

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

*Volume 15 Issue 25
July 6, 2007*



Crystal Gazing *What the Future Holds*

The Reel Deal

Reviewing Pan's Labyrinth

Hang Ups

New Do Not Call List Leaves Lines Open

*Plus:
Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan
From Where I Sit
Click On This
AUSU This Month*

and much more...

Welcome To The Voice PDF

The Voice interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom-right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.



features

EDITORIAL

Sandra Livingston



columns

CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

LOST & FOUND

Bill Pollett

THE REEL DEAL

Diane Gadoua

FROM WHERE I SIT

Hazel Anaka

AUSU THIS MONTH



news and events

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

CLICK ON THIS

Lonita Fraser



from the readers

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CLASSIFIEDS



We love to hear from you!
Send your questions and
comments to voice@ausu.org,
and please indicate if we may
publish your letter.

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

1200, 10011 109th Street NW
Edmonton, AB T5J 3S8
800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Publisher AU Students' Union
Editor In Chief Tamra Ross
Managing Editor Sandra
Livingston

Regular Contributors:
Mandy Gardner, Katie Patrick,
Hazel Anaka, Bill Pollett,
Janice Behrens, Barbara Godin,
Wanda Waterman St. Louis,
John Buhler, Zil-E-Huma Lodhi

THE VOICE ONLINE:
www.voicemagazine.org

The Voice is published every
Friday in HTML and PDF
format

Contact *The Voice* at:
VOICE@AUSU.ORG

To subscribe for weekly email
reminders as each issue is
posted, see the 'subscribe' link
on *The Voice* front page

The Voice does not share its
subscriber list with anyone

Special thanks to Athabasca
University's *The Insider* for its
frequent contributions

© 2007 by *The Voice*



Good Call

It's happened to all of us: the workday is done, the kids are (sort of) corralled at the table, the meal is ready, and then the phone rings. One more interruption in the already overcrowded, stressed-out day. Maybe it's a friend or relative; maybe it's that call you've been waiting for about a recent job interview.

"Hi. My name is Bob and I'm calling from (pick a company, any company). How are you this evening?"

And with a sinking feeling, you realize you're left with two choices. You can hang up, or you can take a deep breath and remind yourself that the person at the other end of the line is someone much like yourself, doing a job they probably don't like in order to pay the bills (option B, while definitely more Canadian, also involves spending even more of your precious time politely trying to extricate yourself from the sales pitch). Either way, telemarketing calls are irritating, frustrating, and (usually) a complete waste of time—if I want new windows, doors, or a newspaper subscription, I'll go find them, thanks.

At long last, the federal government has taken steps to remedy the problem, but the devil, as they say, is in the details.

On the surface, the National Do Not Call Registry is a grand idea. It's modelled on the U.S. one introduced in 2003, and will let consumers register their phone numbers (including cell and fax numbers) in order to avoid telemarketers. The process is simple: call or go online, provide the numbers you want added to the list, and presto—after a 31-day grace period, no more annoying telemarketing calls. (At least not for three years. After that, you have to re-register.)

But look a little closer and you'll find that your dinner hour may not become a peaceful refuge after all.

You may not get calls pedaling aluminum siding, but you can still expect to be inundated with requests from charities: they're exempt from the rules. Oh, and come election time, the phone might still be ringing off the hook. Political parties don't have to abide by the Do Not Call list either.

Maybe that's not so bad, you think. After all, charities help make countless lives better, and you've really been meaning to become more aware of important political issues.

In that case, would you like to take a survey? Research companies are—you guessed it—also not required to use the list. Neither are general-circulation newspapers. (Why they're any different from other companies selling a product is beyond me.)

Well, that should do it for the exemptions . . . no, wait, there's more. A company selling windows and doors (or any other service) can't contact you—unless, of course, you've established a business relationship with them. In that case, your phone number is fair game, even if you're registered on the list.

So if you think the new phone registry (scheduled to be up and running near the end of 2007) will end those annoying unsolicited phone calls, you may be right. As long as you don't mind having your dinner interrupted by charities looking for donations, politicians trying to get your vote, people taking surveys, offers for trial newspaper subscriptions, companies you've previously dealt with . . . oops, gotta run. There's the phone.

The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by
Wanda
Waterman
St. Louis





Various Fortunes, 2001

1) Eating noodles in a red vinyl booth, we read our futures from a tiny paper scroll decoding the intricacies of the Chinese zodiac. We found out it was a good day to buy real estate and fish. We found out we would be lucky in love, but someone we trusted would prove false. We found out that our daughter's charm and wisdom would bring the world to her door.

2) In the back of a rundown coffee shop, the eighteen-year-old seer with the golden nose ring peered at the tea leaves scattered at the bottom of a bone china cup. She told me that I would find myself on a dark road very far from home; that I would live a life both long and sad, that something I cared for very much would eventually fall from my hands and be broken.

3) From a drunk guy on the bar stool beside mine at the Cobalt, I found out that the Americans were—At This Very Moment!—gathering information about each and every one of us in the form of bar codes, and would soon be rounding up the ones who didn't conform to certain Security

Department specifications for decent normalcy.

4) On a September morning, looking into the lozenge-shaped eye of a crystal of radiant plasma, I saw the future on silver wings flying again and again into soaring concrete towers.

5) Double Fortune: In a sterilized room with dim lighting and skull-white walls, we looked at an echo chamber picture that predicted the imminent passing of an unborn son.

While we sat waiting for the doctor to appear, I flipped through an old copy of *Wired* magazine in which some cyber-guru was predicting that artificial intelligence and nanotech were spelling out in ones and zeros the name of the beast, the end of the human race. At the outside, he suggested, we all had about twenty-five more good years to relish our *foie gras* and *sang froid*, our unbridled greed and our childlike faith in technology, before the heavens would come crashing down upon our nappy little heads.

6) Last week, I put my head to the belly of a pregnant friend, and heard the faintest possible sound, a possibly hopeful sound, distant and fragile like a flutter of pigeon wings high up in the vaulted rafters of an abandoned cathedral; the only fortune worth believing.

Pan's Labyrinth

Release date: May 15, 2007

Studio: Universal Studios Home Video

Genre: Fantasy

Rating: 8 out of 10

A quick scan through your local video store will probably reveal lots of war films you can rent. Most of them have battle scenes and explosions, steely-eyed soldiers creeping along night-shrouded beaches or up rocky hills. They try to portray the reality—the horror and brutality—of war. Sometimes, the cinematic explosions and hails of gunfire come close: they give audiences just the slightest glimpse into what it must actually be like to experience warfare.

And every so often, a film comes along that does away with the explosions and heroics and yet saturates the screen—and the viewer—with a sense that this is about as close as you can come without actually being there. *Pan's Labyrinth* is one of those films.

It is 1944, and rural Spain is still reeling from the country's civil war. In a trail of cars that winds through the woods, army officers are escorting a woman and child to their new home in an old mill. The girl is Ofelia (Ivana Baquero), and her pregnant mother Carmen (Ariadna Gil) is taking them to live with Ofelia's new stepfather, Captain Vidal. Vidal runs the military post that's been set up at the mill, and he has two burning passions: to exterminate the anti-fascist rebels hiding in the hills, and to ensure that his new bride delivers the healthy son that he's been craving.

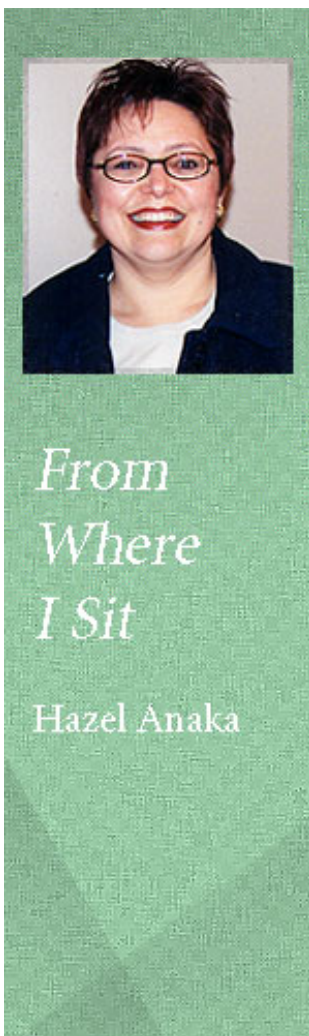
From the moment the reluctant Ofelia steps from the car and faces her stepfather, the sense of dread is palpable: she is completely at the mercy of a cruel, dominant foe, and the vulnerability that their meeting portrays is symbolic of the struggle between the ragtag rebels and Franco's army. Sergi Lopez plays Vidal with chilling realism, and his understated performance will stay with you for days.

To escape her lonely and oppressive new world, Ofelia takes refuge in a mysterious labyrinth that lies in the mill's neglected garden. The characters in her beloved fairy tales come to life and, guided by a dragonfly, she meets The Faun (Doug Jones), an eerie satyr that could be friend or foe—or both. The quest that The Faun sends her on parallels the covert efforts of some of the rebels. Like Ofelia, the housekeeper Mercedes (Maribel Verdu) lives in dangerous proximity to Captain Vidal, and her secret efforts to aid her fellow rebels puts her in constant danger.

While Ofelia's quest is purely one of childish fantasy, Mercedes is in very real danger, and the scene where Vidal discovers her true sympathies is troubling (but—without giving anything away—ultimately satisfying).

Directed by Guillermo del Toro, *Pan's Labyrinth* is categorized as fantasy, but it is really a film about war, and the hope that endures even when people are faced with fear and oppression.

If you're not a fan of subtitles, you'll probably want to give this Spanish-language film a pass. But *Pan's Labyrinth* is a visually gorgeous and richly layered film, and one whose ending will definitely take you by surprise.



Ten Suggestions for a Happy Marriage

Here we are in the thick of wedding season with couple after couple taking the big plunge—committing to love, honour, and cherish; choosing this one person from a potential pool of several billion people; promising to forsake all others through good times and bad.

It may be a lavish affair complete with hundreds of guests, a bridezilla, and all the best of everything, all at a cost of what used to be a down payment on a house. Or it may be an intimate gathering of five: bride, groom, best man, matron of honour, and officiant in someone's backyard or living room.

No matter the trappings, the budget, the simplicity or complexity of the event, in my humble opinion, it boils down to the rightness of your choice in mates and the intention you bring to the vows. I say this as both a marriage commissioner and a woman married to the same guy for almost 34 years. Yes, it's true—I was a child bride. I can't possibly be old enough to be married that long otherwise.

You'll note I'm offering “suggestions” versus “commandments” because no two marriages are alike any more than any two people are alike. Here goes, in no particular order:

1. When the lustful glow has worn off, remember the more substantive reasons you fell in love with this person.
2. Hang onto your sense of humour. Especially when your sweetie really ticks you off and you find yourself wistfully dreaming about the one(s) that got away.
3. Talk about money before you commit because it's the leading cause of problems. Discuss how much each of you earns. Honestly disclose how much each of you owes. Explore your individual priorities and beliefs regarding saving and spending. This can be, and often is, a deal breaker.
4. Become each other's biggest ally. There are plenty of critics and naysayers out there. Let your marriage be the refuge from negativity and provide the support you each need.
5. Before you commit, talk about your hopes and dreams. Is there buy-in? Life is so much easier if you're both pulling in the same direction, pooling resources, creating synergy.
6. Notwithstanding number five, hang onto your own thoughts, integrity, beliefs, and identity. You, the individual, shouldn't cease to exist just because you got married.
7. Do things for each other not out of a sense of duty but just because you know it will bring comfort or joy.
8. Find the right balance between work and play. You need both aspects in good measure to make life worth living.
9. Fan the flames of desire. Shake up your sex life to keep things interesting and each other interested.
10. Don't let kids, in-laws, the job, or other people come between you. This is, after all, a union of two people, not a group venture.

Above all else, if you've made a critical mistake and it isn't going to work, end it. Cleanly, civilly, completely. Move on and find the happiness due you. You deserve it, from where I sit.

AUSU THIS MONTH



Coalition for Student Loan Fairness

AUSU is currently investigating the Coalition for Student Loan Fairness (CSLF) to determine if participation with this group would be advantageous to our members. The group, a grassroots movement of student loan borrowers from across Canada, supports fairness in the loans repayment process.

The CSLF notes that Canadian students are charged a rate of 2.5 to 4.5% above prime for loan repayment, resulting in interest charges that can amount to as much as 33% of the loan principal over the lifetime of the loan. Borrowers who utilize interest relief during low-income periods may pay considerably more. Given that student loans are offered as a public service and incentive to learning, the high profitability of these loans is of concern to AUSU.

CSLF also notes that students over the age of 30 are not included in government surveys of student loan experiences. This is of particular concern to AUSU as the majority of our membership is 30 years of age or older and we know from our experiences with our members that the current loans program does not adequately serve these members, nor does it serve members who wish to work to support themselves while studying part-time.

CSLF also asks that the government provide an Ombuds office to handle student loan complaints—a change that would help address many of the problems we hear about regarding lost forms, incorrect instructions, and confusing requirements. Additionally, CSLF supports providing for consolidation of multiple student loans into a single loan with a single payment, a change that many students have asked for.

Members are encouraged to check out the CSLF website at <http://www.studentloanfairness.ca/index.php>

AUSU Frappr—Show Us Where You Are

On June 20 AUSU launched a Frappr member map on the front page of AUSU.org. Just three days later, nearly 140 members have added their dot to our map, and a "picture" of the dispersion of our website visitors is taking shape. We're thrilled to see so many of you leaving your little mark on our site, and we love all the great pictures and shoutouts people have uploaded. Members who have left anonymous pins are encouraged to add their name (or alias, if you are shy) so we know you are all different people! If you haven't added your mark, drop by www.ausu.org—and don't forget to read the posting information if you are new to Frappr.

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

Maybe it's the heat, but all sorts of weird and wonderful news stories seem to crop up as the temperature rises. Here's a selection of current events that are just the thing for light summer reading!



Is it safe to go back in the water?

Plenty of two-year-olds like playing with Lego—but not many of them have eight arms.

Ollie is a giant octopus who lives at a British sea life park, and apparently he's taken a liking to the brightly coloured building blocks. He uses his tentacles to grab the pieces and put them together, which comes as no surprise to his handlers, who say that "giant octopi are very smart and like to play with toys of different shapes and textures."¹

So far, Ollie hasn't built anything that his handlers recognize, and for my money they probably shouldn't hold their breath waiting for him to do so—even if they aren't under water.

Meanwhile, a 6-year-old Florida girl will probably have lots of time to play with toys—she'll be recuperating with a broken leg caused when a sturgeon leapt out of the water and smashed into her. The girl was riding with her aunt and parents in a 20-foot boat on the Suwannee River when the strike occurred. Along with the youngster's broken leg, the three-foot fish caused cuts and bruises to the girl's aunt.

According to wildlife officials, injuries caused by the leaping fish aren't that uncommon. So far this year, three sturgeon strikes have occurred, injuring four people. In 2006, there were at least ten known cases of injuries caused by the fish.

Lake watchers in Scotland have bigger fish to fry, though. It seems that Nessie—that perennial favourite living in Loch Ness—has resurfaced and an amateur scientist has captured her on film in what Nessie watchers say is the "finest footage ever taken"³ of the elusive sea monster.

Gordon Holmes, a 55-year-old lab technician, was astounded when he saw the 15-metre long black shape moving through the water. A marine biologist from Loch Ness 2000 centre has watched the video and plans to analyze it thoroughly.

More than 4,000 people have reported sighting Nessie since the 1930s, but this most recent videotape of the legendary sea monster was considered so impressive that BBC Scotland aired it on their main news program.

Intelligent octopi, leaping sturgeon, mysterious sea monsters—it all makes land-locked pursuits like skydiving look positively tame in comparison!

¹ ABC Action News, 2007. "Giant Octopus Enjoys Playing with Legos." Retrieved July 5, 2007, from http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=animals_oddities&id=5416939

² The Florida Times-Union, 2007. "Girl's leg broken from jumping sturgeon." Retrieved July 5, 2007, from <http://www.jacksonville.com/apnews/stories/062507/D8Q01LK00.shtml>

³ PR-Inside, 2007. "Loch Ness monster aficionados say new video among the finest taken." Retrieved July 5, 2007, from <http://www.pr-inside.com/loch-ness-monster-aficionados-say-new-r140039.htm>

Back on dry land, Spanish hotel is a smash

Still feeling stressed by the serious news of the world? A Spanish hotel chain may just have the answer: they let 30 highly stressed-out people take a swing (literally) at the walls and furniture in the hotel's rooms. CBC News reports that the smashing good time was part of the hotel's plans to renovate one its Madrid locations.

After being screened and selected by a team of psychologists, the 30 lucky people were let loose with sledge hammers and battering rams. Dressed in protective gear, they demolished TV sets, walls, furniture—all as part of the NH Alcala hotel's publicity scheme. The hotel had been planning to renovate, and in order to advertise their upcoming facelift they let the amateur demolition crew do the work instead of hiring professionals.

As the hotel said in a statement, "Who hasn't dreamed, in the middle of a stress attack, of breaking everything around them?"¹

When the renovations are complete, the 30-person wrecking crew will be invited back to see the finished product. If the hotel's management is smart, they'll do another psychological assessment first to make sure that their guests got rid of all that tension on their first visit!

If your problems can't be solved by a little physical stress release, though, you might want to try drinking some soup made from magical dinosaur bones.

That's just what a group of villagers in central China have been doing for the past couple of decades—until they found out that the bones weren't from flying dragons, but from plain old non-magical dinosaurs.

Apparently, the villagers thought that the enormous bones they'd found were from flying dragons and possessed healing powers. The bones were ground up and made into soup or sold as a powder to be used in traditional medicine. For just 56 cents Canadian, you could buy a kilogram of flying-dragon powder and cure everything from dizziness to leg cramps.

The powder was also made into a paste that was thought to heal fractures.

When the villagers were told the truth about the bones, they decided to donate 200 kilograms to scientists of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to use in research.

Hmmm—if the villagers are stressed out about losing their source of magical dragon bones, maybe that Spanish hotel chain has some more rooms it wants to renovate . . .

¹ CBC News, 2007. "Stress break: Spanish hotel offers 'stressed out' guests chance to smash up their rooms." Retrieved July 5, 2007, from <http://www.cbc.ca/cp/Oddities/070704/K070417AU.html>

² CBC News, 2007. "Chinese villagers eat dinosaur bones believing they're from flying dragons." Retrieved July 5, 2007, from <http://www.cbc.ca/cp/Oddities/070704/K07049AU.html>

There are those who would say that perverting the poetic form of haiku is just that: a perversion. However, there are those who also say that one ought not to take anything that seriously. I shall let you decide for yourselves. Here is a selection of haiku-related links that demonstrate the less formal side of the form.

The Fabulous and Nonsensical Haiku Generator - <http://www.fo2k.com/haikumaker.php>

"With a click of a button, you can have an endless multitude of poor haiku to impress your dullard friends, or try to make new ones! These haiku are best performed in front of lots of people, a grocery store makes a great forum. You'll become the next Ezra Pound, the next Walt Whitman, the next person to be physically assaulted by a complete stranger!"

And this, my friends, is what I got upon hitting the button. I'll let you all know how the performance went.

or breadboards enders
desolation expunges
miserable cab

Random Word Haiku - <http://www.cs.indiana.edu/cgi-bin/haiku>

This site is similar to the link above, but this one generates multiple haiku at once, and each word of each piece is linked to a dictionary definition of the word.

Formal tumescence,
avian lockjaw superman,
forgivable disperse.

FiveSevenFive - <http://www.fivesevenfive.com/>

Haiku based on news headlines and stories. I somewhat liked this one:

Yum, not a hazard
Pizza will outlive us all
Atomic oven

SPAM Haiku Archives - <http://web.mit.edu/people/jync/spam/>

You see? Spam need not be merely a meat-like product; it can also be art!

Salvador Dali
Paints soft, drooping cans of pork:
"Persistence of SPAM."

The Genuine Haiku Generator - <http://www.everypoet.com/haiku/default.htm>

"The Genuine Haiku Generator creates evocative, meaningful verse using completely random combinations of individual words. Words follow one another according to general grammatical principles, tempered with a touch of poetic license."

Haiku-O-Matic - <http://www.smalltime.com/haiku.html>

Something a little more surreal, perhaps? Try this out, or submit your own.

classifieds

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@ausu.org for more information.

THE VOICE

1200, 10011 109th Street NW, Edmonton, AB T5J 3E4 -- Ph: 800.788.9041 ext. 2905 - Fax: 780.497.7003 attn: Voice Editor

Publisher Athabasca University Students' Union

Editor In Chief Tamra Ross

Managing Editor Sandra Livingston

Regular Columnists: Janice Behrens, Wanda Waterman St. Louis,
Katie Patrick, Hazel Anaka, Bill Pollett, Barbara Godin, John Buhler

Contributors to listings columns: Zil-E-Huma Lodhi, Lonita Fraser

THE VOICE ONLINE: WWW.VOICEMAGAZINE.ORG

The Voice is published every Friday in html and pdf format

Contact *The Voice* at: VOICE@AUSU.ORG

To receive a weekly email announcing each issue, see the 'subscribe' link on *The Voice* front page. *The Voice* does not share its subscriber list.
Special thanks to Athabasca University's *The Insider* for its contributions

© 2007 by *The Voice*