



LAKE GENEVA #1

# Lake Geneva #1

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Wish to contact Lake Geneva?  
Shoot our Editor! Please!  
Well, not with a bullet  
or an arrow,  
but an email at  
[Chepablo@gmail.com](mailto:Chepablo@gmail.com)!

Who knows?  
We may even publish  
your angry and  
disdainful letters  
in the next issue.

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Thanks for reading and enjoy!

# Welcome to Lake Geneva

Dear Readers:

What you're witnessing here is my first attempt at a fanzine, a medium I've been fascinated with for a while now but really didn't think I could delve in myself. I'm not quite sure why I thought that, but the fear was there anyways that fandom as a whole was this Great Wall that only a select few could really penetrate and even though I had experiences that proved to the contrary, it wasn't until my latest Self-Patented Life-Changing Experience that I changed my mind completely and am now lost in the Sea of Fen Madness forever. What caused it?

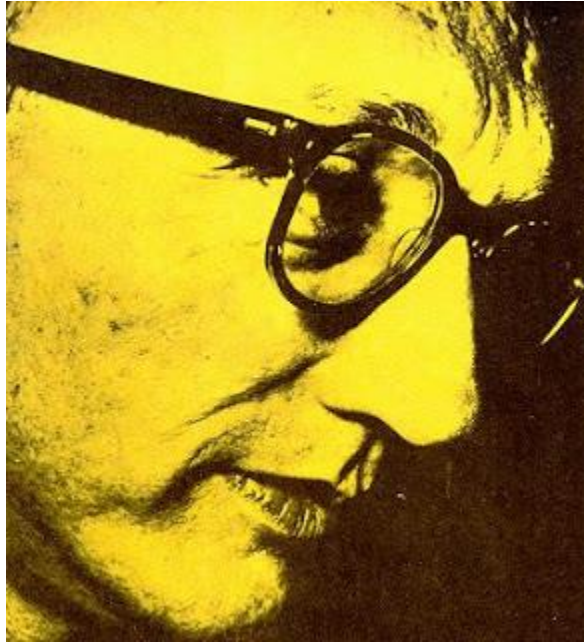
WorldCon. Well, LoneStarCon3 to be exact. I went in having near to no friends and came out having met some of the greatest people alive, including a couple of those contributing my debut publication. It was to me a near-perfect convention which allowed me to realize what kind of fan I was, what I wanted out of fandom, and, most importantly, what I wanted to give back. This here fanzine, fine folks, is my first attempt (besides busting my ass with the other great folk who work the conventions we so love) to truly give back for the betterment of fandom as a whole.

The careful reader will notice that I didn't really contribute anything to the zine beside this little welcome letter. Well, true, you've got me, but with work, moving to a new city (hello Austinites!), and gearing up for FenCon coming up in a few days, I wasn't able to do much but reach out to the foolish folk who thought contributing to this madcap idea was a great life choice. I kid, I'm the true fool here, but like with the tarot card, it's all about how you read it.

Why Lake Geneva? It's the birthplace of Science-Fiction and Fantasy through the strange and orgiastical creative retreat with Percy Shelley, Mary Shelley, Lord Byron, and all their wild friends. It's also where Freddie Mercury spent a lot of his time, but that's for another issue. With one drunken boast, Lord Byron challenged them to write and write they did, with Mary creating Frankenstein and giving birth to the monster of Science-Fiction that we so love. To them, I dedicate this issue, thinking myself a Postmodern Lord Byron and the rest of my flatmates rather insane to have decided to live with me knowing full well what I'm capable of (looking at you, James!). However, like that drunken boast, here we are, with an issue chock-full of awesomeness.

Anyways, I hope you enjoy this issue and come back for more. I'm hoping to have this thing be a bi-monthly publication, but bear with me if life and its assorted insanity gets in the way. However, I promise you every new Lake Geneva will be as exciting as the last and if you doubt me, send me your letters of hate which I will reply to in mocking haiku.

With Deepest Regards and Wishing You an Entertaining Read,  
Pablo M.A Vazquez  
Lake Geneva's First Consul/Editor



## Cordwainer Smith's “The Dead Lady of Clown Town” A Visit by Warren Buff

Before discussing the fiction of Cordwainer Smith, it may help to provide some brief background into the life of Paul Linebarger. Linebarger was the godson of Sun Yat-sen, spoke six languages by the time he reached adulthood, and held a PhD in Political Science. He was a professor at Duke, and then later Johns Hopkins, and highly regarded in Far Eastern affairs. During World War Two, he served in the US Army, helping to found its first psychological warfare section and rising to the rank of major (and later, in the reserves, to colonel). His *Psychological Warfare* is considered a classic text in the field, and he was called upon to advise British forces, the CIA, and JFK in his later years. He also wrote science fiction under the pen name “Cordwainer Smith”, much of which went unheralded for decades before seeing a resurgence in interest in the 1990s around the time of the NESFA Press collection of his complete short fiction (edited by Jim Mann, who remains active in fandom).

It is worth noting that while we commonly refer to book-length prose fiction as a novel, this is not always correct. Other forms possible include prose-epics and romances. I had this pointed out to me in an afterword on an audiobook of Mark Helperin's *Freddy and Fredericka*, which takes the form of a romance, eschewing some of the realist understanding of cause and effect for moral and symbolic weight – things happen for a reason, which is not always a matter of physics. The shift in focus carries with it a shift in style, to the point that it doesn't quite *feel* like a novel would. I have to believe that similar shifts are possible in shorter fiction – a fable feels very little like a short story in the novelistic style, for instance.

I'm not sure what, exactly, "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" is, but it's not novelistic.

In some ways, it feels more like a hagiography, and even spends a good deal of its text refuting the details of more popular hagiographies of its principle characters in Smith's fictional world. It also places its action within a larger moral drama, beginning:

*You already know the end—the immense drama of the Lord Jestocost, seventh of his line, and how the cat-girl C'mell initiated the vast conspiracy. But you do not know the beginning, how the first Lord Jestocost got his name, because of the terror and inspiration which his mother, Lady Goroke, obtained from the famous real-life drama of the dog-girl D'joan. It is even less likely that you know the other story—the one behind D'joan. This story is sometimes mentioned as the matter of the "nameless witch," which is absurd, because she really had a name. The name was "Elaine," an ancient and forbidden one.*

Jestocost barely enters into the plot – the story closes with a note that its denouement takes place in the year of the first one's birth – C'mell will go unmentioned, save in references to the action's place within the slow progress of history, D'joan won't appear until the third of the story's ten sections, and Goroke not until the seventh. While Elaine is the focus of the story, such that the first section recounts the strange circumstances of her birth and the second the conditions of her life up until the action, she remains unnamed until the final sentence of the opening paragraph, long after the characters better-remembered in their world have been placed into the web of relationships. The titular dead lady remains unnamed and unseen until after Elaine has encountered D'joan. Elaine may be the focus, but as this story is told as though the reader exists long after its events, her importance must be established. Note that C'mell and Jestocost's importance is never explained by the story – you'll have to read "Alpha Ralpa Boulevard" and "The Ballad of Lost C'mell" for that.

None of this should be too surprising to readers of science fiction and fantasy – Tolkien, Lovecraft, and Frank Herbert all make good use of fictional documents to flesh out their worlds, placing their action within a literary milieu. Asimov and Heinlein weave their short fiction and novels into vast future histories. Cordwainer Smith does all of this, and does so well enough that upon his first publication, he was widely assumed to be a pen name of an established master. He also demonstrates something more rare in SF of the fifties and sixties – an understanding of the oral traditions of storytelling. From early on, certain long phrases are repeated in whole when their subjects are referenced, most notably, "the Peace Square at An-fang, the Beginning Place at An-fang, where all things start." The repetition is not quite exact, but no reference to An-fang can occur without mention of the Peace Square and that it is where all things begin. In a way, this contributes to Smith's strange diction, which often feels as if it were translated from an unknown tongue. It's hard to read these stories without feeling a bit out of place in this strange world.

I chose to revisit “The Dead Lady of Clown Town” precisely because it serves as a focal point for several of the key concepts of Smith's future history, and because it represents a major turning point within that history. The most critical of these concepts are the Instrumentality of Man and the underpeople.

The Instrumentality is a system of running society such that all things are ordered. Disease has been eliminated, aging conquered (through a wonder-drug, stroom, from the world of Old North Australia, or Norstrilia), accidental death is exceedingly rare, and yet humans are given an allotment of just 400 years. Crime is almost non-existent, scarcity unheard-of, the variety of languages reduced to a common tongue, and people are given a genetic make-up based upon positions of need within society. The wheels are kept turning by the Lords of the Instrumentality – a small (only four reside on the planet in this story), telepathic, incredibly well-informed elite. (Eventually, the Lords of the Instrumentality will come around to seeing the problems created by such a uniform existence, and reinstate cultural variety and risk, a process known as the Rediscovery of Man.)

The underpeople are a slave class made by modifying the animals of earth into human shapes and raising them to human intelligence. They handle much of the menial labor, and are treated as complete non-persons. When they grow sick, they are simply killed and replaced. They may not challenge true humans, and are compelled to obey them, all the while living out of sight in under-cities.

“The Dead Lady of Clown Town” is the story of the revolution of the underpeople against the Instrumentality of Man, though it is important to recognize the idea that a revolution is not a violent act of rebellion, but an act of consciousness-changing. The story carries heavy religious overtones (Linebarger had become much more devout around 1960), and lifts its crowning image from a rather obvious bit of Earth's history, and one fitting to a hagiography. A reading based upon novelistic expectations might see it as a tragedy, but viewed with an awareness of the moral significance of events, it is a triumph, and Smith's otherwise non-sequitur final sentence serves as a confirmation of the changes yet to come. This is a big, weird story from a thoroughly strange writer, and serves as a wonderful introduction to his work. Right now, Amazon is offering the NESFA Press edition of Smith's complete short fiction, *The Rediscovery of Man*, for \$25. At thirty-three stories in 671 pages, it's a steal.



# StarCraft: The Dark Templar Saga

## Book One: Firstborn

### A Review by James T.M Griffin

Dear friends,

My esteemed colleague, Mr. Vazquez, asked me to inaugurate Lake Geneva by introducing you to one of my longtime fandoms: Blizzard Entertainment's hit sci-fi real-time strategy game, *StarCraft*. For those of you who've only vaguely heard of it, the first thought in your mind is probably of its cult following in the cybercafés of technocratic South Korea, where gaming is considered a legitimate sport, and consequently, spending twelve hours a day for months on end to hone your skills in the multiplayer free-for-all mode actually has a reasonable chance of getting you laid, rich, or both. As I'm not a Korean, nor could I ever hope to achieve the stupidly high number of actions-per-minute on the keyboard necessary to be considered "good" at multiplayer, my interest in *StarCraft* has always been strictly on the story-driven single player mode of the games, save for the occasional online forays with good friends. The original game's graphics are primeval to the modern gamer's eye, but in 1998, when *StarCraft* first hit shelves, it made a great leap forward for the entire computer strategy game genre by actually telling a damn good story.

The story of *StarCraft*, in a nutshell, is about the descendants of criminals and other undesirables who were rounded up by a dystopian government on Earth into four supercarriers and blasted into the nether regions of space. After hurling through the stars for sixty years and crash-landing on the worlds of what is now called the Koprulu Sector, the progeny of these poor sods have built a new, thriving spacefaring society, committing all the same human follies as the powers that cast them away from our homeworld in the first place. The decadent Confederacy of Man is already facing a full-scale revolution when humanity finds itself caught in between a greater war between two fearsome alien races: the unending swarms of the insectoid zerg, and the hyper-advanced, telepathic stewards of the galaxy known as the protoss.

Blizzard made impressive strides in 1998 with their professional voice-acting during and between missions, and especially their CGI cutscenes which helped make the game feel more like an epic film. As a storytelling device, though, Blizzard was still quite limited by the technology of the age; and even with its modern incarnations (*StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty* and *Heart of the Swarm*), you can only do so much in a genre where the purpose of the game is to harvest resources and convert them into legions of death before the enemy has time to do the same.



Therefore, for those of us who want to know more about our cherished space rednecks or their zerg/protoss adversaries, Blizzard has commissioned a sizable number of novels which attempt, in varying degrees of success, to flesh out the stories behind Raynor, Kerrigan, Mengsk, and other diverse characters in the *StarCraft* universe. Today I've elected to review one of the gems of this project: *Firstborn*, the first book of the *Dark Templar Saga* by Christie Golden.

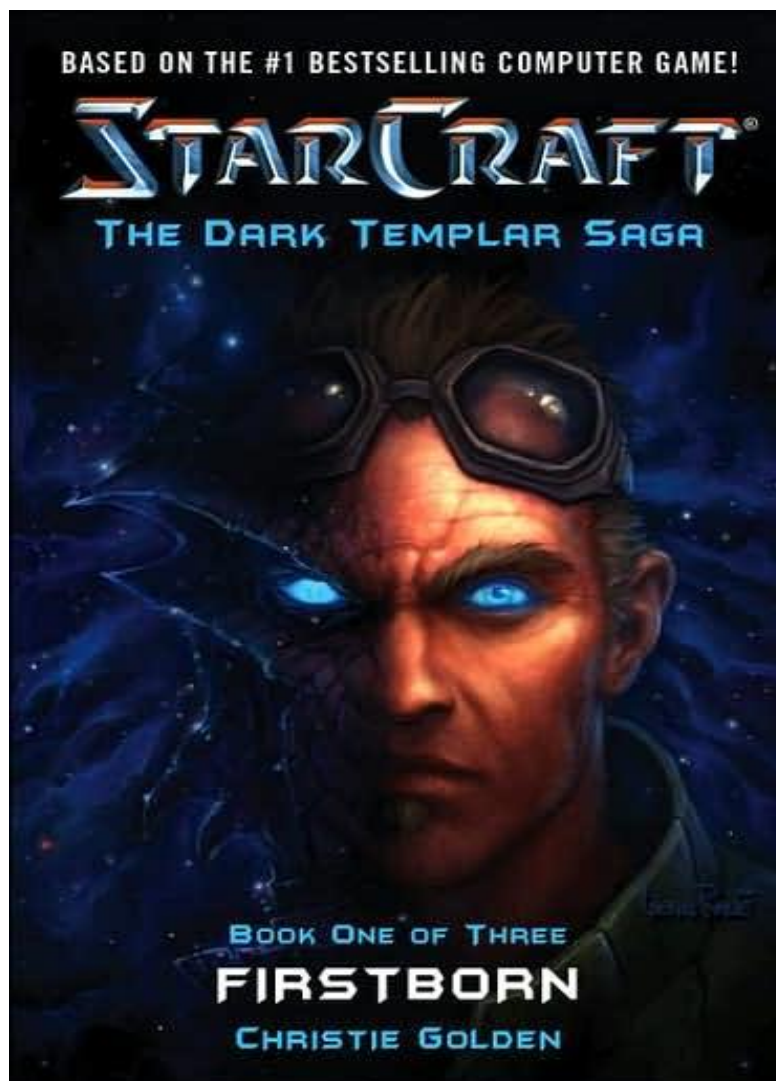
*Firstborn* was written during the development of *StarCraft II* and is meant to serve as a bridge between the events of the first and second games. While you don't strictly need to have played any of the games to enjoy this book, it certainly helps a lot. The story begins with Jacob Jefferson Ramsey, a terran archaeologist whose theories on ancient alien civilizations have dubbed him a crackpot by his peers and consigned him to picking through scraps on a thoroughly inhospitable planet. About three years after the Brood War, Ramsey's lucky break finally comes in the form of a surprise transmission from Valerian Mengsk, son of Emperor Arcturus and heir-apparent to the throne of the Terran Dominion. The young prince, an avid student of archeology himself, commissions Ramsey and his team to unearth the mysteries of a sealed xel'naga temple found in Dominion space.

There, within the ruins, the story takes an unforeseen twist as Ramsey encounters a dying protoss by the name of Zamara: a preserver, charged with storing the memories of every member of her race who has ever lived within her own mind. In her dying breath, Zamara forcibly transfers her own consciousness into the professor's body. Now wanted as a lab rat for study by the emperor's men, Ramsey is chased throughout the sector by treacherous mercenaries while Zamara molds his mind to fulfill her sacred mission and become a preserver.

Unlike most other books of the *StarCraft* novel series (and the games, for that matter), *Firstborn* doesn't feature a whole lot of action sequences. This isn't the book you're looking for if you want to read about marines stomping through bloodied battlefields in power armor, gauss rifles smoking from heat exhaustion, helmet visors splattered with zerg blood. No, it's mostly an introspective tale where a great deal of the action takes place in the recesses of Ramsey's mind, as Zamara walks him through the memories of a protoss historian from the Aeon of Strife (the protoss' caveman days) and teaches him how to think like one of the "firstborn". The memory chapters are, in fact, the greatest parts of the book. I personally found the chapter in which Temlaa and his mentor "invent" reading and writing for the protoss to be adorable. Each of these memories, in *Firstborn* and throughout the rest of the *Dark Templar Saga*, flesh out key events in the protoss history which is summarized in the lore chapters of the first game's manual: from the Aeon of Strife, to the banishment of the Dark Templar, all the way up to Tassadar's expedition and the protoss' first contact with humanity.

For fans of the *StarCraft* games, it bears mentioning that a few of the new characters and concepts from *Wings of Liberty* actually made their debut in this book, giving it an established sense of canon that's often lacking in media tie-in novels (*Star Wars Expanded Universe*, I'm looking at you). I already mentioned Valerian Mengsk, whose character was first established here. There's also the lawless crime den known as Deadman's Rock, which came to be used as an environment for one of the *Wings of Liberty* campaign missions; and, later on in the *Dark Templar Saga*, we read about the origins of the Tal'darim, a renegade protoss cult that crosses swords with Raynor's Raiders on several occasions in *Wings of Liberty*.

My final assessment is that if you're an average sci-fi fan with an itch for Indiana Jones-like spelunking into ruins filled with ancient wonders, *Firstborn* may be of interest to you as a quick weekend read. If you're a veteran of the *StarCraft* games, *Firstborn* is an excellent introduction to the novels and an expansion of a universe you've likely spent many hours dominating. Above all, if you're both a fan of *StarCraft* and a Protoss player, there's only one word to describe this book: indispensable. Until next time, to quote the words of Aldaris, *Entaro Adun, brave sons of Auir!*





# “A Shaman For All Seasons: An Esoteric Tale in A Cyberpunk Detroit” By Matthew Stuart Boren

“There’s no water...” said the girl with a soot-smudged face and half-formed dreads. She twisted the knob and clanged on the faucet with the small pot, producing a small cloud of dust and rust, as if driving home the point. “Shit,” a young man with greasy black hair in a torn Lions jersey. “What about the other one?” He inclined his head towards a pipe the jutted out of the wall near where the girl stood on the creaking step-ladder. “Already tried sucking what I could from it, before you woke up this morning.” the girl sighed, as she hit the ground in a clatter of gravel and a cloud of dust. “The hell are we gonna do Trè?”

“Move closer to the river, I guess,” he scratched through his curly black hair, picking out an unwanted guest as he did so. “I’d hate to abandon this place though.” He pushed open the squeaky-hinged door marked ‘Women’ and gazed out into an expansive room filled top to ceiling with broken shelves and books. The late morning sun built pillars from dust and light. “We can’t be the Windsor Bookworms if we move outta the library, Layla.” Moving among the remaining stacks were other members of Trè and Layla’s little tribe- about 50 in all – reorganizing the shelves, or setting aside anything unsalvageable for fueling the fires once the pages were combed through for valuable knowledge. Others stood on the upper level, keeping watch with slings, bows, and the odd functioning rifle.

“We can’t defend the library if we move out Trè, and if we don’t have information, we don’t got nothing to trade when some dumbshit raider needs his ride or his hide fixed up.”

“We could always send bigger parties out to fetch water.” He looked at the sun and then his scarred digital Pokémon wristwatch. “They’d have to leave now though.”

“You know Big Al doesn’t open the barricade near his hotel until three.”

“So the fetchers would have to go past...”

“City hall.” Layla crossed her arms and set her face.

“Yeah, nothing doing there.” muttered Trè.

“So unless someone comes by wanting to trade time in the reading rooms for water- which they won’t- we’re gonna have to start moving these books somewhere else.” Layla motioned emphatically out the open doors where two Worms stood on watch. “And that’s not gonna happen without loosing good people, or good books.”

“It’s a double-damned situation...” then Layla was cut short as the two boys outside cocked their weapons. “Stop right there!” she heard one of them yell. She looked over to see both kids had their rifles trained on a man on a bike, who had stopped in the parking lot outside the main doors. A bizarre and impressive bike it was, too. The handles looked like they had been lifted from a Harley, and a strange mask was placed over the pedal-powered headlight. Side-saddle bags hung on a rack mounted over the back wheel, and behind the whole thing was a cart hauling a small generator. The rider looked to be a man, though it was difficult for Layla to tell between the hood and slight bagginess that marked everything the rider wore. Layla motioned for the sentries to lower their weapons, if only slightly. “Can we help you?”

The rider removed the dark grey hood - connected to the top of an old dark grey sweatshirt, cut short so that it acted as a cowl - to reveal a man, with caramel skin and short blonde hair. He remained on his bike, but punctuated the pause with a flick of the kickstand.

“Actually, I was hoping to help you.” His attire was as much a mess as his bike. Underneath the hood, a long-sleeved dark blue under armor shirt tucked into grey cargo pants, many bulging pockets no doubt laden with unknown gear and supplies. On his hips he slung a similarly packed looking utility belt. Sturdy, if heavily used hiking boots completed the hodge-podge look. Layla could see the boys get itchy as the traveler began to climb off his bike, could practically feel Trè squirming for his revolver when the man began rummaging through his saddle-packs. “That remains to be seen, although, if you want to trade supplies, or spend some time in the library for some supplies, we can always work something out.”

“I have been looking for a particular book.” he said, picking up a tripod with a black canvas sack, the type you’d slip over someone’s head in an interrogation room, over the bottom end. “You can let me see it when I’m done fixing your water problem.” The unexpected piece of knowledge proved to be the last straw for Trè, “ Hang up! Layla, we really gonna let this guy into our territory? How the hell can he know about our pipes? Fucking grifter, he probably caused it and now he’s coming back around to ‘fix’ the problem? Bullshit.”

“I actually just rode into town- I have the pass-stamp from the Southwest side to prove it.” said the hooded rider pulling a passport out of his utility belt. “Let’s hear him out, Trè. If all he wants is to read a book *and* fix our water problem, I say let him. I don’t see any weapons on him anyhow.”

“Weapons are a relative term.” said the rider with a wry smile, undoing the knot on the cord of his tripod-staff. “Not when it’s an actual weapon.” Trè said, tapping his revolver’s barrel with his index finger. “That one won’t help you with your problem.” rumbled the rider. With that he snatched the black bag from the staff, revealing three mechanical clacking faces, spouting gibberish as the day’s thinly stretched sunlight awoke them from their slumber. Each was in a varying state of disrepair, with the middle creature fairly complete, the right cracked an half falling apart, while the left-most was merely a beak and eyes nestled within a mass of wired wrapped on the tripod’s upturned leg. From each leg there hung various charms, nick-knacks, and small animal bones. Layla made a disgusted face. Trè could not keep his revulsion from spewing out. “Are those... skinned Furbies?”

“Yes, dead-tech brought back to life to give me advice and power. They run on rechargeable batteries and solar. They are a triple-oracle. I’m called Zero by the way.” Zero jammed the staff into the soft earth outside the library doors, and took a small vial of what looked like oil and dirt from one of his belt pouches. When he twisted the cap off, everyone near boy winced from the sulfurous smell of rotten eggs. He poured the mixture over the three plastic corpses, carefully measuring his liquid to make sure to give each one third of the vial. With a buzzing snap of short-circuit and a small twist of acrid smoke, the creatures stopped gibbering and closed their eyes.

A chill breeze began to pour in from the river to the north, clanging the charms and bones together like chimes. “Water ...dry ...” the most intact Furbie opened its eyes and began to speak. “...temple, dry...” The half-broken one continued. “Fix... defiled...” The face hidden among wires finished. The silence between moments as dead and grinding gears returned to sleep and the rough canvas bag drew closed, was deafening. Everyone except begged to ask the question, one Zero already knew and happily answered. “Oh yes, they were talking. Not to you, you could hear them, but to me, they were talking. You have an angry spirit in your building.”

Zero pulled another object from his belt, wrapped in what was obvious to all, Furbie skin. Moving past the small cluster of people, he set it on the ledge of the empty planter by the door, and reverently pulled the edges open to reveal a large, slightly beaten up handheld tape recorder. “My guess is that it used to consider that fountain in the lobby as its shrine. From the looks of those racks nearby, I’m betting you all started using it to wash clothes when it became harder to get to the river. If you had respected it, and thrown in some coins from time to time, you’d all still have water.” He sprinkled a mixture of clear water and glass and salt over the recorder with a sprig of frayed and outstretched wire, and it squawked to life. Picking it up, he turned to Trè and Layla.

“Should I go ask it what it wants?”

END.

# Lake Geneva Recommends

Lake Geneva wants you to know the  
best of what's out there in  
the fields of Science-Fiction and Fantasy.

Lake Geneva also tends to spend  
much of its time  
delving into those fields.

Lake Geneva enjoys the third-person  
and you should too.

## **Music:**

Afro-Futurist is the key word here and if you haven't experienced Science-Fiction  
in this fantastic fashion, please do so! We have our top recommendations listed as ready,  
from the modern to the classic. This has been Pablo's obsession  
for the past few months, so this is his doing.

He recommends Janelle Monae for those with Soul-Funk leanings,  
Deltron 3030 for those with alternative rap tastes,  
and Parliament Funkadelic for anyone that likes to groove.

- ♣ Janelle Monae
- ♣ Deltron 3030
- ♣ Parliament Funkadelic

## **Authors:**

Pablo's been reading his awesome Post-Colonial anthology by Nalo Hopkinson  
while also becoming increasingly obsessed by a free book involving  
Aztec Fantasy Murder Mystery he got at WorldCon by Aliette De Bodard.

Check both of those out, along with the great Starcraft book James has been reading aloud to anyone that will listen.

- ♣ Nalo Hopkinson's "So Long, Been Dreaming"
- ♣ Aliette De Bodard's "Servant of the Underworld"
- ♣ Graham McNeill's "I, Mengsk"

## **Films/Television:**

Pablo just watched 2046, a Hong Kong film he describes as "surprise science-fiction",  
yet strongly recommends as one the best films he's watched lately.

Altogether, however, Lake Geneva has been enjoying Arrow,  
a modern take on the Green Arrow mythos which is now on its second season,  
and Legend of Korra, a Steam/Dieselpunk Fantasy cartoon made for the enjoyment of all ages.

- ♣ 2046
- ♣ Arrow
- ♣ Legend of Korra

## **Video Games:**

Pablo just finished Shadowrun Returns, which like the tabletop RPG he does so enjoy,  
is an awesome throwback to old-school computer RPGs in a cyberpunk fantasy world.

He also finally finished TimeShift, a strange time-travel first-person shooter, after near a decade of playing it.  
However, it took all of Lake Geneva to finish the space opera real-time strategy, Starcraft: Heart of the Swarm.

- ♣ Shadowrun Returns
- ♣ TimeShift
- ♣ Starcraft: Heart of the Swarm





# The Substitute

## AKA

### Danish Science Fiction Genius

### A Review by Christopher J Garcia

When I hear the words 'Danish film', I think of the dark and distant works of Lars Von Trier, the dark silent documentary-esque film Haxen, or Babette's Feast. These are hardly Science Fiction (though Von Trier has done SF in Melancholia and the justly-neglected Epidemic), so when I came across the film The Substitute (Vikaren), I had rather low expectations. The Danes do dark movies, with dark themes and dark music. There's no way the Danes could put together a science fiction film, especially one that's as much fun as the first Men in Black, or as heart-tugging as Solaris (the Tarakovsky, not the Soderberg, though it wasn't bad either...), or even as blockbuster-y as Independence Day.

I was wrong about that, it turns out.

The story of The Substitute is actually pretty simple: an alien arrives in Denmark and takes the form of a substitute teacher, played by the magnificent Paprika Steen, Copanhaganwood's version of Meryl Streep, I'd say. She takes over the chicken farm where she lands, and then starts to work on taking the kids. I don't know about thou, but I always suspected many of my substitutes were aliens. Especially math subs...

The story is pretty simple, but as it's a Danish film, there has to be more. In this case, it's a kid named Carl, who has been traumatized by the death of his mother. His Father, played by my 2nd favorite Danish actor Ulrich Thomsen, is similarly damaged, but is awesome!

Our Substitute uses her alien powers to mentally terrorize the kids in the classroom, especially Carl. Steen's performance is not one of her best, she seems to have saved those for films like *Festen* (by Thomas Winterberg) or *Applause*, but it is a solid genre performance. She plays it dark, but light. In many ways, I saw shades of the best performances of Jim Carey: somewhat brutal, but very entertaining. Her work, especially playing against Carl, is solid and smarter than I would expect in a film that was essentially marketed towards kids.

And there's no way you'd ever see a film for younger audiences like this in the states. It's a bit intense, it's a bit strongly pointed, and it's got a bit of the psychological. We're given a series of scenes at the chicken farm that are REALLY intense, and it seems that they had some budget issues that held back the effects a bit in the latter portion of the movie, but what sells it is the darkness.

That's right, there's darkness in a Danish, young persons Science Fiction film!

The relationship between the kids and their parents, Carl and the rest of his class, Carl and his Dad, The Substitute and the kids, and even Carl's Dad and Maria, a cop who becomes a love interest. Maria, played by the wonderful Sonia Richter (who was awesome in the film *Villa Paranoia*), plays a small role, but she's so good in it and has a wonderful couple of moments with Thomsen.

The Substitute was directed by Ole Bornedal. He's best known for his *Nightwatch* films (both the early 90s Danish original and the Ewan McGregor US remark later in the decade) and the fascinating *Just Another Love Story*. He works with three of the top actors in Denmark to make this movie happen, and he coaxes good performances from them. Directing Steen shows his skill with his working with flashy actors like Steen. Her role was meant to be somewhat showy, but Bornedal reined her in wisely.

*So, what's the best part of The Substitute? It's the wonderful sense that the kids give of living in a world where they're so put upon by the adult who is their teacher. They're oppressed, and they can't get their parents to really believe them. It's the story of every 13 year old, innit? She represents what we all went through: she's that thing that our parents wouldn't believe. She represents that time we couldn't get Dad to believe that you turned in that paper, or didn't ding the car, or didn't mean to spill that drink all over his tax return. THAT'S why The Substitute works so well. Because, basically, it's true.*

