

חידושים האגודה – אוגוסט 2026 The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

תל אביב: מועדון הקריאה יעסוק בספר "מלכודת האנשים" מאת רוברט שאקלי. לקבלת המיקום יש להירשם במייל של דפנה קירש dafna1485@walla.co.il, ובדף האירוע בפייסבוק. <https://www.facebook.com/events/1041913523811981>.
ירושלים: המפגש החודשי יעסוק בספר "שכול וכשלון חומים" מאת אמיר חרש, ויתקיים ביום חמישי, 30-08-2026. לפרטים על המפגשים של מועדון הקריאה, ניתן להצטרף לקבוצת הפייסבוק <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1758700637764422> או ליצור קשר במייל עם המרכזת, גלי אחיטוב, sal.maple@gmail.com. ולהצטרף לוואטסאפ המועדון.
לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף לרשימת התפוצה או בדף האגודה בפייסבוק. כל האירועים של האגודה מופיעים בלוח האירועים (שפע אירועים מעניינים, הרצאות, סדנאות, מפגשים ועוד)
Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

This month's roundup:

- Link to an online SF short story: "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" by Philip K Dick
- Quick review of the animated SF series "Invincible"
- About a new science fiction book "Usurper" by Australian author Russel Southam
- Sorry, our usual tidbits from the Web will be presented in the upcoming issue

Wartime Issue #35: NO, The War Isn't Over Yet (part IV)

This seems to be the longest United States non-war of this millennium ... which is rather frustrating for the IDF, continuously being on 'extra-high' alert status, and then easing up a notch, and then back again.

On the other hand, We civilians are taking this all in with a grain of salt: – it may happen any moment, that the fighting will break out dramatically... or that some arrangement will be made between the US and the terrorist IRGC regime in Iran. So, even though the immediate future is unknown and seems rather bleak, we are going about our business as usual, people are taking their families on vacation in Israel or abroad, the school year is nearly upon us (summer vacation ends at the end of August), and the High Holidays are less than a month away.

So far, Iran has refrained from (re-)attacking Israel – but that may change too.

May the good guys stay safe, and may the bad guys fail hard! – Your editor, Leybl Botwinik

LB: Among other Science/SF mailing lists, I subscribe to Space.com's Sci-Fi Reader's Club "Strange New Words"

"We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" by Philip K Dick

NOTE: Inspired "Total Recall"

HE AWOKED--and wanted Mars. The valleys, he thought. What would it be like to trudge among them? Great and greater yet: the dream grew as he became fully conscious, the dream and the yearning. He could almost feel the enveloping presence of the other world, which only Government agents and high officials had seen. A clerk like himself? Not likely.

"Are you getting up or not?" his wife Kirsten asked drowsily, with her usual hint of fierce crossness. "If you are, push the hot coffee button on the darn stove."

"Okay," Douglas Quail said, and made his way barefoot from the bedroom of their conapt to the kitchen. There; having dutifully pressed the hot coffee button, he seated himself at the kitchen table, brought out a yellow, small tin of fine Dean Swift snuff. He inhaled briskly, and the Beau Nash mixture stung his nose, burned the roof of his mouth. But still he inhaled; it woke him up and allowed his dreams, his nocturnal desires and random wishes, to condense into a semblance of rationality. I will go, he said to himself. Before I die I'll see Mars.

Story link is here:

<https://philosophy.as.uky.edu/sites/default/files/We%20Can%20Remember%20It%20for%20You%20Wholesale%20-%20Philip%20K.%20Dick.pdf>

Animated TV Series Review – INVINCIBLE

- By Leybl Botwinik

Even though the animated TV series INVINCIBLE has the feel of a 'Saturday Morning Cartoon', it has so much Science Fiction and mature content in it, to raise it to a class of its own. So far, 4 seasons have been aired, starting in 2021, with the latest (4th) this year. At first, it seems like a 'typical' coming-of-age teenager superhero story, where Mark Grayson finally matures to the point where he gains his inherited superpowers from his superhero father Omni Man. However, there is so much more going on in both the foreground and the background...

There are multiple super powered people in this version of planet Earth that more or less parallels our own world (other than the superpowered community) or that of the well known DC/Marvel comics universes, in just about every aspect. These include the typical good guys and bad guys, mostly single bad guy entities, and a few teams of good guys.

Omni Man (think 'Superman') is the most powerful by far and belongs to no team. His son, Mark, takes on the name 'Invincible' and begins training with his father. The super-powered pair live in a suburb and hide under a secret identity, together with Mark's mother Debbie – a normal human. Mark, a typical teenager with teen issues suddenly needs to pull himself together and deal with life's curve balls.

The animated TV series is based on the IMAGE comics of the same name. The writer, **Robert Kirby Kirkman**, is also best known for co-creating The Walking Dead, Invincible, Tech Jacket, Outcast, Oblivion Song, and Fire Power – and he also worked at Marvel comics for a few years.



Although I'm not familiar with the Invincible comics, I assume that they are just as graphically explicit and dramatic (and possibly even more so) than the animated scenes that depict people (as well as superhumans and villains) being literally torn apart and mutilated either as direct victims of evil superpowered individuals, monsters, and wild creatures (including aliens and netherworld devils and such) – or as innocent victims caught in the midst of fights between the super-powered. Limbs and body parts will be indiscriminately tossed about, with lots of blood streaming, including among the superheroes – a few who get killed, maimed, etc. Even our hero Mark is punched out, bleeds, gets black/swollen eyes or deep cuts in his body. Invincible, but not indestructible...

Topics covered are evil super powered beings and criminals, some time travel, alien and other universe invasions, multiverses, genetic manipulation, and more.

The focus of the series begins with Mark's coming of age and dealing with his superpowers in the shadow of his immensely powerful father. He soon discovers that his father is an extra-terrestrial from Viltrum, sent by his people to prepare Earth for invasion. The Viltrumites are the most powerful aliens in the know universe, and have conquered, subjugated, and or annihilated hundreds of inhabited planets. They are not only super-powerful (and totally ruthless) but practically immortal. Their fascist motto is "**All is Ours**". Not unlike the ancient Spartans, weakness must be irrevocably purged – even setting new generations of children, or young recruits at each others' throats, to kill and ween out the weak.

Most episodes deal with 'standard' superhero issues, such as fighting the bad guys: normal human criminals, evil super villains, would-be world conquerors, etc. as well as intrigues within the ranks of superhero teams.

There is also a secret superhuman monitoring Global Defense Agency at the Pentagon that manages one of the super teams "The Guardians" and in parallel is busy creating human-controlled deterrents (powerful robots/cyborgs) to be used against super powerful beings (including their own superheroes, in case these should go mad, or become uncontrollable).

The animation is simple but effective – nothing too extravagant – and the storylines are well plotted out.



Most episodes end with the main issue resolved or as a cliff-hanger (i.e. to be continued), and after the main credits are shown, another minute or two follows with some side issue as a foreshadow of things to come, or 'unfinished business' (Marvel used to have a lot of those in their comics and usually follow the end of their films with a teaser for the next one). This is then followed by the rest of the credits.

Read more here (about season 1 and 2):

<https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2023/nov/03/invincible-season-two-review-television-amazon-prime-video>

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LB: A friend of mine in Australia, Russell Southam, recently wrote a Science Fiction book, and I thought our readers would be interested in hearing about it. Russell spent years writing stories intended for the screen. With *Usurper*, he built one that eventually became too large for it.

He sent me the following:

USURPER: When a Science-Fiction Film Became a Novel

There is something reassuring about being told the world is dead. No survivors. No civilisation. Nothing left worth returning to. Humanity has moved on.

In *Usurper*, the first novel in **The Continuance Saga**, what remains of human civilisation exists above the stratospheres, orbiting an Earth transformed into a vast industrial resource. The surface below is no longer regarded as a home. It is just an infrastructure consisting of enormous automated hives, machinery, extraction systems, and forgotten spaces operating beneath the remnants of a world humanity has supposedly left behind.



For most people living above the planet surface, there is little reason to question that history.

For contractor Elias Venn, there is even less reason.

He has enough problems of his own.

Once closer to the society that he now observes from its edges, Elias makes his living servicing the machinery that keeps the system functioning. He repairs what breaks, keeps his head down and tries not to attract the attention of people with considerably more power than he possesses.

Then a routine repair takes him somewhere he was never supposed to look. Elias discovers something that should not exist. Something alive.

That discovery creates the central question behind *Usurper*: what happens when an entire civilisation depends upon a version of history that may not be true?

The answer takes Elias from the industrial depths of Earth into a mystery involving the orbital society above it, powerful families, hidden histories, and the increasingly uncomfortable possibility that the greatest threat to civilisation may not be what was left behind on Earth, but what humanity chose to build in its place.

Yet *Usurper* did not begin as a novel.

It began as a film.

TOO BIG FOR THE SCREEN

Author Russell Southam comes to science fiction through an unusual route for a debut novelist.

His background is in independent filmmaking, working as a writer, director, and producer of films that have travelled extensively through the international festival circuit. His screen work has accumulated awards and nominations around the world, including recognition for his writing, while films such as *Black Heart Red Hands* and *There's No Hell Like Home* received Gold Remi awards at WorldFest-Houston.

When the earliest version of *Usurper* began taking shape, Russell naturally imagined it through a camera:

- Industrial chambers.
- Immense machinery.
- Orbital habitats.
- Vehicles crawling through artificial landscapes.

- Human figures dwarfed by infrastructure.
- And, somewhere beneath all of it, the remnants of Earth.

The problem was obvious. It would cost a fortune.

Rather than continually reducing the idea to something an independent production might realistically finance, Southam eventually made a different decision: remove the camera altogether.

The screenplay became a novel.

And something unexpected happened.

The story got bigger.

FROM CINEMATIC SCI-FI TO PROSE

The DNA of filmmaking remains visible throughout *Usurper*.

Its world is highly visual. Scenes frequently unfold through physical spaces, movement, machinery, light and sound, rather than lengthy explanations of how the future works. Technology is often encountered as something used, repaired, damaged or misunderstood, rather than presented to the reader through exposition.

But prose offered something the screenplay could not. It allowed the story to get inside Elias Venn. The result is science fiction that operates simultaneously in two planes or scales.

At one level, there is the enormous architecture of the world: Earth, the Continuance, industrial hives – and the political structures controlling them.

At another, there is simply one man gradually realising that the assumptions upon which he has built his life may be wrong, but knowing the truth is considerably easier than deciding what to do with it.

THE WORLD BELOW

One of the more intriguing ideas within *Usurper* is its treatment of Earth itself.

This is not the familiar science-fiction image of humanity abandoning a ruined planet and travelling out to the stars.

Earth remains useful. Very useful. It has simply ceased to belong to ordinary people.

The great industrial hives continue operating below while civilisation looks down from above. Machines move through spaces built for purposes most people will never witness. Contractors maintain systems

whose origins and full functions are increasingly remote from those who depend upon them.

This creates a peculiar relationship between the two worlds: The people above need Earth. They simply don't necessarily want to know what happens there.

Elias does... Eventually.

A MYSTERY RATHER THAN A MANUAL

Despite the scale of its setting, *Usurper* does not immediately explain every piece of its universe. The reader learns much of the world in the same way Elias does: incompletely and one piece of a jigsaw at a time.

- A damaged machine means something.
- A missing record means something else.
- A person behaving strangely may mean nothing – Until later.
- Information accumulates.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CONTINUANCE SAGA

Usurper is intended as the opening movement of *The Continuance Saga*, establishing a world whose history extends far beyond Elias Venn's initial discovery.

For the author, turning the project into a novel also represents something of a creative reversal. Film normally begins with words and then they are gradually transformed into images. *Usurper's* literary journey, on the other hand, travelled in the opposite direction.

A world originally imagined as images, sets, performances, and shots was dismantled and rebuilt with words and sentences. Perhaps that is why the novel still feels as though a camera is hiding somewhere inside it, moving through corridors; following machinery into the darkness; watching Elias Venn make one apparently insignificant discovery... and waiting for him to understand just how much trouble he has uncovered.

Because in the world of *Usurper*, the dangerous thing isn't discovering that someone has lied. It's discovering how long everyone has been living inside that lie.

Author Russell Southam



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