

WATCH THE SKIES



WOOL

By Hugh Howey

16.6

The world is full of levels and stairs. It's not that inhabitants don't know about the outside world, in fact they can see the devastation that exists out there, it's just that their lives can only continue inside the realm of the Silo. There are those who dream of more and others who know just how dangerous those dreams are. The only way to survive is for everyone to keep on doing what they've always done. When Juliette comes along to rock the boat and question things, those in charge move against her and banish her to the outside world. But Jules is not a quitter and neither are the people that she's influenced. Instead of dying, she's going to live and her influence will launch a revolution that changes everything.

-Cover by Eric V. Hardenbrook

-Next month's book— The Chaplain's War—Brad Torgersen

-Dear Crabby looks at the bathroom dilemma and George R.R. Martin's free time.

Check out the website at: watchtheskies.org



Home of Watch the Skies
and awesome books too.

NEW RELEASES

July 2016

Allan, Nina - **The Race**
Bond, Gwenda - **Girl in the Shadows**
Bova, Ben - **The Best of Bova, Vol. 2**
Carriger, Gail - **Imprudence**
Chu, Wesley - **Time Siege**
Craft, Kinuko - **Beauty and the Beast**
Daniel, Tony - **The Dragon Hammer**
Davidson, Rjurik - **The Stars Askew**
Dozois, Gardner, ed. - **The Mammoth Book of Best New SF 29**
Dozois, Gardner, ed. - **The Year's Best Science Fiction: Thirty-third Annual Collection**
Ford, Jeffrey - **A Natural History of Hell**
Gladstone, Max - **Four Roads Cross**
Guran, Paula, ed. - **The Year's Best Dark Fantasy & Horror: 2016 Edition**
Hamilton, Peter F. - **A Window Into Time**
Hamilton, Peter F. - **The Hunting of the Princes**
Hughes, Matthew - **A Wizard's**
Jones, Stephen, ed. - **In the Shadow of Frankenstein: Tales of the Modern Prometheus**
Koontz, Dean - **Joanna Moon**
Kowal, Mary Robinette - **Ghost Talkers**
Lain, Douglas, ed. - **Deserts of Fire: Speculative Fiction and the Modern War**
Lee, Tanith - **Tanith by Choice**
Levine, David D. - **Arabella of Mars**
Priest, Cherie - **The Family Plot**
Snodgrass, Melinda - **The High Ground**
Strahan, Jonathan, ed. - **Drowned Worlds**
Strugatsky, Arkady, & Boris Strugatsky - **The Doomed City**
Turtledove, Harry - **Fallout**
VanderMeer, Jeff, & Ann VanderMeer, eds. - **The Big Book of Science Fiction**
Weisman, Jacob A., ed. - **Invaders**
Whates, Ian, ed. - **Crises and Conflicts**
Whates, Ian, ed. - **Now We Are Ten**
Whates, Ian, ed. - **X Marks the Spot**
Wilson, F. Paul - **Panacea**

DEAR CRABBY

June 2016

Dear Crabby,

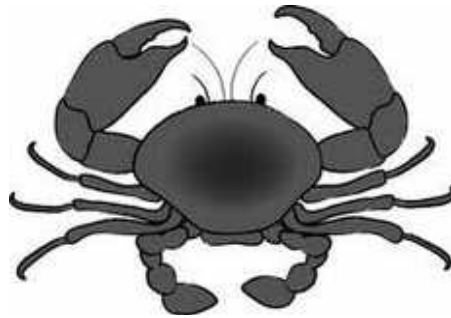
There has been a lot of hub-bub lately about the use of bathrooms and who should and shouldn't use which ones. In all of this I think we're missing a very important question...which bathroom should Diva Plava Laguna (*the Fifth Element*) be using? I mean I don't personally care who uses which bathroom to relieve themselves, but when you start talking 6+ foot aliens who may have both sets of equipment or something totally different I can't help being curious.

Sincerely,
Curious

Dear Dead Cat,

Like so many others that seem to be wrapped around the axle about where people go to the bathroom your priorities are really screwed up. If Plava Laguna walked into any bathroom I was in my first thought would be to swoon while trying to get an autograph. Second, I would give the diva some privacy and go about my business because it's obvious that the singer didn't end up in there to check the acoustics and I'm not an idiot. People and aliens just want to pee or whatever they do with some dignity and privacy. Anybody doing anything else in a public bathrooms issues aren't about gender identity and yours shouldn't be either.

You people give me a headache.
Crabby



Dear Crabby,

I recently attended my first fan convention in Baltimore to see George R.R. Martin! It was a wild ride and I had a lot of fun. Only after the con was done and I had regained my wits it occurred to me...how can you in good conscience invite George R. R. Martin to a science fiction and fantasy convention when he should be writing that Winter book instead?!?! If you really loved us fans you wouldn't tempt him away from his writing!

Woebegone

Dear Sad Sack,

Easy, not all of us are interested in those particular books. It may amaze you to know but, the man has written an awful lot more than what HBO has taken to reinterpreting for your visual enjoyment. Songs of Stars and Shadows, anyone? The Glass Flower, maybe? Geez, read a book!

I'm unimpressed.

Crabby



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World of Warcraft : The Movie

H'okay. My personal "Warcraft" movie review. I've been stalking the development of this film for 10 years and the ups and downs of my expectations have been quite the roller-coaster ride, so I feel like I can say that I went into it deciding neither that "no matter what this will rule" NOR "if it doesn't match the existing storylines I'm gonna hate it." It was EXCELLENT. Not perfect, but excellent. I think you should see it because you'll likely enjoy it. A lot of effort was made to respect the Warcraft games fans AND to provide a standalone movie for folks who are curious about this crazy fantasy world they've never played in. Did they accomplish both? Mostly. Go see it this weekend -- the stories that sequels could provide are some of the best stories I know, but we're only gonna get them with domestic box office success. Of course there have been plenty of the "I want to sound like the smartest/hippest person in the room so I'm going to slam it because I think that's probably the cool opinion" types out there recently who have decided it sucks before they even see it, but nothing in pop culture seriously needs their bitchy-ass dollars anyway. BTW no spoilers below; if you wanna discuss details just p.m. me. OK in no particular order . . .

Cast: Outstanding. Everyone gave a good performance; the main cast delivered extremely emotive and multi-dimensional portrayals.

Score: Ramin Djawadi (the GoT composer) NAILED the score. It makes you want to lift a sword or an axe, shout a battle cry, and charge into broad-shouldered, marching, lumbering glory. The percussion and horns are just the right tone. In poignant moments, the score will challenge you not to mess up your green makeup.

Visuals: Well what can I say, they created new motion capture technology for this, and 98% of the time you are convincingly immersed in their world. From the vistas to the dozens of emotions that play across the faces of the orcs . . . they really nailed it. I saw it in 3D IMAX and while I don't think you HAVE to see it in that format, I usually don't go for 3D and this was actually satisfying. Also the spell animations were spot-on. Arcane Missiles, Fireball, Arcane Blast, Teleport, Ice Block, Supernova, etc.

Timing/pace: I don't agree with some complaints that you don't get the idea that months or even years pass during this story -- they pretty much declare it in the first 2 minutes. There are little things that imply it but I was looking for them. That said, I think the movie did suffer for the 40 mins Duncan Jones had to slice out of the final version (you'll notice that some of the clips in

the trailers and BtS videos are not in the movie). If you can make it past the first half hour of machine-gun character introduction, you're in for a great ride. Lots of action, lots of illustration of the theme of family, survival, tradition, and morality. It's disappointing that we couldn't have spent more time getting emotionally invested in some of the characters but there's no way they could have accomplished that in 2 hrs without slashing huge pieces of the story out of it entirely. If I could have done the screenplay and final edits, I would have done a few things differently (e.g. hosed Glenn Close's random uncredited appearance or nixed the sidestory with Lothar's family) to make room for more lore but of course it's not up to me. I look forward to watching the Extended Edition.

Alignment with the original lore: Here's where you gotta be flexible. They do take a lot of liberties (I can outline them in a p.m. if you want spoilers) but the important thing to take away from it is that ****in the end the impact of their story choices is the same****. Certain people have to die in order for the next round of characters to fulfill their destiny -- it may not happen exactly the way it did in the game or the novels but we get to the end result. Some character's backstories are way more complex than what they give you in this movie, but if they're trying not to confuse non-players who are new to this by keeping it simple, giving them the complete story will defeat that purpose. I'm not entirely pleased with some of the changes -- a couple of them easily could have been left intact with a very brief scene for context and it would have been just fine. But doing so would have been less emotionally satisfying for non-player viewers and they might lose sympathy for some characters.

Story: Rushed at first, but I think it's way more coherent than some of the early critics declared it (I honestly don't know if they saw the same movie I did -- maybe they look down on anything WoW-related and this was their chance to blow their "fuck nerds!" horn, idk, but audiences are obviously making their positive opinions heard now that it's on screens worldwide). There are a lot of character development scenes that were cut (e.g. Frostwolf clan laughing around the campfire) that I believe would have made the movie better, but they tend to be slower-paced and I know studios look at that as chaff in adventure movies (remember that all of the emotional scenes between Mal and Inara in "Serenity" were cut for pacing). That said, the illustration of the conflict is balanced -- Orcs want to survive, Humans are not ok with some of the Orcs wiping out their villages -- and there is good and evil on both sides. Heroes are compelled to act when their faction's moral compass is spinning. The inner conflict (duty, love, etc.) of some of the characters is compelling. Most of the characters are likable. "Strength and Honor" is real. What I really missed though

is the Great Why. Why did these Orcs show up here and why did someone help them do it? Why are the evil ones corrupted? How did this all happen in the first place? Sargeras as the source of all this was never part of the movie, and to me that is a huge missing piece because his influence touches ALL of the stories and the substories. It's like LOTR without Sauron. It's like "Interview With the Vampire" without the existential-spiritual struggle of the main character's immortal soul. It's the whole point! I think they easily could have given a Sargeras nutshell in a voiceover intro like they did in David Lynch's "Dune" director's cut. Would have taken 30 seconds. Or they could have revealed it through the storyline. Instead we get this nebulous "Fel energy" green stuff as the movie's villain, like it's a message about pollution or something. I'm disappointed about that. In the game it's a tool, not a causality. But again, I'm sure the choice was because they didn't want to overload new viewers with too much stuff. Hehe they should make 2 versions of all movie adaptations -- one for the fans, one for curious newcomers.

Cool stuff WoW players will enjoy: As far as I could tell, just about ALL of the Horde chieftains had cameos -- Ner'zhul, Kargath, and a couple others I gotta look up. Should they have been there in that timeline? Well Durotan shouldn't have so that's a slippery slope of continuity complaints we could fall down. Also it's very cool how they switch back and forth between whether we're the listener of Orcish or the listener of Common -- very "13th Warrior." There's a lot of appearances of major game characters. Lots of humorous easter eggs for players. And of course seeing the zones and cities we know and love is breathtaking; both the practical sets and the CG.

AND HOLY CRAP AT THE END OF THE CREDITS THEY ACTUALLY CREDIT US FOR THE "FOR THE HORDE"/"FOR AZEROTH"/"FOR THE ALLIANCE" CROWD SHOUTS!! "Thanks to the attendees of Blizzcon 2014 for participating in the recordings" yadda yadda yadda. SHOOOOO KEEEEEWWLLL!

Funny trivia moments (these really aren't spoilers): 1) PVP flag in the opening desert scene! 2) Haha Lothar literally gets a quest at Ironforge! 3) Murloc! 4) I think the King's strategy table looked like a Settlers of Catan board. 5) <http://www.wowhead.com/item=.../precisely-calibrated-boomstick> har har 6) the arduous climbing of the stairs in Karazhan (it literally takes 30 mins in-game at max level). 7) somebody dinged -- look for it! I missed it. 8) <http://www.wowhead.com/npc=9526/enraged-gryphon> haha -- they even used the sounds! 9) the moment I went "BAZINGA, introducing Deadwind Pass." TL;DR: 9/10. It really didn't suck. Moar pls!

By Stefanie Hackenberg

Warcraft

The Outsider's Point of View

I thought the previews for the new Warcraft movie looked quite good. It was visually striking and that appeals to me. There was certainly a lot of hype. I took the opportunity on opening day and headed to the theater. I was in luck that morning. I normally head to the theater at off times in order to minimize the crowd. This was what one might term very minimal crowd. I was the only person to attend that showing. I loved it, but it did take away the crowd reaction part of the movie going experience. This didn't really bother me much until I realized there was nobody to share thoughts and opinions with or to hear how they reacted when certain things happened.

I had no idea what to expect. I have never played the Warcraft video game and I haven't paid any attention to the world(s) of that game. I didn't know any of the characters nor did I have any idea about what they would do or not do. I can say that knowing this movie sprouted from a previously made computer game world gave me very high hopes for the setting and the visual aspects of the film.

I watched the movie in 3D. I am probably not the best judge of the 3D effects as my astigmatism makes certain aspects of the format simply not work for me. Beyond that basic level I'm not sure the 3D added much to the film. There were a couple of scenes that it really seemed to work for. There were one or two times when I saw the traditional "look this is just for the 3D folks" sword coming out of the screen. All in all, I suspect a 2D viewing would be fine.

The setting and the scenery was really enjoyable. There were some wonderfully rendered buildings. It was somewhere between difficult and impossible to figure out where the seams were and I really like that. The visual aspects of the sets, the costumes and the computer generated landscapes all worked together really well. There were scenes I suspect were directly aimed at the gamers, but they didn't distract from the rest of the film.

The rest of the film. About that...

This whole movie was a great big sequel set up. The story was deeper than I thought it would be, with darker moments than I would have given it credit for before seeing it but it just didn't feel like it all came together. Maybe I needed to commit more? Tried playing the game first? I'm not sure it would have helped. I loved that the world building showed through. There were some that complained about how much stuff cascaded across the screen. That

showed me there was a huge world behind all this and I could go along for the ride and learn about these places. I didn't learn much about any of them, but I could appreciate that it was all there and things hung together based on that. I don't remember the names of any of the characters now except Durutan. I would recognize the others visually and relate their story to them that way, but there wasn't the level of investment I think the creators were hoping for. I saw a lot of potential that just didn't seem to come through.

It wasn't a bad movie. I liked it. I was entertained and I walked away not feeling bad. In the end this was a couple of hours that I won't think of as wasted but I don't know that I would spend that way again. We'll have to see if that sequel ever does get made.

By Eric V. Hardenbrook

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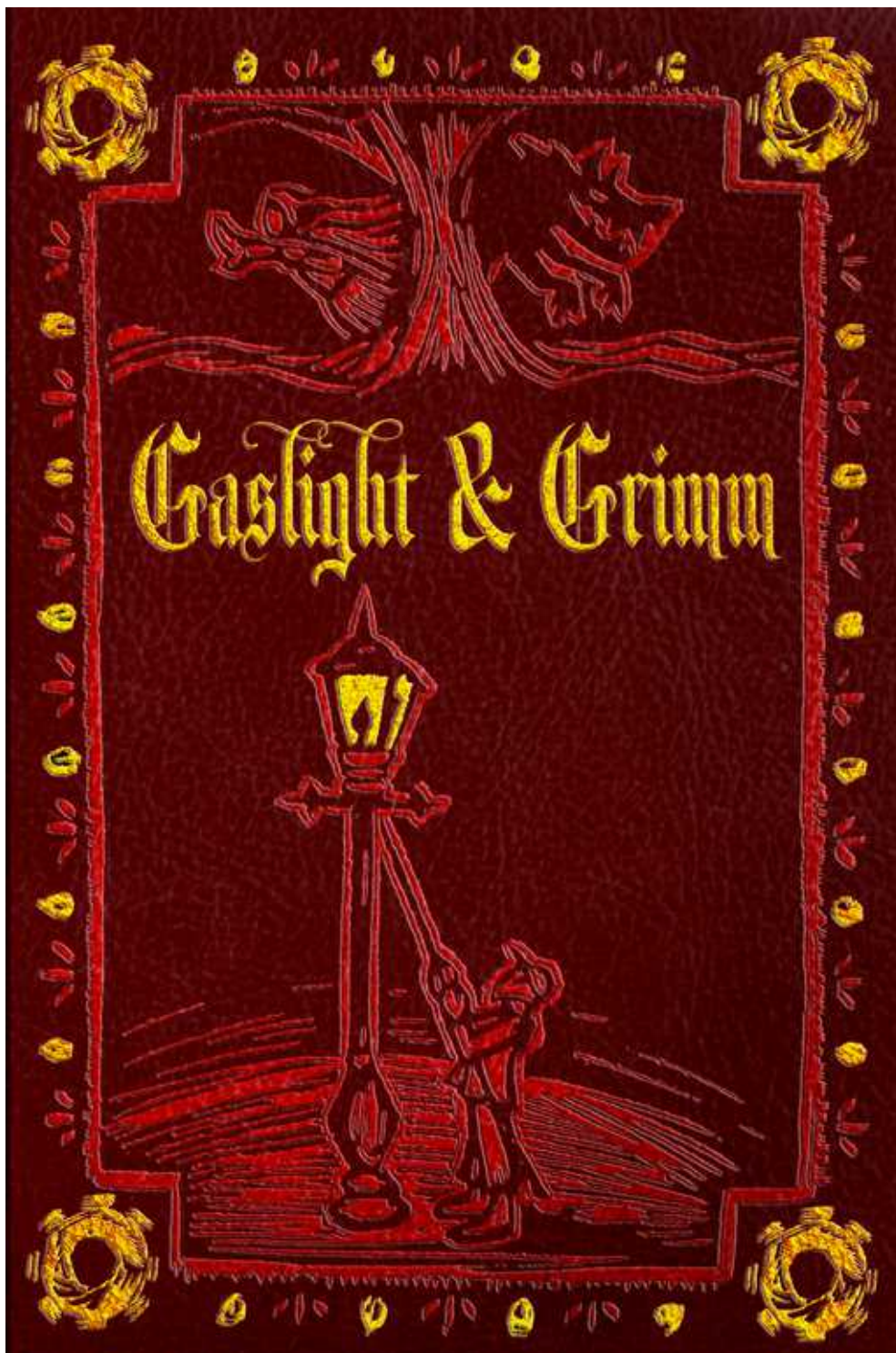
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Continuing Improvements - AwesomeCon 2016

Though official numbers haven't been released yet for last weekend's turnout, AwesomeCon 2016 once again expanded exponentially from the year before. The Walter E. Washington Convention Center in downtown DC was packed June 3rd to June 5th with sci fi, fantasy, comic book, and pop culture fans; their families; the celebrities they worship; and acres of merchants to sell cool loot. Every year the con outdoes itself with the caliber of guests and number of attendees, every year it learns lessons about adequately preparing for its own popularity, and every year it does better.

This year some of the marquis guests included Kevin Smith, Peter Capaldi and Jenna Coleman, Bill Nye, and John Barrowman in the most adorable baby-doll Darth Vader dress you'll ever see (look for the video, you'll be glad you did). Apparently there has been tremendous brouhaha over the Peter Capaldi and Jenna Coleman Q&A panel, as they arrived quite late and there were insufficient logistics to handle the unprecedented amount of autograph seekers, so the cosplay contest that was supposed to follow was more or less scrapped, and people stood in line for hours to see the guests. Capaldi and Coleman stayed as long as it took until every last person got their autograph. Ben Penrod, who is a co-creator of the con but beginning this year is more of a facilitator than CEO since handing off the logistical management to the pros who regularly do the megacons, issued a humble apology on AwesomeCon's FB page. Despite cranky Whovians, most involved handled the kerfuffle quite graciously.

Volunteers and con staff this year seemed to be much more empowered and upbeat than in recent years. During one of our panels we had no power outlet for the laptop we brought for our presentation, and our hands-on workshop was booked in a panel room with no tables. After the first panel an AV tech brought all the cables you could wish for and even returned 15 mins later to confirm everything was a-okay. Later for the workshop the head of programming herself came to rescue us and brought an army of volunteers carrying long tables from Con Ops -- with only a 10 minute delay everything worked out well in the end. Another volunteer personally escorted us the entire way across the airport-sized Exhibitor Hall and down the corridors of the convention center to deliver us to Con Ops for our panelist badges. One of the most friendly, helpful, responsive staffs we've encountered at local cons.

Another wonderful touch AwesomeCon included this year was designated gender-neutral bathrooms. The attendee feedback was positive except for a request that next year there be more than two. :)

Cosplay was huger than ever and the caliber continues to get more impressive. Studio Cosplay's booth was popular for our free repair station, and quite a few con-goers won our social media scavenger hunt (who can resist those cute dragon mascot plushies?). Our three panels/workshops were well attended: a new version of our "Level Up Your Cosplay" panel, "Cosplay 202: New and Improved!" included more off-the-beaten-path and cutting edge tools and materials; the "Say Yes to Capes!" children's workshop launched the lucrative careers of a dozen young superheroes; and the "Learn How to Make Simple EVA Foam Bracers" workshop was a colorful smash hit. My mom Lynn reprised her award-winning "GoT" Olenna Tyrell cosplay from Balticon and got substantially more practice posing for convention paparazzi. ;)

The increasing spectacle of AwesomeCon is received both positively and negatively by the DC fan community. Many love the local access to big celebrities and diverse programming, but some are turned off by the increasing resemblance to other "Line Cons" that are too big for their own good. The byproduct of both sentiments is beneficial to everyone, as more libraries and grassroots groups are starting more intimate neighborhood "comic-cons." More cons for everyone!

By Stefanie Hackenberg

Cosplay Tip of the Month: Adhesives

Always read the labels on your adhesives to ensure they are appropriate for the material you're working with, know the amount of time required for the adhesive to set and whether an activator is required (e.g. Gorilla Glue must be activated with water), and wear a respirator when using adhesives with fumes. If you can smell it, so can your brain.

From Studio Cosplay

Sciency Stuff

-Paleontologists recently took a bite from history and discovered something surprising about the stegasaurus. Most of us are familiar with the crest backed dinosaur with the spiky tail which ate plants. We might not be familiar with the fact that its teeth have puzzled scientists for years. They are just too small and their surface area is just not big enough to effectively cut and chew up the amount of vegetation necessary to keep a large animal like a stegasaur fed. It turns out that we've been looking at the wrong piece of evidence, in fact we should have looked harder at the jaw. 3D scans and modeling of stegasaur jaws now prove that the dinosaur's mouth was similar to that of a sheep and the jaws were capable of quite a bit of force allowing the mouth to cut through vegetation.

-Using stem cells, scientists were able to grow pituitary cells and tissue that could be used as replacements in humans that suffer from failing or disabled pituitary glands. The gland is a sort of master control for the hormone production of the body and its failure can have lasting and catastrophic effects on the victim's body, especially children. Stimulating the stem cells to grow and take on the characteristics of pituitary cells, scientists then inserted the cells into lab rats whose glands were removed and were able to document improvements based on the proper regulation of hormones by the implanted tissue. Current sufferers from pituitary diseases and failure have to take injections to maintain their health as long as they live. This new treatment would offer them freedom from this expense. Pluripotent stem cells, which are readily available to the scientists, are exposed to stimuli similar to an embryonic environment to encourage maturation into pituitary cells.

Tillyer's News From the High Frontier

May 2016

-Some of us are old enough to remember Skylab and the concerns that it caused about where it might land after re-entry. It sounds as though next year, unless measures are taken, we all might be watching the skies once again as China's Tiangong-1 comes down to Earth. The spacelab was originally built as a docking test station and stepping stone to a larger permanent station scheduled for 2020. Observers have noted that Tiangong-1's orbit will begin to decay unless it is boosted back up into a more stable position. As an observation station, Tiangong-1 provided large amounts of data on geologic and mineral locations to China, even helping to observe the Yuyao flood. Satellite watchers also hint that they believe China may have lost control of the spacelab and are concerned that this news will not be shared until the last moment making it difficult to correct the orbit.

-NASA Advanced Concepts Award winner Christopher Walker thinks balloons are the answer to better telescopes both near Earth and in space. Walker's idea uses a dual balloon structure where half of the interior is covered in reflective aluminum to gather light and the exterior layer is similar to a stratosphere balloon providing both lift and protection to the inner components. The exterior should allow the telescope, referred to as the Large Balloon Reflector or LBR, to ascend to a projected height of 120,000 feet where the telescope would be able to observe outside of typical atmospheric conditions, which limit Earth bound observatories. Walker also has plans for another model- the Terahertz Space Telescope or TST, which would operate in space. After leaving Earth's atmosphere, the telescope would shed its outer envelope. Unlike the LBR, the TST would not be subject to the forces of gravity and will be able to maintain the hemispherical shape of the reflector allowing for greater light gathering and accuracy. Walker believes that the LBR will help us scan into the far infrared and that the TST could observe galaxy formation.

