

Hub Magazine

SCIENCE FICTION HORROR FANTASY

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DEADLINE EXTENDED



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EDITORIAL:

by lee harris

We wander between the tables at Waterstones, Smiths, Borders, or our favourite independant book shop, picking up titles at random, or perhaps looking for a specific book, or our author of the moment, and we rarely consider the person behind the pages - the author who has slaved over a hot PC or Mac to bring us our plate of fiction.

Most of the time, of course, the authors have "proper" jobs in addition to their writing work. Sometimes they take time out from their careers to apply a concentrated burst of energy to their prose.

And sometimes they produce a blog entry that simply makes you stop and think - something that makes you want them to carry on writing full time, yet **at the same time** go back to their day jobs.

Horror writer, Sarah Pinborough, produced one such blog entry this week - as inspirational a piece of writing as you could ever wish to read. A diary entry that makes you want to rush out and buy her fiction (and you should - it's excellent).

Head on over to www.SarahPinborough.com and see what I mean; hit the "news" button - it's the May 3rd entry you need.



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FICTION

Old Clothes

by chris cyr

The estate sale of Emily O'Keefe was to be a dull affair. The old woman's family gathered at six o'clock the evening before and picked what they each wanted from among all of her worldly possessions. After surprisingly little conflict during this phase of the weekend, the women began placing price stickers on the remaining inventory and directing the men where to move things. By ten p.m., everything was on the back lawn, priced to sell and tarps were thrown over it all in anticipation of the eight a.m. start time. The family retired to their rooms in the local hotel or in their own nearby homes and the house sat dark for the last few hours it was in their possession.

Emily felt that it was entirely too dull an event, given the exciting nature of her death. She moved beneath the moonlight among her possessions, curious as to why she'd accumulated so much stuff in her life. These things that gave her comfort in her flesh did nothing for her now. Most of them didn't even generate an emotional response.

As she glided through the tarps to see the furniture and appliances underneath, she thought, "Who would buy this?" Let them sell everything. Hopefully the money would go towards something useful.

When she reached the clothes racks in the very back of the yard, against the guest house, she finally gave pause. She used all of her will to move the tarps off the racks and was rewarded with the sight of all of the outfits she had acquired over the years.

She ran her hand through the clothes, wishing for the sense of feeling she took for granted in her life. These clothes had seen some adventures. Here they were now, priced in a manner that anyone with a few dollars could walk away with them tomorrow.

Here was the jacket she'd worn when she met Rose Kennedy during her son's election. When her husband, Tom, had told her they'd meet the woman, Emily had gone out and bought this jacket from the most upscale store their town had. She'd saved the jacket for over 40 years. She remembered Mrs. Kennedy's kindness during their introduction. Rose had accepted Emily as another matriarch whose family, while not as influential as her own, made her proud. The two of them had chatted for hours while their husbands discussed business. Tom left the Kennedy mansion happy over a contract that would be worth a lot of money after the election. Emily was just happy to meet such a great woman. This jacket had been in that great house. Tomorrow, someone would buy it for \$5. That was a steal since it was back in fashion.

Emily traveled further down the rack until she came to an even older garment. She'd seen it clearly thanks to the reflection of the moonlight off of the sequins in the dress. The straight line of that dress took her back to her twentieth birthday. She'd met Tom that night in a club up in Chicago, where she had been visiting with her parents. Her parents thought she was asleep in her room when she sneaked out of the hotel, met some friends near the river and spent the evening drinking bathtub gin and listening to an old piano make sounds that none of them had heard.

Tom walked in like he owned the place. He tipped the bartender, handed his coat to a scantily clad cigarette girl and took a drink of some very expensive and impossible to obtain Canadian whiskey. The moment her eyes landed on him, she was in love. Power emanated from him like light from a light bulb. He walked over to her table, and in an act that made her friends giggle uncontrollably, asked her to dance. Two hours later they were in his apartment downtown. Eight hours later he was explaining to her parents why she had been out all night. Two weeks after that, they were married. The dress still had the tear in the back from Tom's over zealous attempt to remove it from her.

The dress she'd worn the night she lost her virginity was priceless to her just months ago...now it was

worth \$15.

Emily passed her hand through the dress several times, trying to imagine the feeling of the material against her skin. She could almost feel Tom's hands lifting it over her, instead of letting it fall to the floor (which would have been much easier). There was no feeling though, so she moved on. There was so much of her history here. It wasn't until she was near the end of the second rack that she was actually shocked to see an item.

Hanging on a wire hanger, of all things, was a blue dress with white flowers that Emily had worn to a steak house in 1965, just a few years after she met Rose Kennedy. She and Tom were celebrating his seventieth birthday. They'd gone to the restaurant, and both felt so young once the wine found its way into their systems.

Tom had finished his steak and was patiently waiting for her to finish before ordering desert. He had something to tell her, he said, but it could wait until after dinner. Her curiosity piqued, she asked him what it was and all he would tell her is that it meant an investigation into his business would finally be over. Delighted that life would soon be returning to normal after the past year of chaos, she ordered cherry pie for desert. It would be nice for Tom to relax at his age.

She'd excused herself from the table and was using the restroom when she'd heard the gunshots from the restaurant. She'd run out the door without washing her hands to see what had happened, and there, with his blood running onto the table and mixing with the remains of her pie, was Tom. No one interviewed by the police had seen the gunman who walked up behind him and killed him.

"Tom..." Emily whispered. She wanted to cry, but the ability was beyond her. The children had salvaged what they could of most of his businesses. They folded the questionable ones and carried on the legitimate ones until they could be sold. She'd spent the last forty years of her life without him. She couldn't find the price for the blue dress, but whatever it was, it couldn't come close to the emotional cost of that night.

Finally she came to the most recent outfit she'd worn. A simple cream colored pants suit that she'd worn to a meeting with a book publisher about her memoirs. Tom wasn't particularly notorious, but in his seventy years he'd seen a lot that would interest people, and she'd been there for most of it. At 104 years old, she wanted to tell his story. If money could be made from it, the money could go to her great grandchildren.

The publisher jumped at the chance, but warned her that some of the information would make people angry. "Who'd want to harm an old lady like me?" she joked. They made arrangements for someone to come and take dictation at her home and she'd left the publisher with a large advance.

Emily now smiled at her last statement. She hadn't anticipated that anyone would actually hurt her, but the memory of the large man holding a plastic bag over her face while she struggled in her pajamas proved her wrong. She'd been found the next morning in bed, arranged as if she'd died in her sleep. They'd had no qualms about killing her, but she didn't have the ability to be angry. She just moved along to other clothes and other memories.

Finally, the sun rose and her family arrived to manage the sale. Emily sat there watching, unable to feel the sunlight beating down upon her, as people bought her relics. All around her, memories from her life were carried away by her neighbors, leaving behind only a cigar box increasingly filled with cash.

She didn't know what would come next. Would she stay and watch her family? She didn't know what could be gained from that. She loved them, that was certain, but the years had spread her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren across the country and made contact with them sporadic. She hadn't gotten a chance to know some of them very well while she was alive, so she couldn't imagine trying to do so now that she was dead.

She could stay with the house she supposed. She could walk its rooms and halls and relive the memories contained within. Heaven knew that there were millions of them. Spending an eternity reliving the happiest moments of her life had an allure. But she knew that it wouldn't be real. Tom wouldn't be there with her. Besides, the house would no doubt be sold. She could no longer remember which child she'd left it to in the will, but she was certain that whoever it was wouldn't want to pack up and return

home. Anyone who moved in deserved a chance to make their own memories without her haunting them.

At one point, she saw the man who had killed her. She'd been watching a child play with a hand mirror and in the reflection Emily saw the man standing behind her, buying the very pajamas she had been wearing the night of her death. She could haunt him, she imagined. She could follow him all of his days and remind him of the life he'd taken from her. But she'd lived a full life and truthfully, the memory of those last moments and her struggle against him had already begun to fade. She was still upset that she wouldn't be able to write anything more than what she'd already put down on the pages that sat in her safe deposit box. It upset her some that so much of Tom's story would be untold, but thought of revenge didn't appeal to her. She felt disconnected from the reality of her murder. Instead, she watched him pay for the pajamas without dickering over the price, and leave with them tucked under his arm. Emily supposed she could at least mutter a curse for the man, so she did. She chuckled as she saw him, or imagined she saw him, shiver as she spoke the words. That was enough for her.

With all of the options she felt available, none felt as right as moving on. She'd lived more than a century and she supposed that was more than anyone could every hope for. Resolved to let go of the life she'd known, she turned her back to the memories scattered around her and watched the sun make its way to the horizon. As she watched it and marveled at its beauty, the world around her began to fade away and Emily O'Keefe discovered what waited for her in the afterlife.



X-Men Origins: Wolverine

reviewed by alasdair stuart



Directed by Gavin Hood

Starring Hugh Jackman, Leiv Schreiber, Danny Huston, Lynn Collins, Taylor Kitsch, Kevin Durand, Will I.Am, Dominic Monaghan, Ryan Reynolds and Daniel Henney

The X-Men franchise gets rebooted at last with a film which not only serves as a prequel but also sets up no less than four possible spin offs. It's an almost impossible task, not only trying to get the franchise back on an even keel but also serve as a multiple launch pad and still serve as a decent film in it's own right.

It succeeds. Certainly far more than almost any other review has suggested it does and that's due almost entirely to Jackman and Schreiber. From the moment we first see them, running headlong towards the Confederate Army during the American Civil War, the two men are utterly credible as immortal and, in Schreiber's case, immoral killers. The two have a natural on screen chemistry that gives their scenes the gravity they desperately need. Schreiber's amiable psychopath is the perfect foil for Jackman's tortured, desperate hero and the film is at its best when it focusses on these two.

Danny Huston is also impressive as William Stryker, clearly playing the same man as Brian Cox in X2 but at the same time bringing something new to the role. Huston plays Stryker as a plausible, charming man who is all the more threatening for that and remains a credible threat to Jackman's improbably physiqued Wolverine throughout.

The rest of the cast also score remarkably well, with Lynn Collins' Kayla Silver Fox a credible and smart female lead and Taylor Kitsch's Gambit a near perfect take on the iconic New Orleans gambler. He's one of the characters in line for a spin off and based on his turn here, is more than capable of carrying a film by himself.

The other, of course, is Deadpool. In one of those rare moments of perfect casting, Ryan Reynolds finally gets screen time as the demented merc. What's really impressive is how much he does with how little screen time he has, his impeccable comic timing shot through with something cold and very, very dark. Whilst a lot of Deadpool fans will be less than happy with how the character is treated, Reynolds is faultless and the character absolutely deserves a film of his own.

Somehow, Wolverine manages to launch these two characters, set up the proposed First Class film following the first group of Professor X's students, establish a series of Wolverine films and fit into the continuity established by the first two X-Men films. It's an incredibly difficult task but the film succeeds more than it fails. There are problems and the film has clearly been re-cut in several places but it's never less than entertaining and frequently much, much more. It's not perfect by any means but it's more than good enough to merit a sequel and a second wave of mutants in the cinema. The best there is at what he does is back, and he's still pretty damn good.

FEATURES

Hub Writing Competition – Bootstrap SF

We've had some excellent entries for our short story competition - for those of you new to Hub, and for those who sometimes need a gentle reminder, here are the details, again...

First of all, a general outline of the rules – we'll get to the competition specifics, later.

General Rules

- The competition is open to anyone currently living in the UK (don't worry, rest-of-world – we'll have something for you soon, too).
- Writers must not have had any short story sold to any publication for a professional fee. For the purposes of this competition, "professional fee" equates to 5p per word or more.
- There is no entry fee.
- The winning entry will receive £100.
- The winning entry and the 12 runner up entries will be published in the following ways:
- The winner will be published in issue 100 of *Hub Magazine* (August 2009), for which no further fee will be payable.
- The 12 runners-up will be published in *Hub Magazine*, for which no further fee will be payable.
- The winner and 12 runners-up will be collected in a paperback volume, and the authors will receive a copy of this volume. Further volumes will be made available at a discount (amount to be confirmed) to authors whose work appears in the book.
- Non-winning entries may be published in *Hub Magazine*, for which no fee will be payable.
- Writers retain full copyright to their works, but assign indefinite, non-exclusive print, electronic and audio rights to Right Hand Publishing Ltd (publisher of *Hub* magazine).
- Other general terms and conditions, as set out in the Competition Agreement (downloadable from [here](#)).
- The judges' decision will be final, and no correspondence will be entered into.
- The judges will not be able to critique individual stories.

The competition:

Bootstrap SF: A Very British Future.

The British are an unusual combination of heroism and fatalism, humour and malice. Their Science Fiction is unique, blending pragmatism with sarcasm and death with laughter. For the British, Science Fiction is something subtler than the standard utopias and dystopias, something more concerned with exploring the future with a healthy cynicism.

The genre faces stagnation. Fans who discovered SF in the Sixties and Seventies are now actively resisting the very progress that they embraced when they were younger, cutting out new audiences by relentlessly defending stories which have little relevance to newer, younger readers. SF has built a wall around itself, and for it to survive we must break it down.

Bootstrap SF is designed to please the core fans whilst attracting new ones. By focusing on British stories about people, characters, the audience doesn't feel excluded if they don't quite grasp the science behind the plot.

And the authors? The authors are new. Previously unpublished in the professional arena, these people are brimming with ideas and passion, and aren't blinkered by decades-old notions of what SF should be. The authors are what's happening right now in SF. And SF has always been about progress.

In short, Bootstrap SF is about British authors who love SF. New British authors. New British SF.

For an excellent example of bootstrap SF, see this week's short story, *Montgolfier Winter* by Alasdair Stuart.

The Judges:

Hub staffers: Lee Harris, Alasdair Stuart, Ellen J Allen and Phil Lunt.

The winner will be chosen by Ian Whates. Ian is the Development Director of the British Science

Fiction Association (BSFA), Overseas Regional Director of the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA), Proprietor and Senior Editor of independent publisher, Newcon Press, Editor of the BSFA news and media review magazine, *Matrix* and Co-chair of the NewCon Convention Committee. Oh, he's also a writer with numerous professional short fiction credits, and a multi-book deal with Solaris.

How to Enter

Your story must be between 5,000 and 10,000 words long. It should be sent as an RTF file to the competition address (see below). In addition, you should attach a copy of the Competition Agreement to the same email. Your story will not be considered without these things. **Electronic copies only, please - hardcopies will not be accepted.** The story file should contain the following things:

Page 1

- Your name, address, telephone number, email address
- The title of the story
- How you would like your name to appear (eg. pen name if you use one)
- The word count
- The words "I agree to the terms and conditions set out in the attached Agreement"

Page 2 to end of story

Your story.

- Single-spaced, 11 point Arial (or Helvetica).
- New paragraphs should be tabbed with no blank lines between (except to indicate a section break).
- If you want to indicate italics, *use italics*.
- If you want to use bold, **use bold**.
- If you want a dash – use a dash; do not use two hyphens --.
- Make sure you check the basics – spelling and grammar – before you hit "send". We expect the odd typo, but if we get distracted by too many errors it won't help your chances.

Send your entry by June 14th to:

Bootstrap.sf@hubfiction.com . Entries received after this date will not be accepted.

The winning entries will be announced by 31st August in *Hub Magazine*.

Good luck, and get writing!



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