

# RAVENCON 2006

## ***Close Quarters Battle, Orbital Strikes and Burying Bodies.***

After Actions Report of combat actions in and around the vicinity of the Richmond Airport Doubletree by Hilton Inn  
from dates 21APR06-23APR06

I have to say that I have a love hate relationship with Virginia.

It seems like every other time I go to Virginia the trip is wonderful. By the same token, the odd trips are awful.

This one was wonderfully awful. To be precise, it was both.

Because of this love-hate relationship and for a few other reasons I'll get to far too soon enough, I'd sworn off cons in Virginia. The other reason (see, soon enough) has to do with (ick!) politics and (double ick!) culture clash. (Ick is, by the way, a rather revolting fish disease, one possible etymology of the word.)

First to the politics. Virginia is a "red" state, that is it tends to vote Republican and notably has voted for Bush in two elections. However, it has a very sizeable collection of democrats, liberals and moonbats. (Yes, they *can* be separated.) And while Virginia SF fandom has many conservatives in it, they are very quiet, in fact almost invariably closet, conservatives. I'm not speaking so much of congoers, but the staff and "hard core" fans that are conservative tend to tread very lightly.

One reason can be seen in the purging at SheVaCon. In case anyone reading this *hasn't* gotten the word, SheVaCon is very much persona non grata among Barflies. Why? Because the con committee purged the two Barfly members of the concomm almost specifically because the liberals guests had gotten tired of dealing with Barflies and Baen authors. What were they tired of? Well, being asked to defend their "obvious" positions. Gun control saves lives, if you are an unrepentant heterosexual male you're wrong, killing adult murders bad, killing babies in the womb wonderful and so on. Conservatives have to start from the position that they are wrong and liberals are right and simply nod their heads while being ranted at. That sort of thing doesn't work with people like Tom Kratman and myself. Hell, it doesn't work with David Drake, he's just not around to catch as much flack.

So SheVaCon purged the conservative members of the concomm and thus ensured they wouldn't have to deal with Barflies, core Baen authors and evil conservatives in the future. Losing 15% (yes, that's a hard number) of their attendance was worth not having guests complaining about being forced to defend their "obvious" positions.

Thus if you're a conservative in fandom in Virginia, you'd better keep your mouth shut and your head down or you're going to lose it.

What that has meant is that every single time I've gone to a con in Virginia, I've been ground zero for an ongoing nuking. The first couple of appearances at SheVa, I was virtually the only conservative guest around to lob nukes on. Oh, I'm bolo about such things and I roll right on through, but it doesn't mean I *like* it. SheVaCon, as a con, sucked every single time. (Note: SheVa guns were named, in part, for that very nuking I

got every time. It was a political “Bun-Bun” run. Of course, I generally left the same amount of damage behind. Poorly run and organized for that matter.) So I had trepidations about going to RavenCon for good reasons.

I had my arm twisted into going, though, (long story why, too long for what is going to be a very long piece anyway.) Miriam eventually got invited as a guest as well. Now, she was *supposed* to be billed (if not comped) as a Guest of Honor and was not. But she rose above such unstudied (and quite accidental) insult. Oh, My Fucking God did she rise above it. (This is referred to as foreshadowing. Insert mad cackle here.)

So, and so. We venture forth.

# ENEMY INDICATORS AND INTEL FAILURES I

## *Never Go to a Virginia Convention in White*

Since this is an after actions report, I'm going to skip all the "we got to the con" shit. I drove all night (Miriam slept), slept part of the day, went to panels. Nuff said.

My first indicator that there was enemy presence in the sector should have been at my first panel: Are You Sure You Want To Go There?

This is generally a pretty easy panel. My take: Think about your audience on this one. Hard. If you're writing combat SF, the market (primarily insensitive heterosexual males 15-55) does not like erotica. If you're writing erotic vampire horror, skip the majority of the weapons tech.

The moderator was fine, he felt it necessary to "keep me in check" because I *will* take over a panel if I get bored by the other panelists. (Alas, common.) Pretty sure I've been on a panel with him before and I didn't take it amiss. And in general everything went fine. But Elizabeth Massie, with whom I've done probably a dozen panels, for want of a better word or phrase "jumped my shit" about "let somebody else talk for ONCE..."

### Elizabeth Massie



Elizabeth Massie is a two-time Bram Stoker Award-winning author of horror novels and short stories published by Simon & Schuster, Tor, Harper, Leisure, Avon, NAL, and more. Her books include *Sineater*, *Welcome Back to the Night*, *Wire Mesh Mothers*, *Dark Shadows: Dreams of the Dark* (co-authored with Stephen Mark Rainey), *Shadow Dreams*, *The Fear Report*, *The Little Magenta Book of Mean Stories*, and others. Her most recent novel, *Twisted Branch: A Novel of the Abbadon Inn* (written as "Chris Blaine") was released from Berkley in September 2005. Along with authors David Morrell, F. Paul Wilson, and others, she will be one of the professional instructors at the 2006 Borderlands Press' Writers Bootcamp in Baltimore. Upcoming works include "Next Door Collector" in *Deadly Housewives* (Avon, April 2006), "Fence Line" in *Joe Lansdale's Lords of the Razor* (Subterranean Press, Spring 2006), and a CD and chapbook of her story "Brazo de Dios" (Borderlands Press, Spring 2006). Elizabeth lives in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia with illustrator Cortney Skinner, designer/builder of the mutant and other props for the Sony-released feature film, *The Lost Skeleton of Cadavra* and creator of the opening title sequence for the upcoming film *Trail of the Screaming Forehead*.

Now, as I've said, I've done panels with Elizabeth probably a dozen times, respect her and even like her. I don't recall the particulars but I *do* recall being honestly shocked. I don't know if she's having a bad week, month, year or what. I saw her on Sunday clearly drawing comfort from a guy I'd never seen around her before. I *suspect* there's something going on in her life. But I also suspect there were "discussions" going on (based on later intel indicators) and she might have built up some sort of Ringo-Dread.

Shrugs. Dunno. Hope it's nothing serious in her life because I *like* Elizabeth (check out her books). But it was indicator one (besides previously being in Ambush Alley) that there was enemy action possible. However, God Damn Me, I was in White.

White, Yellow, Red, look it up. Try Googling: Combat states. Read On Combat. Take a Personal Handgun Defense Class. Anyway, here's my lame-ass excuse for being in White even though I was in Virginia. (The fucking state.) But I must digress.

This was the first RavenCon, the first time that any of the three guys organizing the show, Tee, Tony and Mike, had ever run a con and generally a lot of other "firsts." And I'm going to say, right here, that 99.9999999% of the aspects that make a con "great" were there. It was organized as hell. Small and large details had been done to make it easy to navigate the panels. The hotel, with the exception of the restaurant the service at which totally sucked, was very good. The panels were well chosen. Many of the guests were very good to outstanding. The constaff was well prepared and trained. The parties were good, the congoers polite and even bathed. All in all, the thing was a damned machine. For a first con, it was fucking excellent.

I know the guys who were running the con. Know them well. And, yeah, it was their first con. But it was very damned well done. But...

I figured that if I was going to be sent down a valley that was lined with enemy cannon, one of them would at least MENTION it. Maybe hint that one of the guests was going to be a bit...

It was their territory and thus security of my flanks was their job. But... You never get everything right. As was later mentioned, some of the guests *they* didn't know well.

# MEETING ENGAGEMENT

## *Do Your Homework*

Especially on a panel you know has the potential to go oh so very wrong: Writing Strong Female Characters

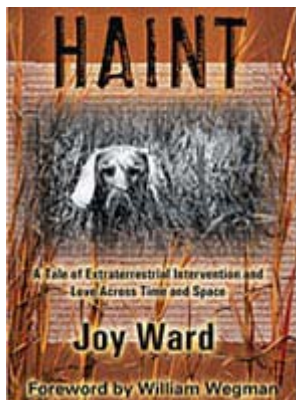
This one is always touchy. Hey, I'm a male, I've got a dick, everything I know about women is wrong. Ask Sharon Green, Jany Wurtz and any number of other women who have done this panel with me. But while I've had some really bad responses from women when I point out that I KNOW women who are warriors, not just back packers or somebody who once picked up a sword and figured out which part was the pointy end, those encounters may have been heated, but they were professional. The women, much as they hated my guts, recognized that I had my own CV and while they would not *accept* my arguments they recognized that I *had* arguments and *debated* them, if somewhat heatedly.

And, okay, I have to admit it, I fucked up. I should have ensured I had my intel on this one. I barely glanced at the guests. I just checked that Jany Wurtz and Sharon Green weren't on it. If they had been, I'd have double loaded the Hellbores, called in my auxiliary troops and required at least one firm ally on my flank. (Or, hell, taking point in the case of Genghiz Kratman.)

I hereby provide some easily gathered intelligence for my treasured readers. Easily gathered by me, especially, since I'd been handed a damned program.

Joy Ward

<http://www.joyward.net/>



Ward's writing has been seen in many venues, ranging from traditional print to [her writer's blog](#). She was a regular columnist for *Women's News of the Mid-South* and her work appeared in *The Riverfront Times*. She was London-based *Government Review's* US Editor for Business and Politics. Ward's writing also appeared in *Mother Jones*, *On the Issues* and a number of other national and regional publications. She spent time as the head writer for *Commerce Magazine*. Ward has also been a consumer psychology consultant for well over a decade. She has a BA in International Relations, an MA in Political Science and an MSBA in Management specializing in intercultural issues.

Ward now lives in St. Louis with her three Weimaraners, Sol, Cloudy and their daughter Star. Annie, a Redbone Coonhound, completes the family.

This book, Haint, is according to this “international marketing expert” an “entirely new subgenre.” You see, it’s from the POV of the *dog*. Isn’t that cute? And so original! If you ignore:

K-9 Corps

The Cat Who series

Watership Down

Shardik...

Errr...

(Ahem) EMERALD SEA????

Oh, I fucking give up. I will, however, point out some “intel indicators” in the above CV. One simple read and things would have been OH so much better. (Or, perhaps not. Sometimes battle is exactly the thing to seek and I suspect this weekend was an example.)

Intel Indicator 1: regular columnist for *Women’s News of the Mid-South*. Males apparently either a. have their own news (Golf Digest? Hunting and Fishing Magazine?), b. don’t need it or c. Already Control All The Other Organs Of Information You Chauvinist Fucking Pig! My readers are permitted to guess the answer to this multiple choice quiz and if you guessed “c” then you get the gold star.

Intel Indicator 2: writing also appeared in *Mother Jones*. WHOOP! WHOOP! DANGER WILL ROBINSON!!!! DANGER WILL ROBINSON!!!! While not quite the official organ of the Communist Party of America (that would be Eric Flint’s *Mutterings*) *Mother Jones* is the de rigueur publication cred for anyone who wants to be looked up to by the Che Guevara crowd. If anyone had bothered to *mention* that, I’d at least have been expecting a meeting engagement. From some later intel bits, I suspect that Missa Wahd done been waned.

Intel Indicator 3: She has a BA in International Relations, an MA in Political Science and an MSBA in Management specializing in intercultural issues. Okay, I don’t even know where to start. This is more like seven indicators. I will say, though, that during this meeting engagement, she Repeatedly Told Me That She Had Her Degree In **Psychology** And That I Was **WRONG** About Every Study I Cited. In other words, she did what Communists are trained to do: Lie to Inflate Your CV in the Event of Challenge. But more about that later.

I was moderator. Things started politely enough except that I mentioned that I wasn’t intending to just sit and listen, that I had input and I was going to give it.

Almost immediately, Missa Wahd, (AKA The Dumpy Lady, AKA Screaming Feminist One Each, AKA You Have A Dick So You’re Wrong, AKA You Know The Panel’s Over When the Fat Lady Opens Her Mouth) tried to take control of the panel, including choosing panelists to speak and pointing out who could ask questions. Did I mention piggy eyes? Sorry, just reminiscing.

You see, I feel that I write strong female characters who are very realistic. But, you see, my female *military* characters (so few in number, say... Sergeant Major Kosutic? Sergeant Sandra Ellsworthy? Triari Sergeant Deann? Lieutenant Van Krief?) minimize

their femininity in a military situation. They act like “guys in skirts” (later, as things became more acrimonious, “guys with tits”), they minimize sexual cues, use primarily male problem-solving methods, etc. And apparently every single study done since 1954 on combat psychology, psychology, male-female processing tendencies and male-female differences in brain structure are **WRONG!!!** And **DON’T YOU KNOCK B.F. SKINNER, THE FATHER OF BEHAVIORAL MODIFICATION OR I’LL ZAP YOUR BAD-THING WITH A TASER YOU CHAUVINIST PIG!** Because every time I cited a study (including one that Miriam, who wasn’t present for the panel alas/thank God had **PARTICIPATED** in) that study was **WRONG!!!!** Oh, and all the female soldiers in Iraq were getting raped and left out to die of heat stroke in the Desert!!!! You Fucking Male!!!!

The last she did not say. (The fucking male part, the thing about the rapes she did say, quoting a debunked article.) And she didn’t “raise her voice.” She instead, scaled up in register until she was speaking in a high... sort of soprano squeak. It was not the most dreadful tone I’ve ever dealt with, (I’ve been at a table less than 75meters from Miss Marvel) but it was pretty close.

She also had something of a comrade in arms in:



Haley Elizabeth Garwood wrote her first novel at the age of eleven, which she sold for two pencils and a notebook to a classmate. Since then, she’s learned the value of hard cash. Dr. Garwood writes full time from her peaceful farm in Kentucky surrounded by unemotional cattle.

The first novel in the Warrior Queen Series is *The Forgotten Queen* followed by *Swords Across the Thames*, *Ashes of Britannia*, and *Zenobia*. The Warrior Queen Series takes forgotten women warriors who changed history and brings them to life. Carefully researched material is woven into memorable stories. Garwood’s goal is to entertain as well as educate.

I’m glad I finally have been able to remember her name. Haley. Haley... Got it. All I could come up with over and over was “That white haired principal lady...” Towards the end, that really bothered me.

What do I say about Haley? She never switched sides, and only at the very fucking end, when it was clear that the only thing left was mopping up by my side, did she retreat. She didn’t resign, she didn’t hide in a bunker and hope that things would pass over, she staged an incredibly effective fighting retreat. But I think she realized she was on the wrong side. (Getting ahead of myself again.)

One of the first female principals in (IIRC) Texas, during this panel she was Joy’s shield. Moving in again and again to take a defensive position, she may have gotten scarred but she *never* fucking got defeated. This is one of the ladies who “kicked down the door” in the working world and I admire those ladies even when (as with my ex-mother-in-law) I personally hate them and they loathe me. In Haley’s case, I cannot be said to even dislike her. Even when we were going at it hammer and tongs, I never felt

one drop of dislike for her. You *cannot* dislike a warrior as strong as she was. I suspect those books are God damned good and I'm ashamed I never picked one up. I kept meaning to but this con was very VERY...packed.

This panel was simply a meeting engagement. I tried initially to keep near topic but every time I stated something that was either a. a military reality that had been tested or b. a psychological study, one of the three above would challenge it with either strawman arguments (the one thing I had against Haley, but it's technical and she might not have even recognized them as strawman arguments) or it would be stated, primarily by Joy (What an incredibly wrong name, the woman was one of the most bitter I've ever met), that the study I cited was WRONG!!!

Example of an "exchange of views" with Missa Wahd:

"Very recently there was a study that was done indicating that testosterone levels in the womb determine how many links are broken between the two sides of the brain. More testosterone, fewer links. So males *tend* to process information primarily through the pure logic side while females *tend* to process even high-logic information through the emotional side in part."

"That study was wrong."

"What?!"

"There's a question. Yes, dear?"

No citation of why she felt that study was wrong. Then there was the irrelevant (and in fact false) statement of psychology credentials.

"I'm a commercial psychologist." (Nobody was able to figure out what that means.)

"Well, as BF Skinner said..." (BF Skinner, like Freud, is referred to nowadays as "out-dated" psychology ("We tried this and *really* fucked up a generation before we figured out how stupid we were...") followed by "Skinnerites are scary." To me, this was the equivalent of saying "Well, Freud said that women should get finger jobs from their doctors, so I'm going down for my finger job." I didn't actually mind his particular statement in this case, that personal psychology is a combination of nature and nurture, but when I pointed out that Skinner was hardly a cite *I'd* use, it really pissed her off. "Don't you knock Skinner!" she said, trying for a joking tone and instead getting some sort of scrambled whine like a gerbil being slowly and lovingly molested.)

And the most telling:

"I *grew up* in a psychology research lab! You can't tell *me* anything about psychology research!"

Okay, this is doing some major WAG analysis. She's about old enough that her parents, obviously psychologists, were, potentially, Skinnerites. Hopefully not *uber* mind you, because the one uber-Skinnerite I knew, and I'm not joking or exaggerating, used electro-shock on his children as a means of "negative reinforcement."

But, really, next to Dr. Spock who has guiltily admitted he is going to burn in hell, Skinner is probably responsible for more of the fucked up people in the Baby-Boomer generation than any single other guru. Skinner could actually get some results using his



techniques, but he used them with common sense. (Hell, *I* use them on my kids with common sense. Kid fucks up, you punish them. Skinner was about as “original” as the Bible.)

The problem is, when you use it “scientifically” and you don’t know diddly-shit about science, you tend to confuse “positive” and “negative” until you have people that are so afraid to make a decision they’re peeing themselves. Then when they “break out” (one term of art for De-Skinneriting someone) they’re so afraid of anyone EVER controlling them again (think of a rape victim and common response to men) that they become utter control freaks.

And, well, psychologists are almost always people that hope that psychology will help them quit being crazy. And just as preacher’s kids tend to be party animals, children of shrinks tend to be really fucked up. Really REALLY fucked up. I haven’t known a single one that didn’t have massive psychological problems. And those are kids of *regular* shrinks who just accidentally fuck them up by reading a book that says one thing one week, testing it on their child (since the child clearly needs psychological adjustment) then trying a new book the next (since the child is starting to show signs of irrationality.)

I cannot imagine what children of RESEARCH psychologists must be like. I mean, here’s a research psychologist trying to figure out a new way to make crazy people better. We’ll just call it the Peanut Butter Hypothesis of Anal Retentive Retardation.

“Little sweet daughter of mine, I’m a bit short on lab rats. So it’s peanut butter time...”

“Nooooooooo! Please daddy, not PEANUT BUTTER TIME!”

You can see where *that* was going and it’s too ugly for me to write. Needless to say, even if the peanut butter hypothesis works out (it didn’t) the process of establishing exactly what brand was going to cause some scarring.

Or maybe she needed her meds adjusted.

If you’re beginning to get the feeling of being trapped in an alley by a homeless person who needs haldol...

A few minor notes on the Writing Strong Characters (By the way, got a couple of *doozies* now...) panel.

Really hot brunette down front. Now, given that Miriam was doing on a panel on “Goth/Fetish Costuming” at the time, wearing thigh-high boots, the shortest miniskirt in the world and a corset, you might wonder why I’m mentioning another chick. But I’m going to go into some loving detail.

During brief disengagements in the skirmishes, I’d have nothing to do but let Joy incessantly whine (God, she had a grating voice and she was sitting right next to me) and stare at this chick. She was dressed in skin-tight jeans, a scoop neck shirt (wearing falsies, by the way) that showed off about 2.362 inches of cleavage (determined by research psychologists to be the sexual cue version of 34 ft in fear of heights) and “fuck-me pumps”. Nice toenails, too. Really elaborate gold patterning. They weren’t cheap, lemme tell you. OTOH, she wore the same pair of shoes, all three days. Don’t know if she just didn’t want to pack any others or if she’d blown all her budget on the toenails. She said

she was a doctor, apparently she was a family medicine intern. I'll give her a pass on suggesting she was an MD. Intern, resident, MD... Close enough. Besides, did I mention she was hot?

But she DEFINITELY was dressed for getting her MRS degree. (MRS=Mrs.) Sexy. Not slutty, mind you, just sexy. Nothing wrong with that. Comfortable to the eyes.

I never sat there staring, except at her toenails since I was trying to figure out the pattern. Okay, and at the shoes since they looked like something Miriam would like. And I was trying to figure out exactly how to broach the question. "Excuse me, I couldn't help but notice your really nice fuck-me pumps. Where'd you get them? My girl friend would probably like them..."

No... Gotta work on that phraseology.

And, okay, occasionally at the tits. But, hell, 2.362 inches *is* the perfect number for cleavage. I'm a guy. I was bored and trying to drone out the whining in my left (remaining good) ear.

There is a point to this apparent digression. Some will like it, other's not. But keep this description in mind.

# INTERSOMETHINGORANOTHER

## SCOUTS REPORT INTEL VALIDATION ONE:

### PREPARE FOR BATTLE!

So I'm at the Barfly suite complaining in amazement at the WORST FUCKING PANEL IN MY LIFE (oh, I SO have a new definition for that) and Miriam, whom I've been neglecting what with one thing and another, is OCDing. She needs the power cord for her video camera. Why?

I left out one thing about the previous panel. Because Miriam was doing the Goth/Fetish Costuming (which, by the way, also went very south if no so south as Female Characters and nothing compared to... Gulp... We'll get there) she had asked Patrick Vanner, former Marine intel specialist, one each, to tape it for her.

Patrick is one hell of a guy. I've used him as an ongoing character (former Marine intel specialist, one each named, coincidentally enough, Patrick Vanner) in the Ghost series, I consider him a friend and a comrade. He also has a book under consideration with Baen which rocks. He's a comer.

But I digress. Patrick, who normally has some comments to make, wisely ducked and covered. Another Barfly, Mike the Sub-Dude, pointed out that nobody on the panel *but* me knew what the hell they were talking about, stood his ground, etc. But it was very light suppressing fire at best. Patrick just let it blow over. I was moderating so I couldn't exactly be shut down and I tried not to shut anyone else down even by default or through anger.

But now we need the power cord to the video camera. Why?

Someone has "complained about that Ringo guy's actions on the panel." Crystal, who is not part of this con committee, was informed and asked about the panel. She pointed out that there was a *video* of the panel, no need to ask questions.

Okay, now I'm fucking livid. Well, I think I'm fucking livid. Again, I get a new definition about 24 hours later. But I'm pretty livid. I had tried like hell to be polite to a couple of the biggest fucking feminazis I'd ever encountered, one of whom wasn't even vaguely polite to *me*. I might have said a few things that they considered unPC but I'm not sure they've ever heard of SOMETHING CALLED THE 1<sup>st</sup> FUCKING AMMENDMENT YOU STUPID BITCHES!

Just a tad upset. And nobody seems to know shit. The complaint was from someone named "Elizabeth." Immediately, I flash to Elizabeth Massie snapping at me. But that was a different panel. And, besides, if Elizabeth *really* felt I was out of line, she'd tell me. She's a con professional. She's seen much worse panels than the one we'd shared. It all made no sense.

In fact, none of it made sense. Nobody had "an official complaint." (Is there an official complaint form? Is there a trial? Who's on the jury? My peers? Only one at the

con, and I consider him above my peerage level, was Terry Brooks, the GOH.) I'm not even sure if the tape was reviewed. I spoke to the three muckety-mucks of the con, each of whom I like and got pretty much the same response. "Don't worry about it, it's no big deal, you didn't do anything over the line, just stay professional and it will all be alright on the night."

Okay, I've had bad panels and come back the next day and everyone's icily polite but you get through the panel. Just stay the fucking course. And swear off cons in Virginia.

So I still don't prepare. I put out no flankers. I bring in no allies. I call upon no fire batteries.

I do not realize the results of this intermediate negotiations until it is far too late.

My local allies? The neutrals I depend upon to cover my flank?

One of them (not naming any names, *Tee*) told the moderator for the next panel to "keep John under control and it will all be alright on the night."

Yes, you guessed it Brotheren and Sisteren, the moderator for the next panel is, indeed, Miss I'm A Flake And I Fear Peanut Butter.

They set mine enemies up in a covered position on that flank and tell them to "control" me.

Telling an embittered feminist control freak to "control" an unrepentant heterosexual male is the equivalent of... My God, all the Good Similes are taken.

Pouring Gasoline on a Flame (Alan "Dr. Lazarus" Rickman, *Galaxy Quest*)

Giving whiskey and car keys to teenagers (P.J. O'Rourke, *Parliament of Whores*)

Oh, never mind, all the other great similes you've ever read. It was, in fact, a bit like how you paint half of north Georgia bright orange in less than a second.

It was *very much* like painting north Georgia bright orange in less than a second. Yes, you want to keep reading to get to the good parts.

# THE ICY BREATH OF BELA ABZUG CLONES...

## *Nuke 'em From Orbit, It's the Only Way to Be Sure*

### ***Citadel***

*Cruxshadows*

Languid waves of desperation  
fall before the rains  
A vanguard to approaching war  
is borne upon the sea  
The icy breath of cyclones bent  
on waging our destruction  
Drills hard against the hearts of heroes  
called here to defend

I see storms on the horizon  
I see the tempest at the gates  
I see storms on the horizon,  
and a citadel alone  
Clinging brave, defying fate

And I will stand here at the gates to face the onslaught fighting  
Without surrender or defeat  
With Troy besieged by tyrants' greed - (tyranny)  
In Hector's memory, God willing  
We shall save this victory  
Without surrender or defeat

Sudden silence - I realize  
breaking teardrops in the rain  
With every breathing moment  
the pillars are sustained  
And waking hands attached to nothing  
tightly clutching close  
Each sleeping vision speaks unheard  
and heaven only knows

Paris' arrow landed true  
Paris' arrow landed true  
Paris' arrow landed true  
Down upon your heel...

# **This Troy... she will not fall again This Troy... she will not fall!**

The sun rises over Tombstone. High on the red sandstone ridge, giant speakers stretching into the sky wail as Janis Joplin plays a slow Toccata and Fugue in D Minor on the steel guitar...

Yes, you read that right. Janis Joplin. Yes, I do in fact know that Janis Joplin couldn't play the steel guitar for shit.

That. Was. The. POINT.

They're wailing in agony.

There's a hum, a buzz, a feeling to the con as Johnny Ringo walks out of his hotel room, spurs a goin' jingle jangle jangle. (In my entire life I never imagined I would use that particular image and, in fact, if someone had suggested it I would have scoffed and/or ripped his head off and shit in his neck. Ugg! Agggh! Damn, it's hard to rip off your own head... Just gonna have to take a pass...)

But, there is much to do. People to talk to, things like that. A panel, in fact, to attend. Quite bland: Space Opera, Is it still pure or is it just mil-fic with a better name. The only high point I recall was mine (I frequently recall really good lines from other panelists, and steal them when possible...) when I pointed out that as far as I knew, no space opera had ever been performed. I don't recall any sopranos going on about approaching Altair Seven... Got a bit of a laugh.

Kurt Miller, cover artist for several of my recent books, had driven down to attend the con as a congoer. He's looking for good cons to market/sell in. He ought to be GOH. Guy's awesome. We had a great time chatting about past and present covers.

The time passed far too swiftly to ten PM when the panel:

CHICKS IN CHAIN MAIL VERSUS

CONAN THE BARBARIAN

Have women replaced the masculine man in mass market literature or has the romance/erotica moved in and taken over? What do you think?

Joy Ward (M),

John Ringo,

Haley Garwood, (note the lack of "Elizabeth" *here*)

Mike D'Ambrosio,

T. Glenn Bane

I was ambushed. I walked in, not quite flat-footed but without flankers out and with no allies, into an ambush.

“An ambush,” the reader scoffs! “*Sure* it was.”

Joy and “Elizabeth”, but especially Joy, had played the “poor poor pity me!” card and gathered just about every Skirtinator at the con and packed the audience. Oh, you think I’m paranoid? Nah, we did a count as we tallied up all the intel during the course of the night following the panel and during the next day. Every female who had strong views about woman’s lib, every hyper feminist including guests, was in the audience.

Oh, don’t get me wrong, I’ve done the same thing. I’ve even ambushed people. Ask Ann Crispin. In fact, ask Ann Crispin about trying to go to the mat on a panel with John Ringo. They don’t call me the Ringoator for nothing.

I’ve never gone into collusion with *other* guests with the purposes of ambushing a guest. And oh, my, did they.

And I’ve never handed out note cards with “have you stopped beating your wife, yet?” questions to be asked.

But wait, there’s more:

T. Glenn Bane



T. Glenn Bane grew up in the rural town of Robbins, NC. He learned about the design marketplace and how to explore the depth of his imagination in both word and visual arts while attending the Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia. Graduating with degrees in Illustration and Art History, he returned to North Carolina to pursue a freelance career.

In 2002, he became a founding partner and art director of NeDeo Press, a book publishing company. He is also founder and president of Scaldcrow Games, a publisher of role playing games. He created, wrote, and illustrated *The Dark Fantasy of Sundrah* which will premier in June at ORIGINS, a major fantasy convention in Ohio. Meanwhile, he continues to pursue quality fiction, illustration, and his love affair with the fruits of imagination.

Bane lives near Greensboro, NC with his wife, Terry, and their family dogs—a rottweiler and a mixed breed adoption dog.

Before I talk about T. Glenn (What, ashamed of your first name, Glenn? How bad could it be? Tooth? Tinkle? Looks like “Twinkie-Eater” to me...) Bane, let me discuss who I’m willing to give cred to on a panel. And by “cred” I mean, in this case, a very wide latitude to be stupid.

When I’m on a panel, I give cred to several different types of people. I give cred to people who know about as much as I do about the subject with or without my position. I give cred to people who are interesting and don’t try to baffle with bullshit when they clearly are out of their depth. I give cred to people with my CV or better. I give cred to people who are clearly “Emeritus.” (Hell, I practically shut *down* one panel in ComiCon specifically so I could get a word in edgewise for Harry Harrison.)

I give cred to anyone, basically, who has something *serious* (experience, knowledge, charm even) to bring to the table and is willing to debate subjects with honesty. They don't have to be willing to change their minds, we're not there to change each other's minds, we're there to inform the congoers.

I don't give cred to:

Wannabes, Has-Beens or Nobodies.

Everybody knows what a Wannabe is. Joy is a Wannabe. She had one book, print on demand, about as thick as *Bridges of Madison County* (in other words, my writing output of a week or less) and she didn't know shit about the industry, the market (despite being a supposed "intercultural marketing" guru) or, in fact, anything.

Has-Beens are people who never were *worth* Emeritus Status and should have quit trying to do this a long time ago. Has-Beens are momentarily "successful" Wannabes who turned out a few books or short stories that promptly tanked (always the fault of the Evil Publisher) and have since wandered around the con circuit proclaiming themselves as self-selected experts.

Nobodies are people who think they have "cred" because they...think they have cred. They set up a computer and become an instant "small press publisher" mostly printing books by friends.

Some of these people know what the fuck they are talking about and are going places. You can tell them from the ones that are clearly out of their depth. One of the con-coms is a comer one of these days. T. Glen... is not.

T. Glenn Bane, besides being the perfect model of a modern metrosexual, is the epitome of a Nobody. I'm not even going to give him Wannabe status because he's decided that being Nobody is good enough for Glenn. He has his little niche and he has his small group of suck asses that stroke his ego since he's a "founding partner" of a "press."

What he doesn't have is cred. Not my cred, not Jany Wurtz cred, not even Elizabeth Massie or, FOR GOD'S SAKE, Ann Fucking Crispin cred. He's a *nobody*. And he, by the way, sucks as an ally. Fortunately, he wasn't mine.

Tits (never got her name) was front and center, legs crossed, nails a flashin and cleavage measured. Tits, potentially, could be a strong ally, but not likely. She's *way* too easy to acquire and take out, almost without thinking.

And center of the back of the room, *apparently* a nobody, was Terry Brooks, the Guest of Honor.

That made me sort of wince. I knew this wasn't going to be pretty, I was pretty sure I was going to have to be...firm and I wasn't planning on losing, moderator or not.

I'm at a panel to First: Entertain the congoers (I don't, by the way, consider a shouting match entertainment), Second: Teach the craft of writing as I see it and my philosophies of it and Third: Make sure that any of the other panelists, especially the Credless Ones, who spout utter bullshit get called on it. Too many young authors have had so much shit stuffed in their ears, their writing brains have turned brown and they are



only good as Clarion Grads. And there was a lot of shit about to spouted in “Chicks and Chain mail vs. Conan.”

Keep the image in mind.

We prepare for battle. The enemy is carefully hidden in plain sight. I, meanwhile, march in at the last minute, as usual.

I’d been kneeling down just before the panel talking to somebody and the combination of kneeling and the weather had me limping badly. Apparently that was taken as a sign of weakness or something, forgetting that for all the metaphors, this was a verbal battle.

I sit down, painfully, unfortunately again to the right of “I replaced my vocal cord with a dying hamster” Joy Ward and groan.

“Bad knee?” she asked, solicitously, in a high enough tone that I already know she’s in about condition orange. (Grossman tells me there’s no condition orange. Fuck that. She was in condition *orange*. The tone of her pasty skin proves it.) “Did you hurt yourself?”

“It’s from jumping out of airplanes and running four to six miles every morning at a six to seven minute mile pace,” I ground out. “Fortunately, I gave up exercise for Lent. In 1987.”

There are several things buried in there, warnings. And my tone is the “mock friendly” one that you use just before you bust the pitcher over the guy’s head at the bar. I could tell she was just ready to put this chauvinist pig in his place and I was going to explain that my place was with a voice and using it. I was going to speak truth to power as she hadn’t seen since daddy grabbed the Jif.

“You must be very religious,” she replied, tightly.

Oh, great, now I’m an Evangelical Christian Unrepentant Heterosexual Male Chauvinist Pig. Get *that* to trip off the lips. And they COMPLETELY FORGOT “xenophobic genocidal asshole”! I’ve just *got* to get them together with Misty Lackey. Joy would be a perfect co-author for Misty. She’s Misty without Misty’s iron self control. (This is only ROFLMAO if you have ever dealt with Misty. It told it to one person and they were very puzzled. “Misty does not have iron self control.” Again, that’s the point.)

Joy starts off almost immediately, right on the dot of Ten PM, welcomes, and will everyone introduce themselves?

Done. I’m still thinking this is just a normal stressed panel. I’ve done it. Been there, done that. Got the scars, haven’t done worse than a tie in *years*.

Not sure what started it. I think it was a question I asked on redirect. I do remember the point where I made a statement and T. (What in the HELL does that stand for) Glenn said that I was wrong.

Actually, I was using Socratic Dialectic which some people seem to think is “Bad Speak.” The subject of Ripley in Alien was brought up, by T. Glen IIRC, and he said that she had been “uninteresting” to women viewers in the first movie (which I saw, by the way, First Night’s Run with my *very* liberal sister-in-law and at least at *that* time she

vociferously disagreed) because she wasn't portrayed as nurturing. She was, in other words, too mannish.

So I said: "What was Ripley?"

Various stupid answers. I mean, did they ever WATCH the movie?

After they couldn't guess her working position, even with quite a bit of coaching, I actually made a factual error and said she was the "First Mate". She wasn't, she was Second I believe. No matter.

"That is a traditionally male role and a position where male decisionmaking is critical. There's no time for touchy feelie, a crew like that has to handle emergencies, fast, or they die. She was acting like a guy with tits and that's a very *realistic* way for a female in *that* position to act! Read about current day female skippers! So playing 'a guy with tits' was right: Yes or No?"

T. Glen's answer:

"No."

Now, I'd taken the "you're wrong" with no explanation last night. Tonight, I wasn't going to stand for it. So I asked him to justify his response. And Joy told me I couldn't because I was out of turn. So I told her until he explained why I was wrong, I wasn't going to pay any attention to her. Seemed reasonable to me. He'd just suggested I was as full of shit as a Christmas turkey, as she had repeatedly the night before, and I was going to know why.

Then she held up the finger. I can just see her holding it up to her daddy, jar of Peter Pan in hand. Was about as much use holding it up to me. I don't even remember the finger. (Index finger, held straight up. Make eye contact. That way you can control the little doggies...) She used it on everybody else in the audience that she didn't want to speak, IE my supporters, but I never saw it used on me. Others said it was.

Let me be clear: It was *such* a childish gesture. Or, maybe, the sort of gesture that a Skinnerite would use *on* a child. Certainly it's used on dogs. On dogs it works. Make eye contact, hold up the finger, dog cowers. The Alpha, the God, is telling you you're a Bad Dog! Oh, no! I'm a Bad Dog!

On humans it doesn't work. A human can decide if they're a bad dog or not. Skinner did a lot of dog studies. Please replay the whole thing about Skinner.

I never really saw it. All I saw were two piggish eyes like half cooked poached eggs rolling in fat. She was big about control by eye contact. I guess she thought I was a Pomeranian. Piggy, I eat *Rottweilers* for lunch.

(Literally in one case, but that's a long story...)

And of course I heard the whine, sliding up the scale:

"You will *be quiet!*"

"The hell I will! He just said I'm wrong. He's going to tell me why or retract his statement!" Okay, I also heard myself getting louder.

“This is *not your turn!*” Up another notch. “He doesn’t have to answer your question!”

“If he can’t explain his response then he needs to retract it!” Up another decibel.

Picture me, nose to nose with Miss Piggy, but shriller and way less funny. A Miss Piggy with no sense of humor and who hates all men on earth. (Miriam, by the way, prefers the image of a Pomeranian which she refers to as “a piranha with fur.” It’s actually a pretty good image. So, imagine me nose to nose with a shrilly barking Pomeranian if you prefer.) There were other sallies, but T. Glenn was out when I called him on the “you’re wrong.” He went to earth. Catatonic, apparently.

Let’s be clear. He couldn’t argue his position; it was indefensible. He had the choice to either admit he was wrong or prove I was wrong (really fucking difficult, I don’t think even Jany Wurtz would have taken that one on. Of course, she wouldn’t have made the stupid mistake in the first place.)

And the School Marm? Livid. The Skirtinators in the audience? Incensed. I wasn’t doing what a *WOMAN* was telling me to do! And I was **RAISING MY VOICE!** That is simply not **ALLOWED!** Don’t you know that you horrible **MAN!** **BAD DOG!** **BAD DOG!**

First Rule of a Gunfight. If you’re going to a gunfight, bring a gun.

They had depended on controlling me, but I’m not a dog. I’m also not pussy-whipped or a metrosexual who “knows” that the man is always wrong. I’m an unrepentant heterosexual male who requires that in a debate you use logic. If you’re going to a battle of wits, bring wits. If you’re going to a battle of logic, bring logic. Panels are not about your feelings. You can try to play the feelings card, but logic is going to demolish it, nine times out of ten.

Jany Wurtz can argue better than these people. They were like the “professional” in the Argument Clinic that thought that negation was argument.

All arguments... Highlight this, please, class. **ALL ARGUMENTS ARE ABOUT CONTROL.** This battle was taking place on two levels. One of them was about direct control. Miss Piggy felt that she should be able to exert control by essence of being given a position of control. Normally, I would have, to the extent I could manage, (Okay, okay, I take over panels, admit it) acquiesced to that. Not, however, when she intended and started to abuse it. He’d made a statement indicating that my position was wrong and was unwilling to debate it on *any* level. She was deliberately trying to shut me down rather than have that rather important point be clear. She simply didn’t want me to win a point and was using her authority to, she thought, prevent it.

At that point, she lost her moral authority to control. And, really, in panels that is the only authority the moderator has. There was no-one standing by with a muzzle to muzzle me (hard control) so the only choice is persuading me I should accept the control (soft control). I’ll do that, right up to the point that the controlling entity abuses it. At that point, all bets are off.

The second level was about the *theory* of control in male female relationships. Yes, females have a long history of being oppressed. Got that. But I grew up in the period

*after* that was breaking. Are there still pockets of stupid males in America? Yep. I live in the middle of one of the biggest concentrations. Miriam and every other smart, strong woman I know has dealt with stupid males in positions of authority. I'll let them tell the stories but they were *very* stupid males.

On the other hand, there are also means of redress. Women, for reasons that I can only term "womanly" reasons, often fail to use them. But they're there. If a male boss requires actual sex for promotion or hiring or whatever, well, that boss isn't going to last long. Eventually some female is going to wear a wire on a job interview and then he's going to be mowing lawns when they take him for everything he's got.

As should be. I got *nothing* for the male jackasses of the world. You take one of your female employees out to lunch *well* away from work and explain that she can put out as your mistress (complete with apartment) or be fired... Buddy, you'd better not come near *me* or you won't have to worry about a lawsuit. It's very hard to worry about anything in the fucking grave.

Got *nothing* for male jackasses. Except the scene at the end with Joe Pesci in "Casino."

But male jackasses, by and large, don't tell women they can't be women or that they cannot use their full palette of options. Women tell men all the time that *we* cannot use our full palette of options. Males can't be intimidating because it makes the girls cry. Males can't just be logical about something. Males cannot hammer a point or use interrogative techniques.

But women can cry if they want (which is a passive aggressive technique), women can use the pity card, women can use sexual cues. Women, in almost all cases, get to use their full palette yet tell males they cannot use theirs. And in the few cases that women, simply by the reality of the situation, are required to use a limited palette, they scream because men are trying to "control their body."

The term here is "double standard."

The fact that Miss Piggy was abusing her position of authority, was using passive aggressive techniques to escalate the situation (I recognized each one at the time and didn't care) and the fact that I had them on the mat, logically, didn't matter. I was RAISING MY VOICE! Therefore, I was wrong. I'd lost my temper.

They didn't realize that I had about sixty notches to go before I REALLY lost my temper. I never even got close. I just went into battle mode, condition red, dodged every bullet, never took cover, laid down fire, suppressed them, moved, forced Glenn, the fucking coward, all the way into his bunker to suck his thumb and then turned their flanks.

How'd I turn their flanks? Because of one thing: Miss Piggy had just lost it. I may have been up in decibels, but this lady was sounding like some sort of super-magnified gnat. The sort you get in your ear at night and just can't get out. And while she was blank faced, it got pretty clear that that was her "tell" for anger. She was out of the bunker and charging forward.

Her favorite technique was to raise an issue that was political hot-button then say “but that is political so we’re *not going to talk about it!*”

“And you say that women aren’t being tortured and left for dead in the *thousands* in Iraq but that’s political and we’re *not going to talk about it!*”

So I’d talk about it. Loudly. And she’d shrill at me and make eye contact (Lady, drill sergeants that would melt your brain did that to me when I was nineteen, I’m not going to back down for a furry piranha) because SHE HAD THE POWER and I wasn’t paying any attention.

It went on and fucking on. Sometimes it would go to other panelists (never Glenn, he was out of it, usually “Elizabeth” would talk for a bit while we went nose to nose and whispered sweet imprecations at each other) then it would go back to battle royale. The furry piranha never let me complete a sentence before she was telling me I couldn’t talk. She and “Elizabeth” had talking points that they were going to run the panel on and I wasn’t allowed to *possibly* stop what they considered an Unstoppable Juggernaut!

Looked more like a Volkswagen powered by a whining hamster.

Then, I turned the flank.

Tired-of-being-metro-I-Want-To-Be-A-Real-Man Glenn (figured out what the T was...) was out of it. I mean, catatonic. So I started throwing logic barrages at “Elizabeth” (Haley DAMNIT!) And while she *hated* to see that there was logic in there, she fought my flanking maneuver as hard as she could, she was also two things Miss Piggy was not: Intelligent and wise. Oh, not wise enough to see a fruitcake when the fruitcake used her. But she had enough basic honesty to admit 1. There was logic there and 2. I was in the position *she* had been in when the other principles and school boards said she couldn’t do the job because she was a gurrll. I was being attacked simply because I was an unrepentant male and I wasn’t willing to be PC just because “I have my finger up and you have to obey me” was abusing power.

I had “Elizabeth” pinned, mostly by ignoring the shrill sound of incoming in my ear and then...

One of their auxiliaries decided to lay in defilading fire.

I’d just made a comment about a recent study on the affect of female sexual cues on male decisionmaking when “Tits the Intern” decided to chime in.

Aside: It’s long been known that males do stupid things around women. Duh. Think back to trying to talk to a pretty girl when you were fourteen.

What the studies are doing now, is showing to exactly what degree sexual cues affect male decisionmaking. Look on Google News BBC for “male decisionmaking sexual cues” for just the *latest* study. Forget “thinking with your dick.” It’s a very straightforward change in male personality that can be fought with a degree of willpower. But my point was, as I put it to a female pilot I know, “You don’t want your co thinking about your tits in an emergency.” There’s enough task loading on the brain in that situation; a condition that reduces IQ unless it is hard fought is a guaranteed killer.

Pilots, soldiers, cops, firefighters, EMTs, they can't have their decisionmaking skills affected by female coworkers. So said coworkers deliberately tone down their femininity "on duty." They may shake out their hair and party with the best of them *after* duty, but they know (turns out in the military it's ad hoc training by the "old girl" network, it should be formalized) that you just cannot afford to be "female" on duty in anything liable to require sudden emergency decisionmaking and rapid decisions. Otherwise, well, the female is depending on the male (and vice versa of course) to make good decisions. If she decides that she wants to use her feminine assets to attract, she's going to kill herself just as surely as *he* kills them both.

This argument was the major point of contention in the two panels. "In military-like conditions, males cannot afford a condition where critical decisionmaking is degraded. Since that is a genetic *constant*, you can either segregate males and females or females can become 'guys with tits.' Don't care which, but choose." Ripley acted like a guy with tits because that was a necessary concomitant of her position. This is reality. Deal with it.

I was essentially saying that women have some responsibility here, too. I mean, they can commit suicide if they'd like, but if they *don't* they need to do what... Well, what women in the military, police, firefighting, EMTs and even merchant marine are already doing. Naturally It All Had To Be The Males' Fault! And You Are A Male Chauvinist Pig For Suggesting That Women Have To Take Any Responsibility! Stay Away From Our Bodies You Christian!

The fact that *males* have to change how they act on a daily basis, not only in those situations but in every other working environment in the world, was, of course, not *women's* fault!

So then Tits the Intern decided to slay the Evil Dragon. Get the picture in your head again... 2.362 inches of cleavage, fuck-me pumps, make-up all done up, sprayed on jeans...

Brown eyes. Well, she'd say "hazel" but they're brown.

"Does it all have to be about SEX?"

Response:

"Yesterday, when I wasn't doing anything else I was looking at your tits and your shoes." More or less a deadpan delivery.

Oh. My. God. She asked, I answered. Seemed like a pretty straightforward question/answer. Admittedly, if she hadn't obviously been trying to hammer me, I'd have been more polite. But the expression on her face was priceless. After the shock cleared, she had a look that said, in very eloquent words:

"In the *Right Society* (see 1984) where only *Good Speak* was allowed, the *Word Police* would now drag you away to the dungeons and put helmets on your head filled with *RATS!* You should be *SHOT* for suggesting that I can't wear *ANYTHING* I want. I should be able to pick and choose *which* men can and *cannot* look at me, because I *AM* WOMAN HEAR ME ROAR!!!! And if *you* look you are AN EVIL MAN! I didn't tell you you *could!* And you *CAN'T!*"

Nobody had ever, apparently, pointed out that if you're holding up a sign, you're expecting people to look. Note, I'd been subtle enough she hadn't even been *aware* of it. I'm not a total geek when it comes to babe watching. But if I could draw, I could draw the pattern on her big right toe in a heartbeat. Sort of a hatch pattern. Something. Gold with a reddish background. Sort of like she wanted to be humped by the entire Gryffindor Quidditch team.

But that was just a look. We cannot forget Miss Piggy. Who then said, and I shit you not:

**“Well, you obviously have problems and need help.”**

Well, Duh. Let's begin to list them. I've got to slow down my production because only venture capitalists can keep up with my output. My cover artists are developing carpal tunnel syndrome. I'm a raging success in the industry. I wrote Ghost. Because I wrote Ghost, I'm having to beat female (so far, thank God) bondage subs off with a club and the problem with that is that BONDAGE SUBS *LIKE* BEING BEATEN WITH CLUBS!

Oh, you mean I have a problem because as a heterosexual male I look at women? I guess, yes, I need help. Tell you what, you can hold the balls, the “doctor” can cut them off then everybody will be happy. Right?

Yeah. Fuck you. Here's the logic. I don't stare at girls who are clearly covering up. I don't girl watch the girls that have put on a baggy sweater and have their heads down. They don't want to be looked at, I am polite enough to accede to that desire. If you don't want to be looked at, don't advertise. If you advertise, you don't get to *choose* who checks out the merchandise. This is *reality*, short of some sort of wire in guy's heads that permits us to only look at women that have given their approval.

Wow, don't the Doctor want that. Tell you what, drop that lame-ass Family Medicine degree, go for neurosurgeon, work on implanted chip technology and by the time I'm a *really* dirty old man, and you're nothing to look at anyway, honey, you'll be all happy happy.

They'll all be programmed for only that decade's version of Brad Pitt. Which means every other man on earth will be slamming into women they didn't even see, thus causing a blizzard of sexual harassment suits. Just can't win. OTOH, it will be a bit like being a blind man where women are concerned and it's AMAZING what blind guys can get away with.

Come to think of it, Tits, PLEASE come up with that chip, pronto. Picture me, hands out like a zombie but instead of hanging down they're sort of...cupped...

But I digress...

Piggy's comment broke their line. Piggy had lost her last supporter as Haley began a fighting retreat. Even *Haley* could see that a guy looking at a girl *dressed* to be looked at did not have a “problem.” I *think* I caught at least one of the Feminazi auxiliary in the audience stifle a grin that, more or less, said: “I'm glad somebody finally pointed that out to her.”

I mean, she's an intern. She just finished college and most of medical school. She has the habit of sitting in the front row, near males. The first night, she was almost directly in front of me. The second, she was almost directly in front of T. Glen. (With most of a row to choose from.) She tends to dress in scoop necks and spray on jeans. Still, most professors are male.

You think habits like that *didn't* help her GPA a bit? You think she didn't *know*?

Yeah, right Tits, pull one of the other ones. It's got a *bell* on it. Two guesses which...

I'm not saying that Tits made it through medical school "on her back." However, I virtually guarantee that she used sexual cues to enhance her ability to negotiate a very hard school. Nothing against that, that's part of *your* palette, but don't act all shocked when someone calls you on it.

During all of the above, the following action had been going on in the audience to this particular battle-royale.

The Barflies had absolutely fled. I was rather shocked and surprised as my allies and auxiliaries turned upon their long-legged horses and ran. As it turns out, they were sending those fleet horses to the neutrals who had ensured the security of this valley of slaughter as well as to enquire about the orbital strike I had requested yeah at the very beginning of the battle. As later recounted it went something like this:

Vonnage: "Mike! Go get Patrick! Ringo's about to kill somebody!"

Mike: "Patrick! Go get the Con-Chair! Ringo's about to kill *everybody*!"

Con-Chair: "Patrick! Go get Miriam! I'll meet her at the panel!"

Why they felt that Miriam was going to calm me down is a very good question. But as the argument reached very near utterly wroth, the Con-Chair entered the back of the room. If you think that *settled* anything you would be far wrong. It waxed upwards. And it really got silly when another of the Feminazi Auxiliary Corps interjected with *her* telling point of logic:

"It's *fiction*! It doesn't have to be the way people actually *act*!"

Man, their line was broken. Their logic troops were scattered on the field. Haley had taken a defensive position in a cluster of boulders, shielding her remaining troops as she watched Joy's troops, that rabid band of Pomeranian piranhas of logic, surrounded and decimated.

All the time, with Terry Brooks watching, more or less deadpan, from the back. He was, in fact, the only person whose opinion I cared about. He had cred. Was I hanging my ass in his opinion?

(Of course, to an extent, given my description, Harlan Ellison had cred. Let me be clear. Harlan Ellison has no cred. But I *did* know enough to know that Terry Brooks was sane, so he actually *did* have cred. We might not agree, but he had cred. I had no clue, I'd never met the man. This was the first time I'd been near him for any significant stretch of time.)



Then, finally, the orbital strike arrived. Miriam strode in like the calmest Valkyrie in the world. She had Changed. Well, she does that, often, at cons. But she usually doesn't change into business formal that makes her look like the world's best paid, hottest and most efficient, secretary. She strode right through the firestorm and set an ice-cold Starbucks Mocha Frappacino in front of me.

"There you go, sweetie," she said in her best Scarlet O'Hara accent.

"Thank you, honey," I said, smiling, stripping off the plastic and taking a gulp. "Ah!"

Miriam then sat down about two seats from Tits front row, far end.

The Con-Chair sat down next to *her* to watch the fracas.

The rabid Pomeranians, the potential Bad Speak police having AMAZINGLY decided not to arrest and imprison this EVIL MALE, then attempted to stage a counter-attack by saying something along the lines of: "There are *no* differences between men and women!"

To which Miriam "Scarlet" Sloan responded:

"Except genetics. *Duh!*"

*That* was the orbital strike. Nuke 'em from orbit, it's the only way to be sure.

Okay, so she was pretty. Okay, beautiful. And, okay, she was poised. And, okay, she likes, okay looks like "loves", the fucking chauvinist pig. But you know about abuse syndrome and... Okay, so she *really* doesn't have any of the tells of abuse, like, you know, some of *us* do.

But just because she's stupid enough to be stuck with an unrepentant heterosexual male chauvinist...

Oh...Fuck. She's prettier than any of us, she's more poised than any of us, she's somewhere around as SMART as any of us (smarter unless one of *them* has an IQ close to Einstein's, by the way, yes, I'm serious, and, yes, I said "Einstein", I am *not* joking)...

And she doesn't mind "doing" for "her man." And both derive love and comfort from the other and...

The Pomeranians went frantic. Miz "I am an expert in psychology, despite the fact that I've apparently never *read* a study since 1954, I'm an expert in marketing despite the fact that I'm declaring my book 'totally new' when it uses the same tropes as several huge bestsellers and I'm an expert in how men SHOULD ACT YOU BASTARD!" was revealing the ugliest, nastiest face of hyper-feminism, the man hater who believed that all men should be physically or functionally emasculated. All the Feminazis in the room were seeing themselves brought to *reducio absurdum* and the picture weren't fucking pretty. And then there was Miriam, showing the face of... something deeper and richer that they realized was far, far better than the cold place they lived in.

Miriam told me, much later, that every single one of them had note cards. The "Does it always have to be about sex?" card was actually dropped on the floor by Tits. Whether written by Miss Piggy or not, they all looked remarkably similar. Just as the positions

taken by Joy, T. “I’m a Metro who hates his first name nearly as much as I hate all chauvinist pigs because my wife told me I do” Glenn and “Elizabeth” had all been in lock-step.

They had aligned the three panelists and provided talking points to their auxiliaries in the audience. They had set up a deliberate ambush with prepared positions. And now... they were in rout.

All the cards were put away in pockets as the panel wound down. Haley Elizabeth Garwood, one time first female principal in Texas, PhD Ed, author of five books on warrior queens of the Middle Ages, (which are probably really damned good) had withdrawn her support. She was not switching sides, but she was actively considering it and was, at best, neutral. The Feminazis in the audience were silent, stunned and, in many ways, very sad to watch.

I wish that I could implant this panel (Tits?!) in every woman’s head in the United States. I wish that I could show the faces of those women to every woman who has ever said: “I’m a bitch, get over it.”

They were seeing two possible futures for “feminism” in the United States unfold, there in microcosm. The embittered “I am Woman roaring ‘you are SCUM’” feminism of Bela Abzug and something new and different. Call it “femininism.” “I’m a woman, he’s a man. He has his strengths and weaknesses, I have my strengths and weaknesses. Together, we are stronger, but only if I let him have his strengths and he lets me have mine. If I emasculate him, what good is he to me? If he abuses me and takes away my feminine powers, what good am I too him?”

They were seeing an unrepentant heterosexual male who could face them on every front and not back down. And, yet, one who clearly cared for and cherished a beautiful, intelligent and *strong* woman. For Miriam was no chinchilla in that panel. She had manifested what I now call “The Goddess” and it shook my faith in agnosticism. She had Changed far more than clothes. She had entered to do battle in the most feminine possible way. She had simply *been*. And the aura that she emanated was damned near a divine light.

The feminists were being shown that there was a way back to the Goddess of Femininity. And they could *attempt* to grasp it or they could become rabid fury piranhas. They looked, in fact, very much like the Hebrews caught worshipping the Golden Calf. Like kids with their hand in the candy jar.

The panel was no where near “over” but it was done. The fury piranha kept scaling up into bat-radar range, holding her finger up to anyone who chimed in on my side. This especially included Miriam, repeatedly, and the fury piranha attempted to stare the Goddess down. Fat fucking chance. The “unknown audience”, that small group that I neither recognized as John Ringo fans nor feminazis, were more and more shutting her out. She would take over to respond to a question and people would start looking elsewhere, trying to find something interesting. I’d get a chance to answer and they *were* paying attention to my words, especially as I got to the point that I didn’t have to shout down the “moderator.”

The panel ended, a new panel came in including one of the con co-chairs. I was supposed to be on it, but I wasn't going to stick around.

The fury piranha was still yapping at me, but she was trying to find "sympathy" ground or something, anything, anywhere she could win.

"You know, you don't persuade anyone when you come across as an asshole."

"There is no one in this room I *wished* to persuade who would have had any problem with my statements or methods," I replied, arms crossed. She'd stood up and apparently thought a foot of height gave her an advantage.

"This was a very stimulating discussion," she said in a very brittle voice. "I forgive the things you said."

"You said I have a problem and need help," I said, turning to her and for once giving her a thousand mile stare. "*That* is unforgivable."

It shut her up for a moment. She knew she'd crossed the line. Especially in her field, giving "medical" advice like that is right up there with every other form of PC. Now, I wouldn't say it because at no point in the discussion had I descended to ad hominem. Oh, there are plenty in this after action report, but I never said she was a fat little yapping pig who needs to eat some fruit and, oh, yeah, get her meds adjusted, on the panel. Oh, and the color of that dress? Honey, you do *not* need more red near your skin.

"There's another panel coming in," she said, clearly not willing to leave until she WON damnit. And they say women aren't competitive.

"I'm on it, you're not."

She looked flustered and walked off as the moderator, one of the con co-chairs, came in and sat down.

As soon as she was gone, I got up, clapped him on the shoulder and walked out. I was not interested in a panel on "It happened on the way to or at the con." Uh, pass.

I walked away from the battlefield, bloodied and wounded, but undefeated, leaving the bodies of most of mine enemy upon the field. But on the morrow would be one more face-down, another panel with a similar line-up. I intended to finish off the wounded, ensure the neutrality of one of my former enemies...

And bury a certain rabid fury piranha's body.

# INTERMEZZOLUDEREGNUM

## *I Always Did Procrastinate*

One note to RavenCon. Eleven PM panels? Bad idea. By eleven, many people (including me) would much rather be at room parties.

I was headed anywhere but a panel. As it turned out, where I was headed was right past Terry Brooks on the way out. I cannot for the life of me recall how we got talking, but it was something like:

Terry Brooks: "That was a tough one."

John Ringo: "I'd say I've had worse but I'd be lying."

Terry: "I was interested at the answer to one question and it, unfortunately, didn't get answered..." Small smile.

So for the next forty-five minutes, what I ended up doing was talking to Terry Brooks about writing. Now, let me say a few things about Terry Brooks. I read Terry's books... well a long time ago. Far away and the wench is dead. They're good quest fantasy. Hell, he practically created the market, post-Tolkien. I now have to go out and get the full set. Why? Because Terry Brooks is cool. And I mean *cool*. Not just personable but cool as a fucking cucumber. If he'd been military, he'd have been the sort of commander (not an NCO) who kept his cool as hell was falling on his command and then worked his way out of hell, probably with incredibly low casualties. Terry Brooks *is* Armand Pahner.

Cool.

When he noted that he had to get off to bed, I headed out to find Miriam. She was talking with two ladies (youngish and young) and I sat down next to her. The subject quickly became the panel, which they'd been watching from the audience. The subjects ranged away from that, "we spoke of cabbages and kings", for quite some time. Then Miriam broke it up when the youngish lady (who it turned out was 34 and I'd have said 22) needed to go to bed. (Physical issues.)

Then Miriam and I had an argument. We'd both gone back to the room, I was ready to go back out, she was ready to go back out but we'd both assumed the other wanted to rest. Miscuing. We flared up, backed off, realized we'd mis-cued, kissed and went to find a room party.

Most of which had closed. It was *late*. We ended up back in the Barfly suite. Along the way we'd "touched base" with most of the con-com. The general response was "We didn't know much about some of the panelists." This translates as: "We didn't realize we'd trapped you in an alley with a homeless guy who needed his haldol." They are more than willing to have me back, want Miriam back as a guest, but... Maybe not some other guests.

Finally the *Barfly* suite closed (is that allowed? ☺) and Miriam and I *did* head off to bed. I was snuggled down when a question she'd asked as we were getting ready penetrated my consciousness.

“Is Joy the moderator tomorrow?”

THEN I got up, got the con booklet and started reading. THEN I read her CV. THEN I realized what a fucking nightmare I'd stepped into, going into a panel about “female characters” with a fucking liberal moonbat.

Note, there are conservative moonbats. No question. Don't have anything for them, either. Liberal moonbats, though, start from the position that they are right and stay there. And Joy was the perfect image of the modern liberal moonbat. Her CV was perfect for one. Among other things, she had nothing on it that was of any serious level, not in the publishing world. In fact, I couldn't find anything that she'd done that wasn't pure ivory tower. The woman had been nowhere, done nothing and created nothing. Note: I'm sure she'd traveled. That is different from “been there, done that.” Been there, done that is being a kid wandering the Teheran bazaar after dark or lost in the jungles of Panama or Beirut in the middle of the civil war. It's even being a member of Doctors Without Borders, patching up mujaheddin in a hut. Been there, done that is... Well, you don't *need* the fucking t-shirt to remember.

Marketing expert, huh?

Oh, yeah, we were going to bury her damned body.

# FRIENDS HELP YOU MOVE

## *Once More Unto The Breach*

Having *finally* done my homework, I wasn't expecting a battle this morning. For one thing, the remnant of the enemy forces would have had to be far more stupid or courageous than I expected. After the sound thrashing of the night before, battle was unlikely. Besides, Terry was on this panel and I didn't figure they were going to start another battle royale with Terry caught in the middle.

From my POV, today's panel was a matter of killing the wounded and burying the bodies. So I prepared carefully.

First, there was the matter of dress. I'd been wearing a kilt all weekend, sure. But I'd been wearing my "casual" kilt and t-shirts, mostly ones with humorous sayings.

As I stepped out of the hotel room, I was wearing more or less what I wore to the Amazon lunch: black dress shoes, black socks with white skulls, dark blue button down silk shirt and my black "tuxedo" style Utilikilt.

I'd dressed up, in other words. Yes, I consider this dressed up. I also have a real tuxedo and a tailored silk and cashmere suit worth more than my first car. Your point?

Second, there was the nature of the panel. In anticipation of the con, Miriam had gathered various items of a marketing nature. But... Why bother to telegraph? So after packing a box with some of the stuff, I handed it over to Mike "Sub-Dude" Gants and asked him to take it to the panel for me.

Friends help you move. *Real* friends help you move *bodies*.

So I arrived apparently without any marketing material at all. Late, as usual. The only remaining seat was next to the moderator (not Joy who was at the far end. Haley Elizabeth Garwood, by the way, was as far away from her as she could get.)

A few notes. "Tits" was in the audience. Second row. Wearing a shirt that at least had some coverage up to the neck. Sad. She also was, probably coincidentally, seated so that someone was directly between my seat and hers. This becomes...humorous later.

And Miriam, the dear, brought me a cup of coffee, just before the panel started.

As she noted, every time those people saw me on a panel, she was bringing me coffee without any apparent rancor. She doesn't feel subservient bringing me coffee any more than I feel subservient getting something for her.

It's what people that love each other *want* to do.

Oh, those poor, poor feminazis.

Tee held up the panel, quite briefly, to read a message from a school where some of the guests had spoken the day before. I had wanted to do that gig, but, frankly, after driving all night, I think I would have probably babbled. I slept instead which was a good call.

The moderator started off, please introduce yourselves, etc, etc. So far, all cool.

Oh, one small item. This was the first time that the Pomeranian had trotted out the “entirely new sub-genre in science fiction” line.

“The book is from the POV of the dog, Haint. It’s an entirely new sub-genre in science fiction.”

I furrowed my brow and just had to open my mouth.

“What about K-9 corps?” I asked.

All I got was a poisonous stare. I just sat back and tried not to grin. I mean, come on, it’s *not* an entirely new sub-genre in SF. It’s been done, in various forms, at least a dozen times. This shows that she was either lying or, much more likely, had failed to do basic market research. Marketing guru, indeed.

Then it was “How does one market oneself?”

My part I have more or less memorized.

It went to most of the rest of the group, sans the moderator and myself. When it got to me, I stood up. Most people at panels remain seated, but I slowly walked to the back of the room (where Sub-Dude was seated) and talked.

“At the level of Terry and I, our market is, alas, not the people in this room,” I said, truthfully. “Our market is the corporate buyers, the people who buy for Ingrams and Barnes and Noble and Waldens. They are the people who decide how many of our books are purchased.

“Marketing is not sales. Marketing is a method for creating a precondition where sales are easier. To do that you have to create a positive impression of your product, in this case your books, and yourself. The most *important* point is to create an *impression*. One important aspect is what is called ‘personal branding.’” Pause, gesture at the kilt. “I am known as ‘the writer in kilts.’ This is more or less the same outfit I wore to meet the buyers from Amazon. They still talk about it. I created an impression.”

Reach the back of the room, get the box from Sub-Dude, start walking back.

“I want everyone to be able to remember me and, *hopefully*,” I added with a slightly wry tone, “have a positive impression.” That got a few chuckles. “But mostly I hope they remember me. Anyone ever heard the term ‘SWAG’?” A few hands go up. “Anybody know what it means?”

“It’s the English term for booty,” someone said.

“True, but what it *derives* from is ‘Sealed With A Gift.’” This is one of two possible, possibly equal, etymologies for Swag. The other is “stuff to swagger with.” But it worked. “It’s similar to the Arabic *baksheesh* in that way. Face it, it’s a form of bribe.” Another laugh.

“I’m going to BEA as an invited signer. So I’ll be meeting a lot of book buyers. I want them to remember me and be able to find me and my stuff. Fortunately...” I said, preparing to bury the “marketing guru”, “my girlfriend, Miriam,” gesture to Miriam, “is an amazing out of the box marketer.”

People turned to look at Miriam. She'd arrived separately from me and was in business attire again. The purple hair is always a bit eye-catching, though. As are her looks. So what mostly happened was turn, turn back, *whiplash* back around in amazement, stare, turn back. Miriam thought it was funny as hell but just sat there smiling.

I'd opened up the box and pulled out a rubber duckie and handed it to a lady I was standing by. The duck had a little Army helmet on it and a radio. They were soldier ducks.

"Have a duck. Anybody want a duck?" hands went up all over and I handed out some ducks as I talked. "The ducks, you'll notice," toss a duck, "have my website on the butt." Duckie Toss. "Alas, the only place the labels would fit. Miriam is one of those people who get stress relief from doing things like putting little labels on duck butts." Another laugh. Plenty of people could figure out, they thought, when she needed stress relief. In fact, she'd done them on Saturday morning.

Note here. I, the *male chauvinist pig*, had just complimented his *girlfriend* on her *marketing*. And those ducks *were* awesome. *Everybody* wanted a duck.

So the girlfriend, who had cheerfully brought coffee each panel, was not only prettier than they were, more poised, etc. She was a better *marketer* than the market guru.

Then I pulled out a pinwheel.

"I don't do pinwheels," I said, handing one out and preparing to stamp down the dirt on the grave. "Miriam's firm does. She's a high end home designer, nothing under a million dollars. The firm's quite popular in the Nashville area. Rich people will pay just about *anything* for a Jack Herr House and they want 'the Goth chick' to work on it."

Oh, shit, and she's not even a gold-digger! She's not even his "personal assistant"! She's got a real job and is in the TOP OF HER FIELD.

This is referred to as tapping down the dirt.

And, of course, Miz "I'm a Marketing Guru" had nada to show except her lame-ass "totally new genre" book.

I had four copies of East of the Sun in the box. One I'd handed to Sub-Dude in thanks for carrying the shovel.

"I get a box of books for free with each on that comes out," I said, pulling out a book. "For people I *really* want to suck up to, I give them a book." I handed it to Terry Brooks. "Here you go, Terry."

Big laugh. Face it, they were eating out of my hand.

School Marm? Wry amazement. Pomeranian? Hang-dog (HAH!) boiling anger.

I talked a little more about marketing while passing out duckies and sat down.

The moderator talked about some of the swag she uses as well as websites which Terry had touched on in his presentation. More questions, more answers, nothing off-topic.

But...



About half way through the panel, while speaking on something I don't recall, I saw a head pop out. Tits was leaning over so she could see me as I talked and furiously scribbling notes. From her expression, she was not only listening but appeared to have decided that I was one of *the* people to pay attention to in terms of marketing. I doubt I'm going to be on her Christmas card list any time soon, but...

I also noticed that the few times that Pomeranian barked, she wasn't taking notes.

Heh.

There were two comments from people after the panel. One was:

"You realize that by half way through the panel, it was a tennis match? You'd say something, Terry would agree and expand, you'd agree and expand and so on?"

So... In other words, the people with cred were explaining how to gain cred. Okay. Go figure.

And from Miriam:

"The principle lady was all the way in your corner by the end."

Haley had said a lot of interesting things during the course of the panel. Like I said, I never had a smidgeon of disrespect for Haley. The only thing I wonder is why her books are self-published or small press (never really caught which.) I need to get ahold of one and find out if she just can't write. If she can... She needs a publisher. From her diction and other clues, I'd say she can probably write like a fiend. (This is a compliment.)

However, she'd also mentioned that she and Joy were a pair. Miriam sees dark things in this (based on Joy's personality). Whatever. Hopefully she's reconsidering her "partnership." Joy's never going to get her on the NYT list. Not a "marketing guru" that has not a clue about the market. But I digress...

The panel was over, I shook Terry's hand and signed his book. I might have inscribed it, I don't recall.

Then I gave the Pomeranian and Haley books. I had two left, why not?

Ringo to the Pomeranian: "Lots of strong female characters."

And it does have lots of strong female characters. I mean, half the technical team is based on Hooters girls. ☺

"I'm sure I'll enjoy it," she ground out.

The School Marm's though, I inscribed. Badly. My hands weren't shaking but I was tense enough my fine motor control was bad. And my handwriting has always been awful.

The inscription?

"Once more unto the breach." (Unto, note. Even people who quote it usually get that wrong.)

"And he quotes Shakespeare," she said in a voice of wonder.

God, I hope she breaks away from “Joy” soon. She needs a better path than the Pomeranian will ever lead her down.

“I am the perfect model of a modern major general.”

“And Gilbert and Sullivan...”

I attended one of *Miriam's* panels, talked to Patrick Vanner about his book (which has some really good shit in it), got convinced to come *back* to a convention in Virginia (damnit!) and ended up talking to Terry Brooks for about forty minutes while he was waiting to drive to the airport. He'd notice that he had to get out of there sometime and then he'd say something and I'd say something and... We just hung out.

Have I mentioned how weird my life has gotten lately? I mean, at DragonCon, Anne McCaffrey comes over to talk to me about my latest and now I'm vestibuling with Terry Brooks.

My life has gotten *really* weird.

But I digress...

I eventually went back to the room and *crashed*. I'd ended up being up later than *usual* each night and was planning on getting up in a few hours to drive home. I'd planned on leaving about six or seven so Miriam could get a couple of hours sleep before work the next day.

I woke up when the light came on, with Miriam's hand on my chest.

“It's eleven,” she said, softly, and I started to get up, frantically, thinking that *she* had overslept and would now be obsessing about getting home. But she just applied light pressure and held me down. “Everything is packed. I'm dressed so I can go right to work; I'll sleep in the car. All you have to do is take a shower and we'll leave.”

Changed. The Miriam with her hand on my chest was not my usual girlfriend. It turns out she knew about what I call the Goddess. Apparently the Goddess manifests when Miriam feels injustice is being done. And results in the past have been even stronger than orbitally striking an insane feminazi.

There ain't much more dangerous than a man who knows he's in the right and just keeps a comin'.

Except, maybe, a woman. Especially one channeling an avatar.

But she says the “chinchilla” Miriam will be back when the Goddess (who *she* refers to as her namesake from the Bible) fades. I'm sort of glad. If the Goddess manifested in the wrong meeting, I might end up being a CEO and then it would be work, work, work...

I'll take either one. Miriam or MIRIAM, she's just plain...

Have I mentioned lately that my girlfriend is really *cool*?

And that my life has gotten really weird?

# THOUGHTS ON ONE LONG ASS DRIVE

## *So You Say You Want A Revolution*

So what's the moral to this story?

Boy, there's a bunch. But it was one long-ass drive from Richmond to Chattanooga. The traffic was light, the weather not bad and I can drive in "alpha state" with my mid-brain making 99% of my driving decisions, especially in conditions like that. Driving is the time when I do some of my best ideation. On this drive, I was contemplating "recent events." I could pick out a bunch of morals.

One, for me, is do your damned homework. "For once!" Miz Garwood would probably have added had she been one of my teachers. I never *was* any good at doing my homework. I once told a 5<sup>th</sup> Grade English teacher "I wasn't in the mood" when asked for a writing assignment. This did not go over well. In fact, she looked so much like Miz Garwood they could be twins. Heh.

I still only write when I'm in the mood. Fortunately, I'm in the mood more, these days. Oh, and I write fast. Like, two weeks, complete novel, fast.

But I need to start doing my homework. Or set someone else to it. Delegation is the key to management. I'll keep pondering that one.

But depending on the con committee to make sure the panels aren't free-for-all is clearly out. I've gotten into too many furballs already. I'm not willing to just take the PC path, so I need to know if I'm going to be in a battle-royale in *advance*. I can't keep up with every minor writer on the con circuit who has a bee in his or her bonnet about something I have a bee in mine about.

I'll ponder it.

Two: This one's for the guys running RavenCon and con committees in general. For RavenCon: Hell of a con, guys. Very well organized, mostly had a lot of fun.

But... Well, you already learned that lesson. *You* guys are supposed to be doing the intel work. And that panel could have worked, if someone *very* good, such as Tee for example, was the moderator.

I did a panel one time at SheVaCon which was specifically "Liberal Vs Conservative." And the panelists mostly knew each other and had major political *and* personal issues with each other.

But the moderator was Kelly Lockhart, who's real job is as a talk-show host. And he ran it like a talk-show. Ask each panelist a question, get the answer, move on.

It was one of the best panels I've been on and I found out some interesting things about people I'd put in the firm "enemy" category. Some of them moved out. I moved out of some of theirs. It *could* have been a furball, *should* have been a furball, but it was managed with exquisite expertise.

The big problem on the "Chicks in Chain mail" panel, everyone agreed afterwards, even my political "enemies", was not me but Joy. Especially as moderator.

Moral for Con Committees Two: Do not put nutjobs, liberal or conservative, in positions of power.

Joy Ward, expert in “intercultural marketing” and author of *Haint*, a book from the POV of a dog making it “an entirely new sub-genre of science fiction,” is not, by the way, invited back to RavenCon. Whatever anyone on a con committee thinks about my politics or my personality, I’d strongly suggest you ask anyone who was mentioned in this missive if she’d be a good guest. Unless you’re hosting the entire NOW contingent, the answer will probably be: No.

If you do put her on a panel, ensure that the only males are ball-less metrosexuals.

If you’ve ever decided not to invite Harlan, Misty or Jerry back to your con, do yourselves a favor and skip this Nobody.

Garwood would be great, *if she’s* by herself.

The Big Moral.

Ladies, the revolution is over. Ladies like Haley Elizabeth Garwood, first female principle in Texas, and my ex-mother-in-law, Janet Wendt, who started off working as a programmer on Univac and ended up as a Vice President of Unisys, kicked down the door and took no prisoners.

They *created* the current conditions. But like most revolutionaries, their techniques and actions are the actions of a *revolution*.

The revolution is over. You won. Congratulations. But “enjoying the fruits” does not mean ripping them off of men. Deciding that you’re going to keep kicking men in the balls, especially men who haven’t ever done one single evil thing to *you*, is becoming counter-productive.

The current approach of hyper-feminists is very like the approach many Kurds would like to take to the Sunnis in Iraq. Under the Sunnis, not just Saddam but the governments before his going back to the Middle Ages, the Kurds were viciously oppressed. They had to constantly fight just to stay alive.

Now, many Kurds want to return the favor. Since they are, for cultural reasons, much better fighters than the Sunnis (who only won in the last century or so by being better supplied) the Kurds, arguably, could annihilate the Sunnis in about a year’s hard fighting.

Instead, their leadership is trying to create a coalition government.

Ladies, think about trying to join the coalition. Let men be men. You can be women (except in those rare jobs where the *only* choice is a guy in a skirt. Since those are all volunteer, for that matter, you might just think about keeping your nose out.) I mean you can *really* be women. “Equality” is a losing proposition as is “every man is the enemy.” You can be ladies, again. And I think you’ll find that glass ceiling might melt if enough of you tried it.

Part of that is letting men be men. If a man compliments you, or opens a door or anything else that shows he considers you “special”, take the compliment or the door opening with *grace*. He’s showing respect, not trying to put you in a burkha.

Men these days, in corporations and the military and government, often *hate* women. Because they have to watch every step of every day to avoid causing “offense.” Ladies, sometimes men do things that aren’t PC. That doesn’t mean they’re trying to rape you. It would help both sides in this battle if you ladies would get a grip and take a breath, the next time a guy says: “Nice skirt.”

The flip side is, if you’re holding up a sign, you’re advertising. If you’re advertising and someone says more than “Nice skirt”, you’re on your own. I mean, groping is out for damned sure. But if you hear a muttered “Look at the tits on *that* one!”, well, you’re wearing the low-cut shirt. Such clothing, unless it’s *very* hot, is an invitation to attention. You don’t get to pick and choose who looks. Sorry. You wear it around me and I’m *gonna* look.

Now to business.

Sexual cues and their effects are reality. And they work. Miriam knows one girl, who shall remain nameless, who when she gets in trouble at work (often) wears a plunging-neckline, super-tight outfit the next day. The girl has D cup hooters. The, male, boss seems to *forget* how pissed he is at her.

This is using your powers for evil. Sorry. It’s true. Now, Miriam sometimes does similar things, but only when using her powers for what she sees as good. Getting a business deal is an amoral exercise. So when she’s going to a business meeting, she dresses up to the max. And, lo, doth the resistance melt away.

Miriam, by the way, is awesome in a business meeting. She was, extensively, trained in it. She calls it “geisha training without the sex part.” She can get just about anyone eating out of her hand.

When I’m doing business and things start to get... contentious (around *me*? Heaven forbid) I’ll go “powder my nose.” Hum a few bars of Cruxshadows, take a whiz, look at my cell phone for the time, wander back.

Suddenly the obstacle we’d been getting “contentious” about melts away. The males at the table are looking pole-axed and the women are just shaking their heads. All I have to do is close.

If we can get over the whole “sexual harassment” thing, I would see the sort of training Miriam went through becoming a standard in business. And the reverse, of course. Guys getting trained to ignore it. Test their decision-making then show them porn and test again. Hammer them over their second response and repeat. Hell, it might even work for the military.

Here’s an “out of the box” idea I came up with while massively sleep deprived: Porn entry. You’re doing an entry, put pin-ups on the shields. Guys see pin-ups and their decision-making drops. Roll ‘em up.

You’ll have to rotate the pin-ups, though, or every crack house will put the same pin-up up and get inured.

Of course, that would make it humorous fighting the mujaheddin. Heh.

“Salah! The Americans are using the Britney Live In Las Vegas pin-up against us! We must inure ourselves to her magical effect by getting one and staring at it for hours...”

Heh.

Just a strange thought. Sleep deprivation is like that.

Speaking of sleep deprivation, this economically useless essay has absorbed two days of my life. And it's getting late. For that matter, Miriam has already gone to bed.

Time to go be an unrepentant heterosexual male.

Take care,

John Ringo