

STORE REPRESENTATIVE



March 2021
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*inside: wide open texas - anarchy from the ground up - the women with
dried flowers - salacious crumbs - good movies for bad guys -
third world texas - reading rocks - record reviews*



**979represent is a local magazine
for the discerning dirtbag.**

editorial bored

kelly menace

art splendiddness

**katie killer & wonko zuckerberg with maren
farmer, james gray, and william daniel
thompson**

print jockey

craig wheel werker

folks that did the other shit for us

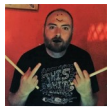
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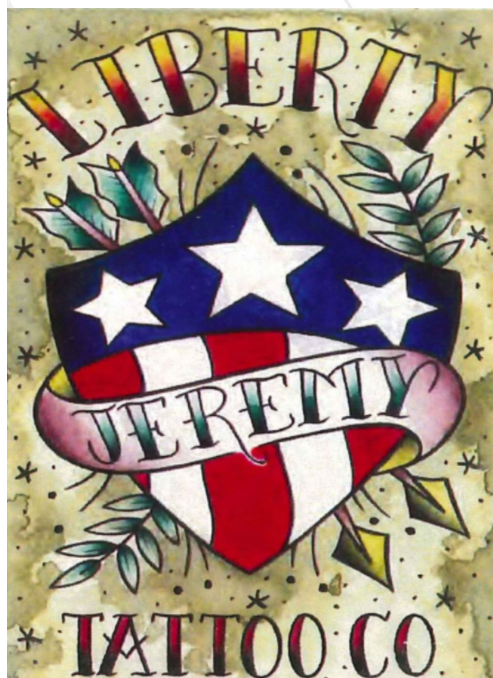
WIDE OPEN TEXAS

By the time most of you will pick up this paper Texas will be completely "wide open". Governor Greg Abbott declared in a press conference that Texas will lift its mask mandate for businesses and that businesses will be allowed to open "100 percent" by mid March. Abbott is trusting that Texans will not "abandon safe practices (y'all) have mastered over the past year. Instead...each person has a role to play in their own personal safety and the safety of others." In true Texan fashion, Abbott assumes that you are all adults and will make the right choices for the health of yourself and everyone around you. Personal responsibility is the key.

Of course, this is an amazingly ignorant assumption on Abbott's part. Sure, the national covid numbers have come back down from holiday season OHMYFUCKING-GAWD levels back down to last summer's OHLORDHAVE-MERCY levels. No longer are we infecting six figures a day but we are still talking about 60,000+ infections reported daily. It is possible those infection rates will continue to fall proportional to the number of people vaccinated but at this moment it is too soon to tell. Heck, many of you have had your first shot (I myself will have my first shot by the time many of you read this issue) but to make this declaration now rather than in two months when perhaps the curve of vaccinated versus infection meets in the middle is just mind-blowingly irresponsible. This is Dubya "Mission Accomplished" level dumbfuckery.

I find Abbott's statement particularly ironic in light of what many of you went through just two weeks ago during the Snowmageddon 2021 event. Most of you had no power for a week, froze your asses off, had your pipes break, and your houses flooded. Former governor Rick Perry said leaving Texans out in the cold was worth it to keep the feds out of the state power grid. Tell that to the folks in Dallas and Austin who all of a sudden faced astronomical power bills for that period when they had maybe 10% of normal power access. If the government doesn't keep an eye on people most of the time those people descend into assholery. That's how the free market works. We know it from watching what people do when the state DOESN'T mandate masks. It kickstarts the culture war back up all over again. Businesses will have to dictate their own policies and hope customers comply. Restaurant servers, bartenders, store managers, etc. will be put back on the front lines of having to deal with the worst sort of humanity who, when left to their own discretion, will always choose to be complete assholes to one another. It is my hope that people will keep their smartphones handy to document this behavior, as this will be the only way anyone will ever be held accountable for mask-related hatefulness.

While Abbott thinks this makes him and the state look Texas Strong it shows his administration is too weak to do the right thing and would rather abandon citizens to fend for themselves than take a strong stance. Considering what the snow response looked like last month one could say this is just Texas realigning itself back to its normal branding. Texas doing them mavericky Texas things. But Abbott's slap to the face smarts particularly sharper in light of just how stupendously state government failed the people of Texas during the blizzard last month. Abbott is preparing you for how much he will fail you on the mask mandate concealed in individual rights drag. Keep them masks on, y'all. — **KELLY MENACE**



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ANARCHY FROM THE GROUND UP



Fuck fucking Covid. Fuck a reunion. Definitely fuck a fucking relapse. Yeah. I know we are at the one year mark for what began the collapse of our....well, fucking everything. Fucking everything is not the same as it was and normal changes every day. But FUCK THAT!! I'm over it. Even if it is just for this long. Just long enough to write this down.

What is something that you are really fucking proud to have accomplished or survived during the rise of the apocalypse?

How many radical moon phases were you present for? Did you see the super conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn? Did you try to take a picture of it with your phone?

How many new recipes did you learn? Do you still have sourdough starter shoved into the back of a cabinet somewhere, long since forgotten? Go feed it, bb.

Do you remember live streaming LoudFest and how much love we shared with each other?

Did you join TikTok? Or OnlyFans?

How did you help someone this year? How did someone help you?

Did you replace any unhealthy habits with new ones that you really love and enjoy?

Is there a forgotten piece of workout equipment or sex toy that you trip over everyday?

How many new pairs of socks do you have?

Does your cat still get annoyed when you enter a room? Or does your dog get anxiety if you leave it?

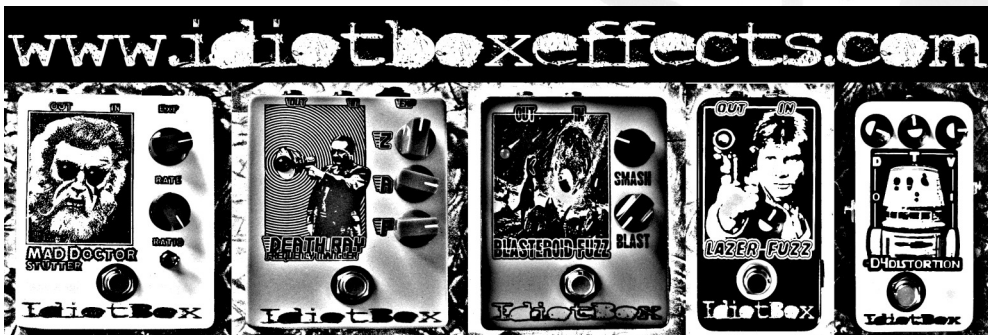
What's your favorite number of pillows to sleep with?

What are you reading? What are you writing?

What are you grateful for? What can you be grateful for? How many beautiful and amazing things are still happening in and around you despite the collapse of our former reality?

These are things I choose to focus on every day when I am mentally healthy enough. And even on the days that I am not, I use tools like gratitude to keep me out of my darkest places. Being mindful of very little things that bring you happiness, joy or even just, fuck yeah contentment, can enhance your empathy and reduce your aggression against Covid and our current circumstances of quarantine one year later. I know what it feels like to get caught up in the WTFUCKINGFUCKHAPPENEDI-WANTMYOLDWORLDBACKIMISSMYFRIENDSANDFAMILY vortex but it sucks to feel that way all of the time. I try to take breaks in between my mental collapses and practice some healthy doses of gratitude (and masturbation) when I can.

I'm grateful that spring is on the way. Are you planting a relapse apocalypse garden? My favorite thing to put in the ground right now is potatoes, beans and peas, flowers like zinnias or cosmos or climbing vines like loofah gourds! Good luck, y'all. We're heading into another phenomenal year of shaking shit up! Remember to walk in gratitude and kindness when you can. Eat pickles every day. Keep learning weird new shit. Empty all the cups and dishes from your room. And your other room. Feed yourself the most decadent meals your money can afford. Buy a Hitachi. Make your own tattoos. Cling to every little damn thing that makes your heart feel good. Teach your friends and family to do the same. Remember: We're all just walking each other home. -Ram Dass -
HALEY RICHARDSON



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GOOD MOVIES FOR BAD GUYS

I CARE A LOT

I spend a lot of time watching movies. I spend a lot of time rooting for the villain. I like villains. Proper antagonists. They keep us on our toes. They invite change and they fight the status quo. And when I see a character like Rosamund Pike's Marla Grayson, I really wanted to like her.



What's not to like about a character like Marla Grayson at first glance? She's a powerful woman, worked to get where she is at, likes to dominate in courtrooms and ruthless in business and negotiation. She's incredibly stylish and you have to admire how she floats from buildings and business tasks fluidly.

All that to say, her profession is garbage and not worthy of any sort of defense. You see, Marla has a pretty heinous grift going on, and it's all built around legal loopholes and a flawed legal system. She bribes doctors to declare senior citizens unfit to live on their own, and then after having an "emergency court session" in which the older person in question isn't even present, she fools a gullible judge into making her their legal guardian through her guardianship business. Once she is named their guardian, she springs into action, making a house call, removing her new ward from their home, placing them into an assisted living facility, cutting off communication to the outside world where she controls their diet and medicine to keep them compliant. Then, she removes the house of anything of value, putting belongings in auction and liquidates all assets, selling the house, and drains the ward of all finances.

It's a despicable scam and it's legal. Marla pays herself very well. Her office is full of happily paid employees, she wears wonderfully stylish suits and puffs on a ridiculous vape most of the time emoting the kind of smoke you expect from a demonic entity.

She's not a villain. Nah, villains have purpose. They have a cause. Marla Grayson's only desire is money. Lots of it. That's so pedestrian, it's actually boring. Now, her drive for money is pretty strong. So strong, she doesn't seem to fear death most of the time, but all the same if you are going to spend time making a character, why have her purpose be so vanilla? It also doesn't help

because of the touchy subject of Britney Spear's conservatorship or nursing home scandals coming to light to remind us all how our elderly and some people are treated, we are reminded specifically that Marla has such a hold on the system, it seems there is no way to fight it. Especially when faced with angry family members or even her own wards, Marla moves in a scary cold calculated demeanor.... The first act of the movie is a weird sort of draw. The situation is interesting and you kind of want to see where it all goes. The movie brings all that uncomfortable and awkward fascination forward. You're supposed to feel this weird conflict I think. It's an odd move for a movie that wants to make Marla the protagonist in all this, but the plot carries on when Marla's doctor friend offers to serve up a new mark for the right price.

Jennifer Peterson, is what they call a Cherry. And she is ripe for Marla's picking. She lives alone, has a big house filled with expensive furniture, drives an import and a portfolio worth lots of money. Best part is no husband or kids, so no one to fight in court if she goes missing and no one to pay inheritance to if she dies before she can drain all her assets. The scene where they take Jennifer Peterson away is kind of brutal. They escort her out of her home with police (court orders man) and in a musical montage you see her closed off from the world, not able to make a phone call, being drugged up beyond comprehension when she tries to voice her dislike while Marla and her team dismantle her home, tagging items for auction and eyeballing bank receipts, antiques and deposit boxes with the eyes of a Disney Villain peering through a crystal ball.

What they don't realize, is that this time, they picked the wrong old lady. As the plot moves along, you discover that Jennifer Peterson is actually someone else entirely and that she has ties to the Russian Mob. Enter Peter Dinklage, who plays Roman, a volatile mobster who never misses an appointment to see his mother. When the day is missed, the game is afoot. Dinklage plays a great character, as best as can be written in this movie anyway, and strangely enough I find myself rooting for the mob more than Marla. Especially since Marla refuses to let Jennifer go because the mob didn't "play by the rules" although she seems to loophole everything on a daily basis.

The story only moves along because basically we want to see what happens. I don't care about the mob and their drug mule operation. I don't care about Marla and her lawful kidnapping of people. I only really care about seeing Jennifer Peterson walk out of the nursing home and getting her life back. Even when the mob attempts

to kill Marla, we as an audience don't feel for her. I actually found myself angry she survives.

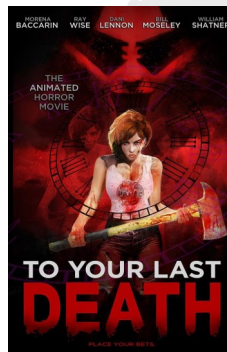
That's where this movie feels roughest. The first act of the movie offers this unique story line and situation I hadn't thought about and seems to know the injustice it creates. You have to believe it is going to give you a resolution. And as far as the mob/Marla situation goes, it brings an unsatisfying one. I mean I guess if you are rooting for money, it's OK. Karma comes in the last five to ten minutes to right everything, but by then it's too late. Almost written as an afterthought. Maybe they showed the movie to some test audiences and everyone was ticked off. It feels forced and clunky and you almost miss it. Which is unfortunate, because the story of Marla Grayson should have focused on her punishment just as much as her rise, and if the film won't show you that, is it even worth your time? Maybe halfway.

RATING: 5 outta 10 estate sales

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TILL YOUR LAST DEATH

I like Horror movies. I like Animation. So when I saw this weird little film pop up on a streaming service I was intrigued. I watched the trailer, and saw the HORRIBLE animation I almost turned it off right away, but the trailer showed all these great one line quotes and brandished it's film fest awards like a badge of honor so I decided to give it a go especially since it was marketed as the first of it's kind animated 2D movie.



Well, I don't know who awarded this thing so many awards, and I don't know how so many people find it enjoyable, because I honestly just want my 90 minutes back.

The film opens with Miriam Dekalb covered in blood claiming her father has murdered her family. The police don't believe her and since her father is a powerful man, the whole thing gets blamed on her.

Eventually finding out the story, Miriam accepts an invitation from her father for a reunion at his office building. Which is strange because all the siblings hate each other and their one redeeming moment of bonding occurred when they all announced to

the press that their father was a dangerous psycho while running for office of Vice President. (no red flags here!) So basically her Daddy Cyrus, wants to kill the kids.

Can we talk about red flags for a moment? It's not bad enough their father is basically an evil mad scientist weapons dealer type legal killer for the government or some shadowy organization. His office employees are not even thinly disguised henchmen who are all about 7 foot tall Frankenstein muscle monsters with scars and comically bad facial deformities. I mean... PLOT HOLE, if Igor the giant answered the door of my father's spooky office at night, I would politely offer a zoom meeting (there is a pandemic going on Cyrus).

Cyrus apparently had a lot of time to brood after his campaign loss. He has spent it creating elaborate ways of killing his kids. In intricate detail and ironic ways so he can gloat over a speaker as he does it. Very reminiscent of SAW, it would seem cool if we hadn't seen this in the early 00's.

Annd then the Gamemaster shows up... she's a supernatural being who looks like she got real inspired by the Matrix movie and she has the ability to time travel and put Miriam in a "game" where she has to figure out how to survive all over again with a different outcome. All the while, the Gamemaster is running said game with other celestial godlike folks as they play with human lives.

If this sounds like a lot, it is. The movie feels like it was written by a horny fourteen year old who will probably write cool movies in thirty years, but has to get through his weird blood gore fetish first. There is a scene where Miriam is talking to her boyfriend laying in bed topless that is just funny to watch as a cartoon character with huge cartoon breasts hanging out while trying to have a serious conversation which just adds to many other over the top scenes which have no bearing on the story in any way.

The thing about some animation that this movie gets compared to (like Archer) is that shows like Archer are actually well written and funny. This is supposed (?) to be a horror movie, but even the blood and gore is cheesy and it's hard to be cheesy for a cartoon. The siblings are all a train wreck and although we are supposed to root for them, you could care less. As for Cyrus, he is a comically over the top villain who deserves to be in some weird adult danger mouse cartoon.

If this was the first of it's kind, let's pray we killed it before it can spawn.

RATING: 1 out of 10 death traps. — TIM DANGER

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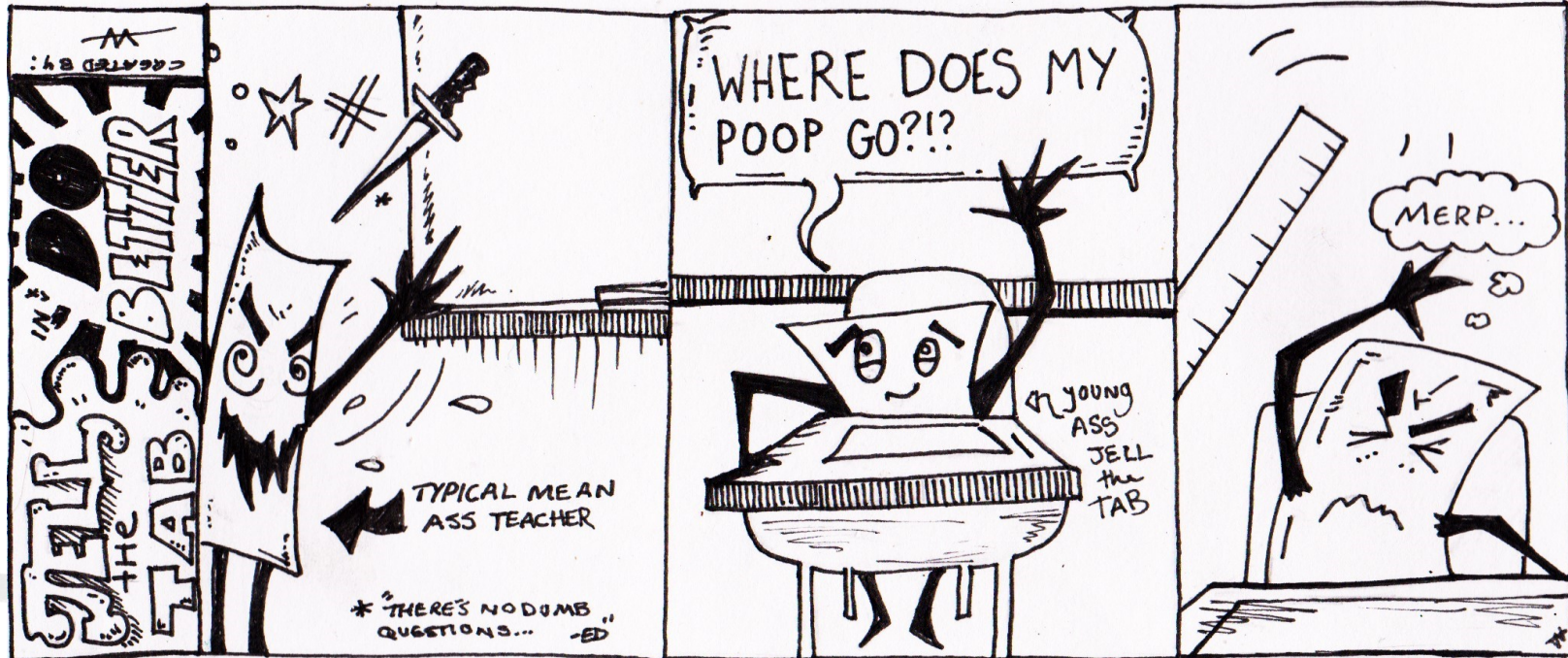


HELLO FRIENDS, AND WHAT A PLEASURE IT IS TO SEE YOU ALL AGAIN. AFTER A MUCH NEEDED 8 YEAR VACATION I'VE DECIDED TO MAKE MY GLORIOUS RETURN TO THE FAST PACED, HIGH STAKES, CUT THROAT WORLD OF LOCAL ZINE ILLUSTRATION SO NOW IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE I PRESENT TO YOU, MY ADORING FANS...

WELL... THERE IT IS... 8 YEARS IN THE MAKING... GUESS I'LL JUST COLLECT MY CHECK AND GET OUT OF HERE YOU'RE WELCOME

NOTHING
IN THRILLING
TECHNICOLOR

... SEE YALL NEXT MONTH **JAMES GRAY 2021**

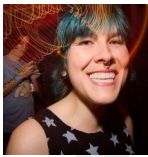


W
CRAFTED BY:
GET THE TAB BETTER

TYPICAL MEAN ASS TEACHER
*THERE'S NO DUMB QUESTIONS... -ED

WHERE DOES MY POOP GO?!?
YOUNG ASS TELL THE TAB

MERP...



SALACIOUS CRUMBS

I'm sorry guys, this is going to be so disjointed. My creativity and motivation have been coming in very short, small bursts, and I used up all of my February creative energy on sculpting a chocolate covered butt because that's what my brain

MF REFRIED BEANS are vegan friendly, with no lard animal broth, or butter! Regular rice, flour tortillas, and charro beans are still a no-go. This is straight from the kitchen manager. You guys, those Cucu's beans are my FAVORITE BEANS in town and I haven't had them



says is a great gift. Here's some stuff!

Village Foods has VEGAN CANDY BARS! Straight up Snickers-style, Almond Joy-style, full size peanut butter cup kinda candies! My brother got me a big pack of them from the brand called **Go Max Go** for Christmas and I had always wanted to try them and I'm so excited we have them in our little town now, especially because that means I can throw them onto cakes and into cookies and brownies and stuff for Crumb Boxes! GO GET THEM!

Have you tried **SOY CURLS**? They're these like...soy-based...curls. They're dry? Does that help? They look like big pieces of shredded chicken. Whatever, they're from this brand called **Butler**, and vegans on the internet have been talking about them for a long time, and I finally bought them and MAN! They rule! You can marinate them in a super flavorful chicken-y or beefy broth and throw them in a stir fry. Rehydrate them and then braise them in BBQ sauce for a long lost pulled whatever sandwich. Batter and fry them for vegan fried [insert cruel animal-based protein here]. You can marinate them and cook them slow and low to make cheap homemade vegan jerky!! They're super awesome and next time you have a few spare bucks, order some and share them with all your friends. Or I'll share mine because I might have bought six bags of them!

I got some BIG **CUCO'S NEWS** from a friendly person who uses the big vegan restaurant guide that I do a pretty bad job of maintaining (check it when you get the paper to see if I've actually updated it. I haven't!). The corn tortillas, white rice, black beans, and YES the

in...more than half a decade. I CAN'T WAIT to shovel a guac chalupa with a 32 oz side of lava beans down my gullethole!

I've also been tipped off that **Mad Melt**, the grilled cheese spot that the near-campus **Mad Taco** turned into, is working on a vegan grilled cheese, so keep an eye out for that! They're also currently using 979's own **The Pickle Witch's** (aka Haley of Granny Moon Farm) pickles on their sandwiches! Dirtbags, infiltrating the mainstays of College Station!

If you don't have March 11 marked on your calendar, you should!! It's when **Taco Bell** brings back their **POTATOES!** I haven't had Taco Bell since they took them off the menu and, like, I guess I'm alive, but if I could have a flour tube filled with those powdered beans and some little fried potatoes, man! Life would be grand for a few minutes!

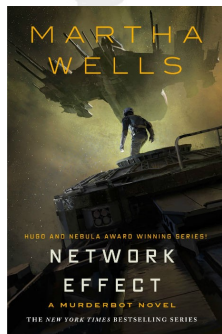
I also read that **McDonald's** signed a three year agreement with **Beyond Meat** to work on plant-based options for the most evil fast food corporation in the world. Maybe come up with some vegan friendly fries before you try and tackle burgers, chicken, and pork, okay McDonald's?

I'm compelled to tell you all that I saw a 5lb bag of **Follow Your Heart** shredded cheddar (which is a good one) at the **Farm Patch** yesterday, so whoever really needs that massive bag of cheese, I hope this note finds you, and that you magically find \$25 in your pocket.

Crumbs out! — KATIE KILLER

READING ROCKS

This novel is the fifth piece of writing involving the character Murderbot, called by some one of the most relatable characters in science fiction. Bryan resident Martha Wells has written nearly two dozen science fiction and fantasy books, but it was her novellas featuring Murderbot that garnered her two of science fiction's highest awards: the Hugo and the Nebula.



A bit of background first – Murderbot exists in a future world where companies compete for resources and planets across galaxies. Humans are the same then as they are now, but there is a rich world in artificial intelligence (AI) they largely ignore and exploit. Murderbot is a SecurityUnit, a SecUnit, essentially an AI cyborg with human and artificial parts constructed for protection to the highest degree.

Built-in weapons systems with personal drones, advanced computer skills, speed, and durability: SecUnits are the best bodyguards in all the worlds, but essentially seen as products like toasters and luggage slaved to human control ... until Murderbot becomes a rogue. However, Murderbot is not a killing machine run rampant; it just wants to be left alone with its sarcastic humor to watch trashy video series as well as figure out its place in the universe.

It's not essential to read *The Murderbot Dairies*—all wonderful novellas—to enjoy this new novel; it would just add a layer of understanding. Wells does a fine job of bringing us into the Murderbot world quickly in *Network Effect* by throwing the reader into action quickly, and the novel has plenty of action.

The plot revolves around what amounts to an extended rescue in space of its humans by Murderbot and its AI-enhanced transport spaceship.

However, the beauty of this piece of fiction is the wonderful interior monologue of Murderbot, the central character, whose head we never leave. One example is when Murderbot is shot and goes offline. When it awakes, it accesses one of its drones to watch video of what happened: "I forwarded through the boring parts with Amena being upset because of the whole me-lying-in-a-pool-of-steaming-blood-and-fluid thing and Arada trying to tell her this actually wasn't unusual for me."

At another point, one of the humans Murderbot is working with says the construction robot found on a colony world could be just something we don't recognize. Murderbot's thought: "That's probably what the Adamantine colonists thought before they got eaten or turned into liquid or whatever."

Listing examples of the clever humor exhibited by Murderbot would get tedious, so just read the first paragraph of Wells' *Network Effect* to see if it tickles the funny bone. You won't regret it. — MIKE L. DOWNEY

THE WOMEN WITH DRIED FLOWERS: SMASAQA

The frost bites back and muffles the brooks flowing off the mountains. Even the trees bow to the ice that weighs upon the high branches filled with pine. The wind licks my skin and burns my eyes, entering the clearing with the snow's orchestra crunching beneath the weight of my feet carrying my pale body, ivory like bone; like tungið. The moon's light spills over my fingers reaching out for the old gods to see beyond their borders. The closer I get the more the snow carries a scent of burning birch and iron. Closer and closer I walk while the night rests over the sky. The fires arch high and the drums bellow through their smoke. Horns of rams and antlers of elk parade against the light of the fire. Women come from the shadow, bare beneath the stars. They greet me with dried flowers hung with the spring sun, carpeting my feet in honor. Við brosum. My heart races as I see all leaders from great villages have come.

Closer to the fire, men hold swathes of pine limbs. The eldest of the men takes a long blade hidden by his side. He grabs a horn of the lone, red eyed, white skinned goat – sweeping smoothly below its head with one sharp squeal, it falls. Earls take their limbs and drench them red. I hold my breath and close my eyes. Rivers of blood wash over my arms. Streams of goat trickle over my legs. They chant with drums and stomp their feet, deafening the sounds of the winter snow falling. Their mouths, rotting and angry, curse me and the Huldra to the great wolf. I've taken their sons after their sons have taken me kicking and screaming into the night, passing me to the next to prove his worth. Violated but vindicated, each one deserved to die; dauðinn kom fljótt fyrir þá by the hands of the Huldra.

Drums pounding against the rhythm of my chest makes me a little madder with every beat. I grit my teeth and dig my nails into my own skin. The chaos makes me dizzy and the putrid smell of bloody iron has me crawling out of my body. The fire is roaring, and the men are growling for our death! And then... silence. Nothingness sways its way into my ears as if the world has fallen into the shivering sea. I open my eyes not to see Fenrir, the great wolf, but women. Dozens of women with tails like cows, and backs made of bark with dried flowers spilling from their hair. "There is no wolf," one of the Huldra says, "only trees and death." The women lunge silently. There was no great struggle or thrilling battle, for the faces of these men slid off effortlessly. We hung them on trees for the villagers to see the greedy creatures they once called free men and earls. We propped them in a row so they could have one last look at their faces nailed to the birch bark before the ice crept over them. Their pride: mirroring and bloody; not their lands or riches or even their dead sons could save these faceless unrighteous men. — JESSICA LITTLE

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THIRD WORLD TEXAS*

* (That this term is pejorative, particularly to inhabitants of said countries, is something I apologize for in advance, but it's shorthand that makes a larger point for all concerned, I hope. Again, sorry).

I worked for a decade with college-aged international students from more than two dozen nations across the globe. I heard numerous stories about their lives, their family's lives, and the stories of their countries. Some of those stories were from those who were from countries that many Americans would label as "Third-World"* with all that term entails.

Here are five particulars about what life in a Third-World* country is like:

- 1) Unreliable electric power grid: electricity is regularly off for hours, even days although usually it cycles on and off.
- 2) Untrustworthy, possibly dangerous, water supply – boiling water is mandatory ... if there's enough pressure for running water.
- 3) Fickle phone service – although everyone and her dog has a cellphone, service doesn't always function as advertised (see power and towers).
- 4) Disrupted food supply chain – bread and rice are staples stores have ... until they suddenly don't (hoarding is an issue).
- 5) Toxic leaders – officials for power, water, phone and food are either impossible to reach, promise without delivering, or blame others.

My fellow Texans, we now know what it's like to reside in a Third-World* country, thankfully only temporarily. Of course, that's an oversimplification—it's insulting to those millions who are in these countries to compare our brief hardship to their lives, but again, I'm trying to make a larger point.

Millions of Texans were without electric power with little warning, not for the "rolling outages" officials "promised," but for days on end. America has one of the best water supplies in the civilized world, but half of the State of Texas (population 29.4 million) had to start boiling its tap water ... when it had power to do so. Cellphones are great ... until cellular companies whose

technology relies on steady power goes away. Anyone have any luck getting bread, meat, milk, dog food during the storm? How about five days after the storm subsided?

And those toxic leaders? Given the xenophobic nature of many of a certain political persuasion currently in Texas leadership positions, there is a certain irony that this winter storm was named "Uri."

Texans were still freezing—and dying—while our governor was braying on national television (Fake Fox of course) that the fault for the powerless Texas millions was renewable energy, wind turbines to be precise. Naturally, he completely ignored the truth—that wind power supplies between 13 and 18 percent of Texas power needs. And that they froze because he and his cohorts ignored the 2011 freeze recommendations to winterize not just turbines, but the generators for natural gas (frozen) and oil (frozen) and even coal (did you know frozen coal won't burn until it thaws?).

You know why those in the frozen northern part of America (New York etc.) and the western states like the Dakotas, Montana, and Wyoming seldom have power outages during those blizzards? Their electric power grids share power with each other when the demand is too great. Know how many power grids Texas shares power with? Right, none. Texas chose independence over security for its citizens. That's why President Biden declared Texas a disaster area, all 254 counties.

Texans deserve better leadership, particularly leaders who flee the cold ("Cancun" Cruz) and throw their own children under the bus in a pathetic excuse for their craven behavior. Oh, the other Texas senator left the state earlier ... to play golf in Florida with the defeated past president.

The Texas Legislature is in session right now, and it is up to us to bombard those leaders with demands to do something now for the next time this happens. You know it will happen again this summer with the rolling outages, and with climate change, this extreme weather like Uri will happen with more regularity. Texans, we deserve better than this. — MIKE L. DOWNEY

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Stormkeep
Galdrum

As I pen this review, the weather is absolutely grim. Outside lies a forlorn wasteland covered in a blanket of ghostly white. Not a sound can be heard on the wind save for the overwhelming silence of winter's frozen majesty. If you are guessing, dear reader, that this is going to be a black metal review, then you guessed rightly! Coming in late to my list of the Top 10 releases for 2020, Stormkeep boasts members from death metal band, Blood Incantation, and old west black metal outfit, Wayfarer, both bands receiving considerable praise for their respective 2019 and 2020 releases. Combining their forces, these Coloradans has created *Galdrum*, a potent black metal EP so good that even I, a guy who doesn't care all that much for EPs, had to buy it!

As the band's name implies, Stormkeep's brand of black metal is epic; and if their name doesn't imply it enough, the artwork by the massively talented Ian Miller certainly will. Melodies, a cavernous atmosphere, and story-telling lyrics dealing with mighty kingdoms and great battles that have passed into myth and legend, abound in *Galdrum*. The band engages in what can only be described as musical "world-building"; a technique that authors of fantasy novels use to create the setting and mythos of their stories. By far, the most important musical element is the guitar melodies, which help to create an otherworldly feeling that permeates every song. This atmosphere is made even more tangible by the utilization of sampling such as clashing swords, battle cries, and choir vocals. The mystical ethos is only solidified by the introduction of traditional Medieval instruments such as a flute, which does not stray into folk metal at all and rather acts as guiding principle for creating context. This music has a "feeling", one that makes the listener believe it was made for an entirely different world where dragons, wizards, and fantastic dangers exist.

The length of *Galdrum* is nearly perfect, clocking in under thirty-three minutes. Given that two of the tracks are over ten minutes long, and the other two tracks are around five and six-and-a-half minutes, the band has constructed an experience that doesn't bore the listener nor demand a great amount of time. This punctuality entices the listener to become fully invested into the world Stormkeep has created with their music. Though I am not certain if *Galdrum* was meant to be conceptual, the arrangement of the tracks certainly feels that way, as it has a definite beginning, middle, and end, just like a story book. When listening, it is easy for the listeners to immerse themselves in the stories conveyed in the songs. The band's knack for suspending the audience's disbelief is able to transport the listeners to another time and place, soliciting the same pleasurable effect one would get from reading a fantasy novel.

Despite the phenomenal job Stormkeep has done with *Galdrum*, there is one glaring problem I have with it, and that is that I want more! Unlike most atmospheric black metal records wherein I feel like I've come home from a long and taxing journey that required my utmost attention, I have spun this record multiple times in a single sitting because it naturally grabs my attention and I want it to last longer. If this is what the band is capable of with the brevity of an EP, I cannot wait to see what Stormkeep is capable of with the length of a full-length record. How they have managed to demand the full investment of the listener while having such a short play time requires a level of talent that is simply incomprehensible to me.

To say the least, paying \$25.00 for a physical EP may sound unreasonable, but now that I have it, I can say that it was worth every penny. Perhaps *Galdrum* struck me so positively because I'm a nerd with a master's degree in Medieval Literature who loves fantasy and sword n' sorcery very much, so one could certainly color me biased. However, I don't think that is necessarily the case. I can find no fault with this magnificent piece of Medieval black metal lore; it is simply a masterpiece of talented songwriting that fans of melodic black metal and Bathory's latter albums will certainly love, and for that it gets and easy 5:5 from me. Perfection! — CALEB MULLINS



Jason Eady & Courtney Patton
Something Together

The duets album by this husband and wife duo, two of the finest practitioners of Americana in Texas, serves as a good introduction to both of their sounds. They draw on their past work along with a few select covers among the 14 songs.

The most emotionally-powerful tune is Patton's song about missing her husband while he's on tour: "Twelve Days." A gentle fingerpicked tune with Patton's poignant voice asks "How's the road been/Is it treating you good?" and "Did you need your jacket like I said you would?" However, the universality of lyrics like "Your side of the bed seems to hate that I'm alone" and "And when I see your headlights darling/ everything will be just fine" indicate the quality of the songwriting and performance.

The pair have a great deal of fun exchanging leads of their cover of "Better Move it On Home" as well as an Eady co-written tune: "Man on a Mountain." Eady and Patton also do a fetching version of Merle Haggard's "My Favorite Memory," which is followed by a stunning Patton original—"The Words to My Favorite Memory."

Another Patton tune, "So This is Life," is a wrenching look at a woman's life over time. Equally heartbreaking is Eady's "Cry Pretty" about a pair of former lovers accidentally meeting. Patton's "Twisted" is another take on a love gone bad. "Where I've Been" is a quiet meditation on the challenges of keeping a relationship going while "Suffering Fools" depicts the discussion to let each other go.

For all the clever wordplay, it's the simple beauty of Eady's "Love Song" for Patton that resonates. Unpretentious but elegant lines like "I've thought of so many ways to say it/But I always come back to 'I love you'" and "I've been trying to write you a love song/And I

hope this one will do" filtered through Eady's unadorned voice, backed by Patton's tender harmonies, are a treasure. — MIKE L. DOWNEY



The Gary
Follow

Austin trio The Gary gives me a fluit of fancy. They have me imagining a world, *Man In the High Castle* style, where D. Boon didn't die. Minutemen didn't break up. FIREHOSE never happened. In this world D. Boon grew old. Minutemen toured Texas a few times in the early 90s with The Jesus Lizard and Butthole Surfers and D. became enamored with the guitar stylings of Duane Denison and Paul Leary. Watt decided he was gonna play his bass guitar just like a really big regular guitar. No more single string lines, he was always gonna strum that sumbitch like a giant ukulele. George Hurley started having arthritis and begged the band to slow down and explore the space between notes instead of always cramming every idea into one hectic 50 second song. So D. and Watt obliged. The heat was good for George's limbs and they loved those Central Texas bands so Minutemen left their native Pedro for Barton Springs.

To make west coast dates the band had to drive mile after mile across the vast nothingness of west Texas and the drained ocean floors, mesas, and infinite skies began to color how the band wrote songs. D. and Watt settled in with domestic partners and instead of writing agitprop political songs about the world outside, they began to write songs about the personal politics within, about watching TV and having board game nights with your friends and not feeling like you had to get wasted every weekend. Well, this really happened, except the band that sounds exactly like this is The Gary and the EP they just put out is called *Follow*. It is their sixth release and it's been seven years since the last release. If you love all the bands mentioned above in my fever dream you will absolutely love this record. — KELLY MENACE

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