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EDITORIAL:

by alasdair stuart

The Other Project Space Monkey

Monkeys, like pirates, ninja, robots, gigantic monsters and zombies are one of those pop culture perfect tens. Throw a monkey at something (Or, the logic goes, a gigantic undead monkey who must fight a zombie ninja, possibly also a monkey) then, much like South Park's underpants gnomes, you have your doorway to wealth, fame and, of course, social change.

Well, maybe just that last one.

Tim Pratt is one of those authors you may not know about but really, really should. Tim's combination of wild fantasy and keenly observed character makes anything he produces a must read, or listen, and Tim? Well, Tim loves monkeys and, even better, Tim believes monkeys can be used as a force for good. He twittered that an anthology about monkeys and apes titled Monkeypunk would be a force of good. He was right. Editor Patrick Klima and guest editor John Ward took the... banana... shaped... ball and ran with it and the end result, entering stage left with a banana in one hand and a katana in the other? Is Raisemonkeypunk: <http://raisemonkeypunk.com/about/>

Go, read, if you like it donate to charity:water. Better still? Write a story, tell your friends, help some people. Help them with monkeys. What could be better?

(Also, don't forget to go check out *Marco and the Red Granny*, our first podcast serial. Written by the incomparable Mur Lafferty! <http://www.hubfiction.com/2010/11/marco-and-the-red-granny-part-4/>



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FICTION

The Wall

by keith harvey

Bats scattered from shadowed caves in the Sierra Madre, as Colonel Calypso's Spring Dragon 6, a SUV hybrid designed in Wolfsburg and manufactured especially for the Mexican Federal Police in Shenzhen, China, sped north an hour or so before dusk.

Calypso, turning away from the SUV's tinted window, snuggled deep into its black leather rear seat and read the remainder of the electronic dispatches from La Ciudad. Rubbing his eyes, he glanced up to catch the last glint of a crimson sun-- its rays surging over the rugged ridge of the red mountains-- before he barked at his driver and aide-de-camp, Sergeant Cantu: "Osvaldo, slow down, you're going to hit a pot hole and wreck a wheel shaft."

"Sí," snapped Cantu through gritted teeth, as he lowered his speed. "This road is a *bruja*, Colonel."

Calypso frowned at the man's conjuring the witch as a curse, crossed himself, and then said sardonically: "If it bothers you, text *El Presidente*, but please, this time, use your own sim card." Cantu looked into the rear view mirror and said in falsetto: "I don't need no stinking sim card."

A moment passed before Cantu laughed. The two had been together for ten years, ever since the border riots of 2029, and they shared a sarcastic, fatalistic humor, an extreme fear of witches, especially those from Luna, and a love of old movies, especially *gringo* movies of the fifties and sixties of the last century.

Still laughing, Calypso folded his electronic pad four times into a tiny cube, deposited it in his left fatigue pocket, ran his fingers through his thick black hair, and then asked: "How much further, Osvaldo?"

Cantu cleared his throat, wiped the tears of laughter from his black eyes, and ordered the SUV's computer: "Calculate estimated time of arrival."

The computer replied in the voice of Salma Hayek, the most famous Mexican actress in history: "ETA at load-down terminal 616—Sonoran Sector--in three hours."

Calypso leaned forward and put a weathered hand on the back of the black leather seat and whispered: "That is if you don't break an axle or turn us over."

As the last of the sun spread like a vermilion sliver across the top of the mountains and shadows extended and stretched across the desert toward the macadam road, Calypso closed his eyes and fell asleep.

A few minutes later he awoke to Salma's strident warning that an Anglo-American spy drone had locked onto their coordinates. In response, Calypso placed his elbows on the back of the front seat and ordered the computer to determine the make and model of the drone. The computer, assured by his calm command, soon purred in reply: "Reaper 66, manufactured in Quebec in 2028, broadcasting an Anglo-American Alliance signal."

Calypso slapped the seat with his left hand. "Damn it, Osvaldo, why do they continually break the rules?" Startled by the swat against the back of his seat, Cantu swore and handed him the satellite phone, cradled in the SUV's dash.

Calypso listened for a signal and then texted Command in La Ciudad that an Anglo-American Reaper was targeting road traffic rather than maintaining the twenty mile no-fly rule. With the message sent he handed Cantu the phone and then swiveled in his seat to better see the lights of the Reaper; he hoped to God it was not on a search and destroy of human contraband. *Those blasted machines*, he thought, *couldn't tell one Mexican from another.*

As the reaper dipped its left wing to turn toward them, Calypso called out somewhat stridently: "Computer, activate the commercial/humanitarian code and beam our info-numerical to that blasted machine."

A few seconds after Salma Hayek transmitted the code the Reaper dipped its right wing, turned sharply toward the north, and disappeared into a darkening haze—blacker than the night—emanating from the hive city, Heroica Nogales. Relieved Calypso leaned back and covered his eyes with his hand.

Twenty minutes later Cantu announced: "I can see the lights of the tent city, Colonel."

Calypso straightened and said: "Slow down and prepare yourself." He, then, unsnapped his holster and removed his forty-five caliber Springfield XD compact automatic, manufactured in the Dakota province in 2024, and held it securely in his lap with the safety off.

On the edge of the tent city, barefooted children ran toward the Spring Dragon, screaming, laughing, and begging for a handout. A large wooden cross marked the entrance to the refugee camp and Calypso noted that someone had sprayed a message in reflective paint on *la Cruz*: "Jesus Saves."

As the children hurried toward the vehicle with their hands outstretched, Calypso barked "Electrify." The outside shimmered blue, as Salma Hayek sang out to the children—"Warning, Warning, Electrical Field; high voltage. Please step back; please step back."

The children, startled and scared, backed away, as Cantu maneuvered through the tent city that, in some places, completely swallowed the two-lane macadam road that interrupted the makeshift slum that encircled the outer rings of the Hive City.

Within the ad-hoc encampment, elevated adverts, lining the road, blinked infomercials, as buskers, prostitutes, and hawkers screamed out their talents and wares and electrically propelled government hover cars whirred above them. Within the tumult of the throng, more children crowded the shoulder of the road screaming and laughing. Calypso, bothered by the poverty and hunger all around him, looked up and away from the children pushing toward the vehicle. One neon tag caught his attention: "people are consuming machines; disassemble the machine." Beneath the sign, a young girl, fourteen or fifteen, wearing a black mini, waved at him, ran her left hand slowly between her brown thighs, and leered. A Digem cigarette smoldered on her lower lip.

Calypso sighed. The tent city grew up around the Heroica Nogales just five years ago and continued to expand ever since. He could not imagine what the people thought they were doing or what they hoped to achieve by camping out on the doorsteps of Nogales; did they hope, he asked himself, that some prophet would shout the walls down and they could cross into the promised land of the Anglo-American Alliance. Didn't they know that products cross borders; not people.

Eventually they reached the first fence surrounding the Hive City; it was a barbed-wire contraption manned by a squad of regular soldiers. Electric lights mounted on forty foot creosote posts ran parallel with it and illuminated the perimeter. Cantu stopped the SUV at a gate and a corporal in sweat-stained green fatigues shuffled toward the vehicle. Once he reached them, Cantu ordered the electrical charge off and lowered his window. The Sonora heat radiated into the cabin and the sweating corporal grimaced as frigid air from the vehicle's air conditioning assaulted him. He stepped back involuntarily, scratched the stubble of his black curly beard, and belched: "Papers please?"

Cantu handed him a smart card with their travel code and orders embedded. The man slipped the card into a flat palm-size computer hanging on his belt and then touched the ear bead in his left ear. He nodded when he received the clearance code and waved at one of his men to open the gate. As Cantu pulled away, the man half-heartedly saluted Calypso, who grunted his disgust and ignored the salute.

A mile later, after wending their way through narrow asphalt streets, lined with pink adobe houses, they crossed a narrow stone bridge, stretched over a dried stream bed that was littered with cola cans, garbage bags, dilapidated furniture, syringes and condoms of various colors and stopped at a reinforced steel gate of the second outer wall, known in the city as the second ring. Automatic Gatling guns adorned its parapets like gargoyles and a Captain, wearing mufti, emerged from a guard house, followed by two uniformed men, carrying Austrian MK-36 (2027) sub-machine guns and guiding guard dogs.

The troopers waited patiently on each side of the vehicle as the two German shepherds sniffed the undercarriage and urinated on the Japanese reinforced steel-belted tires. When the dogs moved away,

the Captain signaled some unseen operator and the gate opened onto a wider, better maintained macadam road, lined with colorful stucco houses. People milled around the streets and shops, blocking their way, and Calypso, frustrated at the continued delay, said: "Turn on the siren."

The people slowly made way for the SUV, as they drove another two miles to the third wall—the first ring-- and the entrance to the elevated hive city—Heroica Nogales.

The last fence was a forty-foot high obsidian barrier and Cantu stopped the SUV in front of its adamantine gate. No guards were visible; just a mechanical box on an iron rod, into which Cantu inserted the smart card. The gate opened automatically and they entered the Hive City, the city the politicians and *nacros* referred to as Emerald City.

A *Policía Federal*, a PF, dressed in black fatigues and wearing a balaclava to disguise his identity waved them through the gate and pointed them to the left, toward the entrance of an underground car park. Calypso knew the rules: no carbon-powered vehicles from this point forward and no weapons. He slipped the safety on and holstered his automatic, as Cantu parked in a VIP parking slot on the ninth level of the underground.

An electric cart soon arrived, driven by a woman in a skin-tight black uniform. "Colonel," she said, "Ensign Bolaño, I am to drive you and your aide to the heli-pad for transport to load-terminal 616."

Calypso nodded, opened the hatch of the SUV and unlocked a safe welded into its frame; he removed a stainless steel attaché case and stowed his automatic. He stepped back, snapped his fingers and pointed at the safe; Cantu nodded, handed him his pistol and holster, and then took a seat next to the Ensign on the electrical cart. Calypso locked the SUV and climbed onto the back seat.

Under the metallic drone of the electric motor, Cantu fell asleep. Calypso sat silent in the back, thinking, as Bolaño maneuvered through the bee-hive interstices of the underground alleyways that led to the entrails of the hive.

Twenty minutes later she delivered them to an elevator tube dedicated exclusively to the heli-port on the roof of the hive-city. As Calypso stepped out of the electric car, Bolaño said: "I will be here when you return, Colonel." The air-conditioned air of the hive had an acerbic taste that irritated his throat. He coughed and punched Cantu to wake him. "Sergeant, we are here," he said.

Cantu rubbed his eyes, straightened his beret, and mumbled: "Yes, Colonel."

They took the elevator tube up through seventy-five levels of the hive city. With their ears popping, they stepped out onto the steel and plastic heli-port, where a PF, identical to the one that waved them into the car park, waited for them. In the distance a solid black French Sikorsky turbo idled.

A tall blond man, wearing a black suit, white shirt, and leather tie, approached them from the idling copter. He was so tall he bent almost double to avoid the Sikorsky's prop, as he extended a meaty fist and said in English: "Van Kahnweiler, colonel, glad to meet you." Before Calypso could answer, the man put his arm around Calypso's shoulder and guided him toward the helicopter. "If you don't mind colonel, we are on a very tight schedule."

Calypso hesitated and said: "I'm in no hurry." The man turned and grimaced, as Calypso ignored the man's obvious ire and explained: "Because of your no-fly rules I just drove all the way from La Ciudad. It took us almost two days. In the past, these quarterly meetings to discuss operations of the load-terminal were fairly leisurely: in fact, almost a pleasure for me. But now the trip is arduous and dangerous. So, if you don't mind, I would like to shower, shave, eat, and sleep, Mr. van Kahnweiler." The man smiled a crooked grin and said: "I understand colonel and I am sympathetic but today is different; today is your lucky day. Today you have won the lottery. Now please come with me, we are late."

Even though the man was smiling, his pale blue eyes bore down on him and Calypso sensed imminent or potential violence. Cantu, also, was alert to the threat and Calypso saw him, out of the corner of his eye, crouching, ready to spring. To avoid violence, Calypso sighed, shrugged his shoulders, and said, "Lead on Kahnweiler."

"You may call me Ruik, colonel," the man said, as he moved toward the waiting helicopter.

Load-terminal 616 was technically in Mexico; however, under United Nations Treaty 16543 (2031), the area fell under United Nations Jurisdiction and control. As a *quid pro quo* for that control the Anglo-American Alliance assumed all responsibility for the financing and security of the facility, as well as control

of all roads and rails entering or leaving it. In addition, because of or perhaps as a result of the riots of 2029, the United Nations passed Resolution 72666-b3 (2030), which mandated that a corridor extending fifty miles south of the North America-Mexico trade barrier, known as the Border Wall or the Great Wall, would be a no-fly zone for all airships, except those owned and operated by either the Alliance or its designated assignees. In other words, the Anglo-American Alliance would regulate all flights coming from Mexico, Central America, and South America.

They took their seats and the Sikorsky took off, circled the apex of the Hive City, and then followed the Great Wall west, heading toward the load-terminal. Calypso enjoyed flying and he used this rare opportunity to scan the virtually empty space north of the wall. Small cities once dotted the desert but the Anglo-Americans were consolidating their population in hive cities and turning all the spaces around them into massive farms. The open land in the north was for cultivation or animal propagation controlled by the agricultural mega-corporations.

As they neared the mammoth terminal, Calypso watched a McDonnell-Douglas 2030 turbo dirigible dock. He had only seen one of the huge ships once or twice before and he felt a child-like sense of wonder at the sight of the solar-powered airship hovering placidly above the load-terminal. This particular model he remembered could carry up to seven hundred passengers and travel an unlimited range at a speed of 300 kph. The ship displayed the symbol of the salamander, the logo of the multi-national defense and construction company, Argent Noir, also known simply as The Company, and the city of its origin—Quebec City.

As soon as the Sikorsky set down on the pad, van Kahweiler was out and leading Calypso and Cantu toward the dirigible. Its size dwarfed anything Calypso had ever seen before and he willingly trailed after Kahnweiler. They soon reached the ramp leading to an adamantine cupola, where a blonde in black fatigues greeted them. The shoulder patch on her left arm displayed a yellow background with the Anglo-American insignia—three stacked red “As,” forming what appeared to be either a pyramid or an oil derrick, crisscrossed with fasces, a bundle of rods. Calypso identified her as a member of the Black ops unit, known as Special Forces or SF.

“Welcome aboard colonel,” she said. “Please follow me to the dining room; they are waiting for you.”

As they worked their way through the labyrinthine design of the ship another SF officer appeared and said: “Sir, we have made arrangements for your sergeant to join our non-commissioned officers for lunch in the mess on the second level.”

Cantu frowned but Calypso waved him away; his presence would not help if the Anglos decided to kill them on the ship. They were both unarmed and outnumbered.

The blonde led him to a wooden door marked “executive dining room” and knocked. A voice called out to enter and the door opened onto a wood-paneled room housing a long dining table with four places of crystal and fine china set at the end. Three men sitting at the table rose to greet Calypso. One of them, Father Hector Rebollendo, stood and walked toward Calypso with a smile on his face and both arms extended. Calypso stopped, startled by the appearance of his favorite philosophy professor from his stint at Loyola University in New Orleans twenty-five years ago.

“Father,” he asked in Spanish, “what the hell are you doing here with these *gringos*?”

Rebollendo smiled wryly and said: “I am doing the Lord’s work, Roberto, and I hope to persuade you to do the same.”

The other two men joined Rebollendo and the priest introduced them: “Roberto, let me introduce Bishop Britton of Toronto and Colonel Max Schilling of the SF.

Calypso shook each of their hands.

“Please join us for lunch, Colonel,” said Britton. “We have some interesting news and a proposition for you and your brother, *El Presidente*.”

“Ah,” thought Calypso. “*That was it; they want something from my brother and they are prepared to bribe or threaten me to get to Alfonso.*”

Van Kahnweiler entered the room and joined them at the table. As soon as he sat down, the Priest cleared his throat, smiled, and said: “Listen, Roberto, I am not going to beat around the bush with you. We are here because we want something from *El Presidente* but it is not what you think. It is a great opportunity

for Mexico and the west." He paused and cleared his throat; his eyes were sparkling with excitement. The Holy Father has decided to leave Rome and create a new Vatican City in La Ciudad."

Calypso coughed and reached for a crystal goblet of mineral water. "What?" he stuttered, as he lowered the goblet to the table.

The priest continued: "The Holy Father no longer feels Europe is safe. The EU is no longer predominantly Christian and most of the Church's growth is coming from either Africa or Central and South America. He feels it's time to move and he wants to relocate to Mexico."

Calypso thought for a moment and asked: "Why come to me? There are plenty of priests in La Ciudad; thousands in fact who could intercede with my brother."

Van Kahnweiler interrupted and said: "The Holy Father has granted my company a contract to negotiate, finance, and construct the new Vatican City; consequently, we want to pave the way for our entrance into La Ciudad."

"What makes you think we would allow the Company into Mexico?" snapped Calypso.

"Brother, what makes you think we aren't there now?" hissed van Kahnweiler.

The muscles in Calypso's jaw fluttered and tensed; he wanted to lash out at the pompous Kahnweiler but he knew the SF would be all over him before he reached the man. Instead, he said, "I doubt we will be interested in doing a deal with you but I will convey your message to my brother. But I have to be honest; I will do everything in my power to prevent the Company from entering Mexico. Let the Holy Father come. The people will dance in the streets but the Anglo-American Alliance and the Company can stay away."

Van Kahnweiler's eyes blinked and Calypso imagined he saw a serpentine skull buried beneath the man's chalk-white skin.

After the men exchanged some meaningful glances, Schilling nodded and said sternly: "All right, Colonel; I think we understand your position. Thank you for coming. I know you have your quarterly meeting and we do not want to detain you with chit-chat over lunch about a subject that obviously doesn't interest you."

The door opened and a SF officer escorted him from the dirigible, where Cantu waited for him on the roof, next to the idling Sikorsky.

Cantu asked: "What happened? They threw me out before I could finish my gazpacho."

Calypso took off his beret and ran his fingers through his hair. "I will tell you once we get out of here. Let's finalize the monthly audit and head home. We are not wanted here, my friend."

Twenty-four hours later, Calypso sat in a dingy cement room seventy-five feet beneath the train terminal of load-terminal 616, surrounded by fifteen accountants pouring over spread sheets projected onto a wall painted white. As Hermes Gonzalez explained the numbers, Calypso sipped a tepid cup of coffee, scratched the stubble of his thick beard, and scanned the columns of numbers representing the tons of grain shipped from the north over the last quarter.

His eyes burned, as he squirmed in his chair to relieve his stiffness, sniffed the stale air that was redolent of unwashed bodies, and silently yearned for an end to this ordeal. Not only was the room stiflingly hot, the numbers were shocking and he was worried about the audit's conclusions, which predicted a future famine for La Ciudad. Additionally, his mind continued to wander back to the meeting with the Anglos, which promised another, more far-reaching threat for Mexico.

Just as he thought he could take no more of the auditors' reports, Gonzalez cleared his throat, turned toward him, and asked: "Do you have any questions, Colonel?"

Calypso put his coffee cup down on the folding table and rubbed his nose with the index finger of his left hand, a nervous twitch that signaled he did have a question. "Why has there been such an uptick in demand in Nogales for grain?"

Gonzalez nodded and turned to his computer, where he typed in a series of commands. Suddenly, a bar graph appeared showing a correlation between the rise in demand and an incipient increase in the population of the tent city surrounding the hive. Over the last year, the number of refugees had increased by seventy-five percent.

Calypso leaned forward to better see the chart and rubbed his chin as he studied the figures. "So, you

are attributing the increase in demand to an increase in population of the homeless outside the walls?"

Gonzalez shrugged his shoulders, as if to ask—isn't it obvious? Calypso looked up and caught the man's gaze, which indicated that he too was perplexed by the number of Mexicans moving north and congregating around the wall like flotsam and jetsam.

Gonzalez scratched the stubble on his face and said, almost in a whisper: "Colonel, as you can see, we will need a modification in the budget to deal with the increase in demand. Otherwise, we will have a disaster on our hands if we can no longer feed these people."

Calypso stood and walked to the coffee pot and poured fresh coffee into his cup. As he stirred a packet of Chinese powdered milk into the coffee, he said: "Most of the grain allocated to this load-terminal is designated for delivery to La Ciudad, not Nogales. Over the last few weeks, however, you have diverted shipments to Heroica Nogales without orders or authority; consequently, there has been a shortage in the city and a steep increase in grain prices. Who controls this grain?"

Gonzalez did not respond to the question; instead, Carla Espinosa asked: "What would you have done, Colonel, faced with the starvation of thousands of people?"

Calypso sipped the coffee before answering her question with a question. "Why are they here? Why have thousands of people moved north to a closed border to starve in tents?"

Espinosa blinked, unable to answer the question, which allowed Calypso to ask another question, which he knew was rhetorical. "Why has the population of Heroica Nogales increased by three hundred percent in the five years?"

He now had everyone's attention in the room so he decided to ask yet another question that no one seemed to have an answer. "Why would people flock toward the north when the Anglo-Americans sealed their borders and closed down all transportation links between our countries?" He sat down and continued. "Wouldn't the logical thing for the Mexican people to do would be to turn south and immigrate to the emerging Mayan states?"

Espinosa asked: "But isn't that happening? Haven't we formed alliances with the south?"

Calypso nodded. "Yes, the government has but the people seem drawn toward the north; to those empty spaces north of the wall. It is like a vacuum is pulling them but they stick against the wall."

Gonzalez pulled a folding chair near Calypso's, sat down, and said: "But that does not solve our problem. We have hundreds of thousands of people to feed. What do we do?"

Calypso sighed and said: "You must follow your orders. The people outside the walls of Heroica Nogales are our problem. I will discuss it with the President as soon as I return to La Ciudad. In the meantime, you must ship all grain available south." He paused to sip his coffee and monitor their response. He could tell they did not like the order so he said: "If you do not do as I command, I will have to take over the grain supplies in the load-terminal."

Espinosa gasped: "You mean send in the military?"

He shrugged in response and finished his coffee. Then he asked: "Are we finished?"

Gonzalez nodded and Calypso stood and shook each of the accountants' hands before he left the room.

Cantu was asleep in a chair in the hall outside of the conference room and Calypso kicked his boot to awaken him. The sergeant awoke instantly and fell in behind the colonel who was moving quickly toward the elevators. "Let's get some decent food, Osvaldo."

"How about the cantina?" he said slyly.

As they waited for the elevator, Calypso said: "I don't know why not? It will be full of gringos though."

Cantu shrugged and winked. "I agree, my friend. So what if we have to dine in a room full of gringos? They couldn't be worse than our unwashed accountants. Could they?"

They exited the administration building of the terminal into a clear night, the sky alight with stars. A grain train from Calgary emerged from the tunnel that ran beneath the desert from Tucson, underneath the wall, and then into the load-terminal. A whoosh of wind slapped them and they staggered against its force, as the train, with five engines on the front and four on the rear, sped into the yard, pulling over a thousand cars loaded with wheat and corn. It would slow for several miles before halting but already servitors were moving down the sides of the track toward the train to break it apart and re-configure the cars for off-

loading and continuation to other load-terminals.

Calypso picked up his red beret from the cement sidewalk and coughed to clear his throat of debris thrown up by the speeding train. "Let's get off this walkway before another one comes in," he barked. Cantu rubbed his nose and then sneezed three times.

Outside the terminal's train yard, they found a rickshaw stand and decided to share a double to the *zona rosa*, the area designated for bars, taverns, Japano-stacks, *maison clos*, and duty-free shops. Over fifty-thousand visitors entered the load terminal per month and the corporate franchise that ran the terminal squeezed every pound or peso that it could get from the crews on the trains.

Cantu wanted to eat at Voss, a tavern run by a middle-aged German expatriate named Grossman. He liked Voss because of an entertainer named Lola, who sang sultry ballads and flirted with the clientele. Cantu swore he loved her, although he had never spoken two words to her. Calypso didn't care one way or another but the food, mostly steak, was good, and the tequila outstanding.

Their rickshaw driver, a spindly man in his fifties, wore nothing except a pair of worn Adidas and nylon cargo pants. Sweat glistened on his shaved head as he maneuvered through the narrow passageways of the load-terminal. Within a few minutes he arrived at the Voss, lowered the arms of the rickshaw, and pulled a towel from a tin box tacked onto the front of the carriage and vigorously rubbed his head. Calypso paid him before climbing down and then followed Cantu into the bar, where Grossman greeted them. "Colonel, what an honor it is to have a member of the presidential family in my establishment."

Calypso, embarrassed by the man's unctuous greeting simply ignored it and asked for a table away from the band. Cantu, who wanted to be as near Lola as possible, shot him a hang-dog look that indicated he preferred a table in front of the stage. Calypso refused to relent, however, and pointed at a table way in the back in a curtained alcove; he was tired and hungry and just wanted to enjoy his meal. Romance was the last thing on his mind.

As Grossman led them to the table in the alcove far away from the music, Cantu muttered epithets under his breath and looked longingly over his shoulder at the Viennese woman crooning on the stage. Calypso smiled sardonically at his friend before saying: "You can go and sit at one of the chairs around the stage, if you want." Cantu asked shyly, "You don't mind?" Calypso slapped him on the shoulder and answered: "No, go ahead. I have some things on my mind anyway. I wouldn't be much company for you tonight, my friend."

Cantu almost ran to the stage. Calypso scanned the e-menu Grossman handed him and ordered steak and a *cerveza*, then leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. He dozed off for a moment but awoke to the sound of laughter at the next table. On the table in front of him was a *cerveza* in a frosty glass, a basket of chips, and a bowl of guacamole. He rubbed his eyes and looked over at the laughing woman. She was young, probably in her twenties and wearing a uniform of some sort. It was gray with red trim and beneath the tunic she wore a white cotton shirt and black tie. He noted her skin was very pale and her eyes a luminous blue. Her hair, however, was dark black and long, braided and hanging down her back.

It took him a minute to realize she was speaking French and that the man she was talking to you was the corporate agent, van Kahnweiler. He instantly suspected this was no coincidence.

In French, van Kahnweiler said loudly: "He is awake."

The woman turned and greeted Calypso with a broad smile that revealed very white, very even teeth. Calypso immediately recognized the dentistry of the Anglo-American Alliance.

Van Kahnweiler stood and said, "Colonel Calypso, may I introduce Chief Engineer Alette de Meudon."

Calypso rose stiffly and shook the woman's hand that he noted was small, firm, and very warm. "Almost feverish," he thought.

"Pleasure, Colonel," she said brightly in Spanish. Then she added, "Please join us."

Calypso shot an angry look toward Cantu who was watching Lola, unaware of his plight.

He cleared his throat, picked up his beer, and moved to their table.

"So, Colonel," asked van Kahnweiler, "is the audit finished?"

Calypso sipped his beer and replied: "Yes, we finished an hour or so ago."

Van Kahnweiler rubbed his hands together and then snapped his fingers for a waiter, hovering in the background. "Please bring us a bottle of your best champagne." The man bowed obsequiously and then

disappeared. "We must celebrate, Colonel."

The girl asked, "Audit of what?"

Calypso paused and examined her face. He wondered if she were an innocent bystander or van Kahnweiler's accomplice.

Finally, he looked away because he could no longer stand her steady gaze and answered: "We audit the records of the load-terminal to determine the source and amounts of goods coming into Mexico."

"What are you looking for—theft?" She asked.

"That and misfeasance and malfeasance. Corruption in all its forms," he answered.

"We have the same problems on the line: theft, spoilage, conversion, and smuggling."

Her frankness disarmed him and he asked: "smuggling?"

"Of course," she said with a laugh. "You can't have a wall and not have a black market."

"A black market in what?" he asked.

"Don't be ingenuous, Colonel," said van Kahnweiler. "Drugs, women, minerals, and unlicensed workers travel north, while spies, pharmaceuticals, arms, bionic technology, soft ware, medical equipment, androids, servitors, and Digems move south. Just to name a few things, of course. Why do you think the trains are manned by military personnel?"

"I had not really thought of it. We don't run the terminals. That's the UN's bailiwick isn't it, van Kahnweiler?"

The man lifted a flute of champagne and said with a smile: "Exactly Colonel. However, the load-terminals are our business by contract and concession."

Calypso thought of the young girl in the tent city and he had an almost irresistible urge to smack van Kahnweiler across the face with the champagne bottle now nestled in the silver bucket next to the table.

"You also produce those Digems as well?"

The man smiled and asked with a sneer: "Why do you ask? Would you like a case?"

The woman sensing his anger touched his hand and he jumped at the extreme heat emanating from her body. Her physical presence distracted him for moment and when his mind cleared, he turned his attention to the room, forgetting his anger. On stage, Lola announced she was taking a break, as a mariachi band filed toward the stage. With Lola's set finished, Cantu left the stage and worked his way through the crowded restaurant toward him. And then it dawned on him, van Kahnweiler and Aliette de Meudon were no longer there. Thirty minutes had passed and his drink was warm. He blinked and then shook his head before moving back to his table and a cold steak.

They spent the night in one of the coffin-shaped rooms of the Japano-stack hotel, woke with staggering hangovers, ate a huge breakfast of *migas* at the metro station, and then took the underground to the Hive City to retrieve their SUV.

They left the Hive City at noon and drove south. One hundred and seventy-five miles south of Heroica Nogales, they stopped at a *taberna* perched precariously on the side of a hill above a dry river bed, parked the SUV in a wash on the side of the highway, and trudged up a winding trail to the tavern and took a seat outside, underneath a wooden lattice covered with flowering vines. Bees buzzed from flower to flower and cicadas clattered in the brush, as a young Indian woman with long black hair cascading down her back served *cervezas* and *posole*.

Cantu wiped froth from his mouth and asked: "What are you going to do about van Kahnweiler and his proposal?"

Calypso scratched his leg and patted his pistol nervously: "I am going to let my brother decide but I am also going to encourage him to establish another link to the Vatican."

Cantu nodded and turned back to his *posole*.

Besides the buzzing of the bees and Cantu's slurps, Calypso heard the faint hum of a drone. "Osvaldo, do you hear that?"

The sergeant stopped eating and listened. "It's a drone way outside the no-fly zone."

"Jesus," said Calypso standing up and surveying the ground. A gully ran away from the *taberna*, etched roughly in the soil by runoff from the hill.

"Take cover in the gully there," said Calypso through gritted teeth.

The Reaper came in slow and level, circled the *taberna* three times, and then turned north toward the border.

As soon it disappeared on the horizon, Calypso dusted off and climbed back up the hill to his table. The young woman emerged from the kitchen with two cold beers and placed them on their table. Her hands shook and Calypso reached out to steady her. She smiled and said: "They have never come so close before; those bastards and their machines."

Calypso rubbed his face with his right hand before taking a swig of the cold beer. It crossed his mind that the reaper was a warning from the Anglos, a warning to him and his brother.

The woman stood with one hand on her hip near Calypso, gazing off toward the north, and Calypso sensed she was afraid and sought solace from his uniform or from him.

"So you don't see them flying in this area?" asked the colonel in an attempt to engage her in conversation and assure her.

"Never," she said. "This was like a threat."

Calypso nodded in understanding. He felt the threat and associated it with the man van Kahnweiler.

Cantu pulled out his chair, grabbed his beer, and quickly swallowed half of its contents before asking: "So Colonel, what do you think?"

Calypso sipped his beer to buy a few seconds, while he gathered his thoughts. "I think the Anglos are warning me to cooperate." He scratched his chin and asked the young woman: "*Señorita*, what if the Pope moved the Vatican City to La Ciudad; what would you think?"

The woman, surprised, turned toward him, and asked: "The Pope here in Mexico?" Her eyes sparkled and she continued: "I would say God has blessed us finally for our fidelity." She crossed herself and asked: "Is this so, *Señor*?"

He waved his hand vaguely and answered: "It is a possibility."

"Could we have another *cerveza*?" asked Cantu, handing his empty bottle to the young woman, who smiled and returned to the kitchen.

"Why are they coming, Osvaldo? They have everything in the north? I don't understand."

Cantu pulled on his ear and brushed away a fly. "It is the shark theory."

Calypso leaned forward and smiled. "You surprise me Osvaldo. I think you have hit upon something important. Capitalism must continue to move and expand. Failure to move produces a crisis; we have millions of potential consumers and a market on their border. They shut their doors on us twenty years ago but failed to see the dynamic effect our people had upon their economy. Now they want us back but not there on the other side of the wall; they want us here. They want to absorb us."

"So how will you advise your brother?"

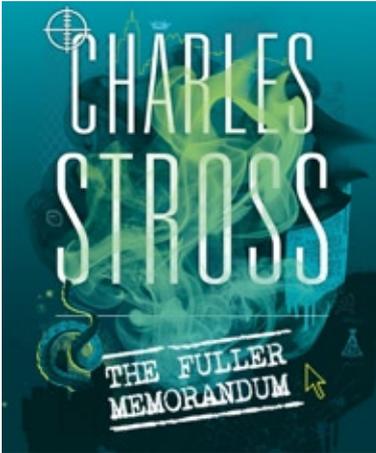
He placed his hand flat on the wooden table, as if in surrender.

"What do you say to a shark?" he asked as the woman placed another cold beer before him and an old blind man in the blue shadows of the arbor began to strum his guitar and sing a song about a cowboy who loses his love and his horse to a beautiful Luna *bruja* with pellucid blue eyes.



The Fuller Memorandum

reviewed by martin willoughby



by Charles Stross
Orbit
rrp £7.99

This is third of Stross' books that I've read this year and I'm slowly getting the hang of his writing. Not because he's a bad writer, he isn't, it's just that he not easy to classify. Comedy: tick. Horror: tick. SF: tick. Fantasy: tick. Of all the things you could say about Stross' writing, the one thing you can never say is that it is boring.

The Fuller Memorandum is the third of the Laundry novels after *The Atrocity Archives* and *The Jennifer Morgue*. Those titles alone should give you a clue that these are more horror than SF/F. Despite that, there are enough weird gadgets to keep the geeks happy.

The Laundry is a top secret organisation set up by the government to deal with the occult threats to Britain and it has a long history. Originally part of SOE, it was kept going after the war and one of its original staff, Angleton, is still working there. He also happens to be Bob's boss. As the Laundry deals with the occult, computers are almost impossible to use so the main character, Bob, has to use a typewriter. The one piece of technology that they do use is a PDA, and Bob gets a beaut.

At the beginning of the story, we see Bob leaving home to deal with a possessed jet at RAF Cosford. Unfortunately he makes a mistake that leads to the death of a civilian and, more importantly, the destruction of his PDA, to which he's rather attached.

Bob is married, and his wife has a violin that, when played, kills people. As it was constructed out of the bones of people who were tortured, it, and the others constructed at the same time at rare.

The main villains of the piece are a cult dedicated to summoning the evil one in order to bring on the apocalypse. Seeing as the world is going to end in an apocalypse anyway, they figure it may as well be brought on now when they feel they have a chance of siding with the evil one and actually getting to stay alive. If not, they've lost nothing.

The details of how to do this are held in a document called 'The Fuller Memorandum'. I won't spoil the details, but the document, its provenance and who/what it refers to are a nice twist in the tale, though you may probably guess it by the half way point.

Also involved are the Russian equivalent of the laundry who know more that they are letting on, and want the Fuller Memorandum for their own purposes.

Bob spends most of the time being chased, harassed, threatened, kidnapped, shot at and being as non-magical as he can, even though he can use magic. He's also a dab hand at networks.

The climax sees the cult get what they want, but not in the way they imagined, the Russians get what they deserve, but not what they want, and Bob gets tied to a bed. There are zombie-like creatures aplenty and a lot of mess to sort out afterwards, but, eventually, Bob gets to sleep it all off. He also gets a new PDA.

Stross manages to tie up all the loose ends and by the final page you realise that not a single character or incident has been wasted, but everyone, even the dead civilian I mentioned earlier, has a place in the

story.

His writing is light, easy, but still dotted with CAPITALISED WORDS on nearly every page. It is my only gripe.

All in all, it's a great read. GO AND BUY IT... NOW!

I Am Tim

reviewed by scott harrison



Starring Jamie Simcox, Tom Cockram, Owen Lean, Jen Jordan, Richard Massara

Written by Jamie Simcox

Directed by Jamie Simcox and the cast

If we're talking horror then, until recently, nothing stopped the heart faster, or chilled the blood as surely, as hearing those two seemingly innocuous words: Web Series. They had a habit of cropping up again and again, wherever you looked on the internet.

For a while the term seemed to become synonymous with those dire, low budget, fan-made pieces of hokum that are totally lacking in any form of charm, wit or entertainment value whatsoever.

You only have to type the words Doctor Who or Star Trek into YouTube's search window to witness the utter dross that masquerades as die-hard fans either attempting to keep the series alive, or offering their own 'unique' take on what the series would have been like had they, a sixteen year old schoolboy non-actor, been cast in the lead role.

Thankfully, in recent years, many big budget television series such as Battlestar Galactica and Homicide have hi-jacked the web series, effectively reinventing the entire medium to become Web Television, broadcasting through broadband and mobile networks; often using 3 - 6 minute mini episodes (often called minisodes or webisodes) to fill in addition background details on certain characters or plot threads, bridging gaps between television episodes, or even entire seasons.

So, it was with some understandable trepidation that I first approached horror/comedy series *I Am Tim*, Itchy Scratchy Tasty Films' self proclaimed 'monster of a documentary'. Being neither big of budget, nor the spin off of an enormously acclaimed television series wasn't helping matters. Come to think of it, neither was the fact that this was a group of guerrilla film-makers, armed with only a single hand-held camera, a few simple props and a budget so low it amounted to little more than pocket change.

Naturally, I was expecting the worst. What I got, however, was a complete shock.

You see, against seemingly insurmountable odds this series turned out to be good. Damn good, in fact. A marvellously gut-wrenching visceral little gem that manages to sparkle through despite its obvious shortcomings. A series that succeeds in its ability to both shock the audience with its sometimes graphic violence one moment, and then turn the whole scene on its head with a genuine laugh-out-loud moment of slapstick comedy.

Plainly many of *I Am Tim*'s influences lie in the modern horror / comedy trends of the past two decades, such as *Shaun of the Dead* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as well as popular genre movies *Dawn of the Dead*, *Blade* and *Underworld* - there's even a sprinkling of 1960s *Batman* in there. But the series greatest strength lies in its remarkable use of both editing and sound; which (particularly in the latter half of the

series) rivals even the best television show for its precise and clever techniques; making good use of jump cuts, white noise, slow-mo and intelligent camera positioning.

Episode 3 is particularly effective, with its dark woodland setting and erratic, often frenzied, direction genuinely unnerving and, in places, scary. With much of the horror playing out through sound effects and half-glimpsed shots, it manages to produce a level of creepiness and unease that even the 1999 theatrical film *The Blair Witch Project* failed to do. The effects too are startlingly effective given the production's meagre budget, with the above mentioned episode ending in a brilliantly clever, wonderfully gruesome decapitation scene that will have you reaching for the rewind button just so you can see it again.

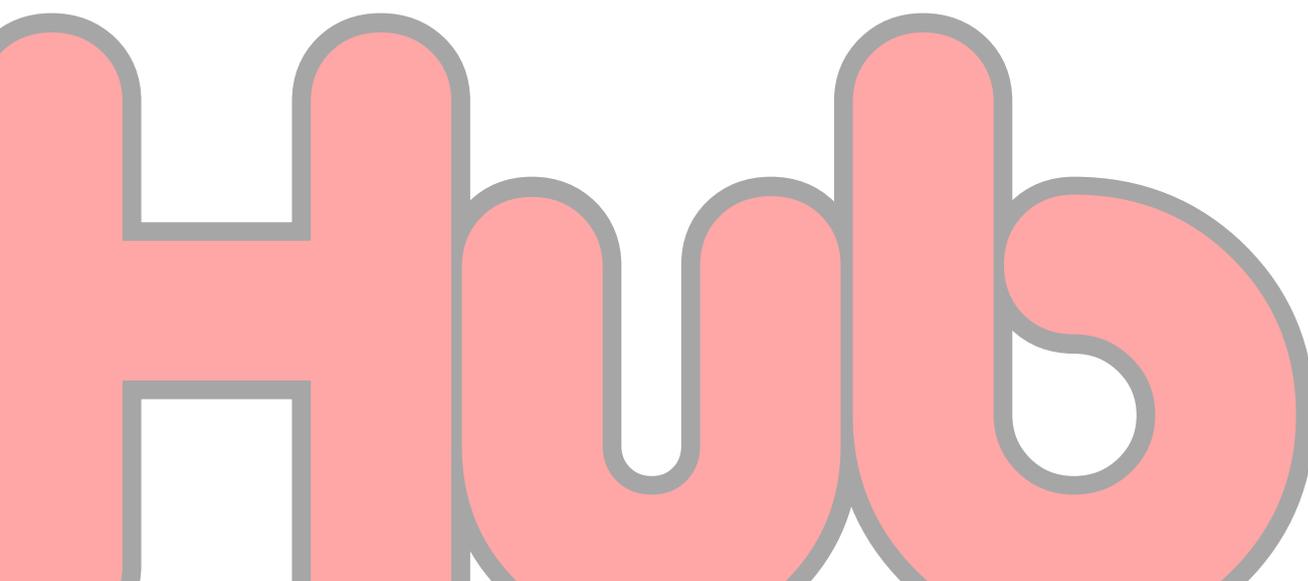
Don't get me wrong, it's certainly not without its faults. Episode 1, for example, lacks much of the style, pace and raw power of the other five instalments, with much of its 10 minute runtime taken up with flat, unexciting point-and-shoot direction. But the first episode is, after all, the pilot episode and like all good debut episodes is there to lay the groundwork for an ongoing series that will (hopefully) learn from its mistakes, improve, and gain in confidence.

Some of the comedy too is a little hit and miss, (mostly in the early episodes), although, thankfully, it's more hit than miss as the series progresses, with the actors visibly becoming more confident with the material they are performing. Of particular note is Jamie Simcox who's titular character is one of the series' greatest strengths - imbuing Tim with all the charm, wit and subtlety that is needed in a lead character; you actually find yourself caring about him, even when he's being a pompous dickhead.

Much of the final episode is taken up with the final showdown between Tim and his arch nemesis Hannibal King, which was promised at the end of episode 5; and it certainly doesn't disappoint. Ending the series on a surprising cliff-hanger that will leave its audience desperate for a second series.

Episode 6 will be premiering on Halloween Night, at the City Screen in York, along with the season 3 feature film of *Zomblogalypse*, where you can meet the cast and crew of both shows. It will then go live on the *I Am Tim* website on 2nd November.

If you haven't seen it yet, then I urge you to give it a go. It's one of the funniest, intelligent and, at times, deeply disturbing web series you're ever likely to see. Just don't watch it after you've eaten.



FEATURES

Pledge, Turn, Prestige, Monster

by Alasdair Stuart

Magic tricks are the slightly more reputable sibling of con tricks and are designed along the same, basic structure. 'That structure was articulated by Christopher Priest in his novel *The Prestige* and is defined as the *pledge*, the *turn* and the *prestige*. The *pledge* is the promise of something extraordinary, the *turn* is the apparent revelation and the *prestige* is the actual reveal, the moment you realise that the magician was never standing there, that the silk scarf has become a bird. It's a simple, elegant framework that can be applied to everything from making a coin disappear to walking through the great wall of China and it's also one of the secrets of JJ Abrams' success.

Abrams' entire career is based on not just a fascination with misdirection and magic but an instinctive understanding of this framework. *Lost*, *Alias* and *Fringe*, the three TV shows he's best known for all embrace it and interestingly, each one also uses the three stage framework within their pilot episodes. In *Lost*, the Oceanic 815 survivors not only realise something is wrong with the island but that they're not alone, in *Alias* Sydney Bristow not only realises she's working for the opposite side but becomes a double agent whilst in *Fringe*, Olivia Dunham not only discovers what the Pattern is but that her colleague Agent John Scott is deeply involved in it. Pledge becomes premise, turn becomes plot, prestige becomes cliffhanger. The three stage magic trick melds with the three act narrative structure to create something intricate, detailed and, in the long run, immensely rewarding.

This is the connective tissue that holds Abrams' work together as shown by the teaser trailer for his new film, *Super 8*. It opens with text informing the viewer that in 1979 a section of Area 51 was closed before cutting to a train speeding through the night. We learn that the materials stored at Area 51 were being moved overland to a secure location as, on screen, a pickup truck smashes through the barrier and runs headlong into the train. The train is derailed, cars ripped apart before, finally, silence falls. The text returns, informing us that next summer 'It Arrives' as the camera tracks through the wreckage to a large, sealed container with *US Air Force* stencilled on the side. The side of the trailer deforms and is then thrown outwards as the camera cuts to a close up of a Super 8 film lens with film flickering past it before fading to black.

Now, as pledges go that's pretty spectacular. In less than two minutes we learn that something awful was moved from Area 51, something unthinkable happened that freed it, that the creature is large, strong and angry and that the film will have something to do with a Super 8 camera. Straight away we get science fiction and horror mixed with conspiracy thriller and a human element, all without meeting any of the principle characters. The message is clear; next summer, innocent people will witness something awful, try and survive it and you'll be first in line for a ticket.

It's a classic set up and one Abrams has used before, most notably with the original *Cloverfield* trailer. With no name and almost no credit text, it was a cut down version of the party scene from the start of the film, culminating in the Statue of Liberty's head being hurled into the street. Once again, it's a pledge, a hint of something remarkable designed to intrigue, get the audience's full attention and bring them closer before the turn.

The teaser trailer for Abrams' *Star Trek* uses the turn beautifully, opening with close ups of men constructing something immense as sound bites from the history of space exploration play. It's only in the final shots, where the camera pans up over the saucer section of the *USS Enterprise*, Leonard Nimoy says 'Space, the final frontier' and the familiar refrain plays that it becomes clear what's being trailed and the true nature of what you've been watching becomes clear. It even throws in a self-deprecating, cheeky prestige as the Starfleet crest appears to the sound of the transporter and the first bars of the original series

theme tune before fading out to be replaced by two words:

Under Construction

This wry, self-deprecating sense of humour is just another means of disarming the audience and putting them at ease. It's also an immensely clever move with *Star Trek* in particular because it feeds into the affection for the series and the status quo it represents.

Abrams then takes great pleasure in both honouring and subverting that status quo throughout the film, most notably in the opening sequence where the Kirk we meet is revealed not only to be James T. Kirk's father but has to sacrifice himself in order for his wife, son and friends to survive. It's a brutal sequence, difficult to sit through even after multiple viewings and there's a case for it being the film's turn. After all, everything changes as a result of it and the rest of the film is spent exploring those changes.

However, the real turn arrives at roughly the halfway mark, by which point the sense of familiarity has returned. There are changes certainly; James T. Kirk is a darker, brasher version of his old self, Spock is more emotional but still a genius but they're fundamentally the same people. The *Enterprise* looks more futuristic, the special effects are more impressive but, fundamentally, it's still *Star Trek*, still familiar, still safe.

Then Vulcan is destroyed.

In a single moment, Abrams, along with scriptwriters Roberto Orci and Alex Kurtzman change the rules, alter one of the most intricate fictional universes in decades forever and force the audience to pay full attention as they realise that everything is different now. The building blocks, the accepted wisdom of decades of fiction are changed into something new and dangerous and exciting which still, somehow, manages to honour what's gone before it. This isn't just a textbook example of how to successfully reinvigorate a franchise, this is magic at it's purest, taking something that the audience think they know and turning it on its head. It's the assistant disappearing, the needle going through the balloon, the card appearing inside the sealed box. This is the turn, positioning the audience for the final revelation, the prestige.

The best example of a prestige in Abrams' work is arguably the end of the pilot episode of *Fringe*, which deals with both the mystery deaths of everyone aboard an international flight from Berlin and the serious injury of FBI Agent John Scott, caught in an explosion at a storage facility linked to the incident on the plane. Scott's friend, and lover, Olivia Dunham's refusal to let him die leads her to defy protocol, track down reclusive genius Walter Bishop and his son, Peter, get Bishop released from a mental asylum and, finally, to both the person responsible for the incident and a cure for Scott. The episode is, by all weights and measures, over, the series' premise established as Olivia is offered a job investigating Fringe Science cases full time, Walter is reinstated in his old lab and Peter slowly begins to accept his father.

Then John Scott gets out of bed, goes to the perpetrator's room and suffocates him. At almost the same time, Olivia discovers evidence that Scott was complicit in the attack, tracks him down and a car chase ensues. Scott is fatally injured and his last moments are spent apologising to Olivia and telling her to ask why.

This by itself would be enough, but the episode's final scene really drives home the unknown territory the series is running headlong towards. Nina Sharp, the head of Massive Dynamic, a pseudo-Microsoft company helping the government investigate Fringe Science is shown Scott's body. She asks how long he's been dead, is told and, after pausing for a moment, says 'Interrogate him.'

This single moment brings together the mystery surrounding John Scott, the allegiance of Massive Dynamic and the research into communicating with the comatose and dead that Walter successfully uses earlier in the episode to not only set the rest of the series up but neatly place the viewer and Olivia on the same page. Neither know what's going on and both find themselves wanting answers as the episode finishes. Or to put it another way, the circle is closed, the trick is finished and everyone leaves the theatre asking how it was done.

Pledge, turn and prestige, each not only mapping onto the three act dramatic structure but changing it into something rich and strange. Abrams and his collaborators take this still further, incorporating the elements of magic and misdirection not only into their films and TV series but how these stories are marketed and presented. This is magic not only as a storytelling framework but a tool, a means of not only writing and constructing stories but selling them to an audience. It's not always successful but it's always interesting and, with Abrams linked to several major new projects, it's an approach that's clearly working. Just remember, the rabbit isn't always in the hat, and the hat may not be a hat at all.



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