

June 6

Hi Mary.

Today I visited the gym for the first time. I was really tired afterwards, because the instructor showed me all the machines and made me try them out. I'm going to be sore tomorrow! Everyone at the institute (almost) has joined the gym, so there's never a shortage of people to go with.

This morning I received a call from Colleen Taylor in New Brunswick, who has just finished up her one year B.Ed. program at Saint Thomas and is considering coming to Korea. My institute's contact in Canada gave her my phone number.

She called to ask how I was getting along here in Korea and what I thought of it. Her friends were filling her with doubts about coming to Korea, but after speaking to me she said she was eager to come over. She says she may call me again before she leaves, to check about things she

might need to bring with her. This afternoon, my roommate and I went with Anthony and Julie (two Korean teachers) to one of the Buddhist temples near the city. The grounds



were beautiful and about the size of a provincial park. The smaller buildings were oriental style; ornate and colourful. There were arched bridges over streams and many marble carvings of dragons, turtles, and other religious items.

The main attraction was a 30 metre statue of Buddha in a praying court near the temple. It was awe-inspiring. The court itself was made of

polished marble, and many people brought mats and were bowing and praying. In a smaller building were three gold Buddhas sitting in the lotus position.

Anthony told me my prayer would be answered if I made one, so I prayed for love. I also threw a coin into a hollowed stone at the bottom of a stream and wished for love. The fortune teller I saw last Sunday says I will have a love interest in July (he also said it would be good to get married in the next year!), so with these three powers in my favour (and three is a magic number), perhaps I will find love.

Maybe you can add a few words for me, which wouldn't ruin the magic of three power because, I suppose, the fortune teller only predicts the future and doesn't influence it.

Anyway, I took about twenty pictures on out little excursion. It was a fine day.

Marcus.

When Dragons Dream by Kathleen O'Brien Harlequin Books

review by Sam Morgan

My girlfriend's mother is an avid reader of Harlequin Romances. Each week she ponders over four or five of them and everything is hunky dory for her for the rest of the week.

So on a brave expedition of ridiculousness, I decided to venture my mind, waste my time and read one. Why not I'm a big boy, I watched *The Smurfs and the Magic Flute* without crying. well, almost.



I know all of you share my stereotypes against those damn Harlequins. Damn them for making women get ideas that men and romance can happen together. Damn their stories for not cutting to the bedroom like Penthouse Forum. And damn them for creating Fabio. Because of Fabio I have to spend my whole entire life feeling inadequate. I'd thumb wrestle his ass and I'd kick it too.

Most Harlequins follow a template, but when I read Harlequin Presents Plus *When Dragons Dream* by Kathleen O'Brien I had no idea how close it was to *Wuthering Heights* and crap. You know, man and woman are stubborn, hate each other, then the next thing you know they're doing the shimmy shag in a bag.

Anyway, *When Dragons Dream* involves a rich self-made man's man named Connor St. George, Hilary Fairfax, and Hilary's neurotic, pregnant sister Marlene.

Marlene is being kept at Connor's house in Dragon's Creek because he feels indebted to take care of her because she dated his younger brother Timmy. Seems ol' Timmy got himself chopped up pretty bad in boating accident a few months back.

Connor realises his time cannot be devoted to being a nursemaid to the neurotic and conquer the world with his large bank account and countless one night stands. To rectify this, he recruits Marlene's older sister Hilary to watch her, afraid to come home one day and have a miscarriage or worse on his calloused muscular digits.

After some sparks of hate between Hilary and the charismatic Connor, the two end up resolving their differences through... well read this passage and make up your own mind:

"...her [Hilary's] sparks or perhaps her words, ignited his [Connor's] own fire. The rigid control finally broke and his rhythm grew frenzied, until it exploded in one last, shuddering burst of liquid flames."

Wow! that was hotter than Ronald Reagan's old prostate inflammation and as original as the Spider-Man clone.

There was a subplot behind the whole story about Hilary's other sister Terri, a beautiful butterfly who got too close to a powerful business man's flame and who had to deal with the ramifications. I couldn't tell you anymore without giving the story away.

This book is like one big NBC *Movie of the Week* and my stereotypes of the whole Harlequin Romance thing are still in place. If the value of a book is by how much you enjoyed it, it's worth the quarter I paid for it out of a stock bin plus it's original cover price.

Imperium

by Ryszard Kapuscinski

Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1995,

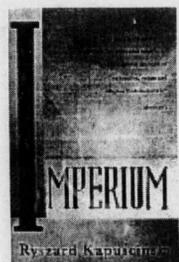
331 pp.

(translator: Klara Glowczewska)

review by John J. Knoll

Only rarely does one have the chance to read a work like *Imperium*. The undertaking of any story of the Soviet Empire presents a task as massive and daunting as the subject itself. That Ryszard Kapuscinski has succeeded in this task is testimony to his considerable gifts as a writer, historian and storyteller. That he has given us here a pageant of Soviet life - replete with all the glory and misery - in just over 300 pages is even more remarkable.

Imperium is work of that most enjoyable sort of history: the real and personal history of the autobiography.



The book is divided chronologically into three sections. First Encounters tells of - among other stories - the author's childhood in a Soviet-occupied Polish village during the

Second World War, complete with early firsthand glimpses into Soviet terror. To a child the divergence between official ideology and daily reality has already become all too clear, as in this terse passage about deportations to the camps:

The first in class to disappear was Pawel. Because winter was approaching, the teacher suggested that Pawel had probably caught a cold and was staying in bed. But Pawel didn't come the next day or the next week, and in time we began to understand that he would never come.

"From a Bird's-Eye View," *Imperium's* middle section, is a series of observations from the late 1980s and the early 1990s on the implosion of the Soviet Empire. As in all places, the mysteries of the present in Russia lead the astute observer directly to the past. Kapuscinski's psychic

excavations of Russia's past are at times sad and sympathetic, at others hard and sarcastic, as in this wry indictment of Stalin's 1934 plan for the reconstruction of Moscow:

All dictators, irrespective of epoch or country, have one common trait: they know everything, are experts on everything...there is no end to the profundities and wisdom. Stalin was expert on history, economics, poetry and linguistics. As it turned out, he was also expert on architecture.

Imperium's final section, "The Sequel Continues," is, in the author's own description, "...a collection of reflections, observations and notes that arose in the margins of my travels, conversations and readings." Among these observations is Kapuscinski's explanation of the profound importance of perestroika: "Someone who wasn't

brought up in an atmosphere of general, animal fear, and in a world without information," he suggests, "will have difficulty understanding what this was all about." This explication is exemplary of the author's ability to

"All dictators, irrespective of epoch or country, have one common trait: they know everything..."

simplify the complex without robbing it of its meaning or resonance.

Imperium is not a dry work of scholarly history; by contrast, Kapuscinski denies it is a work of history at all, preferring to call it a "personal report." As such, it is a story alive with all the beauty and contradiction of the Soviet world.

For those who want a personal report of events - a kind of sketchbook history - *Imperium* should be read. For those who would seek to understand - in tangible and human terms - the rise and fall of a modern empire, *Imperium* must be read.

