A Long Letter from the Future

Reviews of Babylon 5, from a Minbari Point of View

by Shira Destinie Jones

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Minbari Mondays, B5 order of viewing, and mass transit in space?

The common good, or the general welfare, imho, must become more fully inclusive for all of us, and also requires me to do a re-watch review of that 1990s series Babylon 5, the best American TV series of all time, imnsho.

The episodes will be reviewed in Lurker’s Guide order, from the point of view of a fictional Minbari lady I am in the process of inventing at the moment. I will probably wait until after the current impeachment trial is finished to start posting the reviews, since no one will be reading blog posts, right? Just let me know in the comments, please, if you want me to start them sooner, since I’m writing them up in draft from now…

The lady, Anla’Shok Mayann, will send her reports on each episode from the city of Tuzanor on her home planet of Minbar, where she is currently stationed.

It was the dawn of the third age of mankind.
(Why do I always hear “Toute la Gaule est occupée par les Romains…” right after those words??)

So, it turns out that patience is still a virtue, for some of us, but that the age of Space Mass Transit, if three very rich passengers counts as public transportation, has finally arrived…

Action Items:
1.) Search for two different sources related to 1990s science fiction and Babylon 5.
2.) Share them with us in the comments, here, please.
3.) Share your thoughts on how science fiction has helped, or hindered, inclusive thinking,
4.) Write a book, blog post or tweet that uses an alternate calendar, tells a good story, and makes a difference. I’m working on that through my historical fantasy #WiP, #WhoByFireIWill. If you write a book, once published, please consider donating to your local public library.

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“Faith Manages…”
ShiraDest
Minbari Mondays, In The Beginning, and Introductions

This is a fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I received from an equally fictional time portal, based on the planet of Epsilon 3, around which the Babylon stations will be in orbit.

Yes, I said will be.

A lady born on another planet, and in another time, on the other side of our galaxy has been asked to send these reports in a rather long letter to her past, about our (fictional) future. Don’t ask how, just yet, please. Some of this may not quite make sense at first, but if you stick with us, I believe that all will become clear shortly. Here is her letter:

Greetings: Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa.
It means, “I am your friend in peace.”
My name is Mayann.

Originally from the Minbari religious caste, I am now Anla’Shok, or what you Humans call a Ranger. I shall explain both of these institutions in my next report, adjoining it to this letter each week. Let me begin by framing the history of the Babylon stations, as it was framed by the late Centauri emperor Mollari II, shortly before his death earlier this year. I leave you this letter, do not ask how, from your Earth year 2278, and for me, this is history.

This history begins thirty five of your years ago, in your year 2243, when you first made contact with my people, the Minbari.

A young Centauri boy (and his quiet sister) demanded to be told a story. Within this story are wrapped the stories of many heroic deeds, and several tragedies, of which you will learn as these letters reach you from Minbar. Nearly all revolve around one major question, and around where, within themselves or within their own stories, each person who “loved, fought, and died” in answer to that question, reached for an answer. Recalling that question twenty years later, the ailing emperor obliged the boy, and his sister, with this story, which I now report to you.

He told the children that he met with some Humans, thirty five Earth years earlier, who wished to know more about us, the Minbari. He saw them right away for what they were: arrogant men. Mollari tried to warn them. He even quoted one of your Earth sayings, as he told the children this story: “Pride goeth before a fall.”

His warning to the Humans was in vain. In their “stumbling around,” these arrogant men did indeed, as he had feared, awaken “the sleeping dragon” – they woke us, drove us mad, and you nearly all died because of it.

A terrible war began, which the head of The Rangers, as you call us, attempted to stop. You see, we knew that another, even more terrible war was coming, and that we were not prepared. So, as the Rangers were to be needed before the great War prophesied long ago, the leader of our order, Intilza Lenon, demanded to see our supreme leaders, The Gray Council. That body is constituted a bit differently now, but then, as now, governs all of Minbar and her colonies. At that time the great Delenn was a novice to the council, while President Sheridan, then just a young officer, was serving as a member of your Earth Force.

Our forces met purely by accident. Another arrogant Human captain assumed that he knew enough about our technology. He was wrong. Our own warrior caste assumed that you Humans,
represented by this arrogant man, knew enough about our customs and traditions. They were also wrong.

The sum of these two errors was much needless pain and death. As Emperor Mollari put it, “With the death of their leader Ducat,” we “began a holy war . . . in which the human race ends with the current generation.”

The greatest tragedy of all is that much of this suffering and death could have been avoided. But the emperor, then a young Centauri, had his orders. Mollari was then charged with preventing any cooperation between the Narn, a people you will learn more about later, and you Human beings. You Humans, we did not know, were the key. Kosh the Good, later appointed to be Vorlon ambassador, may their memory last long, then simply an emissary, tried to warn us.

But, in our anger and our grief, we could not listen. So, Intilza Lenon and Satai Delenn, at that point fully initiated into the Gray Council, arranged to have the Narns broker a meeting with you Humans.

Dr. Steven Franklin was then a renegade member of your Earth Force, having refused to hand over his notes on our biology and thus earned himself a seat in your punishment cells, while then Commander Sheridan sadly masterminded the destruction of our flagship The Black Star. Though he did so to save the lives of his crew, we Minbari still mourn her destruction. Due to this action, and to Dr. Franklin’s previous contact with us, they and the blessed G’kar, who was then a Narn weapons liaison to your Earth Force, met to try to form a peace agreement. Dr. Franklin, Commander Sheridan, and G’kar gathered to negotiate an end to our holy war with Intilza Lennon. It was Mollari’s order that destroyed their last chance for peace.

Then the war grew worse and everything changed. For emperor Mollari, the courage displayed by you Humans in the very face of death itself was magnificent. For us, it was mere annoyance. Nonetheless, your Earth president’s desperate plea for her pilots to step in “one last time, to hold the line against the night” moved even many Minbari to question the rightness of taking our war to its logical end.

Each time I think of that historic moment of pain, and of anger, though I was not there, I again shed tears for both of our races.

In that moment, as Humanity saw its own destruction, Satai Delenn, was still seeking some way to end the war. In that desperate moment, she was told by the blessed Kosh that “the truth points to itself.”

She first began, dimly, to understand this when she saw how bravely you Humans fought, even though you knew you could not harm our ships. Satai Delenn then, I believe, came to more fully understand Kosh’s words upon seeing how the triluminary, our most ancient and revered relic, given to us by Valen himself, reacted. That most holy relic showed a key commonality between you Human beings and we Minbari that, had it become generally known, might have destroyed the very fabric of both of our societies.

Thus was born the famous question which would obsess everyone for the next many years as the late Emperor Mollari put it: “why did the Minbari surrender at The Battle of The Line, on the very eve of their victory?”

And that surrender by our forces allowed your Earth president to put her proposal for The Babylon Project in to motion, to choose life, and to build a place where we could all begin to work toward building peace.

But the story, as the dying emperor tells it, ends incorrectly, if I may be so bold as to venture my poor opinion. Emperor Mollari claimed that President Sheridan ran the Interstellar Alliance, with Delenn ever at his side. Yet the emperor was away, isolated on Centauri Prime, far from the seat of the
Alliance. He could not know that in reality, it was Intilza Delenn, and then Intilza Ivanova, who served after her as head of the Anla’Shok, having been too young to join your Earth Force during the Earth-Minbari war, who has always been the true Heart of the Interstellar Alliance, with President Sheridan in fact helping her to manage the Anla’Shok. Together, they both lead my Order, help the Gray Council govern Minbar, and also manage the affairs of the Interstellar Alliance. They have always been equals, and yet, was it not Intilza Delenn who was The Shining Star, and the creator of the Alliance?

One last thing, an answer to a question put to me by one of your fellow Human beings: As to whether or not Humans may yet join the Anla’Shok:

I am afraid that the common good, for you Human Beings, may need to become more fully inclusive for all of you before the Rangers can accept citizens of Earth back into our Order.

From Tuzanor, on Minbar
Earth year 2278,
Anla’Shok Mayann

That was part 1 of Ranger Mayann’s letter: her first report on the history of the Babylon Project, which can be seen from another point of view (as told by Emperor Mollari II) by watching the Babylon 5 film In The Beginning, which I highly recommend. -Shira

**Action Items:**

1.) Did this first review make sense?
2.) Share your thoughts on this Babylon 5 film.

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ShiraDest
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Minbari Mondays, The Gathering, and the 1st Year of the 5th Station

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann. Here is her second report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:
I said that I would explain two of our ancient institutions: the Minbari caste system, and the Anla’Shok, or the order that you Humans call the Rangers, in my next report. You will now need to know something about the Warrior Caste, which you will see mentioned in the incident I describe in this report. So I will begin by telling you what you need to know about them, now that you need this information.
We Minbari have three castes: Warrior, Worker, and Religious. Each of these castes has a different function, in our society, and dresses accordingly.
That is what you need to know, at this time, about the Minbari Caste system. As for the Rangers, all you need know at this moment is that we carry messages in the darkest and most difficult of places, where no others will go. You, on Earth, are in a difficult place, right now, and so I bring these messages to you, in the hope of adding to the light.
And now, for the incident in question, the reason for this, my second report.
During the first year of operation of the fabled space station Babylon 5, The One who was known as Commander Sinclair, was at the head of this, the last of The Babylon stations. He had under his command a Lieutenant Commander named Takashima, a young woman who had worked hard after she learned the value of order and discipline, to come to serve under Commander Sinclair when it went online. That was during your Earth year 2257.
This report centers around an incident related to justice, but not only to the sort of judicial process of rendering justice, about which you will hear in the report. My hope is that you will see what lies at the heart of the incident, and take this meaning to heart.
This, my second report, will describe what may have been the most important incident to occur during the first year of operation of the Babylon project, aboard your Earthforce station Babylon 5. The incident brings together some old faces, and some new names.
Then Ambassador Mollari reported that he was there at the Dawn of your third age, in this first year of operation of your Earthforce station in 2257. This last Babylon station was located in neutral space for travelers, diplomats, and business negotiators. He called it a “dream given form” despite being a dangerous place where all accepted the risk, because it was our galaxy’s last, best hope for peace. That dream of a galaxy without war, given the form of this space station, is the dream of many visionaries. This last Babylon station was the only station to have operated during our time. We will speak of another Babylon station which operates in a different time period later, when you need to know about it.
Leaving aside certain shocking cross species dating problems, there was also a problem involving technology, smuggling, and telepaths. Commander Sinclair was required to meet the new resident telepath sent by what will, for a time, be called your PsyCorps, and he had the first opportunity to show his metal on the station. He acquitted himself well, while Lieutenant Commander Takashima dealt with Ambassador G’kar who was, at that time, not yet very enlightened.
This incident revolves around the arrival of Ambassador Kosh, the final ambassador to arrive as part of Babylon 5’s Advisory Council which is like your current United Nations Security
Council. The commander, in his sympathy for a new arrival to the station, even took the time to explain to the telepath, Lyta Alexander, that this particular station is called Babylon “5” because the previous four Babylon stations each, apparently, met a bad end. When asked by Satai Delenn, acting as the Minbari ambassador to the station, why you Humans insisted on rebuilding each lost station, he answered with the words of your Earth poet Tennyson, saying that: “To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield,” are the point of human endeavor.

At that point no Human, and very few others, had ever seen a Vorlon. Little was known about the Vorlons, even by us, the oldest of the space-faring races. Our Satai Delenn, serving as ambassador on the Babylon 5 Advisory Council, did know more, however, and helped Commander Sinclair both with a nugget of self understanding, as well as with a file, containing information about the Vorlons. Unfortunately, in the sad events that followed this donation of information, our government didn’t act as well as Satai Delenn did in that moment. While she was forced, in the course of these events, to teach G’kar a bit more respect, she disregarded his attempts to persuade the new telepath to donate genetic material to the Narns. Satai Delenn, restricted by her role as ambassador, was unable to reign in many of G’kar’s unhealthy activities.

In the later events, your resident telepath, Lyta Alexander, was misled, and manipulated, partly through the ongoing and shameful actions of G’kar in this matter. Nevertheless, “the Universe knows what it is doing.”

As Ambassador Kosh lay between life and death, Ambassador G’kar acted as prosecution in the trial of Commander Sinclair. He also managed to manipulate the Centauri vote on the jury as we Minbari stood by and watched. To our deep shame.

As our Minbari Federation abstained, on the grounds that Ambassador, rather than Satai Delenn, was there strictly to observe Commander Sinclair, a great wrong was accomplished. That wrong took years to correct.

This incident shows us how very much growing room each of the ambassadors had at that time. And you will see later how much they did indeed grow, each of them. As did Commander Sinclair.

In this incident, Commander Sinclair also learned something crucial that we Minbari had already known: the commander was missing memories because we left a hole in his mind. By way of partial compensation however, Delenn did provide Commander Sinclair with a full record of our Warrior who caused this particular incident. Not quite restitution, but a beginning, since Satai Delenn would never tell her old friend Commander Sinclair anything that was not in his best interest…

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar
Earth year 2278,
Anla’Shok Mayann

That was part 2 of Ranger Mayann’s letter: her second report on the history of the Babylon Project, can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 pilot The Gathering , which I highly recommend.

Ranger Mayann’s first report can be read here.

-Shira

**Action Items:**

1.) Share your thoughts on the Minbari caste system, if you will.
2.) Share your first imaginings about the Rangers, if you like.
3.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and whether we would need the Rangers after that
4.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.
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ShiraDest

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This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her third report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this third report, we move forward another year in the history of that “dream given form … ten years after the Earth-Minbari War.” Commander Sinclair said, of the fabled place, that it held “… humans and aliens wrapped in two million, five hundred thousand tons of spinning metal, all alone in the night.” But this Babylon station did more than hold space for sentient beings to talk: it held hope, against the darkness.

That Earth year 2258, the second year of operation of the station, saw the arrival of two new faces. One was the Lieutenant Commander Ivanova of whom you will hear much more later, as head of my order. The other was the second resident telepath, sent to replace the first telepath in residence on the station, on orders of your PsyCorps. The name of this new telepath was Talia Winters. Both new members of the station crew were forced to learn the ways of the station, and of one another, quite quickly.

It did not help that Ambassador G’kar was still not very enlightened.

But, then, neither was Ambassador Mollari.

Satai Delenn, in her role as the ambassador from Minbar, tried to mediate negotiations in the aftermath of the Narn surprise attack on a small Centauri agricultural colony, and then to help both sides see through their anger. But each of them, far from being ready to see reason, was holding on to a dream of death, rather than a dream of peace.

Both of them would learn that twenty years may not be as long as it seems.

Commander Sinclair, already beginning to grow toward his true self, reminded Mollari that the station existed to build peace, even as both sides, Narn and Centauri, nursed visions of war.

Kosh the Good, assigned to act as the Vorlon ambassador to Babylon 5, gave the commander some guidance which he needed, but could not yet understand, to deal with the warring factions.

Commander Sinclair, Lieutenant Commander Ivanova, and Mr. Garibaldi, while working to unravel a seemingly unrelated problem with raiders, began to get to know the new resident telepath, Talia Winters, as a person, rather than just a telepath. While contemplating that raider
problem, they also each contemplated their own votes in a planet-wide Earth presidential
election which would have tragic consequences not much later.

They each began to build, sometimes reluctantly, new relationships, sometimes upon tenuous
foundations. Those relationships would later rise or fall, with deep consequences for all of us,
reverberating from that day to this one.

During this incident, we see how any sentient being, Centauri and Human in this particular case,
can be tempted to misuse a subordinate, when placed in a position of power, even if that misuse
came with the best of intentions.

Finally, through this incident, we also see how important it can be to both know and to
understand what motivates another sentient being’s actions.

The spark was the invasion of Ragesh III by the Narns, which lit the flame of that smoldering
anger, and burst into the conflagration of hatred, started a century before by the Centauri. While
the Narn habit of selling weapons turned out to be their undoing, in this case, the flame that was
ignited began a much larger fire, which nearly consumed us all. And all because of politics.

Those raiders turned out to be partially in the employ of Ambassador G’kar, having purchased
the weapons they were using to wreak death and destruction near the station. In selling those
weapons, the Narns also gained a base from which to monitor communications between Ragesh
III and the colony’s defenders.

Ambassador Delenn pointed out, rightly, that this cycle of hatred could only result in an endless
set of attacks that would eventually destroy both peoples. Ambassador G’kar, however, sadly
maneuvered the station’s Advisory Council into accepting the politically convenient response of
a Centauri government seemingly tired of war. Both at an individual or personal level, and at the
wider community level, politics, it seems, have always been another common curse shared
among sentient races.

…

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

–

That was part 3 of Ranger Mayann’s letter: her third report on the history of the Babylon Project,
can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 1:
Midnight on the Firing Line, which I highly recommend.

Ranger Mayann’s second report can be read here.

-Shira
Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on cycles of destruction, if you will.

2.) Share your first imaginings about how to end such cycles, if you like.

3.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and something like Babylon 5 could help.

4.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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Minbari Mondays, Soul Hunter, and a new doctor on the station

March 8, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her fourth report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa,Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this fourth report, we move forward just a bit in the same Earth year 2258, the second year of operation of the station, in an incident that saw the arrival of two more new faces. One would leave, for good. The other would be a tremendous force for good, as he already had been, though he was punished for it. Both new faces remain part of our collective memory, twenty years later.

Shag toth: when they come, great death arrives with them.

Satai Delenn knew this, but in her capacity as ambassador, all she could do was try to explain.

This report concerns an incident that took place immediately after the Doctor, Steven Franklin, came aboard the famed last of the Babylon stations. As then Lieutenant Commander Ivanova showed the doctor the station, one of these thieves of that which is most precious, may they leave us forever, was being saved by Commander Sinclair.

While Mr. Garibaldi was making his characteristic jokes, Satai Delenn attempted to remedy the great danger in which this creature placed every soul, especially certain classes of Minbari souls. Once again, her situation as ambassador limited her ability to protect all from the danger, even herself.

The doctor, also new to these creatures of nightmare, lost his first race with death as this thief gloated over the passing of one whose soul he did not feel was worthy of saving, as he put it. But removing those souls he claimed to have saved had diminished us all, until …

These thieves see us as jealous and selfish because we made a wall of bodies to stop them from stealing the soul of our great leader, Ducat, at the start of our war with you.

As Lieutenant Commander Ivanova committed the body of your slain ‘lurker’ as you called such people without a home, to the deep, she explained how she understood the ongoing mistakes your people make. She told the newly arrived Dr. Franklin:

“<I am Russian, doctor. We understand these things.”
When Satai Delenn visited the thief to ask where his collection of souls was hidden, he showed his true nature. Injuring one of your guards to escape, he followed Delenn, capturing her to start the process of stealing her soul just as one of his fellow thieves arrived at the station, hoping, no doubt, to steal the souls already stolen by the first thief.

In the final analysis, Commander Sinclair saved the soul, not to mention the life, of our great leader Delenn, who then freed the captive souls stolen by the first Soul Hunter, but at a cost.

The commander was brought one step closer to the perilous knowledge of what we made him forget, those ten years earlier, at The Battle of The Line.

The good in this incident was that Commander Sinclair learned another important set of facts that would be crucial to his later role in our society, and also that one more evil was seen and deterred, for your society.

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

–

That was part of Ranger Mayann’s on-going letter: her report on this incident in the history of the Babylon Project can be seen from another point of view by watching Babylon 5’s Season 1, Episode 2: Soul Hunter, which I recommend.

My personal view of this episode is that while it is an important introduction of Dr. Franklin, it is an even better introduction to an important part of the character of Lt. Cmdr Ivanova. It is also the source of one of my favorite Ivanova quotes, and I am grateful to Ranger Mayann for citing her in this report.

This has been her fourth report.

Ranger Mayann’s third report can be read here.

-Shira

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on differences of opinion regarding death, and how they can affect the decisions we make, if you will.

2.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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Minbari Mondays, Born to The Purple, and trained not to see?

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann. Here is her fifth report:

—

*Nih sakhl sh’lekk, sleem wa,* Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this fifth report, still in your Earth year 2258, the second year of operation of the station, Ambassador G’kar and Ambassador Mollari, with the mediation of Commander Sinclair, have been dancing around the issue of an important treaty for some time, telling enough untruths to make the head of your poor human telepath, paid to monitor the negotiations, spin with unease. As talks around the Euphrates sector, indeed, possibly named for a key civilization on your world, falter, the two ambassadors mutual fondness of drink, of which we Minbari cannot partake, and romance, with which we Minbari are well acquainted, showed that Narn and Centauri were more alike than they wished to think.

At this same time, Lieutenant Commander Ivanova was learning that Mr. Garibaldi was a better sniffer of electronic truth than she might have first imagined. Her tale of Russian fighter pilots and gremlins did not stop the relentless comic from catching her in a sadly needed, yet still unauthorized misuse of station resources.

While then still new to the station, Vir Koto had his first taste of ambassadorial authority, if for only a few hours. In contrast, another Centauri experienced the consequences of lack of any authority, and what that could lead to for the powerless from their world. Despite having the love of an ambassador.

As Commander Sinclair learned more about the resident telepath, Talia Winters, his two closest subordinates were coming to know each other as opponents in a game of ‘*catch Lt. Gremlin*’ accessing the communication system. At the same time, a powerless woman is forced to access the system on behalf of her power hungry master. A saddening balance of abuse for good, and abuse for ill. Neither abuse of the system ought to have been made necessary. Only the solidarity among the less powerful prevented this incident from turning into an even greater tragedy for both parties.

This incident is an important introduction to the importance of appearances and of saving of face for the overly prideful Centauri, and it further shows that human telepaths had free will to decide to help other human beings, despite the power of your Psycorps, which ran their lives without mercy, for a time. It also brings into sharp focus the lengths to which those who abuse the vulnerable will go to gain power, including lies, theft, and even murder, if permitted.

Knowing the station and those who frequented it were what allowed then Commander Sinclair to apply some of that wisdom which he would later use in full measure, upon becoming…

Sadly, even the oppressed run out of the solidarity that could save them, and the ruthless find strong arms with out conscience to do their ill bidding.

Fortunately, there is always a way around such problems, if we are willing to find creative solutions and act with courage to protect the vulnerable. And to forgive the broken of heart, when they are people of honor.

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar
Earth year 2278,
Anla’Shok Mayann

Addendum to her report, by Shira: My personal view of this episode is that while it is important for characterizing all of the main players, it really shows the power relations within the Centauri Republic-turned-empire. This will be very important later on. I am grateful to Ranger Mayann for including these issues in her report.

I also really enjoyed seeing how poor G’kar has to put up with his new attaché’s disgust with the dancing ‘establishment’ in sharp contrast to his own liking for it, and especially the glee with which Londo watches all of this. It is fun to watch G’kar’s own ambition being used against him, in the end, to ‘save the honor of the Centauri Republic’ and his almost (but at this point, not quite, as far as he knows, anyway) arch-enemy Londo’s career! At this point in the series, he seems to be setting up to become the villain, and it looking back on it, will be … ok, no spoiling!

This is also a great episode from a human rights point of view, highlighting as it did, back in the 90s, the problem of sex-trafficking and showing how a woman can be coerced even when it is not obvious that that is the case, at first glance, anyway.

I also love the cat and mouse game between Garibaldi and Ivanova, with her never outright lying, but knowing that she is not being entirely truthful, either, and too proud to ask for permission to use the Gold Channels, even though Commander Sinclair would surely have authorized her use of that limited resource to talk with her dying father. Garibaldi’s tact and empathy in dealing with her, once he had proof, was the highest example of kindness and even of humility, as he let her save face, and keep her honor clean. The final bit of seeing her at last drop her pride to accept ‘that drink, some other time’ is almost like the moment in Harry Potter when Hermione lies to Professor McGonagal to save Harry and Ron from punishment: a turning point where the habitual behavior of a character changes, revealing that a key lesson has just been learned and acted upon with a new ‘self’ being born in that moment. Or perhaps I go too far?

That was part 5 of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 3: Born to the Purple, which I highly recommend.

Ranger Mayann’s fourth report, from last week, can be read here.

-Shira

**Action Items:**

1.) Share your thoughts on inheritance and power, if you will.
2.) Share your first imaginations about how to change such cycles, if you like.
3.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how something like Babylon 5 could help that process.
4.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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March, 2021 CE = March 12021 HE

_Stayed on Freedom’s Call_
(free: https://archive.org/details/StayedOnF...)
Minbari Mondays, Infection, and Purity?

March 22, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her sixth report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this sixth report, still in your Earth year 2258, the second year of operation of the station, the only ambassador to be seen in this incident is one from the distant past of a dead world: an ambassador who is built to bring destruction.

As Mr. Garibaldi informed the human reporter, working for your news agency called InterStellar Network News, or ISN, how to navigate the station, Dr. Franklin was being offered an adventure by an old professor of his, while the esteemed professor’s subordinate was murdering a customs officer in one of the station’s docking bays.

The doctor showed what you humans call grouchy behavior both to Garibaldi and to his old professor. Perhaps you humans could benefit from our Minbari meditation training?

The doctor, for some reason, missed signs that even one of my people would have noticed. It was clear from his arrival that the doctor’s old professor was lying. Was it not also clear, that the professor was using the doctor's own vice, his ego, to manipulate him? Why do you Humans allow this?

I must admit that I am also mystified about the Martian war machine wanting to discuss the common cold: were not your Martian colonists also resistant to the human rhinoviruses?

Dr. Franklin, to his credit, questioned the motives of an Earth-based corporation, IPX, the one that financed the dubious adventure to which he was being invited, but yet again, the doctor allowed his suspicions to be talked away by his blustery old teacher.

Coming back to another Earth-based corporation, this one a network for news reporting, ISN, we see Mr. Garibaldi attempting to save face for the commander, by talking around the commander’s delay in meeting with the reporter. He informed the reporter how, after walking many miles through a desert, he became close friends with Commander Sinclair, but met only with a shameful attempt on her part to make Garibaldi lose face. Such stories are what we Minbari treasure above all, to learn more about the history of Sinclair…
Commander Sinclair and Garibaldi were then forced to confront the professor regarding an artifact found on the dead planet from which it had been taken. Fortunately, they were less willing to be deceived than the doctor.

As with Lt. Commander Ivanova, a word of warning from Commander Sinclair goes far. But, his warning applied implicitly to the professor, without Sinclair having to say the words. Again, showing the wisdom which would later make up much wisdom from our world, the wisdom from which we would learn. Except, perhaps, for his early habit of performing duties which could have been delegated to his security personnel.

But then, the commander had to do that which only one of his wisdom could do: to convince a living machine that purity does not exist except in mathematics. You Humans would take a very long time to be able to learn that lesson from Satai Delenn.

In the end, the commander was successful, and the doctor had to confront his old professor, who tried, yet again, to stain the honor of your doctor, this time unwilling to be manipulated by his old teacher.

And Garibaldi risked their friendship to be honest with Commander Sinclair. True to his growing wisdom, the commander overcame his pride to thank his old friend Garibaldi.

Doctor Franklin, in reflecting on the problem of killing in the name of purity, was reminded of the words of Santayana by Lt. Commander Ivanova. Both the mistakes of the past and the survival in the future, of a species are connected to pride, ego, and purity not of flesh, but of motives.

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

--

Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, by Shira: This episode introduces us to some big movers and shakers in the B5 Universe, like ISN, and IPX. I have always loved the play on CNN and on the large multi-national corporations that throw so much financial muscle around and force nation-states to bid for factories by giving out tax breaks. That said, this was one of my least favorite episodes, with the exception of 1.) the great Ivanova quote:

“Don’t. You’re too young to experience that much pain.”

and 2.) The Big Question, facing humanity about space.

While I still find some moments in this episode to be cring-worthy, mainly that climactic scene with the over-acting of Commander Sinclair, I find that I like this episode much better now that I have gone back to look at it from Ranger Mayann’s perspective. I also liked seeing the reference to H.G. Wells a bit better, this viewing around, though it suddenly strikes me that
that year, Mars is a human colony, so the reference to “the common cold” should no longer work, since a Martian war machine would now most likely be a battered old transport loaded with human colonists from Mars trying to escape oppression, if human history is any guide.

The thing that has always troubled me, most likely, about this episode is that it touches a nerve for me. As a kid, I was constantly being accosted by other kids, Black and White, asking me if I was “mixed” or “half and half” and even in college, about my folks not “keeping my bloodline pure.” Ridiculous, of course, in the mouth of any of us here in the US, considering that every Black American has had ancestors from both Africa, probably from Europe, and often also from this very continent, especially for those of us whose ancestors arrived earliest. Skin color is not a good indicator of ancestry, as one Black man found out the hard way: he deemed himself ‘pure’ until a DNA test showed that his either grandfather or great grandfather had been white!

Heck, even the Puerto Rican girls in my Woodbridge, VA Middle School didn’t see any common ground with me: they decided that it was imperative to follow me as I walked down the street, yell stupidities at me, and start a fight because I was ignoring them. They both seemed to get a shock when I actually hit one of them back. One sister stared at me in bewilderment as the other pulled out her makeup mirror to check her face! Meanwhile, I continued on my way to pick up my little step-brother from his baby-sitter. By the time we got home, there was a large crowd of unhappy people, mostly Puerto Ricans, and the remaining one or two white, waiting on my front lawn. None of us were what anyone would have called “pure” blooded, but this didn’t seem to matter to anyone, that day.

“No one is pure. None of us”

Very true, but I doubt that those who need to hear that truth watch Babylon 5.

That was part 6 of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 4: Infection, which I certainly recommend.

Ranger Mayann’s fifth report, from last week, can be read here.

-Shira

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on race and purity, if you will.

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how something like Babylon 5 could help that process.

4.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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Minbari Mondays, Parliament of Dreams, and empathy for religions?

March 29, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her seventh report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

This seventh report, is still in your Earth year 2258, the second year of operation of this station. This report looks at an incident during the time of G’kar as ambassador, and several celebrations of near death.

This first celebration of near death teaches much about how much potential Ambassador G’kar already had for making new starts, as he did with his still new attaché Na’toth. As the danger unfolds around this one, the other ambassadors present two other celebrations of death couched in new life. The Centauri celebrate the near death of their own species, and the actual deaths of all the members of the other sentient species with whom they once shared their planet, Centauri Prime. Though they insist that it was for their own survival, this genocide saddens us, even today. All life is sacred. Perhaps now, they may begin to learn this.

Miss Sakai helped Commander Sinclair begin to see more of his own new life, as she explained how our Rebirth ceremony brings new life couched in the taste of your own death, and that it can also double as a marriage ceremony.

The primary incident in this report, that of a Narn sent to assassinate Ambassador G’kar, ends in a celebration of his life, with the help of his newly proven attaché, Na’toth. The time taken to unravel his mystery also ends with the death, happily, of an idea. Your Earth government had an idea to show each “dominant belief system.” Sinclair, in his wisdom, killed that idea, by showing a way to give birth to a more lively idea: the idea that you Humans have a great long line of varying beliefs and traditions, represented by your many different peoples.

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

–
Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, by Shira: This episode is one of my favorite episodes, and I cry tears of wonder and hope every time I see that very last scene. This scene turns “the Long grey line” into a long named line of all our human ancestors, and all human belief systems. Each of us has such a line of those who came before us saying “remember.”

This episode introduces us to Lenier, Natoth, and Catharine Sakai. I love how the Narn assassin’s guild guy wears reading glasses, by the way! I also love that hint at foreshadowing by Sinclair of the relationship between Londo and G’kar!!

and

The mystery deepens, as we see Delenn insist that Lenier not use her title “Satai,” and the the first time, we see the Minbari idea that “Understanding is not required, only obedience…”

That was part 7 of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 5: Parliament of Dreams, which I certainly recommend.

See Ranger Mayann’s sixth report, from last week.

-Shira

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on religion and cultural dominance, if you will.

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how this episode of Babylon 5 could help that process.

4.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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ShiraDest
Minbari Mondays, Mind War, and Gatekeepers with Empathy?

April 5, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her eighth report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this very minimal eighth report, still in your Earth year 2258, the second year of operation of the station, there were two unrelated incidents which both came near to affecting the life of then Commander Sinclair. One, so we hear, is rumored to have almost cost him his life, as well as those of the quarter million other inhabitants of that station. The other appears to have involved Sinclair’s human mate, Miss Sakai, in an apparently simultaneous life threatening event. As the Anla’Shok lacks reports on either of the incidents in question, I can only confirm that no high ranking Minbari, and no Anla’Shok, were aboard the station during the time of these events.

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar,

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

—

Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, by Shira: This episode is all about control. It introduces Bester, appropriately enough, and also, the soon to be infamous Jack. We also learn more about the PsyCorps, but it’s still one of my least favorite episodes, and I cringe every time I hear a certain word mispronounced during what ought to be a very tender scene. On the other hand, we do get another great Ivanova quote:

“Who watches the Watchmen?”

and an even better one:

“Good old PsyCorps! All the moral fiber of Jack the Ripper.”

We also get introduced to Garibaldi’s not so pleasant relationship with Al Bester:

“Anatomically impossible, Mr. Garibaldi, but…”
The really neat thing about this episode, from the Narn point of view, is how G’kar manages to take his role of gatekeeper for Sigma 957 and turn it on its head. He is a watcher of the planet, effectively, but actually uses his power to keep Miss Sakai safe. The PsyCorps, on the other hand, are the watchers and keepers of human telepaths, but not for the rest of us normal human beings, or mundanes, as the Teeps like to call us. Garibaldi seems to feel the same way Ivanova feels about telepaths, saying “they look at you like you were some kind of bug.” So this episode is all about control, watchers, and who gets to be the GateKeeper of what, and why, but not always in a bad way. And I do appreciate how the “Becoming” image of the guest star looks like something from an Octavia Butler novel. Too bad Octavia Butler didn’t get any credits in the episode though.

And there is one other part of this episode that I really do like, which, along with Sakai doing a great mocking imitation of G’kar’s warning that “Sigma 957 is not a healthy place,” just before she realizes that she’s about to cook, shows G’kar starting to reach up toward his potential. Fortunately for Miss Sakai, and by extension, Commander Sinclair, some gatekeepers don’t like others to die embarrassed. Upon thanking him for her rescue, Sakai asks G’Kar what was that huge thing that knocked her into the planetary orbit and nearly cooked her. I love his explanation and I can always imagine the two ants, one looking up and asking the other

“What was that?”

And the other replying:

“You don’t need to know!”

That was part 8 of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 6: Mind War, which I definitely recommend.

See Ranger Mayann’s seventh report, from last week.

-Shira

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on gatekeepers and who gets input into setting agendas and watching over those agendas and the people placed in the way, if you will.

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how this episode of Babylon 5 could help that process.

4.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Minbari Mondays, The War Prayer, and Empathy for the Other

April 12, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her 9th report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this report, in your Earth year 2258, it is the second year of operation of the station. This station which has so much of the love of my people, even when we were not loved there.

This report revolves around two intertwined incidents, both of which relate to the other, and to the need for empathy among all sentient species. You humans, just as we Minbari, continue to learn this lesson.

While one of our revered poets was on the station to visit with her old friend, Delenn, since before she was either Satai or ambassador, a terrible series of crimes was committed. The crimes affected not only the person of our Poet, but also the sense of safety, or lack thereof, for all of the vulnerable aboard the station. Even vulnerable humans, despite the attacks being carried out by human beings.

Attacks of hatred always carry a double message: one for those who were directly targeted, and one for those who were not directly targeted, but as members of the “in” group are also being reminded to “stay in line,” as you Humans put it.

Our Ambassador Delenn, and her friend, our well-known Minbari poet, were brought into closer contact with Ambassador Mollari. This series of incidents helped set Mollari, I humbly assert, on his path to possible redemption, as our Poet showed him a needed insight.

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, by Shira: This episode is one of my favorite episodes!

I think of this as the tight shoes episode!
We get to see love and hate up close and personal, and a beautiful opening, with two friends discussing the maturing of a poem begun long ago. Garibaldi makes a still valid and saddening point about the hateful attacker, as he grunts that there are

“too many who agree with them, and too many more just don’t give a damn.”

I love the conversation between Mollari and the Minbari poet, where he snaps that

“I would expect such logic from a poet,”

and she comes back with a beautiful reminder that

“all sentient beings are best defined by their capacity and need for love.”

This episode has an excellent juxtaposition of love and hatred, with the consequences of both linked through an inter-generational exploration of an existence without love. That would be the existence of ambassador Londo Mollari.

This episode also shows the importance of the role of love and visits to the sick by their loved ones in healthcare.

That would be the empathy part of healthcare.

That was part of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 7: The War Prayer, which I most highly recommend.

See Ranger Mayann’s eighth report, from last week.

-Shira

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on hate crimes, bullying, and cultural dominance, if you will.

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how this episode of Babylon 5 could help that process.

3.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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April 26, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her 10th report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this report, in your Earth year 2258, it is the second year of operation of the station. This incident revolved around the guilt of surviving when others did not, and why it is important to remember.

It is important to remember, even when one has acted shamefully, as our Gray Council did that day in torturing Sinclair.

Delenn gladly gave the knowledge of our biology, while confirming the sacrifice made by your Doctor Franklin, for us when we were your enemies. She was also the first to know that the Commander was missing, and the one, after Sinclair saw her in his memories, to welcome him back home.

And to protect his lie of not remembering…

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

—

Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, by Shira: This episode has one of the most telling Ivanova quotes:

“Mr. Garibaldi, there are days I’m very glad I don’t have to think the way you do.”
And through Sinclair’s eyes, we see the absolute despair of volunteering to fight an unwinnable battle, and fighting anyway, in the hope that your death can buy just enough time to save a few civilian lives.

That was part ten of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5: Season 1, Episode 8, which I mildly recommend. It’s an important episode, and those who like epic space battles will be happy with some scenes in this episode, but for me, as a survivor of long-lasting childhood trauma, it was hard, and is always hard, to watch this episode.

I can feel the Commander’s grief at having lived when all of his friends died on The Line, and he alone of his squad, not to mention the vast majority of pilots who volunteered to “hold The Line” died. I know that pain of wondering why I got out of it safely, when so many around me did not. Events from the past can impact our current lives, and must be understood in context.

Also, do not borrow from knee-cappers!

Sorry, I did not shed any tears at the death of this idiot Ensign Red Shirt (does it seem like the gray guys from security always seem to get killed off in each episode, kind of like back in…).

On the other hand, this does remind me that we do need to do something about those predatory Pay Day lenders…

See Ranger Mayann’s 9th report, from last week on hate crimes.

To see all of her reports: https://shiradest.wordpress.com/b5-reviews/

(and the on-going PDF version: B5EpsThr7…)

-Shira

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on guilt, and surviving trauma, if you will.

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how this episode of Babylon 5 could help that process.

3.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa.
and my Babylon 5 review posts, if you like Science Fiction, 
and
a proposed Vision on Wondering Wednesdays: for a kinder world…

Shira Destinie A. Jones, MPhil

our year 2020 CE = 12020 HE

(Day 1 … Day 5)

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Please leave a review, if you can, on the GoodReads page.
Minbari Mondays, Deathwalker, and Context for Understanding

May 3, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her 11th report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this report, in your Earth year 2258, it is the second year of operation of the station. This incident, though rumored within the Religious Caste to have had something to do with our Warrior Caste sheltering some sort of mad genius, has no report on record with the Anla’Shok…

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

—

Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, or lack thereof for this week, by Shira (go figure that the WindSwords would have buried this one, somehow, to prevent the shame of admitting what the Minbari, like some Human Beings I know, remember, but won’t talk about…): This episode has one of the most fascinating, and oft-cited, Kosh quotes in the entire series:

“Understanding is a 3-edged sword.”

We’ll come back to that one in a year or two…

This episode is all about context, which is probably 2/3 of that understanding which makes up the three edges of our comprehension sword.

And poor Talia winters.

The theme of Justice or immortality seems not to have anything to do with this telepath being psychologically tortured, but no one seems to understand what’s going on. Not Talia, hired for ‘cautious’ negotiations, nor those on the station who were trying to deal with the dilemma of the immortality serum.

Understanding comes only after the fact in both cases.
Interesting how “all secrets long kept” seem to take on a life of their own, and new victims.

(Reminds me of an episode of my favorite Turkish show Sihirli Annem, where the littlest Fairy is suffering because she must keep her magic secret from her best friend, who is a human girl her same age…)

The survivors of atrocities have a right to justice, to truth, and to healing, but how to protect those rights from the greed of more powerful interests?

And Kosh and the Vorlons? What do they gain from all of this?

That was part eleven of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 9: Death Walker, which I thoughtfully recommend.

See Ranger Mayann’s 10th report (episode 8), from last week on Survivor’s Guilt.

To see all of her reports as an on-going PDF version: B5EpsThr7…)

-Shira

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on context, understanding, and justice vs. revenge for war crimes, and on individual versus collective benefit , if you will.

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how this episode of Babylon 5 could help that process.

3.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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Shira Destinie A. Jones, MPhil

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NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Minbari Mondays, Believers, and Health care vs. saving life?

May 10, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her 12th report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this report, in your Earth year 2258, it is the second year of operation of the station. This incident shows that we Minbari also had much to learn…

A pair of parents working to honor their beliefs, asking each of the ambassadors to intervene to protect their child from what their sacred texts forbid. A doctor working to save a child’s life over the objections and beliefs of those parents.

One of our informers mentioned a rumor that the following had been said by Ambassador Kosh:

“The avalanche has already started. It is too late for the pebbles to vote.”

Satai Delenn pointed out that for us, matters of the soul are private, and thus relayed the sad decision by our Gray Council that she was forbidden to intervene, since no one can prove which party’s belief is correct. True, logically, yet still lacking in wisdom, as did that old Council. Our new Gray Council is wiser.

And Garibaldi:

“Sure is for people with nothing on the line.”

Surprising that Mr. Garibaldi, in this case, might have shown more wisdom than one of our Gray Council.

And once again, Sinclair shows the wisdom of who he will become, as he points out that our beliefs give our lives meaning.

Ivanova here shows us her skill in battle, and her wisdom to know when to do battle, even when it requires temporarily ignoring previous orders, in order to obey the higher order.

Both displayed a start of that wisdom which made a crucial difference in the great war, still to come in your time.
And your doctor learned a difficult lesson: the beliefs of a patient can never be treated as mere delusion but seen as valid.

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

—

Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, or lack thereof for this week, by Shira: This episode has some good character development, and a theme still, sadly, very much relevant to current events.

Saving life? Where does the right of individual belief end and the duty to save life take over?

This is basically the Jehovah’s Witness episode for one life, intertwined with a subplot of Ivanova sent to save many lives, after offering to knit a sweater or something.

Yet, Sinclair is right:

“What we hold sacred gives our lives meaning.”

Sinclair is also right in that sometimes doing the right thing doesn’t change anything, but it has to be done anyway, and that what makes us human is that we care.

G’kar is brutally blunt from a strategic point of view, where Londo wears a more pleasant face as he presents the economic point of view. Both are eclipsed by the near hypocrisy of the Minbari reply: near, because they sincerely believe that no religion can be proven to be right or wrong, yet still hypocritical because a refusal to take a stand is a refusal to act, and remains wrong.

I love the juxtaposition of the individual boy, dead, and the little boy, alive, from the starliner (Asimov!!) rescued by Ivanova from certain death, at the very close-shave risk of her own life.

And I keep asking myself, is this the episode where G’Kar becomes the Cassandra of Babylon 5? (“explain, Lucy!” -he openly explains the fact that strategic value sets a limit on what help the vulnerable will or will not receive, foreshadowing the help that his own world, not deemed to be of sufficient strategic value, will not receive, shortly…).

That was part twelve of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 10: Believers, which I recommend.

See Ranger Mayann’s 11th report (episode 9), from last week on death, in context.
Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on the rights of a parent to ruin or even effectively end the life of a child, versus society’s duty to protect children, if you will.

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how this episode of Babylon 5 could help that process.

3.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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Shira Destinie A. Jones, MPhil

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Minbari Mondays, Survivors, and Coping

May 17, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her 13th report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this report, in your Earth year 2258, it is the second year of operation of the station. This incident revolves around a drink that we Minbari cannot stomach, yet many humans seem to find impossible not to drink, and often to abuse: alcohol. While there was no Minbari nor any Anla’Shok involvement in this incident, Susan Ivanova was a Lt. Commander at that time, and we learn more about her through her words to the chief personage of this incident, Mr. Garibaldi.

We also learn more about the apparent rivalry between Ambassadors Mollari and G’Kar: the rivalry was more of a partnership, as the years would show, than it then seemed, and this incident shows us the start of that deadly dance.

Our records are scarce, here on Minbar, with regard to this incident, but what we do know is that Mr. Garibaldi was very nearly made to take the blame for what was intended to be a major terror event on the station. This would have affected both the station’s ability to function, and of course, also that of Mr. Garibaldi. Had that happened, the Great War to come might have turned out very differently, with disastrous consequences for the entire galaxy.

From the city of  Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann
Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, by Shira: This episode has one of the funniest Ivanova quotes, because it can be taken as being rather condescending, yet it is simply a matter of fact response to Garibaldi’s comment that he is no longer surprised by anything that EarthGov does (implying, however foolish it may be):

“That’s a very Russian attitude. I commend you.”

Apart from that scene at the beginning of the episode, this one is one of the most difficult for me to watch. It’s about trauma, and surviving that trauma, and how we cope. Coping by using alcohol to escape is more obviously problematic, but coping by shutting down nearly all emotions but anger, and using that anger to fuel a burning drive toward “success” is also not healthy, even if it looks that way for a while. “I know. I was there.”

That was part of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 11: Survivors, which I recommend.

See Ranger Mayann’s 12th report (episode 10), from last week on beliefs vs. lives.

To see all of her reports as an on-going PDF version: B5EpsThr10.

-Shira

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on the difficulty of seeing that a person has changed or learned to cope differently, if you will.

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how this episode of Babylon 5 could help that process.

3.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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May 24, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her 14th report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this report, in your Earth year 2258, it is the second year of operation of the station. This incident revolves around a twin set of events that seem, at first glance, as you Humans say, unrelated. Yet, they are more alike than it would first appear.

We continue to watch the apparent rivalry between Ambassadors Mollari and G’Kar: turned, by Sinclair in his growing toward greatness, into an unwitting partnership, once again. He did it when a Centauri woman’s life, and Mollari’s honor, was at stake, and he has managed here, when Centauri pride and G’Kar’s honor are at stake.

And the honor of Commander Sinclair shines as brightly as his wisdom in this incident. Here we learn of the use of tactics, which will lay so much groundwork in Minbari culture as he helps us to win the last great war, and teaches us to cease our quarrels, in preparation for the next great war, which for you Humans in your Earth year 12021, is still to come.

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

—

Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, by Shira: Ranger Mayann is wrong, by the way. The A and B plots of this episode are in fact related -they share the same Inciting Incident, at the start of the episode. When the Narn pilot panics and disobeys Ivanova’s order, the ensuing explosion sets off both the “last straw” strike by the Dockers Guild as well as the plant problem for G’kar. In the end, a sleep-deprived Cmdr Sinclair essentially uses the same technique to solve both problems. He shows that the interpretation of a word is extremely important.

Excellent way to fork two great plots from one starting event.

This episode is definitely my favorite episode of this season, and one of the biggest reasons that I love Babylon 5 so much. Thank you, Workers’ Rights! Since I hate summarizing already
much-summarized episodes, I will quote the poster of the S1E12 video clip on how the title of this episode is a fantastic sign of things to come, in terms of the play on initial expectations:

“Instead of using security personnel to end the strike as the Senate intended, Sinclair finds a loophole in the orders that allows him to divert funds from the military budget (which had received extra funding when the dock workers did not) to hire new workers and upgrade the dock equipment, as well as to grant amnesty to the strikers. “

Oh, yes, and hey, look: Garibaldi has lots of hair!!

That was part of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 12, which I very highly recommend.

See Ranger Mayann’s report from last week on coping after surviving.

To see all of her reports as an on-going PDF version: B5EpsThr10.

-Shira

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on the many possible ways that a phrase can often be interpreted, and why it is not safe to accept wishes from Djinn, nor to piss off your House Elf, if you will.

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how this episode of Babylon 5 could help that process.

3.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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Minbari Mondays, Signs and Portents, Questions and Context

May 31, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her 15th report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this report, in your Earth year 2258, on the dates from Wed 3rd – Fri 5th August, 2258, to be precise, it is the second year of operation of the station. From this incident will be born the workings in preparation for the next great war, which for you Humans in your dominant culture’s Earth year 2021, is still to come. You Humans have a word for this: Machiavelian. It is a word that well describes the forbidden question, asked by one of your people who worked against his own interests and those of us all, even if he did not understand this until it was too late.

And now, Londo Mollari will begin to go down the path of accepting the first of many favors without asking the questions which could have saved us all from such pain, his own people most of all. For all of their gifts of seeing into the future, the Centauri people, led by their pride and their thirst for renewed glory, continued to misread their visions and to ignore the warnings of the Seers, as Lord Kiro did, and as Londo Mollari did for too long.

Yet, the pain suffered by the Narn under the yoke of Londo’s people, which Mollari would see restored, also played a part in the events to come, and was also fully awakened by the events in this report. Our own people, in insisting that Commander Sinclair be placed in charge of the station, continued to guard a great secret that also contributed to the pain to come. Perhaps, had our Grey Council then been more wise, much of what was later to come might have been avoided. Yet even Satai Delenn was still groping dimly in the darkness at that point, even as she prepared for the great change she would make, to help all of us come together. At the cost of much pain for herself.

And Sinclair, showing more of the strategic and tactical skill that he later and earlier (this will become clear next year…) teaches to our people, grows even further in wisdom as he guides Garibaldi, his best resource for ferreting out hidden information, as you Humans would say, and Lt. Commander Ivanova, his best resource for ferreting out hidden enemy fighter craft, and blowing them from the sky. Wisdom, in choosing and placing people in the positions where they will shine most brightly, and wisdom, in knowing when not to pursue, and when to pursue.
From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, by Shira: This is where it all begins!! We finally meet the famous Mr. Morden, one of the most complex and fascinating villains I have ever seen, asking the one question that all Minbari are taught to avoid:

“What do you want?”

Ranger Mayann, as a Minbari, refuses even to pronounce those words, yet claims that one should always follow the “calling of your heart.” What is that, if not what you want? So why refuse to ask that question? Why fall back on duty, on obedience, and on faith, rather than using reason to illuminate the path?

But they are right in that what you want cannot be, must not ever be, the whole story. The darkness in each of us wants only what it wants, rather than the ‘higher good,’ as some people call it. And that is something that each person must take into account. I want to eat that chocolate lava cake, but if I do, there will be a price down the line, both in terms of lasting “a lifetime on the hips” and also of a temporary setback to my immune system. As someone whose family has a very very strong history of diabetes, I also know that the price I could eventually pay for too much lava cake includes an embarrassingly preventable death. So, I abstain, except for one day per week, giving me the chance to celebrate my good fortune of being able to afford and enjoy the taste and smell of chocolate, while using self discipline, as the Minbari teach, to keep my duty to society and my honor, for I do not know for certain that this chocolate has not been picked by enslaved children far from where I live, clean.

😊 Oh, and not to forget, of course, excellent fighter pilot and leadership skills by Lt. Susan Commander Ivanova!! Later on, those skills will have grown to outstanding levels, and enable her to pull off near military miracles, at great personal cost.

And I love the way so many breadcrumbs are laid down now, starting a trail that we almost can’t even see, yet. For Sinclair, for Londo, for G’Kar, for Delenn, and even for Ivanova, it all starts here. Each of their paths now lies before them, and each has stepped onto that path definitively as of the end of this episode, even if we the readers, er, sorry, viewers, cannot see those paths and much less to where the paths lead: yet!

We also see the crucial importance of context, in this episode. Yes, the station will indeed be destroyed at some time in the future, but only the context can tell us if it will be a good thing, or a bad thing. A key Adulting skill.

And, G’Kar, be careful what you wish for…
And, just when you thought it was all getting perhaps a wee bit too heavy, here comes one of the
funniest moments in the first season!

That was part of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen
from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 13, which I most
highly recommend seeing, at least twice!

See Ranger Mayann’s report from last week on means and interpretations…

To see all of her reports as an on-going PDF version: B5EpsThr10.

-Shira

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on the many possible forms of discomfort that a question can provoke,
but why that question should be asked anyway, if you will, and then

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive
society for all of us, and how this episode of Babylon 5 could help that process.

3.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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Minbari Mondays, TKO, and Health Defense: physical and spiritual

June 7, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her 16th report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this report, in your Earth year 2258, it is just past the middle of the second year of operation of the station. The Anla’Shok has no official records related to the private life of Lt. Commander Ivanova at this point in the station’s history, although the title fight related to the Sho Rin Gior and Walker Smith of Earth is, of course, a matter of interstellar record. While the two incidents which I have been asked about are undoubtedly important as individual experiences for both Humans, they are considered private, and thus not a matter for discussion, nor reporting. Nevertheless, we Minbari consider rituals of this nature to be sacred. Leave-taking rituals, such as sitting Shiva, and terror-facing rituals, like that of The Sands of Blood, as they call the arena of the Mutai. Our Religious and Warrior castes both have many rituals, some like these two. All rituals serve a purpose.

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

—

Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, by Shira: What the Rangers did not report on was one of the very few and very best examples of religion being dealt with extremely well in science fiction television, and I always cry my eyes out at the end as Ivanova says Kaddish (the Mourner’s Prayer), after so much resisting. As Walker Smith needed Gior to show him where his heart was, so Susan needed her Uncle Yossi, R. Koslov, to show her where her heart was.

Before that, though, she shares an anecdote about her father, for whom she has finally being persuaded to sit Shiva, which provides a fascinating glimpse into what she was like as a growing and inquisitive young teenager. With, I must add, some rather exquisite language!

“…out of diapers.
… and I’d been out of diapers for many years, but the quality of his writing had yet to rise above the contents of those garments!”

Beautiful retort!

This is a fundamental episode for the Lt. Commander, as we see more of why she is so private, how she tends to deal with things. We’ll see her strength really start to shine in the next year or so, sadly, being polished like a diamond after the pressure of years in a coal pit. And we see a bit about Garibaldi, and more about the often uncomfortable relationships between Earth and the other worlds in the galaxy. This episode in particular feels like Earth standing in as a proxy for critique of the US regarding our relations with developing countries, especially.

This episode has always been a very uncomfortable one for me, but still a very fulfilling one, oddly enough.

That was part of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 14, which I highly recommend seeing, with two boxes of tissues at the ready!

See Ranger Mayann’s report from last week on questions and context…

To see all of her reports as an on-going PDF version: B5EpsThr10.

-Shira Destinie

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on the many possible forms of physical vs. emotional (or spiritual) self-defense, and the difference, and then:

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how this episode of Babylon 5 could help that process.

3.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

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Minbari Mondays, Grail, and Health as a Quest

June 14, 12021

This is the continuation of our fictional letter (reviewing each film and episode of Babylon 5) that I receive each week from Ranger Mayann.

Here is her 17th report:

—

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa, Greetings from Tuzanor:

In this report, in your Earth year 2258, it is just past the middle of the second year of operation of the station. The Anla’Shok have used part of the official Minbari ambassadorial archives, some of which were salvaged from the fires during the Civil War, for this report.

An Honored Seeker from your world came to the station in search of a cup known to you Humans as the Grail. So much conflicting mythology seems to swirl around this object that it is very difficult for a Minbari to grasp the significance of the object itself, but the search that it represents was well understood by Satai Delenn, who welcomed your Seeker in her role as ambassador from our planet, to Babylon 5. I am pleased to report that this Seeker, derided though he was by you, his fellow Humans, found a worthy successor, as he was on the point of death, allowing him to Go to The Sea in tranquility.

From the city of Tuzanor, on Minbar

Earth year 2278,

Anla’Shok Mayann

—

Addendum to Ranger Mayann’s report, by Shira: Excellent ending: Aldus dies, but his search, and his order, continues. Thus, his essence lives on.

And Sinclair’s character arc, from Garibaldi’s ‘blaze of glory’ talk to Delenn’s “then, you do not know yourself…seeking” talk, we now start to see a bit of what the Commander might be seeking. Stay tuned for next season…

Oh, yeah, and:

this is a great episode for Lt. Commander Ivanova quotes, and for showing her perspective on perspective!
“...somebody’s got to have some damn perspective around here.

Boom.

Sooner or Later… Boom!“

– Ivanova to Garibaldi and Sinclair

“Beautiful perspective, Lt. Commander!

Garibaldi’s part of the show illustrate the problems law enforcement has in protecting witnesses long enough to make sure that justice gets done.

That was part of Ranger Mayann’s letter on the history of the Babylon Project. It can be seen from another point of view by watching the Babylon 5 Season 1, Episode 15, which I highly recommend seeing!!

See Ranger Mayann’s report from last week on questions and context…

Action Items:

1.) Share your thoughts on the many possible forms of seeking.

2.) Share your thoughts on how we Human Beings might start to build a more fully inclusive society for all of us, and how this episode of Babylon 5 could help that process.

3.) Write a story, post or tweet that uses these thoughts.

Dear Readers, ideas on learning, especially multiple #LanguageLearning, on-going education and empathy-building, to #EndPoverty, #EndHomelessness, #EndMoneyBail & achieve freedom for All HumanKind?

Support our key #PublicDomainInfrastructure & #StopSmoking for CCOVID-19:
1. #PublicLibraries,
2. #ProBono legal aid and Education,
3. #UniversalHealthCare, and
4. good #publictransport
Read, Write, Vote, Teach and Learn (Lesson Plan Book)!

Nih sakh sh’lekk, sleem wa.
and my Babylon 5 review posts, if you like Science Fiction,
and
a proposed Vision on Wondering Wednesdays: for a kinder world…

Shira Destinie A. Jones, BsC, MAT, MPhil

our year 2020 CE = 12020 HE

(Day 1 … Day 5)

Stayed on Freedom’s Call
(free copies at: https://archive.org/details/StayedOnF…)
includes two ‘imagination-rich’ walking tours, with songs, of Washington, DC. New interviews and research are woven into stories of old struggles shared by both the Jewish and African-American communities in the capital city.

Shared histories are explored from a new perspective of cultural parallels and parallel institution-building which brought the two communities together culturally and historically.

-one can add Stayed on Freedom’s Call via this GoodReads button: , Please leave a review, if you can make a bit of time, on the GoodReads page.