

# WATCH THE



# SKIES



# LEGENDS AND LATTES

By Travis Baldree

## 23.6

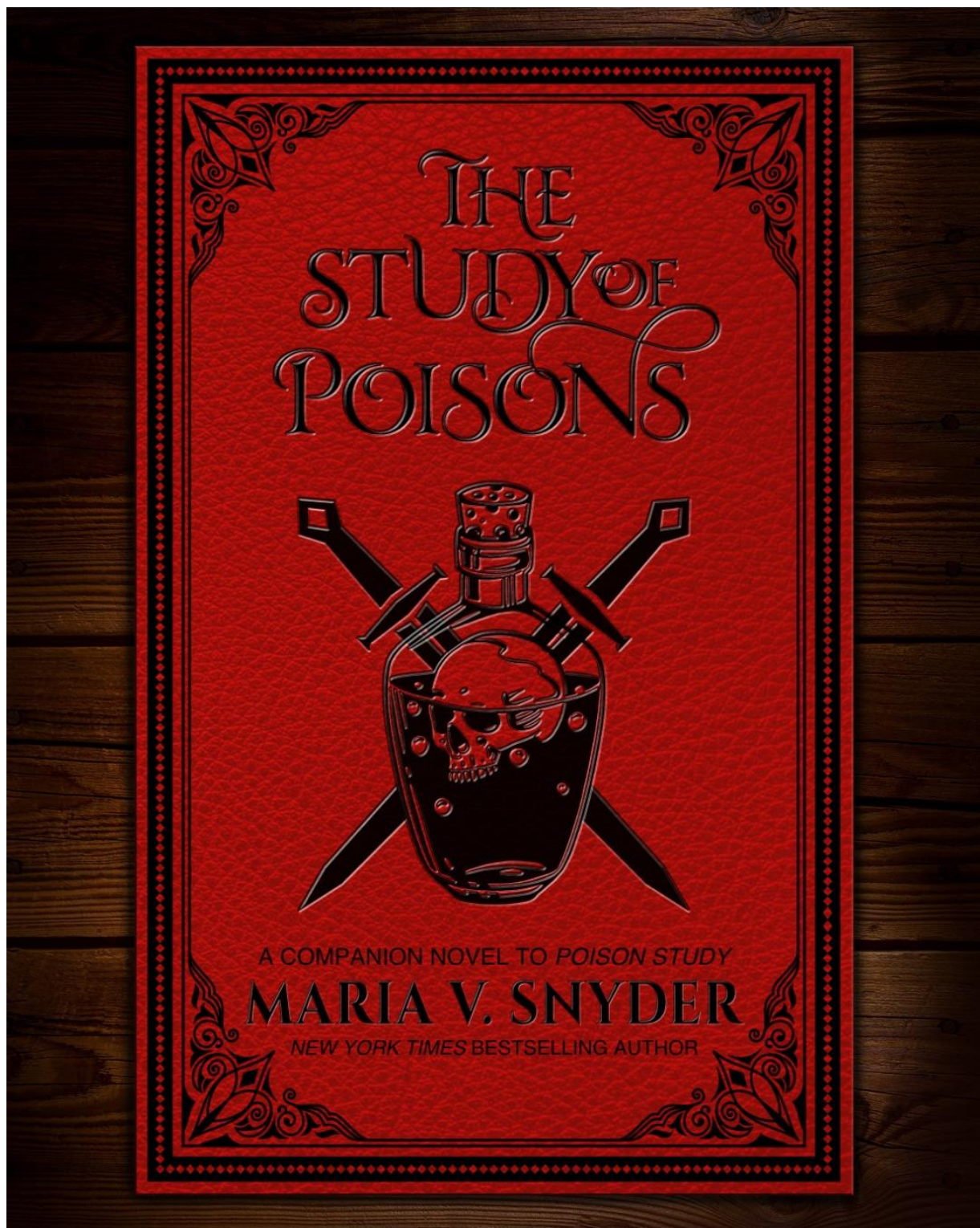
Viv has a dream and in this one, she's not up to her elbows in gore, not running for her life, and not watching her friends get hurt. She's had enough of her adventuring life. But when you are an orc, it's sort of expected. Viv, however, is nothing like an ordinary orc. She has a plan, and it involves gnomish devices, a little place of her own, and introducing coffee to an unsuspecting populace. The town of Thune is about to get a new proprietor of hot drinks, and she's going to retire from the danger. No matter how smart she's been, including the little secret she's got on the side to ensure her success, plans don't always include everything. The road to getting her own shop up and running is going to have some bumps. But if anyone is going to succeed, it will be an orc, a succubus, a hob and a ratkin. Thune better look out – it's about to be served.

-July's meeting is on the 19th, in person, at the Simpson Library, Mechanicsburg (unless otherwise announced) and the book of the month is *Shadows of the Short Days* by Alexander Dan Vilhjalmsen.

-Cover art by Eric V. Hardenbrook.

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





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# **NEW RELEASES**

**JULY 2023**

DANIEL ABRAHAM - **Blade of Dream**

NEAL ASHER - **War Bodies**

PIERCE BROWN - **Light Bringer**

D.J. BUTLER - **Between Princesses and Other Jobs**

MIKE CAREY - **The Ghost in Bone**

P. DJÈLÍ CLARK - **Abeni's Song**

SEBASTIEN DE CASTELL - **Fate of the Argosi**

T.L. HUCHU - **The Mystery at Dunvegan Castle**

RICHARD KADREY - **The Secrets of Insects**

FONDA LEE - **Jade Shards**

SHARON LEE & STEVE MILLER - **Salvage Right**

VIOLETTE MALAN - **The Court War**

GEORGE R.R. MARTIN, ED. - **Wild Cards: Pairing Up**

SEANAN MCGUIRE - **Be Sure**

SILVIA MORENO-GARCIA - **Silver Nitrate**

GARTH NIX - **Sir Hereward and Mister Fitz**

ANTHONY RYAN - **The Traitor**

CHARLES STROSS - **Ghost Engine**

PAUL TREMBLAY - **The Beast You Are**

LIZ WILLIAMS - **Salt on the Midnight Fire**

# NEWS OF THE REALM

## **Fantasy Night – Cupboard Maker Books**

June 28<sup>th</sup>, 5-8PM, multi-author signing – watch the website for more details.

[Cupboardmaker Books](http://CupboardmakerBooks.com)



Shore Leave 43, July 7-9, the Delta Hotel, Hunt Valley, MD. Media Guests include: Ben Browder, Claudia Black, Grace Park, Aaron Douglas, Robert Picardo, Peter Macon, Jennifer Johnson Jerald, Bonnie Gordon, Robert Duncan McNeill, and Alaina Huffman. For more information: [Shore Leave: A Fan-Run Science Fiction Convention \(shore-leave.com\)](http://ShoreLeave:AFanRunScienceFictionConvention.com)



Confluence – Pittsburgh's Literary Science Fiction and Fantasy convention is July 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> at the Sheraton Hotel Pittsburgh Airport Hotel in Coraopolis, PA. Guest of Honor will be Ada Palmer, winner of the John W. Campbell Award and the Compton Crook Award in 2017. Featured musical guest Sassafrass is an a cappella troop lead by Ada Palmer.

For more information: <https://confluence-sff.org>







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# You Should Be Watching

## Retro Review – *Andromeda Strain* (1971)



I've been going back and re-watching some older science fiction films, or in some cases watching them for the first time. I had never seen *The Andromeda Strain*, so I grabbed some popcorn and hit play.

There are a number of things I noticed while viewing this 50+ year old film.

Aspects of the film style place it squarely in the era of the late 60s / early 70s. Unavoidable things like changes in film making, the quality of the picture (at least compared to modern, high-definition sets), special effects without CGI and updates to sound. There are minor turns of phrase that might raise eyebrows today. Some things the characters say or how they respond to things can be very different than a viewer of today would expect.

Beyond simple style or dated cultural issues there is technology. Some tech you simply can't avoid seeing changes in. Cars, helicopters, and planes are all mechanical items that we have contact with or at least passing familiarity with, so those are easy things to spot. Interestingly, the computer technology has made an unexpected change. In part, the attempts to be 'futuristic' have made of the tech in the movie actually look spot on to things we have today. Using a stylus on a computer screen in 1971 was so far in the future as to seem unreachable or at least something movie goers wouldn't expect. These days we have a stylus for our personal tablets and phones that are so common we barely think twice about losing them. The computers themselves were a surprise to me. The 'main frame' driven tech is very old in the way the movie makers were likely thinking of it, but to those outside the computer industry it's almost passable as an AI or supercomputer, so it would still fit the bill as 'science fiction'.

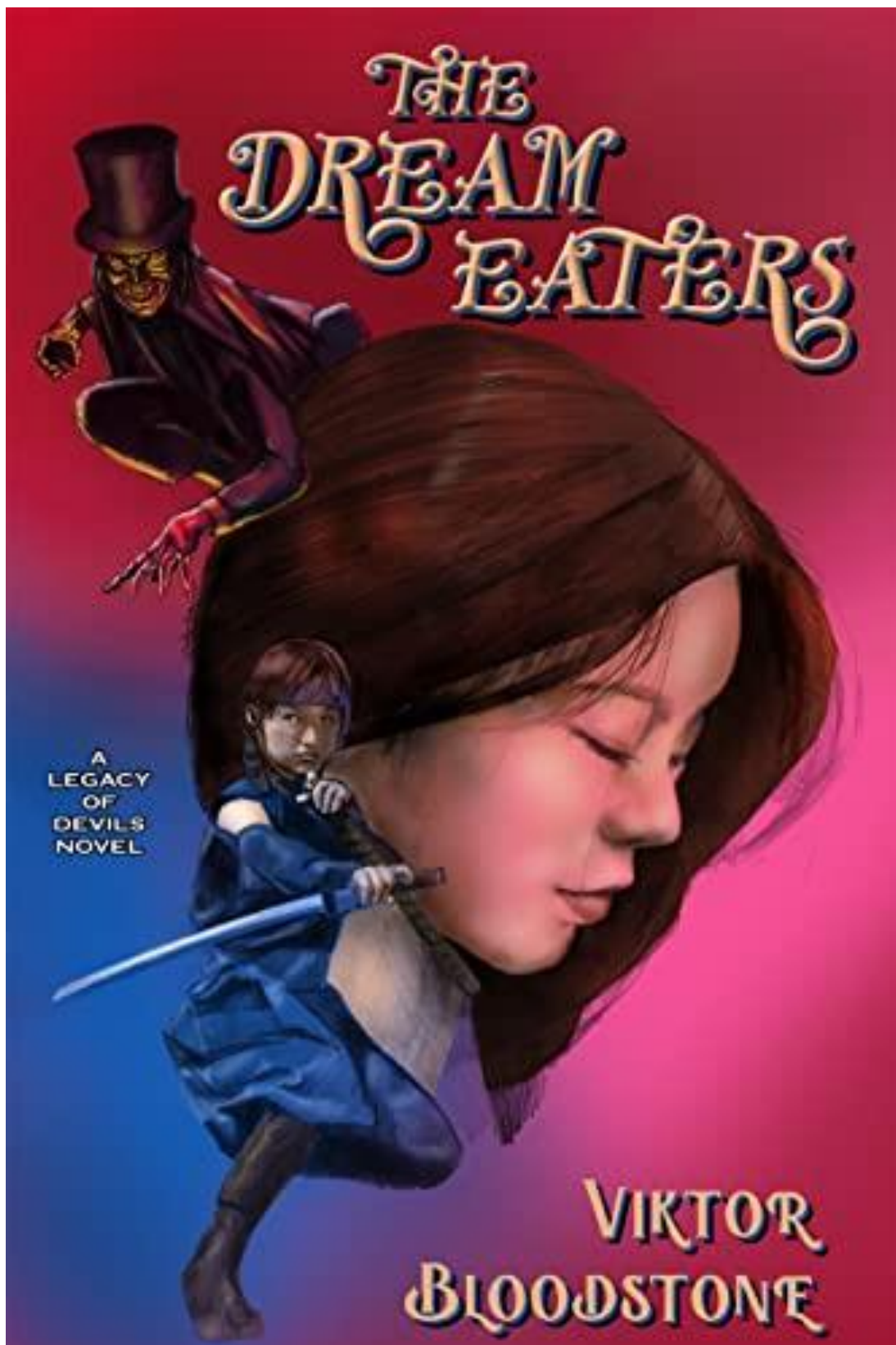
Certain special effects make me wonder if the film makers actually killed lab rats and monkeys to get this movie made. Those scenes were definitely not for the squeamish. Any scene like that today would require disclaimers at the start of the film and would be ruthlessly scrutinized. I didn't see the note at the end of the credits stating that no animals were harmed in the making of the film. Perhaps I missed it.

The version I watched had an interview with Michael Crichton. I was fascinated to hear about his drive and sense of humor (one of his pseudonyms meant dwarf when he was actually 6'-9" tall). The scope was broad for this movie but still had a tight run time. There's a more modern (2008) remake that was broken into two 90-minute films, but I suspect it won't land on my watch list. If there's such a thing as a spoiler alert for a 50-year-old movie, this film is a bit of a downer. The biological space thing escapes into the world at large. It is mutated and non-lethal, but it's out there and there's a secret science department in the government working constantly to stop it from mutating and killing people again. That part was a lot less entertaining after living through the pandemic and seeing how people reacted.

In the end, I'm glad I went back and checked out this classic. It's good to have a sense of where things come from, knowing the roots of things. If you've got the chance, you should watch this version of the film.

Check out the retro trailer here: <https://youtu.be/YMbSpnlOOtE>





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# **Tillyer's News of the High Frontier**

## **JUNE 2023**

This September, we're getting a package from the sky seven years in the making. Samples from the mission to the asteroid Bennu will be arriving, dropped off by the spacecraft of the OSIRIS-Rex mission. These will give scientists the opportunity to learn not only about the composition of the asteroid, which could perhaps one day be a danger to the Earth, but also about the composition of asteroids in general. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, Utah's desert will be the target for the landing of the samples. Computers will assist in modeling weather to ensure that the capsule is able to hit its mark for recovery. Parachuting down, the payload will need to be protected from excessive heat, vibration, and contamination. A new lab is being readied at the Johnson Space Center in Houston to examine the material from Bennu. Team members are practicing unboxing containers in glove boxes in order to maintain a pristine sample. Contamination by any earthly substances will render the material relatively useless. The sample is expected to be about a cup's worth of material. The recovery team will also be sampling the area around the landing so that comparisons can be made with the Bennu material to rule out the possibility of contamination. From the landing site, the sample will be helicoptered to a portable clean room that will allow scientists to remove portions of the landing craft to gain access to the sample canister. This will then be transported to Houston for analysis. Once its delivery is complete, the OSIRIS mission will convert over to OSIRIS-APEX, and realignment of the spacecraft will head it towards its next target, the asteroid Apophis.

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, Sally Ride became the first American woman in space in 1983. The STS-7 crew of the shuttle Challenger, launched from the Kennedy Space Center, ran experiments using the Shuttle Pallet Satellite and also launched communication satellites. STS-7 was also the first five-person crew. STS-7 was forced to land at Edwards Air Force Base on their return due to weather.

