

WWW.TRINITYGATEWAYS.NET

July-August 2011 Edition

**Come on to our side of the gate.
You'll like it here.**

TrinityGateways.net was launched in February 2008 by three authors looking to promote their writing and help others with their own. Who are we? Doris Ross, LJ Gastineau (formerly Lisa Marcado) and Tricia Sparks. Writing fantasy, horror, and alternate reality fiction, we post some of our stories on the site for free reading and download. In addition to that there are articles on writing, the conventions we attend, book reviews, and the Writer's Desk for writing tips, tricks, and advice we've been given.

So step through the gate and check us out

Trinity News

What's Happening in Our World

Lisa Gastineau has sold a horror short story, *Doll's House*. It is included in the anthology *Dark Things II*, published by Pill Hill Press.

www.pillhillpress.com.

Tricia Sparks has completed her first solo novel it is now in the Beta reader phase. In addition to this she has completed the first draft of a short story for a future Trinity Gateways project and is working on the revision.

Both Lisa and Tricia are continuing work on their joint series.

Doris Ross will be launching Part 3 of *Decent Into Darkness* this month.

The Trinity has been invited to attend Spooky Empire as guest panelists in October. Information will be posted on www.TrinityGateways.net as we get it.

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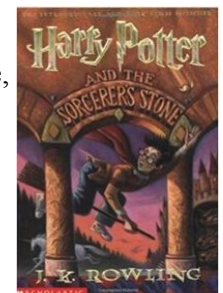
The History of Fantasy

By Tricia Sparks

Fantasy. It grabs the heart and captures the imagination but what is it about the genre that holds us, as readers, captive. Well, for one, it's notable as the only form of literature that consistently blurs the boundaries between adult fiction and children's fiction. Lewis Carroll's books *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, for instance, have defied description since they were first published over 100 years ago. The books unquestionably were written for a child—the original Alice, who was the daughter of a friend of Carroll's—but I would wager that they are just as often read by adults looking for an escape back to a simpler time.

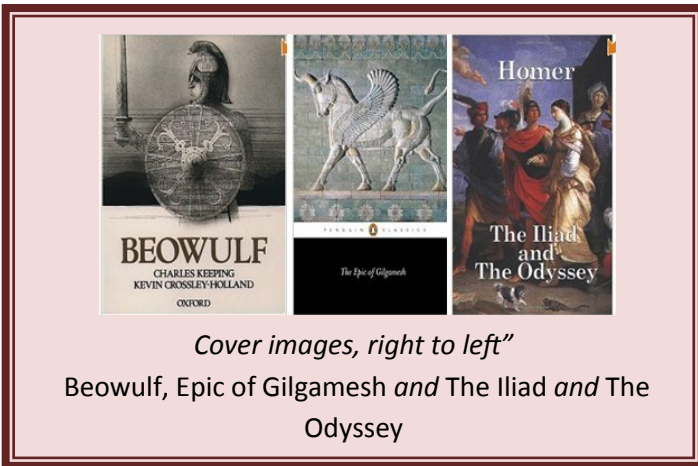


A more modern example is J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, which, literary acclaim or no, have caused something of a revolution in the publishing world. While these, again, are aimed at a youth/young-adult market, they have become a "trendy" read for socialites and hipsters of all ages. Yet, more likely, it is simply that we as humans enjoy dreaming and though the fantasy genre in its modern sense is less than two centuries old, it has the



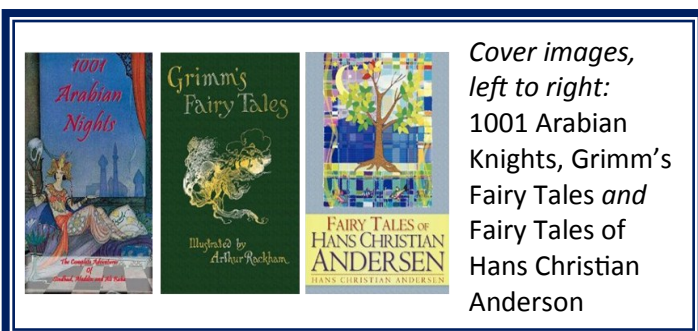
longest and richest literary heritage of all of the forms of genre fiction.

The very first recorded literary works in history were works of fantasy before the genre was even established. It started with epic poems that told stories of fantastic adventures of men as they battled against monsters and gods alike. The earliest known is from Mesopotamia. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* was written on 12 clay tablets believed to date back to 7th century BC. Another early example is Greek, dating back to the 8th century BC: Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. A much later example of epic poetry can be seen in the 11th century English piece *Beowulf*.



From its roots in poetry, fantasy grew with the increase in learning of the medieval European era—when literary fiction began to appear. The genre of romance, among the first of the genres to appear during this era, embraced fantasy from the onset, telling tales of King Arthur and his noble knights of the round table. From Arthur’s origin to seeking the Holy Grail to tales of Faerie Queens, these stories were told up through the renaissance.

Fantasy went on to become collections of folktales and faerie stories. One of the earliest is a collection of Middle Eastern and South Asian stories compiled in Arabic during the Islamic Golden Age entitled *The Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night*, which featured the first appearances of Sinbad and Aladdin. It was first printed in English in 1706.



Another example of this form is *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* first published in 1812 by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. It is from here we have tales such as Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella and many of the other stories that Walt Disney has made so popular.

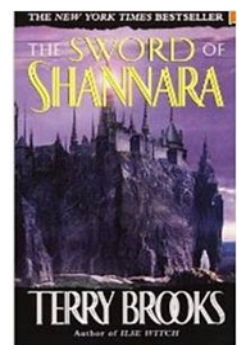
Yet another source of fantasy is Hans Christian Anderson who published his first collection in 1835. His more famous tales include, the Little Mermaid, the Ugly Duckling, the Snow Queen, and Thumbalina. As the era progressed, fantasy became frowned upon as society became more conservative and less fanciful. This, however, was an essential stage, as the development of a realistic genre ensured that fantasy could be defined as a distinct type, in contrast.

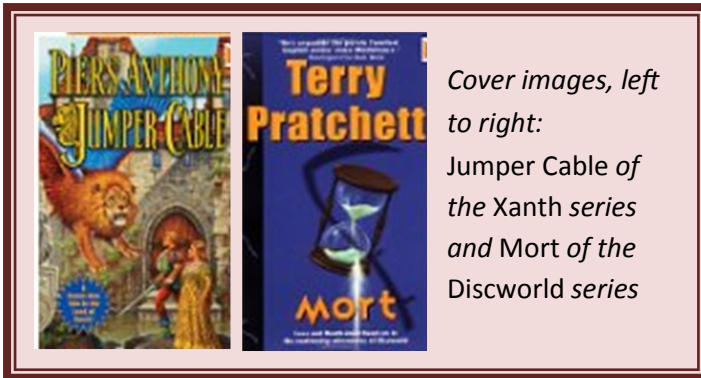


The modern fantasy genre as we know it first took root during the 18th century with the increased popularity of fictional travelers' tales. Yet it was George MacDonald, the 19th century Scottish author whose work entitled *Phantastes* is widely considered to be the first fantasy novel ever written for adults. MacDonald was a major influence on future writers such as J. R. R. Tolkien.

It is difficult to overstate the impact that *The Lord of the Rings* had on the genre. Intended by the author as a myth for the modern day, it re-introduced a wholly fictional world, high adventure, and great magic to a literary stage that was ready for it after two World Wars. With the advent of epic fantasy bursting onto the scene in the 1960’s in the USA, fantasy was finally allowed to truly enter into the mainstream.

Although many fantasy novels of this time proved popular, it was not until 1977's *The Sword of Shannara* by Terry Brooks that publishers found the sort of breakthrough success they had hoped for. The book became the first fantasy novel to appear on, and eventually top, the New York Times best-seller list. As a result, the genre saw an incredible boom in the number of titles published in the following years.





Cover images, left to right:
Jumper Cable of the Xanth series
and Mort of the Discworld series

While fantasy has remained somewhat of a niche market, that has begun to change in recent years. The long-running series of light fantasies by Piers Anthony (*Xanth*) and Terry Pratchett (*Discworld*) regularly hit the bestseller lists from the 1980s onward. Thanks largely to J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels, which have become the bestselling book series of all time, fantasy is becoming increasingly intertwined with mainstream fiction.

The current market, according to the Publishers Weekly and Locus bestseller lists, is dominated by crossovers as well as a few remnants of the 80's style epic fantasy market. One of the most prevalent trends from the last decade has been about elements of the fantasy world seamlessly and unsurprisingly residing in our own world; a subgenre titled urban fantasy. Females are the consumers mainly targeted by publishers, and it is no coincidence that there is a tremendous crossover between 'romance' and fantasy with this in mind.

In our economy, with technology driving the culture and the future of the industry, today's marketing ambition is for titles published to be bigger 'hits'. To reach a larger audience a lot of the genre distinctions from decades past are fading away as writers combine different 'types' of stories. Where this new trend towards cross genre will lead the fantasy writers of tomorrow's works is anyone's guess. I, for one, am looking forward to seeing where our imaginations will take us. ♦

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By Matt Sanchez

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By Jason Block

<http://www.plutonianimes.com/2009/08/01/a-brief-history-of-the-fantasy-genre/>



Firemount by Tricia Sparks

The Game

By LJ Gastineau

It's haunting. The ticking clock never seems to end its relentless mocking. Any minute someone is going to burst through that door and put me out of my misery. Myst tightened her grip on the gun; the only thing that might keep her brains in her head. She licked her dry lips, wishing she could be anywhere but playing hide and seek in a storage closet of the Starke. How the mission had gone so wrong was beyond her. She wished she could smash in the face of the clock which hung a few feet above her head. For some reason anything having to do with time was revered by the Starkses, her peoples' mortal enemy. Instead she had to suffer. Several strands of sticky dark hair clung to her face, but she didn't dare push them away; one false move could mean game over.

It was already over for her partner, Haze. The enemy proved that the arrogant asshole had a brain after all by splattering it against the wall.

"Myst, report."

She nearly cursed at the voice in her head. She sucked in a breath. "We've got a huge problem. Haze is dead, and I have yet to find the whereabouts of Illusia. How do we even know they grabbed her?"

"Myst, you have a mission—"

“Do you think I didn’t already know that? Look, I’m trapped in a frickin’ closet hoping the guys that blew out Haze’s brains don’t do the same with mine.”

“You have an initiative. Stick with it.”

“Roger.” Myst sighed as the voice disappeared. She hated the mental intrusion even worse than a mission going horribly wrong. She’d just have to suck it up and complete the mission anyway she could. It wasn’t like an orphan mattered to the council anyway. She was just as easily replaced as was Haze and those before him.

Drawing her resolve, Myst rose to her feet and activated her gloves with a simple touch of a gem stone.

A heavy mist seeped out from the cracks of the closet as a group of Starkes marched by. One paused, confused by the odd occurrence. As he neared the door, it exploded in a shower of metal and smoke.

Myst flipped through her diversion, drove an ice blade through the gut of her nemesis before turning an assault of crystals towards them. Green blood painted the walls and floor as the lifeless bodies crumpled to the ground.

Satisfied, she snatched one of the guns from a member of the fallen then took off at a sprint. She kicked in a door then froze as a barrage of lasers flew towards her.

The world around her shuddered as though horrified of the unlikelihood of Myst’s survival. Echoes of screams pierced her skull forcing her to the floor. She cried out in agony as everything went black.

* * *

“No!” Myst sat up terror rushing down her spine, cold and wet. The white room she was in brought more alarm than comfort. Where was she and how did she get there?

“You’re awake.”

Myst snapped her head up at the voice then gasped at the sight of a small blonde girl with pale blue eyes. Her face was unreadable which seemed worrisome. “Illusia-”

“The dream is over. It’s time to wake up.”

“What?” Myst slide off the bed and rushed towards the girl. “Come on. I have to get you out of here.”

“No,” Illusia jerked away, as though afraid.

“Don’t be difficult, come here.” Just as Myst reached for her hand the world became unfocused. A shot of light left her blinded for a moment. “Damn it,” Myst rubbed her eyes then blinked at the sight of a forest overflowing with green trees. Birds sang happily from the branches. “Illusia? You’re doing this aren’t you?”

The little girl appeared from the shadows. A pout was on her pretty face as she eyed Myst. “You should not have remembered.”

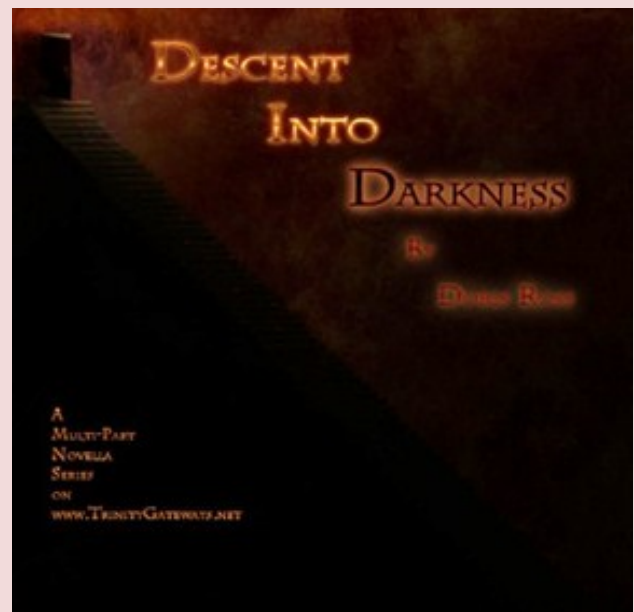
“Then you should have done a better job at creating your worlds.”

One act will change his life forever.

A young man that came from nothing, Ba’tvian Delthanurk will do anything to prevent being nothing again. Having pushed his ambitions too far, he is stripped of what he values most and exiled. Now, bent on vengeance, on gaining all that he has lost and more, he delves deeper in the forbidden arts – deeper into the darkness.

His path will be strewn with betrayal, violence, and blood. He will find followers who believe in him, and others who have nowhere else to go. Together, they will seed the fall of their world.

This is their story.



Descent Into Darkness, a multi-part series available now at www.TrinityGateways.net.

“I knew you would last the longest. I was careful with how to formulate your data. You had the least faults to work around.”

Myst folded her arms, narrowing her dark eyes at the girl. “You can’t stay in here forever. They’ll be looking for you and you remember what happened last time they had to force you out. You were sick for a week with a horrible migraine.”

Illusia sighed, twisting a lock of hair around her finger. “All the Symphony wants to do is use my abilities for creating scenarios for training purposes. I know it’s

more useful than a holo-room, but it's tiring for me."

"I'll play with you again later. I promise."

Illusia smiled as the world flashed again to reveal a stainless steel room lined with various electrical equipment. Illusia stood in the center of a glass tube wearing a white dress. She pressed her hands to glass and smiled at the dark haired woman who nodded back as the glass lifted.

"Do you want to try Whisper World? I should have it

ready tomorrow."

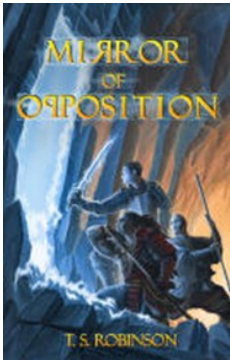
Myst smiled. "Sure."

"You have to wear the cat costume!" Illusia giggled as Myst frowned at her.

"Don't push it, kid."

"At least the ears?" ♦

To be continued on www.TrinityGateways.net.



Mirror of Opposition

New from T. S. Robinson, author of *Battle Chasers* and *Into the Dragon's Maw*, comes a tale of three childhood friends who follow separate paths as adults. They reunite to save their world from an ancient evil and must weigh the value of childhood friendship against the responsibilities they hold as men.

"An imaginative, philosophical martial arts adventure that reads well and offers wide appeal."

– Piers Anthony

Go to www.xlibris.com to order yours today, or visit the author at www.tsrbooks.com.

The Art of Fan-Fiction

By LJ Gastineau

Fan-fiction is often shunned as the black sheep of the writing world. I have experienced people ridiculing the fact that I was "playing" in someone else's world and that what I was writing was all a big waste of time because it was not technically mine. As true as that may be regarding who owns the rights to the universe, those of us who write and read fan-fiction have discovered that not only is it fun because you get to experience stories that in the world of the series do not exist, but for the fan-fiction writer themselves, can be a valuable tool to form and perfect their writing style.

As a writer who first started with fan-fiction I learned how to form my own plots, maintain a character's identity, especially when dealing with more than three characters at a time, and how to stay true to the world that the story takes place in – all of which are skills a "regular" writer needs to obtain and strengthen in order to write to the best of their ability.

The tricks I have used in writing fan-fiction over the years have not only taught me skills of the writing craft but have also enhanced the quality of my fan-fiction. Since quality of the writing is sometimes lamented by the readers, I'd like to share with you what I've learned.

You can follow all of these tips, just one or two, or none at all, depending on what style you are going for. Whether you want to be canon based (true to the world

your media of choice exists in), create an alternate universe, or go with a parody where the characters are not acting the way they normally do. The key is to decide on what type of story you're looking at and sticking with it.

For a good canon based story, the most important thing is to stay true to the world that creator has established. Pay attention to the setting is it modern day? Historic? Futuristic? Study your characters. Nothing can upset fans worse in a canon based story than someone that doesn't know the characters. Personality and appearance are especially important. You don't want to have a broody character happy-go-lucky for no particular reason in a canon based story without a legitimate reason why. If you change something about a character or in the world, that reason is very important to the reader. Said broody now cheerful character may have been drugged for instance. If you decide to age the characters, you need to determine what has happened in the last several years or so and how those events might have impacted a believable change. For an example, we'll take a show with five elementary school kids and age them to their early twenties. Is the tomboy now trying to be girly because none of the guys paid attention to her in high school? Does the stuck up girl have a weight issue because she is so concerned about her appearance? Is the popular guy now a loner with a drinking problem because his little brother died in a car wreck? Is the smart guy now the most popular guy on campus because he went from geeky to the hottest guy as he grew older? These are all possible changes that could have occurred, changing the characters as a result. The most important thing you need is the reason for the chang-

es.

If you introduce a new character you want to give them a reason for existing other than just being a character's love interest. They need their own back story, and personality. Be careful that they aren't too perfect (this is where the terms Mary Sue and Gary Su come from). They need to have some faults and weaknesses in order to make them interesting to the reader. This is also needed for an alternate universe story.

To create an alternate universe story, you need to first decide on what type of world you're bringing the characters into. Are the futuristic characters now going to be existing in a fantasy setting as knights and princesses? Are the high school kids in modern day Tokyo going to instead be in a world of pirates or ninjas? Once you have the setting, you need to figure out what the characters are doing there and make said alternate history suit the character and their personality.

If you want to write a parody, then you can break the rules of a canon and even alternate universe. The characters can be slightly out of character or very out of charac-

ter. The important thing is to keep it consistent. Another thing to be aware of is bashing (making fun of) other characters. There are some people that do it, and they even put warnings in the summary of their story, but there are readers that don't like it. So if you do plan on bashing

another character, be sure to mention it in your summary.

For those who wish to take their fanfiction and turn it into an original story there are a few things to consider while planning that transition. The first would be the setting. If it's unique only to that story such as a world in which there is a school for magic users, you'll want to alter it to make it your own. Same thing goes with characters. You want them to be your own and in order to do that, you'll have to change them a bit. It can be a difficult process at first but it gets easier the more you are will-

ing to let go of certain characters, settings, and concepts. After all if it gets published the last thing you want to be accused of as a writer is plagiarism.

The important thing is to enjoy the journey of the story. Some readers can be critical in their reviews, others are very useful. Not everyone will be a fan but as long as you enjoy the story that is what matters most. ♦



Step into a land of Intrigue...

If you like fantasy with a bit of mystery try the ongoing four-part fiction series by Tricia Sparks, now posted on www.TrinityGateways.net.

A shocking discovery near the Dead Sea, a mysterious killer on the loose in our nation's capital, a troublesome character that won't die and an undercover assignment would seemingly have no connections under normal circumstances but when you're dealing with the gods nothing is quite as it seems.

Here are a couple sample chapters from *Dreams End Part Two* in the introductory tales for the *Mantel of the Gods* series .

Dreams End: Part Two

By Tricia Sparks

Chapter 1:

Location: Washington DC

Month: July

Sunday 6am:

The familiar trill of his cell phone drew Lance Roman from his light sleep. He lifted his head from the comfort of his soft pillow and reached over his sleeping fiancé to the offending object. He clicked the button to silence the phone as he drew it to him.

"Detective Roman," he said in hushed tone in a bid to avoid waking the sleeping beauty at his side.

"Sorry for the hour detective but we've got another one," a young man voice stated uneasily.

Lance ran a hand through his red hair as he closed tired blue eyes. He was really getting sick of these early morning calls disturbing what peaceful sleep he managed to find at night. "You're sure?" he questioned as Dana stirred be-

side him lifting her head brown eyes wide with question.

"Afraid so," the young man replied.

"Where are you?" Lance questioned as he opened his eyes again and threw back his covers.

"Rock Creek Cemetery."

"I'll be there in twenty," Lance stated before hanging up the call.

"Him again," Dana asked as she sat up behind him.

"Yeah, another cemetery," Lance said with resignation.

"That makes three," Dana said with a yawn.

"I know; we better get a move on." Lance stated. The

some lingering sense of darkness hanging in this place for the dead. Behind him Dana hummed softly to herself. It gave him a strange sense of ease to know that she was not comfortable with their current surroundings either.

As the pair drew near the crowd ahead lance spotted the elaborate graven image of an angel looking over the burial grounds in the direction of the victim.

"Seems like our guy's got a thing for having angels watching him as he works," Dana commented from behind him.

Lance turned and studied his partner for a moment before moving on. Her brown eyes were heavy with sleepiness and he worried she not be able to shake off the tired of being dragged from their bed yet again in the middle of the night. "Yeah, this makes two out of three. The first one was near a church. It was gargoyles looking on there instead, right?"

Right but they are angles also just fallen ones," Dana stated before taking a sip from the coffee they'd stopped for on the way.

The pair fell silent as they ducked under the crime scene tape and crossed the grassy field headed to where the victim's body lay spread out. Lance studied the young woman with a growing sense of disquiet. A pair of lifeless hazel eyes stared up at him wide with horror. Pale skin was stained with crimson where the killer had left cuts beneath her eyes leaving the illusion of bloody tears. A crown was set upon her brow of golden serpents. A long flowing crimson gown covered her battered flesh just like the previous two victims had worn.

"It's confirmed that makes three," Dana stated her voice grim.

"Right, we've definitely got a serial killer on our hands," Lance said with disgust. He turned his focus from the victim to the officer standing watch over the scene. "What do we know so far?" Lance questioned.

"Well, the grounds keeper found her a little after 5am. He called it in and I and my arrived here on scene first. I contained the scene as best I could my partner's over with the grounds keeper trying to calm him down poor old guy isn't handling what he saw well. When I saw her I called the chief and told him you should be here seeing as your lead detective on this thing."

"Where's the forensic team?"

"SCI is in route."

"Okay, nice work..."

"Detective Roman?" A familiar voice called from behind. It was warm and inviting, and managed to convey both concern and excitement at the same time. Lance cursed he'd hoped she not show until after the coroner had carted off the body. It wasn't his night it seemed Lance told himself. Lance turned and did his best to steer the over eager reporter away from the crime scene.



Take a walk on the dark side with the stories of *Dark Things II*...

An anthology of horror, featuring the short story *Doll's House* by the Trinity's very own Lisa J. Marcado (before she became LJ Gastineau).

Dark Things II, edited by Ty Schwamberger, ISBN-13: 978-1617060441, now available from Pill Hill Press at www.pillhillpress.com.

pair moved away from the bed and busied themselves with getting changed.

Once dressed and armed the pair stepped out of Lance's home and climbed into their shared squad car. Lance backed the car off the drive onto the street and set off for Rock Creek Cemetery.

Chapter 2:

Sunday 7am:

The early morning air was cool and damp but the rising sun had already begun to burn off the evening dew. It wouldn't be long before the summer heat beat down on the world below.

As Lance made his way towards the yellow crime scene tape in the distance the distinct scent of freshly trampled grass filled the air.

Lance repressed a shiver as he walked past a statue of the grim reaper. He hated cemeteries. There was always

“Miss Walsh.” He said politely as he extended his hand to the bleach blonde haired woman with sharp brown eyes.

“Pamela.” She corrected her crimson lips curved into a seductive smile as she tried to look past him in the direction of the yellow tape.

“All right Pamela, what brings you out to a cemetery at this hour?” Lance questioned leading her further from the actual scene as the CSI team headed toward the body.

“I heard a call over the police band for a homicide. Does your being here mean that we’ve got a serial killer on the loose?”

“Miss Walsh, I will not comment on what we have here as of now because it’s not clear yet,” Lance stated.

“Pamela,” she said hurt those full lips forming a sulky pout. “Is this one like the others?” She asked.

“No comment. Look, you’ll get a statement as soon as there is one to give. For now Pamela, do us a favor, let our

people do their jobs and give the dead a moment of peace.

“I want whatever you have first detective you owe me,” Pamela reminded whiskey brown eyes demanding his agreement.

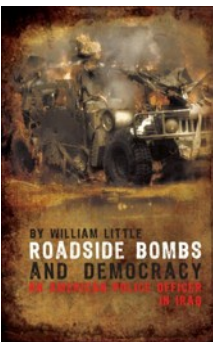
“You’ll get it,” Lance assured her before turning back to the crime scene. He glanced back and watched with satisfaction as the overzealous reporter departed.

“Pamela?” Dana questioned watching as the slinky blonde made her way back toward the local news van. “Yeah, you know Miss Walsh, always looking for the big story. I got her out of our hair for now.”

“Good.”

“Come on, we’ll need to go speak with the grounds keeper. We should take care of it while the team works the scene.”

Dana nodded and together the pair made their way to where the officer’s partner sat with an older man speaking in hushed voices. ♦



"This is a story of guy's experiences in a place that conjures up much controversy and difference of opinion today and probably for a long time to come." – *William Little*

William “Ron” Little gives a first-hand account, starting at the point he decided to apply as a consultant, and ending with his recovery from injuries incurred overseas. A non-fiction book, *Roadside Bombs and Democracy* is written in a style reminiscent of Admiral Daniel V. Gallery’s *Clear the Decks and U-505*.

Available at both Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com.

Guardian

By Doris Ross

Light filtered through a lush, thick canopy of greenery, speckling the fern-and-moss-covered floor, the golden flecks revealing the ants marching in the shadows toward the center of the forest. The endless train climbed through the footprints, then over the Browning rifle so prized by poachers. The line split into five or six, some pausing to inspect the spots of rusty-crimson scattered in the dappled shade. Others wound their way toward largest piece of debris that lay sprawled on the ground.

Flies danced about the carcass, gorging on the rotting decay. They took advantage of the bounty, males courting females, females laying offspring in what would become their first meal. The buzzing was the only sound in a place of cheery silence.

One fly landed on a leather boot. It watched its brethren, the ants, even the butterfly that coasted by on its way

to a fresh bloom. Finally, it looked up with a kind of reverence at the granite shape next to the body.

Lichen patched its surface, grime lay deep in its etched lines. Cracks showed here and there, giving testimony to the weathering of time. How long it stood there, the fly didn’t know, nor did it care. It was, as it had always been: a stone buck, its proud head raised in triumph, pride defining its posture.

Yet there was something different about it. The huge rack upon its brow was streaked with thick layers of the same rusty-crimson. The eyes glittered, sunlight glinting eerily off the flecks of mica and quartz in the rock. As if, possibly, it knew more than anything else living in the forest.

Thoughts like these passed by without much note; a fly is such a simple creature. It took flight again to join the feast.

Somewhere nearby a songbird let out a trill of song, broadcasting to the world that his mate had laid him five eggs. ♦



Meet Grimmie.

He's the kind of guy everyone will encounter once in their lives. He does his job faithfully, usually with terminal results, until one day he decides to make a change – for himself, and for all of those he meets.

Death will never be the same.

From author Linda S. Cowden, hostess of *Fiend Radio* and owner/editor of the e-zine *Arrhythmic Souls*, comes a tale of the famed Grim Reaper. He takes his work seriously, plays the sax, and shows that not all primal forces are without compassion – or a sense of justice.

Now available at Amazon.com. Visit the author at www.auntiemaim.com

Ancient City Con 2011: An Overview

By Doris Ross

This past weekend has been all about Ancient City Con, the fantasy and science fiction convention catering to tabletop gamers, video gamers, anime fans, readers, writers, and artists of all kinds. Held in Jacksonville, FL, on 7/9-10/11, the convention offers gaming, workshops, panels, movie and anime screening, and the opportunity to meet new people.

LJ Gastineau and myself met up with friends made from previous ACC events; Tricia Sparks was unable to attend this year, unfortunately. She was missed by Linda S. Cowden, author of *Grimmie*, Kevin Ranson and Brett Link of MovieCrypt.com, T. S. Robinson, author of *Mirror of Opposition*, Kevin Coryell, the winner of last year's ACC fan-fiction contest, and his girlfriend Sarah Jo Lorenz, the winner of this year's ACC fan-fiction contest.

With the exception of Kevin Coryell, our friends had tables set up in the dealers area of the convention. Kevin Ranson was promoting his first book, an e-book written for the young adult horror market entitled *The Spooky Chronicles: The Crooked Man*. Having self-published through Smashwords, he shared his experience with others to great effect.

Next to Movie Crypt.com was new local author Grant Payne with his book entitled *Password Novus Orsa.*, a science fiction novel about the future of space exploration. We enjoyed talking with him about writing, sharing what we'd learned about the industry, and coming away with a few new marketing ideas that he had shared with us.

Other dealers included Suncoast Comics, Black Sheep Books, Three Muses Clothing, Antiquarian Boutique, Stiff Magazine, the 501ST Squad Seven, T-Shirt Bordello, Wonderland Creations, and several others.

Cosplayers acted out skits in the halls, video gamers played in the game room, screenings of anime and movies were shown, table-top gamers played for hours next to the

dealers area, and panels on anime, writing, blogging, and fan-fiction were held.

As writing is our main focus at these events, we attending several of the writing panels. We did, unfortunately, miss the *Read-Write-Live!* Panel, presented by COO-Interactive Entertainment, due to the timing. It was the first panel of the day, slotted in at 8:00am and Lisa and myself opted out of attending in favor of breakfast.

John Ottinger (graspingforthewind.com) led the panel on using blogs to promote yourself and your writing. He, along Kat Hooper, Tia Nevitt, and Charlie Allden, spoke of ways to attract attention to your website or blog, such as commenting on the blogs of the others.

Linda Cowden headed a panel entitled *Edit or Die!*. She covered the reasons for editing, even specifying that it was the lack of editing that has sullied self-publishing in the eyes of most established publishing houses and presses. Tips were given, examples discussed, and the importance of editing stressed.

There was also a two part Creative Writing Workshop available, one part featured per day of the con. They not only coached writers on how to improve their works, they also covered how to give constructive critiques—the points where you have to tell your writing buddy what's wrong with their piece, why, and how to do it while minimizing bad feelings.

Another of Linda Cowden's panels, *Building Better Characters*, was a discussion on creating 3-dimensional characters, whether you are building a character from scratch or using a template such as a character sheet for tabletop gaming. Character background was also spoken of. It was pointed out that, for the author, having a detailed background is good — some might even say essential. However, we were warned against putting too much of that background into ours works so we wouldn't lose our readers.

All in all, the convention was an enjoyable experience, one that we looking forward to repeating next year. ♦