

Tightbeam 299

August 2019



Space Dragon by Angela K. Scott

Tightbeam 299

The Editors are:

George Phillis phillies@4liberty.net 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester, MA 01609.

Jon Swartz jon_swartz@hotmail.com

Art Editors are Angela K. Scott and Cedar Sanderson. The front cover is from Angela K. Scott. The back cover is from Jose Sanchez.

Anime Reviews are courtesy Jessi Silver and her site www.s1e1.com. Ms. Silver writes of her site “S1E1 is primarily an outlet for views and reviews on Japanese animated media, and occasionally video games and other entertainment.”

Fiction reviews are courtesy Declan Finn, Jim McCoy, and Pat Patterson. Declan Finn’s web page declanfinn.com/ covers his books, reviews, writing, and more. Jim McCoy’s reviews and more appear at [/jimbossffreviews.blogspot.com](http://jimbossffreviews.blogspot.com). Pat Patterson’s reviews appear on his blog habakkuk21.blogspot.com and also on Good Reads and Amazon.com.

Regular short fiction reviewers Greg Hullender and Eric Wong publish at RocketStackRank.com

Cedar Sanderson’s reviews and other interesting articles appear on her site www.cedarwrites.wordpress.com/ and its culinary extension cedarwrites.com/eat-this-while-you-read-that/

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To join as a public (free) member, send phillies@4liberty.net your email address.

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Editorial

After assembling the last issue, there was some discussion as to what future issues of Tightbeam should resemble. How long should they be? What should they include? There was an emphatic opinion from some people that we should limit the size of the zine. Others disagreed. I asked you, the members. No matter what answer was suggested, someone supported it.

I have tried to find a compromise. While everyone does not agree, henceforth Tightbeam will be limited to a maximum of 30 pages. What about all those extra book reviews? I am pleased to announce that the N3F Writer's Exchange Bureau, the N3F Pro Bureau, and the N3F Book Review Bureau will be collaborating on issuing a new zine:

The N3F Review of Books including Prose Bono

The size and frequency of publication of **The N3F Review of Books** remain to be settled.

CorFlu is the fanzine convention. In other important fanzine news, Corflu 37 - Corflu Heatwave - will held over the weekend of March 13-15, 2020 at the Hilton Hotel and Convention Center in College Station, TX. More news when it becomes available.

Letters

1706-24 Eva Rd.
Etobicoke, ON
CANADA M9C 2B2
July 4, 2019

Dear George and Jon, and the whole club:

Happy July 4th, happy Independence Day! It's a hot day, the AC isn't working, and I am waiting for the repairman to come and cool this place down, I hope. In the meantime, I find that I am three issues of Tightbeam behind. We spent much of a month getting ready for the three-week vacation in England, so no wonder I'm behind. Time to get moving.

296... Condolences on the passing of Tom McGovern. My letter... Got more coffee on the go. Issue 4 of Amazing Stories is now available, and I have some of the body of issue 5 ready for a good proofreader/editor go-through. We returned from England on June 19, and in some ways we are still recovering. We saw so many parts of London, plus Bath, Stonehenge and Liverpool. Great fun, and we want to go back already!

I know Kareen Abdul-Jabbar as a former all-star basketball player, but ten novels written? I guess that proves that I don't read the New York Times. A quick Google...he is in his early 70s, he has written a lot about his basketball days, and he has a few novels under his belt, mostly Holmes pastiches. I guess Anna Waterhouse has been helping him out with his writing skills.

Thanks to Jon for the article on Hugh Cave. I have read some of his work, and found it interesting, but

not spectacular...perhaps his name was what stuck in my mind all these years.

Discussion... It looks like you might need some way to get issues of fanzines out to all the members. I have tried that in the past with a little newsletter we send out locally, and we were accused of spamming by our ISP.

297... True, some of us look back of the history of fandom, and our involvement in some cases, and marvel over the fact we've been involved for 20, 30, 40, 50 or more years. For me, 42 years and continuing, although my interests have certainly changed here and there.

I remember reading the Dick Tracy cartoon strips when I was a kid, remembering that nothing like that could have happened in the small town I grew up in, but I never had anything like the BLBs. I doubt my parents would have bought anything like that for me, anyway.

It's a shame few are participating in the electronic round robins, but there are so many electronic areas to discuss any particular topic with a large audience to discuss it with (and in front of).

298... "Forensic accounting, it seemed, was a class of sorcery all its own." I have to relay that to Yvonne, who has done her share of forensic accounting, and there's at least one person who served time for his own creative accounting...

Stephen King's 11/22/63... When this book first came out, I remembered a Twilight Zone reboot episode called Profile in Silver, starring Lane Smith and Andrew Robinson, about a descendant of John F. Kennedy's going back in time to meet his famous ancestor, and affecting the event at the Dealey Plaza in Dallas. I won't reveal anything more, other than to say they have some similarities.

I know I have one Miriam Allen deFord book on my shelf, and a quick check, and it is indeed Xenogenesis. Thanks to Jon for another great chunk of research.

I guess I am caught up, although I wanted this letter to be more than it is. I guess the coffee didn't do all for me that I wanted, but it can only do so much. Many thanks for these issues, and I will try to keep up in the future.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Anime

Dr. Stone Review by Jessi Silver

Taiju is about to confess to the girl he loves when a mysterious force hits the Earth and turns every human into stone. Taiju and his friend Senku wake up thousands of years later and begin to rebuild society.
– ANN

Streaming: Crunchyroll
Episodes: 24
Source: Manga

Episode Summary: Senku is a scientific genius, and Taiju is a lovable meathead. But neither boy's particular strengths allow them to escape the mysterious green light that envelops the Earth and turns all of its people to stone. By sheer force of will, Taiju holds onto his consciousness and vows to finish his confession to his crush, Yuzuriha, should they ever break out of their stony prison.

When Taiju finally does manage to break free, he finds the landscape almost completely transformed. Senku has been awake for 6 months already, and tells him the news – it’s now 3,700 later than when they were transformed, and the world has essentially been thrust back into the stone age. But Senku has a goal, and with his brains and Taiju’s brawn, he believes it’s a realistic one. He plans to use scientific knowledge and technique to recover humanity’s lost technology, and restore civilization to its former glory.

Impressions: Years ago, I watched a Discovery Channel documentary about the things that would happen if all of humanity were suddenly wiped off the face of the Earth. It was humbling to see how so much of our architecture might not even survive a century without proper upkeep, and eventually all of our greatest constructs and monuments would crumble beneath the weight and power of encroaching plant life. This can be terrifying to think about, but maybe also a little bit comforting in its inevitability and finality. The early scenes of *Dr. Stone* recreate this all in a montage, as Taiju calls out to Yuzuriha within his mind. Not only is it an effective way to show the passage of time, with bridges breaking and buildings toppling over, but it also speaks to the great resilience of human beings.



The world is littered with people frozen in terror.
Screencap from Crunchyroll.

I’ve also read elsewhere that the chances of human beings being able to start again from human society’s literal square one position and progress all the way back to our current level of technology could be in the realm of impossibility. Fossil fuels are controversial (and I personally believe we ought to move away from them sooner rather than later), but one thing they’ve been really good at is providing a lot of energy and allowing us to manufacture a ton of things quickly on a very large scale. There may be no way to know for sure how much is left beneath the Earth to dig up, but one thing we do know is that oil, coal, and natural gas only exist due to millions of years of fossil decay, tectonic shifting, and other unfathomably slow processes that don’t occur within the small-scale human perception of time. If a disaster were to happen right now, there may not be enough resources left to restore the type of lifestyle we have.

The reason I mention all this is because this episode made me think about a lot of things that weren’t necessarily directly related to the plot or characters. Ever-present in the background of my thoughts are musings on where we are as a people and why some of us seem to be so stubborn when it comes to the idea that the conveniences and lifestyles we know could be fleeting. Simply put, the Earth itself doesn’t really care if we’re here or not, and more people (and industries) need to understand that reality before we do ourselves in. I think it speaks to the strength of the series’ premise that its very brief glimpses into a temporarily post-human world can relate so closely to real-life.

On the other hand, I think this episode also speaks to the strengths we as human beings have when we choose to put our minds to something. The probability of actually restoring society aside, Senku’s intelligence, passion, and effort argue well for the alternate hypothesis that, no matter what might happen, maybe we could claw our way back to some equivalent level of technology, or even beyond. While I’m not really convinced that he’s actually a student (his mad scientist credentials are already off the charts), Senku’s depth and breadth of knowledge, as well as his use of the scientific method to create and test his hypotheses, is an entertaining testament to the fact that some people take any hardship as a challenge. Senku’s partnership with Taiju, someone whose physicality provides him with a different sort of advantage, does a great job of pointing out that human survival relies on many different types of talent.

Setting aside my own existential musings, I had a lot of fun with this episode’s peeks into different kinds of biological science. Alcohol fermentation, chemical collection (from bat guano, no less), clay hardening, mushroom identification... I can now clearly see the appeal. I tend to like “edu-tainment” type sto-

ries, and I feel like this series would fit well alongside anime like *Moyashimon* or *Cells at Work!* with its very digestible and story-centric scientific fun facts. Fantasy anime is great, but I find that having even just a baby-toe dipped into reality makes it much simpler to relate to something, even if most of it is speculative.



Senku has had a six month head start. Screenshot from Crunchyroll.

The only real questions I have at this point revolve around the inconsistency of the stone mechanism. The early part of the episode features a few birds that have been turned to stone, which the characters find around their city. After the 3,700 years have passed, there are a few more of these birds around, but other animals and such don't seem to have been affected. I'm guessing that this isn't a "plot hole" as much as it is just something unexplained at this point. But within an episode

that's compelling and fun in so many other ways, this mystery sticks out like a sore thumb.

I also hope Yuzuriha gets de-petrified sooner rather than later. There's something that feels a little off about Taiju holding a torch for a girl who's a literal stone statue. I assume she's like every other character and has had some kind of inner monologue at various points over the millennia, but we've never been privy to her internal thoughts, so right now she's just something to pine over. This relationship dynamic feels a little bit weird to me.

I must say, this has to be one of the more unique shounen series I've had the pleasure to sample in my tenure as an anime fan. I think anime gets accused of being very formulaic (and honestly a lot of it is). However, one thing about operating within the confines of a formula is that, within those boundaries, there's almost limitless potential for small kinds of creativity. There are a lot of shounen series about boys on adventures, encountering dangers, interacting with other characters, and discovering wondrous things. Choosing to set such a series in a wild new world in which any remnants of our society are gone is a fun, interesting angle to take within a familiar framework.

Pros: The episode introduces some fun scientific concepts. It's a unique take on the shounen adventure formula.

Cons: There are some tough logical leaps and unexplained inconsistencies. Yuzuriha currently occupies sort of a creepy story role.

Content Warnings: Mild body horror (petrified people being broken into pieces). Destructive imagery (planes crashing, massive automobile pile-ups, buildings collapsing).

Grade: B+

Legend of the Galactic Heroes – Week 4 Review by Jessi Silver

Note: This post contains spoilers for episodes 11-13 of the series.

Managing attendance at two conventions in as many weeks is a tall order for me. Though I didn't have any responsibilities at SGDQ during the last week in June, the late nights and intense emotions of the event definitely wore me down more than I expected them to. This weekend was CONvergence, where I sat on 4 panels while also juggling a day of work on Friday and several anime premiere impressions here at the blog (I really don't want to end up too far behind this year...). All of the time away from home,

the crowds, and the stress of speaking in front of people (among other things), ended up becoming overwhelming, and I skipped out of the last day of CON to recuperate. While it's disappointing to miss part of something you've looked forward to all year, sometimes mental health has to be a priority. The upside is that being at home gave me the time to continue this watch-along rather than delaying it a day or two (while also trying to dig into all of the high-profile new anime series that premiered this weekend). Life is all about blessings in disguise.



The Marchionesse has a bone to pick with Annerose. All Screenscaps from Hive.

Kaiser Friedrich's reign has been on the decline for years, mostly due to his passion for alcohol and women, as well as his disinterest in actually governing. As the Kaiser aged, he began to develop a taste for younger women. At one point he kept company with Marchioness Sussanna von Beenemünde, until Annerose was brought in to become his imperial consort. The Marchioness, feeling slighted by the Kaiser's lack of favor and willing to go to great lengths to get it back, hatches a plot to kidnap

Annerose, murder her, and make it seem as though she had been disloyal, thus bringing shame down upon her family (including Reinhard). Considering the strong and cunning individuals that Reinhard keeps by his side (including the recently-recruited Oberstein), the plan is soon uncovered, Annerose is rescued, and Marchionesse Beenemünde is forced to atone for the crime with her life.

The members of the Imperial court and the military know that the Alliance is likely to make their next move soon, and they are becoming more and more desperate to move Reinhard and his dubious familial origins out of the picture. However, the young leader may turn out to be the key that ensures the Empire's survival – for the time being.



Annerose is threatened with poisoning.

Yang Wen-Li is hopeful that the leadership of the republic will choose to extend a peace treaty to the Empire, rather than further continue military hostilities, but that hope turns out to be misplaced. While an invasion will greatly exceed the military budget, as well as stretch supplies extremely thin among the soon-to-be liberated border territories, the council votes to begin an invasion (for the purpose of padding their public approval ratings). Of course, Yang is tapped to lead one of many squadrons traveling into enemy territory; in total, the fleet has

200,000 ships containing over 30 million soldiers – a massive undertaking threatening to drain every last resource the Alliance has.



The Imperial forces take supplies, knowing the Alliance will provide them to the border worlds.

The Imperial leadership quickly gets word of the Alliance's plans via some information trading with Fezzan. Though Fezzan serves as a trading partner with both sides, it's technically aligned with the Empire, which many people often seem to forget. Reinhard's plan is unorthodox; rather than prevent the intrusion into Imperial space, he directs the border worlds to offload their supplies and welcome the Alliance soldiers. As the

Alliance spends all of their resources feeding the occupied populace, the Empire will sweep in and fight them off. The only thing preventing this plan from going smoothly is the pride of the local fief lord, Kleingeld. To give the appearance of surrendering after sacrificing so much already is an action that is

almost unbearable to him, yet the potential continuation of the family line with Karl, his grandson, weighs heavy on his mind.

Thoughts: Last week's episodes had a lot of meaty tidbits to chew on, while this week's episodes seem more focused on cultivating the lead-up to another major conflict between the two factions featured in the story. After a long weekend of activities and discussion, being able to relax a bit and enjoy material that's a bit more focused on human emotions is a welcome change.

Marchioness Beenemünde's story reminded me quite a bit of *The Rose of Versailles* in its focus on court intrigue and betrayal (the set of episodes dealing with "the affair of the necklace" especially, as they both involve scorned women). While these types of stories might seem kind of petty when the fate of large swaths of the galaxy are likely to be at stake fairly soon, I think they do a good job of reinforcing the extent of the corruption that's permeated the Imperial leadership. There's a reason why absolute monarchies have been mostly abandoned in our current era – no matter what, the fate of 99 percent of the populace hangs on the ability of those with wealth and power to choose the path of fairness in leadership. When just a few people hold the majority of the wealth in their grasp, there's very little if any motivation to relinquish the pursuit of more wealth for the greater good. An over-taxed and legally-oppressed people don't necessarily have the resources to rise up and fight against this injustice, either (although there are limits to every situation, just ask King Louis XVI).

This episode is an interesting look at the position of women in societies where their sex doesn't afford them much power. There's a temptation to label characters like Marchioness Beenemünde as petty and conniving, but with male primogeniture the major method by which power is transferred from older generations to newer ones, women desirous of some agency have to resort to underhanded or unorthodox means in order to get it. Their power is often gained through men – lovers and sons, primarily, and when those relationships don't work out there's very little way for courtly women to be masters of their own destinies. I sometimes think about what my life would be like if my husband were the one completely in control of my life and our finances. While he's a kind, generous person and someone who believes in gender equality, if the situation were different and I didn't have the option to work or have a bank account, whether he was a feminist or not wouldn't matter all that much for my personal sense of security. Consider that on a much larger scale, and I think even the Marchioness's actions are understandable.

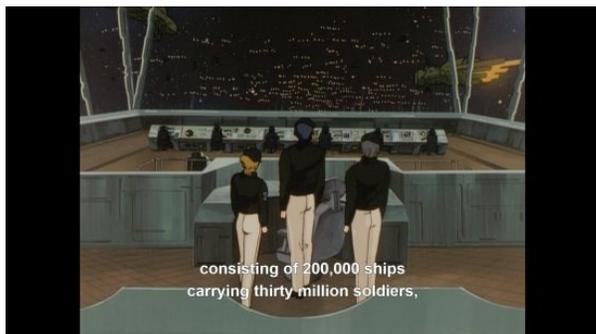
Kleingeld has some tough choices to make. Kleingeld's story interested me quite a bit, as he embodies the myth of the kind-hearted oppressor – someone with a lot of power who actually does choose to use it responsibly and who his workers and subjects seem to willingly follow. I found his plight very sympathetic, and that in turn left me with some complicated feelings to unravel. The history taught in my country is sometimes tainted by descriptions of "benevolent" slave-owners, those who owned people, but treated them fairly well. What we need to remember is that, no matter how good their actions were, they also chose to own human beings; we fool ourselves when we try to excuse these kinds of terrible actions on such nebulous criteria (as a side-bar, this is why the current "slavery" trend in fantasy anime has got me especially riled-up; Japan doesn't have a history of chattel slavery, but the US does and I'm not interested in seeing it fetishized, because in these parts it's never not "too soon"). Ultimately his actions seem to be geared toward the continuation of his family line, not the certainty it once was since his son lost his life in the war. I wonder if the intended message is that, no matter how kindly and generous someone with financial and social power is, when it comes down to it they're still about maintaining their status quo. Maybe that's what most of us are like anyway, even though we all live in very different circumstances from the characters in this anime series. It takes someone with a very special mindset to work as hard or harder toward the good of others when doing so means engaging in a great deal of self-sacrifice.

Once again the Alliance government proves that it has become just another flavor of the same dish as its elected officials vote to go against all good advice and go on the offensive. This is by no means a unanimous decision, and a couple of council members argue very logically against going to war. The Alli-

ance's fleets will be stretched thin, and their supplies even thinner, but as is stated in the episode itself, military victory is like a drug, and Yang's heroic takeover of Iserlohn has given the populace a sweet taste of this rare delicacy. And since an election is coming up, a show of military strength will position the candidates up for re-election for victory. Yang muses on the shared weaknesses between both factions.

Yang's insight is, as usual, impeccable, as he muses on the corruption that exists in the upper levels of leadership within both the Empire and the Alliance. Both systems operate secretly in ways that no layperson on either side has any sort of insight into how major decisions are made. The only difference may be that the population of the Alliance has a hand in electing their own oppressors. I look at the state of things in my country right now, and I see many people, some of whom I'm close to, actively voting against their own best interests for the sake of one or two policy positions that don't actually affect their day-to-day lives. Even when "we the people" have the power to change things to be more equitable, there are those already in leadership positions that prey on our fears and our hatred in order to consolidate their own power. I would like to think that this is not the inevitable end-point of every form of government, but as long as we continue to worship things like wealth and domination, I think even the potential of a great space-faring future will be tainted by our own human weaknesses.

This point marks the end of about a cour's worth of episodes, and to be honest I'm happy I didn't try to push myself to complete this many in one week like I was considering. While just watching them certainly wouldn't have been a problem, each episode has been so full of thoughtful material that I believe any reactions I may have had would have suffered. As a consummate anime-marathoner, it may be a little blasphemous to say, but sometimes slower is better.



That's a lot of people.

Novels

Wolf Time by Lars Walker

Review by Pat Patterson

Excellent cover art by Gary Ruddell

One day, I'm either going to reconcile myself to the fact that chaos visits me frequently enough, often in the company of deadlines, that I am NEVER going to get caught up; OR, I'm going to drag myself out into the front yard and beat myself up for being such a slacker. I rather think that the reconciliation is more likely, although it has yet to occur.

Now, in THIS particular case, I am NOT late posting a review that should have been done shortly after publication. That would make this review 20 years late, as it was originally published in 1999. I'm not entirely sure, but I believe I read it shortly after that, but I wasn't writing reviews then.



However, in April of this year, I reviewed one of Lars Walker's more recent works, "The Elder King," and decided I would enjoy re-reading something that had given me great enjoyment on first perusal. Hence, my decision to pick up "Wolf Time."

And then: forms of chaos. And it wasn't until TODAY, after clearing away a GREAT deal of items needing immediate attention, and making room for one of the cats to sit on the arm of my chair and stare at the computer screen, that I returned to this review.

I started to say that there are two themes running through the book, but that's not really accurate. I'm guessing there might be as many as six, maybe a few more. However, for the purposes of the review, I'm only dealing with two.

The first is a howling great non-rational eruption of Scandinavian myth into the life of the present day world, as expressed in a tiny college in Epsom, Minnesota. That's a real place, by the way, but it's ONLY a place; nothing there but Minnesota. This is not the semi-gentle Minnesota that Garrison Keillor spoke of; this is a place that has no lasting identity, but is desperately running around in all directions, looking for one. So, the Scandinavian horror suits them just fine, at first. It is, after all, a way of deriving identity. Later, when people start getting eaten, chopped to bits, etc, they have other thoughts. Usually, coming a bit too late.

The second aspect of the story is a biting commentary on certain aspects of American society and the educational system that are aggravating. At the core of the irritating bits is the idea that everything is great and equal, EXCEPT for saying that everything ISN'T great and equal. That's a VAST oversimplification, but I believe it's true to the bit of the book that veers a bit toward message fiction.

NOTE: if it wasn't actually HAPPENING, this wouldn't be message fiction at all. It would just be: fiction. It's what seems to be the desired outcome of the most abrasive elements of society that have given this book what may be regarded as a political spin. But, that was the choice made by the Influencers, not by Walker. He was just writing a book.

And here's what he has one of his characters say:

"A good, hard fact is the best defense there is — against everything except tears. There's a whole generation of debaters in the church who've learned that you don't have to refute an argument if you can only burst into tears and make your opponent look like a cad."

I don't suppose that, at the time he wrote that, it was reasonable to predict that the bursting into tears would be supplemented by hitting people in the head with bicycle locks. Unfortunately, that has turned out to be the case.

We can hope, however, that mysterious and evil bits of pre-history do not suddenly appear in our neighborhoods. The calling together of elements of Ragnarok and Armageddon, etc, IS a popular topic in fiction, according to the movie feeds that cross my line of sight. However, Walker rightly points out that the alleged noble and peaceful Viking traders, promoted by deconstructionist historians, are not quite the flavor we will get if they move in next door to us.

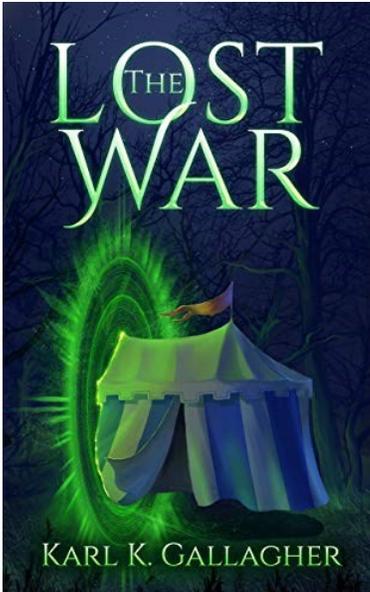
Re-reading has been a great visceral release. The good guys are good, the bad guys are bad, and usually, the difference between the two is evident. However, this is NOT 'Fun with Dick and Jane.' Characters are conflicted and have multiple motivations, so be prepared for that.

But: do yourself a favor, okay? Go ahead and get this one.

The Lost War by Karl K. Gallagher Review by Declan Finn

When I sat next to Karl Gallagher at LibertyCon, he mentioned that his Torchship Trilogy was about his day job (yes, he is a rocket scientist), and that *The Lost War* was about his hobby.

It was supposed to be a weekend of costumed fun. Instead these medieval historical reenactors are flung into a wilderness by magic they don't understand. They must struggle to survive and deal with monsters who consider them prey . . . or worse.



Buckle up. This is going to be fun. This is my fantasy pick for best fantasy for the Dragon Awards this year. It is awesome, and you are going to like it. And if you don't... well, um... you're wrong.

Our main character is Newman Greenhorn -- and if you can't tell that he's a newbie at a gathering of the Society for Creative Anachronism, now you know. When his girlfriend brings him to the pagan circle on the first night, well, what's the worst that can happen?

This. This is the worst that can happen.

As the circle disbands, the entire camp has moved. The flora is different. The fauna are different. The stars are different. And there are three moons in the sky. The entire camp has been moved and the struggle to survive has begun. They need food. They need weapons. They need to know what threats are out there. And look up in the sky! It's a bird.... no, it's a plane.... crap, that's a dragon.

If you're thinking "SCA surviving in a fantasy landscape. Hmm, sounds like John Ringo's Council Wars".... that is a very superficial view of it. Let's put it this way, when I read Karl's Torchship trilogy, I said in a review "Well, if David Weber ever needs help finishing Honor Harrington, maybe he should take to Karl."

Having topped David Weber, Karl has apparently decided to top John Ringo. And I don't even mean the Council Wars. Because there is a very specific reason that Newman and the camp have been brought over to this new world. The world has a problem, and the humans are to be the pest control. Thank you, rotten, mutha-bleepin elves. (Yes, think Posleen. Only a worse situation).

However, the plot is not what got me started on thinking about John Ringo. There is so much in the way of readable logistics in this book, it's amazing. There is a ton of effort put in on how things get done -- is the flora edible? Are the Fauna? The amateur astronomer who confirms, "Yes, the stars are different. We are not in Kansas anymore, Toto." "Oh look, here are piles of bones, we can deduce that we aren't the only hunters out here." There are considerations about medicines, hygiene, resource consumption, resource allocation, down to "How do we make soap?" and the question of law enforcement. Karl does a great job of setting up the situation, the variations of reactions to the setting, the governing of the new world -- both official and unofficial. You can see how it feels a bit like a Ringo novel, as Ringo is one of the few I can think of who can recreate and rebuild an entire society that completely.

Amateurs study tactics. Karl's a professional.

Also, I dare you to find someone else who will deal with fantasy parasitology, microbiology and serology.

AND EVERY LAST MINUTE OF IT WAS EASILY READABLE AND ENJOYABLE. Unlike most geniuses, Karl writes plainly and easily without dumbing it down.

The character of Newman himself is ... I think he's easily summed up in his line, "I'm more comfortable with strangers trying to kill me in the wild than dealing with protocol for nobility. Your excellency."

It was perfect. Down to the placement of the period.

There is a lot of easy character development. At least one character became my favorite in a one-page description (look for the character of "Burnout." I suspect she is a PA).

And then human beings start developing magical powers, and we have SCA X-Men. This leads to some interesting moments, including several instances where the characters make a deduction, follow through on the deduction, and it is apparent to the reader what is going on -- and it is AT NO POINT SPELLED OUT FOR THE READER. Because Karl figures that the reader also has two brain cells to rub together. And he's right. I didn't have to be told what was going on ... in fact, I had to double back to make certain that Karl didn't spell it out. It's great writing.

And it's so nice when a character calls out "Thalassa!" and I know what the bleep he's talking about.

I have only one problem with the book -- no chapters. The novel is more or less one continuous work. Luckily, I read quickly, so I didn't have to lose TOO much sleep.

Anyway, as I said, a great book, brilliantly executed.

Buy book 1, The Lost War, here.

It is my pick for fantasy in the Dragon Awards.

The War Revealed by Karl K. Gallagher Review by Declan Finn



In The Lost War, we saw the emergence of magic just beginning to settle in among the folks of the SCA troop transported to a fantasy world where magic is common ... and so are orcs. In the follow-up, The War Revealed, this book goes far deeper into the mechanics of magic. I'm trying to recall when the last time I saw magic being executed this practically. In the previous novel, a lot of time was spent on logistics and how things work. This novel centered around how magic worked. There's Chekhov's gun, and then there's Chekhov's SAW. There were even some uses of potential energy that read a little bit like old-school philosophy (IE: Ancient Philosophy). And some of it boils down to "Magic is weird."

But yeah, there's a lot of how things get done, only with magic. Call it "hard fantasy" if you must be picky, but it's interesting and readable for well over 30% of the book.

Then there were the elves. The mother. Flipping. Elves. Who are nasty, brutish and tall. The following exchange from the book sums it up rather nicely.

"It's an Elf."

"Don't call it that. We don't know anything about it. If you call it 'elf' just on its looks, you're making assumptions about its culture, morals, everything. That could bite us."

"I'm not going by his looks."

"What then?"

"The arrogance."

In book 1, the reader was made aware that our heroes were brought over to help with the orc problem -- the humans are the exterminators. Here, our heroes are told the "why," and then things become fun. Once again, the moral of the story is "Don't screw with the humans."

About a third of the book is focused on magic and how it works. Twenty percent is on the elves. And the rest of the novel focuses on and gears up to The Big Battle.

Also .. yeah, I'm going to make one or two more comparisons to John Ringo. Why? Because of lines like "The reply that sprang to mind was It's my job to be an @\$shole. But this wasn't the army, he wasn't a sergeant." Then there's an entire scene where someone is counting coup, only with orcs... because infantry, apparently. Yes, I still enjoy how easily Karl does character. Ignoring that some of the names are a tad on the nose ("Autocrat Sharpquill" is my favorite subtlety hammer), when Karl does character, he can do it in a few lines. I especially like the head of the camp, "King Ironhelm." ("I played Othello and Richard the Third in front of a thousand people! I can keep a f***ing poker face.")

And I do enjoy the lines. Karl even gets in good coinage. Like "I'm a Metatheist. I don't believe in God, but I believe I should." I'm sorry, I just like the line.

And screaming "Cannae!" to order an encircling maneuver. That was fun.

I have one problem with The War Revealed there might not be a third book. So buy book one and two, read them, review them, and make sure I get a book 3, damn it.

A Fiery Sunset

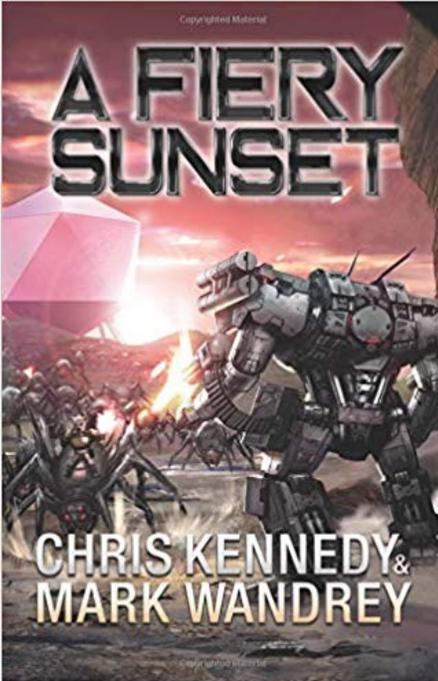
by Mark Wandrey and Chris Kennedy

Review by Jim McCoy

(Every once in awhile, when life isn't going the way you want it to, a book can take you out of that stressful place you're in and move your mind halfway across a galaxy. Today and tomorrow, I'll be reviewing two such books. I hope you enjoy my reviews as much as I enjoyed the works in question.)

Having read The Revelations Cycle in the Four Horsemen Universe, I couldn't wait to get to the Omega War Series. The life of a book reviewer is, however, a rough one, and I couldn't justify taking the time away from people who sent me review copies to pay for something. Then I found myself in a situation with no way to read e-books and a good paperback novel was just what the doctor ordered. Of course, I probably screwed up my prescription, because A Fiery Sunset by Chris Kennedy and Mark Wandrey is better than merely good. I mean that.

If you've read the Revelations Cycle then you've met the head of all of the Four Horsemen: The heads of the Mercenary companies known collectively by the same name. There is Nigel Shirazi of Asbaran Solutions, Jim Cartwright of Cartwright's Cavaliers, Sansar Enkh of the Golden Horde and Alexis Cromwell of the Winged Hussars.



If you haven't read the Revelations Cycle yet, you fall into one of three categories:

- 1.) Someone who doesn't like Military Science Fiction
- 2.) Communists who oppose the free market that allows smaller companies to flourish

or

- 3.) Someone who needs to get to Amazon and whip out the plastic money As Soon As Humanly Possible.

Of course, I'm willing to settle for quicker than that if you can figure it out. I mean, if it's worth doing in the next five minutes, it's probably worth doing yesterday if you can pull it off.

Oh, wait. Maybe I should talk about the book!

A Fiery Sunset is the first in the Omega War series. As such, it asks a lot of questions. There are things going on that we are not at all sure of the implications of everything that has happened and continues to happen. In some

ways, the book functions in a manner similar to a detective novel or an episode of Law and Order. We're trying to figure out what's going on and who is at fault. Unfortunately, the Galactic Union doesn't seem to have a RICO statute and that makes things difficult.

Of course, the fact that the aliens are casting humanity as the bad guys doesn't really add a whole lot to their - and thus our - odds of figuring out just what is going on. All of the fighting does seem to take up a lot of time that the Horsemen could be using to figure out why this is all happening to them. There is a lot to A Fiery Sunset. I'm guessing Kennedy and Wandrey spent a lot of time planning just how they were going to get here, because this tome fits in damn near perfectly with the earlier books. They did a phenomenal job working everything together.

And that's where the really cool part of A Fiery Sunset comes in, because even though it starts the series off, it's also a payoff of sorts. The first four books were each about a different one of the Four Horsemen mercenary companies. They're really good books, but we don't see the companies or their commanders mix at all. The only recurring character is someone I would cheerfully push out of an airlock with no suit on, just to see if the explosive decompression thing would actually happen. Who am I kidding? I'd do it, but science would be beside the point. No, I'm not going to paint you a picture if you haven't read the first series. Not even if it would look good on a CASPer.

That all changes in A Fiery Sunset. If any of you are fans of the Battletech novels (and please believe I am) you'll remember the time we finally got to see Jamie Wolf in the same room as Grayson Carlyle. Do you remember how cool that was? Do you remember how you wished it would never end? That's A Fiery Sunset in a nutshell. We finally get to see all of our heroes working together. It's freaking sweet. This isn't some "Scotty's stuck in the transporter" type junk either. Everyone is there because they need to be. Of course, this isn't the family reunion where you have to watch your great aunts and uncles sit around playing bridge. Lots of stuff happens and it comes at a very fast pace.

If you read my review of Asbaran Solutions then you know that I'm a huge fan of the way Chris Kennedy writes combat. If you read my review of Cartwright's Cavaliers then you know that Mark Wandrey does a damn fine job of it too. I'm guessing, based on the fact that I read too much and recognize certain authors' styles, that both wrote the combat in this book. That's good. They owned it. Something that frequently annoys me in books, and something I struggle with in my own work, is that with big ensemble

casts like the one in *A Fiery Sunset* it's not always clear why people are working together. There always seems to be that one annoying person who is just there because the author needs them to be with no clear cut motivation to show up. Not here. It's a fight for the fate of humanity and even the one company whose membership is nearly half alien has a definable motivation for being there. These characters make sense.

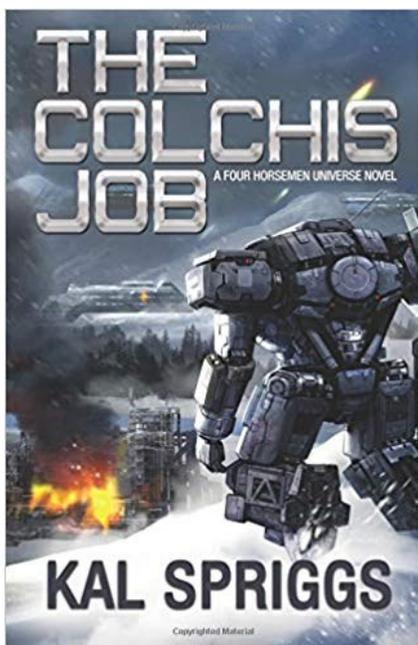
Combining characters can also provide some poignant moments and there is one character in the book that I can feel a lot of sympathy for. Dude goes through some major stuff and comes out okay. I like these kinds of moments in pretty much any book (if they're well done and they were here) but especially in works of military fiction or military history. A lot of people seem to forget that members of the military have real lives outside of just being soldiers/sailors, etc. It's not just that though. People who serve have feelings, too. Look, I'm a fan of free speech. If someone wants to throw terms like "baby-killer" or "bloodthirsty savage" around they have the right to do so. That doesn't make what they're saying correct though. Service members are people too. They love. They hate. Sometimes they hurt. What is truly amazing about members of the military is their ability to do their duty even when most civilians would fold up their tent and go home. It's not always easy for them, but they do that. We see some of that resilience here and it comes from one of my favorite characters. Kudos to Kennedy and Wandrey for giving a realistic depiction of military life instead of relying on negative stereotypes.

There is just so much here that works so well. I read this twice in less than a week because reasons, but also because it's just that good. Pick this one up folks, because it's that awesome.

Bottom Line: 4.75 out of 5 Raknars

The Colchis Job by Kal Spriggs

Review by Pat Patterson



There is a bit of (alleged) wisdom about the enemy of my enemy being my friend. I can accept that in certain circumstances; it's that sort of political necessity that allowed Roosevelt and Churchill to join forces with Stalin to defeat Hitler.

HOWEVER, just because it's true in certain limited applications, don't make the mistake of extrapolating beyond appropriate limits. Certainly, don't make that mistake if you are running a country, or a merc team.

Actually, don't make that mistake if you are a reader, either. The reason that thought occurs to me, is because I don't like the protagonist in 'The Colchis Job.'

Here's a quote that I used to define my opinion. Situation: he gives his general fix-it guy a nuclear device, in a delicate/unstable state, and tells him to weaponize it:

"I'll need to rig some kind of timer or something..."

"Whatever." I waved a hand. "Make it work." I wasn't really a details kind of guy.

Okay, I don't like this guy. I don't find his response charming, or devil-may-care, or any of those interesting quirky things. It happens I have WORKED for bosses like this, and they were always bad for the team, bad for the mission, bad for the company. They wanted what they wanted, immediately, and if you DARED to point out to them that what they were asking for was impossible, they blamed you for that.

I liked the BOOK, though. It's AT LEAST a semi-good plot, in part because the author imposes crippling circumstances on the mercs: extreme limits on CASPERS and other weapons tech. The one ultra-super-duper invulnerable unstoppable weapons suit they have consumes power at such a rate that it only has about 20 minutes of combat action time available. Most things have to happen with ingenuity, not brute force.

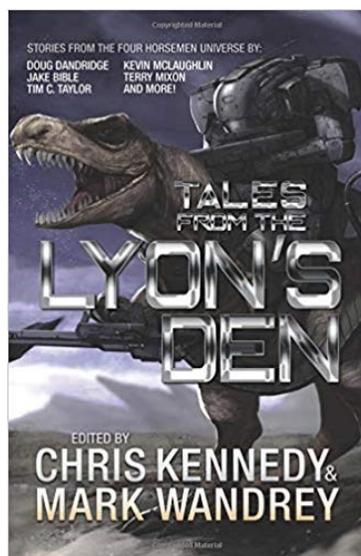
Also, those 'enemies-of-my-enemies' that I referenced are some pretty dastardly enemies. One of them is an evil step-father (literally). Another is a Mad Scientist, out to rule the universe with proscribed tech. If the Galactics discover that, they will not only kill him, they will bomb Earth back into the Stone Age. And, there are a few other Lesser Evils out there, in the form of...nah, not gonna tell you that.

If you like gonzo humor, as I do, you'll appreciate the dialogue. My favorite involves the field generated when the ElectroMagnetic Onanger (ELMO) is fired. Get too close, and it will kill ya, but from a bit further away, it's survivable for biological units, even if the EMP zaps some suit systems.

One of the BEST aspects of the 4HU is that it's NOT the same story, told over and over, from the same perspective. While common elements remain, such as CASPERS and the potential for Galactic threat, the story is not bound by a requirement to always include the same characters. That makes this an INCREDIBLY spacious playground, which can't help but benefit the reader. The fact that this particular story holds DEFINITE potential for further development multiplies the effect, Let's see: does that make this literary kudzu?

Shorter Works

Tales from the Lyon's Den by Chris Kennedy and Mark Wandrey Review by Pat Patterson



Preface by Chris Kennedy. Read this to find out where the stories came from. I'm not going to tell you, which illustrates BEAUTIFULLY the problem I have, as a reviewer, with anthologies. Frequently the point of the story turns on One Thing. And, I can't reveal that One Thing without it being a spoiler.

Now, I don't hate spoilers as bad as some people do. In fact, when I was a lad, I can remember turning to the last page of the story and reading that first, because I WANTED to know how it was going to come about.

Here are two points: It's not the One Thing that makes a good short story; it's the craft of the author. That's the first point. The SECOND point is that it takes me just about as long to communicate the craft of the author of a short story, as it does to communicate the craft of the author of a novel. So, while I LOVE short stories, and they were really what got me hooked early on, I HATE REVIEWING THEM. No, that's not true. I don't HATE them. But I do sigh, knowing they are going to be hard work. How much work? Well, I've just passed 200 words on the PREFACE. And avoided the One Thing!

The Devil in the Pit by Mark Wandrey. A merc walks into a bar... Jim Cartwright, the Original Cavalier, is visiting a new merc pit, when a chaotic fight breaks out. It appears the fight is everybody against everybody else. Survival is not a certainty; make a profit? RIDICULOUS!

A Job to Do by Quincy J. Allen. FOUR mercs walk into a bar...They are POSSIBLY the new Fireteam

Cooper for the merc unit Hu's Hawks. Although they all have the raw material, they have to pass another test before they are accepted. It involves taking a drink.

For the Honor of the Flag by Doug Dandridge. A burnout has walked into too many bars. That was his choice, after a bad thing happened, a bad, bad thing. To return from Burnout World, he has to walk into a different kind of bar, and then walk into a death trap.

Lucky by James P. Chandler. I don't know who walks into a bar. Some people may enjoy stories that are told in disjointed reveals, with continuity something you have to assemble after the entire thing is over. Me? I hate them. I hated this story. And a PART of that emotion is because it's got what LOOKS to be a fairly interesting plot. I don't really know, however, because I gave up about half-way through. YMMV. (But you are wrong if it does.) (insert defenestration gif here (not really, I don't have a gif))

Shit Day by Marisa Wolf. (who walks into the bar is a secret!) The best of these days are those that happen to other people. Keep that in mind. Also, keep in mind that help can come from unexpected places, and that sometimes, as when you are hanging upside down in a cave waiting to be eaten, you had better count on that. Because there is no other way you are getting out of this...

The Charge of the Heavy Brigade by Chris Kennedy. A merc ALMOST walks into a bar, but a T-rex stops him. Yeah, that IS a strange start, but it DID happen, really. Peace-loving, cabbage-eating T-rexes need help, because wicked, wicked MinSha have threatened to do a Bad Thing.

The Bottom Line by Michael J. Allen. An IRS agent walks into a bar. See, that's ALREADY a bad move. Why go into the bar? Why not make them come to you, and sit down in your air-conditioned office in the Official Building building? Hmmm. Wonder if the agent has OTHER reasons?

Midnight Diplomacy by Tim C. Taylor. Captain Blue, of the Midnight Sun Free Company, longs for a bar to walk into. Instead, there are these WORTHLESS, STUPID diplomats who must be protected. Despite the fact that they HAVE to be the worst treaty-makers EVER.

Desperta Ferro by Eric S. Brown & N.X. Sharps. Lt. Mazzey walked into a bar. A long, long time ago. And has been busy pickling brain cells since. It's rather pathetic, since at one point, he was a pretty good merc. Now he's the kind of merc only a loser would hire. Or, somebody who was LOOKING for a loser.

The Deadly Dutchman by Kevin McLaughlin. Corporal Wilson SLAMS into a bar. With his head. Fortunately, his suit protects him from most of it. But he's confused: Where is all this wreckage coming from? He was on a drop, when everything went away. Now, he is adrift in space. Where are his comrades? Where are his enemies? Does he have a future?

The Felix by R. J. Ladon. Why in the world would anyone PLAN to make an Oogar mad? And what would you do if your sister told you to do just that? Well, I'll tell you this: you had BETTER have a LOT of trust in your sister if you comply with those directions. NOTE: this story wins the award for finding an actual use for the .500 S&W. It DOES take space opera to make that come true.

The Heart of a Lion by Terry Mixon. When you need rescue, Rick Betancourt is the man you want. This mission is a bit different, though. Wicked, treacherous aliens are waiting to swarm an expedition to retrieve the fallen. For every successful mission, a price gets paid.

What Really Matters by Chris Winder. Ummm...sorry. I don't know what this story is about. I can tell you that it has GREAT action sequences, but I must have missed something, because the ending went over my head. Look, I was probably asleep, okay? Don't let it bother you.

Headspace and Timing by Robert E. Hampson. A whole bunch of mercs walked into a bar a while ago.

They are playing a very ancient game, call “mess with the newby,” and are telling lies. This PARTICULAR assortment of lies involves having your brain enhanced.

Return to Sender by Benjamin Tyler Smith. Well, the merchants have done it to the grunts again. The delivery of arms and ammo that will save them from being wiped out will suffer a slight delay, slight being a VERY flexible term. In this case, it means the mercs will die. They have ONE chance: a just in time delivery, by the service called “Justin Time;” captained by none other than Candy the Gun Bunny.

Grunwald by David Alan Jones. With the massive firepower called upon by some merc companies, it seems unlikely that a niche would exist for a one-CASPer unit. However, that is the case. It's only a guard posting, though, a guard of nothing valuable. Yeah. Right.

The Quiet Was Fine by Jake Bible. The ship exploded, and he was alone in space. And then he wasn't. As long as there is a hope, you strive. Eventually, striving is over.

A Mother's Favor by Kacey Ezell. A Depik walks into a bar. Unseen, of course. I believe you need to read THIS, then “Gilded Cage” in “A Fistful of Credits” and then this again, then “Gilded Cage” again, then this again. Why? Well, BESIDES the fact that they are both just excellent, creepy, engaging stories, regardless of content, they both deal with a Depik walking into a bar, and the consequences. Ezell is one of those writers who has the gift to use just a few words, and utterly rip your heart out of your chest. “I suppose I can't stop you,” Lyon said.

“No,” Del said, slowly blinking. “I suppose you cannot.”

Brrrr! To my way of thinking, that soft-spoken phrase carries more menace than paragraphs of raging threats and weapons waving in the air.

With one exception, these are well-told. They aren't predictable; in the 4HU, we start off with the fact that 96 of 100 missions ended in failure. And they are well worth your time. Heck, you might even like the one I threw out the window!

Video

The New Picard Trailer is Here! Review by Jim McCoy

Ok, everybody...

Can I make a confession?

I've uhh...

Never seen a single episode of Star Trek: Discovery.

The reasons are simple: I don't bootleg and I don't have CBS All Access. I didn't want to get it for one show that, from what I've heard, is only mediocre.

That might be changing though and it's all because of that trailer.

Listen, I'm a fan of ST:TNG. I have been since "Encounter at Farpoint" debuted on my local TV station. Seriously, if you ever see me, shake my hand and ask me about the night ST:TNG debuted in Detroit. It's

a tale better told in person. I'll be sure to let you in on one of the most humorous moments of my life.

Oh, yeah, the subject of the blog post...

I forget about that sometimes. I can be easily distracted by my mind, which travels at the speed of ligh...

Uh soun...

At the speed of something that travels fast, anyway.

So, yeah, I'm geeked.

I like seeing Sir Patrick back in a Star Trek show because I'm an unabashed fanboi. Always have been, always will be. He's an awesome actor and there is literally no television universe with more history than Star Trek. None. Fight me.

There is also none that I have more history with personally. I've been a fan for literally as long as I can remember. My dad raised me watching ST:TOS from before I could walk. He actually told me that I watched one episode with him the day they brought me home from the hospital. (Warning: This story may be bullshit. My father talked a lot of junk and I have no clear recollection of the event, having been like three or four days old at best.) At any rate, my first four friends were Mike from around the block, Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock and Dr. McCoy.

I get nervous about the legacy of a show like Star Trek because it's so near and dear to my heart. I can't honestly declare ST:PIC to be a good continuation of that legacy because I haven't seen a single episode, but I will say this much: I feel confident that something good is coming. It feels weird saying that because in general I'm not a fan of the fact that studios keep bringing back things that have been gone for decades. I'll make an exception here though, because this looks sweet.

I'm on the fence about reviving Data. Listen, I love the character and Brent Spiner is an awesome actor, but let's face it: Data is an android. He doesn't age. Brent Spiner is an actual actor and he's thirty plus years older than he was when he first played the part. He doesn't look the same anymore.

In spite of that though, I find myself intrigued about how and why Picard brings Data back. And seeing Seven of Nine come back is awesome. I've always loved that character and the fact that Jeri Ryan is that attractive and I was a teenage boy when she first appeared in ST:VOY has nothing to d...

>GAG<

Ok, whatever. Listen, Seven's first character arc and trying to find her humanity is one of the most entertaining and intriguing things I've ever watched/read in my entire life. Jeri Ryan is an amazing actress and I'm a fan. I'm looking forward to seeing her in Star Trek again as well. Unlike Data, Seven is a human being so she actually ages.

Not that Jeri Ryan looks a whole lot older than she did in ST:VOY. Hollywood people just don't seem to age at the same rate the rest of us do. But still, she doesn't look like she's barely out of high school like she used to.

And listen, with the exception of the last episode of ST:ENT, I'm a huge fan of mixing cast between shows. Seeing O'Brien and Worf on ST:DS9 was awesome, but so was seeing Picard in the first episode. Who can forget seeing Spock, Scotty and McCoy on ST:TNG? That was amazeballs. All I ask is that it makes sense story-wise and I see no reason why it wouldn't at this point. I do reserve the right to change my mind later, but if Picard is bringing back Data they way it shows in the trailer, I'm guessing he has a

reason to do so.

I want to be cautiously optimistic but I'm leaning heavily on being in Fanboi Heaven right now. What could be better than seeing the right person (IE the original actor) come back to play one of your favorite characters of all time? If they do right by the character (and I trust Patrick Stewart to tell them all to place their scripts in their anal orifi if they don't) this is going to be awesome.

Hey, I just thought of something...

Are they going to have a couple of recovered Borg references between Seven and Locutus? If they do it right that could be amazeballs and it's the kind of thing that an introspective dude like Picard would do. He's a caring guy too, so I can totally see a sympathetic talk between the two, maybe like horror of the experience combined with a weird nostalgia, especially on Seven's part.

Oh God, now I'm the guy who gives the writer ideas. Somebody save me from myself.

But it would make a great moment though, right? One for the ages?

Ok, I'll stop.

And I'm out. Let me know what you're thinking.

Sercon

The Life and Work of Richard Sale

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian

Richard Bernard Sale was born December 17, 1911, and died March 4, 1993. He was an author, a motion picture director and screenwriter, a television producer/director/writer, and a composer and lyricist. A fourth-generation New Yorker, he sold his first magazine story at age 12. After he left Washington and Lee University in 1933, he turned professional and eventually published over 450 magazine stories, several books, and 38 movie scripts; and he had 23 directorial efforts.

One of his stories was listed on the honor role of the Best Short Stories of 1935. He worked briefly for newspapers in New York State, including the World Telegram and the Pelham Sun. Sale also published under the pseudonyms of Bernard Elas and John St. John, usually for stories he wrote for Argosy. During World War II, he served as a Navy correspondent for The Saturday Evening Post.

Principal Books

Not Too Narrow, Not Too Deep (1936) [treated by some reference works as a fantasy/filmed in 1940 as Strange Cargo]

Is a Ship Burning? (1938)

Cardinal Rock (1940)

Lazarus #7 (1942) [aka Death Looks In and Lazarus Murder Seven]

Sailor, Take Warning (1942)

Passing Strange (1942) [Spanish Fly is a major plot element!]

Destination Unknown (1943) [aka Death at Sea]

Benefit Performance (1946) [movie star impersonates his stand-in]
 Home is the Hangman (1949) [Two novelettes, one published separately in England as Sailor, Take Warning – see above]
 Murder at Midnight (1950) [Two novelettes/described as “fantastic fiction” by some reviewers]
 The Oscar (1963) [filmed in 1966/screenplay by Harlan Ellison]
 For the President's Eyes Only (1971) [aka The Man Who Raised Hell/hero described by reviewers as an American James Bond]
 The White Buffalo (1975) [“Moby Dick of the West”/filmed in 1977]

Magazine Fiction

Sale's short fiction included several mystery series in the pulp magazines, one involving a reporter named Joseph “Daffy” Dill and one about a tough photographer named Candid Jones, a sometime companion of Dill's (both series in Detective Fiction Weekly), another about Penny Packer, a “news hound sleuth” (in Popular Detective), and one about The Cobra, a masked avenger similar to The Shadow (in Ten Detective Aces).

The Cobra: The King of Detectives (2009), published posthumously, is a collection of Sale's reptile-related pulp stories, and includes all of the appearances of The Cobra. The Cobra was Deen Bradley of British Intelligence, out of India. Another of Sale's series characters was named Daniel Webster!

One of Sale's early novels, The Rogue, was a 5-part series in Argosy in the 1930s and has never been published in book form.

Three of Sale's detective stories appeared in the legendary mystery magazine, Black Mask, although two of these were reprinted from other magazines. His debut story in Black Mask was “The Dancing Rats” in the June, 1942 issue. Set in Oahu during World War II, the story told of a Dr. Nick Adams and his encounters with villainous Japanese. Sale's two reprinted stories appeared in the January, 1951 and July, 1951 issues of Black Mask.

A few of his stories were undoubtedly fantasies, including a series he wrote about a Captain McGrail. In the late 1940s - early 1950s, Sale had a story in the first issue of Fantasy Fiction, and a couple of other stories in The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction (including one in the very first issue when the magazine was titled The Magazine of Fantasy).

Motion Picture Work

Sale wrote the words and music for the movie “Gentleman Marry Brunettes” that appeared in 1955. His wife, Anita Loos (married in 1940, 3 children), had written the famous story Gentlemen Prefer Blondes – filmed in 1953 with Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell. Other movies in which Sale had a hand writing and/or directing were Mr. Belvedere Goes to College (1949), A Ticket to Tomahawk (1950), Suddenly! (1954), Seven Waves Away (1957), and The White Buffalo (1977). He is also credited as being one of the scrip writers on Around the World in Eighty Days (1956).

I especially enjoyed Mr. Belvedere Goes to College when I saw it as a teenager. The scene in which Mr. Belvedere, played by Clifton Webb, takes an intelligence test is one of the funniest I have ever seen on the screen.

Lazarus #7

Why is Sale of special interest to me, primarily a science fiction (SF) fan? The answer is found in some of his short fantastic fiction, but mainly in his 1942 novel Lazarus #7, a book that is very difficult to acquire today in hardback editions – unless one is willing to pay a lot for it.

In 1942 it was marketed as a mystery, and most critics still view it as belonging to the mystery genre. On the other hand, some book dealers consider it SF and list it as such in their catalogs. I have two copies, the hardback “Inner Sanctum” edition from Simon and Schuster (1942), and an abridged paperback edition from Handi-Books (1943).

There was also a Jonathan Press paperback edition (1945) and a 1950 paperback edition from Harlequin (#79); also, reprints of the story appeared in various pulp magazines of the 1940s - 1950s.

Today, the paperback editions, when available, sell in the \$50.00 to \$100.00 range, with the hardback first edition selling for an even higher price, sometimes a much higher one. The book has been translated into several foreign languages; and, for some reason, copies of these foreign editions are usually readily available and at quite reasonable prices.

Raymond Chandler in his famous essay, “The Simple Art of Murder,” called Lazarus #7 “a gay and intriguing Hollywoodian gambol.” Ron Goulart (in his anthology of detective fiction from the pulps, *The Hardboiled Dicks*) quoted Chandler in describing the book, but added: “You should read it anyway.”

The plot involves a scientist who wants to raise the dead (and has been successful in doing so with several dogs), a medical researcher who is seeking a cure for leprosy, a powerful Hollywood producer and his cronies, and two lovely women who claim to love the hero, the medical researcher.

The title refers to the seventh living thing in the story that was successfully brought back from the dead.

Sale and Doc Savage

Sale had another brush with SF, but nothing much came of it. It has been reported that Sale almost wrote a Doc Savage novel. Sale considered himself an expert on snakes, and had had several stories with plots involving snakes accepted for publication in the pulps. He came up with an idea for a Doc Savage story, and he and Lester Dent (the principal Doc Savage writer) discussed his idea at length. The story was tentatively titled “Python Isle,” and they decided that Sale would write it under Dent’s direction. (This is apparently the way Dent worked with his “ghosts” at that time).

Sale was kept from completing the story, however, by the magazine’s editor, John L. Nanovic. Sale had sold Nanovic some of his “snake” stories; but some readers did not like them, and wrote LoCs to Nanovic criticizing them. When the proposal for the Doc Savage novel to be written by Sale was submitted, Nanovic promptly rejected the idea.

Interestingly, Dent later wrote a Doc Savage story that bore a remarkable resemblance to “Python Isle.” Dent also called one of his Black Mask characters Oscar Sail – and named another character (in an unpublished mystery novel) Homer Sale. It seems that Richard Sale (or at least, his name) made an impression upon Dent.

Some Conclusions

Sale is remembered today mostly for his work in motion pictures. He is almost always mentioned, however, in any comprehensive discussion of detective stories of the 1930s-1940s. Author/critic Ron Goulart appears to be especially fond of Sale’s work. In his history of the detective fiction pulps, *The Dime Detectives*, Goulart reported on an interview with Sale. In this interview Sale said that Daffy Dill was his favorite character, presumably because he was patterned after Sale’s own newspaper experiences.

Goulart concluded his discussion of Sale’s work by saying that his Daffy Dill stories were the prose equivalent of the very good, very slick screwball mystery movies of the period. If Goulart is right, these

early pulp stories were the precursors of some of Sale's later screenplays.

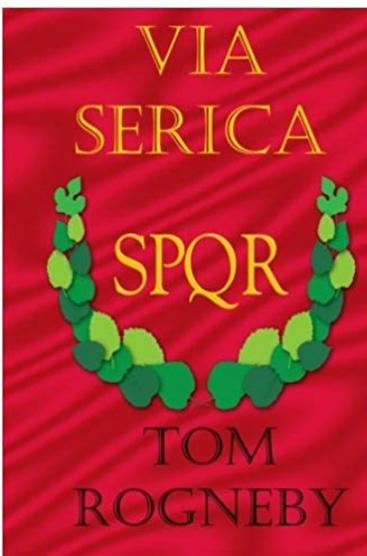
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Note: In addition to the above, several Internet sites were consulted.

Gourmet Bureau

Eat This While you Read That: Tom Rogneby
 From Cedar Sanderson



I didn't realize when I asked Tom for a dish for ETWYRT that he also food blogs. Which makes sense, really, I know a few authors, like myself, who are rather fond of this food thing, and putting things in our mouth, especially tasty things. Tom, being a father, makes foodstuffs for his baby bears (totally makes sense if you look at his blog or read his *Tales of the Minivandians*). So he sent me a pair of recipes when I asked, with links, and I said 'yippee! less work for Cedar!' So thanks, Tom.

This didn't, of course, let me out of the cooking, photographing, and inevitable clean-up involved. But that's ok, because this was a very tasty meal and I'm glad for the opportunity to have eaten it. While *Tales of the Minivandians* is a lovely book to read while cooking, because it's vignettes and short bits of a story in a post-apocalyptic medieval setting (it works, really it does), you might also want to check out his latest, *Via Serica*, which I reviewed recently. *Via Serica* is a historical novel, and a very well-done story. Now that we have the reading material out of the way, we shall commence with the food porn. I've added my cooking notes.

Pork Roast with Potatoes and Apple Gravy



When I do this again, I will omit the green peppers. They didn't really add anything to the flavor, and they were an off-green when cooked, not appealing. Or, as the First Reader will point out, I could just be prejudiced against green peppers.

When I was first looking at the recipe I turned to the First Reader and asked "what's cooking bourbon? I've heard of cooking wine, even if I don't use it, but cooking bourbon?" He shrugged. "The cheapest stuff in the store?"

Gathering my ingredients, including the bourbon...

Pork Roast with Potatoes and Apple Gravy

It's officially chilly out there, and it's time to make something that will warm us all up.

Ingredients:

1 3 to 5 pound pork roast
 1 bell pepper, with stem and seeds removed, coarsely chopped
 1 large white onion, chopped fine
 1 granny smith apple, chopped into 1/4 inch cubes (skin on or off depending on your tastes)
 3 cloves of garlic, minced
 1 pound potatoes, whole if they are small, coined if they aren't.
 2 cups cooking bourbon (No need to use the good stuff here)
 1 can cream of mushroom soup, or 1/2 pound of sliced mushrooms and milk or cream if you're better at this than I am and want to make better gravy
 Salt and pepper to taste

Put the bell pepper and onion in the bottom of a crock pot. Sprinkle the apple and garlic on top of the onions. If you're making real mushroom gravy, add the mushrooms to this layer. Arrange the potatoes in a layer above the apples. Place the pork roast on top of the potatoes. Pour the bourbon over the top of the pork roast. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Cook in the crock pot on medium heat for 6 to 8 hours.

When the pork roast is done to your desired tenderness, remove, along with the potatoes. Use a potato masher to break up any remaining chunks in the drippings left in the crock pot. Transfer drippings to a saucepan. Cook over medium heat until it comes to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. If you're making real gravy, stir in the milk or cream and simmer until you get the consistency you want. If you're like me, stir in the can of cream of mushroom soup and simmer until the lumps are dissolved and the gravy comes to the desired consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste, although if you used canned soup, you shouldn't need to add any salt.

To serve, place several of the roasted potatoes on a plate, mash with a fork, top with the pork, then ladle on as much gravy as you like. Serve with a good vegetable or a salad, and your favorite crusty bread. Recipe feeds four with leftovers.

So that's what I got. The flavor of the finished sauce (it's not properly a gravy) was quite good, so I did something right I guess.



The only problem I have with the slowcook when I'm gone all day is the pork gets overdone. But still tasty.

The sauce took forever to cook down. I'd done the initial cooking in the slow cooker and mine is quite well sealed, keeping all the liquid in. I would either cut back the bourbon to one cup, or actually do a gravy with a roux base, if I

try this again. I did do it from scratch, with fresh mushrooms and cream rather than the cream of mushroom soup. But I was in the mood to fuss, which isn't always the case.

We had ours with garlic bread, and over a bed of fresh spinach.



Apple Spice Cake

Applesauce Spice Cake may be the quintessential fall dessert. Forget Pumpkin spice, this is much better.

It's that time of year again, where a bear's thoughts turn to things with nutmeg and cinnamon in them.

Girly Bear's going to a sleep over tonight, so we thought we'd whip up something for her to take, and this seemed appropriate.

Ingredients:

1 cup white flour
 1 cup whole wheat flour
 1/2 tsp baking soda
 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
 Nutmeg
 Ginger
 Cinnamon
 Cloves

1/2 cup butter, softened
 1/2 to 1 cup white sugar, depending on your tastes
 1/4 cup honey
 Vanilla, bourbon, or almond extract
 2 eggs
 1/2 cup milk
 1 cup applesauce

1 small apple, cored and peeled, and cut into small pieces
 1/4 cup raisins

Sift flours, soda, baking powder, and spices (to taste) into a bowl.

In another bowl, cream together butter, sugar, and honey. Add vanilla, bourbon, or extract and eggs. Combine milk and applesauce in a bowl. Add dry ingredients to sugar/butter mixture and mix thoroughly. Add milk/applesauce mixture and mix thoroughly. Mix in apple and raisins.

Place in a small, greased baking dish (I use a 6x6), and bake in a 350 degree oven for 30 to 40 minutes or until a knife poked into the center comes out clean.



This cake comes out very dense. If you prefer your cake a little spongier, use all white flour instead of the whole wheat portion. I doubled down and added 1/2 cup of walnut meal to this one. I also added a little ground cardamom to the spice mix.

Super dense and moist. I baked mine in a 9" round dish. It would work nicely in a tube pan with fried apple in the center, a sprinkle of powdered sugar, and served with ice cream... now I need to make it again.

We talked about making caramel sauce to have over this – from Dave Freer's Sticky Date Pud-

ding, and this is closer in texture to English pudding – but wound up eating it as-is. It's yummy, and not terribly sweet so it's nice for breakfasts (says the busy student who grabbed a slab of it on her way out the door and was surprised at how long it lasted for fuel).



Breakfast! Coffee cake! Whatever you call it, it's delicious.

**This space
could have been
your LoC.**



Weightless by Jose Sanchez