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LOCAL
AUTHORS

AT NOVEMBER'S SOCIAL, NWSFS MEMBERS HAD A CHANCE TO READ SOME SELECTIONS SUBMITTED BY NWSFS MEMBERS ON THE TOPIC FIRST CONTACT. IN THIS ISSUE ARE THREE OF THE PIECES SUBMITTED; THE REST WILL BE IN OUR SPRING ISSUE. ENJOY!

Congratulations to

JEAN JOHNSON

2011 P.K. Dick Award nominee
for *A Soldier's Duty* from Ace Books

LETTER FROM THE EDITRIX

Oops, we did it again...so nice we did it twice...you blinked and we're still here. The year 2012 is now upon us and, pop culture notwithstanding, I think we will all be here come December 21st. I'm sure the ancient Mayans duly noted the last day of the previous cycle on their codices, updated all of their records, made to-do lists for the upcoming Long Count...and got on with the business of living. After all, the Maya are still with us. At least 6 million people living in the Yucatan Peninsula speak one form or another of their language. Twenty eight dialects are recognized by several countries. Doesn't sound like a dead language (or planet for that matter) to me.

How we look at time measures us as a civilization. Time is money. Time flies. Time conquers all. Time is everything. We spend it, try to save it, waste it, measure it with increasing accuracy, complain there is never enough of it, regulate it, lose it, and kill it. And still it passes, both slow and fast, inexorable and relentless. I have often thought that our society misses the point of it entirely. Like the city of Reality in Norton Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth*, we never lift our eyes from the pavement; and so the world fades around us, its wonders unseen. How many wonders are forgotten due to schedules without end? Or how many are never noticed due to the endless rush to get ahead? And what does getting ahead *mean*? Yes, money makes this vale of tears a bit more bearable...but I think that it is way too easy to get distracted by activities and items that seem so necessary at the time. But six months from now?

I don't tend to make New Years' resolutions as I have enough time-sensitive deadlines in my life. Plus, when I have failed to achieve them in the past, I've gotten a wee bit depressed. But here's my New Years' idea or theme as it were: spending my time wisely.

Since I can't manage to do *everything*, even if I could manage to define that precisely, but I can prioritize what is most important and move forward from there. Some of what is important is easy to define: my family and friends, for starters. Other items like Norwescon, writing, and costuming may force me to make some tough choices. I don't know. Many of you know I have been writing off and on for the past couple of years. Do I want to take it to the next level? If I do, I may have to do what Mercedes Lackey did and give up other activities for a few years to hone my craft. Which may mean I don't work on Norwescon's con com during that time. Not an easy choice to make as the Norwescon (and NWSFS) folks are my extended family. I've been volunteering for Norwescon for nearly 20 years and with NWSFS for 8. Yikes! So I may continue to dabble in writing and focus my primary efforts around volunteering. Much thought and consideration is required. My head hurts and it's only Day Two of 2012.

But here's to 2012. May all of you have time enough for what matters most to you. And if you don't, make time!

FIRST CONTACT: FANDOM

By Michael Citrak

During the summer of 1975 I made first contact....with fandom.

Sure, I had a friend or two at high school that liked Star Trek, so you add my brother and that made at most four people in the world that I knew who like Science Fiction. That summer I was living in Seattle and I heard on KJR (AM radio when they used to play music on AM) an ad for a gathering of Star Trek fans at the Everett public library. I called the library for more info.....and this was a very important first for me as a 17 year old.....as it was my FIRST time I made a long distance phone call to a non-relative....yes, I asked for permission first. The library didn't have more info but that didn't stop us. At the appointed time Peter and I headed north (our "fannish" friends from high school weren't interested....this was just a little too odd for them).

Once at the library we quickly made our way to the basement meeting room where the organizer was expecting maybe ten people...there were at least a hundred folks there. We talked and talked and talked. And I brought my home made tribble. Way cool. Afterwards some of the folks met up with other Star Trek fans who weren't able to make it to this first gathering....and thus this became the Puget Sound Star Trekkers and they produced a one-day convention in November of that year....that was my brother's and my first convention....and it was *glorious*.

BOOKS ON THE RUN

Touched by An Alien By Gini Koch

Yes, it's derivative and full of clichés familiar to comic geeks; but it is a lovely romp. Like a really good piece of chocolate, it goes down nicely and doesn't give you heartburn. Our heroine is the only one not to run screaming for the hills when a man in front of her metamorphizes into some sort of monster and starts killing civilians. After dispatching him, she is inducted into a super-secret government agency. Mayhem ensues. Recommended to fans of *Men In Black*, *Middleman* and rom com's.

Rosemary and Rue By Seanan McGuire

I have finally gotten around to reading these. When one's husband, who is notorious for his general dislike of fantasy, started reading them after *Renovation* and hasn't stopped yet...well, you know they are worth checking out. What I loved best was how deftly our world and faerie are intertwined and yet so far apart. Not an easy effect to pull off and the author does it well. And I love well-written mysteries. Recommended to fans of *Border-town*, *Butcher's Dresden*, and *Yasmine Galenorn*.

Steampunk! An Anthology of Rich and Fantastically Strange Stories

Edited By Kelly Link

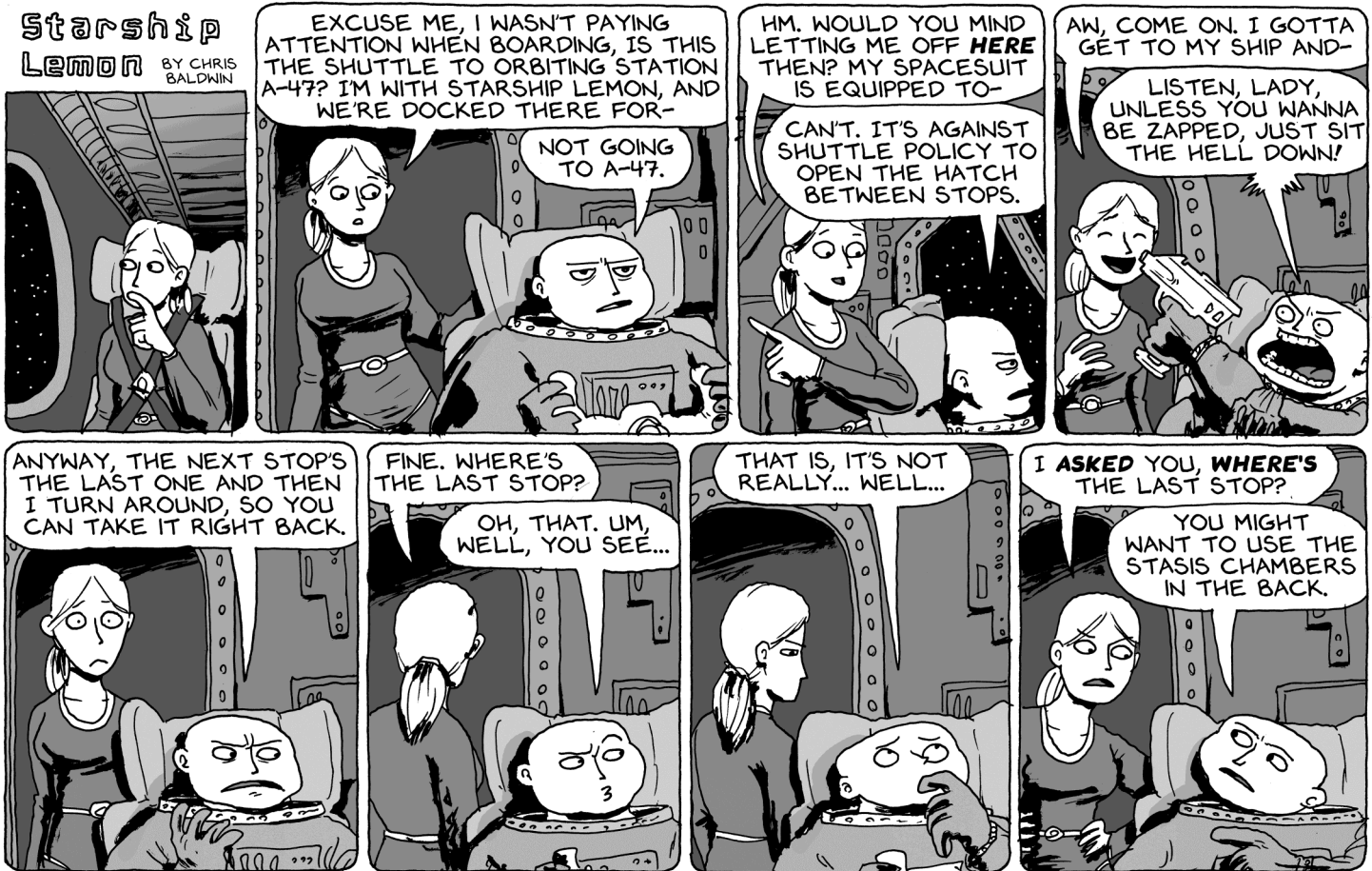
A lovely steampunk sampler with enough variety for everyone. Look for goodies from Cory Doctorow, Delia Sherman and others. My fave happens to be 'The Last Ride of the Glory Girls,' by Libba Bray with Doctorow's 'Clockwork Fagin' a close second. A great introduction to steampunk if you've ignored the genre thus far.

WESTWIND needs aliens...

As well as artists, writers, layout and editing subject matter experts and anyone else who might be interested. You can get in touch with me at katrina.marier@gmail.com And you thought I was going to rerun the same ad from last issue? Hah!

Starship Lemon

BY CHRIS
BALDWIN



ABOUT OUR ARTIST...

I am a cartoonist. I was born and raised in Massachusetts among maple syrup and autumn foliage, and am now Seattle-based, enjoying perfect summers and no snow shoveling. I am currently (twice weekly) writing and drawing the sci-fi humor epic web comic, **Spacetravler**, which can be found at: <http://www.spacetravler.com>

When I'm not drawing comics, I'm cooking (and often posting recipes at <http://www.cookrookery.com>), going for walks with my sweetie, or playing with our four cats. When drawing, I'm usually listening to science fiction audiobooks and trying not to eat all the cookies in the house.

UPCOMING NWSFS EVENTS:

Jan 21st – Social at Rustycon.

Please join your fellow NWSFS members for a social at Rustycon <http://www.rustycon.com/> Look for us in one of the designated party rooms.

Feb 18th – Spaghetti Sauce Off at the Brathouse.

Mar 17th – PK Dick Award Nominee social at William & Sally's home.

The Seattle-based Northwest Science Fiction Society is one of the largest science fiction groups of its kind in the world. Our members can be found in numerous states plus Canada. Though oriented towards literary forms of science fiction, the interests of our members cover all aspects of the field and we reflect their diversity. Whether you are a reader, dreamer, media fan, professional or just like science fiction in all its forms, there is something for you.

About NWSFS Socials and other outings...

We all have hectic lives and the monthly social gathering is a chance to kick back and socialize with people with similar interests. Socials are typically at the home of a local member, with occasional socials at local conventions, museums, or events. Members also host monthly outings to restaurants they enjoy and recommend to others. MFR outings are a great way to meet new friends or get in touch with old ones over a nice meal. And once in a while we'll do something special. These specials can range from museum outings, day trips to natural wonders, weekends in Las Vegas, cruises, to treks to Powell's City of Books in Portland.

We need MFR hosts for January, February, & March. Please contact Jeanine at info@nwsfs.org if you are interested in hosting a My Favorite Restaurant (MFR) event or a monthly social.

THE CARE AND FEEDING OF AUTHORS

BY JEAN JOHNSON

Authors are an awful lot like cats.

When we want your attention, we want it right *now*, and we want it with lots of praise and pettings. Most people don't realize just how insecure most of us are deep down inside, worrying over whether or not anyone will actually like what we write. And when we want you to go away so that we can focus on the mouse-hole...er, the plot we're writing, we want you to go away because zomgwtfbq can't you see we're concentrating here? Aaaaugh!

Thankfully, the only things we're likely to shed are sticky notes. I can't think of any instance wherein an author hacked up a hairball. A poorly written novel, maybe, but not an actual, physical hairball. But beyond that, we're fairly independent. We don't need to be taken out for walkies like a dog...er, scratch that. Some of us do. Writing is very much a sedentary job, so we need the exercise. But we're mostly independent. Presuming we have the basic skills of cooking and cleaning, we can sort-of look after ourselves.

Still, there comes a point in an author's feline-like independence when we need the support of others around us. Praise and pettings, care and feeding, cleaning up after them and teaching them new tricks—yes, it's possible to teach a cat tricks—can take a lot of time and require a bit of patience. But it is possible, and quite worthwhile.

Praise & Pettings:

Authors, as I have said, are insecure idiots. Yes, I include myself in that summation. With rare exception, most authors will wobble over our works, whether it's our first book, our second, or our thirty-fourth. And by wobble, I mean panic, wail, sink into a depressed funk, want to pull the covers over our heads, and in general believe we are total hacks who cannot string two words together coherently, never mind—aaaaaigh—an *entire story!*

The best way to reassure an author is to read and like our writing, and then tell us so. That's the praise part. This does have the drawback of, "But what if I don't like their writing?" Well, unless it's the absolute worst of grammatically incorrect, disjointed, incoherent, spelling-mistake-riddled piece of...erm...hairball-ness, that's the word we'll use for it...then there's bound to be at least one thing you can honestly say was done at least okay, right? That gives you a starting point for reassurances.

More specifically, let an author know what we did right *in detail*. This doesn't mean going on and on for 50 pages' worth of praise. Rather, it means point out something specific in the story that you liked. Maybe it was a turn of phrase describing the way the hero moved when threatening someone. Maybe it was a tricky little plot-twist you hadn't expected but quite enjoyed. That's the sort of praise-laden detail that thrills an author to no end.

The other end of things is the pettings. When things aren't going well, and you have to tell your author we're not doing well—more on that in a moment—then you need to do it in a reassuring, encouraging way. "Well yes, dear, you did kinda muff up the whole traveling from Lake Union to Alki Beach in only 5 minutes in your script, when it actually takes at least 40 minutes...but it's not like you were going to spend 40 minutes following the speedboat on-camera, right? You definitely didn't want to waste the viewer's time, so I know the compromise was necessary..."

As for how to tell the cat...er, author...author-cat...we shouldn't have hacked up that particular hairball in the story, again be specific in what you—you yourself—felt didn't work right. Explain why you think it didn't work for you, if you can. Acknowledge that others may not have the same trouble, though the fact that you yourself did means something probably needs tweaking, and then follow it up by pointing out something the author did right. As the song goes, a spoonful of sugar does indeed help the medicine go down.

You can also give the author time to respond with what they felt they were trying to say, which can then open up a dialogue of suggestions and counter-offers on how they could say it better next time. Writing is a craft, and like all crafts, takes a lot of practice, reviewing, revision, and effort to polish and make each manuscript better with each successive try. Most authors know there's always room for improvement, and most of us want to improve it. You can help with that, and if you do it in a helpful way, we'll love you for it.

Never, under any circumstances, expose your author-cat to open flames. Never try to burn your author with scathing comments and hurtful phrases. You'll get a hissing, scratching fur ball of defensive fury leaping for your face—and we authors *know* how to wield words like weapons, so don't assume your precious hide and/or eyeballs will be safe—before the author will scuttle off, growling and glaring, to hole up in our den or office.

Any attempts to approach your author-cat at that point will be met with resentment, glares, and occasional, vicious claw-swipes...and authors have long memories when it comes to someone trying to burn our stories, our babies. It will take a lot of time and effort to regain our trust, so it's better to refrain from being hurtful at the start.

This is not to say you shouldn't give your author-cat an occasional bout of tough love. "You *will* go exercising today! You have to stay healthy so you can finish your books!" Or, "That plot-twist was lame, crappy nonsense, totally out of character for your (hero/villain/whoever) and you know it! I know you can write better, so go fix it!" ...But in general, keep in mind that if you've earned the trust and friendship of an author, it's a precious thing that shouldn't be wasted. Many of us are very loyal to those who give us their time, friendship, patience, and affection.

Care & Feeding:

For those of you who live with an author, you'll be familiar with this next bit. For those of you contemplating moving in with an author-cat, or who have just adopted one...pay attention. Most authors can take care of themselves fairly well, except for *Deadline Months*.

It's a sad fact, but when it gets to be that time of the year, many of us authors will neglect our housemates, spouses, friends, family members, et cetera. Why? We're busy giving birth to a brand-new story, and this is that last month where the false labor pains keep coming and going in fluctuations of inspiration and despair. We'll neglect doing laundry, we'll forget to eat healthy, or even semi-healthy...or even forget to eat at all. Our sleep schedule will suffer, and when it comes to non-writing appointments, we'll twist and writhe like a cat trying to escape from being picked up when it doesn't want to be held.

Please understand that this is a *job* for us. It involves *work*. It is not, however, a 9-to-5 job. Some authors can manage the discipline of treating it as such, but do not expect it to be confined to office hours. Most of it is mental work, so you may see your author staring off into space a lot, or playing mindless games, or scribbling notes between long pauses. We might even mutter to ourselves, hold arguments with imaginary people, or bolt up from the dinner table and scuttle off, desperate to write down whatever inspiration just struck us.

Yes, it's annoying. Yes, it can be frustrating. And yes, it can be bewildering when you just want to ask us to do something, and it's so very obvious that we're on hand to help you with it because we're *home*, aren't we? Why can't we do the laundry, or wash the dishes, or fix you a meal right now? We're at home! ...Well, let's look at it from another perspective: If you were at your job elsewhere, and your author-cat called you up, demanding that you abandon your job, come home and fix us lunch, or come home and wash the dishes...would you do it? No, you wouldn't, because you're *at work*.

Same thing with your author-cat. We're at work. Our workplace just happens to be at home. The best way to handle this is to designate a work-space, or a work-time. When the author is at-work, we're at work, and our job should be treated with as much respect as yours. We may not make as much money as a burger-flipping job—or at least not in a reliable, consistent, frequent paycheck sort of way like a burger-flipping job does—but it is still work.

Part of this is the responsibility of us author-cats to explain when deadline months are, or what our working hours may be, but part of it is the responsibility of those around us to recognize and respect that, yes, we may be staring at our computer screen for hours on end, but we're still busy inside our heads, waiting for the plot-mouse to poke its nose out of the hole so we can pounce on it and put it into words.

In my own life, I currently have roommates; after explaining to them the horrors and neglects of my own version of Deadline Month, my roommates were very kind about making sure I got fed at least once a day, handling the occasional chore when I was very busy, so on and so forth. In turn, when it wasn't a Deadline Month, I did my fair share of the cooking and cleaning, and a touch more than my fair share, because I was grateful they were willing to take care of me.

This is some of what I meant by giving back our loyalty to those who give time, patience, and consideration. We know our muses are capricious, our schedules are wonky, and our staring-off-into-space-ness can be annoying for those who cannot see all the work going on inside our heads. But we appreciate your support all the same.

Cleaning & Tricks:

Most authors are adults. As such, most of us know and follow the basics of personal hygiene, et cetera, and can handle them. If we get caught up in the vicious teeth of a particularly large killer plot-bunny, we may, erm, forget to groom ourselves for a few days. Feel free to gently point out that we need to shower, or brush our teeth, so on and so forth. Many of us will scuttle off and do so. Feel free to help with the laundry so we have something clean to wear.

We also have a bad habit of snacking at our desks. When it's that time of the year and we're too busy with our stories, double-check to make sure dirty dishes are being carted off to the kitchen every day or so, that the garbage is taken out on a regular basis, so on and so forth. There is another caveat, however: Be *very careful* about which papers get tossed into the recycling bins.

Many of us write down our plot notes, character descriptions, and other such needs on paper. Whether it's in a notebook or on the little squares of sticky notes, any piece of paper in an author's office should be treated cautiously, as if it might contain the password to a rarely accessed account. Only in this case, it might contain the password to a particularly important idea. So, when in doubt, discuss it with your author-cat. We'll let you know if it's important or not.

As for teaching your author tricks? We're not quite as disdainful or aloof as real cats. Praise and pet us while making your requests, and we'll probably do whatever it is you want. Happily, even. In return for all of this care and consideration, when you do have our attention, we'll give you sneak-peeks into our coming books, and purr quite happily in your presence.

Minus the shedding, thankfully.



JEAN JOHNSON HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY PUBLISHED IN GENRES RANGING FROM FANTASY ROMANCE TO MILITARY SCIENCE FICTION SINCE 2007, INCLUDING A NYTIMES BESTSELLER. SHE'S MOSTLY FUNNY, MOSTLY HARMLESS, AND MOSTLY BURIED IN PLOT-BUNNIES ON MOST DAYS. FEEL FREE TO CHAT WITH HER AT WWW.JEANJOHNSON.NET.

FIRST CONTACT

By Katharine Bond

I stood outside the porch door with my hands stuffed as far down into my pockets as they could go. Damn, it was cold! I thought longingly about my gloves, currently sitting serenely on the top of my dresser, which was a seven minute walk back, behind me. I briefly entertained the notion of going back for them, but I knew that if I left now, I probably would not return. And, I did want to go. I wanted to walk up to the porch door, throw it open, and enter the house. I did. At least, I was pretty sure I did.

The house itself was fairly run-down looking and had a vague air of middle age decline—not quite brand new but not even close to condemned status. It was just not new, not sparkly. I could vaguely see a cardboard cutout backlit through a narrow hallway that was just barely visible from the walk outside the home. Was that Spock?

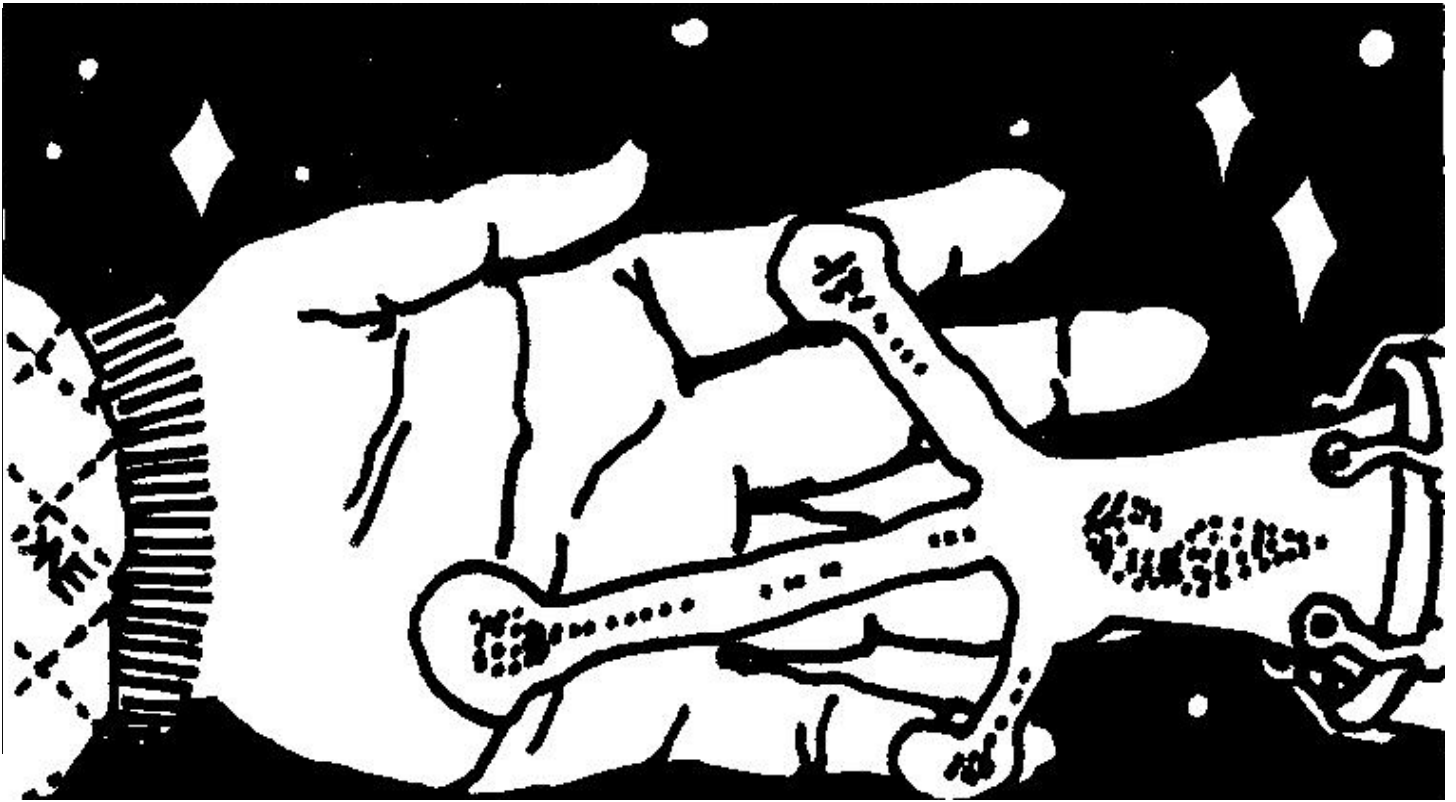
I was still standing outside the porch door. I hadn't been standing there quite long enough to seem out of place, but just long enough to have a fine dusting of snow start to accumulate on my eyelashes. "Okay. Just open the door. Go inside and you'll have fun."

Still, I hesitated. I hadn't even been this nervous going to the gay support meeting for the first time last term. But, I was. I was horribly, nauseatingly nervous. It wasn't that I didn't like science fiction or that I'd never had friends who liked science fiction. But, this...this was different. This would be the first time that I was going to something specifically about science fiction. The first time that the entire point of the meeting would be to talk about, engage with, have fun with science fiction. It was nerve-wracking.

I heard someone coming up the walk behind me with fast, hurried footsteps. Clearly, they were going to go straight in, and it was decision time. Do I go in? Do I go back to my room?

The person did not slow down as they jostled past me, opened the porch door, and then bent down to take off their shoes. At one point, it looked as though they might say something to me, but that moment quickly passed, and they soon disappeared into the house and down that narrow hallway I could faintly see.

The time had come. I screwed up my courage, walked up the stairs, and opened the porch door. A jumble of shoes greeted me at the door to the house. Taking that as my cue, I slipped off my shoes and walked into the narrow hallway I had spied from the walk. And, it was Spock! The noise from the living room clearly indicated where the gathering was happening so I headed that way. Before entering the din, I took a deep breath, nodded to the cardboard Spock (with an eye patch!?), and boldly joined a group I'd never joined before.



FIRST CONTACT: MICHAEL AND CATS

By Rebecca Citrak

In 1997 I told my son that, if he got his grades up, we could get a kitten. He did, so we began looking around. Our friends Mickey and Ogre had a litter that was ready to be adopted out and we made arrangements to bring two of the kittens over to see if either of them wanted to stay.

As we waited, Michael told us: "you know, I don't really like little animals, so if you're going to do this you need to understand that I won't be getting involved with the cat. You'll be responsible for all of the care and feeding, and I'll do my best to be as tolerant as possible."

"No problem!" we told him. "It's going to be Jesse's pet, and it will be his job to take care of it."

Mickey arrived with two kittens. One of them stayed in the carrier, and didn't want to come out. Scooter, on the other hand, came right out and made a beeline for Jesse. They greeted each other enthusiastically, then Scooter set out to explore the house. Michael looked on, not quite frowning. Mickey and I decided that Scooter was going to fit in with us just fine, and she took the little girl kitty home.

Scooter was a 6-inch ball of fluff, audacious and adventuresome. We lived in a two-story duplex. Watching him climb up and down stairs that were taller than he was really fun, but it led to more than one tumble. Happily, he never fell more than one stair because they were much wider than he was. The second time he tumbled, Michael, who was watching out of the corner of his eye, jumped up, picked him up, crooning and cuddling. "Poor baby... did you hurt anything? Are you ok?" We started chuckling. He goes "What?!"

As the day wore on Michael spent more and more time playing with Scooter, and it quickly became obvious that Michael wasn't as disdainful about little animals as he made out, and by the end of the day he was all "Who's my little baby?" and "Does he like his daddy? Does my boy want to sleep on the bed with daddy?"

Jesse watched in disbelief as Michael took over his new pet. We have four cats now, and they are all Michael's!

EAT, DRINK AND BE SCARY

A CHAT WITH JENNIFER BROZEK

I arrived at Soul Food in Redmond this morning with the pleasant realization that I'd been here before. Ben Franklin is next door and I almost always stop in at Soul Food in after looking at knitting needles. One-of-a-kind, mom-and-pop shops with unique treats beat out chain stores any day. The conversation I walked in on was about a hand-blended coffee called, by meandering consensus, Christmas Morning or Christmas Story. This, followed by musings on blends for every holiday makes for the sort of place, where, when you are asked where you come from, answering the planet Mars as well as California and Washington doesn't seem amiss. Soul Food seems directly transplanted from Telegraph Ave. near Berkeley. Have a nice mocha to my right, my computer's working, opera of some sort in the background and I'm not in a hurry...bliss. And now Jennifer is here...

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule for a chat. A number of our readers will recall you were the first author I interviewed for the NWSFS Blog last July and I, for one, am excited to catch up! In one of your recent blog postings you mentioned you might be planning a YA series? Care to share what it might be about?

Nothing is contracted. I decided to write a YA (Young Adult novel) for NaNoWriMo to prove to myself I could write YA. (National Novel Writing Month for those unaware. It's why some writers get no sleep in November.) For that, I wanted to write the book I couldn't find when I was a teenager.

As for the series, all I can tell you is it involves the concept of strangers coming to town and where do the strangers come from? There's a huge mythology behind it.

Stephen King was the inspiration?

No. Yes, Sort of. Stephen King and Dean Koontz are the inspiration for the NaNoWriMo novel. It's going fairly well; I think I might have found my forte when it comes to novels. Stephen King and Neil Gaiman are the inspiration for the YA series.

What is your forte?

I write horror novels and games. I wrote a traditional fantasy novel and everyone liked it; but they said it really isn't your voice. Three agents in a row told me this – my voice is in post-apocalyptic, horror, urban fantasy or science fiction. I thought I would listen.

As far as I know, you haven't written a YA novel before now? I have talked with other YA authors and while I know that some hard-and-fast rules like word count (Thanks Harry Potter!) have been loosened somewhat there still seem to be more restrictions than adult fiction. Care to comment?

I wrote one YA short story, 'The Prince of Artemis V', which is actually my most reprinted story. It's a far-future, slipstream story.

Language for certain. One character in my new series has a serious potty mouth and she will likely be heavily edited. Length isn't a problem for me; 60,000 words is good for me. Shorter fiction forms seem to come easier for me. I just wrote a 28,000 word novel-la coming out in December.

Another YA rule that can be difficult: child protagonists must be the ones solving the problems. They can lean on adults. They can be mentored by adults. But they must be the ones who are the heroes and solve the problems. When an adult character comes in to the story, sometimes it's hard to write it so that the adult isn't the one solving the problem. Especially since it makes more sense sometimes for an adult to solve it, at least from our perspective.

'If I Die Before I Wake' is a story I wrote where a girl wakes up and everyone in her town is dead. What does she do? And what happens when she discovers she's not alone? And what's in the town with her *isn't* human. This is a one-off; it's all plotted out, and I'm 5-10 days from finishing the first draft. I've been running 5,000 words per day. I will likely submit it to agents next year, after editing, test reading and stewing about it.

Do you edit your own work?

I do Draft 0 and Draft 1. Then I put them away for a few months so the story is a stranger to me. Then I go back and edit it again before anyone else sees it.

After the second edit, my test readers get it. My mom is a grammar goddess; she reads everything I write. She's very opinionated as to whether she likes my stories or not. Some she likes. Some she doesn't. I also have the East German judge. He is a chemistry teacher who writes; and he will shred a story even if he likes it. He'll question everything to make certain I've thought through all of the implications to a situation.

He'll pick up threads I haven't and question everything that doesn't quite fit. I have my cheerleader who loves everything I write. She's my litmus test; if she doesn't like it, I've *really* screwed things up. And then there's my husband. He's an extremely voracious reader; most of what I write is for him, except the YA stuff.

In the end, my goal is to be published by a prestigious small press or a major house - and they will edit my work as well. Everyone needs an editor.

You seem to split your time equally between writing and editing. Obviously you love both; but both require different skills. Do you feel that editing has helped you become a better writer and vice versa?

Editing has made me become a much better writer due to the fact that I have learned to see the mistakes that make the editor in me wince. The vice versa not so much, except reading slush has made me a better editor. Reading slush, I know what stories will grab a reader. It gives you a different point of view. Both writing and editing are good at teaching the different parts of the brain to access different points of view.

You have spoken of your work on anthologies as a partnership between the editor and the writer with the editor having the initial vision and the writers building on and changing that vision. Is this what makes your anthologies so popular and award-winning?

Anthologies do well from certain editors because the editors have a specific vision – they aren't grabbing a story just because of the author's name but are looking for tone, point of view, and cohesiveness. Some of the greats like Ellen Datlow follow this process.

I think that's why I love some anthologies and not others.

John Joseph Adams – his forte is editing and the short story. My editorial goal is to be the heir apparent and unholy editorial love child of Ellen and John. My author's goal is to be Stephen King's and Neil Gaiman's unholy literary love child.

It is good to have those who inspire you to do better and definite goals to get there.

Most of your own work appears to be short stories. Do you prefer that medium to the longer forms of fiction or does it simply sell better?

I don't know. Writers evolve. I taught myself to do short stories because I didn't know how. I did a series of exercises that became 'In A Gilded Light.' I've proven to myself that I can write the short form.

Now I want to prove I can write the long form. I'm challenging myself to write good novels. I can write award winning game books; they are world building, back story, and rules, but not novels.

In long form fiction, the back story needs to stay back; and if you bring it in, you need to embed it. I'm still evolving as a author and 2012 will tell me if I can do novels. I'm not one to take on a challenge thinking I'm going to lose.

Some writers appear to be driven by plot (Agatha Christie for instance) still others by character (Japanese manga). Which side of the equation do you fall on?

Character situations...well, what really drives my writing are "What if?" scenarios. And those tend to be character driven.

How do you feel your background as a software engineer has affected your writing? My husband is a software engineer and I am continually amazed at how differently the two of us approach problem solving.

I suppose it has. I was a black box tester and my job was to see if a product worked the way I thought it was supposed to. Much of it was top-down, logical progression, A through Z thinking and planning. And my writing definitely goes from A to B to C and so on unlike some writers who may go from A to C and then sideline to B and so on. So yes, software engineering has affected my writing.

Con'td on page 10

What's coming along the pipeline for 2012?

Let's see. On the editing side, my DAW anthology, *Human for a Day*, comes out in December 2011. On the writing side, my stories, 'Showdown at High Moon' will appear in DAW's *Westward Weird* anthology and 'Sharks & Seals,' appearing in *Fat Girl in a Strange Land* anthology are coming out next February. 'A Ghost Saved My Life,' in the *ODD? 2* anthology appears in June. And four other pieces are also slated to come out next year. Visit my website for more details!

I also read your post about poverty and book ownership. I ended up reading Seanan Maguire's post, 'Across The Digital Divide,' about the topic as well. Given your opinions about this, what are your ideas for keeping print media alive – especially since we as a society seem to be being pushed to ebooks?

I am very passionate about this issue. I grew up poor; and without libraries, I would not be the writer I am today. Without libraries I would not have been introduced to the works of Susan Cooper, one of my favorite authors as a kid. Growing up, a \$.10 a pound hike in the price of potatoes had a major impact on the family budget. I did not buy books until I grew up. I see the digital divide denying low income families access to reading material if they do not have the technology to take advantage of it.

But as library systems either close down or move towards ebooks, how will they be able to get books?

Cheap ereaders that people can use to check out books from the library is one possible solution. People should be able to donate their old Kindles, Nooks, Tablets, and such to the libraries when they upgrade so a perfectly good piece of equipment can help someone in need. And make these available for students to check out as well.

This isn't a perfect solution, as how would you make certain people return the readers when they are done so the next person can use them? And Amazon has begun something with its Prime Accounts wherein a user can "check out" a book to read before they have even bought it.

They get to read it for free without having to pay for it?

Yes. As a reader, this is great. As a writer...

I understand your concern. This has major implications for publishing.

This is a huge infrastructure problem to crack; I don't have all of the information to solve it, but it is a crucial need that should be addressed. But I want to see libraries continue; they serve a vital public need. At the same time, I want to make sure the writers get paid.

As a writer, my goal is to be in print but there is a huge benefit to electronic print runs. You may start to see Print-On-Demand (POD) becoming the norm and having small print runs for special events like conventions. I'll likely use a POD option through Lulu or another POD company for conventions.

Five anthologies in one year! In your podcast with the SF Signal you mentioned that you don't get much sleep. Doesn't your writing suffer from lack of sleep? I know mine does.

I do actually get sleep; but my hours are very different from the usual 8-5 work week. As a full time freelancer, I get to choose when I work. I write first thing in the morning when I'm fresh and ready to go. Writing is also the last thing I do at night when I'm too tired for my inner critic to be feisty. There are advantages to being impaired and not having to deal with the inner critic. I often write difficult scenes late at night when the critic has gone to sleep. Searching for jobs, maintaining an online presence, emails, interviews – there's an entire business to writing – falls somewhere in between.

You also talked in the podcast about your ability to write a story about a topic you might not necessarily like (i.e. zombies) Is writing of this sort as much of a challenge as writing in someone else's universe? Do you treat this like you do other challenges?

To do this, the person must be a good friend who asks nicely or be a client who pays me. Once I figure out what the story is, it isn't too difficult. But if it is a topic I don't like, like zombies, I will throw my own spin on it. For example, the original voodoo zombie is what I used in a recent anthology because it's more horror than gore and I could work with it.

I know you are an avid gamer. What do you play in currently?

I am playing in five weekly games. Monday night is alternating *Shadowrun* and *Eberron*. Thursday night is *Dark Sun* alternating with a homebrew *D & D, Erosia*. Saturdays is *Black Crusade* (I used to LARP on Saturday; but it runs too late and I had to take three months off traveling for cons.) And these are all with the same pool of gamers. I do miss LARPing but there is a time constraint.

I'm currently in a highly-modified *Champions* game. Time is definitely an issue when you are dealing with people with lives. Any games you'd love to play in and aren't currently?

I would love to play in *nWOD: Changeling*, *Far West* (the west populated by Asians and not Europeans), and *Serenity*. John Wick's *Cat*. This is a one off – you play a cat protecting your human from boggins. Drive-Through RPG is where you can find it. Another great one-off is Jason Blair's *Little Fears* – you are a kid and the monsters under the bed are real. Reminds me of writing late at night – animal brain turns on and I can't go to sleep with the lights off.

We also play a lot of board games.

What conventions will you be attending next year?

The next con I will be at is Norwescon. Before that, I will attend a five-day writer's retreat organized by Patrick Swenson with Fairwood Press in late February/early March at the Rainforest Resort Village at Lake Quinault. You go there and you write. There are small sessions about various topics like endings, organizational skills and such. This year is my third or fourth.

So, Rainforest, Norwescon, Origins, and then Worldcon. I suspect I will also be editing the YA novel I'm working on now at Rainforest. A final edit before I send it to a prospective agent.

Well, I know I will look forward to your work, especially the story in the new Valdemar anthology, *Under The Vale!*

It was a dream come true to write for her as I have loved Mercedes Lackey's work since I was a teenager!

Good luck in 2012 and we'll see you at Norwescon.

Thank you so much.



Jennifer Brozek is an award winning editor and author.

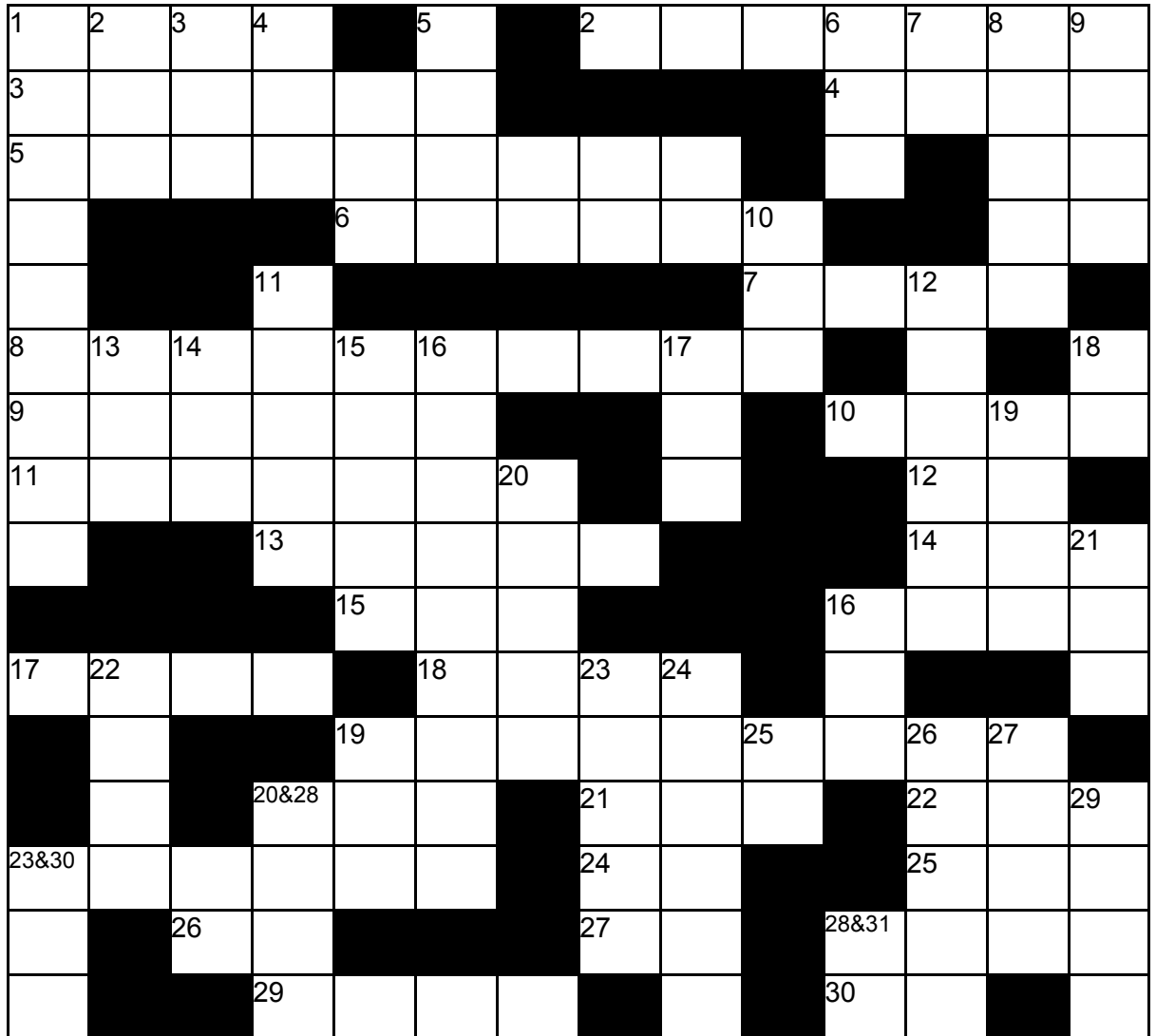
Winner of the 2009 Australian Shadows Award for best edited publication, Jennifer has edited seven anthologies with more on the way. Author of *In a Gilded Light* and *The Little Finance Book That Could*, she has more than thirty-five published short stories, and is an assistant editor for the award winning Apex Publications House.

Jennifer also is a freelance author for numerous RPG companies. Winner of both the Origins and the ENnie award, her contributions to RPG sourcebooks include *Dragonlance*, *Colonial Gothic*, *Shadowrun*, *Serenity*, *Savage Worlds*, and *White Wolf SAS*.

When she is not writing her heart out, she is gallivanting around the Pacific Northwest in its wonderfully mercurial weather. Jennifer is an active member of SFWA and HWA. Read more about her at her blog: <http://jennifer-brozek.livejournal.com/> or on her website, <http://www.jenniferbrozek.com/>

Note: SFWA is the acronym for Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America and HWA is the acronym for the Horror writers Association.

A BEAST OF A PUZZLE



ACROSS

- 1 Hindu Lord of illusions
- 2 Avian symbol of rebirth
- 3 Vishnu's mount
- 4 Skeleton component
- 5 Argentinian lake monster
- 6 German water spirits
- 7 Storm spirit (Basque)
- 8 Scaled buffalo-hog hybrid
- 9 Southeastern US bird
- 10 Black
- 11 To ease pain

- 12 Doctor
- 13 1940's computer acronym
- 14 Affirmative
- 15 Decorative scallops on the edge of a garment
- 16 Dragon (Vietnamese)
- 17 Large grotesque humanoid
- 18 Infusion of camellia
- 19 Record
- 20 According to
- 21 Obsolete unit of absorbed radiation
- 22 Atomic Mass Unit
- 23 Dragon (Germanic)

- 24 Tempore regis
- 25 Commune, pre-Revolutionary Russia
- 26 Adverb or conjunction
- 27 American English
- 28 Losing light
- 29 Latin American bogeyman
- 30 On or about

Note: Squares with two numbers are the starting point for two words, one across and one down. The first number is for the clue across and the second for the clue going down.

ENJOY!

DOWN

- 1 Persian lion-human-scorpion hybrid
- 2 A miscellany
- 3 A short hurrah
- 4 Sumerian sky god
- 5 Lion-like beast (Hindu)
- 6 Flow away
- 7 Negative
- 8 Short-tailed lemur
- 9 Asturian water spirit
- 10 A call for help
- 11 A Lieutenant in the armed forces
- 12 Baby
- 13 2nd person singular of be
- 14 The sesame plant
- 15 To combine
- 16 The sea monster from the Book of Job
- 17 Snake
- 18 Used to indicate inclusion
- 19 Working cattle
- 20 Keen
- 21 Time
- 22 Between black and white
- 23 Major artery to the heart
- 24 Traps
- 25 One of Freud's
- 26 Child-devouring monster (Greek)
- 27 Hebrew giant
- 28 Ash
- 29 Great bear (Greek)
- 30 Old unit of weight (British)
- 31 To perform

Stumped?
Don't believe
there are actually
answers to this
monster of a
puzzle?

HAH!

Check our
webpage!

A Review of 'The Lady of Seeking in the City of Waiting,' coming soon from Jennifer Brozek

By Katrina Marier

I'm a sucker for quests. I love reading about them, good, bad and indifferent. So it was with relish that I picked up Jennifer Brozek's new novella, 'The Lady of Seeking in the City of Waiting,' (Coming soon from Dark Side Books.) and found it to be a quest. I recommend it to fans of high fantasy and history, as it reads like an elaborate strand of beads strung together to make an entire necklace. All are necessary for completion, and must be put together in a precise order.

Nicely paced, this story slowly, almost in passing, reveals the customs and environs of the city of Shadeside, making its questionable sentience shine through. The main character, Jane, is ignorant as to why she is in Shadeside and what her purpose is. And compressing an entire quest, complete with prophecy, betrayal, mayhem, debts of honor, trials and so on, in a novella without the tale becoming rushed or incomplete is difficult. Nor was the writing overdone; she conveys the baroque tones of high fantasy very well without giving us over-decorated palaces and people (I have thought at times that some fantasists are frustrated interior decorators.) Every sentence had a purpose.

In addition to the quest motif, this novella is also a mystery. History buffs will want to pay attention to the clues scattered throughout the story; and be prepared for a surprise at the end. While the story is set in an RPG world, knowledge of it isn't required to enjoy this story. I am tempted to at least check out the game system because I enjoyed it. At the very least, I'll likely pick up a copy of the story.