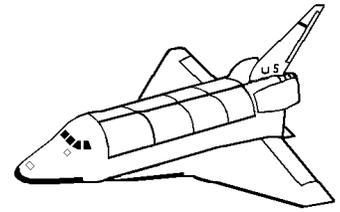


The



# SHUTTLE June 2001

*The Next NASFA Meeting will be 16 June 2001 at the Regular Time and Location*

*Con†Stellation ConCom at Robin Ray's House 6:30P 14 June 2001*

*DeepSouthCon ConCom at BookMark 7:00P 21 June 2001*

## Oyez, Oyez

The next **NASFA meeting** will be **16 June 2001** at the **regular time** (6P) and the **regular location** — BookMark on South Memorial Parkway. Call the store at 256-881-3910 if you need directions.

The plan is to **elect a con chair** for the 2002 Con†Stellation at the June meeting. Miss it at your own peril!

The **program** at the **June meeting** will be a group discussion on "What's your favorite currently running sf TV show and why?" The **June After-The-Meeting Meeting** will be at Mike Kennedy's house.

## Who Cheated Roger Rabbit?

Former Con†Stellation GoH Gary K. Wolf has filed suit against the Walt Disney corporation. Disney (along with Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment) developed and released the movie *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* which was based on Wolf's book *Who Censored Roger Rabbit?*

The lawsuit alleges that Disney has blocked attempts by Wolf to learn how much money he is owed in royalties (possibly as much as 5% of gross revenues). One never knows how this type of business deal will go, but this would seem to make more remote than ever the likelihood of a theatrical sequel.

## Con†Stellation ConCom

The next Con†Stellation XX con committee meeting will be on Thursday 14 June 2001 at Robin Ray's house — 111 Wingfield Drive in Madison. Call her at 256-464-9818 if you need directions.

This is an eating meeting, with the food theme being "long food." Eating starts at 6:30P with the meeting proper afterwards.

## Kubla Khan Korrection

A rumor, which turned out to be false, was included in the Kubla Khan review in the last issue of the *Shuttle* and we are pleased to correct it here. Kubla Khan will indeed be back at the same hotel — the Airport/Opryland Day's Inn — in 2002. This comes straight from the Khen Moore, the Kubla Kondor himself.

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**Deadline for the July 2001 issue of *The NASFA Shuttle* is Friday, 6 July 2001.**



Shrek leaves to complain about these unwelcome guests. Meanwhile, the half-pint potentate needs a princess to marry, so he can become a real king. He tortures the gingerbread man (with a glass of milk) until the soggy fellow squeals on the location of the Magic Mirror.

After a demonstration (smashing a hand mirror), the Mirror reveals three eligible, batchelorette, Princesses: Cinderella, Snow White, and Fiona. The lord picks Fiona, though she is imprisoned in a tower, in the middle of a lake of boiling lava. The Mirror starts to tell him something *else* about her, but stops. Knights are summoned to contest, the best will be sent to fetch the Princess. Shrek flattens the knights, and Lithgow offers a deal. *You* bring the Princess, and the swamp is yours, again.

Fiona can kickbox like a champion, but hides herself at sundown. The smart-mouth donkey talks a monster out of eating him, too successfully. The beast falls in love with him, instead.

Who says, "Nobody likes a smart ass!"?

*Shrek* has excellent CG animation and a humorous storyline, with several twists. Adults and children laugh in the same places, for different reasons.

## Book Review

by David K. Robinson

***Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone***, by J. K. Rowling, Scholastic, Trade Paperback, 8 September 1999, 312pp, \$6.99, ISBN: 0-590-35342-X

I just recently finished reading a remarkable tale. It is *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. It is written by J. K. Rowling, a very popular Scottish writer.

The book opens in modern day England. It tells the story of young Harry Potter, a lad who lives with his aunt and uncle and whose parents were killed in an accident. Harry's aunt and uncle treat him real badly. In fact they treat him like dirt. As the story progresses, Harry is invited to come to this school but his uncle won't let him. Harry gets several letters but his uncle refuses to let him read them. Then Harry finally goes to this school and begins his training to become a sorcerer. The rest of the book progresses into something wonderful.

I personally like the book. It had a real British flavor to it which you will notice from the first page. From the beginning you can tell that it's written on a children's level. If you don't mind that then you will enjoy *Harry Potter*. I have been reading sf and fantasy for over 20 years, but still this book had a magical flavor to it. It reminded me of when I first started reading sf — this book reminded me a lot of why I read sf and fantasy. Read this book and perhaps you will rediscover the same. I would also like to say "thank you very much" to Jack Lundy for giving me this book for my birthday. Highly recommended.

## Convention Review

**DeepSouthCon 39/Tenacity 1**

by David K. Robinson

Most of you have heard of DeepSouthCon 39 which was held in Birmingham AL at the Radisson Hotel on May 4–6, 2001. Myself and Jack Lundy attended. I had a good time.

First I will start with the turnout. It was about what they

had hoped for. They were hoping for 500 and they got about 450. I had heard that they were hoping for that many.

Now on to the con. It was rather slow paced, a lot slower than I am used to. I usually like cons that are fast paced. They had decided at the last minute to make it a relaxicon. I didn't attend any of the panels but I mostly went all over the con. The dealers room had mostly books, games, and buttons. I didn't buy anything due to the fact that they didn't have much else. But still it was well run. The con suite was well stocked. They ran out of food before I got there.

The dance I did not go to. They were supposed to have a costume contest but I heard at the last minute that it was canceled due to lack of interest.

Overall I would say they did a reasonable job. I would give DSC 39 an 8+. See you all in Huntsville. Nice job.

## Set Me Free

**A Convention Review**

by Mike Kennedy

LibertyCon 15 was held 25–27 May 2001 at the Ramada Inn South in East Ridge (near Chattanooga) TN. Headline guests were Literary GoH David Drake, Artist GoH Gary Ruddell, Special Guest Debbie Hughes, and MC Eric Flint. This line up had one unusual feature in that Messieurs Drake and Flint have collaborated on several projects but this con was the first time they met in the flesh.

LibertyCon has been at this venue for several years now, but the facilities have subtly changed over the years. Organization of the space seemed much better this year than I recall from my last visit to LibertyCon two years ago. The con suite still functioned as a "pass through" to get to the art show and dealers room, but that was no big deal since the con suite is one of the most often visited parts of a convention anyway. Computer gaming was in a room off the back of the restaurant, but this didn't cause any problems either. Though I heard no complaints, handicapped access was potentially a problem since a few things (anime, gaming, cards) were located on the second floor of the hotel and there is no elevator. (Access between the main function areas and the sleeping rooms was also awkward for the mobility impaired, involving either stairs or a roundabout path.)

This convention is not easy to classify. In some respects it is a relaxicon, but it attracts too many professionals (usually including a half-dozen or more not on the official guest list) and is larger (typically 300 or more) than I feel comfortable calling a relaxicon. Though I don't have any figures to back this up, it seems like LibertyCon does much better than most cons in the area of getting attendees to come back year after year. I'm sure that helps them maintain a pretty steady attendance from year to year.

Well, relaxicon or not, LibertyCon does have a decent track of programming. However, since I was there in part to help out at two room parties (Con†Stellation XX Friday night and DSC 39 Saturday night) I didn't have time to attend much of it. I did drop on on Opening Ceremonies and caught the Masquerade on TV. LibertyCon does not have a video room, but the hotel does let them tap in to the cable system. This year they used it for old sf/fantasy serials (in addition to the Masquerade, of course). The main programming room was smallish but adequate for most things. Some alternate programming took place in other locations, including the con suite

(glitter *everywhere* from the Make It And Take It) and a couple of different outdoor venues.

Speaking of outdoors, one defining feature of this hotel as used by LibertyCon is the large patio which is right outside the door of the con suite. It saw a lot of use as it was the only sanctioned smoking space at the con and made a good socializing spot for all attendees. There was shade available, and it was needed as the days were quite sunny. In fact, the weather cooperated well all weekend. It was a bit hot and sticky outside during the day but cooled off nicely at night.

Neither the dealers room nor the art show were overly large, but both had good quality. I was tempted by a few pieces in the art show, but my good taste (?) outstripped my wallet. Oh, in theory I could have afforded a mid-four figure price tag but I really like to be able to pay my other bills, too.

Next year LibertyCon will be at the same hotel, but will be moving to the end of July — pretty much the old RiverCon time slot. They plan to make this their new permanent time. Two years hence (summer of 2003) LibertyCon will be host to DeepSouthCon 41 at that same time of year and hotel. It will be interesting to see how, or if, the date change affects the nature of the convention. Particularly, it will be interesting to see how well the hotel and the convention cope with the increased heat associated with being in the heart of the summer. I'd like to see them try out a temporary "air lock" at the door from the patio to the con suite — nothing more elaborate than some 1x2's and clear plastic — to see if they can reduce the heat load from that opening. (The door to the con suite gets opened a *lot*.) In any case I'll be back, they put on a good show.

## Clarke Award Announced

The 2001 Arthur C. Clarke Award (for the best science fiction novel published in the UK in 2000) was won by China Miéville for *Perdido Street Station* (Macmillan). The US edition of the book was published February 2001 by Ballantine Del Rey. The award, consisting of a specially-engraved book-end and a check for £2001, was presented Saturday 19 May 2001 at the Science Museum in London.

As an interesting sidelight, Mr. Miéville was also in the news recently when he was arrested on Wednesday 2 May 2001 during a protest to stop the closure of a London nursery. He also stood for election in June 2001 to the British Parliament as a member of the Socialist Alliance. Running for the seat representing the Regent's Park and Kensington North district of London, he drew a bit over 1% of the vote.

## Stoker Awards Announced

The 2000 Bram Stoker Awards were presented Saturday 26 May 2001 at the Horror Writer's Association banquet (held in conjunction with the 2001 World Horror Convention) in Seattle WA. The winners were:

Novel ..... *The Traveling Vampire Show*,  
by Richard Laymon  
First Novel ..... *The Licking Valley Coon Hunters Club*,  
by Brian A. Hopkins  
Long Fiction ..... *The Man on the Ceiling*,  
by Melanie and Steve Rasnic Tem  
Short Fiction ..... "Gone," by Jack Ketchum  
Fiction Collection ..... *Magic Terror*, by Peter Straub

Anthology ..... *The Year's Best Fantasy & Horror, 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Collection*,  
edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling  
Nonfiction ..... *On Writing*, by Stephen King  
Illustrated Narrative ..... *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (miniseries), by Alan Moore  
Screenplay ..... *Shadow of the Vampire*, by Steven Katz  
Work for Young Readers ..... *The Power of Un*,  
by Nancy Etchemendy  
Poetry Collection ..... *A Student of Hell*,  
by Tom Piccirilli  
Other Media ..... *Chiaroscuro* (web site),  
by Patricia Lee Macomber, Steve Eller, and Sandra Kasturi  
Lifetime Achievement Award ..... **Nigel Kneale**  
Specialty Press Award ..... **Subterranean Press**,  
William K. Schafer

## Sidewise Awards Nominations

Finalists for the 2000 Sidewise Awards (for alternate history fiction) have been announced. The awards will be presented at Millennium Philcon, the 59<sup>th</sup> World Science Fiction Convention, to be held in Philadelphia 30 August–3 September 2001. Judges for this year's awards were Moshe Feder, Evelyn Leeper, Jim Rittenhouse, Robert Schmunk, Stuart Shiffman, and Steven Silver.

### BEST SHORT-FORM ALTERNATE HISTORY

Eugene Byrne for "HMS Habakkuk," *Interzone* #155 (May 2000)  
Ted Chiang for "Seventy-Two Letters," *Vanishing Acts* (ed. Ellen Datlow), Tor  
Paul J. McAuley for "A Very British History," *Interzone* #157 (July 2000)  
Kim Newman for "The Other Side of Midnight: Anno Dracula 1981," *The Vampire Sextette* (ed. Marvin Kaye), Science Fiction Book Club

Carla Cristina Pereira for "Xochiquetzal," translated from Portuguese by David Alan Prescott, *Altair* #6/7 (April 2000) — Originally published as "Xochiquetzal e a Esquadra da Vingança" in *Pecar a Sete / Sinning in Sevens* (eds. António de Macedo and Silvana de Menezes), Simetria 1999

### BEST LONG-FORM ALTERNATE HISTORY

Suzanne Allés Blom for *Inca: The Scarlet Fringe*, Tor/Forge  
Mary Gentle for *Ash: A Secret History*, Gollancz — Published in the US in four volumes as *A Secret History*, *Carthage Ascendant*, *The Wild Machines*, and *Lost Burgundy*, Avon/Eos 1999–2000

S. M. Stirling for the *Nantucket Trilogy*, *Island in the Sea of Time*, *Against the Tide of Years*, and *On the Oceans of Eternity*, NAL/Roc 1998–2000

## Spectrum Awards Nominations

Finalists for the 2001 Gaylactic Network Spectrum Awards (for works released in 2000, excepting the Hall of Fame award) have been announced. The awards were established to recog-

nize outstanding works of science fiction, fantasy, and horror dealing with issues, themes, and characters of special relevance to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered community. The nominees are:

#### 2001 BEST NOVEL FINALISTS

*The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* by Michael Chabon (Random House)

*The Chosen* by Ricardo Pinto (Tor)

*A Face Without A Heart* by Rick Reed (Design Image Group)

*The Jazz* by Melissa Scott (Tor)

*Jumping Off The Planet* by David Gerrold (Tor)

*Kirith Kirin* by Jim Grimsley (Meisha Merlin)

*Teranesia* by Greg Egan (HarperCollins/EOS)

#### 2001 BEST OTHER WORK FINALISTS

*The Authority: Under New Management* (comic)(DC Comics)

*Buffy The Vampire Slayer* (television series) (WB/Fox/Joss Whedon)

*A Distant Soil* (comic) by Colleen Doran (Image)

"Oracle" (short story) by Greg Egan (*Asimov's*, July 2000)

*Queer Fear* (anthology) edited by Michael Rowe (Arsenal Pulp Press)

#### 2001 HALL OF FAME FINALISTS

For any science fiction, fantasy, or horror work in any format released prior to 1998.

**The "Blood" Books** by Tanya Huff (DAW)

**The "Darkover" Books** by Marion Zimmer Bradley (DAW)

*Imperial Earth* by Sir Arthur C. Clarke (Orion)

*The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin (Ace)

*The Sparrow/Children of God* by Mary Doria Russell (Fawcett)

**The "Weetzie Bat" Books** (collected as *Dangerous Angels*) by Francesca Lia Block (Harpercollins)

## Mythopoeic Awards Nominations

The Mythopoeic Society has announced finalists for the 2001 Mythopoeic Awards. Winners will be announced 5 August 2001 during Mythcon XXXII in Berkeley CA. The nominees are:

#### MYTHOPOEIC FANTASY AWARD FOR ADULT LITERATURE

*ravenShadow* by Win Blevins

*Forests of the Heart* by Charles de Lint

*The Sarantine Mosaic* (*Sailing to Sarantium and Lord of Emperors*) by Guy Gavriel Kay

*The Innamorati* by Midori Snyder

#### MYTHOPOEIC FANTASY AWARD FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

*Aria of the Sea* by Dia Calhoun

*Night Flying* by Rita Murphy

*Beast* by Donna Jo Napoli

*Growing Wings* by Laurel Winter

*Boots and the Seven Leaguers* by Jane Yolen

#### MYTHOPOEIC SCHOLARSHIP AWARD IN INKLINGS STUDIES

*C. S. Lewis: Writer, Dreamer & Mentor* by Lionel Adey

*J. R. R. Tolkien and His Literary Resonances* edited by George Clark and Daniel Timmons

*The Crisis and the Quest: a Kierkegaardian Reading of Charles Williams* by Stephen N. Dunning

*Tolkien's Legendarium: Essays on The History of Middle-*

*earth* edited by Verlyn Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter  
*J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* by T. A. Shippey

#### MYTHOPOEIC SCHOLARSHIP AWARD IN GENERAL MYTH AND FANTASY STUDIES

*King Arthur in America* by Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack

*The Fantasy Literature of England* by C. N. Manlove

*The Quest for the Grail: Arthurian Legend in British Art 1840-1920* by Christine Poulson

*The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* edited by Jack Zipes

## Letters of Comment

EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC

Jim Woosley

15 May 2001

Jimwoosley@aol.com

As I had mentioned before, I found the March *Shuttle* while going through Jann's papers and haven't had a chance to properly reply. However, there are a few things in Harry Warner's LOC that deserved or required comment, and so, here goes:

First, thank you for the kind words regarding our Harry Potter review. I'll note that, in addition to the books themselves, I had looked up a lot of material on-line (see web site references in the article) for the kids — particularly Jayson — and had the memory of the *Time* Writer of the Year article and the cover article in *Reader's Digest* from later in 2000 to draw on (although I didn't look through the articles again).

Yes, the Scholastic that publishes Harry Potter also publishes a wide array of both textbooks and recreational books for young readers. If you stop by the kid's section of your local major bookstore, you'll note the Scholastic name on everything from *Clifford the Big Red Dog* to children's television and movie tie-ins.

I would also like to take this opportunity once again to thank everyone for their friendship and support during the time of Jann's sudden loss.

[Thanks for answering Harry's question about Scholastic Press, Jim. And remember, our thoughts are still with you and your family. -ED]

LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC

Carlo R. DeShouten

17 May 2001

506 3<sup>rd</sup> Court SE

Cullman AL 35055

I received news of Jann Woosley[']s death] just today when I got her husband Jim's letter. And it was pretty shocking to me. And I told some of the people who knew her at Con†Stellation and some were shocked to hear about it. And some already knew.

I met Jann during my first convention trip in Con†Stellation and I usually call her my "evil" step-mom because she was real strict and somewhat gets on to me (hee hee hee) but she was real nice and she always calls me "son." In fact, I'm told that everyone at the convention calls her mom because she was one of the mothers of the convention.

She usually runs the smoking [con suite], chatting away with a lot of people and I think she stayed up all night a couple

of times.

I don't have much stories on her by myself though she was a good friend. I was told a couple of years ago at Con+Stellation she and someone were doing a masquerade contest and went into a "disaster." If Mike knows about it, he'll tell about it.

But anyway, this year it's not going to be the same without Jann. I hope Jim, Jeanna, and Jayson will go on strong and I hope we'll have a toast in her honor. Jann will be missed and she'll be in us always.

[Yes, Carlo, many things about Jann will be missed at Con+Stellation and elsewhere. Though she was commemorated at Kubla Khan this year I'm sure more will take place at Con+Stellation. -ED]

LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC

Harry Warner, Jr.  
423 Summit Avenue  
Hagerstown MD 21740

20 May 2001

The May *Shuttle's* information on Hugo nominations gave me some good news. The very best news, of course, was the fact that Sheryl finally received the nomination she has deserved for so many years. The biggest surprise, I suppose, is the failure of *Ansible* to win a fanzine nomination. It's encouraging to find *Stat* on the ballot and to know that fannish fandom is so well represented among the fanzine nominees. I'm less happy about some of the fan writer nominees. Is it my imagination, or has the gap between the number of nomination ballots in the pro categories and in the fan categories really become slightly smaller this year?

Most of the fiction in the Retro Hugo nominations is fully worthy of the honor. I do doubt that a Hugo competition in 1950 would have put a C. S. Lewis book on the novel nominee list, since pure fantasy was seldom considered in polls for the best books at that time. In general, I believe the Retro Hugo nominating did a better job of considering real merit of creations this year; the last time there were Retro Hugo competitions, too many nominations were won on the basis of later achievements, not what was available in that year.

The name of J. T. Oliver seems to be at least semi-familiar to me. But I can remember nothing specific about him. Oliver is a family name that has had a number of prominent Hagerstown residents bearing it and it's possible that that's why it seemed familiar.

The convention reports were enjoyable. I sense, however, that attendance continues to decline at most cons, big and small.

Gene Wolfe's letter is very convincing. I hope the entire question of copyright can be litigated and appealed rapidly so it can go to the Supreme Court and get settled, once and for all.

Of course, I was unhappy to learn of the passing of Jannis Woosley. She becomes another in the long list of fans who have been cheated by death out of a normally long life.

[I thought your question regarding the relationship between professional and fan Hugo nominations was interesting, Harry, so I hunted down last year's stats to compare to this year's. They are reproduced in a little table below, but the short answer to your question seems to be that the gap has increased, not decreased, from last year to this one. On the other hand, I think the number of nominations in the fan categories (excepting perhaps Fan Artist) is still higher than most people might think. I suspect you may be right in regards the C. S. Lewis Retro

Hugo nomination, but it seemed to me like most of the works nominated for these awards do deserve recognition. -ED]

### HUGO NOMINATION STATISTICS

Novel .....	2000: 334 .....	2001: 381
Novella .....	2000: 191 .....	2001: 229
Novelette .....	2000: 168 .....	2001: 237
Short Story .....	2000: 189 .....	2001: 295
Related Book .....	2000: 167 .....	2001: 213
Dramatic Presentation .....	2000: 304 .....	2001: 279
Professional Editor .....	2000: 203 .....	2001: 288
Professional Artist .....	2000: 196 .....	2001: 246
Semiprozine .....	2000: 168 .....	2001: 241
Fanzine .....	2000: 195 .....	2001: 194
Fan Writer .....	2000: 191 .....	2001: 201
Fan Artist .....	2000: 164 .....	2001: 127
Campbell .....	2000: 110 .....	2001: 201

EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC-EMOC

PieEyedDragon  
from "somewhere in allternity"  
dimensional data portal via wazini\_wazu@hotmail.com

22 May 2001

Thank you for the ghodd word, Lady Sheryl of Gaither's-Mountain.

Sir Harold, many fans of anime *also* eschew the Cartoon Network! One word: Censorship.

If that is not enough: Japan is not America.

*Tenchi Muyo!* has more in common with *Barbarella* than *Bullwinkle* (but only if you see an original, or subtitled, version.) Some things that do *not* come across in the Cartoon Network TV7 version (available now at Wal-Mart) or are twisted:

"Tea" can be brewed, or it can come from a store in a little flask for partying.

Bath house and hot springs: the girls are wearing bikinis (painted-on for [the] US market).

Why the Crown Princess freaked-out when Ryoko snagged her towel.

Tenchi's face gets red when Ryoko's hand wanders to his crotch.

Drinking "flask" tea in a hot tub with sky-clad company.

A baby poops in the bath, and it floats to the surface.

Tenchi's father is a pervert who wants to capture his son's first kiss, and first *everything*, on videocassette.

The old priest, Tenchi's grandpa, may also be a little pervish: Ryoko backs into him and he gropes her chest, remarking on what a lively girl she is. No slut, the Space Pirate throws a punch at the old man that Superman would have felt. But he catches it in one hand, with no visible effort. Puzzlement.

Grandpa has hidden his true nature, and lied for years. A great many years.

Princess tortures captive Ryoko, Ryoko "gets off on it"!

Doctor Clay puts his special mark on his favorite things: the tattoo on fake-Ryoko's butt tips Washu that her daughter is a phony.

A major character is severely wounded, but you don't see the blood.

Crown Prince Yosho, betrothed to his half-sister Princess Ayeka, skipped-out 600 years ago. She is still looking for him. Finally, his (human) mother comes looking, too. Being married to the King of Jurai carries great health and cosmetic benefits!

"A boy meets a girl, and forgets his mother!"

[Thank you Mr., er, Dragon. Yes, I had heard that the US version of anime could be rather sanitized and I'm not surprised that the Cartoon Network would choose a tamer product than what might otherwise be available — their core constituency is children after all. I take it that something at least close to the original is available to those who will pay the price to buy the tapes. -ED]

## No Need For Curiosity!

### Part 4 of No Need for a Dragon

by PieEyedDragon

Little Achika plays by the lake. Clouds are humping up over the mountain, but she is too engrossed in sport. The sudden sound of rushing wind is followed by a downpour. She jumps up and starts running back to her house, soaked. Passing through the trees, she hears a loud *crack!* A storm-torn limb is dropping down toward her! Before she can scream, the limb is suddenly flung sharply aside. She runs on to the house. Strangely, rain falls all around, but not on her! From the safety of her door, she looks out at the rain. The torrents fall everywhere but one place, they seem to be splashing and flowing off of some huge *thing* in the yard. The hole-in-the-rain moves off, leaving big, clawed footprints that quickly wash away.

Strong, she says to herself. I shall be *strong!*

— O — O — O —

I'm sunning myself on the rocks above the cave. I have learned so many amazing things from the Tree. I have to sort them out from time to time.

("Payayto!")

("Yes? Master.")

("How is the prisoner?")

("I buzzed down this morning, in dragonfly-size. I've seen no change these last six centuries, except for that gem that's been growing on her wrist. It's the size of the original three, but still dark. Why?")

("She is taking a walk.")

(Forgetting my location, I jump up and fall down the cliff, banging my head.) "*Oof!*"

(*Katsuhito*, tending the garden, hears the noise and looks around. An omen! Achika and Noboyuki were bringing the baby, tomorrow.)

("No need for panic, Payayto, it's just her astral body. Still very weak. She didn't leave the chamber.")

("You scared me! What should we do?")

("I think... do nothing. Let her continue to recover, the sword keeps her restrained, for now.")

("Perhaps you should talk to *her*, then. *Katsuhito* should also be informed. He can probably suggest a plan.")

("Yes. I will do that.")

("I hope she won't recognize *Katsuhito*. She might try to kill him. We'd best carefully support his current identity.")

("I agree.")

— O — O — O —

Ryoko finally makes it outside the cave, and looks around. Sitting down, she watches the leaves swaying, and small creatures going about their lives. A couple enter the clearing before the cave. The woman is holding a baby. Free of Kagato's control, Ryoko feels a pang of wistfulness. I never got to have a childhood. Washuu couldn't be bothered. What would it have been like, to be like that little one? Wish I could see more people, and know what the styles are. When I get *all* of me out of this hole, I'm gonna create a new outfit, maybe.

My "keeper" said he was willing to be hospitable until then. I'll ask about clothes.

— O — O — O —

Ryoko is stronger. She watches little Tenchi chasing after flying bugs with a net. One of the bugs is not a bug. Boy, if you catch him, who will be the more surprised? You, or the dragon? Ryoko smiles.

— O — O — O —

Ryoko feels sad. Tenchi is crying. His mother is no more. Astral bodies are not made to put comforting arms around someone. And that's what she wants to do. Snow is falling, but Ryoko's astral "feet" leave no prints.

— O — O — O —

("Ryoko?")

("Yes, 'Keeper', what is it?")

("Tenchi is visiting for the summer. He will be given the opportunity to come up here, alone, with the keys. Your physical body has suffered during your incarceration. We will be ready with plenty of food and drink, to help you rebuild yourself.")

("What about my gems?")

("When you are whole, you may try to win them from the boy. He will need a supreme test. Try not to really damage him.")

("Beggars can't be choosers. It's a deal.")

— O — O — O —

Tenchi has taken a break in his sweeping. He's inside, looking for I-Know-What, as expected. He pays no notice of the cat sleeping near the door. (The real cat is down by the lake, contemplating some fish eggs.) *Katsuhito* approaches, and prepares to play his part.

*Katsuhito* sneaks up on Tenchi, scaring him, and speaks of the fate of curious cats (catching my eye).

They spar, and Tenchi is down, seeming the loser; but his grandfather stuck the keyring in his mouth "by accident." When he is alone, Tenchi takes his chance and sprints up to the cave. Aloft, in dragon-fly size, I get there first and wait behind the key-rock.

Tenchi pulls out the rusty sword. (The Samurai Yoshio had, for sake of appearance, bound a real metal blade into the wooden Master Key a very long time ago.)

Tenchi tries the sword on the rock and shatters the rusty blade, nothing else seems to happen.

("Oops" I think to myself from my place. I reach out and give the rock a tiny nudge, which causes the newly split halves to fall aside. Tenchi's eyes get big like *mine!*)

Now seeing the rock wall open; Tenchi, as expected, heads downward. Falls downward, actually. I fly down after him and buzz past his shoulder and around again. Tenchi's eyes are strictly on *what waits at the center!* He goes closer.

Now, as planned, Ryoko reaches up to caress his arm. Before she can draw a breath to say "*boo!*" Tenchi loads his trousers and practically flies back the way he came.

Ryoko climbs out of the water. The years have been hard on her. Her face begins to twitch, spasmodically. Getting her breath at last, she laughs! A dry, shaking laugh!

I come out of the shadows, laughing too! "Lady, your dinner is ready, outside. May I lead you?" She takes hold of my tail as I crawl up the tunnel. I've put on some weight these past seven centuries, and have to squeeze through in a few spots.

*Katsuhito* has the banquet tent waiting. Gallons of soup, tea, fish, noodles, greens, and soft vegetables. The fashion magazines are waiting, and the combs, brushes, mirrors, and other feminine paraphernalia. Ryoko starts filling a very hollow place inside, looking more human by the minute.



P. O. Box 4857  
Huntsville AL 35815-4857

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Comments, inquiries, and contributions of writing by email to: [nasfa.shuttle@con-stellation.org](mailto:nasfa.shuttle@con-stellation.org) — EDITORIAL ADDRESS (EMAIL)

Comments, inquiries, and contributions of writing by snailmail to: Mike Kennedy, 7907 Charlotte Drive SW,  
Huntsville AL 35802-2841 — EDITORIAL ADDRESS (SNAILMAIL)

Dues (\$), subscriptions (\$), and Official Mail to: NASFA, Inc., P. O. Box 4857,  
Huntsville AL 35815-4857 — OFFICIAL ADDRESS

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