

WATCH

THE

SKIES



# MASTER SERGEANT

By Mel Odom

## 16.8

Sergeant Frank Sage is looking for the war. He's tired of training men to fight and go away to die when he's more than ready to be on the frontline going up against the Phrenorians. But life is never simple and his assignment to the jungle planet Makaum is about to become an imbroglio of politics, greed and criminal activity with an additional helping of alien interference. Oddly enough due to the corporations interference, Sage is more likely to be dealing with Terran issues than tangling with the (ta)Klar or the Phrenorians. Sage's run in with the bruisers hired by the corporations who've invested in Makaum before he's even made planetfall makes things even more complicated. This brings him the wrong kind of attention immediately. His superiors want him on a tight leash, Dawnstar's hired killer wants him dead and his own men can't decide to trust him or not. There maybe plenty of conflict here on Makaum to test Sage and challenge him without being on the front lines.

-Next month's book— Trampling in the Land of Woe—William Galaini—special review/author signing

-Stefanie Hackenberg tells us all about GenCon

Check out the website at: [watchtheskies.org](http://watchtheskies.org) or contact us at: [wtsnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:wtsnewsletter@gmail.com)

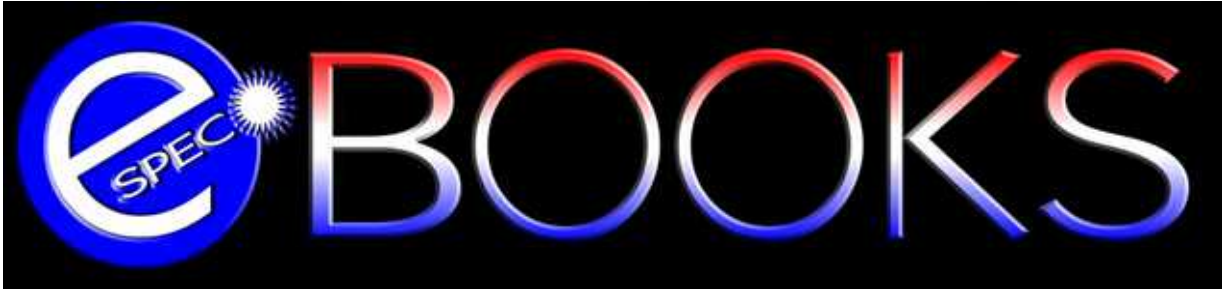


Home of Watch the Skies  
and awesome books too.

# NEW RELEASES

September 2016

Abraham, Daniel - **The Spider's War**  
Anderson, Kevin J. - **Eternity's Mind**  
Anderson, Poul—**The Collected Short Works of Poul Anderson, Volume 7: Question and Answer**  
Andrews, Ilona - **Magic Binds**  
Bakker, R. Scott - **Great Ordeal**  
Beagle, Peter S. - **Summerlong**  
Beaulieu, Bradley - **Of Sand and Malice Made**  
Bishop, Michael - **Other Arms Reach Out to Me: Thirteen Georgia Stories**  
Bledsoe, Alex - **Chapel of Ease**  
Brennan, Marie - **A Star Shall Fall**  
Brennan, Marie - **Cold-Forged Flame**  
Caltabiano, Anna • **Day Before Forever**  
Crowley, John • **The Chemical Wedding**  
Czerneda, Julie E. • **The Gate to Futures Past**  
Hamilton, Peter F. • **A Night without Stars**  
Hearne, Kevin • **The Purloined Poodle**  
Littlewood, Alison • **Quieter Paths**  
Liu, Cixin • **Death's End**  
Lovegrove, James • **Age of Heroes**  
MacLeod, Ken • **The Corporation Wars: Dissidence**  
McDonald, Ian • **Luna: Wolf Moon**  
McDonald, Ian • **The Locomotives' Graveyard**  
McDonald, Ian • **The Mars Stories of Ian McDonald**  
McGuire, Seanan • **Once Broken Faith**  
Parks, Richard • **Yamada Monogatari: The Emperor in Shadow**  
Priest, Christopher • **The Gradual**  
Reynolds, Alastair • **Revenger**  
Robb, J. D. • **Apprentice in Death**  
Rusch, Kristine Kathryn, ed. • **Women of Futures Past**  
Sanderson, Brandon • **The Dark Talent**  
Shawl, Nisi • **Everfair**  
Sherman, Delia • **The Evil Wizard Smallbone**  
Smith, Clark Ashton • **Maze of the Enchanter**  
Steinmetz, Ferrett • **Fix**  
Wilde, Fran • **Cloudbound**  
Willis, Connie • **Crosstalk**



Saturday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, we welcome  
Danielle Ackley-McPhail and Mike McPhail  
to show off the latest releases from the eSpec Books :  
*Gaslight and Grimm*—your favorite faerie tales redone  
in a steampunk style and the reissue of *Dogs of War*—  
Military Science Fiction— men and the animals that  
serve with them

### **Cosplay Tip of the Month: Weapons Policies**

Before you bring that fantastic prop to the next convention, look into their replica weapons policies. Some cons prohibit certain materials, some limit the size, some allow anything as long as it's always holstered/sheathed, and yet others have different guidelines. Be prepared so your hard work doesn't get confiscated. And always remember to practice good weapon discipline! Don't point it at anyone, be mindful of others when you're carrying large props, and never put your finger over a trigger.

By Stefanie Hackenberg

# EVENT HORIZON

-*Avatar 2* is will begin filming next year with an expected release in 2018. Nine years after the record-breaking movie came out, a new Cameron epic will hopefully hit the screens. There are two more *Avatar* films to follow this one and the hope is that the entirety will be finished and shown by 2023. Stephen Lang will be returning to reprise his role as Colonel Quaritch.

-*Vampire Hunter D* will be reborn in a TV show done with CGI animation. Hideyuki Kikuchi's series runs from the initial novel from 1983 to the 29th book in the series recently released in May. Kikuchi's world has inspired a number of different adaptations: 2 movies, audio dramas and a manga series. Now Unified Pictures will bring to the small screen the story of D, a dhampir—half vampire, half human—who hunts vampires in a post apocalyptical world more than 10,000 years in the future.

-The *Doctor Who* spinoff, *Class* is starting to sound a little like the other show that *Doctor Who* inspired—*Torchwood*. Coal Hill School has deep roots in the milieu since it was the very school that Susan, the first Doctor's grand daughter attended. Time and again the school has made appearances and *Class* takes a look at what all of that time traveling activity might have done to the location (which might sound similar to the idea of the Rift in Cardiff attracting alien activity). The primary cast is mostly newcomers. Playing students are: Fady Elsayed, Vivian Oparah, Greg Austin and Sophie Hopkins. Katherine Kelly rounds out the cast and is best know for her work on *Coronation Street*.

-You can have it all, but it will cost you. First there were rumors, then there were pictures and now there's the price tag— the complete extended *Hobbit + Lord of the Rings* boxset is big and expensive— around \$800. Thirty discs, in faux leather cases housed in a wooden shelf with a hundred-page book. The expected release is October 4th. The package also includes reproductions of watercolor work by John Howe and Alan Lee. *The Hobbit Extended* collection includes an hour of additional previously unavailable footage and 34 hours of extended content. *The Lord of the Rings Extended* collection includes 2 hours of extended scenes and 33 hours of extra content. Digital versions are also available through download and access to Ultraviolet versions for playing on a number of different formats.

-While we're on the topic of *Lord of the Rings*, did you know that David Bowie tried out for one of the parts? Dominic Monaghan, better known as Merry was waiting to audition for LOTR, he happened to notice a very familiar looking figure sign in for his turn. Dominic felt that Bowie was reading for Gandalf's part, although many a fan might assume that he was after Elrond's role since it's easy to compare that to the Goblin King. It's never been confirmed which part, but it is still pretty cool that Bowie tried out for a part.

-Finally, yes apparently Ian McKellan did actually turn down a ridiculous amount of money when he was asked to officiate a wedding as a certain wizard. When approached by Sean Parker and Alexandra Lenas to officiate their Tolkien inspired wedding and offered 1.5 million to do the deed, Ian supposedly told them that Gandalf doesn't do weddings. Their wedding however did go off any way without a certain wizard in attendance and the final price tag for the whole affair came to a whopping 10 million dollars.

## **Burlescaperoomcombatcon! GenCon 2016 Recap**

This year's "best 4 days in gaming" from Aug. 3 to Aug. 7 in Indianapolis, IN was attended by nearly 61,000 people with over 16,500 events, and like most other comic and sci fi fan conventions its size has grown again for several years in a row. The hot attraction this year was the Escape Room challenges in various environments: a bank heist, an asylum, a 1930's Lovecraftian adventure, a cyberpunk adventure, a search for the Hoosier trophy, and others, where you and a group of people must look for clues and solve a puzzle in order to escape an enclosed themed room in 1 hour. Tickets for these sold out too quickly for many of us in my group to try it out but by the end of the weekend the hosts were selling 2-for-1 tickets to unbooked scenarios. Though pricier than the average GenCon event, they were still much more affordable and enjoyable than loud-as-a-dance-club True Dungeon where your group makeup can make or break your experience.

Cosplay was scarce in 2016 compared to the last couple of years, although if you traveled to Lucas Oil Stadium down the street from the Indianapolis Convention Center (ICC) you could find the Cosplay and Anime tracks and relevant fan bases. Compared to last year my cosplay panels for Studio Cosplay saw less than half the attendance of last year's, though they still seemed to draw three times the crowd as some of the other panels despite a surprising amount of overlap with programming subject matter. Regardless, the "Bring Your Epics to Life - Prop-Making From Games" and "Cosplay With a Spin: Crossplay, Rule 63, and Mashups" presentations were well received, and the latter especially received feedback that it was very inclusive and respectful. I

myself did not end up cosplaying this year as the new brand of body makeup for my “Warcraft” movie Garona Halforcen cosplay, though finally the right color, had awful coverage ... inspiring me to break down and invest in an airbrush kit. Hey, it’s for props and armor too.

Our group -- several friends from Canada and a few of us from various parts of the US -- never had a dull moment all weekend. Some enjoyed marathon National Security Decision Making (NSDM) Games and demo’d a variety of new games from indie and major game companies. I spend a little quiet time in a workshop where I learned to make ornate, pointy, wire, Elven ear cuffs while my boyfriend competed in a national Hearthstone tournament. He was eliminated early on by close friends so it was not a bitter defeat, and he was freed up to join the rest of us in fun activities. Several of us (including the guys) attended Burlesque 101 and 102 classes taught by Glitter Guild Nerdlesque troupe’s own Ms. Pixy, who is as hilarious off-stage as she is in her mysteriously-accented MC role. The music was of the classic ba-bom-ba-bom-bom style and we could probably still remember all of our moves if asked. Glitter Guild’s Thursday night performance definitely gave us plenty to aspire to. Other activities for the weekend included swing dancing lessons, K-Pop aerobics, bo staff fighting and hand-to-hand combat lessons, and a performance by our long-beloved D20 Burlesque (“Where our Charisma is matched only by our Dexterity!”) troupe. Like most GenCon-goers we ended the weekend with loot, victories, new skills, bellies full of delicious food truck fare, smiles, and new friends.

By Stefanie Hackenberg



## Fan Projects We'd Love to See Completed

-The live action *Futurama*—if you haven't seen this one yet track it down. There's several short videos and a longer trailer. Someone went to a lot of work here and showed their love for the series. There's a great blend of CGI, make up and good set design. They also didn't miss a trick even adding Nibbler and the Hypno Toad. Maybe, just maybe there might be might be a future for live action *Futurama*? One can only hope.

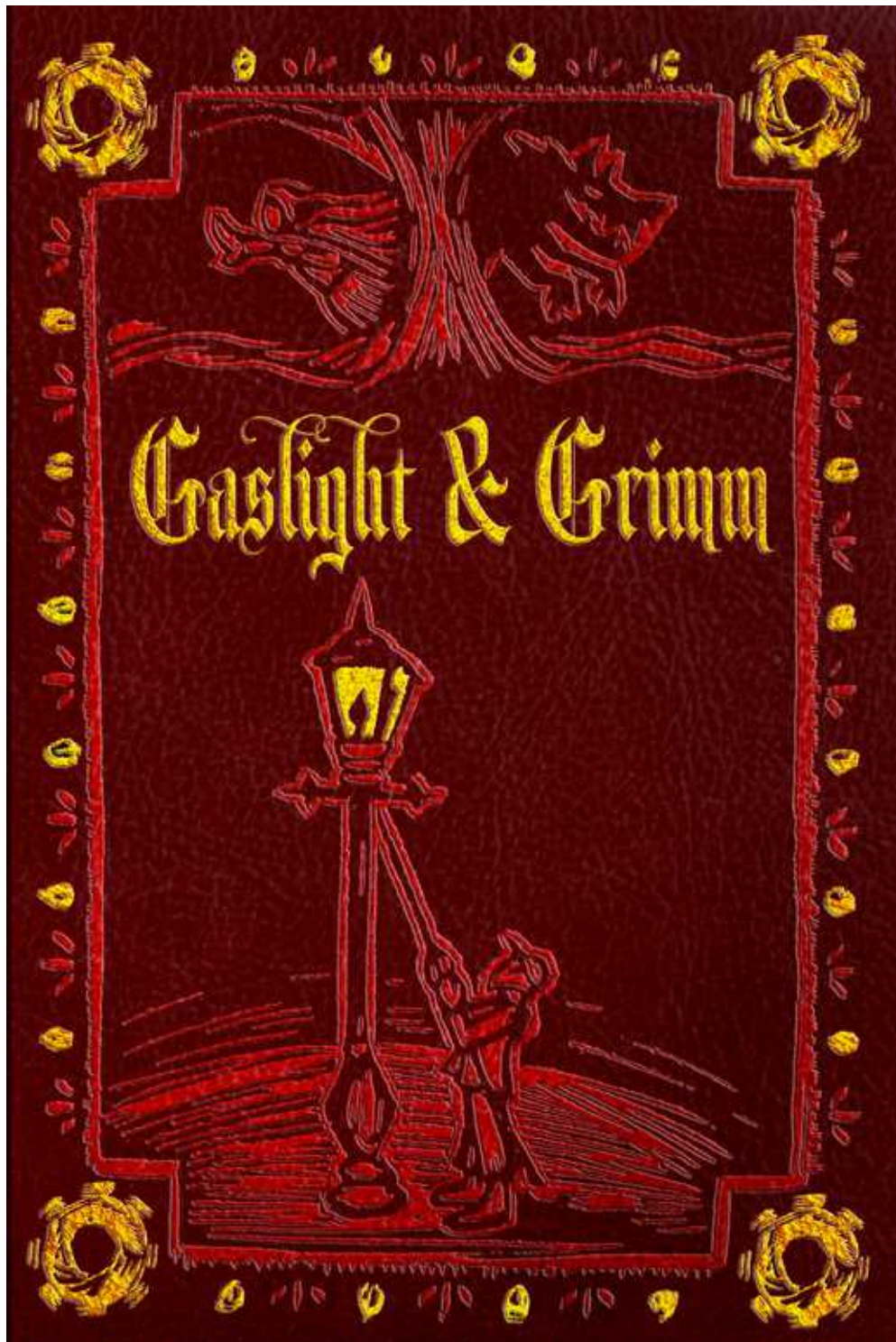
<https://youtu.be/cfNRPKKF4qU>

-Animated *Firefly* fan trailer— this one is currently making the rounds and causing a little bit of furor (there are still plenty of unhappy browncoats out there). Stephen Byrne is responsible for the artwork, and he's done a beautiful job. Apparently, he's been teasing this for awhile with stills before releasing the trailer. Is an animated *Firefly* possible? Could one of the new Online Networks like Netflix, Hulu or Amazon do it justice? And of course what would Mr. Whedon have to say about this? Lots of questions, lots of possibilities.

[https://youtu.be/amse6MX0\\_Ck](https://youtu.be/amse6MX0_Ck)

-*Akira* was partially re-imagined by Dean Fowler and Brad Kremer in a two and a half minute trailer. They're both long time fans and took the opportunity to put their own spins on iconic scenes using CGI. There is still a live action film lurching its slow way to completion but this is something to enjoy while we wait.

<http://www.avclub.com/article/fans-reimagine-and-pay-tribute-akira-using-cg-anim-240969>



## AVAILABLE NOW

The stories you grew up with infused with a new sense of adventure and powered by steam—*Gaslight and Grimm*. Edited by Danielle Ackley-McPhail and Diana Bastine.

# Sciency Stuff

(News from the High Frontier is focused on the nearest star, so sciency stuff will handle the space news closer to home this time)

-Some times they come back. STEREO-B has finally been reached after a long silence. Mute since 2014, NASA, with the help of the International Deep Space Network, was able to restore contact with the satellite. STEREO-B was created to keep an eye on the Sun monitoring flares and coronal mass ejections. After making their connection, NASA scientists learned as much as they could about the satellite's state and then powered it down to save its batteries. They will occasionally re-establish contact to evaluate the state of the satellite and its potential use.

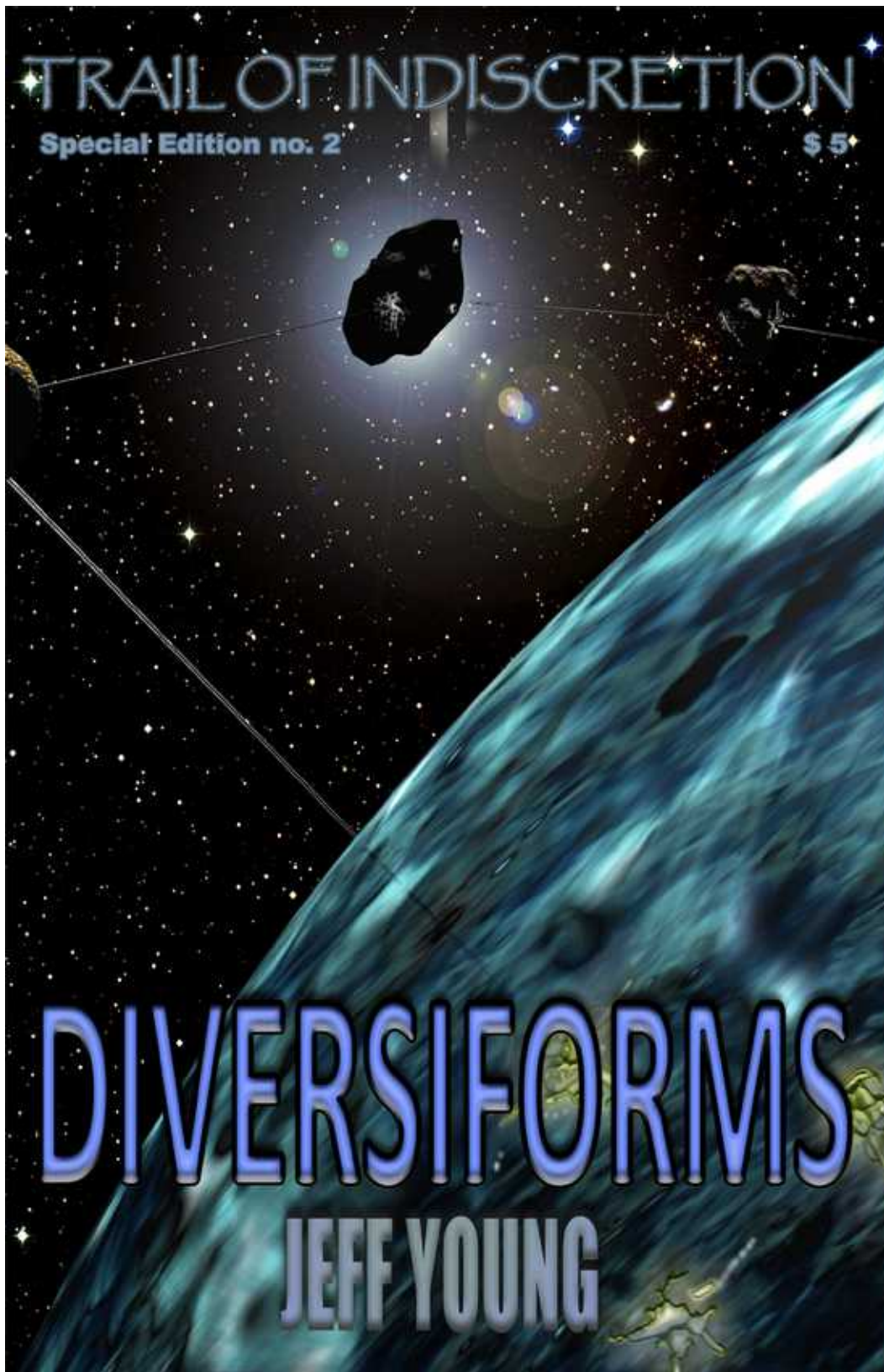
-Here's a really interesting twist on recycling and it's actually something that's been written about in science fiction—NASA is considering using spent fuel tanks to create habitats. If we ride them all the way up there, we might as well put them to use. A Centaur upper stage tank has 54 cubic meters of interior space. To give you something to compare that to consider the BEAM module of the International Space Station which has a volume of 16 cubic meters. The upper stage tanks actually have their own attitude control, propulsion and even a guidance system. Their interiors consist of tanks that are designed to take up to 6-7 gees of acceleration. Skylab was actually designed off of a Saturn V rocket tank. It could be might begin our experiments by linking tanks to the ISS and adapting them to produce even more space.

# Tillyer's News From the High Frontier

-There are plenty of Science Fiction stories that are set on the worlds of the closest stars Alpha and Proxima Centauri, but astronomers have just given us the first proof of such a planet around Proxima Centauri. Not only is it a rocky world but also it lies within the Goldilocks zone of the star. Before we get too excited about our new neighbor there a few things to keep in mind, such as the very nature of their sun, which is an M dwarf. These stars have long lives and are very common, but since they are smaller than our Sun, their habitable zone lies closer in, much closer. Proxima B is scorchingly close to Proxima, ten times closer than Mercury lies in comparison to the Sun. These stars daily spew out radiation and flares all of which can be inimical to life. Finally, it's easy for worlds in this situation to become tidally locked with one side facing the sun perpetually. This produces a number of issues that make it difficult for life to arise. Proxima B experiences massive amounts of UV and X-Ray radiation 400 times greater than Earth.

Scientists have been driven to all kinds of speculation about Proxima B since the announcement of its discovery. An interesting line of speculation was brought up about biofluorescence, which allows animals and plants to absorb harmful radiation and then re-radiate it at ordinary wavelengths. So other life could benefit from a relationship with biofluorescent life. There is also a comparison to plants inferring that organisms might be able to convert the UV directly into energy or even radiate away the excess energy as heat. There is even a really out there theory that says that life either re-radiating or biofluorescing would actually cause a flash visible to our next series of telescopes.

The other surge of interest focuses on the simple fact, how do we get there and find out? Breakthrough Starshot was initially aimed at Alpha Centauri, it certainly shouldn't take too much to aim the swarm at Proxima instead. Here is a perfect target for this project.



# DIVERSIFORMS

JEFF YOUNG

**AVAILABLE NOW**

