Red Tide

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A unique sci-fi collaboration explores the consequences of teleportation in social and criminal realms.

The latest offering in Mike Resnick's Stellar Guild series, *Red Tide*, teams veteran author Larry Niven with Brad R. Torgersen and Matthew J. Harrington in an ambitious collaboration that updates and expands upon Niven's 1973 story, "Flash Crowd." The central theme involves the development of teleportation and its effects on society throughout the world, and eventually beyond it.

The first two tales, "Red Tide" and "Dial at Random," are Niven's contributions, in which he introduces Barry "Jerryberry" Jansen, a young "newstaper," and follows the midlife evolution of JumpShift teleportation. In "Red Tide," teleportation booths have replaced nearly every other mode of transportation and created their own set of unique problems, including the overcrowding of previously quiet paradise getaways and the opportunity for uncontrollable riots to form within seconds. "Dial at Random" continues the theme, going back to the earlier days of the JumpShift technology evolution, accidentally sending a teenage girl on a whirlwind, worldwide adventure in the process of working out the kinks.

"Sparky the Dog," by Brad R. Torgersen, shifts further back to the genesis of the technology, when the original JumpShift developer/founder, Robin Whyte, pursues his wayward dog through an early version of the portals, stumbling into a den of hackers who could end it all before it begins. Told in a narrative by a now-older Whyte to newstaper Jansen, the story showcases their mutual respect for one another in addition to offering insight into the technology's early days.

The final tale in the series, "Displacement Activity," shakes things up drastically with a sudden jump far into the future, including the introduction of an alien element. Though somewhat jarring in its shift of time, place, and main character (though Jansen appears briefly at the start), the story is well written, containing some of the more witty moments and a satisfying twist to conclude the book.

The *Red Tide* collaboration works well on the whole, using the evolution of teleportation and some key characters to carry readers from one story to the next. Jerryberry Jansen and JumpShift founder Robin Whyte are the most prominent carryover characters, and their individual stories, as well as their mentor/protégé relationship, prove satisfying and engrossing as a connecting thread.

The exploration of teleportation in society is intriguing, as Niven and his fellow authors effectively show the ways in which such a revolutionary technological advancement can carry its share of adverse effects. Defective components, easier "getaways" for thieves and terrorists, sudden uncontrollable mobs, and the economic repercussions of almost completely replacing the entire transportation industry is explored throughout the collaborative work with thought-provoking results.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (Winter 2015)