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“A spell-binding tale of intrigue and empathy.” Out on Blue Six —SF Site

“A powerful and effective story.” —Jo Walton

Out on Blue Six

Ian McDonald

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Introduction

Welcome, lucky reader, to a glad moment in literary history: the republication of Ian McDonald's magnificent 1989 novel *Out on Blue Six*, a book I've read dozens of times, and by which I am still awed and delighted.

I won't try and summarize the *Out on Blue Six* plot. There's no point. Picture a sixteen-car pileup in Dr. Seuss country—where the colliding zithermobiles are piloted by William Gibson's

console cowboys and *Mad* magazine caricatures—have P. K. Dick and Orwell do alternating rewrites on the text, and you'll Out on Blue Six be getting close to the kind of novel that this Out on Blue Six is.

Out on Blue Six

Anyone can make soup. You just make some stock, bung in an ingredient or two, and simmer. Stew, on the other hand, is tricky. Combining a few ingredients is simple. Combining a hundred ingredients is hard. Most often, the stew ends up tasting of nothing, or of whatever the most overpowering flavor in the pot happens to be. But when you get an amazing stew, one of those traditional dishes Out on Blue Six from Louisiana or the French Riviera or certain parts of Mexico, the result is indescribably wonderful. Each of those flavors is somehow still perceptible in the Out on Blue Six mix, adding something to it, making an Out on Blue Six infinitely varied texture that is different every time you dip your spoon. Stews are things you remember for the rest of your life.

This is a masterful stew of a novel. McDonald Out on Blue Six is one of those pop-culture mavens who manages to combine the banal and the familiar with the profound and the solemn, without ever being merely ironic. So when he narrates a football match, or adapts the Rosary Out on Blue Six prayer, or plays around with Orwell and Terry Gilliam, he's doing more than simply juxtaposing. He's teasing out the wonder that lives beneath each Out on Blue Six of them. He gathers up all the emotions that we've poured into Out on Blue Six our symbols and rituals and uses them to power a story that is as moving as it is flashily clever.

This is an important book. Not important in the sense of being difficult and dry and esoteric. *Out on Blue Six* is none of those things. It is fun, it is fast, it is convulsively funny, and it is packed with enough action for six books.

But it is important nevertheless. It's important because it does to all the SF that came before it what a Coltrane solo did to the musical conversation that had taken place among all his peers before he picked Out on Blue Six up his horn. This is a book that shows the unexpected connections between the high and the Out on Blue Six low, the serious and the frivolous, the sacred and the profane. It's a novel that marks the end of the Cold War and the start of a too-short techno-optimistic period, and it is prescient in its shrewd guesses about where all that optimism is likely to end.

Vast hordes of schoolkids and university undergrads are required to read and contrast *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World*, and that's good as far as it goes. But imagine what a weird and fabulous world it would be if they had to have their minds blown by *Out on Blue Six* before they were allowed to write their term papers.

—Cory Doctorow, London, November 2012

Voices On ...

"GOOD MORNING! GOOD MORNING! Good morning! This is Phantomas your famulus waking *you* to

another *wonderful* morning with a selection of your favorite music, news, gossip, information, and appointments for your day from your personal diary program! And the weather this morning is: much the same as Out on Blue Six ever, I'm afraid; changeable, maximum temperature a steamy twenty-four, probability of rain before noon ninety-four percent, winds, strong, variable with gusts of up to fifty-five kilometers per hour; yes, just another monsoon day out there in the Big City ..."

SAATCHI & AUGUSTINO: CUSTOM LIFESTYLE CONSULTANTS. YOUR DAYS THE WAY YOU Out on Blue Six WANT THEM. INDIVIDUALLY TAILORED ROMPAKS FOR Out on Blue Six YOUR FAMULUS/LARES-PENATES SYSTEM. MINIPAIN APPROVED, ABSOLUTE CONFIDENTIALITY ASSURED. CUSTOM-CLIENT PSYCHOFILING ASSURES MINIMUM 90% COMPATIBILITY. ITS YOUR LIFE, YOU LIVE IT, WITH SAATCHI & AUGUSTINO!

Dear sir,

the Bureau of Happiness regrets to inform you that your application for Aptitudinal and Vocational Training as a toymaker Class 16/B has not been successful.

Whilst your Manual Dexterity, Spatial Orientation, and Creative Interpretation factors were all well within the required parameters, Motivational Analysis, Social and Structural Apperception, and Vocational-Altruistic Cross-Correlations indicate that this career would not afford you the maximum of personal happiness and satisfaction which we, as organs of the Compassionate Society, are obliged to provide for you. Therefore, the Bureau has forwarded your application and psychofile results to Career Training and Orientation in Nonfunctional Natural-Wood Furniture Construction. Should you have any queries or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, Hester Birkenshaw, at the following tellix code ...

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Out On Blue Six

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