

# The WSFA Journal Sept/Oct 2019



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## Trials and Tribulations

Bang, bang went the gavel signifying the start of the 9-6-19 WSFA meeting. “Hearye hearye, we are about to start. Everyone who wants to be at the meeting get settled,” said prez Bob.

Mr. Treasurer Sam S said WSFA has \$\$\$, year over year \$\$\$, “Let’s throw a Capclave,” said the crowd. “Throw it where?” someone asked.

Bill said, Capclave just had a meeting; a lot of you were there. Meeting to get us going. Deadline for program book is this weekend so everything got rushed. Some things going on. Things are progressing. Program is about a third of the way done, and will be done soon. Will go on website and we could advertise it. Positive in that respect. We are on track for attendees. Hopefully when program gets up we will have more people. David Keener has workshops lined up. Nothing too major. Progressing well.



For Capclave 2020 we’re still having it, continued Bill. During the course of Worldcon Sarah got photo of Martha and Dodo, chatted with Carrie Vaughn who had suggestions based on Mile High Con. Chatted with Nancy Kress who will be our GoH for Worldcon and who said she will be back for 2020 as will Connie Willis. While attending at Dublin, I chatted with a person XXX. He talked about that panel he did in 2013. New XX book not out yet. I told XX if he can’t commit until a month or two out, we’ll still make it happen. Good for the convention. I did get to see XX and YYY can’t do 2020 but still have good memories of Capclave. I discussed with Paul a potential book for 2020, when we get agreements we will let you know more. We have the space and a contract. Things are on track. I have to confirm my programming person because she may have gotten involved in a Worldcon bid. We may need a programming person. People doing it last few years can’t. David Keener volunteered to do workshops. Cathy said Nancy Kress might be interested in doing a workshop if arrange it in advance. Can’t sell memberships for 2020 for another month and a half. Elizabeth has guaranteed that will have forms ready. “Oh, I have???” said Elizabeth. “I want to get people’s money, let’s do it”

Courtnei said she has a Prince George’s library contact who would be interested. Clearinghouse. It can advance our educational purpose.



Far Future: George had nothing to report. A couple bodies have volunteered to be on my staff, but good positions are available. We are 2 years out so not dire. Mark Roth made a suggestion about programming. “How about an old-style convention where don’t have late programming and do have a dinner break so people can hang out?”

T-shirt committee. Cathy passed around t-shirt design. She talked to Off-world designs. I have delegated this to Bob since he has ordered shirts and got some quotes. We’re looking for 180 shirts. I am proposing we allocate \$\$ for shirts, about \$\$ a shirt, and then we can sell for \$\$? So I would like to propose we do this in time for this year. The whole point is that this is not a dated shirt but could use for multiple years.



Bob – Light blue –royal heather.  
 Cathy I refuse to do royal orange.  
 Bill asked how many shirts.  
 Bob, no one asked for this, we will have shirts set aside for Steve Stiles and Elaine.  
 Elizabeth asked about large women sizes.  
 Cathy said 2xl and 3xl and larger for v necks.  
 Sam L. asked about how sell it.  
 Bob said WSFA press table.  
 Bill said we would need another person at the table to sell shirts.  
 Bob said, “I won’t have Paul do it all himself. We’d get a volunteer.”  
 NO one opposed. One abstention (on behalf of Bill).

No committee yet on WSFA Journal

INtertivities - Kim said Friends of Tyson-Pimmett (Fairfax) Library have book sale this weekend through Sunday. Sam S. If have Netflix, we’ve binge watched the Dark Crystal series, a10 episode prequel, it expands out the world. Whole series of YA books. Paul said, “You are all nerds.” Space X demonstrated that watertowers can fly. Star Hawk flew flawless except the landing needed a little work. Starship Mark One will finish this month, will fly next month, and reach near orbit by the end of year. The speed of this is mind-boggling. <discussion of difference between government and corporate where you have to do the work to get paid.> Lost contact with the Indian moon lander.

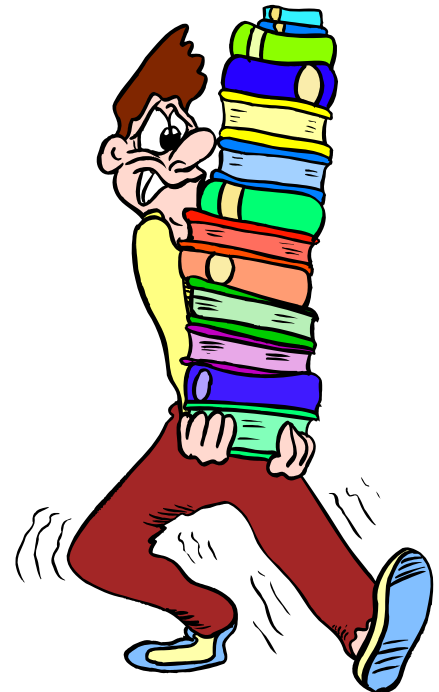
George said he and Madeleine were at the Hole in the Wall bookstore and Eddy was ecstatic that it was closing. Her commute was too long.

Sam L. gave schedule for Committee to Talk SF

Bill for WSFA Press. Trials and tribulation of the Alette de Bodard books continue. We mailed them to her and customs mailed them back (repeatedly). Paul: So we took them to the Republic of Ireland, which is in the E.U. and it was accepted. Bill mailed them to her address in France and put as the return address her husband’s work address. Bill said when she received it, she posted on twitter about how awesome they looked so now book dealers are ordering it. Subterranean asked for ##. In one day we got \$\$\$ of orders, said Paul. Bill said this is good news despite all the things that went wrong. And we’ll have copies for sale at Capclave.

Paul for webpage. It was pointed out that some of the older archived material has not yet returned. I have been too busy because I have not considered decade old journals high priority. It won’t take me long once I get spare time, but I haven’t had much of that. Nothing has been lost. Other org, BWAWA. I promised Peggy Rae that I would write a remote voting system, their bylaws allow for it, WSFA’s don’t, but if they ever change, BWAWA didn’t pay me so it’s not exclusive. WSFA can use it. Paul also said the Keith Lynch list is not an official WSFA list. That’s what we were talking about. It is nice that he has copies but nothing was lost.

Small Press Committee. Paul said the winner is... <dramatic pause> one of the finalists. % voted so no one has to bake. Cathy said everyone notified and I sent out press release. Paul said last year winner got % of vote but took 10 rounds for the final percent. Cathy said the number one and number two stayed the same. Award statutes have been ordered.



Trustees said Rodger recommends that no one mark up anything Paul does with a sharpie.

Old business:



Tabled discussion about the WSFA Journal. Mark said that BSFS just sends out an email with a link to the current version of their newsletter. I don't see why we cannot do that and we can ask them about linking to our newsletter. Bob said that's up to BSFS. Mark replied that we can ask. Kim said since it is irregularly put out, a reminder would be useful. Rodger moved that we form a committee to get better distribution of Journal. Judy Kindell suggested that this be assigned to the publications committee.

Bill said secretary asks for contributions after each meeting. There needs to be a commitment to get material. Rodger said part of the impetus for my motion is that as someone who has written four articles for the journal and read zero copies, having more distribution will get more people to write. Bob appointed Sam as head of committee. Cathy asked about vote. No vote needed for committee.

Paul said, WSFA history page last entry 2015. History is sparse. It would be a good idea to have a WSFA historian whose job it is to keep up with officers, Capclave, etc. And not me. Bob asked for volunteers. Rodger asked if could be made WYSIWING. Paul said history yes, other pages could be easily edited. Aapurva volunteered.

Any other new business? No new business. Eileen is here for her third meeting so can join.

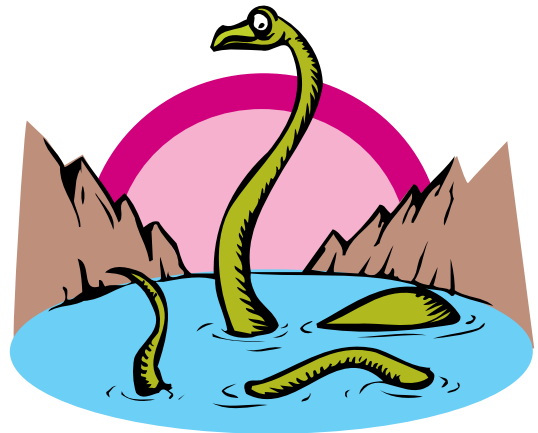
Announcements – BAWAWA won the rights to host Worldcon. “God help us all”. Will have another WSFA meeting before Capclave, First Friday in October at 7 PM.

Judy – Friends of Arlington Library book sale first weekend in October. Details.

Bill – Photos of astronaut signed available at Capclave.

Zenlizard – Loch Ness Monster, sightings come down to giant eels. DNA have been found in the water.

Motion to adjourn. Adjourned at 10:04. Unanimously.

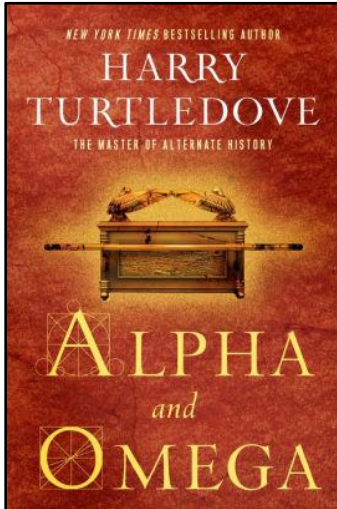


Attendance: Courtni Y Burleson, Aapurva Desai, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Kimberly Hargan, Frances Holland, David Keener, Judy Kindell, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Sarah Mitchell, Mark Roth, Judy & Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Elizabeth Twitchell, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh, Stephen Brinich, Crystal Paul, Sam Hogan, and Ellen Montgomery.

## Alpha and Omega Review

By Alex Wallace

For members of the WSFA who do not know me, I am the de facto head administrator of the largest alternate history Facebook group, as well as a moderator on a small alternate history forum. I became an alternate history fan when I read Harry Turtledove's *WorldWar* series when I was an eighth grader in 2011, and immediately fell in love with his oeuvre. To this day, I consider him my favorite author.



However, many in the online alternate history community are quite critical of Turtledove's work. Many say his pacing is too slow and his histories implausible, and for one period even I will agree that he had some awkward sex scenes. That being said, I envy his imagination, and love all the strange things he has written about. Unfortunately, I too was somewhat disappointed with his 2018 release *Through Darkest Europe*, which struck me as decent, but overall retreading a concept that

Kim Stanley Robinson did so much better in *The Years of Rice and Salt*.

So it was with some trepidation and with some hope that Turtledove would prove my faith in him that I began to read *Alpha and Omega* - a book which concerns faith in great detail. For it is here that Turtledove gets biblical in a very real sense. If the title (or the picture of the Ark of the Covenant on the cover) wasn't enough to clue you in, the book concerns a series of events that seem to bring about the end of the world - although according to who, exactly, is in question.

This is a book that by its very nature is sacrilegious to at least three religions. It is a book that is very focused on God, and what He means in today's secularized world, where in developed countries religion is looked down upon as an anachronism better suited to days before running water and before the internet was alleged to have brought us together. Turtledove has chosen a wide selection of characters to analyze this central theme, including a secular American Jewish archaeologist, his secular Israeli girlfriend-cum-colleague, an American megachurch preacher, an Islamist leader in the West Bank, two irreligious newscasters, and multiple members of a hardline Jewish sect living in a kibbutz plotting to bring about the end of days. In that regard, it's pretty standard structurally for a Turtledove novel, with the variety of characters used to explore a single large-scale event.

For a book that is so explicitly biblical, the presence of the divine had better *feel* divine, with the awe and terror that the Israelites revered their God. Turtledove delivers in this regard; there was a shiver down my spine as I read of the archaeological dig under the Temple Mount dug up the Ark of the Covenant, floating a few feet above the ground. It's that sort of awe that a decent writer needs for a book invoking His presence so directly, and Turtledove delivers. His biblical references are well chosen, with the whole fracas over the red heifer being a standout, as well as a certain plotline involving Iran. It's when



the biblical intersects with the modern that the effect is the most pronounced; the effect is jarring in a way that emphasizes the sheer awe of divine presence.

Indeed, right after the Holy, the book dwells on modernity quite a bit. Turtledove's work is most often at home in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, when his alternate history, often of the well-trodden topics of the American Civil War or World War II, is set. His worlds are typically of vacuum tubes and not transistors (something which, incidentally, comes into play in the first *WorldWar* book), and it is rare he makes the jump into something that is recognizable the world of the twenty-first century (the *Supervolcano* trilogy being a rare exception). *Alpha and Omega* has the apocalypse of an ancient time occurring in today's world of smartphones, 24-hour news cycles, and rampant cynicism towards anyone calling himself holy, or even in the service of a higher power. There's this poignant moment when a Jewish boy in the aforementioned hardline kibbutz is contemplating the sacrifice of the red heifer, which he had bonded with. He thinks about how arbitrary such a ritual seems to the modern mind. Here, he makes a rather disturbing historical connection: a God that demands the sacrifice of a very specific cow, one without black hairs, is believable as a God who would consign six million of His chosen people to gas chambers to prove a point to humanity.

Turtledove definitely has a few axes to grind, but the points aren't too belabored. With one exception, he carefully avoids naming current politicians, but mostly they can be inferred pretty easily; there's a line I liked that went something like "North Korea was acting stupid. So was Iran. So was the President." His scorn, most of all, falls to religious hardliners that use their faith to berate and condemn others for frivolous reasons. He heaps scorn on Islamist militants and American evangelicals who don't put much thought into their faith (but is very evenhanded, not painting all such people as fanatics - the megachurch preacher he has as a viewpoint character is a reasonable guy, I'd say).

The novel concludes with a form of answering the eschatological predictions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and comes forth with a statement that our exact doctrines are less important than our common humanity. It's a conclusion that, in its exact depiction, is probably heretical to all three simultaneously. The intensely, puritanically devout will likely find objection to the ending of the novel, but those who take their faith in less dogmatic ways will probably find it unorthodox but satisfying. This is a book about what religion can be; it can be sinners in the hands of an angry God, or it can be Jesus calling "Let the little children come to me." It is as once a denunciation of religious bigotry, and a call for tolerance and acceptance in a divided world.



About the only criticism I have of the book is one somewhat predictable plot where a bad character gets what he deserves; however, this character is a terrible human being and seeing him suffer for his indecency is satisfying. The plot does advance somewhat more slowly than other authors' plots, as Turtledove's style is to marinate you in his world, rather than to put you on a roller coaster through it. I find it to be fine, but others I know have issues with it; your mileage may vary on how good it ends up being.

Overall, I thought it may rank up with *The Man With the Iron Heart* and *The Case of the Toxic Spell Dump* as being among Turtledove's finest novels. It's strange, and sacreligious, but it poses potent questions about the role of religion in our world, and what we should do with the ancient creeds to which many of us owe allegiance. The result is well worth reading.

## Lots of Tired People

"Okay," said President Bob launching the 9-20-19 WSFA Third Friday meeting. "Mr. Secretary. Tell what we did last meeting." Sam L. read minutes.

Capclave present. Bill said he is present. Next month, 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday will be at Capclave .Be there. Room block closes at the end of the month. Get your room, as hitting the block helps keep our cost down. George is arranging the GoH dinner. Need to follow up on GoH gifts. Time. We have the atrium so will do mass signing in the atrium this year and next. That way, we won't have to rip apart Eisenhower. That's good, we can set it up during the day. Received word from Sam that the program will be done on Sunday, so we can get it up online. That way we can tell people to get hotel rooms. Will be a meeting first Friday. Things on track for con suite. Be ready, be excited. Cap 20 had nothing to report.



Tracy asked about WSFA meeting. Bill said it will be at Capclave. For that one item, you don't have to be a member of Capclave if you are a member of WSFA. I will nudge Collette about George's contract. Question about whether should be a two year contract. Rodger made a motion that we have the option of a two-year contract. Elizabeth asked if it makes sense to do a one year smaller contract for 2021 due to the

Worldcon. Cathy said the two year contract is really two separate documents. We can get a better deal if they know you are coming back. Bill said current hotel comes in at xx than our past hotel, so don't have to worry about adding more space. Rodger said the footprint will be the same in George year so why ask for less space. Bill said people will be attending Worldcon so will find out about Capclave. Cathy said one reason George is chairing, is because he is not actively involved in running Worldcon. Cathy said this is a long tail thing, people tell us they didn't know about Capclave, so being visible at Worldcon will help and George's convention might not be smaller. Carolyn said there'll be lots of tired people there. Vote on Rodger's motion, motion passes, no abstentions. No nays.

Trustees said If want to run Capclave in 2022 speak up. Also other offices, talk to a trustee.

Cathy for Small Press Committee. Did order the award, Sam is adding another finalist to programming. Newsletter committee met and had a discussion. Have a few possibilities in mind. Infrastructure issues. Methods of providing better access to distribution. And distribute paper copies. There was a discussion of printing copies at Staples and asking members of Capclave if they want the newsletter emailed. And back issues at Capclave. Article exchange with BSFS and maybe other groups. Better outreach. Talk to Michael Dobson (who ran Corflu) Elizabeth suggested not trying to do email op-in. Next year when have infrastructure, great thing for 2020.

Talk SF. Gave schedule.

INtertivities: Deirde went to Star Trek first movie showing with a Star Trek group and gave info on Capclave. Mike Ikeda said Smithsonian Museum day is tomorrow. Need a reserve ticket.

No old business.

New business: Bill asked about 501c3 status, bylaw review. Have to pay a lot in sales tax. Cathy said Sam and I need to go through the stuff we got from Steve Smith. Cathy said would talk to John about getting paper from state.



<Discussion of WSFA business omitted by request>

1<sup>st</sup> meeting. Nicole Sbitani. She just moved into the area from Kenya for one year before moving to Korea. Fan of SF but never participated in a fan community and just grateful found the right house. Probably googled it and found the website and hoped it still existed.

Announcements: Elizabeth said Worldcon in 2021 to DC. T-shirts. If register before the end of year \$150. Worldcon stuff discussed. Carolyn said her government consulting is coming to an end, as is really retiring this time for longer than three weeks.

Adjourned at 10 pm. What passes for unanimously.

Attendance: Courtni Y Buleson, Rodger Burns, Jon Clark, Carolyn Frank, Erica Ginter, Cathy Green, Kimberly Hargan, Frances Holland, Michael Ikeda, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Sarah Mitchell, Mike Taylor, Deidre Tracy, Elizabeth Twitchell, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh, and Nicole Sbitani.

## Carolyn's Trip to Australia Part V

By Carolyn Frank

### Sunday February 24 Yarra Valley Wine Tour

I woke up to the alarm at 7 am to a frightening prospect -- none of my devices had charged overnight. I had been using an outlet near the floor on a wall in the bedroom and had had no earlier issues. I tried the outlet next to it, but that did not work either. I tried my other smaller converter and that did not work on either outlet, So I tried a different charging cable (I had brought 3) but that did not work with either converter. I went hunting other outlets. At this point I did not know if it was my phone or my converter that was the cause of the issue. I turned on the tea pot and that worked, so I unplugged the tea pot and plugged in my converter and still nothing charged.

In Australia every outlet has a toggle switch above it to turn on the outlet. What I figured out was that the converter was just high enough to lean against the toggle switch. Eventually by carefully positioning the converter I did manage to convince it to charge my phone. I turned off the tablet to conserve the remainder of its power and went about getting ready and eating breakfast. While it was still charging, I used to phone to confirm my transfers to the Melbourne airport and from the Sydney airport tomorrow, and the phone was charged to 80+ % by the time I left at 9 AM.

I walked down to the meeting place several blocks away and waited for the Australian Wine Tour bus to show up. It did on time at 9:20 and the tour driver/guide actually asked for my voucher, the first one to do so this far on the trip. This was another 24-person seat mini bus and as the driver/guide drove





around picking up each group, it got full. The bus riders were heavily male, only 8 women including me, and widely distributed geographically: Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Canada, England, Texas, Los Angeles, and even a few folks from Perth and Melbourne -- most were complete wine novices.

By asking for a non-specific wine tour in Australia, my trip planner chose a trip to not particularly well-known area, the Yarra Valley. This is an area to the east of Melbourne, that is climatically similar to northern France, at least the Moët champagne people thought so. We visited 4 wineries and ended our day at the Domain Chandon built by the Moët folks to supply champagne-style (got to be French to call it champagne) wine to Australia, New Zealand and south east Asia.

Today turned out to be much sunnier and warmer, high of 92, than I had thought -- I wore my sweater on the walk to the bus but left it in the bus for the rest of the day until I carried it back to my hotel. However, as our tour guide/driver put it, wine tasting is an indoor activity, so the only time we needed to spend in the sun was walking from the bus to the "cellar door", as they termed their tasting rooms.

An hour's drive east from Melbourne brought us to the first winery, a small boutique winery called Steel Gate. They barely make enough wine to supply some restaurants in Melbourne but were willing to let our group taste. Our tour guide/driver turned out to have taught wine appreciation to Australian tour guides, so he started everyone off with a lesson in how to taste wines. They had an oaked Chardonnay, a Sauvignon Blanc, a Shiraz and a Cabernet to taste.

And then we were off to the second winery, Balgownie Estate. This place was a lot bigger in terms of production. This place started us off with a sparkling chardonnay, gave us 4 more whites and reds and ending with a sparkling shiraz (my favorite so far). Then we sat down to lunch provided by their chef; I chose the pork belly which was served with rice and baby bok choy. To accompany lunch, we got our choice among 2 whites or 2 reds; I chose a very full-bodied Cabernet. After lunch we could go back to taste any additional wines we wanted, so I tried their pinot noir and a fortified port-tasting wine for dessert.



We headed off to our third winery, Yering Farm. This is another boutique winery, where we got twice the number of wines to taste, as they had a "farm" and a "reserve" version of each major type of wine. They also gave us a smooth alcoholic cider to taste.

We ended up at Domaine Chandon. Here our tour guide/driver had a key to the riddling room, the room where they age the champagne in bottles tilted downwards and turn each bottle every six hours one quarter turn. Having been in Eperney (home of Moët champagne in France), this did not compare -- France has huge limestone caverns, but this obviously gets the job done.

Then we went upstairs but instead of getting a tasting of a variety of wines, we had to choose a single one. But we got a full glass of our choice. I selected the rose that had been aged 36 months, and it tasted just like the rose I had bought myself for the holidays. Of course, the version I had bought was from the Domain Chandon in Napa Valley, CA. They have a gorgeous room with a room width window framing the vines; some folks ventured to sit out on the terrace. I stayed inside to enjoy the wine and then went outside to take some photos.

By 3:30 everyone was back on the bus and we headed back to Melbourne, with the sounds of Fleetwood Mac and Queen putting me to sleep. By 4:30, the tour guide/driver had dropped me near my hotel, and the very pleasant Sunday tour was done.

I was able to get my phone and tablet charging, and it was still early, so I went out to tour Melbourne's harbor. Apparently containerized shipping decimated their harbor back in the 1950s, so they moved the container port out nearer the mouth of the Yarra River. Today's harbor is similar to Baltimore's Inner Harbor, but much cleaner. Also, the nearby apartment towers are all more than sixty stories high. I finally had a reason (I was tired, and it was hot), so I rode one of the free trams back to my hotel; these are really air-conditioned modern sleek light rail and completely free within the downtown area.

I came back to the hotel to eat the Tasmanian salmon salad that I had bought on Monday but decided that I was not interested in eating at 9 PM Monday night, accompanied by the \$5 bottle of a very nice Sauvignon Blanc that I had bought at the same time. While charging devices, I also managed to wash nearly every piece of clothing (this short stay hotel apartment has a washer/drier stack in the bathroom), so I will not need to do laundry again in Australia. Off to bed as I need to wake at 5:30 AM tomorrow to catch the transfer and the Virgin Australia flight to Sydney.

### **Monday February 25 Melbourne to Sydney**



Up at 5:30 AM, to get myself together, breakfasted, packed and down the elevator to check out by 7:15. I am getting faster at this so did get a little more sleep. I was ready and waiting by 7:20 for the 7:30 pickup, as were a number of other folks. This transfer driver turned out to be only about 15 minutes late, with some story about his van being towed when he stopped in a no parking zone. Anyway, he had a much larger van, which was good, as he was picking up folks with departure times ranging from 7:15 through 7:45. We immediately ran into rush hour traffic but did make it to the domestic terminal within the hour. As he dropped us off at the same place we had departed the airport last Thursday, we could at least find our way back into the terminal and to the domestic Virgin Australia counter with a minimum of asking random airport personnel.

My flight to Sydney was slated to take off at 10 AM, and we were all seated on the plane, but nothing happened. The guy sitting in the middle seat next to me explained the issue, heavy cross winds. This meant that the airport was reduced to a single runway for both landings and takeoffs, so we got to wait in a very long queue. As this guy had been in a work meeting in Melbourne in the morning and was expected to attend another work meeting in Sydney in the afternoon, he had taken this flight before and knew what to expect – mostly that he was going to be late to his afternoon meeting. So, I had an enjoyable time talking with an Aussie banking IT guy; he seemed to enjoy my stories of Elliott's NYC IT banking career.

The flight eventually took off and flew an hour and a half to Sydney, with my seat guide pointing out things to note. His meeting started as we were disembarking, so he got to be the person calling in on his phone – a part of work that I do not miss. I located my checked luggage, found the Ready2Go transfer bus, and we headed towards downtown Sydney. The Sydney CBD is in the midst of both a building construction boom and the installation of a downtown pedestrian mall with light rail system. The streets are narrowed and sometimes closed. And the driver could not find one family's location; few buildings

appeared to have visible address numbers on them. We drove around an extended block 3 times before he gave up and just said that the location should be nearby and dropped them off.



He dropped me off at the Mantra on Kent, another short stay hotel. Although it was only 1 PM and check-in was not officially until 2 PM (which is why I had not minded either the plane being late or the driving around in circles), they were able to check me in immediately and gave me an apartment on the 15<sup>th</sup> of 27 stories. This time I actually have a view, a view of Darlington Harbor, one of the many sets of wharves (for cargo ships) and quays (for passenger ships) within the overall Sydney Harbor.

Sydney has perfect weather: mid 70s, light breeze off the warm water and sunny. During the trip here I learned that the past week it had been quite rainy and wet; possibly due to some outer belts of cyclone Oma, that had nicely stayed out to sea during my time in Port Douglas.

I dropped off my luggage, picked up my Sydney map and set off for the Harbor. Sydney has all sorts of walkways that enable one to walk over the freeways and then down escalators to reach the water side. I found Captain Cook's Ferry Tours, picked up my two-day Hop On Hop Off pass, and boarded a ferry to take me under the Sydney Harbor Bridge to Circular Quay (the primary passenger quay with 6 piers with berths for ferries, whale watching tours and such, and one berth for a full size cruise ship).

I walked to the Sydney Opera House, presented my voucher and got registered for the 4 PM English language tour. The Sydney Opera House is spectacular from the outside, but almost equally architecturally fascinating from the inside. We walked the entire structure that is available to audiences, which includes two thousand-plus stages and two four-hundred-person stages, as well as gorgeous indoor balconies with views of the Harbor and Bridge. All the large plate glass windows are installed at an angle and tinted to minimize glare and heat and to maximize the amount of self-washing by rain.

I then walked back around the cove of the Circular Quay to the area known as the Rocks, the original location where the original convicts built their dwellings, for the 6 PM Free Walking Tour. This tour turned out to be more of a "ghost" type tour, with lots of gristly stories, but this tour leader had been a drama major, so it was quite fun. As the tour started near a statue of Captain Bligh, we got to hear what happened after the Mutiny on the Bounty – he got appointed governor of New South Wales until he botched that too; his rulings inspired the Rum Rebellion, at which point the British removed him as governor. The tour ended on top of Observatory Hill (where the original observatory and ball drop to signify 1 pm were located) around 7:30, so we got to watch the fruit bats which hang out in the trees there return for the evening.

As it was nearly sun set, I found one of the major streets, George Street, and headed back. I found one of the recommended restaurants, On the Rocks, for dinner. I dined on a crocodile burger which tasted like a mediocre turkey burger and a 4 Pines lager which was a light refreshing brew. I noticed a wine





bottle from the De Bortoli vineyards on the table next to me (on yesterday's wine tour, we had passed De Bortoli vineyard) so I started to chat with the couple. They turned out to be a Scot (him) and an Irish (her) forty-something couple that had been touring New Zealand for the past several weeks, but their inexpensive flight required them to fly home through Sydney. So, I got to hear all about New Zealand, which is where I want to go next. And they even asked for another wine glass so that I could taste the very lovely Cabernet.

### **Tuesday February 26 full day Sydney**

I slept in to 7 AM, got up and since I did not find a supermarket last evening, breakfasted on a 100-calorie package of almonds and a cup of peppermint tea. This short stay hotel provided a range of tea bags, including 4 peppermint ones, yea!

By 8:30 I was out the door, and after taking an apple from the bowl provided by the front door of the hotel, on my way to attempting to find Mrs. Macquerie's Rock. She was the wife of an early governor of Sydney and used to sit on a bench carved in the rock in the headland that now is filled with the Botanical Gardens. Following my map, I got mixed up after clearly exiting the incorrect path out of Sydney's Hyde Park. Their Hyde Park is much smaller than the English version but was planted 90 years ago with native Hills Fig trees which are now these enormous 12-foot diameter gorgeous trees.

Eventually I got onto the correct road and followed it out to the headland. The tour buses had gotten there first, but all appeared to be captivated by the view of the Harbor Bridge (built in the 1920s) and the Opera House (built in the 1960s to 1973), neither of which existed in Mrs. Macquerie's time. I walked about 80 feet further around and found no one near her rock at all. I was able to clamber up the four very uneven steps and sat looking out at the harbor to the degree possible. Clearly the very large tree that had grown up from near the water's edge also had not been there at her time. Soon two young women came along to the real thing, and one volunteered to take a photo of me seated on the rock, before they took turns taking photos of each other. That was unexpectedly pleasant, and I thanked her.

I headed back towards the city making my way through the Botanical Garden. It had many flowering plants and I even was able to photograph a mynah bird taking nectar from a flower. The plantings were extensive, but I had to get a move on in order to locate Town Hall and the 10:30 AM Free Walking Tour. Although I was nearly ten minutes late getting there, they did not start until after I arrived, so I was able to enjoy the entire 3-hour tour. The guide provided an excellent overview history (starting with a reference to the Aborigines who clearly had lived there for 50,000+ years before the British came along) and then connected the various buildings and statues we walked past and through with the timeline.



During the 10-minute bathroom/buy lunch break, I bought a huge bowl of chicken, tomato and avocado on mesclun greens salad, and managed about twenty forkfuls before the guide started up again. What I especially enjoyed is that he started with a sculpture titled "Man Waiting", of a business man sitting on a bench reading a newspaper -- and provided a brief biography of the sculptor, our own J. Seward Johnson.

The tour ended across the cove from the Sydney Opera House and Harbor Bridge, so we could admire them while the guide provided his version of how they got built. I could easily walk back to Circular Quay



and eat the rest of my lunch while awaiting the Hop On Hop Off harbor ferry that was heading to Manly Beach. This is the furthest around the Harbor that the ferry boats go, so I sat on the top deck of the ferry, listening to the commentary of what we were passing and taking photos all the way. I now have photos of both the Opera House and Bridge from the water vantage. We also passed a naval harbor, an amusement park, a lighthouse and once we were far enough away, the Sydney tall building skyline. The ferry took about 40 minutes and the water did get a bit churning as we passed the outlet to the sea, but the brisk breeze was warm, the sun shone, and it was a lovely day for a boat ride.

At Manly Quay, I came ashore and walked the 4 blocks from the bay side, where the ferry boats work, to the ocean side, which was a gorgeous cove beach. For a glorious day, albeit a Tuesday, in the middle of their summer, the place was far from crowded. You could rent anything needed by the hour, half day or full day: beach chairs, umbrellas, surfboards....

The waves were of the one to two-foot variety, so more people were splashing about than even attempting to surf. I walked to the water's edge and touched the water, it was probably in the low 80s. Since the air temperature was also in the mid-80s, it appeared to be perfect beach weather. I walked around the outside of the cove for a bit, but then had to return, as the next ferry pickup was at 3:30.

I walked back to the ferry in plenty of time, climbed the stairs to the top deck, and got lots more photos on the return voyage. The wind picked up and at one point I was reduced to hanging onto the straps of my hat with my teeth, as my hands were filled with holding the camera and the hat would not stay on my head. Too soon the ferry ride ended, and I disembarked.

As I was near the Rocks, the section of Sydney built by the original convicts, I decided to follow the walking tour that I had printed out. Together with my Sydney map (provided by the hotel), I was able to follow up and down the small lanes that they had carved out of the sandstone rock of the headland. I ended up on Observatory Hill and sat to watch the ferries and a full-size cargo ship navigate under the Bridge. Also to watch an engaged couple get posed for suitable photos against the backdrop of the Harbor and the Bridge.

I made way across the Observatory Hill Park and located a highly rated seafood restaurant for dinner. At Fish at the Rocks, I dined on Tasmanian Mussels (taste just like the American/European ones) in a mild red sauce, John Dory (an Australian light white fish akin to perch) baked and accompanied by batter fried broccolini and zucchini, and a local Sauvignon Blanc. I was seated next to a couple from Seattle Washington, who had lived in Adelaide for 3 years, and were just coming back through Australia after touring New Zealand. We chatted the entire way through a most delightful conversation and delicious meal.

As the restaurant is located on Kent Street and so is my hotel, all I needed to do was walk down the street for a mile or so. So of course, I turned left instead of right, and found myself at the far end of Kent Street, where it stopped when it ran out of land. Oh well, it was only about 4 blocks in the wrong direction. I turned around and headed off in the correct direction and eventually reached the hotel. I went to bed early again as I need to get up early tomorrow.

<This epic will be concluded in the next issue>.

### **Just For That, I'm Not Telling You Anything**

“Alright folks,” said Prez Bob. “It’s the first Friday meeting in October 10/4/19.” Bill screamed. “That’s the Capclave chair reminding everyone that Capclave is in two weeks.”

Sam L. read minutes. The treasurer was forgotten but piped in, "As of end of September, \$\$\$, year over year \$\$\$ but Paul gave check for \$\$\$ from WSFA Press." Paul has copies of the Aliette de Bodard book. WSFA members get a discount.

Bill for Capclave 2019 said, "Just for that, I'm not telling you anything. We had our Capclave meeting before this. Thanks to everyone who was there. Except for a couple of little things we will stress about, we are in pretty good shape. The program book is in our living room and will make it to the bag stuffing. Thanks to Arc Manor for donating it. Thanks to those who gave us stuff, especially Sam who got the program in. Good for our budget as it cost us nothing. Make sure you say thanks to Shahid Mahmud in the dealer's room. Robert J Sawyer is one of the people he publishes. Wednesday afternoon were deliveries. GoH gifts came, you'll like them and hopefully so will Rob and Martha. Martha is looking forward to Capclave. Robert is as well. Look forward to touring DC on Monday. According to Sam S. 300 attending members, 220 are paid. We expect to see 100 more at the door. More would be wonderful. Working out kinks on program and signs but for the most part we are in good shape. Not much to stress about which is good two weeks out. Hopefully we will have a calm and enjoyable Capclave. Cathy said flyers and bookmarks at the door. Spread the love. Bill said normally Colleen runs the silent auction, this year Judy Kindell is running it. Preview, blanket made out of the DC in 2021 table drape. Nice fleece backing and machine washable. If have items of value talk to Judy Kindell. When at Capclave, take a look at the items and put in a bid."



Bill for Capclave 2020. We are doing long term planning. Looking at the calendar, one of our goals for next year is to have program done mid-August, so we can go through the whole process earlier. So can prepare program book in advance. Past Capclave chairs, you need to be thinking of remembrance of the Capclave(s) you chaired. Way to honor guests who may not be able to return. Souvenir type thing. Maybe list the people who attended all 19 Capclave. We have a solid number of guests. Prices will be the same starting off. You will be able to buy membership for next year at con. Get membership early as prices always go up.

George for 2021. Nothing profound at the moment. Hopefully Eric Flint's liaison who will be at Capclave will have something to say. The more of the convention I can contract out, the better. Bob said the t-shirts are in, Kim modeled. \$20 or can wait for Capclave.

Trustee, Rodger said elections are in May. If interested in a position talk to trustees.



Entertivities, Madeleine invented Tom Crepeau to do a reading for first Friday in November. She will confirm it and get the date. Publications committee has nothing. Sold \$\$\$ to borderland books.

Constitution committee, Cathy is waiting to talk to people. Paul is working hard on website, calendar is nonfunctional, Blue Host has updated its software and calendar only works with old version. Sam S. said so time is out of joint. Bob asked about 2020 book. Paul said in the works, not ready to announce anything. Social media, Dodos are celebrating Capclave with pie, pizza counts. Perform the dance of joy. #Dodowatching. Facebook posting a few things here and there. Program participants are posting their schedule, hopefully that will lead to more people attending. Prereg open until Wednesdays the 16<sup>th</sup>.

No old business.



New business. Rodger announced he is a troublemaker. I would appreciate the president forming a Capclave tech committee. Zambia is powerful but a lot on the back end. Group of people who can figure out what we can do with Zambia, the less we have to retrofit. Hopefully short term committee and can turn things over to Bill for 2020. Bob empowered Rodger to chair it.

No other old business.

Here for second moving Nicole Stratin. Excited to be here. I only live 10 minutes from this location.

Announcement. Judy said still time to go to friends of Arlington library book sale. Kathi doing Pit and the Pendulum at the Bungalow for Halloween. Anyone with free time, let me know. New kids in the neighborhood. Someone may have the opportunity to shackle John to a wall. Arlington Planetarium, you have a month and a half before closing for construction until 2021. Friends of the Planetarium will hold events at other locations. Rodger said Compton Crook award is in the first round. WSFA members can nominate for the first round. I have a list of books suitable for nomination and marked which ones are available at local libraries. Email [rodger@bsfs.org](mailto:rodger@bsfs.org).  
Motion to adjourn. Unanimously adjourned 9:49.

Attendance: Rodger Burns, Apurva Desai, Paul Haggerty, Kimberly Hargan, David Keener, Judy Kindell, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Sarah Mitchell, Kathi Overton, Mark Roth, Judy & Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Elizabeth Twitchell, Madeleine Yeh, Ellen Montgomery, Darth Dodo, Nicole Sbitani, and Sam Hogan.

### Reviews by Rodger Burns

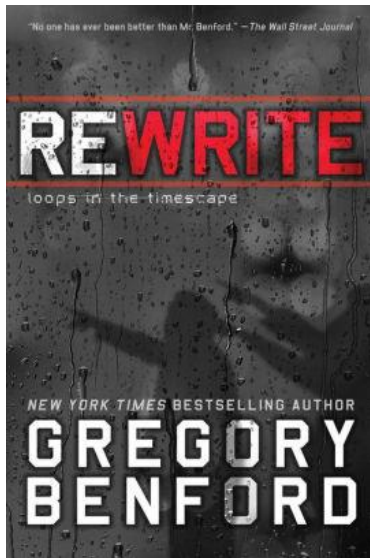


*Catfishing on Catnet* (Tor Teen, November 2019) is the spiritual sequel to Naomi Kritzer's 2015 short story "[Cat Pictures Please](#)", which won a Hugo award and was a finalist for the WSFA Small Press award. Where "Cat Pictures Please" focused just on an AI personality, hidden within the Internet, *Catfishing on Catnet* is written from not just the perspective of the AI but also a human teenager named Steph. The added point of view both allows Kritzer to raise the stakes of her storytelling -- Steph has very real problems, including an abusive father that she and her mother are hiding from -- and provides extra insight into AI's psyche. Steph and AI are alike in many ways -- both are curious, uncertain about the world but anxious to learn and explore, and often impulsive, even to a fault. They're by no means identical, though; Steph has all a teen's frailties, lack of confidence and distrust of the unknown, while AI has a brash willingness to experiment and some distinctly nonhuman priorities. Frequent switching between viewpoints allows Kritzer to provide a deeper perspective on shared events, as well as building up the character of her two protagonists.

*Catfishing on Catnet* is by no means a perfect novel. Its tempo and pacing can feel decidedly jarring at times; the first half of the novel easing us gradually into Steph's and AI's worldview and shared history, but ramps rapidly into a frenetic second half that piles confrontation on top of crisis with little room to

breathe. Given that *Catfishing on Catnet* is decidedly on the short side as published (less than 300 pages), it seems odd that the antagonists couldn't be introduced less suddenly, and their threat revealed less abruptly. The specifics of what technology and hacking are capable of within *Catfishing on Catnet*'s world are also often given short shrift, making them sometimes seem less like tools wielded cleverly by the novel's characters and more like buzzword plot devices to move the action along. These are minor concerns, though, and ultimately don't detract much from the anticipation of the growing camaraderie between Steph, AI, and others they relate to, the obstacles they overcome and the discoveries they make about the world and their place in it.

*Catfishing on Catnet* is unreservedly recommended to fans who enjoyed "Cat Pictures Please" and want to revisit its story, and to readers of SF open to lighter, teen-oriented work.



Gregory Benford's latest book, *Rewrite: Loops In The Timescape* (Gallery/Saga Press; January 2019) is a standalone time-travel novel that revisits one of the classic tropes: a middle-aged protagonist who, upon death, reawakens decades earlier in the body of their teenaged self, with youthful vigor and opportunity but mature memories and perspective. Like nearly all individuals in such circumstances, Benford's hero, Charlie Moment, quickly discovers that events aren't fixed in the second "go" at life, and quickly sets about seeking out new opportunities and avoiding past mistakes.

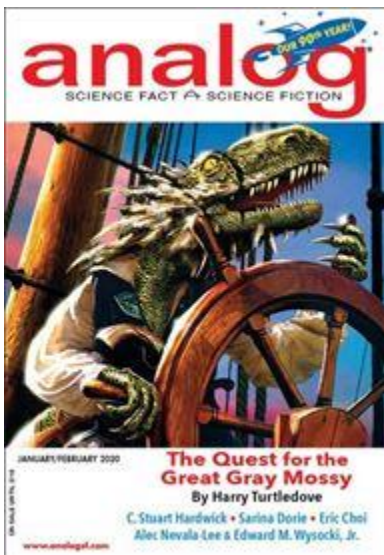
*Rewrite* is, by any measure, a readable and competently-written book. Benford's skill and experience as a writer show through, introducing characters and narrating events with a deft and restrained voice and infodumping only minimally and unobtrusively. Unlike many authors who've tackled the time-travel-through-reincarnation story, Benford doesn't grant his hero much leeway to invent 'future' technologies early or anticipate financial or political upheavals; Charlie's recollections are more focused on social and cultural trends, and exceptional personalities he's able to befriend before their rise to fame. Taken as a rather odd sort of fictional memoir, *Rewrite* is no worse a novel than most.

Unfortunately, as an exploration of time travel and a work of science *fiction*, *Rewrite* ranks merely pedestrian at best. Charlie's second life comes across as a minor, individualized refrain on a story told many, many times before, with very little new or unusual to recommend it to those interested in the 'science' half of science fiction. When Benford does try to shake things up by introducing other time-travellers to collaborate or conflict with Charlie, his restrained and details-shy narrative style prevents him from offering much insight as to how other time-travellers' means of traversing reality differ from Charlie's experience, or considering how time-travellers might interact outside a purely linear past-and-future approach to shared experience. The climactic confrontations of the novel feel rushed and uncertain, as if driven more by a narrative need for Charlie to challenge and overcome the time-travellers he's opposed to rather than arising organically from the events earlier in the novel. And while *Rewrite* ends with Charlie ostensibly triumphant, having changed history to his own purposes rather than allowing others to shape it, a moment's consideration of the metaphysics established by Benford strongly suggest that this isn't a true resolution, but the mere temporary abeyance of a much longer, grimmer and more nihilistic struggle.

Dedicated readers of Gregory Benford's works will certainly find *Rewrite: Loops in the Timescape* to be worthwhile; and science fiction fans looking for a dip into the time-travel-through-reincarnation subgenre could certainly do worse (though it'd be criminal not to note that H. Beam Piper's "[Time And Time Again](#)", one of the first and most defining takes on the topic, is in the public domain and freely available on Project Gutenberg). What's sadly inescapable, though, is that *IRewrite* is neither the best take on its chosen trope nor noteworthy among Benford's written work.

### WSFA Meeting at Capclave 10-18-19

Rodger said we had quorum. Bob banged the gavel. Welcome to the Third Friday meeting of the WSFA. I'm president Bob Macintosh, on my right is our secretary Sam Lubell, on my left George Shaner my VP, and all the way to the left our treasurer. <That's the smile of someone who has all our money> Minutes. Instead Sam moved the waiving of the minutes. Votes have it. Treasurer. We are now some \$\$\$ dollars richer than we were 12 hours ago. Between 30 – 40 walk ins tonight. Bill said to tweet and tell your friends what a good time you are having. Bill said Capclave present is happening as we speak. So far things going well, Rob and Marth having a good time. Tell them how great they are. Freebee table. Bag of arcs from his personal collection will go out. Numbers are good. Fan table people are having a good time. In the Dealer's Room, we have the silent auction thank you Judy, variety of items. Fans of Discon3, bid has a table drape my wife has turned into a blanket, a nice elegant cover and a fleece background. <Complaints of the con suite being cold>. Great variation among rooms and the hallway. You are experiencing all seasons. Thank you all for attending and members of WSFA past and present. Capclave 2021, pass it to the 2021 chair, Bill takes step. On the 2021 front, same weekend in October. NY Comicon will be the weekend before us, Baltimore Comicon will be the weekend after. Guests from the past will not have any competition in the area. List of past GoH.... Long list. Great list of people coming back. We'll be carefully monitoring registration. If the numbers creep up with have the right of first refusal on more space. On sad news, Stan Robinson cannot make it. I let him know that something changes, we'd love to have him back. On the other big name front, the book isn't finished so no commitments.



Kim said anniversary of Analog. Bill said this will have to wait. Sort of Capclave related things. Sale of generic Capclave shirt in the dealer's room. Always WSFA press books. We'll start selling memberships for 2020 at this convention. Buying them at the convention will get you the best rates ever. Elizabeth said to buy them for guests. Some of our participants are in Atlanta this weekend. Sorry Allite Patterson not here. Thank you all. Hopefully tomorrow will match what we did today, that will make the smile on Sam's face even more Cheshire like.

George said: Not much to say, which will have to change soon. I need to talk to someone who will determine the shape of this Capclave. There will be a Capclave in 2021, but it may be a Capclave Lite.

Cathy for WSFA Small Press award. Tomorrow, after the mass autographing with cake and cash bar. BSFS people will do amateur writing contest. One of the finalists will win the Small Press Award. A number of finalists are here and have a ribbon. We're international and people from Australia aren't here. We had a record number, ## entries. I think it will look similar next year, because we're known now. Carolyn goes through the stories to check that it is a small press and

does not exceed word count. Yes we have rules but doesn't mean people follow them. Snapshot of what goes on in the small press world.

Entertainment Committee. Bob said, I present to you Capclave. Bill said, I'm not entertained. Bob said, you are not supposed to be entertained, you're running it. Bob said after the meeting people can stay to talk about the magazine or go to other panels or parties.

No old business.

New business. Bill said, I have this bylaw amendment. Bob said, I will kill you.

Aparna said, he is the WSFA historian. If anyone has something to submit, see me in the hallway.

Mad asked about new people. Bob said, not here, too many new people.

Entertivities. Kim said Tor download of free short fiction. Pluto TV has streaming channel of Dr. Who, 007, sci-fi, and Adams Family channels. This coming weekend is cinema festival at Reston. Kickoff is an evening with C3PO actor, the only actor to be in all 9 movies. And showing of A New Hope. First full-length movie, silent, Adventures of Prince Ahmed. Complete musical score.

Announcements: Elizabeth, said in August of 2021 there will be a Worldcon in Washington DC. Kathi said, time to move. Overlaps with WSFA. Elizabeth gave a commercial.

Mike Walsh does not have books for sale tonight, but yes tomorrow at dealer's room.

### **Review of Zero Sum Game by S.L. Huang**

Reviewed by Samuel Lubell

The heroine and narrator of Zero Sum Game is really good at math. While this is a useful ability for a mathematician or accountant, it may seem less than useful for a violent criminal and retriever for hire. Not so. Cas has the ability to understand angles and lines of force and momentum so she knows exactly where to throw something, when to duck, and how to kill. So when she is hired to rescue a client's drug smuggling sister from a Columbian gang, she is able to kill 19 of them before being stopped by the only person she trusts. Courtney, the rescued girl calls her a "freaky weird feng shui killer."

But it turns out the client is even weirder, a telepath with the ability to cause people to agree with her. And the whole rescue was a test, not of Cas but of her best friend Rio. Cas teams up with Arthur Tresting, a private detective who has been investigating the telepath's organization and together (after a lot of friction) they resolve to bring it down. But there's another secret organization created in opposition to the first who are worried that Cas' efforts will expose them.

The book is mostly all plot, like a summer action adventure. There is some friction between Tresting and Cas, mainly around Cas' tendency to use violence and kill everyone who gets in her way. Several times he tries to end their relationship but she keeps saving his life. In fairness, she does try to tone down her violence but this just goes from killing to extreme mayhem. And Rio, Cas' friend, may seem like a sociopathic thug, but he recognizes his lack of a conscience and has adopted Christianity as his moral compass and became an instrument of God's vengeance which allows him to continue hurting people.

Fans of action movies and adventure stories will have a lot of fun with this. Those who like superpowered antiheroes will too. People who want deep philosophy will need to find something else to read.