

N'APA 218

N'APA Official



The Official Organ

#218

Next deadline: November 15, 2015

N'APA rises again from the dead. Like the Vampire Nostradamus, it just keeps coming back.

Jean Lamb has temporarily gaffiated. She indicates that she will be back in January or so. Until then, the official collator is George Phillies.

N'APA is the Amateur Press Alliance for members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F). As it is distributed in PDF format, there are no dues or postage fees except as necessary for mailing paper copies. It is open to all members of the N3F within the restrictions stated below in the Rules and Regulations (copied from the last collation and updated). If there are members interested in joining who have no computer access, special arrangements are possible. People who only want to read are welcome to ask to be added to the email list. Check with the official collator, who is currently George Phillies, 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester MA 01609 phillies@4liberty.net 508 754 1859 and on facebook.

Currently the frequency is every other month, with the deadline being on the fifteenth day of odd-numbered months. The mailing will normally be collated in due time, as the collator is retired. Publication has always been totally regular, though some readers question my interpretations of "totally" and "regular".

N'APA has been in existence for a number of years and recently transitioned from being a paper APA to an electronic one.

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In this issue:

Cover Art...Actually, the wonderful cover art is a complete mystery. I found it in a recent issue of Counter (countermagazineonline.wordpress.com), a game magazine edited by Greg Schloesser that you should all be reading. On inquiry I learned that he found it in a clipart free to use outlet, but did not remember which one. If any of you can identify the artist or source, I would be most appreciative.

The Official Organ #218 George Phillies - 1 page

The Murdered Master Mage #2 George Phillies - 5 pages

Archive Midwinter Jefferson P. Swycaffer - 2 pages

The Murdered Master Mage #2

Archive Midwinter - once upon a time, a century and a half ago, there was in San Diego a meteorological phenomenon known as a Sky River. It rained. Hard. How hard? The San Diego River flooded. To be precise, it washed away the entire city, so that all that was left were the stone footings from one of the cathedrals. It also flooded the California central valley. How deep? People took ocean-going steam paddlewheelers up the river, with twenty feet of water under their hull once in the valley, to rescue people, because the entire central valley was full of water.

This Spud's for You - best of luck with publishing. I also have a stack of books that could use a sequel, but have little time and am a slow writer. To the extent that I know the style, it was a fine pastiche you were generating as a memorial.

Chapter Two The Invisible Fortress Evening January 11, 2018

I awoke at half past dark. To put it mildly, I hurt. Some places hurt even more than others. Yes, I was doing mind control on myself, so I didn't exactly feel the pain. That meant I could sleep, but I still knew I hurt. A lot. "Hurt" was still better than the alternative, which did not involve being alive. I'd landed the right way when I was thrown into the wall, missed getting a disabling concussion, and dodged getting gutted by the fellow with the sword.

The healing matrix was fixing me, but...oh right, healing matrix. I summoned the glyph for its rules engine. Nothing in violet, nothing that was killing me despite the matrix. Of course, the matrix should have dragged me conscious if I were dying, and it hadn't. Nothing blue, long-term near-death threat. Red warnings? Let's see. Three broken ribs, stitched by telekinesis. My right shoulder? Nothing had broken, but bits of force field were holding things where they belonged while the matrix forced repairs. Gold - a black eye, a few bone bruises, but I've been here before, just not so many ways at the same time. Green - slices, scrapes, abrasions ... my skin is being returned to perfection as I lie in bed. My face had been cleaned up yesterday, but not the rest of me. The matrix was healing everything, way faster than I'd heal naturally. I'd still need a week to recover.

Major knock-down, drag-out fight? That was the cue. I was home and safe. I dropped my mind out-of-body. Actually, the preset really did not give me much choice in that. I had done mind control on myself, to ensure that whenever I was in a really serious fight, escaped, and got back here safe, I would for sure do certain things, whether I wanted to or not. If someone had planted mind controls on me, I probably broke them when I left my body behind. The preset grabbed my gifts and ran a scan fast as thought to see what might have been inserted into my mind-space. Yes, the scan runs at the speed of thought, but it has a lot of mind to scan. Meanwhile, I hovered above my body, looking into my momentarily sightless silver-gray eyes and platinum-white eyelashes, listening to me breathe, ever so slowly.

Done. Control of my mind returned to me. There was a way to break the mind control, if things went wrong, but everything had gone the way it was supposed to. Mum had been very careful about showing me exactly how to arrange that preset, because potentially it was very dangerous to its user. I dropped back into my body, wiggled fingers and toes, and blinked twice. Everything worked.

Gifts? I shouldn't even consider calling any of them. Not flight. Not teleportation. Not any of the neat ways I can seriously wreck things. Not force field – well, there's a low-level screen tacking my ribs and my shoulder together. Just before I left Atlanticea I had pushed my shields way deep, much deeper than I had expected to need them, calling my gifts toward their limits. I could go way deep now if I absolutely had to, but if I do I'm going to hurt myself.

There was a warning flag -- my second-level shields had engaged. What?...then I remembered. It was the most wonderful memory in the world. Or would have been, if everything didn't hurt so much, not to mention I was totally exhausted. I'd solved the Maze, the Maze that defeated Julius Caesar and Cortez and Jackie Fisher and the French Imperial Guard. I'd reached the Tomb, and been given the Namestone, that palm-size sphere of crystalline sky, from the hands of the Martyr. Finally, I climbed the Outer Stairs, out of the Maze into the waking world, wisps of cloud an incandescent white ahead of me. I'd recovered the Namestone, something no one else in the history of the world had ever come close to doing. And I remembered what had happened next.

At the top of the Outer Stairs I had company. Waiting for me were Valkyria, the super-heavy combatant of the League of Nations Elite Strike team, and the Screaming Skull, himself. Alas, they weren't fighting each other, so I couldn't smile once, duck twice, and flee their island paradise. I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised. For thousands of years the Namestone has been viewed as the Key to Heaven. The League of Nations has passed any number of decrees claiming it for themselves, just as soon as someone else rescues it from the Maze. Now I had it, and they all wanted it.

"Where is she, little girl? Where is the bearer of the Holy Namestone?" That had been Valkyria, shouting at me. Valkyria? Six feet tall, impervium plate battle armor, heavy duty body field, not to mention a flaming sword that was mostly a special effect shrouding a pointblank range plasma attack. Yes, there is also an endarium blade inside the flames. There is a long history of people in plate mail being idiots, and at the moment she was living up to it. Her long blonde hair fluttered in the sea breeze. Bad form. Mum always said Valkyria should wear her hair short or mound it under her helmet.

I was a bit miffed. OK, she does have three-quarters of a foot on me, but 'little girl' was still impolite. 'Little girl' is not the nicest imaginable greeting. Valkyria should have been less threatening. After all, I was carrying the most powerful artifact in the world.

"I'm twenty feet in front of you," I answered.

"Aren't you ... isn't the real Bearer taller?" Valkyria asked.

I glowered. OK, I'm not into my teen growth spurt yet, but it's not I didn't pass five feet last year. "I am tall." That's when I ran out of patience. Not one of these people had even been civil, let alone congratulated me. If she wants to insult me, there's no reason I can't return the favor. "Wait!" I continued, "Isn't the real Valkyria a bit less pudgy? I mean, how do they manage to squeeze you into that armor?" Her nostrils flared. I guess she's sensitive about that line.

"You!" Valkyria shouted. "Inform the Bearer. She must turn the Holy Namestone over to League of Nations. At once! As fast as possible! That is a direct order!" Yes, I could hear her Germanic mindset without reading her mind. And unless something had gone very wrong, the whole world had watched me do the Maze. She should have known who I am.

"I am the Bearer. If you wanted the Namestone, you should have walked the Maze first and taken it," I answered. I confess I was getting a bit nervous that the Screaming Skull was standing there, politely not saying anything. No, we haven't met, but when your mother is a persona, you tend to inherit bits of her gift fine structure, enough that he'd eventually figure out whose daughter I am. That would definitely not be good.

"Give it to me! Now! The League decreed: The Namestone is the property of the world." Valkyria was used to having her orders obeyed.

"Give it to you? You and which army?" I asked languidly. I should have been more polite. I will not say in my own defense that I was thoroughly exhausted, not to mention the body damage from the hand to hand combat segments. Old English proverb: Battles are events between inadequate opportunities to rest. I'd expected congratulations. After all, people had been trying to thread the Lesser Maze for three thousand years, with no success. I'd done it.

"This one?" She waved her fingers. What had to be the whole League of Nations Elite Strike Force teleported in at her back.

The Strike Force began to spread, left and right. "That's far enough," I announced. They kept spreading.

It's a very special gesture with hand and wrist. My palm ends up facing skyward, the Namestone burning cerulean a few inches above it, its tuneless tune distantly heard in every ear. Yes, I did remember to cue my personal theme music and body aura. No, I can still call on Namestone's power even if I can't move. And, yes, my aura actually is the same blue as the Namestone's glow. My platinum blonde hair and pale gray garb go really well with it.

"I hold the Holy Namestone. Come no farther or face my wrath." Mom taught me how to sound truly pompous. To my surprise, it worked. Europolord did not quite fall on his fat face when he tripped over his own feet. Of course, he is a Drain, so personal combat training is not quite the issue it is with his team-mates. His task is to sit there and suck power out of his opponents, incidentally shoving it all into his personal force field. "The Namestone is mine," I announced.

“You’re defying the League! International law specifies: The League of Nations owns the Namestone. Hand it over!” she shouted. In retrospect, she might have done better if she’d been a bit more tactful. She could hardly have done worse.

“You know the Maze Rule: Namestone belongs to he who takes it. I took it,” I said.

“Team! The Namestone is indestructible! Kill her!” Valkyria drew her explosive throwing katana. Her team launched a totally bizarre mixture of high power attacks. Not one of them seemed to have noticed that if I died I would drop the Namestone, which would roll back down the Stairs into the Lesser Maze, there to be returned to the Martyr. Perhaps Valkyria counted on the explosion from her throwing sword to blast the Namestone free.

I’d forgotten the Screaming Skull, even when he’d said something to me. Over-focus is very dangerous in combat, but at this point I was outnumbered close to twenty to one. He used the same moment to launch his personal attack, the Shower of Total Death. Being attacked by the League of Nations Elite Team was bad news, but the Skull is a Lord of Eternity. His attack? It works on people, it works on a tree, and now I’d see if it works on me. I’ve actually never been positive my second level shields do anything. It’s not there are a lot of second level attacks wandering around to test them against. Shields did fine. Then Valkyria’s katana hit me. Of course, I’ve seen starcore energy densities before, the real kind, and my shields worked just fine that time, too. It’s just I was very tired, the attacks were all incredibly powerful, and I had to go truly deep to hold my defenses against all those attacks at the same time. For half an instant, the Skull looked surprised. He could tell: I was not drawing on the Namestone. He’d tried to kill me, and my personal defenses were good enough to stop him in his tracks.

I did not give them a second chance. I flicked my wrist back. Namestone vanished. I teleported out, far far away, all the way to the Dark Side of the Moon, then a half dozen fast jumps, one triple cycle loop, and finally a pause in case someone was following me. I’d ended someplace that looks like it could be my base. It isn’t, but it looks really basey. Base-like? Pursuers who could track me, a truly rare gift, would see I had stopped moving and charge after me. I hadn’t hurt anyone yet, but if someone followed my jumps they’d learn how good I am at wrecking things. That’s very good at wrecking things. Wrecking pursuers, in particular. I had no pursuers. I waited until the teleport traces vanished. Fortunately, traces do not fade by becoming ever fainter. Traces chug on and then stop dead, gone forever. A few more jumps brought me here, my own bedroom in my very own house. I must have dropped the Namestone into its hiding place, stripped out of my garb, and fallen into bed. I really only remember closing my balcony door.

That brought me to the here and now. I was incredibly thirsty. Stomach said a solid meal was in order. I rolled out of bed, every muscle complaining, and padded to my bathroom for a glass of water. I was more than a bit cold, but water was definitely the first priority. Then I dropped into my down bathrobe, shoulder and ribs protesting at the motion, and headed to the kitchen, the night light throwing a feeble shadow along the stairs in front of me. Down bathrobe? I’d left the heat pump at standby, keeping the house temperature in the mid-50s, enough to keep pipes from freezing. Yes, I have some neat photographs of the Pluto ruins, taken with me and camera inside my body field, but right now my gifts were very definitely turned off.

Doing the stairs was painful. Besides the hand-to-hand combat, the Maze set other physical and mental challenges, enough to push me to all my limits. Mum had taught me to be physically vigorous, but endurance and weight training only take you so far.

The oven clock said my half past dark was in fact only an hour past sunset. The night light was more than enough, especially when I knew exactly where everything was stashed. Sunset? I must have slept the day around. No, I had woken up once and again for a glass or two of water. I'd had the foresight to cook in advance. Cold chicken fresh off the bone, soda biscuits with unsalted butter, stir-fry curried vegetables warmed in the microwave, more chicken and soda biscuits, milk, sliced plum tomatoes, and finally rum raisin ice cream with chocolate fudge crumbles did just fine. I had remembered to check the bathroom scale. I had lost weight. A fair piece of weight, even allowing I'm five-foot three in bare feet. Somehow, I continue to believe the Lesser Maze will never be a major competitor as a weight-loss machine. Not with *that* casualty rate.

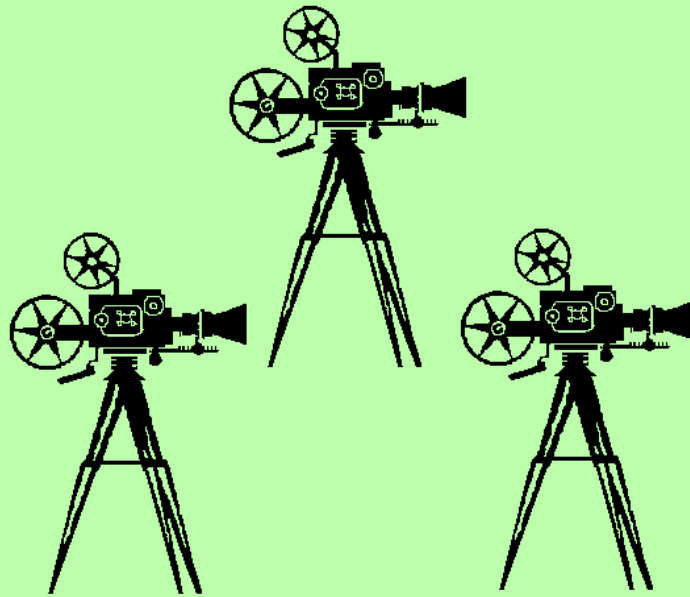
Very soon I was going to go back to sleep...the healing matrix said not-quite-dawn as my drift from slumber moment. Was there anything I really had to do first? The very slightest bit of telepathy, no matter how demanding it was, confirmed ponies and barn-cats were fine. The ponies would want currycombing tomorrow. Dishes were rinsed and in the dishwasher. Counters were bare. I dragged myself up the stairs. Garb? It was in the closet, immaculately clean, not a stitch out of place. Clean? After what had happened to it? That must have been the Namestone, insisting that the Bearer always look perfect. In fact, when I met Valkyria, my garb had been immaculate, down to the flawless drape of my cape. I'd even remembered to flare the cape so the video audience could see my sigil.

Namestone? Safe in its hidey-hole. Anything else? Rules engines, your opinions? The usual warning is that you can carry one rules engine 'Marksman on how to shoot', or if you're really good a second 'Medico on how to heal,' but if you try four rules engines you go bats. Mum knew how to break that limit. I'm a working demonstration. I have like fifty of them floating around, actually not inside my head where they'd cause problems, all being called at once. They all had something they wanted to tell me, but mostly they cancelled. The ones on buying and running a house were pretty calm, so far. The *emergency priority* flag on 'Psychist – going bats for fun and profit' was firmly warning me. The Lesser Maze was too much for almost anyone, and I was building up pressure again about Mum. Okay, I don't know why she threw me out of the house, those six months ago, but she was right. I can take care of myself. I just wish I didn't have to, not with no advance notice. But still...and for a moment bitter tears overwhelmed me. I washed my face, noticed I was getting cold from standing in bare feet, and went to bed. I pulled up the quilt and drifted off, to sleep, perchance to dream.

Archive Midwinter
a zine for N'APA 218
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News:

I self-published! Whee! I went out to Amazon and put up two of my books. They are [At The Sign of the Brass Breast and Other Stories](#) and [The Capitulation of the Carnivores and Other Stories](#).

To be honest, these are incunabula, some of my old stuff, including my very first story ever. (Which, however, was good enough for Andrew Offutt to include in the anthology [Swords Against Darkness IV](#).) I have polished 'em up a bit -- I had a lot to learn about writing! -- and I've priced 'em to move at only 99 cents.

My sister drew the cover for [Brass Breast](#). For the cover art for [Capitulation](#), I went to DeviantArt and found a guy whose style I liked, and wrote to him to ask if he undertook commissions. He said yes.





Amazon's user interface is superb! The whole process was wonderful! It was easy as sin! Compared to the interface I had to use to sign up for health care, it was a pure, true joy.

Comments:

Cover: Very nice. I've only read three of Terry Pratchett's books: two of the Discworld novels, Thud and The Fifth Elephant, and Good Omens (co-written with Neil Gaiman.) I did enjoy all three, but have, so far, been trying to keep myself from full-blown Pratchett addiction. How many Discworld books were there? Forty...or perhaps forty-one? Ye cats!

(I am an addictive reader. When I find a series I like, I follow it to exhaustion. This will probably happen to me eventually with Pratchett, but I'm trying to postpone the evil day.)

George Phillis: You had already shared some of this with me, and I definitely enjoyed it. I find the setting wonderfully screwy: it's "our world" -- London and Moscow and Bangkok exist -- but you've twisted it all around in a strange and quite nifty way. The "super" characters introduce a tone of "high entropy" -- i.e., it's a very powerful world, with people who have access to immense energies in a very personal way. It isn't quite a "superhero" story, but partakes much of that kind of tone. As a comics fan, I love this kind of stuff!

Jean Lamb: I confess, with some shame and sin, I have not yet purchased all three of your books from Amazon...but I promise I shall! Even the regency romance, which, alas, isn't quite my favorite genre. But I have enough exposure to your writing to know you'll have done it well!

"Erasure" was a fun bit of Discworld fanfic. I love the use of the "Three Envelopes" joke!