

TRUE **Review**

Vol 18, No. 1
Whole Number 68
September 2007
\$2.50
ISSN 1083-8511

Protect Us From All Anxiety

A gentleman by the name of Andres Zorrilla found me wandering around Rt. 272, bloody, confused, while I patted my trouser pocket, asking, where is my wallet? Andres was able to gently guide me to the side of the road, out of harm's way. The good shepherd. The one who prays along with you, standing next to you in the pew, during the Eucharistic Prayer, hearing the priest say, "And protect us from all anxiety." I said my prayers that week.

One of the stranger things about the car accident on March 3, 2007, a Saturday at a few minutes before noon, Eastern Standard Time, was that *I didn't really feel any pain*. I had a deep puncture wound on my head, in the sign of the cross, and another deep laceration above my left eye. My arm was badly bruised and I thought it was broken. Blood was pouring out of my head. I lost a lot of blood that day and I felt very, very weak.

I remember the day clearly. I had packed the car to go to a trade show in York and from there to visit my brother Robert in Baltimore. Kevin wanted to go to his card shop in New Holland but it was getting late. I allowed him to drive the forest green 1994 Jeep Grand Cherokee, but first we had to visit the Ephrata Bank before it closed. The bank is a short distance from us, and I had a check to cash. Actually, it was a cashier's check made out to Kevin, he owed me, and I needed the money.

After pulling away from the bank (I went inside), Kevin did something unusu-

al. Instead of exiting out the main entrance, he went into a side area and decided to pull out of an adjacent, abandoned restaurant parking lot to make a left on south Rt. 272. He never did that before.

When Kevin pulled out, he never saw the large black Ford F350 racing down the road, right at us. I saw it, with a large silver grill. Ever the one to criticize Kevin's newfound driving sensibilities, I was more disgusted than concerned about bracing for impact. I turned, put my hands out, to say "Kevin, don't you see?..." The last I saw was the truck coming at us, very fast, and we weren't going to avoid the impact. . . .

Ever see those movies where someone is in a car accident, and as they recover, there come quick flashes of something in the distance, but they quickly fade? I could swear for a time I was still sleeping that Saturday morning. In the dream, which is like one of those dreams you have when you are just about to wake up, I saw these quick flashes of the flower shop sign, and the bright sun, and the road, and cars. I thought it was really time to wake up.

On impact, my head struck the seat buckle suspender, which knocked me unconscious. When I "came to," I was looking at the blood on my gray shirt and my arm, and I was really, really dizzy. Then I realized it wasn't a dream, that something really bad had happened.

I remember asking, "What happened?" And someone saying, "You were in a bad

car accident." I was feeling very spaced out, very lightheaded, and really wanting to just get some rest, leaning against the car.

But none of that was the *really* frightening part.

Ever wonder what it's like to be put in a neck brace, strapped to a stretcher, and seated in an ambulance for transport to a hospital?

That was me. No pain. But what was really, really scary: how did I unfasten my seatbelt, manage to open the car door, get out and away from the car, and find myself wandering a busy two-way street, all unconscious?

Even that was not the *really* frightening part.

In the ambulance, as the EMTs were closing the doors and putting an IV into me, I grew very, very anxious, thinking for sure my son was killed. I knew the car was coming right at him. I asked one of the EMTs if Kevin was all right. They said he was standing up, aware, and the police were talking to him, and - well, let me tell you about relief.

(A big moment of anxiety - they asked me where I worked and for about 10 seconds I had no clue. That was very frightening, too. But then it all came back to me, and I started reciting to myself the names and phone numbers of everybody I knew.)

At that point the EMTs may have had me on morphine, I'm not sure. But time seemed to get very blurry. They asked

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This Ain't The Internet

Book Reviews
By Andrew Andrews

THE FATE OF MICE, by Susan Palwick. Tachyon, 2007, 218 pp., \$14.95. ISBN 1-892391-42-2

Palwick proposes in this collection of her best stories that, for the most part, in our fairy tales and folklore, we really don't know what happens to the mouse after he returns from being a prince. Whatever happens to mice? What is their fate? How do they die?

The title story follows Rodney the white rodent, and Pippa, the researcher's daughter. Rodney, like the mouse Algernon in the Daniel Keyes' classic tale, "Flowers For Algernon," has his IQ enhanced. But along with the powers of language come fear and doubt. Rodney eventually learns of the fate of the famed rodent Algernon. In human stories, no one really cares about the fate of mice – they die, everything dies, it's just an accepted reality. But how they die, and perhaps how they choose to live, instead, becomes more important to a fable.

In "Beautiful Stuff," Rusty Kerfuffle, husband of Linda, is one of the many

dead killed in a terrorist attack. He, like others, is brought back to life, revived, reanimated, for the purpose of defying death, or perhaps explaining it. Even more so, his strange life as the revived may give everyone a chance to really appreciate what they have, to cherish the beauty in life, and all the items in it, before they too are gone.

In "Elephant," Cara uses a surrogate to get pregnant. At least that's the story she tells her best friend Joni. But could the child be some kind of manifest, obsessional phantom? The story pays homage to Carlos Drummond de Andrade, with a tale about an elephant assembled almost like a scrap toy that attempts to find love and companionship but instead arrives at loneliness and despair, only to wait for tomorrow so it can do it all over again.

In "Stormdusk," every year, during the evening of the first snowfall, Mama disappears, to who knows where. Marja, her daughter, is determined to find out why she leaves and where she goes. But Marja

learns of her mother's mystical place in the world, entrapped by Marja's father.

In "Gestella," Stella, a wolf, transforms into a woman, aging more rapidly than her alpha, Jonathan. Gestella's condition reaches a point of no return.

In "Going After Bobo," a boy loses his cherished cat in the Nevada mountains. The cat has a GPS transmitter, so they have located it. But are the dangers too severe to recover the cat, the world too harsh, for the boy?

In "GI Jesus," the story is a play on religious visions, perceptions, and worries about gastrointestinal health, friendships, and belief.

FAST FORWARD 1, Future Fiction From the Cutting Edge, ed. by Lou Anders. Pyr/Prometheus, 2007, 409 pp., \$15.00. ISBN 978-1-59102-486-6

Why is it that every collection has to be starred as "groundbreaking" with enough prepress to purchase commercial time during the Superbowl? I have yet to

TRUE
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Publisher/Editor
Andrew M. Andrews

Contributors
Kevin Andrews

E-mail aandrews@ptd.net

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TRUE REVIEW, a science fiction, fantasy, horror, and mystery review magazine, is published quarterly by Gallifrey Press, 37 Circle Rock Dr., Ephrata, PA 17522, (717) 859-3132. ISSN 1083-8511. E-mail aandrews@ptd.net. Single issue price is \$2.50.

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This issue published September 2007. Issues appear Dec. 1, March 1, June 1, and Sept. 1. Subscriptions are \$8.00 per year. Single copy price is \$2.50, mailed first class.

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see a major new anthology series that

wasn't mentioned as "groundbreaking."

Not much ado, here. A few good stories. These stand out:

"Small Offerings" by Paolo Bacigalupi. Miscariage – no matter what the technology maturity of society, or despite all that technology can do to stifle the physical pain – can be as devastating, in this or any age.

"Aristotle OS" by Tony Ballantyne. Another tale of a computer gone intelligent, except this one fills in the blanks, much like we do when we cannot get the answers in life we seek.

"P Dolce" by Louise Marley. Frederica Daniels, music scholar, is also a time traveler, "inserted" into 1861 Castagno to find the answer all musicologists yearn for – what did the great composer Johannes Brahms mean by making his scores "p dolce," which means "soft, sweet"? Frederica decides to insert her mind into Clara Schumann, who wants nothing more than to be with the Master. In the present, Kristian Nordberg is sent to find a way to retrieve Frederica/Clara, to bring her back, a task that could be dangerous and elusive, or perhaps both.

"Jesus Christ, Reanimator" by Ken MacLeod. In this, an interviewer wants to find the real answer to what appears to be the Second Coming. What would Jesus make of the world created by everyone claiming to be the true one?

UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS, ed. by Julie E. Czerneda and Jana Paniccia. DAW, 2007, 311 pp., \$7.99. ISBN-13: 978-0-7564-0404-8

This volume presents 14 all-original tales of the powers working behind the scenes. I enjoyed the following:

"When I Look To the Sky" by Russell Davis, just another form of temporal police procedural.

"The Dancer at the Red Door" by Douglas Smith. In this tale, a Toronto executive, tired of his powerful life, encounters the Dancer – and eventually follows her to the secret club. The club offers him a form of immortality – if he so chooses.

WIZARDS, *Magical Tales From The Masters of Modern Fantasy*, ed. by Jack Dann and Gardner Dozois. Berkley, 2007, 401 pp., \$25.00. ISBN 978-0-425-21518-0

This is an anthology about wizards, obviously. But some stories rise above the notion of giving us simple tales of superpowers. Here are some good ones:

"Slipping Sideways Through Eternity" by Jane Yolen. Rebecca sees Elijah in the Reform temple, and times after that. Elijah takes her on a journey back in time to the brutal concentration camps of Nazi Germany, where she is to see the truth and live to paint about it.

"Stone Man" by Nancy Kress. Jared Stoffel, as he recovers from being hit by a car on a skateboard, finds out that he could be a wizard – he was able to summon stones from a nearby flowerbed to protect his fall. But it may take a close disaster from him to the join the Brotherhood – and who knows where his fate from there lies.

"Billy and the Wizard" by Terry Bisson. Billy discovers, through his doll Clyde, that the Wizard of Everything Else is hiding from the devil, in Billy's garage. How will Billy protect the Wizard? What's he going to do?

MANY BLOODY RETURNS, ed. by Charlene Harris and Toni L.P. Kelner. Ace Books, 2007, 357 pp., \$24.95. ISBN 978-0-441-01522-1

To some, this is simply just another vampire anthology. To others, it's a good collection of 13 – yes, 13! – works of imagination.

I enjoyed the following:

A 16-year-old girl finds her true, owl-like, vampire-sure self in "The Mournful Cry of Owls" by Christopher Golden.

"Vampire Hours" by Elaine Viets. Katherine, 45, married to a plastic surgeon, learns that she will soon become an "ex"-plastic surgeon's wife – her husband is cheating. Her anger grows more venomous. She meets Michael, who introduces her to the darker side of life.

Easily my favorite story of the collection is "The Wish" by Carolyn Haines. On the way to day care, a mother in Mobile, Alabama sees a wind wraith,

who has called away her children after an automobile accident. The lady, "forty-three, a mother of dead children, a divorcee, a failed suicide. A winner" is trying to track down the wraith – only to stumble on darkness more sinister that it leads to her own immortality.

RECOMMENDED:

THE ACCIDENTAL TIME MACHINE, by Joe Haldeman. Ace, 2007, 278 pp., \$23.95. ISBN 978-0-441-01499-6

DARK PASSIONS: HOT BLOOD XIII, ed. by Jeff Gelb and Michael Garrett. Kensington Books, 2007, 327 pp., \$12.95. ISBN 978-0-7582-1413-3

THE CRYPTOPEDIA, A Dictionary of the Weird, Strange, and Downright Bizarre, by Jonathan Mayberry and David F. Kramer. Citadel/Kensington, 2007, 397 pp., \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-8065-2819-9

ZIG ZAG, by Jose Carlos Somoza. Rayo/HarperCollins, 2007, 504 pp., \$24.95. ISBN 978-0-06-119371-2

POWERS, by Ursula K. LeGuin. Harcourt, 2007, 504 pp., \$17.00. ISBN 978-0-15-205770-1

IVORY, by Mike Resnick. Pyr/Prometheus, 2007, 322 pp., \$15.00. ISBN 978-1-59102-546-7

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Thank you!

me who my wife was (this was before our divorce) and I said Teri. So they called her and she came to the hospital. I think I may have been going through various states of consciousness. They asked me questions and I found it very hard to listen and understand very much.

I don't remember much about the hospital, except they moved me from the stretcher to the bed, and that took some work. I remember feeling way too light-headed and thirsty, I had lost so much blood and I really needed something to drink. It was great when I got the water. I felt much better.

Still no pain. But you know how head wounds are - you lose a lot of blood. I must have lost gallons, it seemed. I could feel a lot of soreness in my arm and I thought for sure it was broken.

They took me into a room where I went through a CAT scanner, a very noisy machine, to scan for head injury, and then they X-rayed my arm. Nothing broken. No skull fracture. Concussion only. Overnight stay in the hospital for monitoring.

I was carted back to a room where a nurse administered hydromorphine, and of course, everything had a nice glow. A chaplain was called and he had my cell phone and wanted to know who he should call, and I suggested my girlfriend. The chaplain managed to get a hold of her. My girlfriend came to see me, and when I saw her smile, she sparkled, and I told her that, and she laughed.

My head needed stitches, so the doctor got right to work. It was amusing, feeling a little tug here and there, as a needle worked its way through my scalp. I

think I got something like 42 stitches at the top of my head. The stitches were in a very distinctive sign of the cross, about the same location where I had stitches as the result of injuries I sustained while falling down a flight of stairs when I was about two years old.

The doctor also did my eyebrow. More tugging. No pain. About seven stitches or so there as well.

The two worst things about an overnight hospital stay:

The next day they were trying to feed me only "soft" foods. I tried to eat the orange Jell-O and I threw up. I begged my girlfriend at the time, a nurse, to find me something to eat, but I would do anything for milk. She was good friends with the nurse on call and I got solid food. The milk tasted absolutely wonderful and I felt better almost instantly.

They won't let you sleep! I just wanted to sleep desperately and every hour, on the clock, a different nurse would come in and shove a penlight into my eyes.

Andres came into the hospital the next day and asked me if I remembered him. I said yes, you were that guy who was holding me up, helping to stop the bleeding from my scalp. Andres said he found me wandering around Rt. 272, dazed and confused. With the help of a neighbor, Andres tried to get me to sit down on the ground on the side of the road and I refused. Andres said I asked him, "What happened?" And he explained that I was in a car accident. "Who was driving?" he remembers me asking. They didn't know. I don't remember any of this. He wondered if I found my wallet, because I kept patting my pockets, asking for my

wallet. Did you find it? Andres asked. Yes, I believe it was in the back of the Jeep, I said, inside my leather jacket, which they found. I thanked Andres for being very kind.

I went back the next day to where the truck was towed. I saw the damage - the Jeep was totaled. Glass busted out on the driver's side, driver's side door had to be chopped off, blood on the passenger seat and dashboard, glass everywhere.

The impact was on the front driver's side wheel. If the truck would have struck directly into the driver door, Kevin could easily been killed. If he were driving a smaller car he would almost certainly have been killed. He's a very lucky guy.

Protection from anxiety can come with steel technology, a good shepherd, a girlfriend who sparkles, or sometimes just from above.

Yes, we are still looking for books from small press publishers, including Wheatland, Wildside, Subterranean, Night Shade Books, and others. I am going to spread this coverage out over this issue and the next. Don't delay!

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