



Chinese woman Su Tan. Incidentally, the film never mentions Russia, but refers to Godofsky as coming from "behind the Iron Curtain." It turns out they have been brought aboard the saucer by an alien who calls himself, imaginatively enough, "the alien." It seems the alien's world is dying and he wants our world, but his moral code will not allow him to take our planet by force. Convinced that mankind will eventually kill itself off, the alien just wants to speed up the process by giving each of the five a weapon powerful enough that the combined effect is sufficient to kill off all life on earth. Each is given three capsules in a transparent case. Only the recipient can open the case, but once it is open anyone can use it by speaking a latitude and longitude into the capsule, cause it to kill everyone within 1500 miles of that point. The humans are returned to Earth where the women immediately nullify their capsules, Eve by throwing them into the ocean and Su Tan by committing suicide. The men do not feel the pressing need to destroy the capsules and soon find that that policy is a mistake. While it seemed a simple matter just not to talk about the capsules and their extraordinary experience, secrecy becomes impossible when the alien announces via hijacked broadcast all over the world the names of the five abductees saying they have information of importance to everyone in the world.

Eve had come to Los Angeles to find Jonathan and arrives to find Jonathan waiting for her at the airport. The two go into hiding at a racetrack closed for the off-season while the world searches for them. The professor is not so lucky and is almost immediately in a traffic accident that puts him in the hospital. Ivan is captured by his government where a Stalin-like leader (at least more like Stalin than the then-Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev) uses a number of strategies to squeeze the information from Ivan as to what the capsules were all about and eventually even uses deception to gain control of the capsules. From there events take their course as people on each side of the Iron Curtain play their hand.

#### SPOILER

This part is quite well done, but leads up to a very believable endgame strategy that would have destroyed all life on earth. However, it does not, because Bechner figures out how the capsules work sufficiently to use them to destroy only the enemies of human freedom.

#### SPOILER

Gene Barry was already familiar to science fiction film fans from the lead in *WAR OF THE WORLDS*. George Voskovec is not a familiar name though that same year he would make a film that is considered a classic, *12 ANGRY MEN*. Steven Schnabel as the Stalinist has been a perennial character actor in films with a latter-day career in soap operas. Paul Frees, whose distinctive voice had been heard in so many science fiction films of the Fifties, actually gets a screen appearance as a TV commentator. The gaunt features of Frederick Ledebur make the greatest impression of any of the cast: He is best known for playing Queequeg in *MOBY DICK*.

During the Fifties as frequently since science fiction films have cast scientists in the Frankenstein mold, amorally releasing horrors on an unsuspecting world. The thrust has often been to blame the Manhattan Project scientists for releasing the horrors of nuclear war on the world. This film makes the point that it is political game-playing in international politics that is the root cause behind the use of super-weapons. It also very forcefully makes the point that the most dangerous moment of the twenty-seven days of vulnerability is the very end and the endgame strategy.

Faults of the film prior to the fatal last act are sparse. The film cheats us a little. Suspense is raised by showing us the alien's shadow and even his silhouette as having a tall body with a small head. When we actually see him he looks quite normal by earth standards. Perhaps the implication is that he is making himself appear to look like us, but if so that does not come across. When we see him in silhouette we are seeing him behind a curtain just before he reveals himself and if you watch you see a crude substitution and that it was someone else casting the shadow. In a later scene we get a camera filming a raft at sea from a mile away and looking down on the raft from an impossible angle. We see more than one person killed by the capsules and the effect seems different each time. Dr. Bechner claims that "in mathematics there is always a solution." In fact, that is a false statement, as was proven by Kurt Godel. Finally the whole concept that rays from space could pick out every enemy of human freedom is as unctuous as it is absurd.

At its best the film has a surprisingly sophisticated view of international politics and its game-playing. At its worst it has an absurd *deus ex machina* ending very much spoils the otherwise intriguing story.

Rating *THE 27TH DAY* is difficult because of the bad ending put on such a promising beginning and middle. On balance it gets a +2 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

**TIAMAT'S WRATH** by **James S.A. Corey** (copyright 2019, Orbit, 544pp, ISBN-10: 0316332895, ISBN-13: 978-0316332897, copyright 2019, Recorded Books, 19 hours and 8 minutes, ASIN: B07GFNQFFB, narrated by Jefferson Mays) (audiobook review by Joe Karpierz):

I went back and read my review of the previous book in the "Expanse" series of novels, *PERSEPOLIS RISING*. I'm glad I did. There were a bunch of things that I wanted to say in this review of the eighth book in the series, *TIAMAT'S WRATH*,

that I discovered I'd already said about the prior book. The superlatives and emotional feelings apply to this book as well as the previous, so there really is no reason to say them again, although they bear repeating, and repeating often. I suspect I'll want to say them again when the series completes after the next novel, scheduled to come out sometime in 2020 (and since I've read only two of the "Expanse" novellas, I probably ought to try to read them before the last book comes out). Maybe I'll say a few of them at the end of this review.

So, where are we when we start this novel? James Holden is a captive in the capital city of Laconia, and while he is technically a prisoner, he is not behind bars locked away in a cell somewhere. He is free to roam the city--within reason--and God Emperor (to steal a title from the "Dune" series) Winston Duarte of the Laconian Empire parades him out at various functions and even listens to Holden's counsel when it suits him. Holden proclaims himself Duarte's Dancing Bear. Naomi, Alex, and Bobbie are part of the underground, trying to undermine the Laconian Empire with the hope of eventually toppling it. Naomi is doing it one way, and Alex and Bobbie are doing it another. Amos has disappeared on assignment. Naomi, Alex, and Bobbie are afraid that both Holden and Amos are dead, and they resolve to fight the good fight without them.

The Laconian Empire has its own agenda. As we should all remember, what we have learned by reading the prior seven books in the series is that the protomolecule was made by a vastly superior species, a species which was killed off by another, more powerful species. The Empire--spanning some 1200+ systems, due to the gate system opening up--is trying to discover the nature of the enemy in order to find a way to destroy them and solidify Winston Duarte's place as the God Emperor of all of mankind. To that end, scientist turned military officer Elvi Okoye (who we met earlier in the series) is being sent to various systems to find out what she can.

The problem is that that big, nasty, evil enemy, the one that killed off the creators of the protomolecule, have taken notice of Laconia's actions and is none to happy about it. They are making their presence known, and retaliating against Laconia. This is causing all sorts of havoc within the Empire and the rest of humanity as well.

All of which is setting things up for what may be one of the grandest finales in all of science fiction space opera history.

I wrote that PERSEPOLIS RISING was about our heroes aging. It's not something you see in extended series. TIAMAT'S WRATH is about family. Winston's daughter Teresa is being groomed to step in for her father in case anything goes wrong, and she find she doesn't like it. And like most petulant teenagers, she takes things into her own hands in a manner contradictory to what the hierarchy wants. Along the way she meets the mysterious friend Timothy, who has a big role to play in the story. The other family is that of the crew of the Rocinante. They are all old friends, and are used to being around each other. They are also family to each other. And it's clear that just one more time, that family will get together to do their best to stop humanity from being destroyed.

Corey is (are?) not afraid to shake things up. In fear of angering those who are sensitive to spoilers, I will say that we lose of couple of beloved characters in TIAMAT'S WRATH, one in the very first sentence of the book. I think this is Corey's way of saying that we need to get back to basics if we are going to get this thing settled, but it's also his way of saying that time stops for no one, and that heroes make sacrifices. In order to win, we must lose.

And for goodness's sake, what else is there to say about Jefferson Mays? He continues to be the one and only narrator who can read this book. He is simply outstanding. And he's going to need to be just one more time, as I think the final book in the series is going to be a whopper, and he is the only one that will be able to pull it off. [-jak]

[James S.A. Corey is the pen name used by Daniel Abraham and Ty Franck. The consensus seems to be for a singular verb, probably because one considers it a collective noun acting as a unit. -ecl]

**James Bond (and VCRs)** (letters of comment by Peter Trei, Kevin R, and Sam Long):

In response to Mark's comments on James Bond movies in the 08/30/19 issue of the MT VOID, Peter Trei writes:

[Mark wrote,] "What can I say about the James Bond series? For most of the time I was growing up this series dominated the popular film market. I remember back in the 1960s a friend scrambled to have two blank VHS tapes to get two of the off-air-broadcast Bond movies."

I think you mean 1980s. VHS was released in 1976. [-pt]

Kevin R replies:

Unless he was using a VTR....

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video\\_tape\\_recorder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_tape_recorder)

My high school had a closed-circuit TV station,\* and it used to VTR the Blue Eagles' football games, in glorious black &

white. Our boys wore white at home, anyway. Game replays were fed to the classroom TVs on Mondays, after classes. The team went 23-0-1 before losing a game in my senior year, when our school was in its last year, and promising JV players who might have made the varsity had transferred out so that they could spend years at schools where they would graduate.

So, they had tapes that could go at least 2, maybe 2.5 hours. We didn't play overtime, and there was no reason to tape half-time, as we did not have a marching band. They could have changed tapes at the half.

\* I was not on staff, nor any part of the A/V Club. I did appear as a guest on "Sunrise News" a time or two, representing the debate & speech club, and school plays I was in. An SF-fan, comics fan, debater and extemp speaker who got parts in senior year school productions....where does that put me on the "geek hierarchy?" (+)

(+) <https://fanlore.org/wiki/File:Geekhierarchy.gif>

Sam Long writes:

A propos of the Bond movies, it's always seemed to me that the opening of the "Goldfinger" theme and the opening of "Moon River" are similar enough that one could sing "Goldfinger, / Wider than a mile...." Alas, "wider than a kilometer..." doesn't scan. About an hour north and west of Springfield, IL, is the Spoon River, not to be confused with "Moon River"; but it's not a mile, or even a kilometer, wide. Its claim to fame is Edgar Lee Masters's collection of poems, "Spoon River Anthology". Here is the title and first stanza of a very chuckle-worthy parody of Masters's verse by Sir John Squires:

If Gray Had Had to Write His Elegy in the Cemetery of Spoon River Instead of in That of Stoke Poges

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The whippoorwill salutes the rising moon,  
And wanly glimmer in her gentle ray,  
The sinuous windings of the turbid Spoon.

[Also,] it's apparently just a coincidence that Hurricane Dorian should be threatening the Southeast when THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY is mentioned in MT VOID. [-sl]

Mark responds:

I do this a lot. I will hear a piece of THE WIZARD OF OZ in some classical music. Unfortunately no examples come to mind at the moment. Tchaikovsky's violin concerto sounds a lot like a bit of THE RIGHT STUFF. [-mrl]

**This Week's Reading** (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Joe Karpierz reviewed *ASTOUNDING: JOHN W. CAMPBELL, ISAAC ASIMOV, L. RON HUBBARD, AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF SCIENCE FICTION* (ISBN 978-0-08-257194-6) in the 11/23/18 issue, so I may end up repeating some of that, but mostly I want to comment on "heroes with feet of clay." The four men in the subtitle were the heroes of the "Golden Age of Science Fiction," but they would have to be much better than they were to rise to the level of feet of clay. Another brown substance is more like it.

The worst is clearly Hubbard, a pathological liar, who abused his wives both mentally and physically, attempted to have one committed, kidnapped his daughter her, and oh, yes, was also a bigamist. (All of them had multiple marriages; the other three at least divorced one wife before marrying the next.)

Campbell was a racist, but perhaps even worse, he was an egotist who was willing to jeopardize American military secrets to prove how prescient he (and science fiction) was. The story "Deadline" by Cleve Cartmill, which discussed atomic energy and attracted the attention of the government and the Office of Censorship. Campbell told several versions of what happened: the government ended up exempting him from censorship, the government was worried about how smart science fiction writers were and started checking them more carefully... The fact was that the government had not been checking them very closely before, and publishing "Deadline" violated existing laws. So now the government started keeping an eye on them, and Campbell had to censor himself, or have them do it for him.

And the story about the map in Campbell's office with all the circulation pins around Santa Fe (or variously, Oak Ridge)? Almost definitely apocryphal. (My thought was that with a circulation of maybe 70,000, you couldn't have individual pins, and color-coding would make the relative numbers much less obvious.)

As noted, Campbell was also a racist, and had the belief that there were some racial groups that were by nature slaves, and happier that way.

And he was abrasive, opinionated, and inconsiderate. (If the quotes can be trusted, Campbell called Asimov "Ike", a nickname Asimov hated.)

Heinlein started out liberal, but became more reactionary with time. Even so, as early as the mid-1940s he was giving Asimov a hard time about signing a request by Jewish employees to be given Yom Kippur off instead of Christmas. (During the war, all holidays except Christmas were work days.)

Among all these, Asimov's sexual predations might seem almost childish, but even at a time before #MeToo and a stronger attitude towards such things, many fellow authors (male and female) were telling Asimov to stop grabbing women. Harlan Ellison, in an ironic twist, claimed when he and Asimov would be walking up stairs with a woman, Ellison would make sure he walked behind the woman to keep Asimov from grabbing her.

In short, none of these were people with whom you would want to spend any time. Most of the other authors mentioned seem less flawed, and I am willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. After all, one must still have some heroes. [-ecl]

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Quote of the Week:

Too often we... enjoy the comfort of opinion without  
the discomfort of thought.

--John F. Kennedy

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