

# Hub Magazine

SCIENCE FICTION HORROR FANTASY

**PUBLISHER**  
LEE HARRIS

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
ALASDAIR STUART

**COMMISSIONING EDITOR**  
ELLEN J ALLEN

**REVIEWS EDITOR**  
PHIL LUNT

**ISSUE 117 · 14<sup>TH</sup> APR 2010**

## CONTENTS:

---

**FICTION:**     ***The Cyclamen*** by Emma Jane Davies

**REVIEW:**     ***The Infernal Game: Cold Warriors***  
***Battery Farm***  
***The Human Target***  
***Doctor Who "The Beast Below"***

**FEATURE:**    ***Interview: Joe R. Lansdale - Part 3***



## EDITORIAL:

---

**by phil lunt**

A few things have happened to me lately and I thought I'd just have a quick word about life... tenuously linked with fantasy and horror undertones!

Recently I decided to work my way through the *Angel* series 5 box set. It was bought ages ago and had been sat, gathering dust, ever since. Too many other distractions getting in the way. Happens to a lot of us, I'm sure. The last few episodes seemed rushed but I put that down to the cancellation of the show. Then came the final episode. One made even more poignant when you realise that the actor playing Lorne, Andy Hallett, unfortunately died last year aged just 33. I'd never seen this episode before and seeing the guy sing "*If I Ruled the World*" and then walking out on *Angel*'s revolution with the last line "...good night, folks" just hit home that little bit harder than it was probably intended to do.

A few days before the news that Corey Haim had died, just over four weeks ago, I was talking to friends about various favourite films and *The Lost Boys* kept popping up in our lists. It felt bizarre that news of Haim's death should come out so soon after I'd been having so many discussions with others regarding movies and vampires and *The Lost Boys* in particular.

These two instances, added to some others in the smorgasbord that is life, just got me thinking. Eventually, some of us may be going on to eternal paradise of some description, others of us may be going to the, erm, other place. Some of us may end up coming back in some form or other, I'm thinking reincarnation as opposed to zombies. Or maybe not. I'm no expert on the various denominations of life after death but one thing is certain; We're here. Right now. Maybe we shouldn't worry about what may or may not come next and just knuckle down and make sure we get as much done here that we want to do, that we need to do, to make ourselves and those around us happy and fulfilled.

Just a thought... I said it was tenuous!

# FICTION

---

## The Cyclamen

---

by emma jane davies

The boy dreams in his bed in the big house above the village. He sees a forest where moss drips from the trees and the shady hangings of convolvulus bind to form a curtain that keeps out the sun. Lords-and-Ladies cluster on the woodland floor, amongst the rot of earth and the skeletons of leaves. Slabs of orange fungus erupt from the mouldering soil. Tightly curled shoots of new bracken compete with yellowing ferns, and Cuckoo's pint bubbles above narrow brooks.

The rays of the waning moon through the leaded light of the window trap the boy's face in silhouette as he sleeps. He dreams of a place deep within the forest where no people penetrate at all. As dusk fades to darkness and the bats fly out from their hollows to explore the ever-deepening blue, he sees the cyclamen flower unfurl her petals, pale and pink as the snow at dawn.

Curled foetus-style in her slumber, the creature within the blossom stirs. For a timeless moment between thought and action, she lies within the tightly packed bud of her chamber. Then, as the petals loosen around her she lifts her arms to the night above and stretches her elastic limbs, basking in the glory of the dappled moonlight.

Beneath the midnight sky, she tumbles from her nest, slipping like a fawn on new limbs. Gathering herself, she totters and stands. Now, on stronger legs she wanders through bluebell dells and needled wastelands. Through marsh and mire haunted by shadow-like mists and will-o'-the-wisps, she follows the light of the moon to a beaten track where she stands, open mouthed, in a wheel-carved rut.

Her nakedness startles a huntsman riding late from his day in the woods. He reins his mare to a halt. She seems to be a girl lost and alone in the night, her silver hair like cobwebs about her face, her skin the milk of rose petals and apple blossom. When he turns to speak to her, he cannot find her, and he thinks he has seen a ghost. Terror-struck, he spurs his mare on with a shout and the crack of a whip.

Swinging amongst the trees in the near distance, village lanterns burn hotly to keep away haunts. She makes her way amongst the people as they pack up their market wares to travel home, or to vanish through skin hangings into the heated darkness of their tumbledown hovels. Her eyes pass over them, glazed, as their own pass over hers. They cannot see her, they do not look for her, and she is like the forest breeze.

A woman with the basket of posies rearranges ribbons tied around their cut, bleeding stems. There are tea roses laid out on a stall, and the creature cups one in the palms of her hands. It has captured dewdrops, like tears, within its petals. It is dying a slow death in its straw and ribbon. As her hands slip away, it withers to a dry and lifeless husk.

A young man buys a bouquet of giant blue daisies and ferns for his lover. She follows him for a short while, her eyes narrow with pain, until a funereal wreath hung from a crude wooden door distracts her. Tied with string and wire, lily stems rub abrasively against one another. She turns away, but door upon door decorated with garlic blossoms confront her; peasant spells to keep out the dead.

She runs from the confusion of village, hands clasped to her ears to block the silent screams. Hiding for a while in the weeping sore of a log pile, she is lulled. In the big house upon the hill, there is movement. The scent of flesh lures her.

She slips through the window into his room. He lies in a patch of dappled moonlight. Young and vital, just a boy, he is startled by her when he wakes from his dream. She is silvery skinned with hair the pink of roses and eyes as dark as violets. She is naked, and for a heartbeat or less, he contemplates how it would feel to slip his fingers between her dark nether lips.

As he rises to his feet, she entwines her limbs around his body like ivy. The boy hears her though she does not speak, and she seems to say; give me life. He is passive to his seduction and allows himself be explored, then ignited, and he grips her arms. Her skin is cool and waxen to the touch, like fresh, green leaves. As she guides him, gently, to enter her, he finds that her sex is cold and gelatinous. She tastes of nectar and bitter juices.

As morning comes and the birds begin to call, the cyclamen makes her way back through the stirring forest. The bats have long since returned to their hollows and the primroses have begun to lift their heads to the grey, early light. With the cusp of dawn, dewdrops form on the silky leaves of her bedchamber. She curls easily into the tight, eager bud where the velvet touch of living stamens strokes her to sleep.

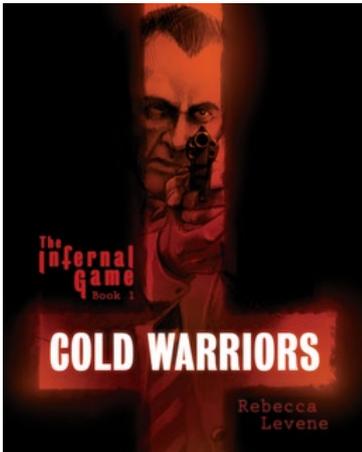
In the big house above the village, a mother tries to wake her son. He is pale as snow, cold as ice. His cup lies on the dresser untouched, and his nightshirt lies tangled on the floor.

In the forest, as the orange sunrays filter down through the leaves in tiny streaks, the early morning flies begin to gather, the very air to buzz. The cyclamen flower soon teems with hungry life, its petals as red as blood.



## The Infernal Game: Cold Warriors

reviewed by derek john



by Rebecca Levene  
Abaddon Books

When Abaddon Books launched their *Tomes of the Dead* series back in 2006 it was perfectly timed to surf the brief wave of enthusiasm for all things zombie. Now as that particular tide ebbs away, leaving any unfortunate latecomers gasping on the arid shores of public indifference, they have announced their latest series *The Infernal Game* fronted by the talented and scarily prolific Rebecca Levene.

'A mixture of diabolism and espionage' runs the blurb for the series and the author herself has described the first instalment *Cold Warriors* as "*The Bourne Identity* meets *The Omen*".

With *The Infernal Game* Abaddon may have cannily tapped-into the Zeitgeist yet again. As Anne Billson pointed-out in a recent article in *The Guardian Online*, in times of economic and social stress western culture inevitably breeds a kind of ersatz religiosity - a comforting urge to see the world in terms of black and white, good versus evil, to celebrate the heroic battles of the individual with faceless satanic conspiracies.

1970s paranoia, fed by the hysteria generated by oil crises, hyperinflation and international terrorism gave us an insidious neighbourhood Satan infiltrating the all-American family in movies like *The Exorcist* and *Rosemary's Baby*. Pre-millennial tension spawned such memorable scenes as Schwarzenegger taking on the Beast of the Apocalypse with a Gatling gun in the abysmal *End of Days*. And the current economic woes again seem to be seeking catharsis in the diabolic as recent movies like *Legion* and *Solomon Kane* creep up the charts.

*Cold Warriors* introduces us to the dark workings of the Hermetic Division - a secret government agency set up to investigate occult happenings that could threaten UK national security. Comic fans may call a halt here and say: hang on, isn't this basically the same premise as the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defence from Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* series or Department Q from Gordon Rennie's *Caballistics* strip in *2000ad*? And of course it is - so far, so unoriginal.

We follow a motley cast of characters including a zombie spy, a forty year old girl of eleven with a demon trapped inside her, a rough-diamond anti-hero with a troubled past, who like *Hellboy* may also inadvertently be about to bring on the Apocalypse and an uptight East German female agent who we all know in our hearts will swoon and fall for the bad-boy in the end. Together they battle an array of Russian oligarchs, renegade clergymen, and the Japanese secret service in a wild romp through the capitals of Eastern Europe to try and recover the Ragnarok artifacts, objects of such occult power that in the wrong hands they can be used to raise an army of the dead to inaugurate - you guessed it - the End of the World.

Despite Levene's claims, those seeking something like Jason Bourne's postmodern, disaffected and morally ambiguous character will be disappointed. *Cold Warriors* is an uncomplicated high adventure in the spirit of Ian Fleming rather than the nasty back-street deceptions of Len Deighton or John le Carré.

Levene plays homage to all the usual Bond clichés and when, halfway through the book, one of the protagonists is battling a ninja assassin on the roof of the speeding Orient Express you could be forgiven for thinking that perhaps she is overegging the pudding a bit. The horror elements are fairly generic (ghosts of dead children, phantoms reaching out of mirrors, animal attacks à la Hitchcock's *Birds*) and the characters lack enough real psychological depth to make you invest more than a token amount of empathy with

them in their peril.

The novel races along to a suitably apocalyptic finale as the plot zig-zags around numerous red-herrings, double-crosses (literally in this case), speedboat chases, and all the required derring-do, gunplay and fisticuffs that a thriller could need.

Despite the obvious lack of originality, I thoroughly enjoyed the book; as a thriller it presses all the right buttons and Levene is clearly a writer operating at the top of her game. The tightly plotted action with the violent set-pieces and cliff-hangers interspersed at regular intervals shows that she has been assiduously studying her Dan Brown-101 primer and putting it to good effect.

Levene writes a spare, hard-boiled prose that elides some of the more intimate moments of any real depth but which carries the plot along at a cracking pace. Rather than the *Bourne* novels, *Cold Warriors* is much more reminiscent of the 'spy-fi' genre beloved of 70's TV. Think of *The Avengers* or *Sapphire and Steel* and if you approach it in this spirit, you'll find it an entertaining, whimsical, and slightly off-kilter bit of pulp-fiction.

*Cold Warriors* is a well-crafted page-turner and none the worse for that, but it won't take you anywhere you haven't been before.

## Battery Farm

reviewed by paul f cockburn



by Gregory Burke  
at the Oran Mor, Glasgow

Gregory Burke's work comes laden with expectations; no surprise given the worldwide success of *Black Watch*, a razor sharp portrayal of the modern working class Scottish soldier at a time when they're facing an increasingly uncertain future -- at home as much as on the battlefield. As a playwright he has gained a reputation as someone with something serious to say and a determination to tell the stories about working class people who normally won't be seen in a theatre, let alone on the stage.

His latest work, *Battery Farm*, is somewhat different, though. Not because it's a comedy; *Black Watch* was grounded on the gallows-humour of our soldiery. He's also written one act plays before, but nothing quite like this. For -- and whisper this among the theatricals -- he's only gone and written some SF!

*Battery Farm* is set in the relatively near future -- around 50-75 years, I'd guess -- by which time humanity has effectively destroyed the planetary eco-system and humans now survive by culling and eating the elderly. The play takes place in the control room of a top of the range, high density "contentment" facility, where the rich see out their coma-induced final years within life-support capsules, slowly but surely being 'fattened up' for human consumption.

The conflict at the heart of the play begins when new-start Kate (Denise Hoey) -- being introduced to the job by Supervisor Third Class James (Alan Bissett) -- turns out to be an undercover activist belonging to dissident group 'People for the Ethical Treatment of People'. She is determined to rescue at least some of the 'guests' from the facility, starting with a man only known as Row NN, Pod 777 (Andy Gray). He's been woken up because it is a legal requirement for him to be told that, since he's had no visitors for 11 years, he's now ready for termination and sale.

Kate is all for freeing Row NN, Pod 777 until he lets slip that he was the 'oilman' who invented the device which allowed humanity to drain even more oil from the planet and so hastened the ecological disaster that wiped out all other animals (except, it would seem, some chimpanzees).

This is the kind of ethical problem that you'd certainly expect a writer of Burke's calibre to play around with, but the problem here is that Kate's switch – to actually wanting to press the button that kills the man – is never really examined; in fact, it's almost immediately overshadowed by an audience-pleasing running gag about pressing an orgasm-inducing button (shades of Woody Allen there).

Overall, the writing is just a tad too obvious and flat; I mean, from the start our attention is drawn to the contentment facility's logo (a serpent eating its own tail) and its link with a society that recycles its own flesh in order to survive. The characters and situation are also, sometimes too quickly, too blatantly drawn – yes, time is of the essence in a one act play, but there are moments of info-dumping and hitting-over-the-head moralising that a writer with Burke's skill should know to avoid. Just because it's science fiction doesn't mean you can get away with sloppy writing.

To Burke's credit, though, he can still come up with some great one-liners, my favourite being: "Yes, I'm a Monster. Now press the orgasm button." There is the delicious (pun intended) talk of the initial 'human consumption' situation where the supposed over-population of Third World countries was dealt with by the First World buying and eating their surpluses – putting a darkly humorous twist on 'I used to love having a Chinese'.

If there are problems with the script, at least I have no problems with this current production by David MacLennan, not least because of the practical 'wheeze' of effectively casting the audience as the pod-bound pensioners – and, having seen the audience before lights went down, there were plenty well-suited for the role!

If Denise Hoey's performance seems somewhat overdone at first, you subsequently realise the subtlety of her performance when her character reveals her true colours. And Scottish author Alan Bissett – this is his first purely acting role – has an instinctual understanding of the rhythms of Burke's dialogue enable him to flesh out what could otherwise have been a rather one-tone role. And, given his innate likeability, he delivers some chilling moments of stillness that hint at just how easily humanity can turn its darkest crimes into the normal, mundane and everyday.

All actors add to a script, of course; perhaps just not as much as Andy Gray, who on this occasion enhances the verbal wit in the script with his idiosyncratic double-takes and physical ticks. Given that's he's essentially standing in a shiny baby grow, it's no mean feat that – as has been pointed out elsewhere – he gives potentially the funniest orgasm scene since *When Harry Met Sally*. He also effectively delivers the play's message – the reason we don't see the future is that we're usually too afraid to look.

## **The Human Target**

*reviewed by alasdair stuart*



**'Pilot'**

**Starring Mark Valley, Chi McBride, Jackie Earl Haley and Tricia Helfer**

**Directed by Simon West**

**Debating on SyFy 14th April**

Christopher Chance (Valley) is a professional bodyguard, a man who specialises in protecting clients who are in serious, credible danger. Carefully anonymous, endlessly professional and quietly unbalanced, Chance seems intent on atoning for past actions only he knows about, aided by business partner Winston (McBride) and professional enforcer Guerrero (Haley).

The most recent comic incarnation of Chance, written by Peter Milligan and drawn by the late Edvin Biukovic as well as Javier Pulido and Cliff Chiang used Chance's technique of taking on his client's lives to

explore life as a blank slate, casting him as a man adrift in a sea of identities. It's a challenging, intellectual and dark exploration of the character and what it's like to live and die in the margins of other people's lives.

This TV version of the character, inevitably, jettisons the existential terror of the comic series in favour of something a lot more visceral. This version of Chance simply puts himself next to clients instead of becoming them and seems to enjoy his work a lot more. He's charming, a little reckless and seems to relish pushing against his support system as much as he does leaning on it.

In the hands of a lesser cast, choices like this could kill the show or, at the very least, render it down to sub-24 levels. However, Valley in particular is a strikingly credible lead, balancing physical presence and authority with a slightly cold, distanced sense of humour that marks Chance out as a deeply broken individual. He's Jack Bauer by way of Simon Templar and if the show continues to give Valley the chance to explore the character, that's reason enough to keep watching.

The rest of the regular cast are equally impressive, with Chi McBride bringing typical authority and charm to his role as Valley's partner, Winston and Jackie Earl Haley almost stealing the show as Guerrero, a colleague of Chance's who almost steals the episode. Both men, like Valley, underplay and as a result both register all the more, whether it's Winston's sincere, if grumpy, concern for his friend or Guerrero's quiet, focussed intimidation of two thugs twice his size. Tricia Helfer also impresses as Stephanie Dobbs, a train designer who hires Chance to protect her from an assassin, bringing intelligence and presence to what could have been a throwaway role.

Jonathan E. Steinberg's script and Simon West's direction also do the show a lot of favours, giving Chance a couple of genuinely impressive deductive moments as well as a superb rolling fight scene that begins with Chance being shot twice in the back, takes in extremely close quarters combat and finishes with a railway tunnel being used as a deadly weapon. It's tight, nasty, effective stuff and the script nicely balances action with plot, giving Chance as many puzzles to solve as people to hit.

*Human Target* isn't a straight adaptation of the comic but, realistically, it never could be. What it is, however, is a tightly written, directed and acted action thriller exploring the life of a man who makes a living putting himself in harm's way. Worth checking out for the three leads alone, it's smart, nasty, hard-edged fun.

## Doctor Who "The Beast Below"

*reviewed by martin willoughby*



My first doctor was Jon Pertwee and since then I've watched all the various incarnations and changes. The one thing I've learned from all of that is that it takes time for a new doctor to win over an audience. On the evidence of the first two episodes Matt Smith will do just fine.

He's a marked change from David Tennant and not just in terms of his age as there seems to be less of an intensity to him. However, I've seen this before when Peter Davidson took over from Tom Baker. Both Tennant and Baker are difficult acts to follow.

How his new assistant will fare is less certain. When she first turned up in a short skirt I feared that she was little more than eye candy. When she carried that over into this episode dressed in her night gown my fears were beginning to be realised. Then they covered her in monster puke.

Unlike previous assistants, Amy Pond has not been an instant hit with me or my boys (16, 14 and 10 years old). She does seem a lot softer than the recent bunch so the problem may be one of contrast. Again, I'll give her time especially as Catherine Tate took a while to win some people over.

The story itself was pretty much a standard DW tale. A dying Earth was being evacuated and the Brits were left behind - damn foreigners! Even the Scots left before the rest of us! DW and his eye candy turn up several centuries into the journey and start looking around. He soon discovers that there is no electricity on board and everything is run by clockwork. It is a mystery.

The mystery is soon solved when they meet a strange woman. One thing leads to another and they discover that a space whale came to Earth as the children screamed for help. The enterprising Brits captured it and used it to power their spaceship. They enslaved it and feed it via sacrificing some of the population: those who are deemed useless to society or who want to protest are the ones chosen.

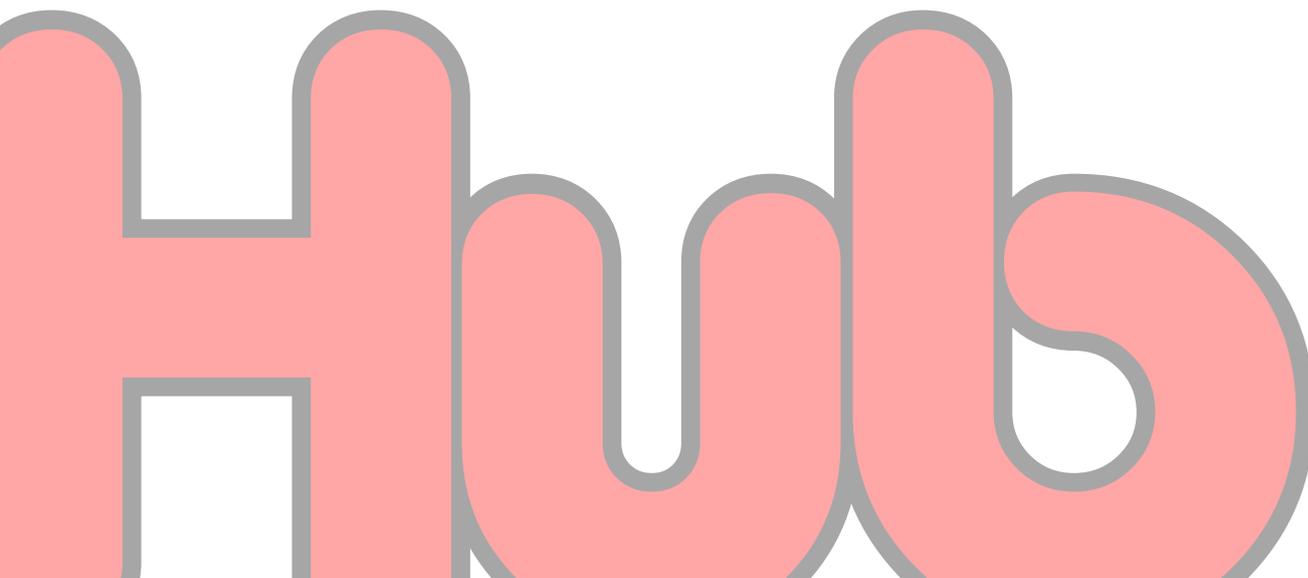
If you've watched the episode you know the ending, if you haven't, I won't spoil it for you. If you did miss it, you can catch it on the BBC iPlayer.

Some will no doubt accuse the writers of spoiling DW with this story and its ending, but that's not the point of these opening episodes: we are being introduced to a new cast. There are still some great scenes and lines here. The side swipe at democracy and the powers that be as well as human blindness to suffering as long as they themselves don't suffer. The humour has not been ignored either.

We also have an interesting back story to consider, that of Amy Pond herself. Whilst the story of her not being sure if she wants to get married may seem a little twee to some, that misses the point. Is she ready for a commitment? Does she know what she wants from life? It's a diversion, but one that I have no doubt will be used effectively by the writing team in the same manner that they have used the families of the other assistants.

A new production team, a new cast, a new...everything. Effectively it's a new show. What hasn't changed are the values behind DW and that they can still get some great actors to play subsidiary roles, this time in the shape of Terrence Hardiman.

Next week we see the return of the Daleks. I, for one, can't wait.



# FEATURES

## Interview: Joe R. Lansdale - Part 3

with richard whittaker

The author of *Stories by Mama Lansdale's Youngest Boy* sums up his career pretty succinctly. "Having been around 35 years, I can at least have the liberty to say I've survived and had some influence," he said. From Westerns to horror, from award winning novels to insurgent online publishing houses, he's written everything and been published everywhere. In the first two parts of this broad-reaching interview, he discussed his influences and his career to date. For this third and final conversation, Lansdale talks about the evolving book industry, how "best seller" is a self-fulfilling prophesy, how Stephen King changed the business, and the fate of the short story, which he calls "the engine that drives the field - or at least it has been."

(Parts of this interview have previously been published in the *Austin Chronicle*.)

### **Hub Magazine: You've been writing for almost four decades. How has the industry changed?**

**Joe Lansdale:** It's changed a lot. Somewhere along the way, people just quit reading short fiction. I think short fiction was taken over by television, and I'm one of those peculiar people that believes there were never that many readers to begin with. I believe there were always a few people that read now and again, and a few people who read two or three bestsellers a year, and then there were a small group who read a lot. I think that the ones that read occasionally or to kill time, when television came along they just switched to that because there was nothing about reading they were dedicated to. When you have best sellers, you have people read one book a year that turn out in absolute droves for the new Dan Brown or whoever it is they read. They make the best sellers, but they don't read anybody else. Then you have people that read four or five books, then you have the real dedicated folks that may read the best sellers but will read all kinds of stray books and short stories here and there, even magazines. But the problem is that they're a small group, and the large group is dedicated to an author or a group of authors. I've been in a store before where someone's said, "What's good?" and they've been told, "Well, there's the best seller list." So it's a self-fulfilling prophesy, because it doesn't mean that there aren't good writers on the list, it just means that's what's pushed forward because it's easier to sell established names. The longer you've been around, the harder it is to push beyond where you are.

### **HM: We've met at sci-fi literary conventions on a couple of occasions and you've talked about how much you enjoy attending them.**

**JL:** Every time I go to these things, I always come back inspired to write short stories. Sometimes it's novels, but to me short stories are the heart of the SF field. It's kind of both good and sad, because short stories are not as prevalent as they once were because there are fewer magazines. There are starting to be more on-line things, and it's starting to grow in an off-shoot. I've always thought that the people that write short stories were usually way ahead of where the field was going in a novelistic sense. Many writers like Henry Kuttner and Cyril Kornbluth, they didn't have tremendous novelistic success, but they had tremendous success as short story writers, and influencing writers who probably had for more financial success than they ever had. They wrote novels, but they never had an easy transition. Neal Barrett, me, we've been able to switch-hit a lot more.

### **HM: Cons give you a chance to meet the readership: How are they changing?**

**JL:** One of the things that scares me about SF and fantasy is that it's an older group. Used to be, every time you'd go to a convention, there'd be a young group, but now you see the same faces every time. I have a

terrible fear that games and films are sucking off of that to such an extent that you may be seeing a dying field.

**HM: That's a pretty gloomy prognosis.**

**JL:** The delivery system for things is changing so much. Online is becoming more important, but I love to hold a magazine in my hand. I don't think books are disappearing, but they're becoming a luxury item. More and more people are reading short stories on the Internet, and if maybe we can get them used to doing that, maybe the field survives.

**HM: The web, or even an E-reader, is no replacement for a real book.**

**JL:** You can't have that smell, and you can't have that tactile experience, because your computer's just not there. You see the cover and it's great, but you click it off and it's gone. You can go back to it, but you can't just pick it up in the middle of the night and hold it and read it. So I think that aspect of it is going to be a hard thing to lose.

**HM: It does seem that there are fewer outlets for SF and fantasy short stories.**

**JL:** It's not just SF: People read fewer short stories than they used to. When I was growing up, every magazine had short stories in them. *Playboy*, there might be three or four. You've still got *Esquire* and *New Yorker* and few that run short stories, and a handful of SF mags - I believe *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and *Asimov's* is still around. But some of these things are gradually moving online and becoming less and less available because there's no way to make money. Part of the problem is with readers, because everyone presumes that people don't read any more because they just don't want to. But when you go to the store and a magazine costs you six or seven dollars, and a book costs you \$25 in hardback and \$15 in trade paper, or nine or ten in regular paper, you're doing what happened in the Victorian era. You're making them a luxury item, so you're making it harder and harder for the masses to read them. People forget that it was that way until the paperback revolution of the 50s, then people could buy a book for very little, stick it in their back pocket, carry it around and kill time. I think those days have gone, partially because our habits have changed but partially because our finances have changed. People who used to profit from cheap paperbacks can't get cheap paperbacks anymore.

**HM: As a young reader, you were one of those beneficiaries.**

**JL:** When I was a kid, our family didn't make a lot of money, but we could usually afford for me to do that, or go to the library. Used to be you could buy a loaf of bread, a gallon of milk, and you'd have enough left to pick a paperback or two up out of a five dollar bill. Now if you buy the paperback, you can't afford the milk or the bread.

**HM: That pricing decision is arguably more to do with publishers and booksellers than readers.**

**JL:** Everyone looks for the easy way out, and they want nothing but the best sellers, because with the others they have to work. It amazes me how unwilling the publicity department are to do anything to establish a new writer. They'll take a new author who has been lucky enough to get sales, for whatever reason, and they'll get behind a horse that is already running, but they're very unwilling to shoe a horse and get it ready to run. One of the things that was different when I was growing up was that the science fiction, the fantasy, the horror, the westerns, the mysteries and crime, they were what kept the field alive. They weren't all best sellers, but they printed a number of copies, they sold those, people made some royalties - not always what they deserved - but they were the spine, and they paid for the people to pay the bestsellers, and those books would feed in too.

**HM: What changed the market?**

**JL:** When Stephen King came along, the field shifted. Now he deserves everything he ever got, because it's not his fault that it happened, but they thought, "Well god, if we can get a writer like this and we can get behind him, then we don't have to have all these other little authors where were paying \$5,000 here and \$10,000 there, and we're making \$5,000 here or a \$10,000 profit there. We'll have nothing but best sellers." So anyone that could write a decent horror novel, they were publishing for a while, and then they realized that didn't work. So then they went, "Well, we need our horror writer, we need our Tom Clancy for our techno-stuff, we've got so-and-so and so-and-so." They just want brand-name writers, and they've eliminated that wonder of going to a book rack at any drug store or any food store and saying, "Well, this looks good, I'll buy this."

**HM: It also seems like back catalogs are a thing of the past, unless you're a name author.**

**JL:** Books used to be in print for a long time. Used to be, I could buy a book and find books in the back of it, and I could still order them from the publisher.

**HM: So what's the short story market like for you these days?**

**JL:** I don't know how to judge it, because I'm asked to write short stories all the time. Most of them are anthologies, a few are online, but I've been around long enough and I'm well-known enough that it hasn't been a problem. I would think that, overall, it's not that good, but some of the online markets like Subterranean Press are actually starting to pay pretty well and get some respect. But it's hard row to hoe for new writers. I miss the days of all the old magazines, but people just don't read 'em any more. People complain, but they don't read 'em, so there's no-one to write for any more.

**HM: It makes the problem worse of finding somewhere, as a new writer, to get published.**

**JL:** The old Catch-22. That existed when I was first writing, it's just there were a lot more opportunities for magazines. Even though now, I don't think most writers research anything. They just want to know stuff. I've had writers come up the last three, four years in a row and ask me the same questions about, "Where can I sell my stuff?" Well, go out and look. Buy a writer's market, look online. I looked just the other day for curiosity's sake and there are tons of markets that pay. How good they are, how responsible they are, I can't tell you, but there are a lot of online markets that are beginning to replace the fanzines and the small presses. They're there, they're just changing.

