

PARSEC Meeting Schedule

March 2005

Date: March 12th 2005 - 2 PM
Topic: Confluence Program Topics
Location: Allegheny Branch of Carnegie Library

April 2005

Date: April 9th 2005 - 2 PM
Topic: Dr. Eric Davin presents "WEIRD SISTERS:
Women and Weird Tales Magazine, 1923-1954."
Location: Allegheny Branch of Carnegie Library

The Carnegie Library, Allegheny Regional is approximately 1 mile north of Downtown Pittsburgh. Situated in Allegheny Center in the Central North Side neighborhood, Allegheny Regional lies just behind Allegheny Center immediately beside the old Buhl Planetarium. For Directions please refer to the Parsec web site: <http://www.parsec-sff.org/meet.html>

Announcements - continued from previouspage

sions and dessert party. Saturday features a full day of multiple sessions for fiction, NF and children's writers, journalists, and poets. Two-hour poetry/fiction workshop. Panel discussions with agents, editors, journalists, informal genre chats, agent/editor appointments, book fair, flash fiction contest. More info: <http://www.glvwg.org/conference>.

• Orson Scott Card will be discussing and signing his new book, *Shadow of the Giant* at the Joseph-Beth Bookstore in the new Southworks complex on Carson street on March 13th at 2pm. For more details go to: <http://www.joseph-beth.com>

PARSEC

The Pittsburgh Area's Premiere Science-Fiction Organization
P.O. Box 3681, Pittsburgh, PA 15230-3681

President - Kevin Geiselman	Vice President - Sarah Wade-Smith
Treasurer - Greg Armstrong	Secretary - Joan Fisher
Commentator - Ann Cecil	

Website: <http://www.parsec-sff.org>

Meetings - Second Saturday of every month.

Dues: \$10 full member, \$2 Supporting member

Sigma is edited by David Brody
Send article submissions to: sigma@spellcaster.org



SIGMA

The Newsletter of PARSEC • March 2005 • Issue 228

Tjernlund on Huygens

Cecil on Boskone 42

Hall on Heroines





View From the Top

The President's Column - Kevin Geiselman

Last May, when Three Rivers Free Net closed, I embarked on a quick scramble to find hosting for the Parsec website. A friend of mine recommended a hosting service run by a friend of his called MongoHosting. For \$20 and knowing someone on the inside, it seemed like a very good deal.

But I made a mistake. Because of a procedural issue it turned out that MongoHosting owned the parsec-sff.org domain. I contacted them and the guy at MongoHosting didn't see a problem. When the domain expired in a year

it would be a simple matter for me to claim the domain. I didn't see any reason to be concerned.

As the year progressed, I began to think I had made a mistake. MongoHosting's website said they were updating their site but nothing changed for months. Our website was down for a day or two and my e-mails requesting support went unanswered. The support forums were alive with activity but only silence from the support staff.

So, with a sense of foreboding and with spring approaching, I sent an e-mail asking about taking ownership of the parsec-sff domain. I received an almost immediate response from the Admin saying they would be glad to transfer the domain for a fee of \$150.

I was outraged. I know what it takes to transfer domain ownership and \$150 is outrageous.

"As we just reregistered the domain we would be expecting to recoup costs, expenses and associated costs from the hosting charges."

I learned that MongoHosting had been bought by another company. I checked and they were lying when they said they had just reregistered the domain. There were lies in the registrant contact information. I had paid them \$20 for a year of hosting so they had no losses to recoup. This was blackmail, pure and simple.

It took three weeks of making it very clear that I knew what their technical issues and costs really were and that their excessive fee put them at risk of me simply not paying the annual bill when it came due and picking up the domain when it expired. The compromise they came to was that they would give me the domain as "a gift" in return for two years pre-paid hosting. That would be \$50. It's still extortion but it is extortion we could afford.

Then the site exceeded its bandwidth and shut down. Several months ago I had set up a bulletin board. No one at Parsec paid much attention but the SPAM-bots of the world did. They started attacking the bulletin board, attempting to signon through security holes to SPAM the members. They weren't successful but their repeated attempts drove our usage from 60-70 Meg a month to 500 Meg.

It was at this point that I let the general Parsec membership know what was going on. After all, the website was down. There were some options floated around but after about a day I was able to get MongoHosting to increase my bandwidth allocation, probably because I told them that I had agreed to their blackmail demands and would pay them once this issue was cleared up.

The site was back up and the parsec-sff domain is now ours. In May when the registration expires, I will immediately pick it up through Network Solutions making me the Technical Contact as well as the Owner. In that way we could move our hosting any time we want.

There has been a lot of talk floating around about other domain names. I had thought of getting another domain when it looked like the website would be down

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Announcements & Stuff

- William Tenn (our own Phil Klass) is available on streaming audio in the archives of New York radio station WNYC. Included is an interview by David Garland and a reading by Phil of his story, "On Venus Have We Got a Rabbi". Available at, <http://www.wnyc.org/shows/spinning/episodes/11222002>.

- Party Announcement!: Ancient cultures, including those as varied as the Romans and the Hindus, celebrated New Year's Day on April 1. In an act to rekindle that ancient tradition, there will be an Old New Years Party at Ann's House on Friday, April 1st. (Ann had nothing to do with it, it was all Greg's foolish idea.) It will begin at 7 pm. RSVP to roboman@cmu.edu, or let Greg know you are coming. Ask for directions if you need. Street parking is limited, so car-pool if you can. Also, the T stop is only a short walk away. Food and beverages are yet to be determined, and attendees are invited to bring something. Let Greg know what, so he can fill in the gaps.

- A small note regarding Confluence membership: There will be no PARSEC discount at the door. We'll offer it for pre-reg memberships, but at the door you will pay full price. This means you should all pre-register for Confluence as soon as you can. No later than the cut-off date of July 1st, 2005.

- Your treasurer reminds you that your PARSEC dues are due!

- April 1-2, 2005: The Write Stuff, the annual conference of the Greater Lehigh Valley Writers Group, at Four Points Sheraton, Allentown, PA. Keynote by award-winning science fiction author and Writers Digest fiction columnist Nancy Kress, author of two great books on writing, *Dynamic Characters* and *Beginnings, Middles and Ends*. Friday evening features Page One critique session. continued on next page

Geis - continued from page 7

panies. Sure, MongoHosting is a bunch of lying thieves but if they keep our website up for \$25 a year, the price cannot be beaten. And with the domain now in our possession, we can cut them loose at any time if they get too bad.

What's going on here is the same thing I see periodically when something is not quite right with the website or if someone wants a new feature.

"Hey Kevin, can we put up a member directory on the website?"

"Sure, there's plenty of space and I can secure the directory. All I need is for someone to put the file together."

silence

"Is there room to put the Parsec library online?"

"Probably. There is a great program available that will actually write the HTML code to be imported. We'd just need someone to go through and catalogue the books."

nothing

"An art section would be great for the website."

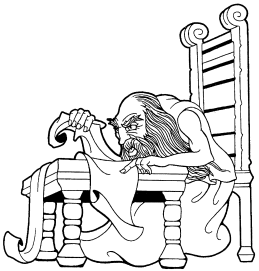
"It sure would. It could be done a couple of ways, any ideas? Of course, I'll need scanned images."

crickets chirping

So, now I'm going to really start ranting. Do you want something special done with the website? Then you have to help me. Do you not like what I'm doing with the website? I can give you the passwords and files if you think you can do better. If you want to complain about something and then not step up to do something about it then you might as well just keep quiet. This website. . . this club doesn't happen without you.

March Minutes

Joan Fisher



2pm. Many of us were milling around socializing. The discussions ranged from the upcoming PARSEC calendar to computer games, to the lack of jobs.

Greg collected dues and Ann handed out membership cards to those paid up.

Kevin called the meeting to order at 2:20

He discussed moving the picnic to South Park or one of the other parks.

Greg gave treasurer report. Ann gave the PARSEC Ink report- Ann Cecil is the Chairman; Barb Carlson is the Editor, and Judy Friedl is the Treasurer.

Bonnie gave the PARSEC Calendar report. They are taking art submissions, as well as dates in Science Fiction trivia. She also mentioned that they were having a meeting after the PARSEC meeting.

Ann tried to find homes for all the dishes left at her house at the Christmas party. She managed to find homes for several.

It was announced that Science Fiction author Jack Chalker passed away.

Greg and Sasha took care of the raffle. Heidi Pilewski won and she took Paratabloids.

The topic for the meet was Ghosts. The talk was given by Rene Kruse of the Mon Valley Ghost Research Society.

Haunting is not always a negative experience. It can be a positive experience. Haunting just means that something is happen in that space and that spirits can be found there.

Haunted houses don't have to be the Hollywood version of creepy dusty, they can be a new house, or a store, or even a backyard.

Something happened in that space or the house that it is impressed on that space. It is the energy of the happening burned into that particular space, like the monitor of an ATM having its front screen burned into it.

There are a couple of types of haunting. In an active haunting a ghost seems to be aware of its surroundings, shares its surroundings with people.

Other spirits seem to move around. They go visiting. During some hauntings people will smell things out context, like baking brownies and cigar smoke, while others will see the spirits, or hear the spirits.

One reason there might not be any 'pictures' of spirits is because the image that we see is how our brain interprets the energy of the spirit. It turns it into something we can understand.

We all have a comfort zone- her comfort zone does not allow for evil ghosts...just cranky or grouchy. She has had hats pulled off, pinched hard enough to bruise, her hair tugged. Just to name a few things that have happened to her.

The talk digressed into an open discussion, with her explaining some of the various tools that she uses in the course of her work. The talk was very fascinating. I was so interested in the talk that I was hard pressed to take notes.

Reviews

Movies

Heroine Addiction: Catwoman, Elektra

reviewed by William Blake Hall



I've already complained that *Catwoman* was not that good a movie, but in the months since it came and went I've picked up a mild buzz among female moviegoers that they resolutely dug the movie, regardless of the critics and its sloppy quality.

Now *Elektra* is upon us, which I saw primarily out of blind lust for Jennifer Garner, and as lavish actioners go it handily beats out a *Charlie's Angels* or even a *Tomb Raider* movie in dramatic satisfaction, so that's still not saying much -- and again, I pick up this subterranean female buzz, which is a little more understandable this time because Garner is an established action-adventure archetype for young women thanks to TV's *Alias* and this is somewhat better. Yet it is still much ado about nothing, its internal logic simply doesn't impress me with the urgency of an evil cabal (which is evil mainly because we have to be told it's evil) trying to grab hold of a girl fighter even though they already seem awfully substantial and the girl fighter in question isn't that much.

The impression I get, then, is that there is a deep and abiding hunger out there for full-blown heroines in their own right, a hunger so ill-served up until now that it will gobble up pretty much anything halfway decent that comes along. Right now we are in a phase of subsistence upon whatever heroines are handy. But when oh when will we see a truly great movie heroine? Hopefully I will have the sense to recognize her when she arrives. Until such time, I can't mind these movies so much after all. With any luck, they are lulls before a bewitching storm.

Do we have any good examples of female heroism to draw upon? I offer these twelve, drawn to some degree from "mundane" sources as needed:

12. Smilla Jaspersen. First appearing in Peter Hoeg's unusual novel *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, Smilla was played in the peculiar movie of the same name by an unusually lupine Julia Ormond, otherwise wasted on glamorous trifles like *First Night* or *Sabrina*. The movie oversimplifies the story to second-rate James Bond stuff, but Smilla is still enough of a fascinating antihero to make the whole film worthwhile. Plus, this was technically SF.

11. Marge Gunderson. Frances McDormand's conspicuously pregnant police inspector from the Coen brothers oddity (is there any other kind?) *Fargo* was a worthy female successor to TV's classic *Columbo*: disarming yet resilient, decent yet wise, simple yet shrewd, polite yet tough. Rarely is a character both so thoroughly decent and impressive.

10. Kira Nerys. It should come as no surprise to SIGMA veterans that I continue to hold a torch for Nana Visitor's Kira from *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, a

character specially created when Michelle Forbes opted not to continue as Ro Laren from *Next Generation*. Kira was a classic Spitfire With a Lot of Heart, her crabbiness nicely offset by her affection for the no less crabby Odo. I'm guessing that we womenwatchers were "supposed" to gravitate to the Daxes, be they Terry Farrell as Jadzia or Nicole deBoer as Ezri, or even Chase Masterson's Leeta, but somehow they were never quite as inspirational.

9. Emma Peel. The first great TV breakthrough during the age of *The Girl From UNCLE*, a British import, Diana Rigg set a standard that few have yet risen to. True, many of the plots for *The Avengers* were padded fluff, and her karate often involved extras who obligingly flung themselves hither and yon if she merely tapped them, but the character was thoroughly winning.

8. Wai Lin. Appearing only once, played by Michelle Yeoh in the Bond movie *Tomorrow Never Dies*, Wai Lin would make a nonetheless fascinating adventuress as a Chinese secret agent equipped with plucky low-tech gadgetry and the ability to walk down walls.

7. Clarice Starling. His liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti -- yeh yeh, we know all that, but now it's time to focus properly upon the necessary counterweight to Hannibal Lecter, especially as portrayed by Jodie Foster in *The Silence of the Lambs*. Enough serializing of Hannibal -- why can't we see Clarice's non-Hannibal cases? Quid pro quo, already.

6. Dr. Julia Kelly. Though overshadowed by the huge presence of George Clooney, Nicole Kidman's Dr. Kelly in *The Peacemaker* is a sharp, steady, intuitive defense expert. Seeing her in action, I'd replace this Donald Rumsfeld fellow we've got with her any day. Team her up with Judi Dench as M from the Brosnan Bonds and we'd find bin Laden inside of a month.

5. Nikita. Here I refer to Anne Parillaud from the original French movie *La Femme Nikita*; Peta Wilson was fine in the TV show, but it all felt a little too Miami Vice for me. As with Emma Peel, another great standard -- even if I still doubt that a Mercedes-Benz made of anything short of neutronium could smash right through a brick wall.

4. Rommie. The syndicated series *Andromeda* has become less interesting after its first two seasons, but you can still see why engineer Seamus Zelazny Harper has a crush on the starship's computer and android avatar nicknamed Rommie. Brilliant, sensitive, an amazing fighter, and she looks like Lexa Doig too. True, she's technically superhuman, but I never held that against Spock.

3. Sydney Bristow. You knew that was coming, right? This latest season of *Alias* has gotten too one-shot episodic for my taste, but Syd is still fascinating to watch. The Rambaldi background alone makes this borderline SF.

2. Ripley. Somehow I refuse to think of her as Ellen. She was the sole survivor of *Alien*, the first one, but it was *Aliens* that really grabbed the world's attention. Sadly, she should have been left unsequelized.

1. Charlie Baltimore. Any bid for number one is so controversial that I may as well go whole hog and go with my guilty pleasure *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, starring Geena Davis in a thoroughly irresponsible, cheesily gabby, and shame-

us: Leen and Julie and Zoe and Shannon and Sarah and Emily (1) and Emily (2) and Xavid and Thomas all showed up for the panel, covering three years of Alpha membership among them. We babbled happily, handed out some flyers, and hopefully spread some enthusiasm.

While Wendy went off to lunch, my cousin and I went in to hear Orson Scott Card on a panel called Fiction for Free-Range Children. I took the opportunity to march up to the head table and introduce my cousin to Card; maybe not as flashy as Card's suggestion, but it did establish the point. Kathryn Cramer and Jane Yolen were on the panel along with Card and Farah Mendlesohn, but the panel became something close to a dialogue between Card and the knowledgeable Ms. Mendlesohn. Farah is another Brit, an academic whose focus is sf, and who is a fascinating conversationalist. (I met her at Mil-Phil, and was very positively impressed). She works for the Science Fiction foundation, out of Liverpool University. The panel sprang from research she's doing on what children really read (as versus what they are supposed to be reading). She has some incendiary theories on why YA fiction fails, by and large, involving the predominance of relationship messages, instead of scientific ideas. She has a questionnaire out on the web, at <http://www.sfquestions.blogspot.com>. I strongly recommend everybody reading this go there and answer her questions (I did). It will help make her sample stronger statistically, and she only needs 300 more to get to 1000 entries (and make her math simple).

After enjoying that panel, my cousin and I crashed the reception next door given by Tor for Card's latest: *Shadow of the Giant*. The fresh pineapple and cheese was better than lunch fare. After that we listened to Card for two more hours: one panel was on *Ender's Game: the Movie*, which was as much about Card's experience with Hollywood as about the possible movie itself. Then we stayed for Card's Guest of Honor speech, which involved him reminiscing about a variety of things.

After that, we foolishly wandered into the Dealer's room, where we met Juliet. I planned to buy one of her books, asked her to autograph it, and somehow wound up buying all 5. When the author is standing right there, it seems rude to just pick up one. Somewhere in there, before we all met to go off to dinner, we heard part of a filk concert by Urban Tapestry, so I got to explain to my cousin about filk.

Dinner was delightful; we went to something called Turner Fisheries (ok, Pittsburgh doesn't have a lot of fresh fish, so when I'm in Boston, my first choice is: fish). It was pleasant, reasonably quiet, with an attentive waiter and very good food. I probably shouldn't have let the waiter pick the wine, but it tasted great, and I can eat cheap for the rest of the month. By the time we left - Ms. McKenna is a very enjoyable companion, Wendy is at her best when relaxed, my cousin was quiet but put in a contribution now and then - we were all very relaxed and in a good mood. My cousin took off back to New Hampshire, Juliet went to bed (since her internal clock was still doing British time), and Wendy and I went off to plot.

Sunday went well, initially; Wendy had a two o'clock panel, we packed up and left in good order, and I was back on the road home by 4 pm. OK, it would be past midnight by the time I got home, but it is normally a very easy drive. All went well until I got to Pennsylvania. It started snowing. Oops. You really realize how BIG Pennsylvania is when you have to cover it at 30 miles per hour. And it is amazing how tiring it is to drive when you have to keep both hands on the wheel and both eyes firmly tracking to make sure you are still on the road. I didn't get home until 6 AM; called work at 9, groggy but focusing, and discovered that the meeting I was supposed to attend wasn't until the afternoon. Got up again about noon, looked briefly at email, and went in to work.

Reminded myself that I should plan these things better, next time. On the other hand, I had a great weekend. Next time, I will probably not plan any better. But Boskone has good programming, good music, a much nicer hotel now; well worth going, and you only have to worry a little about the weather.

Boskone 42

Ann Cecil

Boskone has a long history (42 times!) and is well-respected as the showpiece convention for NESFA, the New England SF Association. NESFA not only has many, many members, it has expanded beyond con-running and a clubhouse to a major publisher, rescuing classic sf authors from the perils of 'out-of-print' anonymity. And of course, rescuing fans from having to pay scalpers' prices to get readable copies of those works.

The biggest drawback to Boskone, besides the fact that it is held in Boston (not close to Pittsburgh, but not a horrendous drive - normally about 9 1/2 hours), is that it is held in February. This year it was the third weekend in February (the 18th - 20th); usually it is held on the second weekend, opposite PARSEC meetings, so I can't go. Ignoring the uncertain nature of February weather, I looked forward to attending this year, and made plans to drive up on Thursday; I took a half-day vacation on Thursday, and all day Friday off. This would give me a chance to visit with Wendy Kosak (aka Wen Spencer), and in addition, on Saturday my one and only first cousin had agreed to drive down from New Hampshire and attend. This would be his very first con, though he has been a fan ever since college, when I gave him a year's subscription to Analog.

Sadly, Thursday February 17 turned out to be "Speed out and Hit someone" day in Pennsylvania. People responded enthusiastically. I was held up three separate times, once on I-79, once on I-80, and finally on I-81. The first two times were relatively short stoppages, enlivened the second time by the person behind me who hadn't planned on stopping (Did she think the sign about icing with the blinking lights was advertising some Italian concoction?) and wound up in the median after side-swiping a truck. I hadn't realized that the whole passenger side of a car could just be peeled off by one hard swipe.

Anyway, stop number three turned out to be a real record breaker: I sat, with the motor turned off, for 7 hours. Fortunately the people in the car next to me were friendly, and lent me their cell phone to call Wendy and explain that I'd be ridiculously late.

In spite of all this, I got to the con on Friday in an excellent mood. Wendy had one of the leadoff panels, so after registering, we cornered one of the other panelists, a very pleasant Brit named Juliet McKenna, and started organizing the panel. We liked Juliet so much we invited her to join us for dinner on Saturday night. The panel went well; George R.R. Martin was the third panelist; the subject was "Writing the Great Fantasy Trilogy." Since none of three panelists was actually writing a trilogy, (Wendy and Juliet have done a series of books set in the same world, George is writing a sexology [6 books that are really one big novel broken into sections]), they mostly talked around the subject. The audience seemed to appreciate the conversation.

Boskone continues programming into the evening; the last panel starts at 10 pm, but both Wendy and I were hungry, so we went off to Legal Seafood and then some parties and to bed. Saturday dawned bright and fairly early, since I was meeting my cousin at 9:30 am. I had pointed him at the website, which has much information; he found the hotel and parking in good order, and his badge awaited (I'd already checked on that the day before). Orson Scott Card was Guest of Honor at Boskone, and my cousin is a big big fan of his. I had also checked with Card the day before (ran into him in the hall), and had permission to march my cousin up to the head of the autograph line and demonstrate that I really do know Card. Alas for grandstanding; the autographing session was on Sunday, and my cousin wasn't staying.

I showed my cousin the Dealer's Room, and then it was time for the Alpha panel. They gave Wendy a whole hour to fill, so Wendy, being Wendy, drafted Tamora Pierce and me to sit up there with her. There were two full rows of friendly faces in front of

lessly maudlin action-adventure which still managed to be solidly entertaining. Davis is an amnesiac teacher and mother who begins to remember that she was once Charlie, pretty much America's greatest assassin, and suddenly everyone wants her dead. Can she properly balance the survival skills of her Hyde with the decency of her Jekyll? It's rousing stuff, and supporting players like Samuel L. Jackson and Brian Cox aren't bad either.

Offhand I can think of ten other honorable mentions, which is all right; I'm just opining here, I make no claim to any incontrovertible definition. The point being, there is a heritage to draw upon. Will someone out there draw, already?

Books

Through Violet Eyes (2004) and With Red Hands (2005)

by Stephan Woodworth

Dell Suspense Books, Publisher: Random House

Reviewed by Mary Ann Mogus

I've been reading SF/F and mystery books for a very long time and have noticed that the genres are morphing into one another. This allows for some interesting and eclectic crossovers and the two books reviewed below are examples.

If you are born with violet irises you are one of the "dead talkers" trained by the NAACC, the North American Afterlife Conversation Corps. Natalie Lindstrom is a member of the NAACC and in *Through Violet Eyes* she is called in to contact Rosa Munoz so that the deceased can testify that she was killed by her husband.

But Natalie has another problem. Someone is killing the violets, as the people with violet irises are called. Detective Dan Atwater is assigned to protect her from this unknown killer. Dan has his own problems, having mistakenly killed an innocent man. He is reluctant to be near a violet let alone have one touch him. He fears the rage held by the soul of the man he killed.

Thrown together Natalie and Dan discover a mutual attraction. They also discover that the killer has help from a soul on the other side. Someone the living violets know and trust. Someone they are willing to let into their mind. A dead violet. Suspicion falls on the character of Maddox since he fits the killer's profile. Maddox isn't a violet but believes he can communicate with the dead electronically.

Dan is drawn away from Natalie by this false lead, while Natalie is captured by the real killer, Evan, a violet and her former love interest. But Evan is supposed to be dead. He is supposed to have been summoned by one of the living violets. Instead, Sondra, another violet and Evan's non-living accomplice has been impersonating the dead.

Serena, another violet saves Natalie after the first attempt on her life but kills Dan when Sondra possesses her body. Dead, Dan seeks out Natalie and inhabiting her, helps her to escape Evan. Evan is caught and confined to a mental institution. Because Woodworth treats souls as a form of electromagnetic energy,

Sondra's soul can be confined to a soul cage, a form of Faraday cage. Natalie leaves the Corps after discovering she is pregnant, setting the stage for the sequel, *With Red Hands*.

In *With Red Hands* a few years have passed and Natalie has given birth to a daughter, Callie, who has violet eyes. Natalie acts as a freelance violet and is very careful to give the NAACC little reason to step in and take Callie into protective custody. She is also forced to deal with her mother. Nora, a violet, who went insane pursuing a murderer called the Thresher. The Corps has hurt Natalie's family economically and forced her mother into a state asylum in revenge for Natalie's retirement.

Inez, a prosecutor Natalie has worked with before, asks for her help. Lyman Pearsall, an unstable violet, has been working with Lathrop, a defense lawyer, by summoning the victim's soul during a trial. But the 'soul' always testifies that someone else committed the deed. Natalie discovers that Pearsall has made a deal with the soul of the executed Thresher, allowing his soul to inhabit Pearsall's body and commit additional gruesome murders in return for pretending to be the dead person summoned for testimony. Pearsall has sealed the souls of the murder victims in soul cages in a house he purchased for that purpose. Pearsall's motive is to get enough money to escape the clutches of the Corps.

Thresher has been tormenting Natalie's mother for years and eventually possesses Pearsall and kills her. He also kills Natalie's stepmother. His motive is to get to Callie and live again as a child, this time a girl. He almost succeeds when he possesses Callie after sending her a sampler he created. But he is thwarted by Natalie who rescues her daughter by summoning Thresher's dead mother, the woman Thresher most fears. Thresher's motive is a very twisted version of the Oedipus complex, complete with castration.

Natalie gets revenge on the Corps, Pearsall, and Thresher by releasing the sealed souls and summoning a set of murder victims to give a press interview. The bad press keeps the Corps away from Callie and gives Natalie some time to teach her daughter how to protect herself from souls such as Thresher's.

Woodworth builds a plausible society complete with electronic Soulscan apparatus to indicate when a soul has entered a violet's body. He weaves the story so well that it sounds possible. The plots and subplots are interwoven and resolved at the end usually with a twist and this review can only give a sketch of what is contained in the books.

My one complaint is with the middle of *With Red Hands*. The murder trial is covered for 36 pages which I found a bit too long. The evidence could have been summarized rather than presented as testimony by several witnesses. The sequel to *With Red Hands* comes out in spring 2006 and is untitled at this time, but the excerpt sets it in Peru. Woodworth seems to have hit upon a formula for a successful and interesting cross-genre series.

March Space Report

Henry Tjernlund

The landing of Europe's Huygens lander onto Saturn's moon Titan this January was a success. Additionally the Cassini craft can now use its radar mapper which it could not do while Huygens was attached to Cassini. Unlike optical imaging, radar mapping is not hindered by Titan's thick hazy atmosphere. Cassini will be making flybys of Titan almost monthly. At least 40 flybys are planned. The combination of radar and filtered light images should allow over the next few years for the first detailed map of most of that shrouded moon.

The Huygens landing was the first ever on a moon around another planet. During its descent through Titan's atmosphere the Huygens module made measurements and even made a recording of the wind noises. Downward looking cameras imaged what appeared to be drainage streams leading into a smooth area that might be a geologically recent or even present shoreline. Of course at -290 degrees (F) any liquid on Titan would be something like super-cold fluid methane. Water ice at such temperatures is almost as hard as stone or metal. In fact it is suspected that the "rocks" seen in images from the landing site may be chunks of water ice. Much of the "bedrock" is likely to also be composed at least partly of water ice. Even the "sand" that Huygens landed on may be made of water crystals something not too unlike a dirty snow cone. During its few hours of operation Huygens sank a little bit into the surface material. It is speculated that either the probe landed in a sort of methane mud and slowly settled, or its warmth melted some of the water ice "sand."

The battery power on the Huygens lander lasted only a few hours. But in that short time it returned images and measurements from the most distant body landed on so far. The Cassini craft, being radioisotope powered, should continue to orbit Saturn and image its moons for several years. Depending on the flyby distances, the images from Cassini should be about 10 times more detailed than those taken by the Voyager 1 and 2 spacecrafts back in 1980 and 1981.

The flyby of Enceladus on February 19 showed a relatively un-cratered surface. Initial measurements indicate the surface ice is much more pure than expected. Surface features of Enceladus are similar to the two moons (Europa and Ganymede) of Jupiter that are believed to have subsurface oceans. Enceladus is one of the brightest and most reflective objects in the Solar System. Sadly, if rumored budget cuts are true and continue, then Cassini may be the last mission out to those far reaches for several decades.

Geis - continued from page 2

without it, but people were considering one for Parsec Ink, one for Confluence, one for Alpha and so on. If getting lied to by our hosting service wasn't enough, now it's politics. People trying to carve out their own little piece of turf.

First off, I thought the reason we were going to all the trouble of getting 501c3 non-profit status was to consolidate under one roof. What's the point of setting up different domains that all point to the same place?

Especially when each one of those domain names creates additional cost that, once established, should not be discontinued. Then there is the hosting issue. Each site needs to be hosted and it would be idiotic to host another domain with the extortionists at MongoHosting and equally foolish to pay for hosting at two different com-

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