



Pythias
Pohl, Frederik

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About Pohl:

Frederik George Pohl, Jr. (born November 26, 1919) is a American science fiction writer, editor and fan, with a career spanning over sixty years. From about 1959 until 1969, Pohl edited *Galaxy* magazine and its sister magazine *if*, winning the Hugo for *if* three years in a row. His writing also won him three Hugos and multiple Nebula Awards. He became a Nebula Grand Master in 1993. Pohl's family moved a number of times in his early years. His father held a number of jobs, and the Pohls lived in such wide-flung locations as Texas, California, New Mexico, and the Panama Canal Zone. Around age seven, they settled in Brooklyn. He attended the prestigious Brooklyn Tech high school, but due to the Great Depression, Pohl dropped out of school at the age of fourteen to work. While still a teenager he began a lifelong friendship with fellow writer Isaac Asimov, also a member of the New York-based Futurians fan group. In 1936, Pohl joined the Young Communist League, an organization in favor of trade unions and against racial prejudice and Hitler and Mussolini. He became President of the local Flatbush III Branch of the YCL in Brooklyn. Some say that party elders expelled him, in the belief that the escapist nature of science fiction risked corrupting the minds of youth; he says that after Stalin-Hitler pact in 1939 the party line changed and he could no longer support it, so he left. From 1939 to 1943, he was the editor of two pulp magazines - *Astonishing Stories* and *Super Science Stories*. In his own autobiography, Pohl says that he stopped editing the two magazines at roughly the time of German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Pohl has been married several times. His first wife, Leslie Perri, was another Futurian; they were married in August of 1940 but divorced during World War II. He then married Dorothy LesTina in Paris in August, 1945 while both were serving in Europe. In 1948 he married Judith Merrill, an important figure in the world of science fiction, with whom he has one daughter, Ann. Merrill and Pohl divorced in 1953. From 1953-1982 he was married to Carol Metcal Ulf. He is currently married to science fiction editor and academic Elizabeth Anne Hull, PhD, whom he married in 1984. Emily Pohl-Weary is Pohl's granddaughter. During the war Pohl served in the US Army (April 1943-November 1945), rising to Sergeant as an air corp weathermen. After training in Illinois, Oklahoma, and Colorado, he primarily was stationed in Italy. Pohl started his career as Literary Agent in 1937, but it was a sideline for him until after WWII, when he began doing it full time. He ended up "representing more than half the successful writers in science fiction"—for a short time, he was the only agent Isaac Asimov ever

had—though, in the end it was a failure for him as his agenting business went bankrupt in the early 1950's. He collaborated with friend and fellow Futurian Cyril M. Kornbluth, co-authoring a number of short stories and several novels, including a dystopian satire of a world ruled by the advertising agencies, *The Space Merchants* (a belated sequel, *The Merchants' War* [1984] was written by Pohl alone, after Kornbluth's death). This should not be confused with Pohl's *The Merchants of Venus*, an unconnected 1972 novella which includes biting satire on runaway free market capitalism and first introduced the Heechee. A number of his short stories were notable for a satirical look at consumerism and advertising in the 1950s and 1960s: "The Wizard of Pung's Corners", where flashy, over-complex military hardware proved useless against farmers with shotguns, and "The Tunnel Under the World", where an entire community is held captive by advertising researchers. From the late 1950s until 1969, he served as editor of *Galaxy* and *if* magazines, taking over at some point from the ailing H. L. Gold. Under his leadership, *if* won the Hugo Award for Best Professional Magazine for 1966, 1967 and 1968.[2] Judy-Lynn del Rey was his assistant editor at *Galaxy* and *if*. In the mid-1970s, Pohl acquired and edited novels for Bantam Books, published as "Frederik Pohl Selections"; the most notable were Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* and Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*. Also in the 1970s, Pohl reemerged as a novel writer in his own right, with books such as *Man Plus* and the Heechee series. He won back-to-back Nebula awards with *Man Plus* in 1976 and *Gateway*, the first Heechee novel, in 1977. *Gateway* also won the 1978 Hugo Award for Best Novel. Two of his stories have also earned him Hugo awards: "The Meeting" (with Kornbluth) tied in 1973 and "Fermi and Frost" won in 1986. Another notable late novel is *Jem* (1980), winner of the National Book Award. Pohl continues to write and had a new story, "Generations", published in September 2005. As of November 2006, he was working on a novel begun by Arthur C. Clarke with the provisional title "The Last Theorem". His works include not only science fiction but also articles for *Playboy* and *Family Circle*. For a time, he was the official authority for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* on the subject of Emperor Tiberius. He was a frequent guest on Long John Nebel's radio show, from the 1950s to the early 1970s. He was the eighth President of Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, taking office in 1974. Pohl has been a resident of Red Bank, New Jersey, and currently resides in Palatine, Illinois. Source: Wikipedia

Also available on Feedbooks for Pohl:

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- *The Tunnel Under The World* (1955)
- *The Knights of Arthur* (1958)
- *The Hated* (1958)

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Transcriber's Note:

This etext was produced from *Galaxy Science Fiction* February 1955. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed. Minor spelling and typographical errors have been corrected without note.

I AM sitting on the edge of what passes for a bed. It is made of loosely woven strips of steel, and there is no mattress, only an extra blanket of thin olive-drab. It isn't comfortable; but of course they expect to make me still more uncomfortable.

They expect to take me out of this precinct jail to the District prison and eventually to the death house.

Sure, there will be a trial first, but that is only a formality. Not only did they catch me with the smoking gun in my hand and Connaught bubbling to death through the hole in his throat, but I admitted it.

I—knowing what I was doing, with, as they say, malice aforethought—deliberately shot to death Laurence Connaught.

They execute murderers. So they mean to execute me.

Especially because Laurence Connaught had saved my life.

Well, there are extenuating circumstances. I do not think they would convince a jury.

Connaught and I were close friends for years. We lost touch during the war. We met again in Washington, a few years after the war was over. We had, to some extent, grown apart; he had become a man with a mission. He was working very hard on something and he did not choose to discuss his work and there was nothing else in his life on which to form a basis for communication. And—well, I had my own life, too. It wasn't scientific research in my case—I flunked out of med school, while he went on. I'm not ashamed of it; it is nothing to be ashamed of. I simply was not able to cope with the messy business of carving corpses. I didn't like it, I didn't want to do it, and when I was forced to do it, I did it badly. So—I left.

Thus I have no string of degrees, but you don't need them in order to be a Senate guard.

DOES that sound like a terribly impressive career to you? Of course not; but I liked it. The Senators are relaxed and friendly when the guards are around, and you learn wonderful things about what goes on behind the scenes of government. And a Senate guard is in a position to do favors—for newspapermen, who find a lead to a story useful; for government officials, who sometimes base a whole campaign on one careless, repeated remark; and for just about anyone who would like to be in the visitors' gallery during a hot debate.

Larry Connaught, for instance. I ran into him on the street one day, and we chatted for a moment, and he asked if it was possible to get him in to see the upcoming foreign relations debate. It was; I called him the

next day and told him I had arranged for a pass. And he was there, watching eagerly with his moist little eyes, when the Secretary got up to speak and there was that sudden unexpected yell, and the handful of Central American fanatics dragged out their weapons and began trying to change American policy with gunpowder.

You remember the story, I suppose. There were only three of them, two with guns, one with a hand grenade. The pistol men managed to wound two Senators and a guard. I was right there, talking to Connaught. I spotted the little fellow with the hand grenade and tackled him. I knocked him down, but the grenade went flying, pin pulled, seconds ticking away. I lunged for it. Larry Connaught was ahead of me.

The newspaper stories made heroes out of both of us. They said it was miraculous that Larry, who had fallen right on top of the grenade, had managed to get it away from himself and so placed that when it exploded no one was hurt.

For it did go off—and the flying steel touched nobody. The papers mentioned that Larry had been knocked unconscious by the blast. He was unconscious, all right.

He didn't come to for six hours and when he woke up, he spent the next whole day in a stupor.

I called on him the next night. He was glad to see me.

"That was a close one, Dick," he said. "Take me back to Tarawa."

I said, "I guess you saved my life, Larry."

"Nonsense, Dick! I just jumped. Lucky, that's all."

"The papers said you were terrific. They said you moved so fast, nobody could see exactly what happened."

He made a deprecating gesture, but his wet little eyes were wary. "Nobody was really watching, I suppose."

"I was watching," I told him flatly.

He looked at me silently for a moment.

"I was between you and the grenade," I said. "You didn't go past me, over me, or through me. But you were on top of the grenade."

He started to shake his head.

I said, "Also, Larry, you fell *on* the grenade. It exploded underneath you. I know, because I was almost on top of you, and it blew you clear off the floor of the gallery. Did you have a bulletproof vest on?"

HE cleared his throat. "Well, as a matter of—"
"Cut it out, Larry! What's the answer?"

He took off his glasses and rubbed his watery eyes. He grumbled, "Don't you read the papers? It went off a yard away."

"Larry," I said gently, "I was there."

He slumped back in his chair, staring at me. Larry Connaught was a small man, but he never looked smaller than he did in that big chair, looking at me as though I were Mr. Nemesis himself.

Then he laughed. He surprised me; he sounded almost happy. He said, "Well, hell, Dick—I had to tell somebody about it sooner or later. Why not you?"

I can't tell you all of what he said. I'll tell most of it—but not the part that matters.

I'll never tell *that* part to *anybody*.

Larry said, "I should have known you'd remember." He smiled at me ruefully, affectionately. "Those bull sessions in the cafeterias, eh? Talking all night about everything. But you remembered."

"You claimed that the human mind possessed powers of psychokinesis," I said. "You argued that just by the mind, without moving a finger or using a machine, a man could move his body anywhere, instantly. You said that nothing was impossible to the mind."

I felt like an absolute fool saying those things; they were ridiculous notions. Imagine a man *thinking* himself from one place to another! But—I had been on that gallery.

I licked my lips and looked to Larry Connaught for confirmation.

"I was all wet," Larry laughed. "Imagine!"

I suppose I showed surprise, because he patted my shoulder.

He said, becoming sober, "Sure, Dick, you're wrong, but you're right all the same. The mind alone can't do anything of the sort—that was just a silly kid notion. But," he went on, "*but* there are—well, techniques—linking the mind to physical forces—simple physical forces that we all use every day—that can do it all. Everything! Everything I ever thought of and things I haven't found out yet.

"Fly across the ocean? In a second, Dick! Wall off an exploding bomb? Easily! You saw me do it. Oh, it's work. It takes energy—you can't escape natural law. That was what knocked me out for a whole day. But that was a hard one; it's a lot easier, for instance, to make a bullet miss its target. It's even easier to lift the cartridge out of the chamber and put it in my pocket, so that the bullet can't even be fired. Want the Crown Jewels of England? I could get them, Dick!"

I asked, "Can you see the future?"

He frowned. "That's silly. This isn't supersti—"

"How about reading minds?"

LARRY'S expression cleared. "Oh, you're remembering some of the things I said years ago. No, I can't do that either, Dick. Maybe, some day, if I keep working at this thing— Well, I can't right now. There are things I can do, though, that are just as good."

"Show me something you can do," I asked.

He smiled. Larry was enjoying himself; I didn't begrudge it to him. He had hugged this to himself for years, from the day he found his first clue, through the decade of proving and experimenting, almost always being wrong, but always getting closer... . He *needed* to talk about it. I think he was really glad that, at last, someone had found him out.

He said, "Show you something? Why, let's see, Dick." He looked around the room, then winked. "See that window?"

I looked. It opened with a slither of wood and a rumble of sash weights. It closed again.

"The radio," said Larry. There was a *click* and his little set turned itself on. "Watch it."

It disappeared and reappeared.

"It was on top of Mount Everest," Larry said, panting a little.

The plug on the radio's electric cord picked itself up and stretched toward the baseboard socket, then dropped to the floor again.

"No," said Larry, and his voice was trembling, "I'll show you a hard one. Watch the radio, Dick. I'll run it without plugging it in! The electrons themselves—"

He was staring intently at the little set. I saw the dial light go on, flicker, and hold steady; the speaker began to make scratching noises. I stood up, right behind Larry, right over him.

I used the telephone on the table beside him. I caught him right beside the ear and he folded over without a murmur. Methodically, I hit him twice more, and then I was sure he wouldn't wake up for at least an hour. I rolled him over and put the telephone back in its cradle.

I ransacked his apartment. I found it in his desk: All his notes. All the information. The secret of how to do the things he could do.

I picked up the telephone and called the Washington police. When I heard the siren outside, I took out my service revolver and shot him in the throat. He was dead before they came in.

FOR, you see, I knew Laurence Connaught. We were friends. I would have trusted him with my life. But this was more than just a life.

Twenty-three words told how to do the things that Laurence Connaught did. Anyone who could read could do them. Criminals, traitors, lunatics—the formula would work for anyone.

Laurence Connaught was an honest man and an idealist, I think. But what would happen to any man when he became God? Suppose you were told twenty-three words that would let you reach into any bank vault, peer inside any closed room, walk through any wall? Suppose pistols could not kill you?

They say power corrupts; and absolute power corrupts absolutely. And there can be no more absolute power than the twenty-three words that can free a man of any jail or give him anything he wants. Larry was my friend. But I killed him in cold blood, knowing what I did, because he could not be trusted with the secret that could make him king of the world.

But I can.

—FREDERIK POHL

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Frederik Pohl

The Tunnel Under The World

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The Knights of Arthur

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Ralph Sholto

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Prelude to Space

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Valeria Woodville's first act as a married woman is to sign her name in the marriage register incorrectly, and this slip is followed by the gradual disclosure of a series of secrets about her husband's earlier life, each of which leads on to another set of questions and enigmas. Her discoveries prompt her to defy her husband's authority, to take the law into into a labyrinthine maze of false clues and deceptive identities, in which the exploration of the tangled workings of the mind becomes linked to an investigation into the masquerades of femininity. Probably the first full-length novel with a woman detective as its heroine, *The Law and the Lady* is a fascinating example of Collins's later fiction. First published in 1875, it employs many of the techniques used in *The Moonstone*, developing them in bizarre and unexpected ways, and in its Gothic and fantastic elements *The Law and the Lady* adds a significant dimension to the history of detective fiction.



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