to replace his uniform, well, an officer of the RCN was always ready to make sacrifices for his fellows.

CHAPTER 3

Buelow's, only three doors down from the Stanislas Chapel, catered to warrant officers looking for a place to have a drink rather than common spacers intending to get falling-down drunk as quickly and cheaply as possible. Daniel eased himself into a booth, realizing as he did so that it was the first time since dawn that he'd taken the weight off his feet.

The three-dimensional photographs on the walls were of landscapes rather than sexual acrobatics. Daniel couldn't identify any of the scenes, but the three-legged creature clinging to the face of a basalt cliff certainly wasn't native to Cinnabar. The dark, pitted wood of the bar came from off-planet also; Daniel noted with interest that its vascular tissue seemed to curl in helices around the bole, rising and sinking through the slab's planed surface like sections of a dolphin's track.

Hogg seated himself beside the cash register where he would unobtrusively take care of the charges; a woman in uniform, an engineer by her collar flashes, was drinking a boilermaker at the end of the bar. Other than them and the tapster who walked over to the booth, Daniel and Mon had the tavern to themselves.

Daniel glanced at the tapster and said, "So, Mon? I believe yours is whiskey and water?"

"No, no, Leary," Mon said, shaking his head violently. "Thanks, I mean, but I've sworn off for, for the time. I'll have--"

He looked at the solid, balding bartender and grimaced. "A shandy, I suppose," he said. "Yes, a shandy."

"And for me as well, sir," Daniel said brightly, wondering if Mon had gone out of his mind. Aloud he continued, "Well, Mon. What d'ye need to see me about?"

Mon set his hands firmly on the table with his palms down and the fingers spread, stared at them as he organized his thoughts, and then lifted his weary eyes to Daniel. "Look sir, it's like this," he said. "While the *Sissie* was rebuilding on Tanais, we got a message through the High Commissioner to the Strymon system that we were to bring her home to Harbor One for disposal. I guess you'd heard that?"

"Yes," Daniel said, "I had."

He didn't add that he'd heard it from Adele less than two hours ago. Strictly speaking nobody'd been required to tell him, since he'd turned over command of the *Princess Cecile* to his first lieutenant while she was in dock.

The fact that he hadn't heard a whisper about the sale out of service of the corvette he'd captured and commanded in actions that thrilled all Cinnabar, let alone the RCN, had to have been conscious concealment rather than mere oversight. Anston, or more likely the captain heading the Board of Materiel, must have thought that the famous Lt. Leary could raise enough of a public outcry to reverse the Board's reasoned decision.

And so he could've done; but he wouldn't have. The needs of the service came first with Daniel Leary, as they should do with every officer of the RCN.

"Well, you can imagine I wasn't happy about that," Mon said, stating the facts baldly as though the situation had no emotional weight for Daniel. "But then a couple nobles from Novy Sverdlovsk arrived with a letter of introduction from the High Commissioner. Count Klimov and wife Valentina, their names were, and they wanted passage to Cinnabar."

He shrugged. "No problem there, of course," he went on. "We weren't on a fighting cruise, and you'd drafted forty crewmen to the Strymon dispatch vessel you sailed home on. It was just a matter of the passengers providing a share of rations to the officer's mess--and I don't mind telling you, captain, that I've never had better rations anywhere in my life, on shipboard or land. They've got more money than God, the Klimovs do."

The tapster returned with the shandies, thumping them down on the table. "Thank

you, sir!" Daniel said, but the fellow turned with only a grunt and walked back behind the bar.

Daniel eyed the muddy brown fluid in his glass, a mixture of draft beer and ginger ale or whatever else the bar kept for a mixer. The tapster looked as though he were disgusted to've served something so debased. Daniel didn't blame him.

"Well, it turned out that the Count and his wife were coming to Cinnabar to hire a ship so they could tour the Galactic North," Mon said, raising his glass. "Rather than use a Novy Sverdlovsk crew and vessel, they wanted the best. Besides, they knew Cinnabar'd opened the shortest routes to the North. Your Uncle Stacey had."

He drank, made a sour face, and set the shandy down again. He started to speak but paused to wipe his lips with the back of his left hand.

"Touring the North?" Daniel said, pursing his lips in concentration as he stared at his glass. "You mean, visiting the Commonwealth of God? I suppose people from Novy Sverdlovsk might find it interesting, though I recall one of Stacey's old shipmates saying he'd seen pig sties he thought were prettier than Radiance, and the rest of the Commonwealth wasn't up to that standard."

"I don't think they care much about the capital," Mon said, rolling his palms upward. "The Count says he wants to do some hunting, and his wife studies people that never got back into space after the Hiatus. The relict societies, she calls them. You know, wogs with bones through their noses who'll cut out your heart and eat it because the Great God Goo tells them to. It's her life, I guess."

"Scholars, then," Daniel said. "I don't think the Commonwealth controls a tenth of the worlds that'd been settled in the North before the Hiatus, and 'control' is stretching it to describe the government anyway. The planets pretty much run their own business, and the Commonwealth fleet supports itself by extortion when it isn't straight piracy."

By a combination of treaty and threat the ships of Cinnabar and her allies were exempt from the abuses, at least in cases where there might be survivors to bring back word of what had happened. But all vessels trading into the Galactic North went armed, even though guns and missiles reduced their cargo capacity.

"Yeah, well, it's still a damned fool way to waste time and money," Mon said. "But they've got money, the Lord knows they have. And that's the rub, Leary. When they learned the *Sissie*'d be going on the block, they decided to buy her themselves for their tour. And they want me to captain her, at a lieutenant commander's salary!"

"Why Mon, that's wonderful news!" Daniel said, rising in his seat to reach over the table and grasp Mon's shoulder. "And they couldn't have a better man and ship for the job! Why, good God, man, you had me thinking there was something wrong!"

If the Klimovs could afford to crew the corvette, she was an ideal choice for a long voyage into a region which was unexplored where it wasn't actively hostile. The *Princess Cecile* was a fast, handy vessel. Though light for a warship in a major fleet, she was far more powerful than the pirates and Commonwealth naval units (where there was a difference) she'd meet in the North.

Mon would have to resign his commission, but under the circumstances the Admiralty would grant him a waiver so that he could rejoin at some future date at the same rank. All he'd lose was seniority on a day-for-day basis--and his half-pay, just under a quarter of what the Klimovs were offering for his services.

As for the *Sissie*--well, she wouldn't be a warship any longer, but she wouldn't be

a scow running bulk supplies to asteroid miners either. Good news for the ship, good news for her acting captain--and good news for Daniel Leary, two recent weights off his back!

"There *is* something wrong!" Mon said miserably. "Sir, what am I going to do for a crew? With the peace treaty signed, all the trading houses will be hiring spacers. I'll have nothing but drunks and gutter-sweepings--for a voyage to the North, and not to the major ports either."

While Daniel thought over what Mon had just said, he sipped his shandy. Good grief! it was dreadful. He supposed he'd drunk worse... well, realistically, he *knew* he'd drunk worse; but he certainly hadn't been sober while he was doing it.

"Well Mon...", he said, resisting the urge to swab his mouth and tongue with something clean or at any rate different. "I should think based on what the Klimovs offered you, they'd pay something better than going wages for seasoned spacers. In fact, I'd expect most of the *Sissie's* current crew would sign on with you. She was always a happy ship--and lucky in her officers, if I may say so."

A middle-aged man came in with a younger woman, moderately attractive but respectably dressed--a second wife, perhaps, but not a whore. "Hey Bert," the man said to the barman as they headed for the end booth. "The usual for me and Mamie."

"Coming up, Lon," the tapster said as he set a pair of glasses on the bar.

"Luck!" Mon said bitterly into his empty glass. "That's the problem. On the voyage home we had a dozen breakdowns. Mostly the damned High Drive--Pasternak finally figured out that the gauges they'd replaced in Tanais were off, so we were feeding 8% more antimatter to the motors than he thought. We had half the motors go out, eaten through by the excess. Plus two of the masts carried away in the Matrix. We didn't lose a rigger, but we would've if Woetjans hadn't grabbed him without a safety line and then caught a shroud with her free hand."

Woetjans, the bosun, and Pasternak, the engineer--Chief of Rig and Chief of Ship respectively--were both officers who did credit to the RCN. Woetjans in particular, a big raw-boned woman, was worth a squad of almost anybody else when she entered a brawl with a length of high-pressure tubing.

"Well, that's the sort of thing that happens with a major rebuild," Daniel said reasonably. "That's what shakedown cruises are for, after all. Are the Klimovs upset?"

"Them?" Mon said scornfully. "Good God, Leary, they're used to Sverdlovsk ships. They'd be happy enough if the hull didn't split open and *all* the antennas fall off!"

He shook his head, miserable again. "No, no, it's the crew," he said. "They think I'm a hard-luck officer. I heard Barnes say that opening his suit in a vacuum'd be quicker than going to the back of beyond with the *Sissie* now, and the other riggers on his watch agreed. And word'll get around the docks, of course. Hell and damnation, it already has!"

"Ah," said Daniel, understanding completely but unable to think of a useful remark to make. "Ah."

It was quite unfair, of course, but spacers were a superstitious lot. There were ships--well-found according to any assayer--which had reputations as killers; and there were captains who, whatever their technical qualifications, were known as Jonahs. No spacer shipped with either, not if there was a choice; and now, with the merchant fleets hiring, all spacers who could stand more or less upright had a choice.

"God damn all spacers to Hell!" Mon said. "God damn *life* to Hell!"

He turned on his bench and said, "I'll take a whiskey and water. A double, dammit, and keep the bottle out!"

He looked at Daniel and said in a despairing voice, "I know, I don't need my wife to tell me that I put down maybe more than's good for me. But liquor never affected me on duty, you know that sir?"

"I never had a complaint about you, Mon," Daniel said still-faced. He could use a drink himself, but it didn't seem that ordering one was going to make the situation better.

"I thought with everything going wrong, you know...," Mon said, squeezing his face with his spread hands. "That, you know, if I went on the wagon, that the trouble would let up. That God'd take his thumb off me, you know what I mean?"

"Yes, I know," said Daniel. Spacers are superstitious by nature; they're too close to random death on every working day to be otherwise. That was no less true of acting captains than it was of the riggers under their command.

"And the next watch the Port One antenna carried away and took the spars and sails from Two and Three besides," Mon concluded bitterly.

The tapster came with his drink, setting it down on the table and watching Mon sidelong as he walked back behind the bar. Hogg was watching also. Daniel wasn't concerned, but Mon was obviously closer to the edge than Daniel would've wanted on the bridge during action.

"Daniel," Mon said, holding the drink in both hands but not raising it. "Sir. The men will listen to you, you know they will. Will you come to the mustering-out parade tomorrow and talk to them? Sir, I've got *five* brats now, my wife delivered while I was on Tanais. I can't make it on half-pay, I *can't*, and if I have to take a crew of fag-ends to the Galactic North, well--"

He smiled with a wry sort of humor. "Well, then, I'd say Barnes'd be right. I'd do better to open my suit in a vacuum."

"I... will consider our options tonight, Mon," Daniel said, rising deliberately so that it wouldn't look as though he were fleeing his old shipmate; which is what he was doing, near enough. "And I'll be at the mustering-out parade, I promise you. That's ten hundred hours?"

"Aye, ten hundred," Mon said, rising also with a radiant smile and gripping Daniel's hand. "Thank God. Thank *you*, sir. If I can just keep a stiffening of trained men we'll be all right, I swear we will!"

Daniel nodded without amplifying his earlier statement. He needed to be at the pay parade to thank the crew which had followed him to Hell, not once but several times; and who'd brought the *Princess Cecile* and her commander back as well. But as for what he was going to say to them--

He owed Mon the respect due a loyal and competent officer; but he owed a great deal to every soul who'd served on the *Sissie* with him. He wasn't going to tell them to throw their lives away; and despite what he'd said to soothe Mon, the corvette's troubles on the voyage home would convince *anybody* that he was a hard-luck officer. He wasn't a man Daniel would willingly follow to the North, nor one to whom Daniel would pledge his honor to encourage others to follow.

There was a buzzing. Hogg, preparing to leave, reached into his breast pocket for the phone he carried while in Xenos. He listened for a moment, then said to Daniel, "We need to get back to the house, master. *Now*."

They headed for the door together, the servant leading his master by virtue of starting a double step ahead. As they burst back into the sunlight, Hogg added in a low voice, "That was the major domo, sir. Mistress Mundy had some trouble. Bad trouble."

The tramcar on which Adele and her entourage returned also carried fourteen home-bound office workers, filling it to the legal limit. Adele's footmen--well, the footmen accompanying her and Tovera; the Merchants and Shippers Treasury paid their salaries, though they wore Mundy livery--would've barred the strangers if it had been left to them, but Adele's parents had prided themselves on their concern for the lower orders. Adele, who'd spent most of her life in those lower orders and knew a great deal more about them than her parents had, nonetheless restrained her servants in their memory.

On the other hand, she hadn't felt she needed to allow the car to be loaded *above* the legal limit. At this time of day there'd normally have been forty people per tram; as passenger number twenty boarded at the Pentacrest Circle, Adele's footmen blocked the door and used their ivory batons on the knuckles of anybody trying to pry it open before the car started. Adele preferred to think of that as self-help in enforcing the law rather than a noble trampling on the rights of the people.

She smiled. Though she could live with the other characterization. She'd been trampled on often enough herself.

The car pulled into the siding at the head of her court, rocking slightly on the single overhead rail. No one waited to board on the eastbound platform; the office workers poised expectantly to spread out farther when Adele's party disembarked. They knew how lucky they'd been to have so much room as they rode to their high-rise apartments in the eastern suburbs of Xenos.

As Adele followed her footmen onto the platform, a tram pulled into the westbound siding behind her. She sensed Tovera turning her head, holding her flat attaché case with both hands. A young naval officer in his 2nd Class uniform got off, a stranger to her. Probably someone coming to see Daniel, a friend or perhaps a messenger from the Navy Office.

The seven houses on the court were as quiet as usual on a summer evening. Half a dozen men wearing varied livery squatted on the doorstep of the end house on the left side, next to Chatsworth Minor. They rose, pocketing the dice and the money, when they saw Adele arriving home.

One of the group was her doorman; he walked quickly back to his post without looking sideways to acknowledge her presence. Unexpectedly two other men followed him.

"Mistress Mundy?" called the RCN officer behind her. She turned, then halted to let him join them. The footmen were unconcerned, but Tovera's right hand was inside the attaché case she held in the crook of the other arm.

"Yes?" Adele said; not hostile but certainly not welcoming either. She didn't like being accosted by strangers, especially strangers who knew her name. This lieutenant--she could see the rank tabs on his soft gray collar now--was clean-cut and obviously a gentleman before the Republic granted him a commission, but he was still a stranger.

"Your friend Captain Carnolets hopes you'll be able to dine with him tonight at his house in Portsmouth," the lieutenant said, stopping a polite six feet back. That put him just beyond arm's length of Tovera, toward whom he glanced appraisingly. "He

apologizes for the short notice, but he says he's really quite anxious to renew your acquaintance."

I don't know any Captain Carnolets, Adele thought. And of course she didn't; but she knew Mistress Sand, who controlled the Republic's foreign intelligence operations with the same unobtrusive efficiency as Admiral Anston displayed within the RCN.

If Adele had needed confirmation, the way the messenger reacted to Tovera provided it. He wasn't afraid of her, exactly; but he was as careful as he'd have been to keep outside the reach of a chained watchdog--and he'd recognized instantly that the colorless 'secretary' *was* a watchdog.

"Yes, all right," Adele said. "But I'll change clothes first."

She turned and motioned the footmen on. Having servants was a constant irritation, complicating even a business as simple as walking down the street. On the other hand, the fact that she'd made the journey home in reasonable comfort instead of being squeezed into less space than steerage on an immigrant ship was an undeniable benefit....

"My name's Wilsing, by the way," said the lieutenant as he fell into step with her. "There's no need to change for the captain, mistress. He was most particular about his wish to see you as soon as possible."

"Which will be as soon as I've changed into civilian clothes, Lt. Wilsing," Adele said, letting her tone suggest the irritation that she felt. The only association her dress uniform had for her was the funeral of a man she'd respected and whom her friend Daniel had loved.

It wasn't Mistress Sand's fault that this funeral had reminded Adele that her own parents and sister had been buried without ceremony in a mass grave--all but their heads, of course, which had probably been thrown in the river after birds pecked them clean on the Speaker's Rock. It was true nonetheless. Adele felt the meeting would go better if she got out of her Whites.

When Adele was within twenty feet of Chatsworth Minor's recessed entrance, the doorman turned and said something to the men who'd followed him. They were burly fellows; though they were dressed as footmen, their livery didn't fit well.

One pulled a blackjack from inside his jacket and clubbed the doorman over the head; the doorman staggered into the pilaster, then fell forward on his face. The thug's companion drew a pistol and pointed it in the air.

Adele glanced behind her. Eight men, mostly holding lengths of pipe and similar bludgeons, had entered the court and were walking toward her purposefully. One of them had a pistol. *They must've been in concealment in the pavement-level light wells of one of the houses across the boulevard....*

Lt. Wilsing pulled a flat phone out of his breast pocket. "Don't!" Adele said under her breath.

The gunman at the front of Chatsworth Minor aimed his pistol at Wilsing. "Drop it, buddy!" he snarled. "I won't warn you again!"

"Drop it!" Adele repeated. She edged behind one of the footmen so that her left hand could reach into the side-pocket of her tunic without the gunman seeing her.

Wilsing let his little phone clack to the ground. His face had no expression.

"Now the rest of you step away and you won't be hurt!" the gunman said. "We're just going to teach your mistress not to steal houses from her betters!"

"I have the ones behind," Tovera murmured.

"You men!" Adele said to the terrified footmen. They were trying to look back at her and to watch the gunman also. "Get out of the way at once. This isn't your affair."

"But mistress--" said the senior man, a fellow who could--and probably did--pass as a gentleman when he was off-duty and looking for recreation among the female servants from other districts.

"Get out of the way or I'll take a switch to you, my man!" Adele shouted. She sounded on the verge of panic; the part of her mind that dealt with ordinary things like servants had been disconnected from her higher faculties. Her intellect was focused on the developing situation.

The footmen scrambled off to the left. One started to go right, then sprinted to follow the others when he realized he was about to be left alone.

The eight thugs from the head of the court must be very close now. The gunman in front laughed and sauntered forward, accompanied by the man with the blackjack.

Adele shot the gunman in the left cheekbone with her pocket pistol. *The light was from the west; she hadn't allowed enough for the low sun.* She shot him a second time through the temple as he spun away with a cry, then put a third pellet into the back of his skull while he was still falling. She heard Tovera's sub-machine gun firing quick, short bursts like the crackling of an extended lightning bolt.

The Mundys were a pugnacious house, quite apart from their political endeavors. Her parents had believed that the best protection they and their offspring had was to be deadly marksmen--not to win duels, but to make it clear to any outraged enemy that challenging a Mundy was tantamount to suicide.

The thug who'd knocked out the Chatsworth doorman dropped his blackjack and fell to his knees screaming. The servants who'd been dicing at the next house had frozen when the first man pulled his gun; now they collided with one another in their haste to open the door and run inside.

Mother would be proud of me, Adele thought as she turned. *Those hours in the basement target range hadn't been wasted. It's good to learn skills at leisure so that they're available when circumstances force a career change....*

The eight men who'd been behind Adele's entourage were all on the pavement now. Several were thrashing violently, but those were their death throes. At least one had started to run.

The barrel shroud of Tovera's weapon was white hot. Like Adele's pistol, the sub-machine gun accelerated projectiles down its bore with electromagnetic pulses. The pellets' aluminum driving bands vaporized in the flux, so sustained shooting created a good deal of waste heat. The muzzle of Adele's own pistol shimmered and would char the cloth if she dropped it back into her pocket.

Tovera turned and shot the thug who was praying on his knees. He sprang backward, a tetanic convulsion rather than the impact of the light pellets directly. Three holes at the base of his throat spouted blood.

Adele grimaced. "Sorry, mistress," Tovera said as she slid a fresh magazine into her weapon's loading tube. "But we didn't need a prisoner. We already know who was behind it."

Adele had a sudden vision of Marina Rolfe herself kicking on the pavement, spraying blood. Of course knowing Tovera, it might not be anything that quick for the

lady who believed the Casaubon family money insulated her from retribution when her thugs crippled the rival who'd ousted her from the status she thought she'd purchased.

"Don't kill her!" Adele shouted. "Don't kill her, Tovera, or I'll hunt you down myself. On my honor as a Mundy!"

Tovera dipped her head in acquiescence. "I understand, mistress," she said.

A stain was spreading across the trousers of the gunman Adele had killed; his bowels had spasmed when he died. She went down on one knee, still holding the pistol in her left hand. It'd cooled enough that she could put it back in her pocket now, but she was too dizzy to do anything so complex at the moment.

Tovera fitted her sub-machine gun back into the attaché case she'd dropped when she began shooting. Wilsing had picked up his phone and was speaking into it in urgent tones. He didn't seem affected by what he'd just watched, until you noticed that as he spoke his eyes flicked across building fronts. They always stayed on the second story or above. He wasn't taking any chance of seeing the carnage surrounding him.

Wilsing hadn't done anything but stand where he was; none of these deaths were on his conscience. But only a sociopath like Tovera could watch such slaughter and not be affected by it.

The senior footman said, "Mistress, what should we do?" Adele tried to speak but the words caught in her throat. He grabbed her shoulder and shook her. "Mistress, what do we do?"

Adele rose to her feet, putting the pistol away. She hadn't reloaded, but it had a 20-round magazine. *I don't think I'll need to kill more than seventeen additional people tonight*, she thought. *Of course it took me three shots to put the first one down....*

Aloud she said, "Get into the house and call the Militia. I'm sure somebody else has done so already, but make sure there's been a call from Chatsworth."

"Mistress Mundy?" Wilsing said as he lowered the phone. "We need to get to, to Captain Carnolets as soon as possible. Quickly, now!"

"We can't leave--" Adele began.

The young lieutenant waved his hand at the sprawled bodies. "This has all been taken care of!" he said angrily. "Come! It's really most important!"

"We'd best do as he says, mistress," Tovera said with a smile as cold as a cobra's. "Mistress Sand isn't a person who likes to be kept waiting."

Adele nodded curtly. "All right," she said. "I don't suppose I need to change after all."

Wilsing pulled out an oddly-shaped key as he led the way back to the tram stop. Adele avoided all the outstretched limbs, but despite her care her right half-boot came down on a trickle of blood. The sole was tacky, at least in her mind, with every step she took thereafter.

BELIZE:2001

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We got up at 4:30 AM on July 13 and drove to the kids' in Burlington, where we loaded all the luggage into April's Rodeo and went to the airport. The flight to Miami was on a full 727 (no problems, though I hadn't realized American still operated 727s) and the flight to Belize a 757 with lots of empty seats. International flights (which I take rarely) are strikingly upscale, providing cooked food on china with steel flatware instead of plastic containers and utensils.

International Expeditions, the tour organizer, provided a guide in Miami to make sure we got from one flight to the other. That gave me a correct notion of how careful they are with their clients.

Our first guide in Belize, Martin, had come to there as a mahogany company executive in 1975. He took us through Belize City (the capital and largest city with 70-80K people in a country of 250-260K total) while we waited for the other six of our party (The were flying in through Dallas). The houses reminded me of older Brunswick County (NC) beach houses: colorful, run-down, and frequently on stilts because of hurricanes. Some of the oldest places in the city itself are built of bricks carried over in the 19th century as ballast for mahogany ships. There are also 'drowned cayes' in the bay where ships dumped ballast on which mangroves then took root, though they're underwater at high tide. (The lift is only 18" in Belize.)

The educational system works very well. The churches build the schools and choose the teachers, but the government pays those teachers. People whose faith doesn't have schools of its own (the big ones are Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Baptist) send their kids to some other church's school, but the kids aren't required to take the religious instruction. Literacy was 96% until the recent influx of refugees from Salvador and Guatemala (some 80K illiterate Spanish speakers) dropped it to 64%.

25% of the country's Gross Domestic Product comes from tourism, and they really do care about visitors. There are 'Have you hugged a tourist today?' posters and tourist police to make sure only licensed guides are operating (we ran into a checkpoint of tourist police later in the afternoon.)

Most cars are used sub-compacts from the US, generally from Texas and California. Used tires are imported from the US also. Gas is about twice the US price.

Then back to the airport, where there's a Harrier GR.3 on static display. The British sent a squadron of Harriers to Belize in 1976 when Guatemala was threatening to invade. They flew non-stop from Britain, refueling repeatedly. Castro allowed them to overfly Cuba: nobody but CIA likes Guatemala. (I will have more bad things to say about Guatemala in the course of this account, I suspect.)

We were switched to a different guide--Edd, a Creole who'd been an officer in the defense forces--and separate driver, Peter, also a Creole who'd been in the defense forces. Peter drove us from the airport in a Toyota Coaster, a 28-seat diesel bus with a five-speed manual transmission. It was a very rugged and satisfactory vehicle with two seats to the left and one to the right of a center aisle which could be filled by jump seats. It was comfortable, holding ten tourists, the guide and driver, and all our luggage without crowding. Peter took us places on it that I'd have wondered if a jeep could get through.

After his stint in the defense forces, Peter had worked for many years with

ornithological projects. He was a really exceptional birder and communicated his enthusiasm to me.

At the New River we boarded a boat while Peter took the bus on to Lamanai by road. The boatman, Ruben, was also a birder. As with every part of this trip, getting there was part of the experience--not just travel. IE packed us full of information.

A word on my equipment. For the trip I'd gotten the recommended packet of background books, which included one on the wildlife of Belize. In addition I'd gotten a specialist birdbook (*A Field Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Adjacent Areas*, by Edwards) which proved very handy: full, but small enough to carry in a cargo pocket. Peter praised it, though he had a massive volume of his own in his backpack.

I'd also gotten a pair of military specification Steiner 8x30 binoculars. They have great depth of field, so by setting them for 30 feet they're effective from 20 feet to infinity. That permitted me to follow flying birds, but birds are so close in Belize that often I could only use my glasses by increasing the eye relief. A standard pair might have been more useful in the circumstances that obtained.

I'd planned to carry my Minox 35-millimeter camera, but I'd dropped it while practicing and didn't get it back from the shop in time. I used instead an old Nikon point-and-shoot with a 35-70 mm zoom. I took 200 ASA film, thinking that was the choice for outdoors in the tropic sun; 400 or faster would've been a much better idea in the rain forest. Jonathan's new Fuji digital proved excellent, and he had no difficulty downloading from his card to his laptop.

The boatride--a river through the rainforest in late afternoon--was a remarkable experience. I won't try to list all the wildlife, particularly birds, we saw, but it was a wonderful harbinger of things to come. Two Morelet's crocodiles (a freshwater croc unique to Belize, coming back from the verge of extinction) approached. Every stretch of river had a ringed kingfisher, a territorial bird patterned like the much smaller belted kingfisher of the US. Raptors were frequent and unconcerned by our presence. The snail-eating kite (AKA everglades kite) is still common here because the apple snail (its sole item of diet) remains abundant. A fork-tailed flycatcher, 5 inches of bird followed by 9 inches of tail, overflew us.

The sun was low as we approached Lamanai Outpost Lodge. Directly beneath it, rising from the solid forest, was the top of the High Pyramid at Lamanai--at 33 meters, the tallest pre-classical Mayan structure known. This day alone was the price of the trip, so far as I was concerned.

On the morning of July 19th we got a better view of the site. Lamanai Outpost Lodge has a small number (maybe 12?) of individual bungalows and a restaurant with excellent food. The roofs are thatched with boton palm fronds, as were those of all the dwellings we stayed in during the trip (including those of Victoria House in San Pedro, which was air conditioned). In the landscaped grounds are many birds and various lizards, particularly the crested basilisk which has a very long tail (twice the body length). It's also known as the Jesus Christ lizard because younger (lighter) individuals can run across the surface of water.

After breakfast we--the ten tourists under the tutelage of Edd and Peter--went on a nature walk to the ruins. I was particularly struck by the chachalacas, chicken-sized birds which were hopping around in trees like finches, and the fact that the flycatchers range

upward to 9" in overall length. Down from us along the river was a treeful of neotropical cormorants, and across the river a flock of woods storks clustered in a small pond where presumably something tasty had hatched or was swarming.

We passed a family of black howler monkeys, dozing in the trees. They took little notice of us. The infants were more active than the adults, but it was a hot day and leaves aren't a high-energy diet. None of the howlers we saw during the trip were calling, but we heard howlers in the morning and evening at Tikal.

Palm trees are more varied and interesting than I'd realized before the trip. Both the cohune palm and the boton palm begin as clusters of huge leaves sprouting from the ground, but they grow impressive trunks if the surrounding forest is thick enough to require them to do so to reach the light. The give-and-take palm is a relatively slender tree, but its trunk is covered by a hedge of downward pointing needles which induce fever in those they prick. The bark, however, is a specific against the tree's own poison (thus the name, give-and-take) and that of other vegetable irritants including the white poisonwood.

Most trees in the forest are covered by epiphytes growing on their bark and branches, but the allspice stays clean by shedding its bark twice a year. The bark itself is aromatic, but the spice is made from the berries.

In the trees at the river landing where we had lunch before entering the ruins were several raptors and some strikingly colorful birds including blackheaded trogons and the oriole-like Montezuma oropendula--brilliant and 20" long. I repeat: I didn't come to Belize as a birder, but I became one while I was there.

In the museum were flint and pottery objects found at the Lamanai site. The Spanish forced the local people to build a catholic church. Archeological investigation of the ruins (the locals burned the church during a 17th century revolt against the Spanish) turned up a multiform monster of pottery which the builders had buried when they built the church, apparently as a curse.

The pre-classic temples here at Lamanai were my first experience of Mayan ruins. The first we saw was the Mask Temple, so called because of a huge face sculpted in the side. Most of the Mayan sites are built of very soft laterite limestone and weather quickly when exposed. The face is being reconstructed (the archeological term appears to be 'consolidated') because it's deteriorated badly in the past few years. The Mayans themselves had the same problem and are now known to have kept carvings under thatched roofs at least during the rainy season.

We were able to climb this temple. It's not as impressive as others we saw later in the trip, but it was a wonderful experience.

The Mayans constantly rebuilt on the same sites, so while the mask is from ca. 500 AD, Classic Period, the foundations of the pyramid date well back into Pre-Classic times. The reconstruction of a site requires a decision as to what time horizon the reconstruction is to represent. (This is as serious a problem in Rome or London as it is in Mayan country, of course.)

Breadnut trees are common around former Mayan sites and were presumably a cultivated species. Their hickory-nut sized fruit matures in July, before maize, and can be ground with slaked lime into flour to make bread. This is the sort of datum which I find fascinating, although I don't expect it to ever enter my fiction directly. The fact that it made my mind kick over in a new direction--*that's* the value of it to me.

At the site were a number of striking birds, including a huge Pale-Billed Woodpecker. I thought of my parents and how much they'd have loved the birds of Belize. Maybe more of their interests rubbed off on me than I'd realized.

There was a ball court at Lamanai. The games, a feature throughout Mayan history, were played with a solid rubber ball slightly smaller than a soccer ball. Reliefs indicate that one of the two players was executed after the game; our guide, Edd, noted that there was argument as to whether it was the winner or the loser who was beheaded.

This puzzled me, because I knew Mayan script had been largely deciphered. There should've been an answer to the question. To get ahead of my account by a little, Foster (our specialist guide at Tikal) had a degree in archeology. I asked him and got the following explanation:

1) In the Pre-Classic Period the games were used to choose a courier to take a message to the gods. The players were all highly-trained members of the nobility. The winner had proved himself the most fit. He was beheaded as a matter of honor and sent with the message.

2) In the Classic Period the games (still a noble prerogative) were used as a means of ordeal to decide matters at issue (much like the Mediaeval European trial by battle). In addition, conquering kings arranged fixed matches with prisoners. In this period the loser would be executed.

3) In the Post-Classic Period, ball games were a sport. Kings had teams which played for entertainment.

This was interesting in itself and a useful reminder that no culture is static for millennia. It irritates me when people talk about 'what the Romans did' when Roman history covers thousands of years with sharp differences in all aspects of life within that general flow. I'd just made the same mistake about Mayan history.

It also reminded me that 'popular information' generally prefers mystification to later-learned facts. This may be more of this regarding the Mayans than some other peoples, because archeologists had invented a mythical gentle Mayan culture and decipherment of the Mayan texts was somewhat of an embarrassment to them. Throughout Mayan history, victims were publicly tortured to death as a regular part of any festival. A portion of the archeological establishment consciously suppressed this information until quite recently.

We weren't able to climb the two other major temples at Lamanai--the 33-meter High Temple and the Jaguar Temple, so called from the stylized jaguar face created in blocks (sort of crocheting in stone) on one side. The modern concrete staircase built up the back of the High Temple had collapsed during Hurricane Keith last year, doing considerable damage to the original structure.

I noted here and at other Mayan sites that the authorities frequently make steel and ferroconcrete additions--and that these regularly do serious damage by concentrating the stresses of storms and earthquakes that the original structure had survived for the preceding millennia. This is as true at European and Asian sites as it is here. You wouldn't think it took a rocket scientist to look at, say, the Parthenon or Sphinx 'repairs' and decide not to repeat the mistakes of past centuries of would-be conservators.

The back of the Jaguar Temple hasn't been excavated. It faces the landing site and museum. Neither I nor any other member of our group had been aware that it was a temple until we came back around from the other side and found ourselves where we'd

started.

Lamanai is a zoological study area as well as an archeological site and an ecotourist destination. In the afternoon we had a description of the zoological mission by the director of the project, then talks by two of the researchers--a woman whose specialty was bats (she brought in a yellow-throated bat for us to view and gently pet) and the man who was researching the diet of Morelet's crocodiles in the New River. The most striking bat datum that I picked up was that tent-making bats roost by day under large leaves whose support veins they clip so that the leaf folds over a clutch of bats. The crocodile man doubles as a herpetologist and brought in a small green iguana (the lecture room has dark cubicles in the walls where specimens can be kept quietly against need) and a garden snake. Save for the boa in the zoo, this was the only live snake I saw in Belize; my dreams of seeing a fer-de-lance in the wild were therefore dashed.

Following the lectures, we went on what was billed as a Mayan Medicine Trail, a nature walk focusing on the botanical uses of the forest. I learned to distinguish various standard palms. Palm trees are the most striking portion of the forest in much of the region that we visited. This surprised me, as I'd not really thought of palms as forest trees but rather as lone images on sandy beaches. There were those too--Jonathan got some lovely pictures of palms on the beach at San Pedro--but when one views Lamanai from the river, one sees an expanse of broad cohune palm fronds with only occasional other admixtures.

Another common aspect of the forest are leaf-cutter ants. These make 6" wide trails, occasionally merging into much wider boulevards, which are easily distinguished from the trails of larger animals by being completely clear of vegetable material. The ants drop formic acid and completely destroy the leaf and twig litter that is found everywhere else. Once you've learned to identify them, you can see ant trails snaking across all the archeological sites--I took a picture of one across the main plaza at Tikal from the top of the palace.

Along the trail was a fallen tree which (by permission) locals had started to turn into a dugout canoe; they'd abandoned the project because the trunk was rotten at one end. It was a good view of how the process was carried out: the exterior had been rough-shaped and the interior was excavated with fire, adze, and apparently saw cuts.

In the Lamanai property is a sugar mill which was operated in the period 1860-75. (I'm told it figured in the Harrison Ford movie *The Mosquito Coast*, which was filmed in Belize.) Massive iron gears on equally massive brick foundations stand in the midst of jungle.

Also on the property (though some distance from the mill) is a brick storage cistern, apparently for grain. It's 19 feet deep, with no sign of other construction nearby.

At night we went out on a spotlight boat tour of the New River and its lagoon. We viewed bird life, but the crocodile researcher was along hoping to capture crocodiles for his diet study. For the most part the birds remained resting as we passed, though several big boat-billed herons flew away when struck by the spotlight. Fishing bats worked the lagoon in considerable numbers, pretty much ignoring us. There were many 3" fish in the shallow water, probably the right size for the bats.

The northern potoo, a relative of the whippoorwill, is famous for its ability to look like a branch. At night, however, its huge eyes glow like beacons when the light catches them.

There were many crocodiles out in the night, but for the most part they sank out of sight when the boat got near. They're opportunistic feeders, eating among other things the large apple snails. This can cause a skewing of diet data because though the snail shell quickly dissolves in the gut, the trapdoor (operculum) that closes the shell over the snail survives for a very considerable period.

The researcher finally caught a 5-foot croc by wading under the branch where it lay and looping it with a cord on a pole. Landing the critter was a lengthy business, though the outcome was never really in doubt. When the croc was aboard, the researcher and the boatman duct taped shut his jaws and then eyes, quieting him immediately.

Somebody asked whether it was a male or female. "Let's see," said the researcher, pulling on a latex glove and sticking a finger up the croc's vent. He was male.

Because the crocodiles are territorial, the last thing the researcher did before we set off for the lodge was to take a GPS reading of the exact location. The following night (after stomach pumping) the croc would be returned to the same spot.

Thence to the bunglalow and to bed, utterly exhausted but full of amazing memories.

July 15 started in a relaxed fashion--IE is good about not overstressing clients, though believe me you don't get bored. We watched the lizards and hummingbirds in the gardens, and I got a picture of the chiclero kettle placed there as an accent. The sap of the chicle tree was gathered and boiled down much like natural rubber (or for that matter, maple syrup). Until 1975 chicle for chewing gum provided 25% of the Belize Gross Domestic Product. Then the Japanese found a way to process a synthetic out of petroleum, and the market for real chicle collapsed.

Chicle wood--zapodilla--is very dense and resistant to decay, by the way. The Mayans used it for lintels in their structures; at Tikal we saw beams that've survived well over a thousand years.

We then took the bus to the Belize Zoo, quite a long trip. The local people practice slash-and-burn agriculture. Land that has been abandoned after a few seasons grows back first in guinea grass and tall cecropia trees; there were many such stretches along the way. There were also orchards and coconut groves, most of the latter dying of the virus that is sweeping Belize. People are now planting resistant varieties, but what had been the standard Belize coconut tree is going the way of the elm and chestnut in North America.

The local subsistence farmers plant corn, squash and beans in the same hole as the Mayans did. The squash grows along the ground and the beans use the cornstalk for support. 90% of the grain in Belize, however, is grown by a small number of Mennonite immigrants (who left Germany for the US, then moved to Mexico, and in the 1950s settled in Belize) who by dint of hard work and western agricultural methods are hugely more productive than the locals.

Because the Mennonites (some of whom eschew internal combustion machinery; others use tractors and outboard motors for their fishing boats) keep to themselves, there's been relatively little ethnic tension, but their *per capita* income is much higher than that of any other group in the country. One can hope--I hope--that envy won't drive these productive people out of Belize as has happened to them so often in the past.

We stopped en route at an anomaly, a Belizian winery. The owner, a Creole about

60 years old, developed gardens and a winery on the 20 acres the government granted his father for being a veteran of World War II. So far as I could tell there was no difference between him and his neighbors, save that he was much harder working and imaginative. (There was a wall around the property to keep the garden furniture from going missing; before that he'd chained it down.)

The wines were local recipes for local fruits, among them orange, grapefruit, 'blackberry' (a tree; not what we know as blackberry in the US), cashew (from the fruit, not the nut), tamarind, and sorrell. Tourists had sent him books on winemaking after they got home--he'd been working without any help whatever before then. His bottles were liquor bottles from El Salvador, his corks from Canada (a visitor had found him a source), the plastic caps from Mexico, and his bottling machinery was British. He was selling the product for \$3.50 US/bottle or three for \$10. Heaven knows what it tastes like (I'm teetotal), but we brought some back for friends.

Thence to the zoo, a recovery operation stocked solely with injured animals and those released from poachers. The cages are very large and incorporate the vegetation that was on the site before it was fenced, so it can be quite difficult to find even good-sized animals. There was a lot of, 'Is that it up there?' and the like. The facilities have largely been built by the Royal Engineers. The British army keeps a jungle training site in Belize and pays for the use of it by carrying out infrastructure projects within the country. The zoo was a beneficiary of this policy.

The woman who founded and runs it (she'd come to Belize 20 years ago to shoot a documentary and stayed) came by with some chicken scraps while we were there, so we got to watch the jaguars gambolling. Even I got good pictures of the friendly tapir, and the tamandua (lesser anteater) was an absolute ham.

Tapirs follow regular trails through the jungle and are therefore easy to shoot, but they--like jaguars and most other native animals in Belize--are making a comeback during the past decade or more. Belizeans have taken readily to the notion of the natural world as a tourist resource and a subject of national pride

In the macaw cage was a clay-colored robin which had managed to squirm in through the mesh and was frantically trying to find a way out. The macaws watched it with mild interest.

It was an extremely hot day, and we were all wilting after the combination of the winery, a patio diner en route (it was called *Cheers*), and the zoo. The air-conditioned bus was a pleasure on the long trip to Pook's Hill, and I say that as one who normally dislikes and avoids air conditioning.

When we left the main road, the going became extremely bad. Here above all I was impressed by the Toyota and by Peter's skill. We were on a narrow rutted track, steep both up and down. The diesel and 5-speed manual transmission were more than adequate; Peter only rarely dropped into compound low. (My year driving a city bus allows me to appreciate excellence in this aspect of the trip.)

At one point Peter stopped and pointed out a pair of collared aracaris eating the fruit from a rubber tree. Aracaris are a form of toucan--smaller than the keel-billed, but big by almost any other standards--and brilliantly colored. They were just another of the striking species of birds we saw at every stage of the trip.

Pook's Hill is a nature reserve with a bush-hogged 'lawn' on the slope beneath the lodge, an open-sided building with a thatch roof. The lower story (ground level at the

back as the upper floor is at the front) is a common dining area, enclosed against the bugs. The individual bungalows have whitewashed walls of cast concrete and thatch roofs with a ceiling fan. The baths were large tiled rooms with a shower at one end and the toilet and washstand at the other; the water was drinkable (I did) though there was bottled water as elsewhere in Belize for those who didn't want to trust the taps.

The generator ran till bedtime, 10 pm or so, and then a battery bank kept the fans running till about three in the morning. It was in all respects a lovely location.

Here as later at the Victoria House we ran into a minor glitch: IE thought the Drake party was father, mother, brother and sister--and carefully arranged separate beds for Jonathan and April. (The two other parties with us were couples with a teenaged female dependent.) It was easily solved in both cases.

Vickie, who runs Pook's Hill with her husband, is English by birth and a fabric designer by former trade. She in a very nice way is a rabid naturalist as well as a thoroughly decent and interesting person. I noted that there were (seriously poisonous) give-and-take palms growing beside the bungalows and asked about them. She explained that two had been there but she'd transplanted the others because she'd noticed that the collared aracaris liked them. She then paused and said, "I guess they do send an odd message to guests, don't they?" But they didn't, not really.

Edd suggested a dip in the stream running through the property. The four Drakes took him up on it; the others, somewhat to my surprise did not (one family had a stomach bug; the daughter had been barfing on the extremely rough road and the father wasn't feeling great). It was a quarter mile away through rain forest, a neat walk in itself which involved crossing the stream on a rope bridge with a log floor.

And the stream was magnificent. It was broad but fairly shallow--chest deep or less throughout most of its width, but a trifle over six feet on the outside of the curve. Two-inch long fish nibbled our body hair as soon as we got in the water; they were harmless but utterly unafraid. A solid wall of jungle rose above the bank. A large antnest of mud sat on the crotch of a branch hanging over the water; and from it grew a rare orchid which was in bloom. The orchid's seeds have a gelatine coating which the ants like. They carry the seeds to their nests, where they may germinate--as this one had.

There were many high points to our trip. Swimming in this jungle stream the two nights we were at Pook's Hill was one of them.

After dinner we got out our flashlights and Edd led us on a walk around one of the circular jungle trails in the darkness. It was an interesting experience, though wildlife itself was sparse. There was a coatimundi (an elongated raccoon), a large frog, and most strikingly a bat flying down the trail at head height with something in its talons. It may have been a fishing bat like the many we saw at Lamanai; alternatively, the prey may have been a large cicada.

Thence back to the bungalows and to bed, the close of another day of amazing experiences.

On July 16 I got up early for birds. We were handicapped by the fact that Peter had cut himself shaving (his scalp) and wasn't able to join us till late. Edd is a very good field naturalist, but Peter's knowledge of birds borders on the supernatural.

Fortunately, the birds made it easy. There was a cecropia tree just down from the lodge. A pair of crimson-collared tanagers were eating seeds in it and carrying them back

to their nest in a nearby palm. They're striking birds, and indeed had pride of place as the back-cover illustration on my field guide.

Thence to Barton Creek Caves. The slightly sickly family remained behind, which is probably good because the road this morning was if anything worse than that which brought us to Pook's Hill (which we retravelled as well, of course). At one point we backed up to allow an old Toyota minivan to get around us in the other direction; the driver must have been a local guide, because he swept his minivan through ruts that I was sure would bog him. Further on, we forded a creek.

This is a good time to mention the weather, a factor in any trip to the region. The rainy season should've started at the beginning of June, but no significant rains had fallen by the middle of July; the scattered nighttime showers while we were there didn't mark a change. Central America is undergoing a drought, and BBC noted that within a month a million people in the region would be in need of food aid.

I greatly regret the drought (human environmental changes--global warming and the destruction of rain forest over much of the region, particularly Guatemala--may be at least partially responsible, though droughts are believed to have brought down the Mayan civilization as I'll mention later). So far as we were concerned as tourists, the lack of rain made the trip much more pleasant. (I know what monsoon rains are like.)

Barton Creek Caves is privately owned (like Pook's Hill and Lamanai), but it serves backpackers and budget tourists as well as coddled ecotourists like ourselves. There's a large thatched marquee under which more a hundred people could shelter (and scores did), with picnic tables and a bar. A number of family groups were swimming in the stream outside the entrance to the caves.

We rented canoes and entered the caves, three per canoe including a local guide who joined us. Whoever was in the back paddled, and the person in the middle was responsible for the light: an automobile headlight in a handgrip, attached to a truck battery by a length of flex with alligator clips. To turn the light on, you clipped both leads to the battery posts.

The ceiling rose in some places to 105'. There were striking stalactites and blooms of flow rock, though relatively few stalagmites. Several bridges crossed the cave, and occasionally the passage was low and narrow enough that the canoe scraped.

The Mayans regarded caves as sacred space. There are burials and grave goods in the caves, some of them (jugs set in niches) visible from the canoe. They've been studied by archeologists but not removed, which I think is a reasonable compromise. (Mind, I'm neither an Amerind or an archeologist.)

Bats roost on the cave roofs. Fruit bat excrement is acid, so over the years they've dissolved conical pits as much as a foot into the limestone. They huddle there in their little burrows and flutter away if the light stays on them too long (which I tried to avoid).

Algae grows hundreds of feet deep into the caves. That nearest the entrance is greenish; farther in the growth is white; and a pinkish algae remains on the walls even very deep into the caves.

The algae surprised me, but not nearly as much as the plants did. Fruit bats sometimes excrete intact seeds, which won't be a surprise to anybody who's gardened with cow manure. The seeds sprout in the blob of fertilizer, also no surprise. But they continue to grow to over 4" high with deep green leaves, photosynthesizing from the light brought into the caves by tourists like us.

I didn't get any worthwhile pictures of the interior, but Jonathan's digital camera and Jo using faster film did. The caves impressed me in many ways, and my neck ached a trifle for weeks after from the amount of time I spent looking up.

I was struck during the tour that the unsophisticated commercialism of the site harked back to an earlier age in the US, for example the Black Hills in 1940 when my folks honeymooned there. Nowadays the volume of tourists, governmental involvement to protect a natural resource, and sophisticated marketing have changed things back home. (This is an observation, not a complaint in either direction.)

From the caves we went to Green Hills Butterfly Farm where the mistress--co-owner with her husband, both of them Dutch by birth--had lunch laid out for us on tables under the usual thatched marquee. As elsewhere the food was prepared by local servants and (as more often than not) it was chicken with a variety of rice, beans and vegetables. The concession to... hmm, I started to say western tastes, but that would be pretty silly... First World tastes was a garden salad which is foreign everywhere in the region. She suggested we throw the scraps, including the chicken bones, over the fence to the chickens and guinea fowl, as that's what she would do afterwards if we didn't. (I did.)

A foot-long, brilliantly-colored lizard ran under the tables as we were eating. "What's that?" I said. The lady looked at me oddly and said, "That's my helper George;" meaning, I realized after a moment, the local man who'd just come over to ask her a question. Jonathan and I laughed in our usual fashion, while people looked at both of us oddly. (The lizard turned out to be a barred whiptail, a male in breeding colors.)

We then got a tour of one of the breeding greenhouses. The farm raises five kinds of butterflies; the caterpillar of one variety has extremely poisonous spines, so they're segregated in a separate greenhouse for safety. The plants within are chosen for their blooms. There are also dropper bottles with sugar water (rather like hummingbird feeders; and washed with bleach every week, just as we do at home with our hummingbird feeders) and leafed twigs of chosen types in vases for the butterflies to lay eggs on. The blue morphos refuse to lay eggs on anything but living plants, so there are also a number of tiny saplings in pots.

Leaves with eggs on them are transferred in the evening to plastic containers like those you'd get deli cole slaw in, segregated by species. The containers are opened daily and a fresh leaf dropped in (this also changes the air; the containers aren't vented). When (as usually happens) multiple eggs hatch on one leaf, the leaf is cut with scissors and part goes into a new separate container with its crop. The process continues day by day until there's one caterpillar in each container. (The woman doing this with blue morphos had the quick efficiency I've seen in other highly-skilled workers doing a repetitive task.)

When the caterpillars pupate they're transferred to a screened box, still segregated by species. Green Hills supplies a number of butterfly houses in Europe and the US, including that of the Durham Science Museum which Jo and I saw last year. (They can only be transported as pupas.) To be honest, I'm not certain what happens to the other butterflies as there must be more than're necessary for breeding purposes; perhaps they're simply released into the wild.

This is a very large-scale, labor-intensive project; I was thoroughly impressed. (I was thoroughly impressed by an awful lot of what I saw during this trip.)

Thence back to Pook's Hill in the evening for dinner and a chance to relax, which I very much needed. I managed to turn my notes for the day into journal entries; there

was so much going on every day that finding time for that necessary task was frequently difficult.

We got up early in the morning of July 17 for another look at the birds of Pook's Hill before we left. I'd seen keel-billed toucans silhouetted in flight the afternoon we arrived in Belize, but this morning we got good views of them in all their size and color. They're the national bird of Belize--and a good choice therefor among many striking alternatives.

We went by bus to our second significant Mayan site, Xunantunich. On the way we paused in San Ignacio, the second city of Belize. The houses again reminded me of older dwellings in Brunswick County, NC where we go to the beach every summer: smallish, generally shabby, often on stilts against flooding during hurricanes, and frequently brightly colored. There were many internet cafes, many travel bureaus, and many shops with tourist wares.

The road passed two cemeteries here and another at San Jose Succotz. The graves in the region are mostly above ground because of the high water table. The stones and slabs are generally painted in bright pastels. The look and feel of these cemeteries is quite different from those of the parts of the US where I've visited cemeteries.

At Succotz there's a hand-worked ferry (the operator cranks his raft along a cable) crossing a tributary of the Belize River to get to Xunantunich. There are three very large green iguanas (one was over 5' long) wandering around the ferry site; none of our group fed them, but I presume there's some reason they live in this location.

The raft wouldn't take the weight of the Coaster, so we loaded onto one of a pair of old blue Ford vans (the other passed us going the other way) that carry tourists to the site a mile upslope. The ride was hot (there was a little fan whirring in the back, but most of the windows didn't open), cramped, and extremely rough, but it sure beat walking.

Xunantunich was built to tax river traffic during the Classic period; it had only about 7-10K people (as opposed to Tikal, one of some thirty known Mayan sites which probably had some 175K residents at their peak). It's relatively small, so you can get a feel for the whole site from the restored pyramids unlike Lamanai and particularly Tikal.

During the late '70s while Belize was still British Honduras, the brutal military dictatorship in Guatemala threatened to take over the country by force. The British moved in troops and aircraft. Xunantunich became a British army observation post with concrete stairs to the top. Not surprisingly there's been earthquake damage since then.

One of the mounds visible from the main pyramid is cratered. An archeologist blew it open with dynamite and announced that there was nothing inside... which was certainly true after he got done with it. Any Iowa farmer with an Indian mound on his property could've told him that's not how you find burials and grave goods. (I'm not saying I condone the practice; just that my in-laws used dynamite for stumping, not grave robbing.)

We drove from Succotz to the Guatemalan border, where there was considerable bureaucracy and (especially since I'm slightly agoraphobic) discomfort. I read a book as I stood in line with a great crowd of other people, waiting for petty officials to stamp forms and take money. (Belize and Guatemala charge people who are leaving the country, \$20 and \$30 per head, respectively.) I found the whole business unpleasant and--it seemed to me--unnecessary.

Thence back on the bus and a long drive to Tikal. The road is now quite good, becoming paved a few miles from the border. Apparently the road had been awful but the complaints of tour operators forced the government to act--though I gather 'act' in this case means spend aid money on construction instead of using it to line the pockets of officials. The aid ran out a distance short of the border, but the gravel portion is drivable.

A line of poles--like telephone poles but without wires--parallels the road. Jo later learned the poles were set up to prevent people from landing light planes on the concrete highway. There's very little traffic, even less than in Belize.

Jonathan noticed that we were being followed by a blue Toyota pickup with two men in it. I asked Edd, who said with obvious embarrassment, "They're friends." It appears that IE provides armed guards for its groups while they're in Guatemala, but they want to keep the fact quiet so as not to spook clients. The trucks carrying cases of Pepsi and Coca-Cola also have armed guards: anyone in the country with cash has to be guarded, because thirteen families control all Guatemala's wealth. Grinding poverty turns most of the population into potential bandits.

Our hotel, the Tikal Inn, is one of the three within the park site. They're private property, remaining under a grandfather clause when the rest of the large tract became public. I assume the Tikal Inn was the best because IE did an excellent job in all the other arrangements, but the place wasn't prepossessing. None of our party were willing to swim in the pool; the restaurant was dirty (food that dropped on the floor would still be there at the next meal) and the staff sparse and untrained. (The waiters couldn't take an order for soft drinks and water in English, for example.) Our room and that of Jonathan and April beside us had cross draft and were reasonably comfortable. The other rooms had windows only on one side, and when the electricity went off at 10 PM, the ceiling fans stopped also.

After settling into our rooms we walked through forest to the archeological site a quarter mile away. There are many armed police throughout the site, up on the pyramids as well as lounging in guard posts at intersections on the ground. Coatimundis, spider monkeys, ocellated turkeys, and crested guans (a larger version of the chacalaca) are as common throughout the site as pigeons are in downtown Chapel Hill.

The site, which the Canadians cleared to its present extent in 1975, is huge. The population during its long *fluit* was about 175,000, far beyond what the region's present slash-and-burn agriculture could support. The Mayan kingdoms use raised-bed agriculture in the swamps around the city, forming 'paddies' with three-foot high walls and filling the interior with rich muck from farther out in the swamps. Raised bed agriculture can feed 1000 people/acre against 65/acre for slash-and-burn.

During the dry summer months the paddies were watered from the reservoirs on high ground in the city. The great causeways of the city were designed not only for pedestrian traffic but also to channel water (along the plastered gutters to either side) into the reservoirs for later distribution.

The region is subject to periodic droughts; recently one lasted for sixteen years, dropping the annual rainfall from 100 inches to 45 inches. A similar drought struck toward the end of the 6th century AD. The reservoirs didn't fill, so the crops on the raised beds would've shrivelled before becoming ripe. This in turn ended the Classic Mayan period. Tikal remained an important site, but the nature of warfare changed from war for

the sake of honor, to war in which the conquered city was annihilated to gain its territory to support the victor.

We entered the Great Plaza past a shrine house, where the king would talk to his ancestors. Temple 1, the tallest surviving pre-Columbian structure in the New World, was closed to tourists but we climbed Temple 2 across from it and also Temple 5 to the south. The acoustics are such that you can easily talk to someone on the opposite pyramid about 200 feet away. Originally Temple 1 was an astronomical observatory, but the ruler who built Temple 2 converted Temple 1 to a tomb for the body of his father, killed in war but later recovered.

Reuse, cannibalization, and overbuilding, are characteristics of all Mayan sites. There are now 16 small temples on the North Acropolis, but they're built on at least 150 earlier temples. The palace on the south side had rooms on five levels. There are steps up to the top, but there are also bleacher seats in the form of broad steps where the court would sit facing the populace gathered in the plaza. The higher a noble's rank, the higher his seat. The king on top would be comfortably ensconced on pillows of jaguar skins stuffed with feathers and kapok from the ceiba tree.

We went from the Main Plaza to the much older Temple of the Lost World, which we climbed with the intention of watching sunset from the top. I was in pretty rocky condition by this point, mostly as a result of descending Temple 2 sideways with my right leg leading the whole way. My left leg started to cramp. There'd been a lot of riding followed by a lot of physical exertion, and that stupid mistake had cost me much of my normal capacity for physical exertion.

The Temple of the Lost World was worth the effort. At 130 feet it's by no means the tallest structure at Tikal, but you can climb to the very top whereas much of the height of the higher temples is in combs which weren't ever meant to be climbed. The view of the jungle below us was marvelous: a bat falcon was making circular passes from a ceiba tree nearby; two birds of prey--they may have been hook-billed kites, but Foster and Edd were uncertain and Peter didn't come with us--were perched in plain sight a quarter mile away. Toucans were hopping among the treetops at the foot of the pyramid.

With us on top of the pyramid were three backpackers. They became excited when our guides pointed out the toucans, and we let them borrow our binoculars to watch those huge, brilliant birds. It struck me that though they were travelling to the same places as we were, they'd have seen nothing but jungle from here, if it hadn't been that we--with Edd and Foster--were present at the same time. I greatly respect what the backpackers were doing on their own, but I'm glad for myself that I waited to go until I had enough money to hire expertise that would enrich the trip beyond anything I personally brought to it.

Because the sky was cloudy, we came down from the pyramid before it was full dark (which would've made the descent really tricky, given the shape I at least was in). It'd been quite a day.

At dinner, Edd and two members of the hotel staff played the marimba. I was struck by how much reverb the instrument had.

I got up early on July 18 and went out birding with Pete as I usually did. Jo and Edd joined us. We got a good view of a blue-crowned motmot which has a two long tailfeathers that're bare shafts save for a tuft at the end. While I wasn't pleased with the

Hotel Tikal Inn generally, I've got to give some credit to any place which has these analogues to the birds of paradise living on the grounds.

There was also a bat falcon sitting on top of a high bare limb, picking apart something with a long tail (possibly a snake). It was a lengthy process. Throughout our stay in Central America I was pleased and surprised by the way birds of prey lived near humans without concern. The family of marsh hawks with which we've shared our property for the eight years we've been in the present house would never let me get as close as this falcon and many other raptors did.

We returned to Tikal with Foster, starting this time with Complex Q, one of a series built over the course of Mayan civilization to mark a 20-year cycle. Each complex has pyramids to east and west, with a nine-door palace to the south (symbolizing the Underworld) and a corbelled arch to the north (symbolizing Paradise) opening to an engraved stela and altar which recount the ruler's achievements.

The carved altars weren't functional. The altars in the plaza on which prisoners were tortured to death in odd numbers--three, five, or seven at a time generally--and their associated stelai weren't carved, though they probably had painted legends when they were new. The altar in the north archway is carved with a full description of the dedication ceremonies for the complex, including the names and means of torture by which the victims were sacrificed.

Later generations overbuilt previous monuments. What kept Q more or less intact was that it was built in 771 AD, just before the final collapse of the Mayan Kingdom. Complex R followed it, but R was heavily cannibalized centuries later by a successor group, the Mopan Maya.

Toucans and oropendulas--big, brilliant orioles--flew among the trees throughout the site. I truly was able to live my dream, to stand in ancient stone cities buried in the jungle.

We curved back to the five-story palace on one side of the main plaza (there was quite a lot of walking on this trip, even without climbing pyramids at intervals). The Mayans claimed (perhaps correctly) to be Olmecs who migrated from homes along the coast. Throughout Mayan history, seashells and mother of pearl were luxury items because they were reminders of the national past.

There was trade with the Toltecs of Teotihuacan (the region of Mexico City) but the route is difficult (the Spanish administered Yucatan from Peru, not Mexico City). In 300 AD the ruler of Tikal made a personal journey to Teotihuacan and returned with a wonder-weapon--the atlatl, the spearthrower--and two Toltec warriors skilled in atlatl tactics.

This revolutionized regional warfare, turning Tikal into a superpower before rival cities were able to adopt the new weapon. When the king died without blood heirs, he appointed as his successors the Toltec warriors who'd come south with him. From one of these (the other died of lingering injuries incurred in the climactic battle) the royal line of Tikal continued through the Classic period. Architectural themes from Teotihuacan appear at Tikal thereafter.

Foster says that in the lower levels of the palace (closed to tourists) pale orange plaster still covers the walls, picked out by a red understripe and paintings of prisoners in black. Construction was by small stone blocks, more or less the size of bricks, rather than the sort of multi-ton ashlar the Egyptians used.

The public portion of the palace has expanses of white plaster, in some cases with graffiti made by 11th century Mopan Mayans as well as by 20th century tourists (mostly Spanish speaking, I noticed). People are people.

We went from the palace to Temple 4; it's 215 feet high but the ladder to the top of the comb (which the guidebooks mention) is no longer there; we reached only the level of the chamber at least 30 feet lower. Only the top portion of the pyramid has been cleared, so access is by a pair of wooden ladderways up the side. This is a very practical addition which doesn't harm the original structure. It seemed to me that the ladder was less tiring than climbing the original stone steps of other pyramids.

From the top there's a striking view of the peaks of other pyramids rising above the treetops, but the jungle is so thick that one doesn't have an overview of the site or any real awareness of its extent.

On the way back to the hotel for lunch, we passed a huge Spanish (also called hardwood) cedar. I got pictures of the buttress roots spreading from the base. That's another of the trip highlights for me.

There was also a line of army ants passing alongside our trail. On the other side I noticed a number of bright orange (probably poisonous) millipedes which weren't being harmed by the ants but which seemed to be unable or unwilling to cross the ant trail. If I'd seen them a year ago, the giant millipede of *Mistress of the Catacombs* would've been orange... but if I live, there'll be other books.

Jo and I got up early on July 19 and did the usual nature walk with Edd and Peter, around the hotel grounds. This morning we didn't see coatimundis, but there was a herd--flock? covey?--of agoutis, which you can think of as large guinea pigs. (The paca, a truly giant guinea pig, we saw only in the zoo.) A flock of white-fronted parrots passed over so low that for a change I actually saw them as parrots rather than parrot-shaped silhouettes.

I asked Peter, by the way, how he could say with such assurance (for example), "Those are red-lored parrots," or, "Those are brown-hooded parrots," when the birds were high overhead against a bright sky and the identification marks are the color of the small patch of feathers between their eyes. "By their calls," he said; which was obvious after he said it, but still quite remarkable.

Edd pointed out 4" long caterpillars which lay on trunks and branches in groups of twenty or more, tight together like swatches of brown velvet with thin white stripes. These were the caterpillars of the Banana Owl moths, one of the species Green Hills Butterfly Farm raises. As adults they're huge and rather attractive, but the masses of caterpillars are pretty disgusting.

Near the Museum was a slough covered with water hyacinths. A limpkin--a wading bird with a curved beak--walked over the hyacinths, dipping down and finally coming up with a 4" apple snail. (Everything from hook-billed kites to Morole's crocodiles seems to eat them; I'd never thought of snails as a major item of diet, but I was wrong.) It held the snail in one foot, popped the hinge with its beak a couple times, and winkled out the meat to swallow.

Immature purple gallinules (visualize a colorful chicken) were walking on the hyacinths also. I don't know what they were eating, but an adult minced out on a drooping banana stem and ate one of the ripe bananas with deliberate pecks.

Thence back to the room to pack. Jo went walking and didn't come back till well

after they'd collected the bags, so I had the nervous task of hoping I'd finished packing all her stuff. I checked three times and had April go over the room also; we seem to have succeeded.

I was wearing the Old Iowa tee-shirt my webmaster had sent me. In the lobby a couple from Cedar Rapids saw the shirt and struck up a conversation. The wife was originally from Guatemala. "I tell my family," she said, "how hot it gets in Iowa in the summer and how cold it gets in the winter, and they look at me and say, 'Why do you live in such a terrible place?'" Given that I moved to North Carolina myself when I learned how much milder the winters were, that's a fair question; but there's a lot about Iowa that I miss, and the conversation reminded me of that.

We ate lunch, still in Guatemala, at a hamlet called El Renata overlooking the river. There were dugout canoes pulled up on the bank; women washed their clothes in the stream. A huge brindled mastiff slept in the roofed patio where we ate, and another dog lay in the screened bathhouse.

We proceeded to Flores, a good-sized city with the regional airport. Every other shop in the business area appeared to be a travel agency; there were also bars with brightly (and often imaginatively) painted exteriors, and souvenir shops where the staff was more aggressive than I was comfortable with. To be honest, the whole country of Guatemala gave me the creeps; that mastiff wasn't 'just a pet', nor were the guards following our bus 'just friends' as Edd put it.

Thence to the airport, where we said goodbye to Peter (who would drive the bus back to Belize City) and outprocessed. I had my usual trouble with forms, but we made it and boarded a Tropicair Cessna Grand Caravan (15 seats including the pilot, and a single turboprop engine). The flight to Belize airport was smooth. We inprocessed (having just come from a foreign country) and flew back in the same plane to San Pedro on Ambergris Caye.

A very battered Ford van carried the luggage and some of our group to the Victoria House where we were staying. The rest followed in a four-seat golf cart, the standard transportation in San Pedro for those who don't want to walk. The town is of about 3,000 people, strung out along the beach with basically just one long central street.

The Victoria House is very plush, with air conditioning even in our individual thatch-roofed cabanas (with the sea breeze, we didn't use the air conditioning except for the first night.) By this point I was pretty thoroughly wrecked, but a shower perked me up. Dinner was ample and excellent.

And to bed, where I slept like a rock.

We were up early on July 20th to go birding with Edd. We didn't see either the roseate spoonbills or the American crocodiles (which live in salt water, unlike the Morolets) which are supposed to be present on Ambergris Caye, but there was a flock of white ibis and many egrets. There were also Great Blue Herons, which I'm used to from NC but which are impressive birds nonetheless.

We then went snorkeling; the first time for the four Drakes, though the other two families were experienced. The initial practice session off the end of the dock went well enough. I managed to control my breathing, and because the flippers provided positive buoyancy I was just about able to float. (For those of you who don't know: when I blow my lungs out, I sink even in salt water. This is one reason I never got far in Boy Scouts,

as to pass the swimming test you had to float for ten minutes without paddling. Because of the laws of physics, I could no more do that than I could fly.)

There were schools of fingerlings near the dock, and I even saw an immature barracuda. So far, so good.

We then went out to the barrier reef (the second longest--Australia's is the longest--in the world.) I was struck on the way out (an impression reinforced by later experiences) that most of the shallow-water sea is utterly barren. There are stands of manatee grass and turtle grass, their leaves pale from the fine sand lying over them. There are no visible fish in the grass, and most of the seafloor is *just* sand or mud. The wreck of a fishing schooner was an oasis of fish and other life in the middle of this wasteland. Clearly artificial reefs *do* work, and having seen the natural condition--a submerged desert--I'm puzzled that there's not a lot more lobbying for them. This would be something positive for Greenpeace and similar outfits to do, as opposed to creating television opportunities for their activists.

The snorkeling itself was one of those interesting experiences, like a few I had in Southeast Asia a long time ago. I could get along all right so long as I was floating face down and paddling just a little (otherwise my legs would slowly sink). The problem was that I couldn't get anywhere in particular without expending a great deal of clumsy effort, and there was a slight current.

At one point I drifted into the boat channel and Edd had to drag me back. (A tourist had recently been killed there.) In my struggles I got water in my mask and had to empty it while thrashing uncomfortably. I managed to swallow a bit of sea water in the course of things, and I became so physically exhausted that I was afraid I was going to throw up after the effort of getting back aboard the boat.

That's the downside: my own physical incapacity and lack of skill. The vivid life on and around the coral heads was quite marvelous during the times I wasn't drifting away on the verge of drowning, however. Edd enticed a 5' green moray eel out of the coral, giving me a real-life glimpse of one of the critters I used in *The Jungle*. (Come to think, I believe there was a giant iguana in *The Jungle* also. As well as grasshoppers and murderous honeysuckle.)

The boat moved to another part of the reef, Shark and Ray Alley. The nurse sharks and sting rays are used to being handled. Edd and the captain horsed them around freely, feeding them bits of fish. Touristy stuff, but they were quite real nonetheless.

Jo had even worse problems than I did: she simply couldn't get used to the mask. Jonathan and April did better, but not well enough that they wanted to go out again in the afternoon with the rest of the group.

Jo and I went instead on a glass-bottomed boat with an eclectic group of tourists from other hotels. Most were Spanish speaking, but there was a young Italian couple and a pair of American women in their late 20s with the 6-year-old daughter of one.

The clear panels weren't large and a crack had been repaired with plywood. When there might be something to see below us, the owner splashed water on the panels to compensate for the scratches, but for the most part there was nothing to see so this wasn't a problem.

In the course of the three-hour ride we saw a sea turtle (underwater and off the side of the boat; there was no way to tell which species) and a very striking rainbow parrotfish. By tossing out chum the owner brought shoals of blue tang as well as gray and

yellowtail snapper around us.

The American women rode on the upper deck of the boat where the choppiness was amplified. They went into the water with others when the boat anchored. The mother immediately came back with her daughter and began wrenching while the daughter whimpered that she had to go to the bathroom really, really bad. Mother, between fits of nausea, tried to shut the child up or alternatively to get her friend over to take the child back into the saltwater rest room. It was, in its way, an entertaining episode.

We got back in late afternoon and relaxed. I even ate dinner, which wouldn't have been my bet while I was out with the snorkel.

On July 21 we went snorkeling again. One of our fellows had bought Jo a pair of goggles which worked for her (as the mask had not). Another explained to me that using my arms was counter-productive; I should simply kick. I found that really did work, though there were still problems.

The main one was that I had to keep moving, at least slowly, or my legs would sink. The other members of the party were good swimmers and--particularly the women--had positive buoyancy; they simply didn't understand that if they zoomed in front of me to look at something of particular interest, I was either going to bump them or my legs would sink. The water over coral heads was often very shallow, so I was in a constant state of agitation lest I inadvertently kick and damage some delicate structure.

Having said that, the amount and brilliant variety of life around the corals was fascinating and lovely. I'd brought the guide to reef life which IE suggested but (unlike the other guidebooks in the package) it was almost useless: there was simply too much there. (I did identify a dusky squirrelfish which looped out of his crevice and back; but compared to the fun I had identifying birds, fish were rather disappointing.)

There were several shoals of 6" reef squid. Their half-transparent bodies are flattened in a horizontal plane, and I saw no signs of two tentacles being longer than the rest. Edd and the captain assured me that they were squid, not cuttlefish, however.

Several of the party had disposable underwater cameras. They worked, but at least Jonathan's and April's pictures were of no particular merit in contrast to what they did with digital and film cameras on the surface. The images were blurred and washed out, even in the very clear water where we were.

My second attempt at snorkeling was much better than the first--I wasn't in fear of my life, nor on the verge of barfing--but it still falls into the category of educational rather than delightful. I might go snorkeling again if I were in a place that offered the opportunity, but I would never go somewhere in order to snorkel. It's one of those things I'm glad to have done--once.

The afternoon was free time. I simply relaxed, read, wrote up my notes into proper journal form, and chatted.

I've listened to BBC News on short wave for twenty years and had brought my current radio (a Sony ICF-7600 about the size of a trade paperback) along. While demonstrating it to Edd, I stumbled onto a favorite program (programme, I suppose I should say: *From Our Own Correspondent*) at an unexpected time. It was a small serendipitous pleasure, one of many on the trip. It made me think of Dad, a short wave enthusiast all his life, and how much he and Mom would've loved the trip themselves. I wish they were still around so I could tell them about it.

A low-key day and a good way to unwind before the grueling trip home.

On July 22 we were up early and did another little nature walk with Edd. San Pedro didn't have the natural interest of other places we'd been--it was a town, after all--though the young iguanas on the trees were of note. Because we'd walked the same route each morning, it was obvious that the lizards were very territorial--but even their postures seemed to be the same from day to day.

We chatted with Edd, who wanted to know about writing. (People tend to think being a writer is a more exotic business than I find it to be.) He's had two (English language) poetry collections published in Belize and promised to send a copy to me in return for *Mistress of the Catacombs*, which I'll mail him as soon as I have copies myself.

We flew from San Pedro to Belize City in another Grand Caravan, outprocessed (bureaucracy was the least pleasant part of the trip, though it wasn't horrible or I suppose even unreasonable), and boarded an Airbus for Miami.

US Customs wasn't a problem either, though the sheer scale of the operation was daunting. A DC-9 to Raleigh-Durham, where we picked up April's Rodeo. Jonathan drove us back to their house; we transferred our luggage to our car and Jo drove us home.

The house and animals were clean and happy.

It was an amazing and wonderful trip. It wasn't a vacation--it'll be years before I'm ready to do anything like this again--but for the rest of my life I'll be processing what I saw and learned.

THE ELF HOUSE by David Drake

This is a short story in the Isles universe for a Bill Fawcett project, which last I was told will be titled Masters of Fantasy. It's for Baen Books and was originally described to me a fantasy companion to The Warmasters, but things have a way of transmuting in the publishing world.

The story was an interesting exercise. I've written a million words in the Isles series, but this a) had to be understandable to people who hadn't read any of the novels; and b) had to be complete in 5-6K words. I wrote it in 5,700 (on my tombstone you can carve HE WAS A PROFESSIONAL).

I think it's a pretty good story, though not as flashy as some of the things I've done. The title's The Elf House, and Cashel's the viewpoint character. As for when it comes out--well, the book's still waiting for Dave Weber's story. Those of you who know Dave's writing commitments can join me in a chuckle at that.

Cashel didn't need to carry his quarterstaff in the corridors of the Vicar's palace--what'd been the Count of Haft's place till Prince Garric arrived the week before--but he was more comfortable holding the smooth, familiar hickory than he'd be otherwise. He didn't dislike big buildings, but he disliked being in them; and this palace had a nasty feel all its own.

Besides, the staff had been a friend in places where Cashel had no other friends. He wouldn't feel right about leaving it alone in the huge suite assigned to him while he went off to dinner with Garric in the roof garden. If the servants, officials, and the amazing number of other people crowding the palace stared at him, well, a man as big as Cashel or-Kenset was used to being stared at whether he carried a quarterstaff or not.

For a wonder there wasn't anybody around at the moment. Cashel sauntered down the hall looking at the cherub mural painted just above shoulder level. In the dim light through the transoms of the rooms to either side, there was something new to catch every time he passed.

Cashel started to grin at the little fellow with his wings spread as he struggled to lead a goat who didn't want to go. The sound of a girl crying jerked his head around.

He'd been holding the quarterstaff straight up and down in one hand. Now, without him thinking about it his left hand slipped into position a span below the right and he slanted the staff before him. "Ma'am?" he said, ready to deal with whatever was making a woman cry.

The girl wore servant's clothing, a cap and a simple gray tunic set off by a sash of bleached wool. She knelt a little way down a corridor which joined the main one from the right. Cashel didn't remember there being anything but a blank wall there, but he guessed he'd always missed it because he'd been intent on the mural opposite.

She gave another vain push at the inward-opening door in front of her, then looked up at Cashel with eyes glittering with tears. "Oh, sir!" she said. "I dropped the key and it slipped under the door. The steward will beat me if I don't get it back!"

"I don't guess he will," Cashel said. The notion that somebody'd beat a little slip of a girl surprised him into speaking in a growl. He didn't know her, but he didn't think

men ought to hit any girls. He was *real* sure no man was going to try that twice in front of Cashel or-Kenset.

He cleared his throat and went on in a normal voice, "But anyhow, let's see if I can't get your key."

The door stood a finger's breadth ajar. Cashel pressed with the fingertips of his right hand without budging it further. It was stuck, that was all; rusty hinges, he figured, since the panel didn't bind to the lintel or transom. Through the crack at the edge he could see a glint of gold in what was otherwise darkness; the key was there, all right. It must've bounced wrong off the stone floor.

Cashel leaned his quarterstaff against the wall beside him and placed his hands one above the other on the latch side of the panel. The girl looked up at him intently. She seemed older, all of a sudden, and there was no sign of her frightened despair of a moment ago. He made sure his feet were set, then put his weight against the wood.

More people lived in the palace than did in all Barca's Hamlet where Cashel'd grown up. Even though there wasn't any traffic in the main corridor, sounds constantly echoed through the hallways and made the floor quiver. All that stopped; Cashel pressed against the panel in dead silence. Maybe it was the effort, because the door still didn't want to give--

And then it did, though with creaking unwillingness. It opened another finger's breadth, twice that....

The girl stuck her arm in, calling something that Cashel could barely hear through the roar of blood in his ears. "I can't quite...", she said, so he kept pushing and the door gave some more, enough that she squeezed her torso into the room beyond.

Cashel shoved harder yet. He could feel the wood fighting him like the staff of a bent bow, ready to snap back if he let up the pressure.

"I've got it!" the girl said, only her legs from the knees down out in the hallway where Cashel could see them. "I've--"

And then she shrieked "Milord, I'm falling!" shrilly. Her legs slid out of sight, following the rest of her. She was wearing sandals with straps of green-dyed cut-work.

Cashel didn't understand what was happening, but as the girl slipped inward he slammed his shoulder hard against the panel instead of just shoving with his hands. He hadn't done that before because he didn't want to smash the door, but now he didn't care.

The door didn't break, neither the thick fir panel nor the squealing hinges that fought him all the way, and he swung it open at right angles. The room within was small and dingy. There was no furniture, and part of the rotten wainscoting had fallen onto the floor.

The girl had the key in one hand and reached toward Cashel with the other. She looked like she was sliding backwards, but she was already farther away than the far wall of the room.

Cashel grabbed the staff with his left hand and stretched it out to the girl. She couldn't reach it and screamed again. Her voice was growing fainter; he could see her body shrink as the distance increased.

"Duzi!" Cashel bellowed. He strode into the room, holding the quarterstaff out in both hands. The girl grabbed it, but Cashel's feet slipped like he was standing on an icy hillside.

The door slammed behind him. The only light was a dim, yellow-brown glow that silhouetted the girl's body and he and she plunged down an unseen slope.

Cashel felt himself spinning as he dropped, but his body wasn't touching anything. The girl held the other end of his staff; he couldn't see her expression, but she didn't bawl in fear or make any sound at all that he noticed.

They skidded onto a gritty hillside and stopped. Cashel looked over his shoulder. All there was there was gray sky and a rising slope. There wasn't any sign of the room where they'd come from. He looked all around and didn't see anything he liked better.

The bare hills ranged in color from yellow-white to the red of rusty iron. For the most part the rock had weathered into gravel, but there were outcrops where the stone must've been harder. The general landscape wasn't pretty, but the outcrops were worse. Whenever Cashel looked hard at one, he started to see a large, angry face.

He got up, brushing crumbled rock from the back of his tunic. He hadn't come down hard, for all that they'd seemed to be rushing headlong through emptiness. He glanced at the girl, already on her feet. She smiled and said, "My name is Mona, Lord Cashel. Do you know where we are?"

"Just Cashel, please, mistress," he said with a grimace. "I'm not lord anything."

He cleared his throat, looking around again. The landscape wasn't any more appealing on a careful survey than it'd been when he first landed in it. "And I don't know anything about this place, except I wish we were someplace else."

"It's where the house elf lives," Mona said. She was looking at the landscape also, turning her head slowly. "Used to live, I mean. There can't be anything alive here except the dwelling itself."

She held her arms across her bosom; her expression was coldly disapproving. From Mona's features she was younger than Cashel's nineteen years, but her eyes were a lot older than that.

Cashel followed the line of her gaze up a series of streaked, ragged slopes. On top of a butte was what at first he'd taken for white stone weathered into a spire. When he squinted and let it sink in angle by angle, he realized he was seeing a man-made tower with battlements on top. A slant of windows curved around the shaft the way they'd do to light a circular staircase.

"You mean that castle?" Cashel said, nodding toward the structure instead of pointing. "That there's people living there?"

"There's no people here and no elves either," the girl said as she stared toward the tower. "Only us. And I don't mean the building, Cashel. This whole world was the dwelling for the house elf."

Cashel cleared his throat. He took out the pad of raw wool he carried in his belt wallet and wiped the smooth hickory surface of his quarterstaff as he thought.

"Mona," he said while keeping his eyes fixed on his task. "The only house elves I've heard of are the little fellows who live under the hearth and, well, make things go right. The Luck of the House, some people call them."

He cleared his throat again. "Not that I've ever seen one. Or known anybody who did."

"How could anybody live under a hearth?" Mona asked, with a pretty smile that took the sting out of words that could've been pretty cutting if said the wrong way. "But

they *could* live between the cracks of the real world, in a place that grew for them. A place like this was."

She looked around, no longer smiling. "When the elf died," she said, "the dwelling should've fallen apart like a web when the spider dies. This dwelling took a life of its own instead. A sort of life."

The sky was getting darker. It was solidly overcast, as heavy and oppressive as a block of gray stone. Cashel could feel a storm in the air. Duzi, the little god of shepherds, knew how many times he'd been caught by the weather while he was minding sheep; but he didn't have sheep to worry about this time, so he could go somewhere else.

"Ah, Mona?" he said. "I think we'd best get under cover while we can. Unless you've got a better idea, let's head for the castle up there."

"Yes," she said. "We'll do that. Though the storm will catch us anyway."

They had about a half mile to go. The route was uphill on average, but Cashel could see there were several ridges and gullies between them and the castle. Experience had taught him that the terrain was always worse than it seemed at a distance, but he didn't foresee anything they couldn't cross even if he had to carry the girl part of the way.

He looked at Mona again. She wasn't the frail little girl that she'd seemed when he first saw her in the palace corridor. She stepped with determination across the rough terrain, avoiding head-sized chunks of rock but seemingly unperturbed by the coarse gravel. Maybe the soles of her sandals were sturdier than they seemed. Cashel himself was wearing thick boots. He didn't like the feel of footgear, especially in warm weather, but the stone floors of the palace and cobblestone streets of the city beyond were too much for the calluses he'd developed going barefoot on the mud and meadows where he grew up.

Lightning flashed somewhere above the clouds, giving them texture if not shape for an instant. Cashel held his staff crosswise, ready to brace himself with an iron butt-cap if the gravel slid or a rock turned under his foot. You couldn't trust your footing here....

"I'm surprised there's nothing growing here," Cashel said. The girl was a couple steps in front of him, choosing each step and keeping in perfect balance. "This isn't good soil--" his boot toe gouged into the slope "--but with rain, there ought to be something."

"Nothing can live here," Mona said bitterly. She reached down and brushed at the loose grit. "Look."

The underlying rock was mostly dark brown and cream, with streaks of maroon and other colors. Cashel frowned as he let his eyes grapple with the pattern.

"It's a tree trunk," he said at last. "It's a stone statue of a tree trunk."

"It was a tree trunk," the girl said. "The house has turned it to stone to reabsorb it. Lesser vegetation is--"

She swept her left hand in a short arc, palm down.

"--already gone. Stone and dust. The house has only a half-life; it hates the real thing."

She smiled wryly at Cashel. "Forgive me if I get carried away," she said. "There's nothing evil about what's happening here, any more than there is with cancer or a wolf

tree. But it's a perversion and can't be allowed."

Cashel nodded. "We'd best be getting on," he said, nodding toward the tower ahead of them. The hill was particularly steep right here; he could only see the crowning battlements from where he stood. "Though you were right about us not beating the storm."

They resumed, climbing steeply now. The girl dabbed a hand down frequently while Cashel used the butt of his staff to steady him where he didn't trust the grip of his feet.

He knew what a wolf tree was. If a forest grew wild, there'd always be a few trees, oaks more often than not, that through a combination of luck in soil and the weather spread over ground that could've supported a dozen ordinary trees. Their limbs shaded out lesser growth, and their trunks grew gnarled and rotted at the heart, useless for anything but firewood.

Forests didn't grow wild, of course: wood was too valuable a resource for that. If a tree started taking more than its share, the woodlot's owner hired a husky young man like Cashel to cut it down.

A steep-sided gully barred their way, not broad but deeper than twice Cashel's height. He figured he could get over it, but the girl'd have to climb down and then--

Mona jumped over the gully from a standing start, looking like nothing so much as a squirrel hopping the gap between trees. She glanced over her shoulder. "I'll wait for you here, Master Cashel," she said with a trace of laughter in her tone.

Cashel grunted. He checked the ground, then backed two steps and came on again in a rush. He butted his quarterstaff firmly at the edge of the gully and used the great strength of his shoulders to loft him over. He landed beside her, flexing his knees to take his weight.

"You're graceful despite your size," the girl said as she resumed her way toward the tower.

"Who are you, Mistress Mona?" Cashel asked. "*What* are you?"

"I'm a servant," she said. "We're all servants of one kind or another, aren't we? You used to serve sheep, for example."

"I didn't serve sheep," Cashel said, shocked at the thought. "I--"

He broke off. A shepherd did a lot of things, but when you boiled them all down they amounted to making sure his sheep were safe and comfortable. Put like that it sure enough sounded like being a servant.

"Well, maybe that's so," he admitted, saying the words instead of just holding his tongue and pretending he hadn't been wrong to begin with.

The rain hit, violent slashes from straight ahead. Each gust drove at Cashel's face like he was standing in the sluice of the mill back home in Barca's Hamlet. He didn't see how Mona could stand against it but she did, lowering her head and striding on.

The lightning was nearly constant, dancing in the clouds as the air shuddered with thunder. Run-off gouged fresh rivulets which gushed down the slopes as streams of thin mud.

The gully they'd crossed must be a raging freshet now. It'd be a bad time to lose your footing and slide into a torrent.

The storm stopped as abruptly as it'd begun. It paused, at any rate; the rain no

longer fell, but the sky stayed the same dark mat. Mona had a little peaked cap as part of her livery. It'd blown away, and her simple tunic stuck to her torso, sopping wet and three shades darker than its original light gray. Cashel figured he looked like a drowned rat himself.

He grinned and slicked the water off his staff between his thumbs and forefingers, sliding first his right hand to the ferrule and then cleaning the other half with his left. A drowned ox, maybe. On his worst day, nobody was going to confuse Cashel or-Kenset with a rat.

They'd reached the base of the great outcrop on which the tower stood. The cliff was pretty steep, but there was a path slanting up to the left. It looked badly worn... well, no. It looked more like the rock had been melted somehow. Anyway, they'd be able to get up it even if the rain started again.

"Wait!" the girl said, staring intently at the cliff to the side of the pathway. Her index finger traced a bump in the rock. It was about the size of a ripe cantaloupe and had a pearly luster instead of the dull, chalky surface holding it.

Now that Mona'd pointed out the first one, Cashel saw that there were more balls, as many as he could count on the fingers of one hand, in the rock beside it. They looked as much like frog's eggs as anything Cashel could think of; though much bigger, of course.

"The seeds of new dwellings," the girl said softly. She took her hand away from the stone. "Each seed should grow into a home for a young elf who'd make the people of a house in the waking world a little happier. This place is absorbing them too."

She turned her head toward Cashel. "I was wrong, I think," she said. Her voice didn't sound angry, but it rang as hard as a sword edge. "What's happening here *is* evil."

"Let's go on," said Cashel, but Mona had started up the path before he got the words out.

The wind rose again before they'd climbed halfway. It whirled around the outcrop, buffeting Cashel head-on no matter which direction he was facing as he walked along the curving path. Rain began to fall, a few drops at a time but big ones that stung like hard-thrown pebbles.

Mona's tunic was sleeveless and only knee-length. Even so Cashel was afraid that it'd give the storm's violence enough purchase to snatch her from the path and throw her onto the broken landscape below. Her balance remained perfect and her steps stayed steady despite the gusts.

The top of the outcrop was as flat as a table. The tower stood in the center with no more margin than Cashel could span by stretching his arms out to either side. He wondered if the spire itself was artificial, a pedestal built at the same time the tower was; though if what Mona said was true, this whole world had been made--or grown, which he supposed was the same thing.

The entrance was partway around the tower from where the path reached the top. Mona started for it with Cashel right behind. Now that they were close, Cashel saw that the windows in the tower were blocked up--filled with stone rather than just shuttered. What he'd seen were the outlines where the sashes used to be.

The rain resumed in torrents, now mixed with hail the size of quails' eggs. Cashel threw his left arm up to shield his eyes. He'd have bruises when this was over, that was for sure. Balls of ice shattered against the stone, cracking like a fire of pine boughs.

Sharp bits bounced from the ground, pricking Cashel's ankles and lower legs.

The tower's doorway was recessed. Mona bent toward it, doing something with the panel. Cashel hunched behind her, trying to shelter her from the hailstones that slipped past the overhang.

The rattling hail drowned the thunder, but its deeper notes still vibrated through Cashel's boots. Lightning was a constant rippling presence overhead. The tower's walls were alabaster; Cashel ran his fingertips over them, trying to find joints between the courses. If there were any, they were too fine for his touch or eyesight, either one, to identify them.

"Mona, maybe I can break it down," Cashel said, speaking louder with each word of the short sentence. The hail made more noise than he appreciated until he tried to talk over it.

A crust flaked off the wall when Cashel rubbed it. Though the tower stood in open air, the stone was rotting like a statue buried in the acid soil of a forest.

"I've got it!" said the girl, and as she spoke the tower opened; she stepped inside.

Cashel was close on her heels, bumping the door as he entered. It was made of the same white stone as the rest of the building, pivoting on pins carved from one block with the panel. As soon as Cashel was past, it banged shut with a ringing sound more like a xylophone than that of stone on stone.

The storm's noise ended abruptly when the door closed. They were in an anteroom.

"There's light!" Cashel said in surprise, and there was: a soft, shadowless glow from the stone itself. The room was unfurnished, but on the walls were carved patterns as rich and fanciful as the engravings on a nobleman's gold dinner service.

Only a few patches remained to show what the original decoration had looked like, though. The scaly rot disfiguring the tower's exterior had claimed most of the inner surfaces too.

Mona stepped through the inner doorway. Cashel followed, keeping his elbows close to his sides. The passage was so narrow that if he'd tried to swagger through arms-akimbo, he'd have bumped the jambs.

A slender woman stood in the center of the hall, her right hand out in greeting. "Oh!" Cashel said, straightening in surprise. The tower was so silent that he'd convinced himself it was empty.

"Her name was Giglia," Mona said, walking toward the other woman. "She was the luck of the palace ever since the Count of Haft built it. There was never a house elf who could match what Giglia did with glass. She made the palace windows gleam like a thousand rainbows every sunrise."

Cashel touched his tongue to his lower lip. His staff was slantways before him, not so much a threat as a barrier between him and the silent Giglia. "Why doesn't she move?" he asked.

"Because she's dead, Cashel," Mona said. "She grew old and died; as things should do. Without death there can be no renewal."

She reached toward the dead woman; their faces were as like as those of twins. When her fingers touched the other's cheek, Giglia disintegrated into dust motes. Her right arm fell to the floor intact, then erupted as a geyser of fine dust swirling in the air.

There was a dry, sweetish smell. Cashel threw his arm over his nose to breathe through the waterlogged sleeve of his tunic, though he didn't suppose it mattered. "Mona?" he said. "How can we get out of here? Back to the palace, I mean? Or somewhere!"

Instead of answering, the girl walked toward the door on the other side of the central room. Her feet stirred Giglia's remains into umber whorls. Grimacing, Cashel followed.

The room beyond was darker than the others. Against the far wall was a throne inexpertly hacked out of stone; on it sat a statue as brutal and primitive as the throne itself. It was male, but it had tusks and a crude ape's face. In its right hand was a stone club the length of Cashel's arm.

"Is this a chapel?" Cashel said. "Is that the god they worship here?"

The tower shuddered. Cashel heard the sharp *crack/crack/crack* of stone breaking. The statue trembled side to side on its throne.

Cashel turned; the outer door had slammed behind them, but maybe he could smash it open again. "Earthquake!" he cried. "We've got to get out!"

"It's not an earthquake," Mona said impassively; she didn't move. "And we can't get out while this remains. The dwelling must have a master to exist, so it's created a master in its own image."

The statue stood up. It looked even bigger standing than it'd seemed while seated; Cashel didn't think he could reach to the top of its head flat-footed. Not that he was likely to need to do that.

It started forward, raising its club. "Mona, get out of the way!" Cashel said in a growl.

He lifted the quarterstaff before him and began backing toward the door to the central room. The light was better there, and there was more space besides. He and his staff covered a lot of territory when the fight started.

Rock groaned against itself. The statue's face shifted as its mouth moved. "I will destroy you...", the stone said in a rumble almost too low for human ears.

Cashel knew where the doorway was behind him. He feinted at the statue's head, then stepped back quickly and surely. He kept his staff vertical to clear the narrow opening. Mona was somewhere nearby, a presence without form because all Cashel's attention was on the statue. He hoped the girl'd stay clear, but he couldn't worry about that right now.

The statue clumped through the doorway after him, barely clearing the jambs. It looked even uglier than it had in the relative shadow of the further room. "You cannot escape me...", it grated in a voice of emotionless menace.

Cashel spun his staff in a short sun-wise arc, crashing his left ferrule into the lumpish fist which gripped the stone club. There was a crack and flash of blue wizardlight; the creature growled like an approaching avalanche.

Cashel wasn't looking for escape. He'd come to fight.

The statue rushed him, swinging the stone club in an overhead blow. Cashel rammed his staff forward like a spear. The blunt butt-cap slammed into the thing's throat with another blue flash.

The creature's head jerked back. The mighty arc of its club touched nothing but air till it smashed in itself on the floor, cratering the alabaster. The grip flew out of the

stone hand.

Cashel backed, gasping in deep breaths. He'd struck swiftly and as hard as he could, and the quivers of wizardlight meant he was using more than the strength of his great muscles. He was uncomfortable about that other business--he was a shepherd, not a wizard--but when he was facing a creature like this he was glad of any help he could get.

The thing held its hands up in front of its face. Its fingers were thin scorings in stone mitts; only the thumbs were separate. Its blunt features were those of a bestial doll a child had molded from clay.

The creature's mouth opened. It screamed like millstones rubbing.

"Watch--" Mona cried, but Cashel didn't need to be told what to do in a fight. The creature leaped toward him like a missile from a huge catapult. Cashel stepped back and sideways, thrusting his quarterstaff low. He slipped the thick hickory pole between the stone ankles; it flexed but held. The creature plunged head-first into the wall with a crash that rocked the tower.

The alabaster fractured in scalloped flakes, leaving a crater at the point of impact. The creature dropped flat on the floor. It braced its stone arms beneath it, starting to rise.

Cashel, holding the staff like a battering ram, struck the back of its head, bouncing it into the wall again. Light as blue as the heart of a sapphire flared at the double *crack!* of iron on stone and stone on stone.

Cashel stepped back, bending slightly and sucking air through his open mouth. The creature's arms moved feebly, like an infant trying to swim. The ferrule Cashel had just struck with glowed orange, cooling to dull red. He switched ends, then brought the staff back with both arms.

The creature got its hands under it and lifted its head lifted slightly. Cashel lunged forward, driving the staff down with the whole weight of his body. The butt hammered the creature at the same point as before. The statue's head exploded in a flash and thunderclap. The massive body began to crumble the way a sand castle dissolves in the surf.

Cashel felt himself wavering. He planted the quarterstaff against the floor and used it to brace him as he let himself kneel. His breath was a rasping thunder, and his blood hammered in his ears.

The only part of the creature still remaining was the outstretched right arm. When it suddenly collapsed to a spill of sand, Cashel caught a brief reminder of the dry, sweet odor in which Giglia had vanished. Then nothing remained but air harsh with the faint brimstone reek of nearby lightning.

Cashel stayed like that for--well, for a time. He figured he could move if he had to, but since he didn't he was just going to rest till he felt like doing something else.

Though he'd kept his eyes open, he didn't have much awareness of his surroundings. There wasn't a lot to see, after all; just the trail of coarse grit that'd been a statue there on the floor in front of him. It looked like what he'd seen on the hills he'd climbed to reach the tower....

"Are you ready to go home, Cashel?" Mona said.

Cashel's world clicked back into hard focus again. He turned his head and smiled

at the girl, feeling a little embarrassed. How long had she been standing there, waiting for him to come to himself?

"I'm all right," he said, wondering how true that was. He stood, lifting himself partly by the strength of his arms on the quarterstaff. He swayed a little, but no worse than you always did when you'd been bent over and got up suddenly.

He grinned wider and said, "I'm fine," meaning it this time. "But how do we get back home, Mona?"

As Cashel spoke, he took a closer look at the walls. His eyes narrowed. "Mona?" he said. "Things don't look right. The stone looks *thin*. It wasn't like that before."

"This world is decaying," the girl said, "and not before time. We have to get you out of here, though. Come."

She stepped through the doorway to the room where the statue had waited; the gold key was out in her hand again. Cashel followed, as he'd been doing ever since he met the girl--except when there was the fighting.

He grinned again. That was all right. Mona was better at leading than Cashel ever wanted to be, and she'd kept out of the way when *he* went to work.

Mona looked back at him. "I'm sorry I had to trick you," she said. "Your help was very important."

Cashel shrugged. "You didn't have to trick me, Mona," he said. "You could just have asked. But that's all right."

The throne had fallen into a pile of sand and pebbles like the thing that'd sat on it. On the wall behind was another door. Mona stuck the key into the door--there hadn't been a keyhole that Cashel could see, but he was sure about what she'd just done--and pulled the panel open.

"Go on through, Cashel," she said, smiling like the sun rising. "Thank you. We all thank you."

Cashel hesitated. "You're coming too, aren't you, Mona?" he said. Light and color without shape swirled in the door opening.

Her smile became pensive. She raised the key in the hand that didn't hold the door open. "I have to free the seeds we found," she said. "Otherwise they'll rot instead of growing as they should."

"But what happens to you?" Cashel said.

"Go on back to your own world, Cashel," Mona said, her voice hard without harshness. "There must be renewal."

Cashel cleared his throat. He didn't have anything to say, though, so he nodded and walked toward the opening. As his leading foot entered the blur of color, Mona said, "Your house will always be a happy one, dear friend."

For a moment Cashel stepped through nothingness so silent that he heard his heart beating; then his bootheel clacked on stone. He was standing in the familiar hallway down which he'd been going to dinner.

"Oh!" cried a servant, dropping the pair of silver ewers he'd been carrying to refill from the well in the courtyard at the end of the passage. They rang on the floor, sounding sweet or hollow by turns as they rolled.

Cashel squatted, holding his staff upright in one hand as he caught the nearer pitcher. It might have a few new dings in it, but he didn't guess the servant would get in real trouble.

"Oh, your lordship, I'm so sorry!" the fellow babbled. He took the ewer from Cashel's hand but he was trembling so bad he looked like he might drop it again. "I didn't see you!"

Cashel glanced at the door he'd come out of... and found there wasn't one, just a blank wall between the entrances to a pair of large suites. He stood up. "Sorry," he said apologetically. "I didn't mean to startle you."

Cashel headed on in the direction he'd been going when he'd first heard the girl--well, first heard Mona--crying. He'd never really liked this palace. It was a dingy place, badly run down before Garric arrived and replaced the Count of Haft with a vicar.

Nothing Cashel could see was different about it now, but the corridor seemed a little cheerier than it used to be. He smiled. He'd have started whistling if he could carry a tune.

Introduction to Dogs of War

COSTS AND BENEFITS

These are stories about wars which haven't happened, can't happen, and generally never could have happened. I've chosen them because they're good stories, and because they explore two questions which I wondered about before I was drafted to Viet Nam and which I've wondered about a great deal more in the years since:

- 1) How do you make a soldier? And
- 2) What do wars do to the people who fight them?

There's no single answer to either question, but the first one seems to boil down to two alternatives--you start with a natural soldier, a warrior if you will; or you take an ordinary man (or maybe woman; that wasn't common in the past for reasons involving muscle mass, but that's less a factor today), strip him of all civilized norms, and build him back in the form you want for the new task you've set him: killing other human beings.

Most people writing military SF focus on the first group, the warriors. Many species have certain members specialized for the group's defense. In social insects like ants and termites, the warriors are physically larger than the workers and may have jaws so hypertrophied that they can't even feed themselves. Likewise, male lions are twice the size of females, but don't hunt for themselves when they're living as members of a pack (or pride, if you prefer the collective noun that gained currency at the end of the 19th century). Physical variation isn't as important in the human species, but there's evidence that one or two percent of the male population is psychologically specialized for similar duties.

If all goes well, the warriors spend their entire lives doing nothing but eating the fruits of others' labor. Nice work if you can get it.

But if resources are limited, there's going to come a time when your colony or pack or tribe has something that another colony or pack or tribe wants. This is as true for developed nations of the 21st century as it was sixty millennia ago when humans hunted herds of bison with spears of flaked stone. When that time comes, you'd better hope your group has somebody walking the boundaries, watching the would-be interlopers; and needs must, closing with those interlopers in the willingness to kill or be killed for your sake.

Natural warriors are, as I said, a small minority of the population. The military leadership of developed nations has learned how to make passable substitutes by teaching perfectly ordinary men to kill. That's the easy part. The process nonetheless leaves a problem that governments rarely address, at least directly.

Despite most fiction and almost all TV and movies, the only people who can kill without compunction and remorse are sociopaths. It doesn't matter if the soldier kills in a good cause (all causes are good in the minds of those who decree them), if he saved his own life and those of his loved ones by killing, or if he returns to honor and glory among his fellow countrymen as a result of that killing: he's still paid a price, and he'll continue to pay, to a greater or lesser extent, for as long as he lives.

There are ways around the problem. Sometimes killing can be made impersonal, a matter of switches and icons rather than blood and screams. Even so, reality may intrude unexpectedly: the firestorms that devastated Tokyo during WW II lifted the smell of burning flesh up to the B-29s raining incendiary bombs from two miles high above the city.

The soldier at the sharp end doesn't have the option of pretending he's fighting map coordinates or phosphor dots, but he can withdraw into himself. His training has already started his process of desocialization, so it's a natural progression. He's no longer fully human--in fact, he more and more mimics a sociopath--but he can continue carrying out the tasks required of him for much longer than would otherwise be possible.

If the process goes on too long, he'll break nonetheless and become useless to his group, his society. That won't matter much to society. He'll have guarded the boundaries while he lasted, and society will by then have trained somebody else to take his place.

And it won't matter to him: there's no 'him' left, after all, in the sense of a human being with human responses.

Those who were close to him in the days when he was still human may regret what he's become; maybe they'll even be able to help him return to a greater or lesser extent. And the others whom society has sent down the same path and who've managed to come back--they'll care very much about the poor bastards who used to be men but are now locked in their own heads with no reality but their own hellish memories.

We may not be able to help, but we'll care.

--Dave Drake
david-drake.com

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last updated 23 March 2002 by webmaster@david-drake.com

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Joke Covers: Image 1 of 11



Maddy didn't like the walk to school, and she didn't like the school. Her daddy had never come home from the war, and her mommy worked the night shift, so she had to walk alone. The path past the Army base was dark and creepy, and the kids who bullied her on the playground left her in tears every recess.

Until she made friends with Mikey, the lonely M-1 amphibious assault vehicle who spoke only to her. Then everything changed. With the heart of Lassie and the power to sustain 29 miles an hour over water, Mikey helped Maddy bring order to the playground—and to her life.

David Drake, who still owns the highchair in which he ate as a child, melds the wonder of childhood with the horror of war to create a modern children's classic you'll want to read over and over again to every child you've ever disliked.



Maddy and the M-1
Amphibious Assault Vehicle

By David Drake

Maddy and the M-1 Amphibious Assault Vehicle



By David Drake



CHISELS AND NUKES:
A KITCHEN SURVIVAL GUIDE

DAVID DRAKE

Sex, housework, and cooking: That's why you married her. Now, though, she's gone to visit her parents, and you're alone in the house, you versus the kitchen. Don't despair: David Drake shows how you can survive for weeks with only a chisel to dislodge the shards of plastic-coated brown, green, and red masses that lurk in your freezer—and a microwave to nuke 'em.

The host of a major annual cooking event, the Chatham County Pig Pickin', for over two decades, David Drake turns his sights on the kitchen and fires a killer payload of vital survival information.



CHISELS AND NUKES: A KITCHEN SURVIVAL GUIDE



BY DAVE DRAKE



You're fat, and you're a loser. You don't need a fancy diet. You don't need measuring cups, calorie counters, kitchen scales, and all those other useless bits of dieting ordnance.

You just need to shut up and stop eating.

In this new diet sensation, David Drake, who can still fit into the pants he wore in Viet Nam, shows you the fastest path to your weight goal. With tips on everything from how to most attractively present a plate of plain, wet iceberg lettuce, to the best way to field-strip an M16 rifle for easy transport to the nearest university tower when you just can't take it anymore, Drake arms you for every step of the dieting process.



Shut Up and STOP Eating By David Drake

Shut Up and STOP Eating

By David Drake



ake

By David Drake



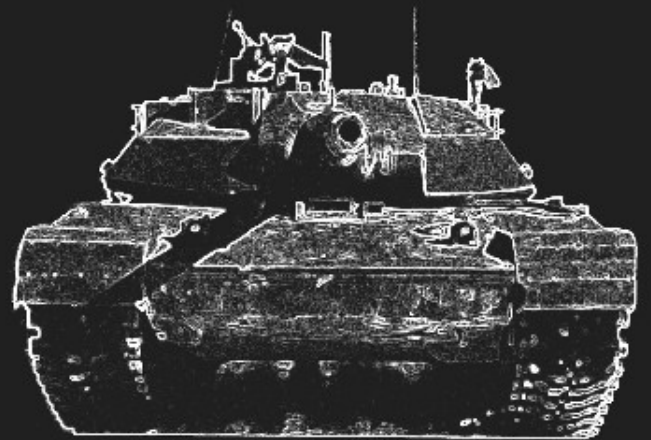
Trouble on the Treads

By David Drake

Though Cutter knew her only as a beautiful woman, a soldier, and the courier who brought him missions from the Army command center, he had always hoped for more. Now, though, she was dead, her gutted body dangling intestines over the edge of the treads of the M4 Sherman tank in the base's locked-and-shuttered museum. When Cutter asked what had happened, central command revoked his base pass—and then he had to investigate. The trail led him first to Washington and then to NASA in Houston, as Cutter assembled the pieces of what might be the biggest cover-up in government history and put his own life in jeopardy.

Leading writer David Drake merges mystery and science fiction in this tale that will take you to a shadowy world you never knew existed—and to a road to the stars that may run through the body of an innocent girl!

Trouble on the Treads



By David Drake

Joke Covers: Image 5 of 11



You didn't ask for the responsibility, but now you're stuck with a child, or, worse, with a pack of them. You considered selling the lot of them to medical science, but jail is too high a price to pay. So now what do you do?

Worry no longer.

David Drake, top military science fiction writer and a man whose son survived to adulthood, has written the step-by-step parenting guide that every new father needs—and that every surviving father wishes he had owned. Learn all the tricks—from syncing your bathroom visits with your infant's dirty diapers so your wife has to handle all the shit, to driving only a motorcycle so you never have to ferry the child anywhere—necessary to keep your sanity until the kids can get the hell out of the house.

Too Bad You Can't Sell Them: A Man's Guide to Parenting

David Drake

Too Bad You Can't Sell Them: A Man's Guide to Parenting

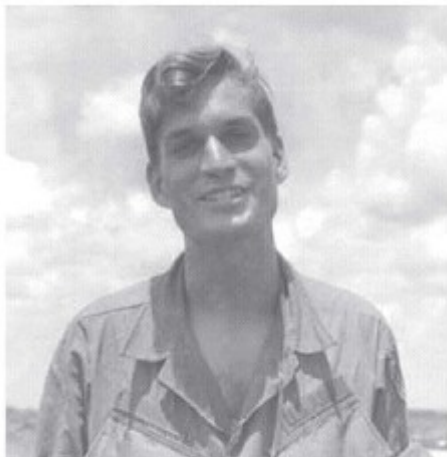


David Drake



With his searing new blockbuster, *Rear-Echelon Mother F**kers*, David Drake blasts through the shields over the political process and uncovers the diseased beating heart of American politics. Sure, you can study issues endlessly, vote for the least repulsive of the candidates, and then drive home daydreaming of the day that a person actually worthy of a higher office ends up in one, but we all know that day will never come.

Instead of wasting all that energy, learn how to use your vote to contain the damage the politicians can do to you and your life. With tips on everything from tracking which special-interest groups you're really electing, to making sure your home is armed and provisioned in case they flip out and launch the big one, this book is the field guide you need to political—and post-political—survival.



Rear-Echelon Mother F**kers

David Drake

Rear-
Echelon
Mother
F**kers:
Minimizing the Damage

David Drake



Drake

David Drake



Life is hell, and you're a loser. What does it matter if there's a God? Wars will continue to dot the globe, governments will continue to erode the rights of their citizens, and your closest friends and lovers will continue to cheat on you and break your heart at every opportunity.

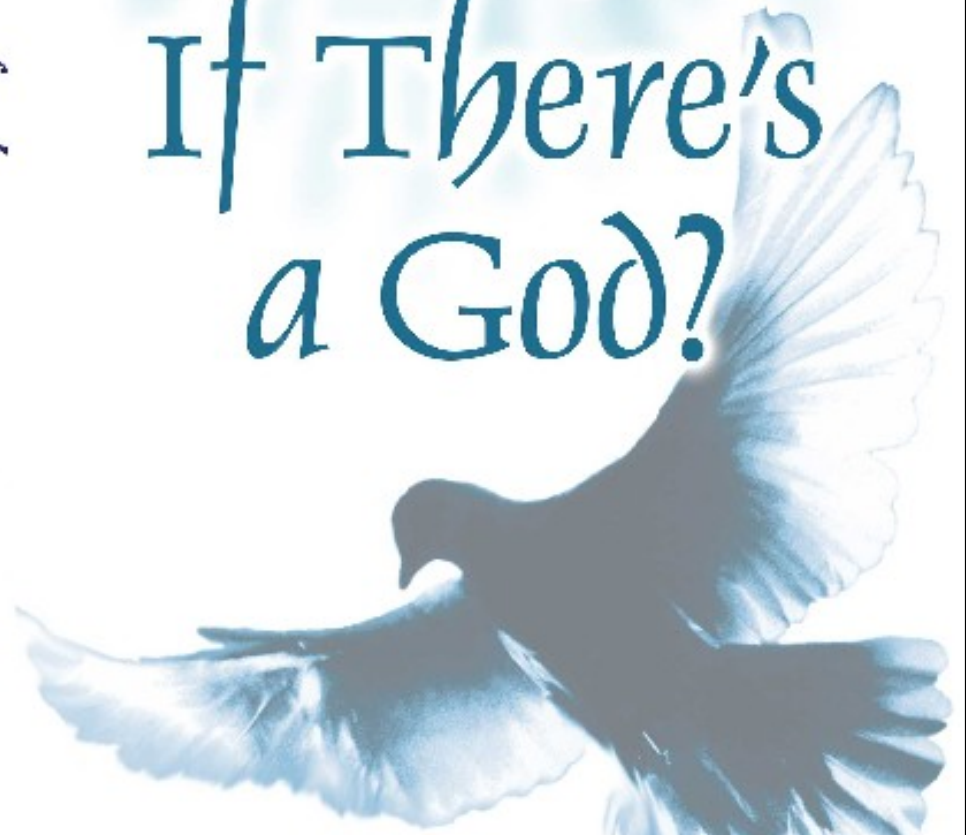
With *So What If there's a God?* David Drake, leading military science fiction writer and author of the self-help classic, *You Deserve It*, draws a bead on the tough religious issues few writers have the guts to confront. You'll never think about God the same way again.



So What If There's a God?

David Drake

David Drake
So What
If There's
a God?



wake





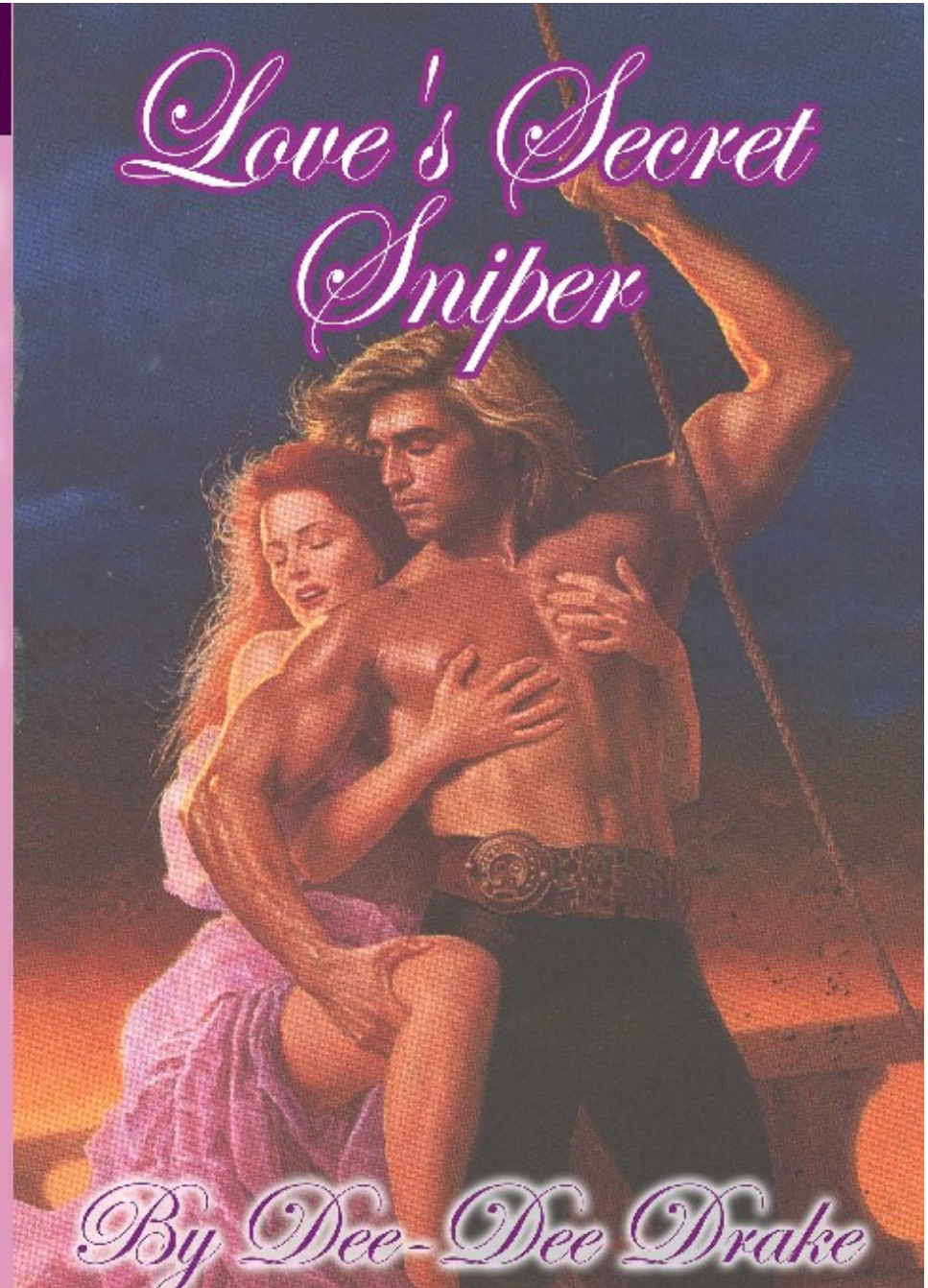
Katarina was an NSA agent with a penchant for heavily muscled men and heavily armored vehicles. Joachim was the sniper the agency assigned to her command. When a mission in Panama turned hot, his shots blasted holes in their enemies—and in her heart! From a watch station in the jungle to the command station of an M1A1 Abrams tank, their passion exploded as powerfully as the ammunition they fired.

With *Love's Secret Sniper*, newcomer Dee Dee Drake explodes onto the romance scene with the sure trajectory of a ground-launched cruise missile. Already reloading for a new book, Drake shows you the passion behind the intrigue, and the love behind the laser sights.



Love's Secret Sniper

By Dee-Dee Drake



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You're a bad person. You know it. Your family knows it. Your friends know it. Just about everyone you've ever met knows it. Yet despite that fact, you try to pretend that all the bad things that have happened in your life are accidents, random acts of fate you didn't deserve.

You don't have to pretend any longer. With David Drake's *You Deserve It* you can learn to accept yourself as the scum you are. The world's leading author of military science fiction lights the path through the jungle of your soul to your own dark heart. Along the way he teaches not only how to resign yourself to the horrors ahead, but also how to take control of the pain by punishing yourself regularly. Bonus chapters on dangerous hobbies give step-by-step instructions for integrating pain into your dally life.

Don't let another horrible day pass without picking up the book that all your loser friends will want to borrow. You deserve it!



YOU DESERVE IT

DAVID DRAKE

**YOU
DESERVE
IT**

**DAVID
DRAKE**



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DRAKE



When You Really Have to Leave the House David Drake

Admit it: You hate to travel. You'd rather stay at home, where you know the land and you've got a clear line of sight on every major approach. Sometimes, though, you *have* to travel. Whether the trip is as obviously complex as an unwanted journey to a foreign land in a time of conflict, or as seemingly simple as a weekend visit to a convention your job demands you attend, leading military science fiction author David Drake shows you how to plot a course that leaves minimal collateral damage.

Learn how to catnap in hotel lobbies when your room isn't ready, win the battle to be on a non-smoking floor, get to a hotel from an airport without killing a cabbie, and other tricks of the reluctant traveler. Once you've read *When You Really Have to Leave the House*, you'll want to pack the book permanently in your suitcase—where you'll hope you never have to use it.

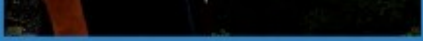


When You Really Have To Leave The House

David Drake

DAVID DRANK

ke



Joke Covers: Image 11 of 11



The bookish boy they knew only as Johnson rode out of Livingston a child and returned a man with a scar on his cheek and a story he would never tell. Conent to drive the short-run stagecoach and visit Lil from seven to eight on Thursday nights, Johnson faded again into the quiet town.

Until the seven Greeley brothers tore into town, burned down the jail, and shot Lil. Then Johnson's past returned with a vengeance. The first Greeley to see the wagon supporting the metal-wrapped cistern laughed so hard he bent over just as the guns emerged from the holes ringing the giant barrel. As the wagon picked up speed and the guns blazed, his laughter vanished as quickly as his life, and the range war was on.

Drawing on his tank experiences in Viet Nam, David Drake creates a new genre of heavy-metal Western. The frontier will never be the same!



THUNDER ON THE TRAILS DAVID DRA

THUNDER ON THE TRAILS

BY DAVID DRAKE





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