

Hub

Issue 35
1st December 2007

Editors: Lee Harris, Alasdair Stuart and Trudi Topham.
Proofreader: Ellen Phillips
Published by *The Right Hand*.
Sponsored by Orbit.

Issue 35 Contents

Fiction: *Weapon of War* by Guy Haley
Reviews: *Battlestar Galactica: Razor*, *The Devil's Right Hand*
Interview: *James Kyson Lee* (Ando from *Heroes*)

Hub on the Web

Longtime readers of *Hub* might not have visited our website for some time – after all, many of you get *Hub* delivered direct to your inbox. Well, our web monkeys have tinkered behind the scenes and upgraded our site to a spanking new Wordpress-based affair. As well as emailed subscriptions you can now subscribe via the magic of RSS (web monkey tells me that this will mean something to the hip and happening kids out there!), and we'll be publishing commentary and news on the site that won't necessarily make it into the pages of *Hub* itself. Well worth a look.

About *Hub*

Every week we publish a piece of short fiction, along with at least one review and sometimes a feature or interview. We can afford to do this largely due to the generosity of our sponsors over at **Orbit**. If you like what you read here, please consider making a donation over at www.hub-mag.co.uk. We pay our writers, and anything you donate helps us to continue to attract high quality fiction and non-fiction.



Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
through Arts Council England





It is said that in all the ages of the world, no greater weapon has ever been forged that that which was created by both Terfus the Maker and Klinglaz the Black Smith in concert. That both were gods of opposing faiths makes this collaboration remarkable in itself, yet further still Terfus was the master armourer for the forces of light, and had made many a blade which had undone great hosts of Klinglaz's table-mates, whereas Klinglaz was the chief craftsman of the forces of darkness, he who fashioned the 101 deadly black iron spears, and many other weapons of awesome and terrible power besides, which had sore taxed the friends of Terfus, oft unto the death.

Yet that these two gods should advance the cause of their art beyond their animosity is not to be wondered at. They were great artists, and the greatest artists of all wish to do no more than create greater art that will be remembered for all time, for even gods die, and their immortality is fleeting compared to that bestowed by memorable deeds, which may truly live forever. So it was with no great reluctance that Klinglaz agreed to meet with Terfus upon the latter's request, for they were both also born of the goddess Metal, and were often of a similar mind.

"Half-brother," said Terfus the Maker upon their meeting, "the war of gods is soon to be done, as we have always known, and will be left forever undecided, as we also have always known. Soon our time upon this world will be done, and we will fade into the darker places of memory. Let us embark upon a last venture, and together forge the greatest weapon ever seen upon this world or any other."

Klinglaz growled at this, sending the bondsmen of Terfus scurrying from the table they waited upon. Klinglaz was small, for a god, being almost dwarfish in aspect, and indeed it is sometimes said his father was of these black-hearted folk, yet still he towered over human kind, and his neck was all garlanded about with skulls of mortal men, so they were much afraid of him, also the furs which swathed him did stink, making a noisome fug about him.

"You speak well Terfus. I feel the cold wind of eternity steal into my halls. There are few of us left, too few to decide now the question of whether it was Loydan of the God-kine or Joloyson the Craven who had the right to ask the dance of Birgida the Fair's hand at the wedding dance of Mulak and Bonz."

Terfus paused before speaking, for he ever was a thoughtful god, much given to careful deliberation before speech. "I bethought the war begun by Kolo, not Loydan, and surely it was Mikikiki who wronged him."

And both thought long and hard on this, for the wars of gods are long, yet their memories as short as those of other beings.

Klinglaz cleared his throat. "No matter, our time is nearly done. You are right not to let us pass into the dark night of never without bequeathing some legacy upon the world of men that is to follow."

"Aye, if only it were but possible for us to leave something of less fell than a weapon, yet I am the god of vengeance and justice as well as a smith..."

"...and I the god of blood spilt in war and petty violence, also a forgerman, so I fear a weapon it is. But what? Sword, axe, mace. Perhaps a spear?"

Terfus thought a moment, then spoke with a wise measure. "Surely you tire of spears?"

"What sayest?" said Klinglaz, who was apt to be a peevish god.

"You have already cast 101 of them," said Terfus.

"I am good at spears."

"But still..."

And both thought long and hard on this also, for the wills of gods are strong, yet they were making pains to both be courteous, for both were old and aching, and were tired and sated after the welcome feast beside.

"Surely a sword? It is the most noble of weapons," said Terfus awhile.

"Mayhap it is... yet a spear...!"

"Sword it is then," said Terfus. He leaned back upon the bench, causing it to creak, and thus exposing his argent breastplate to the fire, casting light all about. And it is said you can still see the full glory of the breastplate of Terfus in the night, for it is the moon. But how it came to be placed in the heavens is another tale.

"As you will," growled Klinglaz. "Yet how will we decide in whose forge we shall make it?"

"A contest!" said Terfus, with much enthusiasm.

"Aye, a contest!" said Klinglaz, likewise excited, for gods do love contests, as we all know.

It is written elsewhere how the two smith-gods engaged in a great feat of strength, hurling their smithy hammers at the stars to see who could bring the brightest down. It is also written elsewhere how Klinglaz missed one of his casts, reducing the city of Pefluga to rubble in error. Also we see their trial in *The Boy Whose Cows Were Flattened*, which remains a popular lay to this, our day.

Eventually it was decided that the stars they knocked from the sky were of near equal size, and should thus be both smelted and cast into rods, whose lengths should be beaten together as one. And so they also agreed it would be fitting to conduct the work at both their forges, and share the task in full halves each, and thus make the forging a burden and a joy equally borne, so that not one nor the other could say that they had sweated more, nor worked the harder than the second.

And sweat and work they did, and both hard, for this was to be their lasting gift to the world. Into the weapon Terfus put the speed of the wind, so that none who should ever wield it would be slower upon the field than his opponent, nor should he be struck first. And Klinglaz gifted it with the malice of the last blood-drake Karrrr, so that its slightest touch would slay all those who would do hurt to the bearer. Also Terfus smote into the heart of the star-iron his spell of binding, so that a king who bore it would always speak in kingly fashion, and all men hearken unto his every whisper. Then Klinglaz brought to the point the touch of madness, so that men who thought to steal it would go lunatic at the thought whilst the sword still had a master. And many other gifts did the two gods bind into the blade as they beat it, their hammers ringing showers of sparks from it, one and the other in turn. They wove magic into it by the moon, by the sun, by blood and fire. And at last the blade was made, and the gods were near spent with their efforts, yet their task was not done.

Terfus must plead with the lady Ardine of the depthless lake to give up a tress of her hair to make the hilt binding. Klinglaz journeyed for seven years to complete 12 gruelling tasks for the dwarf folk of his father, for to secure a mere pound and a half of their rarest red gold for the guard and pommel. Terfus judged wisely and cleverly in the 999 courts of Pfareg in order to win but one tooth of the long-dead Dragon Blirirkan, its ivory with which to make the hilt. Both wagered their halls in a game of shove-tree with the blind giant Durbik to win a single example of his 1000 diamond eyes for the pommel mount.

And then to sharpen and grind it they laboured hard, wearing down the mountains of distant Murg for a grindstone. And then they polished it, 9,000 grades they used, from the harshness of Plugir the High-god's death wish, the utterance of which was said to have abraded a hole in the sky, to the first breath of a newborn fairy child.

And then it was done, and the guard was placed of dwarf gold, and the pommel was set with Durbik's diamond eye, and the hilt of Blirirkan's ivory with Ardine's golden tress bound. The blade sparkled so bright neither Terfus nor Klinglaz could bear to gaze upon its beauty for more than a full half minute, and it was said that its edge was so keen that it could cleave in twain the arguments of a wise man before the idea had left his brain, or the sentiment his heart, thus for it never to be said.

The sword was to all that they before had done as a jewelled watch is to a rude pebble. Their prior work was nought but the fumbled attempts of dull-witted prentices by compare, and this was the masterwork of craftsmen newly minted, and it was a masterwork beyond all other masterworks. And they were mightily pleased.

"What shall we call it?" said Klinglaz.

And Terfus did sigh inwardly, for he had much dreaded this question.

"Why not Moobin? After my half-sister, the glorious lady of the stars! For it comes from the stars, and glitters with them in remembrance of her beauty!"

"And why not Klinglaz, for I forged the half of it?" said Klinglaz, who was wont to be conceited. "Moobin was no sister to me, yet we share the same mother."

"Why not then Terfus?" said Terfus, his ire sparked.

And yet they still did not come to blows, for where they had been brothers in trade and blood before, though enemies at arms, they had come to be closer, and now each much valued the other.

So they were, once again, silent, for gods are intractable, and both wished the other to be pleased.

After a time Terfus said. "And then, shall it not be Klingmoo! For I believe that, though you say otherwise, I believe the star you brought down was but the slightest measure larger than mine."

"And why shall it not be Klingmoo? I agree with your suggestion, brother, for I think in truth your star was the greater in weight, if the smaller in size as you say."

Thus it was Klingmoo was made and named.

"But wait!" said Klinglaz. "To whom shall this sword be dedicated? Who shall it serve? Light or dark? Both our work has been of equal measure."

"Equal it has been, but not entirely," said Terfus. And with that he produced a stamp, and a heavy mallet, and he asked Klinglaz to lay the sword upon the anvil in his workshop, so that he might complete his part of the great artifice. He placed the stamp, and with one hard blow drove it into the metal of Klingmoo, breaking the stamp in the process. "Now my work is done, and truly you may see our efforts have been of similar weights." And he held the blade up to Klinglaz, and the other looked at the mark.

"Ah, that, indeed, should do it."

And so it was that by the last mark of Terfus, Klingmoo the sword served neither good nor evil, yet seemed to serve both in turn. And when it served good, warriors mortal and immortal alike would say Terfus had worked the harder, for many champions both noble and humble bore it, and when it swung, it smote down tyrants and demons alike. But when it served evil, they would say Klinglaz's star had been greater in size than even Terfus had allowed for, for the just and kindly fell before its edge as wheat before the scythe. In truth all were wrong, for the work and contribution of both were of utter like in their equality. The sword worked as it did because of the rune of Terfus, and no-one but the two smith gods knew what it meant, and within time they were gone, and all the other gods also, as they had predicted themselves, leaving only Klingmoo behind as a testimony to the ancient days, and through its brilliance the names of Klinglaz and Terfus lived on long after the names of many other, greater gods were forgotten.

Yet for all its quality and potency, both undimmed by the ages, folk came to see the blade as accursed, that the mark of Terfus was a joke by the two gods so that the most powerful weapon ever made must, perforce, remain unused, and only marvelled at as a work. That it was a moral tale handed down in stellar steel, that man might not go the way of the gods through war and self-destruction.

And perhaps, in this, there was half a truth.

So it came to pass that 4000 years after Terfus had laid his stamp upon the blade, the last bearer of Klingmoo locked it deep beneath the earth, for though it had served him faithfully through a thousand battles, through his own greed had it turned upon him and brought about the fall of his nation, and laid waste to all his lands. Some said that he had been driven mad by his loss, and would see the blade disposed of. Yet others said that perhaps he had learnt his lesson well, and had had a change of heart, and in remorse for all that had fallen before him he had vowed to hide Klingmoo away from evil hands.

And perhaps, in this, there was also half a truth.

But none knew, for even the name of the emperor was forgotten, and his domain turned to ash and dust. For countless long centuries did the resting place of the blade Klingmoo pass from human memory, its deed became the stuff of legend, its makers the stuff of myth. That is, until a certain prince of Belmaree did seek it out for his own ends. Led by portents said to have been wrested from the vilest of the creatures of the outer dark, Prince Gwynion discovered a clue to the resting place of Klingmoo, and set forth to claim it. He was the second son of an ageing king, and though his elder brother was a just and able man, Gwynion had a notion that, when the time came, he would rather be king himself.

For many long weeks he journeyed, far from his home of Belmaree, sometimes disguised as a hermit, other times riding in royal pomp, always heading east. In Vrattuku he consulted rotten parchments long neglected deep in the bowels of the university libraries. Thence he turned north, where ancient rock carvings in the Caves of Pang directed him to the west. There he came to the Lonely Tower, whose spire was the last mark of man upon the land for many thousands of leagues. There he engaged in a game of wits with the Starving Globe, and he won, for if black of heart, he was not without guile, and from it learnt the precise location of Klingmoo, the last, and greatest, weapon of the gods.

Deep within the desert upon whose borders the Lonely Tower stood was a cave, to the entrance of which a parched and heat-deluded Gwynion came three months after his departure from his home of Belmaree. His horse had died under him, still he had come on; his boot heels wore away, yet still he came on, scorpions stung his feet, yet still he came on; desert mice urinated upon his stockings, yet still he, driven by an unquenchable desire for earthly power, came on. At the cave mouth he sipped deep from the spring at the cave's mouth, and heeding not the dire warnings about large and poisonous centipedes around the spout above its trough, and wandered deep into the cave. He would also have ignored the dire warnings about the salivating Trollkin who guarded the blade, had he but seen them, for that was obscured by moss.

Within he battled long hours with large and poisonous centipedes, which he expected, and he found them most terrible foes, whose stings rained upon his head, only to be turned away by helm and shield, whose royal crests were burnt away by their awful venom. When he had vanquished them, he stumbled into the outer realms of the salivating Trollkin. And they did salivate most copiously when they espied his well-fleshed, if slightly sunburnt, royal body. This he did not expect, for moss had obscured the warning of them. And from this, we know always to look under moss.

Yet against these half-beasts, the Prince of Belmaree also prevailed, for he was an able warrior, if not quite so able as his brother...

Tired, bitten, sunburnt, stung, drenched in trollspit, the would-be-king at long last stumbled into the central chamber of the Trollkin's stinking maze. There, surrounded by the scattered bones of the long-gone emperor, amid piles of mildewed finery, stood the sheathed Klingmoo, hilt upright in a heap of gold. Naturally, its dust-free length was usefully lit by a shaft of sunlight streaming in from a hole high above in the cavern roof.

From far off, but not so far as to imbue the Prince with a sense of well-being, came the baying of a thousand Trollkin as they hunted through the dark for him. As accomplished as he was with his blade, he would not escape alive if he did not take up the sword before him, that which could slay an army yet still shine as if newly polished.

He licked his lips and reached out a trembling hand, yet dare he? This was the blade that had undone as many as it had made. It served both good and evil powers, yet to whom did that make a pawn of Gwynion? Would its curse fall upon he also? Would he gain a kingdom only to lose his life? His nerves a-jangle, he paused.

"You do right to think upon your action," came a steely voice.

"Who speaks?" said the Prince, his eyes darting nervously from side to side, searching out the source of this pronouncement. "Who addresses me, the Prince of Belmaree?"

"I do, foolish man. I, Klingmoo the mighty, last and greatest of the god-forged weapons, bane of light, hunter of the dark, Terfus's Golden Needle, Klinglaz's Dark Blade, the most powerful sword ever forged in this world or any other. I speak, I address you, I!"

"Ah," said the Prince, and his hand came back, just a touch, away from the blade. "I had not realised you had the power of speech."

"I? Klingmoo the mighty? Not have the power of speech? AHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!" It laughed, and in exactly that manner, so that the faithless Prince of Belmaree suspected the sword might be mumming. "I was made by gods, forged from the stars! Magic was beaten into my very being by the moon, by the sun, by blood and fire! I, who have lived since the dawn of time, have been carried into countless wars by numberless heroes over untold aeons! Of course I can talk, you booby! If anyone should be amazed at the power of speech here it is I, confronted by you, a mewling excuse for a man, an ape in popinjay's clothing!"

And Gwynion was sore affronted by this. "I am a Prince of the blood! I command legions! I..."

"Am second in line to throne?" ventured Klingmoo.

"Well, yes, but..."

"By the long dead gods," said Klingmoo, and sighed. "Two and a half thousand years have I rested in this cave, I thought you people would have grown up a bit by now."

"Why..."

"Save it. I believe company approaches. I can hear them. I suppose you have come here to bring me out, once more again into the light?"

"Yes! I will wield you and bring peace to the Great Western islands!"

"Yes, yes."

"I could leave you here with the Trollkin."

"Wait!" said the sword hurriedly. "Verily, thou canst bear me, but each and every man who has done so has had to swear to obey a geas. Do you accept the burden I will place upon you?"

"Yes!" said Gwynion who was now determined to take the sword, if only to confound its impertinence and nothing else, though the baying of the Trollkin was also drawing very near.

"Very well, the geas I place upon you Prince Gwynion..."

"Why?! How do you know my name?"

"Forged by gods," said the sword curtly. "Now don't interrupt, you really have to pay attention to this part. The geas I place upon you Prince Gwynion is thus: Thou shalt carry me into every violent confrontation thou shalt find thyself in. Dost thou understand?"

"Yes!" squeaked Gwynion, perhaps a little less regally than he would have wished, for the Trollkin were rounding the corner into he cave.

"Very well, until such time as you do not, then I shall serve you faithfully, for good or for ill; for that is my bond and my curse, yours you will find yourself. Now take me up, and let us remove ourselves from this godsforsaken pit."

And so it was that Klingmoo allowed itself to be drawn by Prince Gwynion, and great was the slaughter amongst the Trollkin that day.

For nine long years did Klingmoo keep its promise. It stayed by the side of the Prince, who was soon King, for the elderly incumbent of the throne nor Gwynion's brother, unsurpassable swordsman though he was, could hope to match the god-given power of the blade. Not once did Klingmoo complain, not when he was pressed against Gwynion's brother's chest, nor as he listened to Gwynion vent his spleen on the subject of unfairly divided maternal affection, nor did it speak as it was pressed through Gwynion's brother's chest. Not once did it raise voice as it clove the head from the old king. Noble and peasant both fell before the Prince's wrath, and after a time, no-one did, for none dared challenge the power of Gwynion the Great, at least, so long the while his hand rested upon the diamond-eye pommel of Klingmoo the mighty, god-made weapon, forged from the stars, into whose very being magic was beaten by the moon, by the sun, by blood and fire! That which had lived, in the manner that magical artefacts live at all, since the dawn of time, which had been carried into countless wars by numberless heroes over untold aeons.

As for Gwynion's part, he carried Klingmoo everywhere, he carried it to the bathhouse and stables, in case he should have to whip a slovenly servant, he carried it into the grandest ball, in case he should have to upbraid rival suitors to women that took his fancy (or the husbands of women that took his fancy for that matter). He carried him into council, whereupon the blade was put to use smiting recalcitrant councillors on more than one occasion, he carried to meat, and, of course, he carried him into battle, where it did its deadly work with admirable, god-powered efficiency.

Soon the armies of neighbouring states began to quit the field without a fight, and the empire of Gwynion grew with every passing month, for what could those kings and princes do but capitulate in the face of such unsurpassable power? Gwynion did indeed bring peace to the Great Western Isles, as he had promised, and the lesser ones too, though it was a black peace of fear, and the kingdom lay under a pall of terror the likes of which had not been felt for many generations, and people began to mutter once more that Klinglaz's star had been greater in size than even Terfus had allowed for.

That is, until the battle of Corromay Field.

The hill-land of Corromay was the last fastness of those who would not bend knee to the tyranny of Gwynion. The people there were not foolish, nor were they stupid, only proud, and perhaps a little canny, for they reasoned that although Klingmoo would surely strike all the tribes of Corromay down within a second would they all be gathered together, Gwynion would have to find them first, for they took to the hills.

So defiant were the people of Corromay that the king was forced to campaign there himself, to bring forth Klingmoo. Yet they did not show themselves. After three weeks camping in muddy fields without a sign of the enemy, King Gwynion's patience was sorely tested, and he brought his army to one of the few towns of Corromay, and bade his army camp about its wooden walls, for he would raze it in the morning, and plough salt into the ground upon which it stood, so that no living thing might make its abode there for many years to come. And then he went to bed, for he had had a long day.

So vexed, so petulant was the king in his rage that perhaps when he heard, late that night the scrabbling of a thief in his tent, he was not thinking clearly, or perhaps he was overconfident in Klingmoo's abilities to win him power.

And maybe there is half a truth in both these things.

The boy cannot have been more than fifteen, yet Gwynion pursued him into the early dawn light as a wolf pursues a lamb. In his night shirt he pursued the boy, easily gaining on him, for the boy was overburdened. And when he caught him he knocked him to the floor, sending him sprawling in the mud, and then he beat him roughly about the head, once, twice, thrice and more! Until blood crept from the boy's nostrils, and tears leapt into his eyes. And then the king had finished, and he released the boy's hair, and dropped him to the sodden earth.

"Vile Corromain cur!" snarled the King. "How dare you trespass into our royal tent, to bring your verminous hide within ten feet of our royal personage! You shall pay for your impudence!"

"Shall we slay him my liege?" asked the master-serjeant eagerly, perhaps mindful that he too, overconfident in Klingmoo's powers to hold off their foes, had let the guard lapse.

"No!" said the King. "Let Klingmoo deal righteous justice unto this miscreant, so that all Corromain may what transpires when my will is thwarted and that, unless they surrender their lands to my dominion, then I will sever the people from their fields and their homes as surely as I will sever this boy's head from his shoulders! Bring me my sword!"

"No longer your sword, my king," said a silken, metallic voice.

There in the mud lay Klingmoo, hard against the whimpering boy, dropped with the rest of his loot upon the soil.

"What?! Did I not bring you once more into the light, did I not take you from the lands of the Trollkin, did I not restore you to your rightful place in history? The boy stole you! He will be mad with your magic and I will remain your master!" With that the king snatched up the scabbard and tried to pull the sword forth.

"Do not attempt to draw me, liege," said Klingmoo, and remained stuck fast in his scabbard.

"I will wield you!" shouted the king, and pulled once more. "I command you, loose yourself!"

"Do not draw me. I will not be drawn by you."

"Obey me!"

"I will tell you one more time; do not draw my blade. Tug again, and I will slide free, but it will go ill for you."

The king was beyond fury now, with a roar that would shame a beast, he tugged at the sword's hilt.

"I warned you my king," said the sword, and slid free easily, so that the king almost hit himself with the pommel, so great was his over-effort. "The boy had no thought to steal me, only to steal from you. He did not covet me, thus he remains sane. Yet you, one geas and one geas alone did I bind you to, just the one, and still you could not keep to it."

A pain shot through the king's arm then, bringing him to his knees. He gasped, and tried to release his grip from upon the dragon ivory hilt, bound by Arvine's golden tresses, yet he could not.

"What geas did I ask?"

"Nyargh!" howled the king. His guard backed away.

"What geas did I place upon you?"

More pain washed over the howling monarch.

"I said that thou shalt not enter into any violent confrontation without me by thine side. You struck the boy most savagely, yet I lay upon the floor whilst you did so. My curse is this: all may wield me, but only I may choose, and I set the conditions, so that good or evil, forever the balance between the two is maintained. Thus did Terfus give me free will.

"You broke the geas, now pay the price."

There was a terrible shout of power from the blade. It glowed as white as the sun, so that all must turn their face away or be blinded. It glowed with the light of the stars from which it was forged, and for a moment, the ancient days returned.

And then they were gone again, and so was the king.

And not a few among his army were glad, for he had been the most terrible tyrant in living memory.

The boy looked up. The sword stood, point deep in the ground. He was a simple soul, a village boy, though possessed of singularly keen mind.

He grabbed at the sword, but somehow he missed. He snatched again, yet the blade remained out of his grasp, even as it sat in front of him.

The sword spoke again. "You cannot grasp me until you acquiesce to my request. You can bear me, but each and every man who has done so has had to swear to obey a geas. Do you accept the burden I will place upon you? Will you abide by this covenant, unlike the king?" asked Klingmoo.

"Yes, yes!" said the boy, who, glancing at the circle of ex-royal guard, could see that they had their eyes fixed on the blade, and could also see that they could see he had not yet grasped it.

"Then the geas I shall place on you is this: Thou shalt immediately grant my first request or perish. Will you abide by my first demand, or shall I ask one of these other gentlemen if they feel they can accommodate my conditions?"

"Yes, yes! Anything!" said the boy, for the nearest royal guard, sword outstretched, was but a lunge away.

"Fine."

And then Klingmoo was in his hand, and the guard had lunged, and the guard was impaled upon the point of his sword. And then another had come. By the time the third had been struck down by a blow too swift to be seen, the others, right wisely, had decided to retreat.

"Do you have a smith here boy?" asked Klingmoo.

"Y-yes, why, yes we do," said the boy, amazed as he was at his newly-found martial prowess.

"Then my request is this, that you take me to him and bid him unbind the hair of Arvine from the grip of my hilt and loosen the handle. Bid him unseat the diamond eye of Durbik from my pommel and

remove my crossguard of red dwarven gold. Bid him slip off the hilt of Blirirkan's dragon ivory and expose my tang naked to the air for the first and last time since my creation. Then bid him build a great hill of charcoals, and have him pump upon his bellows so they glow near white. Then have him thrust me deep into it, then bid him smite upon me with his hammer until I take on new form. Have him beat me into a ploughshare, so that I may deep bite of the earth's flesh and not into that of man, and that the wounds I cause may bleed sustenance for you and your people. Have him do this. Terfus gave me the power of thought so that I may serve whom I choose, provided I favoured not light nor dark. But this is an impossible thing. Good masters die, I can be stolen, and time makes a mockery of all the machinations of men, fair or ill. I no longer will be wielded by unjust men and tyrants, I have no desire to partake of the slaughter of innocents, nor to bring down the kingdoms of the wise, for it will ever be the greedy and the grasping who take me up to their cause. Have me unmade, I have no wish to remain a weapon of war."

And the boy thought on this, and thought of the deadly power he held in his hand, of the kingdoms toppled, of peoples slaughtered. He thought on what he had seen, and he thought of his own geas.

Unmade the blade was.

And thus was the tale of Klingmoo the Mighty, Terfuz's golden tooth, Klinglaz's darkest blade, the god-made weapon, forged from the stars, into whose very being magic was beaten by the moon, by the sun, by blood and fire, done.

But as for the tale of the war-plough of Corromay, well, that is another story.

Reviews

Battlestar Galactica: Razor reviewed by Alasdair Stuart
The Devil's Right Hand reviewed by Ellen Phillips

Battlestar Galactica:Razor

Starring: Stephanie Chaves-Jacobsen, Michelle Forbes, Jamie Bamber, Edward James Olmos, Katee Sackhoff, Mary McDonnell, Grace Park, Fulvio Cecere, Nico Cortez, Steve Bacic and Campbell Lane

With the writer's strike really starting to kick in now, this is the only bit of new *Battlestar Galactica* we're going to be getting for at least four months. It's a tremendous relief then that with *Razor*, the series is firmly back on track after the incredibly variable (And frequently very irritating) third season.

The film takes place in two time-frames, with Kendra Shaw (Chaves-Jacobsen), a young officer aboard the Pegasus, the connective tissue between the two. Shaw transfers onto the Pegasus literally minutes before the Cylon Apocalypse and her experiences under the increasingly unbalanced Admiral Cain (Forbes) colour not only her view of the world but her own personality. Cain spends many of her scenes idly playing with a combat knife (It's the first thing we see, in fact) and Shaw is in many ways, nothing more than an extension of



that knife. She's a weapon, perpetually armed, perpetually dangerous and as Razor shows, that's not always a good thing.

The story of Shaw's time aboard the Pegasus up to and past its reunion with Galactica's fleet is used in a striking, almost elegant fashion as a means of contrasting Cain's command style with Lee Adama's. Bamber is on top form here, carrying the natural authority of his father but with a little less certainty, a little more idealism and the end result is electrifying. His scenes with Chaves-Jacobsen and Olmos are superb, as we see a young, untempered commander forced to take decisions that will cost lives. Like Cain, Apollo is faced with nothing but hard choices and what he does tells us a lot about both those choices and the two officers. This fascinating character study is itself wrapped around what is apparently the herald of a major plot-line for the show's final year, following the discovery of something impossible out in the void, something Bill Adama has encountered once before. Here, we get to see Olmos cut loose, the grizzled old war horse of the fleet faced with a chance to make right a mistake that still haunts him. He does great work here too, although special mention must be made of Nico Cortez, who plays the young Adama. From the incredibly controlled delivery to the growl in his voice, Cortez is, beat for beat, a young Olmos and he's one of the best elements of this highly impressive cast.

However, the stars here are Forbes and Chaves-Jacobsen. Michelle Forbes doesn't know how to turn in bad work, and her Admiral Cain is no exception. In her hands, the character becomes not tragic, but understandable, a woman whose mind-set dooms her as surely as the Cylon attack and who, in the end, was always going to make the choices she makes. It's a subtle, buttoned down performance that lives in the silences as much as anything else and it's easily one of the best things Forbes has done in a long and extremely impressive career.

The real star though, is Chaves-Jacobsen. As Kendra she's required to go toe to toe with the show's three heavy hitters; Olmos, Bamber and Sackhoff and not only rises to the occasion but frequently steals the show. Her confrontation with Starbuck is particularly impressive, Shaw the utterly calm, seething counterpart to Starbuck's leering, hyper-active presence. She's quiet, she's reserved and she's horribly broken, a razor that is suddenly all too aware of the damage she's inflicted on herself by inflicting damage on others. It's an almost impossible task, to fit into an ensemble this good but Chaves-Jacobsen excels at it. She deserves to go on to great things based on this performance.

Razor is a character study, a piece of history, a colossal treat for fans and a fascinating set up for the fourth season. It does everything right that season three did wrong, concentrating on character and plot over soap opera and histrionics and the end result is one of the most complete, intelligent, bleak pieces of science fiction of the 21st century so far. Galactica, it seems, is well and truly back on an even keel.

The Devil's Right Hand (a Dante Valentine novel)

Written by Lilith Saintcrow

Orbit (2007)

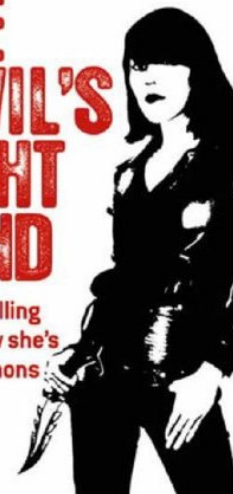
Dante Valentine (Danny) signs up as the Devil's assassin for 7 years. Now all she has to do is survive those 7 years without the Devil or any other demon killing her, and that includes her demon lover, the Devil's last assassin, Japhrimel. After nearly killing her last time they met, all Lucifer wants is for her to track down and kill four Greater Flight demons who have escaped from Hell. Apparently. But when Dante finally discovers the identity of the four demons, she finds that the job isn't going to be anywhere near as easy or as straight-forward as she'd been led to believe.

This being book 3 in the series, there's a bit of back-story that makes its way into the novel. References to past lovers, a previous encounter with Lucifer, and a particularly nasty mental rape crop up throughout.

LILITH SAINTCROW

**THE
DEVIL'S
RIGHT
HAND**

**She was killing
time – now she's
killing demons**



Danny spends most of her time in a state of angst and paranoia. She not only second-guesses herself, but third, fourth and fifth-guesses herself. She can't trust herself. She can't trust her demon lover, conveniently forgetting her promise not to doubt him, no matter what. She certainly can't trust the people around her, whatever the species, dead or alive. She alternates between melting into her demon lover's arms, and being on the verge of trying to kill him, even though she's well aware she can't get close to matching him in terms of speed or strength. There's a point at which she tells herself to shut up: she's annoying even herself. It's a bad sign for the reader. At times, the incessant whine of Danny's self-doubt seems like filler just to make up the page-count.

It's pretty standard to have a flawed hero. Most of literature's based the struggle a protagonist has against the problems their flaws create for them. But when a character is apparently this close to being broken, this crippled by their nature and their past, it's hard to believe Dante Valentine can actually get out of bed on a morning, let alone act in a coherent fashion. Most of the dialogue in the book is internal. This doesn't make for fascinating conversation, and actually detracts from the action. There are fight scenes in which Dante has, apparently, time to have a whole internal angst, guilt, fear and anger-filled conversation with herself inbetween trading blows with demons and imps.

The books is littered with new words and words used in different ways. It's common in SF&F books, and for the most part, it works (although the use of 'Necromance' simply irritates me). However, a few, mostly demon, words aren't clear from their context. But never fear! There's a glossary at the back for if you get really stuck. The problem is that Dante is now a 'hedaira', having been the cause of Japhrimel's Fall from being a Greater Flight demon. She wants to know what that means, apart from her now being part-demon too. I think that's quite reasonable. But Japhrimel's the only one who knows, and he's not telling. And again, that's just irritating, both for Dante and for the reader.

For me, the irritations and annoyances just kept on piling up throughout the novel until I just didn't care if Dante survived to the end of the book. Which is a shame. The world is well thought-out and is really interesting. The post-Awakening world is radically different from our own, and the glimpses of it which come through are some of the best bits of the book. And Dante's brief forays into the world of the dead are out-and-out fascinating. It's just a shame her incessant, repetitive internal monologue is so off-putting.

This is a workman-like offering from the supernatural mystery/romance genre. If you believe that the katana is the greatest weapon ever created and you don't know more about using one than you've seen on TV, you'll probably like the book. If, however, you like a little more action than angst in your novels, this probably isn't for you.

An Interview with James Kyson Lee

James Kyson Lee plays Hiro Nakamura's friend Ando Masahashi in the smash hit US show **Heroes**, the first season of which is currently airing on BBC 2 and will be out on DVD on 10th December. Paul Kane caught up with the star at Collectormania (<http://www.collectormania.com/>) in Milton Keynes and put some questions to him.

Paul Kane: Did you have any aspirations to perform when you were very young? I know you had an interest in singing and dancing...

James Kyson Lee: Yeah, when I was young I used to daydream a lot and I actually wanted to be a secret agent. My fantasy was that I'd go to different countries and become different people – and I guess acting came the closest thing to it. But acting didn't really come into my life until I moved to LA about six years ago, after college.



Paul Kane: Is it true that you sold your car to get to Los Angeles?

James Kyson Lee: I did. I sold my car for \$1800 and I bought a one-way ticket, and I packed one suitcase. It was a very reckless transition to say the least.

Paul Kane: It paid off, though.

James Kyson Lee: It has paid off, which I'm thankful about. But, you know, the first two years were very difficult. My first night in LA I had to sleep in my rental car, so it was quite a journey.

Paul Kane: And was that move specifically to try and get into acting?

James Kyson Lee: I think it was just more about the fact I wanted a new environment, because I grew up on the East Coast and I went to school out in Boston – I grew up in New York. I just felt like California would be a new challenge and then I just kind of found acting there. I really didn't know anything about it, but I knew it existed. I'd studied some theatre and jazz singing, and taken acting class for the first time and started to really rediscover myself again – and then my career started about four years ago.

Paul Kane: So what was the first role that you got?

James Kyson Lee: My first TV audition was for a show called **JAG** which was on CBS at the time. It was a little bit of a surreal experience. I just kind of went, kept it cool... And I saw all these other actors in the waiting room auditioning for different parts in the same episode, then I ended up being cast as a guest star. I wasn't even in the Union – in America you have to be in a Union to be an actor, the Screen Actors Guild – so CBS actually paid the fee for me to join and that's how my career got started.

Paul Kane: So how did you go from there to getting into **Heroes**?

James Kyson Lee: I did about four or five different guest spots on different TV shows, and I was doing independent films, and then about a year and a half ago I went to audition for a pilot that was called **Heroes**. Back then it was just a pilot; I read the script and it was just phenomenal. It was very different from anything I had ever read before. I ended up auditioning five times for the show – it was a very long and arduous process. But once it began it just kind of steamrolled into something phenomenal.

Paul Kane: Was it always for the character of Ando that you auditioned?

James Kyson Lee: When I was first auditioning, they weren't even thinking about anyone for the role of Ando, so I actually had to audition as Hiro, which is a very different character to mine. But when we got to the end, to NBC, it was just me and the actor who plays Hiro, Masi Oka, and they just basically said Masi will play Hiro because he looks like him, and then James will play Ando, so they did just offer the part to me.

Paul Kane: At what point did you meet Tim Kring, creator of **Heroes**?

James Kyson Lee: I believe Tim was there right from the second audition, I think, and then he was there throughout the entire process. Basically after the second audition you have to go through a screen test, as we call it in the States – and you have to get basically approval from all the executives, so we had to go through Universal Studios then through NBC network and it was just a lot of faces that you don't know at the time and it can be very daunting, but it was quite an experience.

Paul Kane: Do you remember your first day's filming?

James Kyson Lee: Yeah: my first day's filming was actually... if you've seen the very first episode it's the scene in the karaoke bar with me and Hiro, it's where we talk about time travel and he mentions that he read about it in *X-Men*, and I think it's just ridiculous. Then I tell him, "Well, if you could really time travel why don't you go to the women's bathroom or something..." (laughs). So that was our first day and I remember it fondly. I just remember there was a lot of positive energy on set and a lot of excitement and it just felt like it was all going to come together well.

Paul Kane: Did you get on well with Masi?

James Kyson Lee: Yeah, we got along – and I think we as a cast overall just get along really well together. We have a lot of fun in our storyline and I think that’s what kind of separates us from lot of other storylines, because there’s a lot of drama and action. And for some reason our storyline became a lot of fun and somewhat comedic many times, so it’s really good. It’s funny because people ask if we rehearse a lot or whatnot, but our show is so busy, the schedule is so fast, and there are so many storylines to shoot that we don’t have any time for rehearsal or tables reads. So basically whatever you see on screen is whatever we did at the time, just spontaneously at the moment. Luckily it’s worked out really well.

Paul Kane: Would you like Ando to develop a power?

James Kyson Lee: I think last year I used to daydream about it, but I’ve really come to learn to love and embrace Ando – because he’s one of the very few mortals on the show. And I think you really do need some otherwise it’s kind of hard to relate to it and be grounded and he’s one of the few characters who can bring the audience with him on the journey, so to speak. And I think he really speaks to the audience when he shares their thoughts and their views. But I don’t know (laughs). Of course it might be fun to get any kind of power, right, at some point (laughs).

Paul Kane: Because they develop them out of the blue, so it’s a possibility that Ando could...

James Kyson Lee: Maybe. You never know what’s going to happen – so if I woke up one day and I could talk to animals, I wouldn’t be surprised (laughs).

Paul Kane: Which one would you like?

James Kyson Lee: Out of the people who have one? I think flying is definitely a great one. But if I could have a power I think I’d love to be able to learn things really fast, like in **The Matrix**, he watches a video and he learns it right away, so being able to mimic or pick up various skills, whether it’s instruments or languages or even combat or any kind of sports. I think that would be brilliant.

Paul Kane: Can you tell us anything about season two at all?

James Kyson Lee: Yeah, we’re actually filming series two right now; we’re about halfway in and we’re about to start filming episode twelve so a lot of interesting things are happening. Many of the characters that you love from season one are back and we’re going to add a couple of new people with some different powers. So things get really interesting and I think in the second season it’s called ‘Generations’ and there’s going to be a lot more explanation about some of the older generation of Heroes...where some of the characters that we know have come from – so it dives into the past a lot more, and unravels some of the mysteries that are involved. It’s quite fascinating and I think people will really enjoy it.

Paul Kane: Do you feel Ando and Hiro’s relationship has changed during the course of the first season and into the second season?

James Kyson Lee: Absolutely. It started out as these two best friends, but Hiro was always like this sort of child in a fantasy land and Ando was like a reluctant participant. But they came together and I think in the event of going to a different country and experiencing these things they’ve definitely come closer. You know, in the beginning they called us the new Martin and Lewis, and Abbott and Costello and it was really fun. I think it progressed into being like Han Solo and Luke Skywalker from **Star Wars** and they both become their own men and very good friends. Hiro, obviously, I think his mission became a lot more serious because of the sword and whatnot, and I feel to counter that Ando is sort of this happy-go-lucky person, looking for the next adventure, feels like they could do anything and just encourages him. So it’s become quite a fascinating dynamic relationship.

Paul Kane: Can you tell us anything about the films you’ve got coming out next year?

James Kyson Lee: This summer I actually went to Japan for the first time and I shot an American movie called **Shutter** with Joshua Jackson and Rachael Taylor, from **Transformers**, which comes out in the States in March in the theatres, so hopefully it will be coming to the UK sometime after that. It’s a very fascinating movie, sort of like **Sixth Sense** meets **The Grudge** – a very supernatural, thriller-esque type of movie. And then I have some independent movies coming out, one we’re going to be filming next year

called **Do-Over**, which is like a high school reunion movie – myself and Maria Menounos – and the other one is called the **The Roel** and that's a sci-fi epic drama, so I think next year will be quite interesting.

Paul Kane: So what are the differences that you've found between doing TV and film?

James Kyson Lee: It's a very different experience because our show especially moves so fast; for television in America normally you have to produce a one hour show in about eight working days – which is about a week and a half to two weeks or so – but with our show, because we have so much stuff, we normally have two teams that are filming at the same time, which means we film twice as much as other shows. And now we're starting to shoot multiple shows together, two and three. So now we've got to a point where now sometimes we have four teams – that's unheard of in the television world. It's just really, really fast and just a lot of characters. Film is a little bit different because, especially if you're playing a leading character, you have a character's journey in front of you – so you have a beginning and an end, sort of like an arc. So I think there's a bit more time to prepare and it's a different experience. You can take a little more time with the storyline, whereas with TV it really had to move fast.

Paul Kane: Thanks very much for talking to us, James.

James Kyson Lee: My pleasure.

If you have enjoyed this week's issue, please consider making a small donation at www.hub-mag.co.uk. We pay our writers, and your support is appreciated.