

Open Shelf

March 2006

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city of mesa library young adult advisory council book review newsletter

Letter from the editor



March. It's really hard to think of a theme for. There just aren't enough reviews on Irish books, Easter, or the Sign of the Ram to fit the bill. So, instead of focusing on a theme, we figured GOOD reviews were theme enough. Enjoy.

Jenny Knatz,
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Half-Human

Edited by Bruce Coville

A girl who grows snakes in her hair the day after she becomes a woman. A boy seeking his grandmother's lost mobility. A man who was once a tree. A girl who hears the ocean when she's a thousand miles from it.

For as long as tales have existed, there have been tales of those with something extra—the people that are part human, part something else. Centaurs, mermaids, gorgons... but what about the people themselves? What do they feel, being around other people while they have wings? Or fins?

This collection of short stories was written by some of the top authors of fantasy and sci-fi today and is one of the best collections I've ever read. Granted, some of the jokes and puns hidden in there are pretty bad, but the others are suitably amusing. It's a really good book and well worth your time.

- Patricia Langevin
★★★★★

Lord Loss

Darren Shan

Lord Loss is the grisly tale of demons, werewolves, and the value of family. When Grubb's family is murdered by the demon master, Lord Loss, and his gruesome familiars, Grubb's life—and his sanity—are torn to shreds. He is rescued by his wily, demi-mage Uncle Dervish and brought to live in his safe—if somewhat creepy—house. He makes a friend in an eccentric youth named Bill-E, and the two of them begin a quest to find a werewolf, soon winding up in more danger than they ever imagined.

Lord Loss is a great read, if you can stomach the first few chapters. The murder scene of Grubb's family is intense and I almost stopped reading, but after that it was great. Dervish is a wonderful character—a warped sense of humor, yes, but he's one of those people you can't help but like. The ending was absolutely marvelous. It seriously left me with an elated, content feeling. It doesn't leave you begging for the sequel, but you can close the cover feeling happy and complete.

- Nykii Ryan
★★★★★

The Illustrated Man

Ray Bradbury

The Illustrated Man—so called because his skin is coated in images, each with its own tale—comes across a traveler and begins to tell his stories. My favorite story, "Marionettes, Inc.," tells of Smith and Bradling, two men desperate for time away from their wives. Bradling employs Marionettes, Inc. to make a model of himself to leave

at home. He reveals his secret to Smith, who in turn craves a replica of himself to buy him time. He returns home and discovers a large amount of his money is missing. His conclusion: his wife has turned the tables on him and replicated herself instead! Meanwhile, Bradling's marionette has become a little too attached to the role he plays and is starting to feel rebellious.

The Illustrated Man also tells tales of other things, from families on Mars to exiled authors. Anyone can read this book—it's not just for people who love science fiction. And it's really, really good.

- Ashley Mentzer
★★★★★



rating system

bad; needs work ★

so-so ★★

average ★★★

good ★★★★

excellent; perfect ★★★★★

Visit the Library's Web Site:

www.mesalibrary.org
and see the Teens page!

Only You Can Save Mankind

Terry Pratchett

Everyone knows the basic plot of alien video games: find the aliens, kill them. But what happens when the aliens surrender? Such is the dilemma faced by Johnny Maxwell.

This is one of Pratchett's earlier books, so there are woefully few footnotes, but the writing is clear, smooth, and most of all, funny. It's a quick, amusing read, so just about anyone who likes Pratchett's writing, video games, aliens, or sarcasm would enjoy it.

- Danielle Cotie
★★★★

Letting Go of Bobby James or How I Found my Self of Steem

Valerie Hobbs

Sally Jo Walker, or Jody, is a teenager left at a gas station when her husband hits her. She moves to Jackson Beach, Florida, with only twenty bucks to her name. She gets a job washing dishes at Thelma's Open 24-hour Café, sneaking into the cinema at night to sleep. Eventually she saves up enough money to rent a cheap motel room. She meets Effaline, who is even more alone than Jody is. By saving Effaline, Jody really saves herself.

I really, really enjoyed this book. It was touching and a very good read. The characters are good and real and the story's interesting. It was inspiring, about finding yourself and helping the people around you.

- Oonagh Mcquarrie
★★★★

Heart of Darkness

Joseph Conrad

Classic novels, as many of you are realizing in your English classes, are filled with examples of such bothersome literary terms such as symbolism, foreshadowing, allegory, etc., etc. However, whereas other books merely have these features, **Heart of Darkness** seems to be the product of generations of symbolic inbreeding. Nothing in this

book is without some sort of symbolism. And yet, it seems to be almost entirely devoid of purpose. Thus, I recommend this under special circumstances. If you will be forced to read this book for English, you may as well puzzle your way through it before it's crammed down your throat. Take a guess as to what the underlying meaning is... No one, not even the real literary critics, can agree on it.

- Jeremy Davis
★★

Playing with Fire

Kathleen Karr

Greer lives in the 1920's, surrounded by the craze of spiritualism. Her mother, Madame Camille, is a fortune teller barely surviving when "Uncle Drake" comes into her life. He convinces Greer and her mother to cheat wealthy devotees by concocting fake séances. However, hidden from everyone, Greer really does have the power—but how she will use it is just one part of the mystery.

This is an excellent book. Kathleen Karr peels back layer after layer of her characters, but never quite reveals them. A good bet for anyone looking for a good read.

- Mary Beth Hutchinson
★★★★★

Forests of the Heart

Charles de Lint

It all starts with a mask—a mask of the Green Man—that figure which dominates so much Celtic lore. Unlike most representations of this mythical figure, this mask is different—it holds power. And, like most forms of power, it can be used for great good or great evil.

This is a tale of Charles de Lint's city of Newford, that city where reality and fantasy blur and unite. As with most of his works, his characters are deep, involved, and true to form. The story often shifts perspectives, but instead of being distracting, it just makes it all the more appealing. Of all the works of de Lint's I've read this remains my favorite. I highly recommend picking it up—it's impossible to put down.

- Jenny Knatz
★★★★★

Where's FRANK?

FRANK Teen Literary Magazine 2005 is now on sale at all three City of Mesa Library branches for 75 cents, or read it for FREE in the library or your school media center.

Teen submissions for the 2006 issue will be accepted until March 31, 2006.

You can also sign up to join the teen editorial staff.

Check

<http://mesalibrary.org/teens/frank/> for more information.

What is YAAC?



The Young Adult Advisory Council (YAAC) is a group of teens from many of Mesa's junior and senior high schools. They hold meetings twice monthly to review books for this newsletter and to plan special activities. They also help the librarians in Mesa Public Library's Young Adult Room at the Main Library as volunteers and assist with programs.

If you are interested in becoming a member of YAAC, call (480) 644-2734 or stop by the Young Adult service desk and ask for an application.

Learn more at:

 **mesalibrary.org**
City of Mesa Library on the Web



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