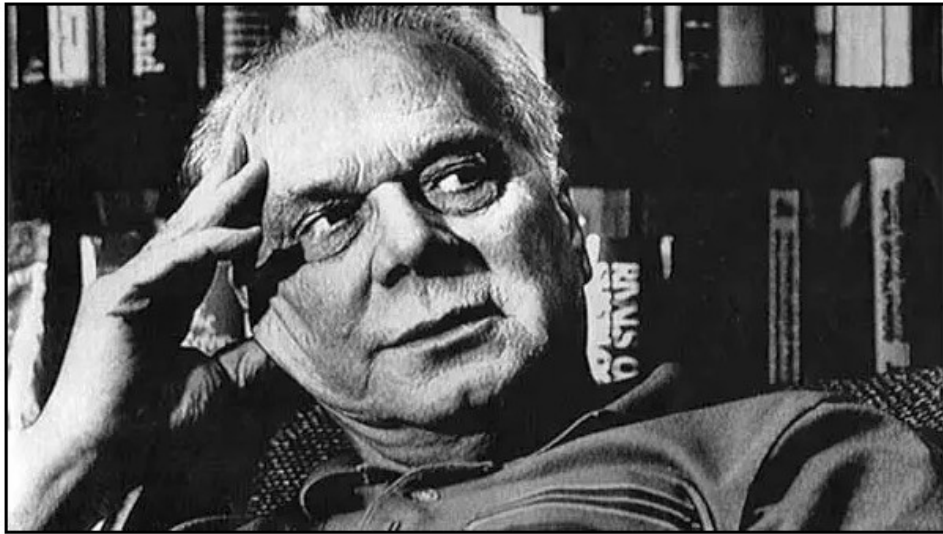


# FARMERREAD

VOLUME 2 | NUMBER 1

SUMMER 2023



**THE LOVERS**  
**WOLD NEWTON FAMILY**  
**THE ROCKETEER**  
**SHERLOCK HOLMES**

# ***FarmerFan***

***Volume 2 | Issue 1 | September 2023***

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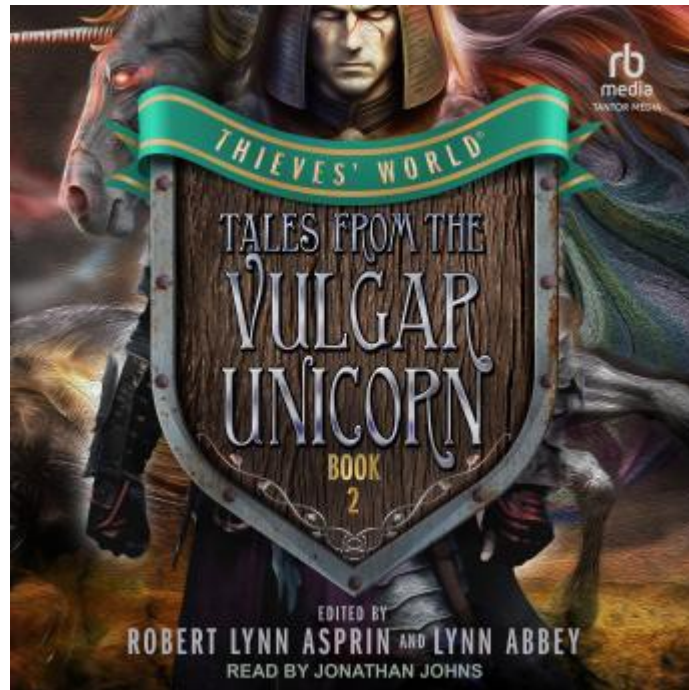
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## ***Editorial: What's New in Farmer fandom?***



***Cover artist is not credited.***

Welcome to Volume 2 of Farmerfan, the fanzine dedicated to Philip José Farmer. It's an exciting time to be a PJF fan with a new audio edition of Farmer's *Spiders of the Purple Mage* being released as part of the *Thieves' World Volume 2: Tales From the Vulgar Unicorn* audiobook. It can be downloaded from Amazon or Audible.

Meteor House has also announced an interesting experimental edition of Farmer's *The Other Log of Phileas Fogg*, pairing it with Jules Verne's original *Around the World in Eighty Days*. The two novels will be spliced together in alternating fashion where the reader will read the original Verne, then Farmer's secret "other log." It's currently up for pre-order at [meterhousepress.com](http://meterhousepress.com).

As for this issue of Farmerfan, once again we try to run the proverbial gauntlet of PJF-related interests:

Atom Mudman Bezecny leads us off with an essay connecting the Domino Lady to the Sherlock Holmes canon.

Sean Lee Levin unveils a crossover chronology for Dave Stevens' the Rocketeer.

Your humble editor takes a speculative look at Richard B. Riddick's possible place in the Wold Newton Family.

William H. Emmons reviews Farmer's groundbreaking tale of *The Lovers*.

As Summer ends and Fall begins, we hope you are able to kick back and enjoy this new issue of Farmerfan. And remember, you can find this issue, as well as all past issues, completely free of charge at [farmerfan.com](http://farmerfan.com).

## *The Adventure of the Masked Granddaughter*

By Atom Mudman Bezecny



**Cover to Domino Lady/Sherlock Holmes #2 by Mark Sparacio**

One of the stories that stood out to me in my most recent reading of the Sherlock Holmes canon was “The Adventure of the Dancing Men.” The events of that story made me speculate on Holmes' involvement with a certain pulp heroine.

In “The Dancing Men,” Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are approached by Hilton Cubitt, who has married an American woman named Elsie Patrick. Recently the Cubitts have been receiving strange messages written in a strange code made of child-like drawings of dancing figures. Elsie seems to understand the codes, and Hilton believes they relate to her unspecified unsavory past. Holmes cracks the code and realizes that the Cubitts are about to meet their doom. He and Watson rush to the couple's house only to find Hilton dead of a gunshot wound to the heart and Elsie close to death from a shot to the head. Elsie is saved, and Holmes eventually discovers the truth: Elsie was the daughter of a Chicago mobster, who was engaged to one of her father's gunmen, Abe Slaney. She broke her engagement to escape from the life of crime her father's mob promised her. Slaney had followed her to England, where he intended to take her back. He killed Hilton in a gun battle and Elsie, in return, shot herself. Slaney is arrested and Elsie dedicates the rest of her life to helping the poor.

I believe that Watson, in his account of this case, omitted key details, as he was wont to do. He didn't want to share that Elsie Patrick had had Abe Slaney's baby out of wedlock. Not only was this done to protect her dignity, but including the detail would have made his story too similar to an earlier adventure he'd shared, “The Adventure of the Yellow Face.” That story also featured a woman hiding from her past marital connections in America, with her secret being revealed that she was the mother of a child of mixed race. Elsie had attempted suicide not only because she witnessed the murder of her husband, but because she had long suffered the shame of abandoning her child.

Hilton's murder only cemented the guilt she felt for trying to start a new life in a different country. She blamed herself for her husband's death and for what she thought was the inevitable criminal future of her son.

In her absence, Elsie's son had been raised by her father. Upon recovering from her injury, and learning of Slaney's imprisonment, she intended to rescue her son from her father's clutches and bring him to England, with the aid of the inheritance of her husband's will. However, some time after Watson's account was made public, the widowed Mrs. Cubitt suffered complications from her previous suicide attempt. While the bullet had been safely removed and the wound had healed, the trauma impacted on her brain eventually induced a fatal stroke. Elsie's father, upon hearing the news, blamed himself for his daughter's death. He realized his criminal activities were responsible, and so he abandoned his leadership of the mob he commanded, starting a new life in Berkeley, California. He raised his young grandson Owen to despise crime, freely telling him that crime had caused the death of his mother. He told him of his mother's work with the poor, and the good she'd done before her early death.\*

Under his grandfather's reformed guidance, Owen Patrick eventually rose to the seat of District Attorney. He also started a family of his own; his beautiful daughter Ellen was a promising student at the University of California. But Ellen's whole life was shattered when her father was killed by the same type of criminals her great-grandfather had tried to protect him from. Thirsting for justice, Ellen Patrick donned a white gown and black mask and became the Domino Lady.

If Ellen Patrick is indeed a descendant of Elsie Patrick, she may have been named for her grandmother. While Elsie is often a nickname for Elizabeth, it could also be given to someone named Ellen. We could even stretch this and say that Elsie was a nickname for Helen. This would mean that Helen Benson, the Domino Lady's daughter, was named in honor of her unfortunate great-grandmother.

We know that Sherlock Holmes and the Domino Lady joined forces several times, as detailed in stories by Nancy Holder, Bobby Nash, and others. It's not unlikely to me that Holmes discovered that a member of the new generation of crimefighters was a descendant of a woman he'd aided in the past. He probably sought her out deliberately on this basis, though he also would have liked to meet her on her own merits. Just as he had been involved with the families of Tarzan and Doc Savage, Holmes' path had brought him in contact with another of the great pulp heroes, who would succeed him as he enjoyed his oft-interrupted retirement.

\* Tangentially, I believe that Mr. Patrick's wife refused to see eye-to-eye with her husband. When he fled to California with Owen, Mrs. Patrick remarried to a rival mobster named Grisson. When Mr. Grisson died, his wife took over his mob. By the time her children by Grisson were old enough to join her outfit, she had stolen Ma Barker's thunder by calling herself Ma Grisson—though she may have actually been ripping off Ma Jarrett (who'd also ripped off Barker). The story of Ma Grisson and her gang was told by James Hadley Chase in *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. Ma Jarrett's tale was told in the film *White Heat*.

## *The Rocketeer Crossover Chronology*

By Sean Lee Levin



**The Rocketeer by Dave Stevens**

Dave Stevens' comic *The Rocketeer*, published in various books from Pacific Comics, Eclipse Comics, Comico, and Dark Horse Comics over the period of 1982-1995, was a loving tribute to the serials (especially *King of the Rocket Men*) and pulps of the 1930s and 1940s. During his two exploits recorded by Stevens, the Rocketeer (real name Cliff Secord) met thinly veiled versions of two iconic pulp heroes and Wold Newton family members: the bronze-skinned adventurer, who in fact invented the hero's rocket pack, and the shadowy vigilante, who appeared under the name Jonas. Philip José Farmer was evidently a fan of *The Rocketeer*, given that he owned a copy of the hardcover collection of the first story inscribed to him by Stevens himself. It was likely reciprocal, as Stevens' use of Doc fits perfectly into Farmer's chronology as presented in *Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life*.

Although Stevens had many ideas for further stories involving the Rocketeer, including a team-up between Cliff and the Golden Age Superman against the Martians from the 1938 radio version of *The War of the Worlds* (which unfortunately met with little interest from DC Comics), they were sadly unfulfilled with his passing in 2008 of hairy cell leukemia at the too-young age of fifty-two. Before he died, Stevens gave his blessings to a remastered hardcover collection of both Rocketeer graphic novels, released by IDW Publishing in 2009 as *The Rocketeer: The Complete*

*Adventures*. In 2011, IDW put out *The Rocketeer Adventures*, an anthology mini-series and the first in a wave of new official Rocketeer comics published by them. Furthermore, a prose anthology, *The Rocketeer: Jet-Pack Adventures*, edited by Jeff Conner and Tom Waltz and illustrated by Jay Bone, was published in 2014. Many of these new comics and prose adventures featured not only the two pulp heroes Cliff encountered in his original exploits, but also disguised versions of other characters from various media, and even a full-fledged official team-up with the late great Will Eisner's hero the Spirit.

The present article is a chronology of the crossovers in the published Rocketeer materials, as well as unofficial nods to the Rocketeer series in other works. Much of the information in this piece is derived from Win Scott Eckert's invaluable tomes *Crossovers: A Secret Chronology of the World Volumes 1* and *2* (Black Coat Press, 2016) and my own *Crossovers Expanded: A Secret Chronology of the World Volumes 1* and *2* (Meteor House, 2016) and the forthcoming *Crossovers Expanded: A Secret Chronology of the World Volume 3*, also to be published by Meteor House. Some of the unofficial crossovers have many more references beyond the Rocketeer nods, so I will refer the interested reader to Win's books and mine in the annotations for those entries.

*Late Autumn 1937-Winter 1938*

#### THE MIRACLE SQUAD: BLOOD AND DUST

The members of the Miracle Squad, a group of actors, detectives, and other employees a small B-movie studio, encounter Cliff Secord (the future Rocketeer) and his girlfriend Betty. Cliff is chagrined by their open admiration of his gorgeous significant other. One of the members of the Squad picks up a hitchhiker recently released from prison, Tom Joad.

*Four-issue miniseries by John Wooley and Terry Tidwell, 1989. The Miracle Squad first appeared in an eponymous miniseries in 1986. Betty is based on real-life pin-up model Bettie Page, who Stevens helped bring back into the public eye and befriended. The miniseries The Rocketeer: In the Den of Thieves establishes that Betty's surname is Paige; thus, both her first and last name are spelled differently than her counterpart in our universe. Tom Joad is from John Steinbeck's novel The Grapes of Wrath.*

*Late April 1938*

#### THE ROCKETEER

Cliff Secord becomes the Rocketeer, using a jetpack, the Cirrus X-3, invented by a scientific genius, who comes to Cliff's aid at one point. His five aides also appear, most prominently a redheaded apelike chemist and a dapper fellow with a cane who his companion refers to as "shyster." Cliff's mechanic, "Peevy" Peabody, falsely believes the duo are employees of Howard Hughes.

*Comic book story by Dave Stevens in titles from various publishers over several years, and first published in a collected form by Eclipse Comics. The inventor of the rocket pack, as stated*

*above, is the pulp hero commonly known as “Doc.” This story likely takes place after the pulp novel The Other World, which Farmer placed in April 1938 in Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life. The reference to Howard Hughes inspired the replacement of Doc with Hughes in Joe Johnston’s 1991 film adaptation of The Rocketeer.*

#### THE ROCKETEER: CLIFF’S NEW YORK ADVENTURE

Following the events of the previous exploit, Cliff pursues Betty to New York City, where he is pulled into an adventure with ties to his past by an enigmatic individual calling himself Jonas, who now employs Cliff’s old friend “Goose” Gander. Cliff and Goose are driven to a club Betty is attending by a cabbie named Moe, whose taxi bears the logo “Sunshine.” The Cobalt Club is mentioned.

*Three comics from various publishers, compiled by Dark Horse Comics. “Jonas” is the vigilante whose career was recounted by Walter Gibson and others under the nom de plume of “Maxwell Grant.” Moe is one of this shadowy hero’s agents, while the Cobalt Club is frequented by “Jonas” in his guise as a wealthy globetrotter. The New York-based Sunshine Cab Company is from the 1978-1983 television series Taxi.*

#### HOME AGAIN

Cliff reunites with Betty and Peevy. He reveals that as he was leaving New York, Jonas confronted him, wishing to create working replicas of the rocket pack, one for his own use, and one as a backup for Cliff. In exchange, Cliff agrees to help him with an unspecified future threat.

*Story by Michael Allred in Rocketeer Adventures #1, IDW Publishing, May 2011.*

*May 1938*

#### THE MONARCH OF ARMAGEDDON

Doc Savage’s aides refer to the kid who recently stole Doc’s rocket pack.

*Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze #1-4 by Mark Ellis, Darryl Banks, and Robert Lewis, Millennium Publications, 1991-1992.*

*Summer 1939*

#### THE WRATH FROM THE TOMB

Aviatrix and adventuress Athena Voltaire battles Dracula’s daughter. What appears to be the Rocketeer’s helmet is in the study of Arthur Holmwood, Lord Godalming.

*Story by Paul Daly, Steve Bryant, and Chad Fidler in Athena Voltaire: The Collected Webcomics, Ape Entertainment, 2006. The Rocketeer helmet seen here is likely a replica, given that Cliff continued to wear his own helmet in many adventures following this story. For information on the other crossovers contained in this story, consult its writeup in Win Scott Eckert’s Crossovers: A Secret Chronology of the World Volume 1.*



*Summer 1939*

### BUTCHY SAVES BETTY

Cliff and Betty attempt to rescue Butchy the dog, who has become entangled in the rocket pack and, thanks to Peevy's new auto-ignition feature, has blasted off into the sky. Meanwhile, Peevy meets with Jonas, for whom he and Cliff are investigating espionage.

*Story by Kyle Baker in The Rocketeer Adventures Vol. 2 #3, IDW Publishing, 2012.*

*Summer 1939*

### THE HELMET AND THE FEDORA

Betty drags Cliff to a lecture at the Museum of Natural History by a professor who has traveled the world studying primitive cultures. Cliff, bored, wanders away, only to find some gangsters trying to steal one of the items on display. Donning his Rocketeer gear, he fights them off, only to get knocked for a loop. The professor defeats them with a whip. Regaining consciousness, Cliff finds a fedora with a bullet hole in it, which he realizes isn't the hat he was wearing before. Cliff catches up with Betty, jealously watching her flirt with the professor. Behind the two on the wall are silhouettes of the Rocketeer and a man in a fedora carrying a whip.

*Story by Kelvin Mao and Craig Cermak in The Rocketeer, IDW Publishing, 2013. The professor is Indiana Jones. The date of this story is conjecture. It ran untitled, and therefore, I have provided one of my own.*

*Summer 1939*

### HOLLYWOOD HORROR

Cliff battles Dr. Otto Rune. Doc sends his two aides that Cliff has encountered before to retrieve the Cirrus X-3, but ultimately decides to let him keep it. Cliff is helped by a married couple who used to be detectives and have a dog named Asta. Cliff briefly meets two paperhangers, one of whom is named Jeff. A friend of Betty's whom Rune had victimized encounters a desert hillbilly couple.

*Four-issue miniseries by Roger Langridge and J. Bone, IDW Publishing, 2013. The former detectives are Nick and Nora Charles from Dashiell Hammett's novel The Thin Man and the subsequent film series starring William Powell and Myrna Loy. Jeff and his coworker are the title characters of Bud Fisher's comic strip Mutt and Jeff. The hillbillies are Snuffy Smith and his wife Loweezy from Billy DeBeck's strip Barney Google and Snuffy Smith. The Smiths live in the Appalachian village of Hootin' Holler, so it is likely they are on vacation in California in this story.*

*Autumn 1939*

### THE GREAT RACE

Government agents arrest inventor Delton Nkosi. Cliff asks what they plan to do with Nkosi's experimental airplane. One of the agents says they have their top men working on it. Cliff decides to retire.

*Four-issue miniseries by Stephen Mooney, IDW Publishing, 2022. The phrase "top men" is emphasized in bold, suggesting the plane will be placed in the same government warehouse where the Ark of the Covenant was stored after Indiana Jones recovered it in 1936, as seen in the film Raiders of the Lost Ark. Cliff's retirement will prove short-lived, as proven by the next entry and adventures subsequent to it. This story takes place in the late 1930s, during World War II, but prior to the U.S.' entry, making the year 1939.*

*Autumn 1939*

### IN THE DEN OF THIEVES

Cliff comes out of retirement when Peevy is kidnapped by the Nazis to make rocket packs for them. Doc comes to Cliff's aid.

*Miniseries by Stephen Mooney and David Messina, IDW Publishing, 2023. This series is currently on its third issue.*

*January 1940*

### NAZIS IN PARADISE

Cliff joins a group sent by Howard Hughes to Tibet to steal a high-tech aircraft from Nazis seeking a lost valley. One of the other members of the expedition is Doctor Emme, who speaks Tcho-Tcho and many other languages.

*Short story by Don Webb in The Rocketeer: Jet-Pack Adventures, Jeff Conner and Tom Waltz, eds., IDW Publishing, 2014. The Tcho-Tcho people were created by August Derleth for his stories set in the milieu of H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, a term Derleth himself coined.*

*May 1940*

### FAREWELL, MY ROCKETEER

Cliff is forced to fly Nazi agents to Colorado to find a century-old Aztec treasure. The agents' leader reminds Cliff of Jonas. Another agent once pursued a large bird figurine. Cliff prevents the last remaining Nazi from murdering a tall, black-haired, blue-eyed man named Simon and his companion, an equally tall, willowy blonde woman named Patricia. Simon, who forged the treasure map the Nazis acquired, says he doesn't tolerate the ungodly, and uses the term "said the

actress to the bishop.” He leaves Cliff a note with a stick figure on one side and a message signed “S. T.” on the other.

*Short story by Gregory Frost in The Rocketeer: Jet-Pack Adventures, Jeff Conner and Tom Waltz, eds., IDW Publishing, 2014. The bird figurine is the Maltese Falcon, from Dashiell Hammett’s mystery novel of the same name. Simon and Patricia are Simon Templar, aka the Saint, and Patricia Holm from Leslie Charteris’ novels.*

*Summer 1940*

### CARGO OF DOOM

Cliff battles the Master (also referred to as “John Sunligh-”), who has a grudge against the Cirrus X-3’s inventor. Said inventor also performed brain surgery on one of the Master’s henchmen. The Master and his ship’s crew are transporting dinosaurs from a small, remote island near Sumatra whose name starts with “Skull.” A few years ago, an expedition brought a giant ape from the island to New York City, where it went on a rampage.

*Four-issue miniseries by Mark Waid and Chris Samnee, IDW Publishing, 2012. The Master is Doc’s foe from the pulp novels Fortress of Solitude and The Devil Genghis. Doc runs a special “college” in upstate New York that uses brain surgery to help reform criminals. The island is Skull Island from the classic film King Kong.*

*Summer 1940*

### DARK STREETS OF DOOM

The crimefighter known as the Masked Avenger uses a rocket pack invented by a famous scientist named Clark Savage.

*Short story by Tom Johnson included as half of a Gryphon Publications Double Novel, reprinted and revised in Triple Detective #3, Altus Press, 2009. This rocket pack must be a successor to the Cirrus X-3 and a predecessor to the Cirrus X-9 (see Win Scott Eckert’s “The Eye of Oran” and “The Scarlet Jaguar.”) For a full list of the other crossovers in this story, consult my book Crossovers Expanded: A Secret Chronology of the World Volume 2.*

*February 1941*

### PULP FRICTION

Cliff teams up with the Spirit to battle the latter’s archenemy the Octopus and his ally Benedict Trask, who plan to use an advanced matter transmitter/television stolen from a bronze-skinned inventor to assassinate President Roosevelt.

*Four-issue miniseries by Mark Waid, Paul Smith, Loston Wallace, Bob Wiacek, and J. Bone, IDW Publishing, 2013.*

*July 1941*

### ATOLL OF TERROR

Cliff battles a vivisectionist working for the Nazis, who says that the British government drove him out of the country, like Moreau before him.

*Short story by Simon Kurt Unsworth in The Rocketeer: Jet-Pack Adventures, Jeff Conner and Tom Waltz, eds., IDW Publishing, 2014. Moreau is from H. G. Wells' novel The Island of Doctor Moreau.*

*October 1941*

### SKY PIRATES OF RANGOON

Cliff pretends to be asleep during a battle between the American Volunteer Group in Burma and a band of pirates to preserve his secret identity, thinking "I bet this never happened to the Spirit."

S

*hort story by Cody Goodfellow in The Rocketeer: Jet-Pack Adventures, Jeff Conner and Tom Waltz, eds., IDW Publishing, 2014.*

*February 7, 1942*

### TKO

Cliff defeats a villain using a flying device invented by the creator of the Cirrus X-3, then returns it to his aides, saying that now they are even. The apelike chemist asks Doc why he didn't get the rocket pack back from Cliff, but he vouches for Cliff's heroism.

*Story by Lowell Francis and Gene Ha in Rocketeer Adventures #2, IDW Publishing, 2011.*

*June 1942*

### CODENAME: ECSTASY

Cliff comes to the rescue of actress and inventor Hedy Lamarr, who is being targeted by the Nazi Silver Legion for her frequency hopper. When Hedy asks Cliff what to do with a captured German, he replies, "Leave that to me. I know a guy called Doc who's big on rehabilitation through applied brain surgery. If it works on criminals, it should work on Nazis too."

*Short story by Nancy A. Collins in The Rocketeer: Jet-Pack Adventures, Jeff Conner and Tom Waltz, eds., IDW Publishing, 2014.*

*Late January 1944*

### THE GLASS LADY

The first team-up of the Avenger and the Domino Lady (Ellen Patrick). Ellen attends a party at the Schildiner mansion. The other guests include an up-and-coming actress named Betty and a handsome brown-haired stunt-pilot who works at Chaplin Air Field.

*Part I of Hunt the Avenger by Win Scott Eckert, Moonstone Books, 2019. The full list of crossovers in this story is beyond the scope of this article and can be found in my forthcoming book Crossovers Expanded: A Secret Chronology of the World Volume 3. I will however note that the Schildiner Mansion is an homage to author Frank Schildiner, and that there is also a Levin Quarry in it.*

*Early December 1945*

### THE RIVET GANG

Cliff's rocket pack is stolen by the all-female Rivet Gang, and Doc's aides tell Cliff that Doc wants him to recover it.

*Short story by Lisa Morton in The Rocketeer: Jet-Pack Adventures, Jeff Conner and Tom Waltz, eds., IDW Publishing, 2014. Surprisingly, the apelike chemist and the dapper lawyer are referred to by their nicknames in the original pulp novels.*

*June-July 1946*

### THE EYE OF ORAN

Francis "Doc" Ardan helps Adélaïde Johnston and Violet Holmes escape from plague-ravaged Oran using a rocket pack, the Cirrus X-9. The pack is later stolen by Adélaïde, who reveals that she is the daughter of Arsène Lupin.

*Short story by Win Scott Eckert in Tales of the Shadowmen Volume 2: Gentlemen of the Night, Jean-Marc and Randy Lofficier, eds., Black Coat Press, 2006; reprinted in French in Les Compagnons de l'Ombre (Tome 1), Jean-Marc Lofficier, ed., Rivière Blanche, 2008; and in English in Doc Ardan: The Abominable Snowman, Jean-Marc and Randy Lofficier, eds., Black Coat Press, 2016. Doc Ardan is from Doc Ardan: City of Gold and Lepers and other works by Guy d'Armen, many of which have been translated and adapted by the Lofficiers, who have identified Ardan with the bronze man. The Cirrus X-9 is a later model than the X-3 from The Rocketeer. This story has numerous other crossovers; for the full list, consult its entry in Win Scott Eckert's Crossovers: A Secret Chronology of the World Volume 2.*

*Spring 1953*

### A BUG'S LIFE

The giant ant Spiridon and Kenneth Williams, who once had his brain transplanted into the body of an ant, use a jetpack invented by Francis Ardan.

*Short story by Atom Mudman Bezecny in Tales of the Shadowmen Volume 15: Trompe l'Oeil, Jean-Marc and Randy Lofficier, eds., Black Coat Press, 2018; reprinted in French in Les Compagnons de l'Ombre (Tome 26), Jean-Marc Lofficier, ed., Rivière Blanche, 2020. The jetpack in this story may be the Cirrus X-9 from Win Scott Eckert's "The Eye of Oran" and The Scarlet Jaguar. A full tally of the crossovers in this story can be found in my upcoming book Crossovers Expanded: A Secret Chronology of the World Volume 3.*

*Summer 1974*

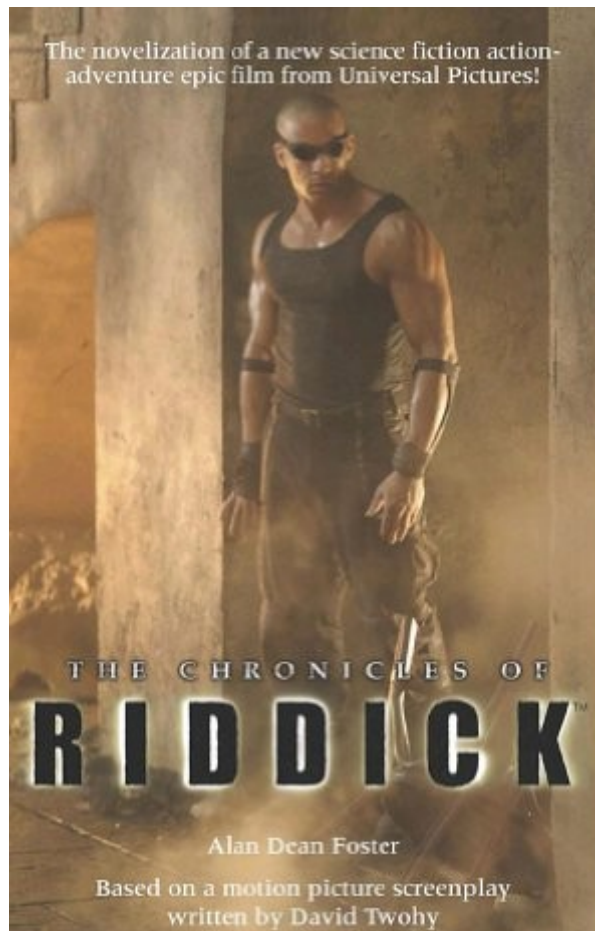
### THE SCARLET JAGUAR

Patricia Clarke Lupin Wildman, the daughter of Doc Wildman and Adélaïde Johnston Lupin, uses her father's Cirrus X-9 rocket pack to escape from the headquarters of the fiendish Scarlet Jaguar.

*Novella by Win Scott Eckert, Meteor House, 2013. The Cirrus X-9 first appeared in Eckert's "The Eye of Oran." According to Philip José Farmer, Doc's real name is James Clarke Wildman, Jr. For a full list of the crossovers in this novella, read my book Crossovers Expanded: A Secret Chronology of the World Volume 2.*

## *Riddick of Furya: The Future of the Wold Newton Family*

By Jason Scott Aiken



Cover to *The Chronicles of Riddick* novelization

When first introduced to Richard B. Riddick the main character of the Chronicles of Riddick series, I couldn't help but notice his similarities to some of my favorite Wold Newton Family members. After seeing this nearly unstoppable anti-hero defy the odds time and time again I have come to realize there is a strong possibility he is a member of the Wold Newton Family.

I believe David Twohy and Vin Diesel are scrying into the far future and channeling their shared vision of Riddick into modern-day media. I'm normally hesitant to attempt to include characters from movies and television in the Wold Newton Universe. However, given the influence of Twohy and Diesel along with their singular vision for the character, I have to make an exception. Riddick is not a written-by-committee modern-media character. Sure the initial *Pitch Black* story was by Ken and Jim Wheat, but Twohy reworked the screenplay into the film we know today. Since then he and Diesel have had complete creative control over the character. Furthermore, the novelizations (which further expand the content of the films) are used with his complete screenplays as a basis. With only two people channeling Riddick's story, I feel I can attempt to place him within the Wold Newton Family.

The Wold Newton Family traits Riddick exhibits are too numerous to be taken for a mere coincidence. In this article I will outline the Wold Newton traits which Richard B. Riddick

possesses as well as a theory on how he can be a member of the Wold Newton Family.

I will start out by introducing Richard B. Riddick to those who are unfamiliar with the character. Riddick is played by actor Vin Diesel. The character was originally created by Jim and Ken Wheat, but was further expanded upon and developed by David Twohy (writer/director of the films) and Vin Diesel.

Riddick first appears in *Pitch Black* a scifi horror film released in 2000. A novelization of the film was also written by Frank Lauria. The movie focuses on survivors of a spaceship crash as they struggle to survive on a seemingly uninhabited planet. The planet is barren, save for vicious nocturnal predators called bioraptors. The survivors' crash landing coincides with a complete eclipse of the planet's orbiting suns when the flesh-eating creatures are free to roam the surface. One of the survivors is a convicted murderer, Richard B. Riddick. His unique abilities prove to be quite useful and he is released from captivity in exchange for his help.

Riddick later appears in a direct to video animated short titled *Dark Fury*, which takes place immediately following *Pitch Black*. This short feature takes Riddick aboard the mercenary vessel the *Kublai Khan*. The ship's captain is a femme fatale named Chillingsworth. She has a hobby of capturing the most highly sought after fugitives in the Universe. After they are captured she keeps them for her personal collection in a state of suspended animation as life-size sculptures. Needless to say, she wants to add Riddick to her already sizable collection.

In *The Chronicles of Riddick*, the series really begins to spread its wings in regards to world building and mythology. Riddick returns from a self imposed exile and finds he is the Universe's only hope against the Necromonger invasion. The Necromongers are a nomadic cult of Death worshipers who take over star systems one by one in their effort to reach the UnderVerse. They are lead by the holy half dead Lord Marshal Zhylaw. It should also be noted the novelization written by Alan Dean Foster was based on a screenplay by David Twohy. It appears the original screenplay includes even more lore and mythology, because the novelization expands the mythology even further than the Director's Cut of the film.

Riddick also appears in a motion comic titled *Blindsided*, which takes place after *The Chronicles of Riddick*. Riddick is now the leader of the Necromongers, their Lord Marshal, and he has lost his edge. His animal instincts have dulled and he has found keeping his throne is a whole lot harder than taking it.

Riddick's latest appearance on film is *Riddick*, a sequel to *The Chronicles of Riddick*, but done in the style of *Pitch Black*. Riddick's time as Lord Marshal has been plagued with assassination attempts, as he refuses to embrace the Necromonger religion. He has lost his animal instinct and has become more civilized than he ever was. He also begins to feel drawn to his native planet of Furya, which only the Necromonger commander Vaako knows the location of. Vaako agrees to take Riddick to Furya, but when Riddick touches down on the planet he can tell it's not Furya. He is ambushed by a Necromonger named Krone and left for dead. The film involves Riddick getting back to his roots, getting his animal side back. In the process, he triggers a distress beacon to draw bounty hunters to the planet so he can escape with one of their ships. From this point on it's Riddick taking on the mercs and monsters in order to escape the planet and get his revenge.

The original untitled *Riddick* screenplay also includes scenes which are more in *The Chronicles of Riddick* style. These scenes focus on Furya, more specifically the character Shirah and a young man who has eyes like Riddick known as Alpha Kid in the screenplay.

In addition to these films, Riddick has appeared in two video games which act as prequels to *Pitch*



*Black*. They are titled *Escape from Butcher Bay* and *Assault on Dark Athena*. These are first-person-shooter/stealth games in which you stalk through the shadows as Riddick. Both games involve Riddick escaping captivity, the first from a super max prison, the other from a mercenary spaceship.

During the course of these stories Riddick depicts traits comparable to those of the two tent-pole members of the Wold Newton Family, John Gribardsun and Doctor James Clark Wildman.

John Gribardsun is the basis for Tarzan of the Apes, Lord Greystoke. According to Philip Jose Farmer, Edgar Rice Burroughs based his Tarzan tales on Gribardsun. In *Tarzan: Alive*, Farmer did not reveal Gribardsun's real name in order to protect the jungle lord and his family. Gribardsun is the name he is going by in *Times Last Gift* also written by Farmer, so I have chosen to refer to him as thus in this article. He is also called Sakhindar in the Khokarsa series by Farmer and Christopher Paul Carey. Via a witch doctor's elixir, Gribardsun is an ageless immortal, who thanks to time travel is active throughout most of history (12,000 B.C. – until at least 2140 A.D.).

Doctor James Clark Wildman is more commonly known as Doctor Clark Savage Junior. Lester Dent and other Doc Savage writers based their stories on Wildman's life. French author Guy d'Armen also based his Doctor Ardan stories on a young Doc Wildman. Farmer reveals Wildman's real name in *Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life*.

Riddick's physical appearance highly resembles both Gribardsun and Wildman. He is bronze skinned and muscular. Not an ounce was wasted on his mezomorphic frame. This is not only akin to Gribardsun and Wildman, but also their offspring. Riddick is also the right height for someone descended from Gribardsun stock, standing roughly six feet in height. In the *Chronicles of Riddick* novelization, Riddick's friend Imam likens his limbs to metal rather than flesh. Another trait he shares with both Gribardsun and Wildman.

With this physical appearance comes peak human physical abilities. Like Gribardsun and Wildman, Riddick is in optimal physical condition and an amazing athlete. He shows astounding speed and agility for someone with his muscular frame. He's able to run long distances without being visibly winded and is able to climb ropes effortlessly with only his arms. When he is jumping from rooftop to rooftop in the *Chronicles of Riddick* novelization, a gap appears which is far too wide for a human to clear. Riddick has to make extra effort to clear it, but he manages to surpass the limitations of an ordinary human.

Another trait he shares with Gribardsun is his affinity for blades. Like Gribardsun, Riddick is comfortable using firearms, but he prefers a knife or shiv, usually of his own making. Whether it's made of metal, bone or teeth, if it cuts, Riddick will use it.

Like Gribardsun, Riddick possesses an animal instinct and heightened senses. In *Pitch Black* he is supposed to be in a state of cryogenic sleep, but is still awake. In his opening internal monologue he states, "They say most of your brain shuts down in cryosleep, all but the primitive side, the animal side...no wonder I'm still awake." While Riddick is blindfolded during transport, he is able to ascertain details about his fellow passengers by his enhanced senses of smell and hearing, including deducing their traits and occupations. His ability to stay awake during cryo is carried over into *The Chronicles of Riddick*. He is able to hear Eve Logan, the mercenary co-pilot, grind her teeth while she was in cryo. His enhanced sense of hearing is shown again in *Riddick* when he hears the rain falling in the distance before the mercenaries are able to.

His animal side also contributes to how he interacts with beasts. In *The Chronicles of Riddick*, he is able to tame a vicious Hellhound in the prison on Crematoria by staring it down. Once he begins to get his animal instinct back in *Riddick*, he is able to force his pet jackal to hand him an object it is

hiding just by growling at it.

As is the case with Gribardsun, Riddick seems to form a bond easily with animals. He shows great skill in nursing the jackal pup back to health in *Riddick*. This brings to mind Gribardsun's treatment of the lion cub Jad-bal-ja in *Tarzan and the Golden Lion* by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Both men develop a strong bond with their respective animal afterward.

Riddick also seems to have inherited Doc Wildman's scientific talents, albeit molded to his own purposes: survival and killing. His scientific knowledge includes anatomy, biology, and physics.

He is shown to have a knowledge of human anatomy through a few of his monologues in *Pitch Black* and *Riddick*. He speaks of the most efficient places to stab someone in the spinal cord and rib cage. According to Riddick, the sweet spot of the spine is the fourth lumbar down and the best place to stab someone in the ribs is between the fourth and fifth rib.

Riddick also shows a knowledge of biology in *Riddick*. He does this when he exposes the jackal pup to the mud demon venom, then extracts the pup's blood to create a vaccine for himself. This vaccine immunizes Riddick against the mud demon's venom.

His knowledge of physics is highlighted in the *Chronicles of Riddick* novelization. On Crematoria he kills a guard with a jagged teacup, causing Kyra to wonder why she didn't think of that. He explains to her it wouldn't work for her; she doesn't have the sufficient mass to put behind it, the kinetics would be incorrect. He's also able to conduct the necessary calculations in his head needed for rescuing Kyra via a rope swing when escaping the planet.

As seen in *Riddick*, he has the ability to control his vital signs as well. When cornered by the jackals, he exhales all of his air and sinks to the bottom of a pool of water. The jackals can still hear his heartbeat, so Riddick slows it in order to fool them into believing he is dead. Given Doc Wildman's mastery of his own body, I can see him pulling off this feat as well.

Riddick's ability to deduce the outcome of situations is most likely due to having the blood of the Great Detective, Sherlock Holmes, in his veins. In *Pitch Black*, Riddick is quick to deduce he and his companions are not alone on the planet and to realize the fate of the former settlers. He's also able to deduce the Bioraptors have a blind spot in their sight line by examining one of their skulls. Moreover, he knows the character of Jack is not actually a young male, but a young female before anyone else. In *The Chronicles of Riddick*, he is able to figure out what happened during the firefight between the prison guards and mercs on Crematoria, despite not being there himself. In *Riddick* he foresees the impending danger of the mud demons coming to the surface during the rainstorm and takes the appropriate measures to get off the planet.

Riddick also displays similarities to two men who are featured in the Secrets of the Nine series, Lord Grandrith and Doc Caliban. They are the main characters in Farmer's *A Feast Unknown*, *Lord of the Trees* and *The Mad Goblin*.

How these three novels fit in with the Wold Newton Family itself remains a question to this day. Are the Secrets of the Nine novels an alternate universe? Or are Lord Grandrith and Doc Caliban a disguise on Farmer's part for John Gribardsun and Doc Wildman, just as Edgar Rice Burroughs and Lester Dent disguised them as Tarzan and Doc Savage?

John Cloamby, Lord Grandrith, is depicted even more savage and primal than Gribardsun. He's said to be the son of Jack the Ripper and shares his father's preference of the knife. Many of the similarities between Riddick and Gribardsun can be applied to Riddick and Grandrith.

Grandrith's half brother is Doc Caliban. Again, many of the similarities between Riddick and Doc Wildman can be applied to Riddick and Doc Caliban, with one exception that really sticks out to me, the ability to dislocate his own limbs.

The first time we see Riddick do this is when he dislocates his shoulders to escape his restraints in *Pitch Black*. Later in the film, he pops his elbow back into place during his fight with Johns. In the *Chronicles of Riddick* novelization, he dislocates his shoulders once again, this time flipping while in midair to get the jump on Toombs. This mastery of one's skeletal structure brings to mind Doc Caliban. In *The Mad Goblin*, we learn Caliban can modify his skeletal structure to aid in disguising himself, a trait he shares with the main antagonist of the novel Iwaldi. While Riddick can dislocate his limbs, changing his skeletal structure entirely is not an ability he has displayed yet.

Given these traits and abilities it would seem Riddick has won the Wold Newton genetic lottery. He has the physical abilities of John Gribardsun and Doc Wildman, Gribardsun's animal instincts and senses, the scientific acuity of Doc Wildman, and the deductive abilities of Sherlock Holmes. Pair this with time spent in the most dangerous prisons in the Universe and you're left with a very dangerous and capable individual.

Riddick is also shown to possess traits similar to certain citizens of the Wold Newton Universe (a term coined by Win Scott Eckert) who may not be part of the Wold Newton Family, but who inhabit the same universe. These characters include the Black Bat, John Carter and Conan the Cimmerian.

The Black Bat is a pulp vigilante who operated in the late 1930's and early 1940's. By day he is Tony Quinn, Assistant District Attorney. After being blinded by acid he undergoes an operation which transplants a dying man's corneas onto his own eyes. This operation gives Quinn his sight back and also gives him the ability to see in the dark. From this point on he becomes the Black Bat. In *Pitch Black*, Riddick indicates he received his eye shine ability through a surgical operation as well. This is later proven incorrect in *Escape From Butcher Bay* when it is revealed the doctor, Pope Joe just stitched up his arm and his eye shine ability was awakened after a visit from Shirah, a Furyan empath still on Furya. Riddick is later revealed in the *Chronicles of Riddick* novelization as being an Alpha Furyan and the eye shine ability is a byproduct of being an Alpha. In the untitled screenplay which would become *Riddick*, the character known as Alpha Kid has the same eyes as Riddick.

John Carter is a former confederate cavalryman who is transported via astral projection to Mars (called Barsoom by native Martians). He appears to be an ageless immortal, never remembering his childhood, but does recall always being a warrior. Farmer speculates in his essay, *the Arms of Tarzan*, that John Carter may be a descendant of John Gribardsun or vice versa. Following his initial visits to Barsoom he creates a tomb to protect his uninhabited body on Earth. In *Riddick*, after Riddick is injured from Krone's assassination attempt he sets his broken leg back in place and secures it with screws from his Lord Marshal armor. He then upsets a stone pillar over a crevice in the ground then lays in the crevice and entombs himself by covering the crevice with the broken pillar. This is for his protection as he convalesces from his wounds. This entombing survival mechanism could be something in his DNA which is triggered when he is unable to defend himself.

The Wold Newton Universe inhabitant who Riddick may resemble the most is Conan the Cimmerian, created by Robert E. Howard. Conan lived in the Hyborian Age, approximately 10,000 B.C. This is a lost age of sword-and-sorcery occurring between the sinking of Atlantis and the beginning of recorded history. Conan is a barbarian who wanders the Hyborian Age as a thief, sword for hire, pirate, and later a king. His life and Riddick's are so similar it almost seems like

history is repeating itself.

Conan eventually ascends to the throne of the kingdom of Aquilonia. Riddick is a fugitive who becomes Lord Marshal, the ruler of the Necromongers in *The Chronicles of Riddick*. Both Conan and Riddick gain their thrones by killing the reigning monarch before them. Each later finds keeping his throne to be substantially more difficult than taking it. This is the case for Riddick in *Blindsided* and *Riddick*. Conan also has to deal with this in *The Phoenix on the Sword*, *The Scarlet Citadel* and *The Hour of the Dragon*. Both are barbaric individuals who come to rule over some form of a civilization.

It should also be noted Conan himself bears a striking resemblance to another Howard creation, Kull of Atlantis. Kull lived during the Thurian Age, approximately 100,000 B.C. He's a barbarian who was as a pirate, outlaw, gladiator, and soldier before becoming the King of Valusia after slaying its previous monarch. Like Conan and Riddick he finds he is more suited to fighting than ruling. If Conan is Riddick's forefather, then Kull is Conan's forefather.

All three warriors end up fighting dark wizards. Kull counts the sorcerer Thulsa Doom as his enemy, while Conan directly fights two dark wizards, Tsothalandi and Xaloton. Contrary to popular opinion, Conan never confronts Thoth-amon directly in any of the original Robert E. Howard stories. Riddick's dark wizard nemesis is Lord Marshal Zhylaw.

There is some evidence to suggest Riddick is also the One of his generation. We learn of this designation in *Is He in Hell?*, a Wold Newton short story by Win Scott Eckert. The villain of the story is none other than Xaltotun, Conan's ancient enemy reborn and operating in 1795 France under the moniker of Baron de Musard. During a monologue directed at Sir Percy Blakeny (also a Wold Newton Family member), he reveals Blakeny is the One of his time period and Conan was the One of his age. The One comes along once in a generation and exhibits an indomitable will and strength of character Xaltotun needs as a sacrifice to revive his ancient dark kingdom of Acheron.

While Riddick does possess an indomitable will, his strength of character may seem debatable. However, he does have a strict code he lives by. He doesn't like it when people mess with children especially. He also has a place in his heart for animals. It's revealed in the *Pitch Black* novelization (based on the screenplay by the Wheats and David Twohy) how Riddick ends up in prison thanks to this strength of character. This happens during Riddick's time spent working for a paramilitary force as a guard on a mining colony. He discovers the workers are treated more like slaves and the guards are basically slavers. He reports this abuse to his superiors and this results in him being framed for crimes he didn't commit and placed in prison. Since then he seems to have taken a more sociopathic view of the world, but he still has a code he lives by. If Riddick is the One then Lord Marshal Zhylaw may be another incarnation of Xaltotun. Or perhaps Xaltotun possessed him after Zhylaw crossed the Threshold into the UnderVerse and gained the dark powers he now exhibits.

Besides confronting dark wizards, all three have to fight the internal battle of civilization versus barbarism. Riddick finds being civilized is overrated, as his skills are dulled while ruling the Necromongers. While Kull and Conan find themselves prejudiced against throughout their lives by civilized men, especially when they become kings. All three are more at home on a battlefield than holding court.

Before explaining how Riddick fits into the Wold Newton Family some additional information on his past is needed. First of all, Riddick hails from a planet called Furya. We learn in *The Chronicles of Riddick* he is a survivor of the Necromonger invasion of Furya. The man who led the assault was a young forward operations officer named Zhylaw, who would later become Lord Marshal. The young Zhylaw was given a prophecy by a seer. The prophet foretold his death would come at the

hands of a male Furyan. This caused him to lead an attack on Furya, eradicating and enslaving most of the Furyan population. Young male Furyans were strangled at birth with their own umbilical cords. Riddick was one of these infants, but he survived.

How he got off the planet is a mystery. He claims in *The Chronicles of Riddick* he was educated in the penal system, so a life of juvenile delinquency is implied. We know he later joined the military or a paramilitary organization and learned to be a pilot. He would later join an elite Ranger academy where he was taught advanced killing techniques. After the academy he took the assignment on the mining colony which landed him in prison. He escaped from the prison within three years and became a fugitive. A bounty of one million credits was initially put on his head, but the number kept increasing every time he killed another one of his pursuers. These “serial killings” would add more time to his prison sentence and more credits to his bounty. He would be recaptured and then escape multiple times. His final capture (not counting Toombs's “capture” of Riddick in *The Chronicles of Riddick*) came at the hands of William Johns prior to the events of *Pitch Black*. As revealed in the *Pitch Black* novelization, Johns killed two children and threatened to kill two more unless Riddick surrendered to him.

We learn in the *Chronicles of Riddick* novelization, (which is based on the complete screenplay) that Riddick is an Alpha Furyan. This name designates Furyans with special and enhanced abilities. These abilities include his eye shine, and physical and mental superiority as well as the Furyan's Rage reflex he exhibits in *Escape From Butcher Bay* and *The Chronicles of Riddick*. Riddick is the only known Alpha Furyan, save for the Alpha Kid in what would become the *Riddick* screenplay.

So how can this futuristic anti-hero from another planet possibly be a member of the Wold Newton Family? The answer lies in the epilogue of *Time's Last Gift* by Philip José Farmer. *Time's Last Gift* is the story of a team of Earth scientists from the year 2070 AD who travel back in time to the year 12,000 B.C. Over the course of the novel we learn the leader of the team, John Gribardsun is actually the ageless immortal jungle hero whom Edgar Rice Burroughs based his Tarzan novels on. This is further cemented in the epilogue set in the year 2140 A.D., where Gribardsun is still alive and is known as Commander Rhys.

Gribardsun is preparing for a interstellar mission to alpha Aurigae, Capella. His space ship is said to be vast and has an unknown number of crew members. The journey will take them 450 Earth years, which they will spend in cryogenesis until awakened by light detecting sensors. For the sake of speculation, I would hypothesize the name of the ship to be the *Fury*.

Gribardsun is the key to the Wold Newton genes expanding beyond Earth. It's not just him, however. I believe Gribardsun wouldn't fill his crew with just anyone. By this point in his life he should have even more influence than he did in 2070 A.D. when he successfully bribed his way onto the time travel expedition. I believe he would use his considerable influence to fill his crew with as many Wold Newton Family descendants as possible. It's also likely he would include non-Wold Newton Family members who descend from the heroes of old (such as the Black Bat for example).

The Wold Newton meteor incident changed Earth forever. The meteorite struck down in rural England on December 13, 1795 and exposed those nearby (who were already of heroic stock) to radiation which further enriched their genes. Instead of a meteor striking the planet later to be known as Furya, what if the *Fury* crash landed?

Hypothetically, the crew members of the *Fury* would survive and help populate the planet, further reinforcing and spreading the Wold Newton genes. The *Fury* did not have greater-than-light speed engines at the time of its launch, but clearly more advanced vessels would have been constructed

while it was underway. With the rejuvenation process being developed in 2070 A.D., the Earth would soon become overpopulated. Eventually humanity would have to take to the stars to spread out. I believe colonists using faster-than-light speed engines outpaced the *Fury* and settled on Furya before the *Fury* crash landed. These colonists (like the crew members of the *Fury*) would be composed of multiple ethnic backgrounds. They would have to be, for we know from the *Chronicles of Riddick* novelization Riddick's ancestry is not entirely Caucasoid.

The colonists found the planet to be quite challenging and were forced to adapt into a heartier race in order to survive. Seeing the advanced technology as a sign of weakness, they reverted back into a Bronze/Iron Age society. The settlers knew the dangers of coming to depend on technology, especially when the possibility of technology failing them existed. No, they had to be able to cope with the wild planet on their own, just as their ancestors did on Ancient Earth.

This regression prevented the establishment of formal government, and the colonists quickly broke into scattered independent tribes. It should come to no surprise when there came tribes, there came tribal warfare. The tribes lived on the planet for many generations before the *Fury* would crash there. The commander of the *Fury*, Gribardsun would prove to be the unified leader the tribes needed to rally behind. He declared the planet Furya.

The crew members of the *Fury* then interbred with the tribes of the planet. Eventually this led to those Furyan's possessing Wold Newton traits and abilities to be known as Alpha Furyans thus making Gribardsun the Prime Furyan and the genetic source for all Alpha Furyans including Riddick.

In addition to Wold Newton Family members, I also believe some artifacts of historical significance were aboard the *Fury*. One I have no doubt about is referred to in the Riddick series as the Blade of Irgun. This is the blade Riddick uses to kill the Lord Marshal in *The Chronicles of Riddick*. It is first seen sticking out of the back of Irgun the Strange, a famed Necromonger warrior. Riddick later kills Irgun with his own blade and is then able to keep it due to the Necromonger belief of keeping what you kill. He loses the blade at one point, but it is then returned to him by the Purifier on Crematoria.

In the *Chronicles of Riddick* novelization more detail about the blade is provided than in the film. Riddick observes it is made from an unusual alloy and the Lord Marshal recognizes it as having mystical properties. These mystical properties allow the blade to actually kill the Lord Marshal. It's explained an ordinary blade may injure his physical form but his astral self would just resuscitate his body once they were rejoined. Hence Riddick's success as he killed both with one blow from this unusual blade at the conclusion of *The Chronicles of Riddick*. This blade, though unusual, is not unfamiliar. I believe the blade's origins date back to the Hyborian Age.

I believe the blade first appeared in the Conan story "The Devil in Iron" by Robert E. Howard. The story takes place in the inland Vilayet Sea, on the island of Xapur. Conan eventually comes into possession of a mystical blade forged from a meteorite. The blade was crafted before Conan's time by a Yuetshi priest in order to defeat Khosatral Khel a being who is said to have crawled up from the Night and Abyss. He is the titular Devil in Iron, and no man-made weapon is capable of harming him. The foolish priest used the dagger to subdue him, but not to kill him. The priest leaves his dangerous foe in his slumber so he can threaten his subjects with him should they oppose him. Ages pass, his people head south, and the entombed Khosatral Khel lies in slumber with the dagger over his breast, until, when in the time of Conan, a foolish fisherman finds the crypt and removes the dagger awakening Khel. Conan finds himself on the island and is forced to use the dagger to slay the iron giant, as it is the only weapon which can kill it. I say "it" because the being is revealed only to have taken the form of a giant man of iron, its true form being too frightening to describe here.

What happens to the blade immediately afterward is unknown. However, I suspect Gribardsun is able to get his hands on it at some point and he keeps it in a safe place. As Commander Rhys he brings it with him on the *Fury* and hence to Furya. While on Furya, the blade is reforged into the blade we see in *The Chronicles of Riddick*. Perhaps it is kept in a museum somewhere in the capital city. During the Necromonger invasion of Furya when Irgun is slaughtering everything in sight, a Furyan may have taken it up once again and tried using it to defeat him. The blade strikes home, but Irgun endures. He keeps the blade in his back as a show of strength. Given the history of the blade perhaps its tale is not done quite yet. Perhaps there are other weapons and artifacts of note brought aboard the *Fury*. Perhaps an Ironcastle or Wildman brought their own meteor-fashioned weapon.

This is not to say the contents of the *Fury* consisted of only humans and their cargo. I am inclined to believe Gribardsun brought some of his other family members with him as well. These great ape-like beings are known in the Edgar Rice Burroughs tales as Mangani, and Farmer refers to them as the Folk in some of his works. It's important to note they are not gorillas, as gorillas are called Bolgani by the Mangani in the original Burroughs stories. The evidence for the Folk's presence on Furya is in the *Riddick* screenplay by David Twohy.

The *Riddick* screenplay includes additional scenes where Riddick has visions of what is currently happening on Furya. I can only guess they did not make it into the actual film due to budgetary constraints. In his visions he sees Shirah, the female Furyan from *The Chronicles of Riddick*, and he is able to hear a primal war cry in the background. The owner of the cry is later revealed as one of three powerful beings that come into view in the distance. These beings appear to be simian in appearance. They are later called the Adredan by the Alpha Kid. The Alpha Kid and his band are later attacked by them and seemingly in great danger.

Could the Adredan be the Folk? All we know about them is they look simian and are powerful, which is a fitting description for the Folk. Also, from what we can gather about Furya's geography, it seems like a place both Gribardsun and the Folk would thrive.

While little is known of the geography of Furya, some information can be gleaned from the *Chronicles of Riddick* film and novelization, as well as the *Riddick* screenplay.

In the *Chronicles of Riddick* film and novelization, Furya is shown in the background of Riddick's visions with Shirah. The planet appears to be a wasteland with a burned out sky, and a forest populated with mass graves. Later in the novelization when the Greater Quasi-Dead are probing Riddick's mind, a vision of the planet comes to his mind described as green and lush. He later sees this version in the novelization during a dream on Crematoria. It is described as, "a green planet, shrouded in thick white cloud, lush with vegetation, fecund with life. It circled its unremarkable but benign star as it had for eons, out of the way and unnoticed, its distinctive denizens living out their lives in contentment and indifference to the rest of the universe."

In the *Riddick* screenplay Riddick refers to his visions of Furya showing the planet as green, wet and beautiful. Vaako, a Necromonger commander, states it may have been once, but it was left in ruins. The last Vaako saw of Furya it was a wasteland.

I believe if Gribardsun arrived on a green planet, lush with life and vegetation he would stay on it, even if it wasn't his intended destination of Capella. We know Gribardsun is no stranger to civilization-building thanks the Khokarsa cycle. I don't think he could resist the temptation if he came across a lush planet of warring tribes just begging to be unified into a civilization. I can see him and his crew becoming the founders for a new society. Nothing would stop the near-immortal crew from taking a little world-building detour on their mission to Capella.

David Twohy himself provides us with the Furyan equivalent of Khokarsa in the *Riddick* screenplay. The Alpha Kid and his group of guerrilla fighters come across it during the final scene of the screenplay: "They reach an overlook. Ahead they behold a vast city built on the water of a jade-green ocean. Diamond spires catch the last light of day. It is as impressive as Rome must have been in Year One... Constantinople in 1400... Havana in 1959. It is what Dubai might be like in 2100." The Alpha Kid and his comrades call this city Ravenova.

It's highly probable the city of Ravenova is the Furyan capital, built by Gribardsun, his crew members, and the populace. This would become the center of Furyan society, the birthplace of a spiritual warrior culture akin to Ancient Sparta.

There is some speculation in the Riddick fan community that Furya has an unpredictable orbit that makes it difficult to chart. I haven't been able to find any mention of this in the films, novelizations, video games or *Riddick* screenplay. In *Riddick*, Vaako states Lord Marshal Zhylaw purged Furya's location from all known star charts so it could not be found. Since Furya was able to be located on charts in the past, I believe the fan speculation about its orbit to be just that.

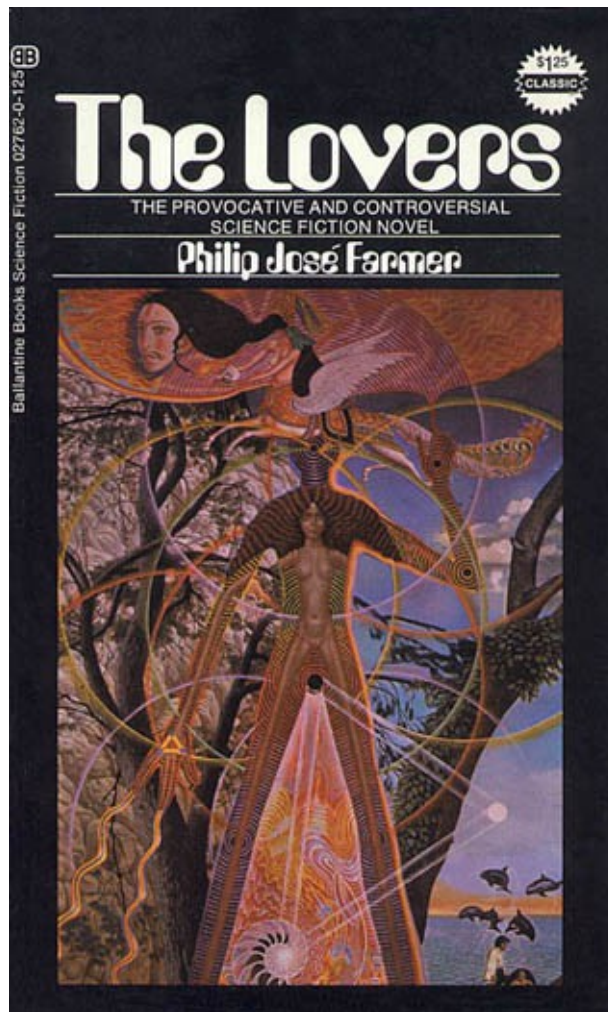
I can't find any concrete dates where the Riddick series takes place within the novelizations, screenplays or films themselves. Although a few wiki articles state they take place in the twenty-sixth century. I believe this to be a bit too soon. Even with the sciences involved there still seems to be more time needed for the evolution of Furya and its people to take place.

When I'm watching Riddick on the screen or reading about him in prose, my mind tends to wander back to his literary ancestors a good bit. These thoughts have been gathering in my mind for so long I felt I had to get them on paper and put them out there. If nothing else I hope the speculation I've provided here was informative and entertaining. It's also my hope for Wold Newton fans to check out the Riddick series if they haven't done so. Another goal is to get Riddick fans interested in reading some classic stories featuring his pulp ancestors. Whether these ancestors are literary or genetic, that's best left up to each individual reader.



## *The Lovers by Philip José Farmer*

Reviewed by William H. Emmons



*The Lovers* second printing, cover by Mati Klarwein

*The Lovers* debuted in the August 1952 issue of *Startling Stories*. *The Lovers* represents the beginning of Farmer's xenobiology phase, and a breakthrough in mainstream science fiction in terms of sex.

The Science fiction encyclopedia has this to say about Farmer: “ in all his work, Farmer is governed by an instinct for extremity, sometimes impish, sometimes flat-footed, but in its most telling enactments arousingly transgressive. It is perhaps now a moot question whether or not Farmer would have been more successful in a world which simply appreciated his flings and intuitions, and which did not recoil at his the polymorphic mutability of his depictions of Sex, which he treated as a ground-bass in the arias of human behaviour.”

Now, let's take a closer look at *The Lovers*: Humans from a postapocalyptic superpower called the Haijic Union have come to a new planet called Ozagen. The Haijic Union is a Sturch (state + church) with totalitarian control over its citizens lives and minds. Citizens are monitored by a system of “guardian angels” to make sure they are not having “unreal” thoughts or committing “unreal” acts. While maintaining falsely friendly relations with the Ozagenians, the Haijic Union is planning to commit genocide on the planet to make room for settlers.

The Ozagenians are cordate arthropod people—descended from regular arthropods but their bones are on the inside. The Earth people call them wogglebugs or wogs after Dr. Wogglebug, a character from the Oz books that they resemble. Notably, there used to be a human community on Ozagen that the arthropod Ozagenians killed off in a war.

The story opens with our hero Hal Yarrow, his “guardian angel” Pornsen, and the wogglebugs Fobo and Zugu driving through the countryside to get to the ruins of a human settlement. Fobo is an “empathist” whose antennae allow him to feel and quickly discharge other being’s emotions. This is important because while the Earth people are more technologically advanced, the Ozagenians have much more well developed psychological sciences.

The four spend the night at the human ruins where Hal Yarrow is clandestinely contacted by a beautiful, seemingly human woman with red lips named Jeannette. Jeannette speaks a tongue descended from French that Yarrow is able to piece together. She has been living in the forest after being held captive by Fobo and other wogglebugs. She asks for rescue. He tells her to wait for him, that he’ll return in some number of weeks.

In order to get back to Jeannette, Yarrow has to cheat a test called the Elohimeter to prove he’s religiously pure. This allows him to move about unwatched by his “guardian angel.” He returns to rescue Jeannette. She has him carry her over the threshold of his apartment, symbolizing that she is now his bride.

She cooks him a steak dinner that is delicious and won’t let him help with the dishes but then asks him to obtain alcohol for her. Yarrow is disgusted because of the Sturch’s rules against alcohol but consents to find some because she says she became an alcoholic in captivity.

Because he doesn’t want Jeannette to be an alcoholic, Yarrow asks Fobo if there is a cure. He pretends it is for himself. He is given a substance called Easyglow that is essentially methadone for alcoholics which he secretly gives Jeannette instead of alcohol.

What makes this story work so well are the many details Farmer includes to flesh out the world. Both the theology of the Haijic Union and the evolutionary biology of Ozagen are well worked out for such a short piece. (87 pages in the Philip Jose Farmer Centennial Collection). It’s a pleasure knowing the Haijics smoke Merciful Seraphim cigarettes. And fascinating to learn about the symbiotes and parasites that accompany wogglebug society.

Throughout the story there are a lot of moments where Jeannette and Fobo treat Yarrow humanely for the first time in his life. While the story emphasizes Jeanette’s domesticity and sexuality as factors that make her a quote-unquote perfect woman (my formulation not Farmer’s). Another aspect of this is that she talks to him about his feelings. Together with Fobo, who logically discusses and undermines the Sturch’s doctrines with Yarrow, Jeanette deprograms Yarrow from the mental oppression of his stultifying religious background.

Unfortunately, Jeanette has to pay the ultimate price for loving Yarrow. Throughout the story we get hints about her biology. She’s physically different from earthly homo sapiens. She has two small cartilage bumps on her scalp and other small differences. She’s pleased when Yarrow comments that she is a mammal. Two peculiar ticks of their sex life give us clues as well. She insists on leaving the light on and she never closes her eyes.

When she becomes ill, Yarrow discovers her true nature. Rushing her to the hospital, Fobo explains that she is a lalitha, a member of an all-female cordate arthropod species that co-evolved with homo

sapiens on Ozagen. She gets the male input through a photokinetic nerve that goes from eye to uterus—this is why Jeannette insisted on keeping the light on and never closed her eyes. For this species, pregnancy ends in the death as the mother transforms her body into a calcium rich “womb-tomb” for her offspring to devour. Alcohol shuts down this photokinetic nerve and acts as a contraceptive. If only Yarrow had known what he was doing when he substituted the Easyglow. The tragedy is made even sadder when Yarrow learns that the lalitha are basically immortal if they don’t become pregnant. He may have robbed his love of a thousand years.

Farmer is ambiguous about these quote-unquote perfect women (again my formulation). While Jeanette is Yarrow’s salvation, the wogglebugs say that the lalitha caused the downfall of human civilization on Ozagen. Due to their immortality and feminine wiles, the lalitha were able to attain high ranking positions in human societies, sometimes even acting as goddesses. They brought the end of humanity on Ozagen by encouraging alcoholism, depraved religious rites and wars with the wogglebugs whom the lalitha could not control. For Farmer, the lalitha is both desired and feared: the ultimate object of male fantasy and super-woman who is mankind’s undoing.

Despite this ambiguity, the main feeling at the end of the story is Yarrow’s sense of loss at Jeanette’s death.

So that’s *The Lovers*. We really only scratched the surface of what is really a deep tale. I really recommend everyone read this story.

## About the Fans/Writers

**Atom Mudman Bezecny** is the editor-in-chief of the independent pulp press Odd Tales Productions, a position she has occupied for four years. Her previous publications include the novels *Tail of the Lizard King*, *Deus Mega Therion*, *Kinyonga Tales*, *The New Adventures of the Flash Avenger*, *Flint Golden and the Thunderstrike Crisis*, and *The Return of the Amazing Bulk*, a canonical sequel to Lewis Schoenbrun's superhero film *The Amazing Bulk*. She is also the author of many short stories, including a series starring her original heroine Bloody Mary. Her stories can be found at [www.oddtalesofwonder.com](http://www.oddtalesofwonder.com).

**Sean Lee Levin** discovered Philip José Farmer's work as a teenager in 2002 and has been obsessed ever since. A lifelong resident of Chicago, Illinois (the same state Farmer resided in), Sean spends much of his spare time reading, watching movies, and writing. He is the author of *Crossovers Expanded: A Secret Chronology of the World Volumes 1 and 2*, published by Meteor House in 2016. He is currently looking to get a Western story published. You can find Sean's blog, which contains his movie reviews and other cool things, at <http://seanlevin.blogspot.com/?m=1>.

**Jason Scott Aiken** came to know of Philip José Farmer's work just a few weeks before Farmer's passing in February 2009. Aiken's journey to Farmer was concurrent to his discovery of pulp magazines and culminated with him attending FarmerCon VI at PulpFest 2011 in Columbus, Ohio. Aiken has been attending FarmerCon and PulpFest ever since and also hosted and produced *Pulp Crazy*, a podcast dedicated to pulp authors, literature, and themes. In addition to Farmer and Pulp fandom, Aiken has had short fiction published by Black Coat Press, Cirsova, Meteor House, and Paizo Publishing. He can be found online at [jasonscottaiken.com](http://jasonscottaiken.com) and [pulpcrazy.com](http://pulpcrazy.com).

**William H. Emmons** is the host of the Planetside Chats videocast on Youtube and a regular contributor to the SFFAudio Podcast. William is @Planetstories39 on Twitter. He is a communist agitator and general ne'er do well. He lives in Eastern Kentucky with his fiancé, elderly dog and an ever increasing number of feral cats.

You can also find us at [farmerfan.com](http://farmerfan.com) along with all past issues, completely free.