

Tightbeam

September 2022



Starbright
by José Sánchez

Tightbeam 336

September 2022

The Editors are:

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

Jon Swartz jon_swartz@hotmail.com

Art Editors are Angela K. Scott, Jose Sanchez, and Cedar Sanderson.

Art Contributors are Alan White, Jose Sanchez, and David Russell

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.” Cedar Sanderson’s reviews and other interesting articles appear on her site www.cedarwrites.wordpress.com/ and its culinary extension. Jason P. Hunt’s reviews appear on SciFi4Me.Com

Tightbeam is published approximately monthly by the National Fantasy Fan Federation and distributed electronically to the membership.

The N3F offers four different memberships. To join as a public (free) member, send phillies@4liberty.net your email address.

To join or renew, use the membership form at <http://n3f.org/join/membership-form/> to provide your name and whichever address you use to receive zines. Memberships with The National Fantasy Fan (TNFF) via paper mail are \$18; memberships with TNFF via email are \$6. Zines other than TNFF are email only. Additional memberships at the address of a current dues-paying member are \$4. **Public (non-voting) memberships are free.** Send payments to Kevin Trainor, PO Box 143, Tonopah NV 89049 . Pay online at N3F.org. PayPal contact is treasurer@n3f.org.

Table of Contents

Art

Front Cover ... Starbright by Jose Sanchez
Back Cover ... Monster Umpire Catcher by Jose Sanchez

Editorial

Letter of Comment

4 ... Lloyd Penney

Anime

5 ... Summer 2022 First Impressions – Parallel World Pharmacy by Jessi Silver
7 ... Uncle From Another World by Jessi Silver

Motion Pictures

9 ... Fantastic Beasts 2: The Crimes of Grindlewald ... Review by Jim McCoy
10 ... Reflections on Post-Apocalyptic Fiction Review by Jim McCoy

SerCon

13 ... Patricia McKillip Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D., N3F Historian

Food of Famous Authors

16 ... Eat This While You Read That: Alma Boykin ... Cooking by Cedar Sanderson

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: All material in this issue, unless expressly noted otherwise, is contributed for one-time use only in this publication in its various print and electronic forms including electronic archival libraries. All other copyrights are retained by the contributor. Other use of any other portion of this publication in any medium requires the express permission of the current (at time reproduction is to be made) President and Directorate of N3F and the original copyright holder.

Editorial

It is Summer.

Writers are on vacation. Writers are recovering from interesting weather across much of our country. Writers are, let us say, not writing as much.

Nonetheless, we hope you enjoy this issue, the 336th issue of Tightbeam

Letter of Comment

Dear George and Jon:

I have fallen behind again, so I have two issues of Tightbeam, 334 and 335, to make comment on. Time to get with it, so here goes...

334... Wasn't there a Tom Disch book with that number? It's been editorial work that gotten me behind again. I am almost done the third book I have edited for D.J. Holmes, and I have finished the book from Amazing Selects called Cents of Wonder. It's about the early writing contests Hugo Gernsback sponsored to get new writers to respond to a fantastic cover on issues of his early magazines in the late 1920 and early 1930s. Hope to see it soon. I have more days with the local business magazine I work on coming soon, too. Don't get me wrong, I'd rather be busy than not. Re the anime con...we are returning to run the vendors' hall in 2023.

Great information on Bob Tucker. I did meet him once at a Worldcon, we were on a panel together on fannish traditions. At one point, Bob asked one of his many 'granddaughters' to go to his room to get a bottle, and it was indeed Jim Beam, and we all got to smooooooth for an audience. We need to create a list of all fans who have been Tuckerized in SF&F over the years. Yvonne and myself...one each.

335... To John Hert, Jan Stinson is still around. I've seen her a few times lately on Facebook. I think she's been away for some time. I have seen other videos where a crab-like cryptid is seen scuttling off a road...I probably have as much idea of what this is as anyone, which is little. So many videos have unexplained phenomena in them.

Leslie Perri is a name I recognize, if not completely remember. In every group, there's important people in the background, and she seemed to have that role with Futurians. Always more to learn.

I fear I have done what I can with what I have. I wish there was more I could write about, and I've gone through each issue twice. Just me sitting and sweating in the heat, I suppose. See you with the next ones.

Yours,
Lloyd Penney

Anime

Summer 2022 First Impressions – Parallel World Pharmacy By Jessi Silver

Streaming: Crunchyroll

Episodes: 12

Source: Light Novel



Episode Summary: A pharmacology researcher works obsessive hours as a response to the loss of his sister from cancer in their childhood. Unfortunately the endless work and little rest catch up to him one night and he collapses in his office. When he awakens, he finds himself not only in another world, but in the body of young Farma – a noble whose family is well-renowned for their talent in the medical arts. Farma was recently struck by lightning, and

his maid Charlotte notices some strange marks on his arms which she believes indicate that he was saved from certain death by the god of pharmacology.

Farma soon begins to understand the implications of the situation he's been dropped into, and starts attempting to re-learn the skills that he knew prior to being struck by lightning. As he becomes reacquainted with his abilities, it becomes apparent that he has the potential to wield a great deal of power. When his tutor Elen begins to sense something different in Farma, including the fact that he has access to powers that, as a human, he probably shouldn't, she becomes terrified of him. Could Farma possibly be a god incarnate – or might he be a demon?



Isn't that always the question?

Impressions: As someone who consumes a decent amount of anime, I definitely have my complaints about certain popular genres. It's difficult not to when you encounter so many that adhere to popular trends. The best I can do is try to temper my expectations and try my hardest to accept these pieces on their own merits rather than let my own prejudices go out of control.

One of the more common isekai fantasy tropes I've seen repeated lately is one in which the individual who's transported to another world does so after dealing with extreme overwork in their "real life." The popularity of this concept is easy to rationalize; while working conditions in Japan are slowly improving, there are still companies that expect extensive overtime from their workers. Likewise, there will always be workers who, in spite of the realities of their

working conditions, will work themselves to exhaustion out of a sense of duty to their employer or some other outside force. The appeal of being lifted off into a world where the workload isn't so extreme and one's talents are greatly appreciated is obvious, considering the circumstances.

The other big trope that tends to stick out in my mind is that of the overpowered protagonist. In many cases, their knowledge of video gaming or some other otaku pursuit gives them an upper hand in an environment that's clearly inspired by that kind of media. A lot of times this feels undeserved and more a spiteful power fantasy than anything that adds depth to an isekai fantasy story.

The biggest question in my mind, though, is generally "did this have to be an isekai?" Many times the story would have worked just as well had the "other world" aspect been dropped in favor of better world-building and character creation from the get-go.

Parallel World Pharmacy, at least from what I can tell from this first episode, is an example of the type of story that embraces these ideas and makes a solid attempt to justify their existence. The pharmacist who dies on the couch in his office isn't some otaku douche who feels like the world has done him wrong, he's a person driven by a past tragedy who's sacrificed his health so that he can find a way to keep others from suffering the way that he did.

He becomes overpowered in his new role, not because of the whims of some kooky goddess, but because his knowledge of modern molecular science helps with the expression of what this other world defines as elemental magic. It feels like the type of story that could only truly exist because of the interplay of the character's old and new lives – something that is unique to isekai stories.

This episode manages to do enough with its opening episode to build some stakes and create a sense of unease, which I appreciate. I'm still wary of the genre as a whole, but I had some positive feelings about this episode.

Generating water inside a house is... inconvenient.

Pros: This episode does a good job of establishing some early stakes for Farma without resorting to "game-ification" of his circumstances. There's no talk of numerical stats or levels, no low-level enemies that need defeating, and no floating menus in this world – just the challenges of a new life and a family with high expectations. I also like that Farma's family situation appears to offer him a chance of having a relationship with a sister – something he wasn't able to have due to his real-life circumstances.

Cons: The writing attempts to disguise its info-dumping with Farma's partial amnesia, which is only partially successful. It makes sense that he'd need to be reminded of the things he'd already learned, but the dialog still has a little bit of "as you know..." stink on it.

Content Warnings: Extreme overwork, mild fantasy violence.

Would I Watch More? – I was pleasantly surprised by this episode, because it managed to avoid a lot of the pitfalls I associate with this specific fantasy sub-genre. I might check out a couple more episodes to see how things roll out once the protagonist gets his bearings.

Uncle From Another World

By Jessi Silver



Episodes: 13
Source: Manga

Episode Summary: Seventeen years ago, Takafumi's uncle was hit by truck-kun, and while his earthly body seemed to be in a coma in the hospital, his mind was far, far away having adventures in another world. When his uncle finally wakes up, Takafumi assumes that the weird language he's speak-

ing is just the ramblings of a crazy person, but once his uncle demonstrates some honest-to-goodness magical ability, Takafumi begins to understand the potential for profit he may have just stumbled into.

While their YouTube career starts as a bit of a slow burn, Takafumi learns more about his uncle's experiences while his uncle wrestles with catching up with seventeen years' worth of technological advances and changes in the video game console landscape. While his uncle has al-



ways seemingly had issues dealing with real human relationships (his fondest memories are of video games), Takafumi learns that his uncle may have inadvertently become closer to a young woman in the other world than he may have realized at the time. As Takafumi and his uncle try to work out a way of sustaining themselves and their meager lifestyle, could his uncle's "interesting" past come back to haunt him?

You've gotta do what you can in this capitalist society.

Impressions: Within the past year, having been put through my fill of extremely similar first episodes of isekai anime, I started to have thoughts of potentially coming up with my own take on the genre, examining the psychology of someone who's been hailed as a hero in another world being forced to return to our world and live as a normal human being again. Like most of my big ideas I've made literally zero effort to follow through, but I sometimes return to it as an interesting thought experiment when I'm feeling especially down about having to watch yet another male power fantasy play out before my very eyes.

Uncle From Another World isn't exactly a full expression of this idea – while Takafumi's uncle clearly didn't have the best time in either the real world or the fantasy world the story doesn't seem to be directly about any potential emotional or psychological scars he may have received due to his experiences. However, it is a very fun, and funny, look at how someone transported to another world might actually be treated by the locals, as well as a pretty humorous overview of how video game and anime culture have changed and mutated since the turn of the 21st cen-

ture – something which will feel especially relevant to people around my own age cohort (I graduated from high school in the year 2000).

There's a gag that repeats throughout the episode in regards to Uncle's Sega fandom and how the console wars was at one time a very big deal in gamer circles. I remember this stuff vividly, and how important it was at one time to pick sides and formulate an identity around that (I've always been a Nintendo fan, but weirdly enough I had both consoles). Some of the advertisements from that era seem tacky beyond belief (and a lot of them were sexist, to boot). It definitely was a time and place, but compared to a lot of the post GG gaming internet, it certainly feels funny and quaint. It was fun to briefly relive some of that via this episode.



This episode actually managed to make me laugh a few times, which is honestly a real feat. While I can't claim to know whether or not the show's central gag will remain funny throughout its run, I was much more entertained by this episode than I would have expected and think that this might be a fun one to pick up (especially since Netflix is actually posting it somewhat weekly rather than all-at-once as usual).

The specific details of Uncle's relationship with a certain elf is up for discussion.

Pros: I like how this episode reveals some of the positives and negatives about our modern world. Back in 2000-whatever, we didn't have to deal with YouTube (or its related comments sections), Amazon wasn't the huge overwhelming force it's become, and there weren't smartphones to keep us constantly "online" with no reprieve. Life certainly wasn't all rainbows and roses, but there were benefits to being able to completely log off. That being said, I'm not sure I'd trade my modern life to go back. In any case, I think this creates an interesting conflict for the characters in this series, even if it isn't the main focus.

Likewise, I hadn't realized how much of the culture of anime and its related media was being codified in the early 2000s because it was happening organically as I was living through the midst of it. I think this fact lends an interesting angle to Uncle's character. He's kind of a "loser" in love and in life, but because he was removed from the equation prior to the rise of the more malignant brand of "women owe me sex" character, his perception of his situation is more in line with being unlucky than anything else. It's not great, but it's better than the alternative, anyway.

Cons: I worry a bit that some of the humor can be too cynical. A lot of it arises from Uncle not really understanding the full implications of some of his own experiences, as well as the general awfulness of the general population of the other world. There's an element of tragedy to some of it that I'm not sure I like. I more prefer the ridiculousness of making money from YouTube videos of one person appearing to stab someone else (by pulling a knife in and out of an other-dimensional storage space) to laughing directly at someone's misfortune.

Content warnings: Magical violence. Brief nudity.

Would I Watch More? – I rarely laugh when I'm watching something on my own, so it speaks to this episode's humor that I actually had a few chuckles alone in my office. I'm not expecting anything too groundbreaking, but I'm definitely interested in watching some more.

Motion Pictures

Fantastic Beasts 2: The Crimes of Grindewald Review by Jim McCoy



I just finished watching Fantastic Beasts 2: The Crimes of Grindelwald about two hours ago and decided I'd share my thoughts about it.

SIGH

Once upon a time, during a decade of my life best forgotten, I was told that I should always start off with something positive when critiquing someone else's work. That's good advice, so let's start with this:

The special effects crew for Fantastic Beasts 2: The Crimes of Grindelwald deserves an Oscar. That was one of the most intense visual experiences of my life. The magical creatures lived and breathed.

There was an underwater scene that looked better than anything similar I've seen in movies, TV or gaming. Barely a minute went by when there wasn't something awesome looking somewhere in my view. I seriously hope that whoever did the CGI for The Crimes of Grindelwald gets a raise or a promotion, or maybe a raise AND a promotion. I didn't watch the credits but WOW, WOW, WOW, WOW, WOW. I wonder if somewhere out there some other special effects people weren't watching this movie in awe wondering how they managed to pull some of this stuff off. It was that good.

Unfortunately, I have to wonder if they didn't spend too much of the budget on effects and not enough on a good team of writers. I mean that seriously. It hurts to write this because I've been a fan of Harry Potter since my then-GF (now ex-wife) put me in a spot where I had no choice but to read the first one. I loved all of the books. I loved the movies almost as much. The first Fantastic Beasts was awesome. That doesn't change the facts about The Crimes of Grindelwald though, and the fact is that this was not a very well written movie.

I remember way back in the day, during the same decade I mentioned earlier, I posted the first few chapters of my first attempt at a novel on a website known as Baen's Bar. It was a rough draft, but I thought it was non-sucktacular. That kind of scared me though, because most of the writers I know who feel confident about their work probably shouldn't. I was happy though because the community was very supportive. The worst comment I got was something along the lines of "This reads more like a collection of events than a story." I took that to heart, re-read what I had written and decided that the poster (I don't remember who it was) had a point. I re-worked it and made it suck less. It was a good experience.

It's also something that I wish the writers of Fantastic Beasts 2 had experienced because their work had the same problem. There was no plot here. There's no narrative thread. This happens over here. That happens over there. They're somewhat related, but let's face it, as a human being I'm somewhat related to the Pope. It's something that I can see happening to anyone in a rough

draft. It's not something that makes sense in a script that has been edited enough times to appear on the big screen. Someone needed to take charge in a production meeting and get some stuff ironed out. It's glaringly apparent that no one did.

It's not that I'm opposed to large casts and stories taking place with widely dispersed points of view. I've read enough Harry Turtledove and David Weber to be used to it. Hell, I enjoy it. It has to be done well though, and in this case it really wasn't. I'm going to cast an aspersion in absence of knowledge of the facts here, but I honestly believe what I'm saying, even if I can't prove it.

The Crimes of Grindlewald feels like it was written more as a way to show off special effects than as an attempt to tell a good story. The underwater scene that I mentioned earlier was awesome but it had nothing to do with the plot. It just looked cool. Grindlewald did some really impressive looking magic but that's all it was. Another person showed up and got everybody to do one really impressive looking spell but that's really all he was there for. That was as big a disappointment as anything else.

I've got to wonder if the reason this wasn't all that good is because J.K. Rowling wasn't writing it. She invented the universe. She created the characters. She engineered Hogwarts. She was conspicuous by her absence. I really missed her input here. She could have made this story sing. As it is, it barely hums and is badly off-key.

The Crimes of Grindlewald is such a disjointed mess that even when it tries to advance a relationship between two of the most important characters it falls flat. Seriously. The payoff, when it came, didn't move me at all. Seriously.

The worst thing about the movie is that it left me bored. Fortunately for me I went to see the two-thirty matinee and was the only person in the theater. That came in handy when I pulled out my phone and started Facebooking. There was no one around to complain. Yes, I really did need something to hold my attention while I was watching a movie that I had paid to see. I almost got up and left early. There really wasn't much there.

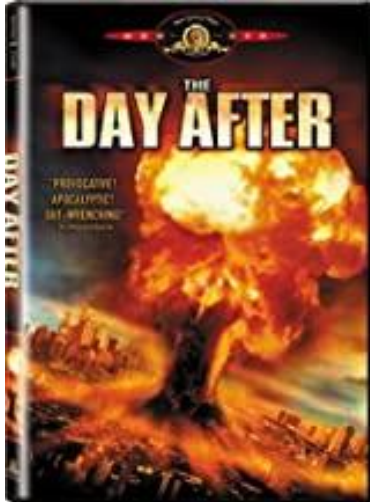
I'm up in the air as to whether or not I'll see the next one. This is, after all, the tenth movie (count again and remember that the seventh book was two movies) set in the Potterverse and they were just about due for a stinker. This should be a fairly easy act to follow as well. It's not like it could be all that much worse. On the other hand, what if it doesn't get better? I'm not rich and even a reduced price for a matinee is seven bucks. I might be better off spending that money on a couple of jerky sticks and a two liter. I guess I'll have to see how the trailers look.

Bottom Line: 2.5 out of 5 Broken Wands

Reflections on Post-Apocalyptic Fiction

Review by Jim McCoy

I just got done watching *The Day After* (directed by Nicolas Meyer for the ABC Television Network, 1983) and it got me thinking. I have watched, read and loved a ton of post-apocalyptic fiction. Today was my first time watching *The Day After*, but I grew up on the Mad Max movies. *The Hunger Games* is, of course, set in Panem after a nuclear exchange. The latter two se-



ries in the Robotech universe take place in a world that has been savaged by aliens. I could go on forever. Science Fiction fans love post-apocalyptic settings. It's just what we do.

I guess the difference between *The Day After* and the vast majority of other Post-Apocalyptic settings is that it shows the actual apocalypse and the time before it on a level I've only ever seen exceeded by *Jericho*. At the beginning of *The Day After* life as normal is taking place. There is a wedding coming. People are registering for classes. If it weren't for the constant chatter about worsening tensions between the US and USSR from TVs and radios in the background they couldn't have made things more average if they tried. Actually, I'd be willing to bet that they DID try and this was the best they could do. They did a damn good job of it too.

So in a lot of ways, *The Day After* is one of the few post apocalyptic thrillers that truly shows the cost of the apocalypse itself. The cost of the apocalypse is not just measured in the mess made of a ruined city. The cost is measured in real human beings, shattered families and ruined lives. It is measured in the attempts to come back from the horror of an honest to God nuclear exchange. It's something we've never had to witness on the scale envisioned in the movie and thank God for that, but it is truly terrifying.

I grew up during the time when *The Day After* was made. I turned seven in 1983. I remember checking books out of the library about military everything. I remember reading about the USS Enterprise (The aircraft carrier CVN-65, not the Galaxy Class NCC-1701) and the nuclear arsenal it carried. I remember watching the news with my dad and my grandpa hearing about some guy named Khadaffi and some bombs that went off in Libya. I was way too precocious and I was reading things I had no business reading at that age. I didn't realize that at the time (what seven year old really understands how young they are?) but I should have waited until I got older. Lesson learned, I guess. I took my daughters to see *Wonder Woman* and my twelve year old thought that poison gas was fake, so I didn't push her as fast as I pushed myself, right?

What I've never understood though, is why we (I?) like it. I mean, it's exciting and suspenseful. If you don't know what's out there, you don't know what the threats are. If you don't know what the threats are, they could be anything. If you're surrounded by threats, survival becomes a problem. All stories need a problem. Just ask your high school literature teacher. (Mrs. Maloney are you out there?). But why this setting and this problem. What's fun about a setting where ninety-plus percent of the human race is dead?

That's the interesting part for me. I've heard people with doctoral degrees in psychology claim that it's because people wonder about their own death and wonder what the world would be like without them. With all respect due to the people who know what they're talking about, I don't think they know what they're talking about. I seriously think that whoever came up with that thesis never bothered to have a conversation with a real fan of post-apocalyptic fiction. Think about it.

Every fan of the PA game that I've come across thinks that they're Rick Grimes from *The Walking Dead*. We, at heart, are all The Chosen One, who will survive the crisis and restore order to the world. When the world falls we'll be the finest scrounger. When we set up the camp, we'll

be the one who leads the defense of it. When the first new crops are grown, we'll be the person who found the seeds. When civilization is re-established we'll be the person leading it. Us. The nerds. The real science fiction fans who grew up reading about/watching this stuff. I mean, I'm even working on a Mafia/PA mashup. My main character is THE MAN... Or he will be if this freaking mob boss quits telling him what to do.

Anyway...

I think the fact of the matter is that the attraction of post-apocalyptic fiction is really a desire to be in charge. We want to run things our way and it's never going to happen that way. Even most presidents don't make the difference they thought they would. We all know that the world would be better off if we could just get rid of the corruption and fix the system. The real problem is that the system is so broken that it can't be fixed. It has to be disposed of and the only way to get rid of it is a nuclear war, or a zombie apocalypse, or an alien invasion, a terrible disease....

You know, whatever caused the thing. It really depends on the writer, but at the end of the day something wiped out everything that came before and this time we're going to start over and get it right. This time, there won't be any corrupt politicians because if they try that bullshit, we'll just feed them to a zombie...

Yeah.

The average post-apocalyptic fiction fan has a heroic fantasy. We're going to save the world. We don't necessarily count the cost because it's just a fantasy, right? I mean, I spent how many hours playing Everquest and slaughtering the orcs in Crushbone? The people in the fantasy don't exist. Except...

Except, I wonder.

Every power mad dictator in the history of history has had a vision of a world (or nation) that he ran himself and how it would be "for the people." They all thought that they would be the one to save the world. Lenin thought he would feed all of the people instead of starving them. Mao thought his Great Leap Forward would put the Chinese economy on par with the economies of industrialized world instead of killing tens of millions. Pol Pot thought that moving backward was best for the people and created his own apocalypse by killing half of its inhabitants in order to murder the educated and save Cambodia. Yes, even Hitler thought that slaughtering millions would prevent them from breeding and result in the eventual evolution of a Master Race that would then improve the world. Every one of them thought they were working for the betterment of the human race (in Hitler's case he had a narrower view of what constituted a human than I do) and they were all wrong. Every last one of them was a disgusting excuse for a human being. None of them should be remember positively by anyone.

And those were the closest we've come to an actual apocalypse, especially with Hitler and Pot. (Hitler killed more people. Pot killed a larger percentage of the population of the territory he controlled. I'll leave it to the reader to decide which is worse.)

So, nerd friends, I guess my point is this: Be careful what you wish for. The cost is too high and the outcome is probably not going to be what you desire. Even if you get what you want it prob-

ably won't turn out the way you want. But, as long as we're keeping it to people who don't actually exist I guess we're okay. Just don't let the zombies eat T-dog. I know, too late, but I miss that guy.

SerCon

Patricia McKillip Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D. N3F Historian



Patricia Anne McKillip (1948 - 2022) was an American author of fantasy and science fiction (SF) novels. Several of them won awards.

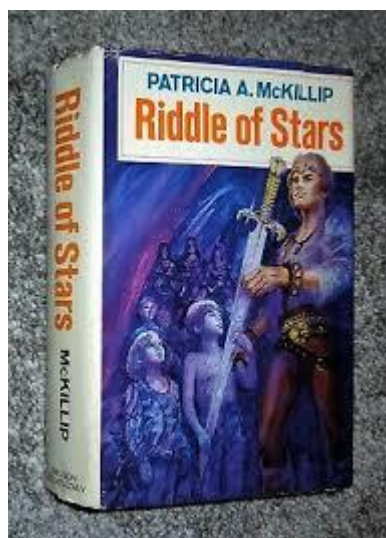
McKillip was born in Salem, Oregon, to Wayne and Helen (Roth) McKillip. She grew up in Oregon, Great Britain, and Germany. She attended the College of Notre Dame in Belmont, California, and San Jose State University in San Jose, California -- where she earned BA (1971) and MA (1973) degrees in English.

She was married to David Lunde, a poet, who survived her. She was his third wife. Lunde has won the SF Rhysling Award. She and Lunde had no children together.

She and genre author Stephan R. Donaldson had the same agent.

Publications

She was known for her Riddle-Master (1976 - 1979), Cygnet (1991, 1993), Kyreol (1984, 1985), and Winter Rose (1996, 2006) series of genre novels. The books in these series were among her most popular works.



Her first two publications were short children's books: *The Throne of the Erril of Sherill* and *The House on Parchment Street*. Her first adult novel, published when she was 26 years old, was *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld* (1974).

A collection of her short fiction, *Dreams of Distant Shores*, was published in 2016.

Riddle of Stars (later titled *The Quest of the Riddlemaster*) collected her Riddle Master trilogy, and was published originally in 1979.

Her genre novels (including series novels), in order of publication, were as follows:

The Forgotten Beasts of Eld (1974)

The Night Gift (1976)

The Riddle-Master of Hed (1976) [Riddle Master series]

Heir of Sea and Fire (1977) [Riddle Master]

Harpist in the Wind (1979) [Riddle Master]

Stepping from the Shadows (1982) [Fictional Autobiographical]

Moon-Flash (1984) [Kyreol series]

The Moon and the Face (1985) [Kyreol]

Fool's Run (1987)

The Changing Sea (1988)

The Sorceress and the Cygnet (1991) [Cygnet series]

The Cygnet and the Firebird (1993) [Cygnet]

The Book of Atrix Wolfe (1995)

Winter Rose (1996) [Winter Rose series]

Song for the Basilisk (1998)

The Tower at Stony Wood (2000)

Ombria in Shadow (2002)

In the Forests of Serre (2003)

Alphabet of Thorn (2004)

Old Magic (2005)

Solstice Wood (2006) [Winter Rose]

Wonders of the Invisible World (2007)

The Bell at Sealey Head (2008)

The Bards of Bone Plain (2010)

Kingfisher (2016)

Awards/Honors/Remembrances

McKillip won many awards during her career, including the Balrog Award, the Locus Award, and the Mythopoeic Award.

In 2008, she was the recipient of the World Fantasy Award for Life.

McKillip On Writing Fantasy

She once wrote: “The tropes of mythology and symbolism are the basics. It’s like a notation in music; you can change it in really wacky ways, but the sound is always the same, the sound is always there.”

Critical Comments

Genre critic and historian Peter Nicholls once said her Riddle Master trilogy was “a work of classic stature.”

Fantasy critic Brian Stableford has called her: “one of the most accomplished prose stylists in the fantasy genre.”

Over the final decade of her life, she was arguably the most impressive of all the fantasy novelists still writing.

Trivia

Her SF writing proper began with her Kyreol series for young adults. Genre critics have said that, while McKillip’s SF was unusual and well written, she was clearly more at home writing fantasy.

She did not use pseudonyms in her writing. Her early books were fantasy novels for children.

In several of her obituaries, she has been described as a “beloved” writer.

Some Concluding Comments

Beginning in 1987, she wrote mainly standalone fantasy novels; there were few series novels from her after this date.

She was born on February 29, 1948, and died on May 6, 2022, aged 74.

She died in Coos Bay-North Bend, Oregon, survived by her husband.

Sources

Barron, Neil (ed.). *Fantasy Literature*, 1990.

Clute, John & John Grant (eds.). *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, 1997.

Mallett, Daryl F. & Robert Reginald. *Reginald's Science Fiction and Fantasy Awards, Third Edition*, 1993.

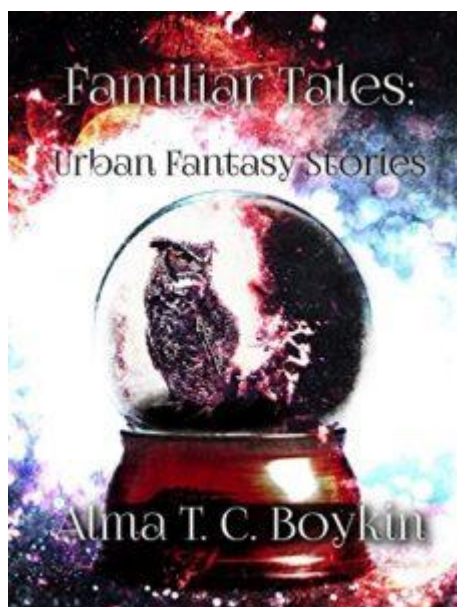
Reginald, R. *Science Fiction & Fantasy Literature, Volume 2*, 1979.

Stableford, Brian. *Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Literature*, 2004.

Note: In addition to the above works, several Internet sites were consulted, including Fancyclopedia 3, ISFDB, and Wikipedia.

Food of Famous Authors

Eat This While You Read That: Alma Boykin Cooking by Cedar Sanderson



I've been reading more, recently, and one of the series I have been catching up on is the Familiar Tales by Alma Boykin. It's a lovely set of stories, that gradually lengthens from short interconnected tales of mages and their animal partners into novels centered more around one or two specific characters. I've been delighted with the whole effect, and am looking forward to more, if more comes. When I had asked Alma some time back for a dish and a book, life crashed over me like a tsunami, so this is the second attempt... and it was worth the wait, I hope.

For one thing, while Familiar Tales is book one, you'll have plenty to keep you busy even after you've finished this book and meal. There are ten of them in the series now!

Alma's stories are hearty, warming fare, just like this meal.

Alma calls for canned fire-roasted tomatoes, which I could not find in a store near me,. On the other hand, I know how to fire roast, even when the weather outside keeps me from lighting the grill to do it that way for optimum flavor and fire.



Roasting the tomatoes and peppers, then using mortar and pestle to remove skin/stems.

I used a gas burner with a wire rack to keep the smallish Roma tomatoes from falling through. My sweet peppers are al-

so smaller, so they needed the rack as well. You'll want to keep a close eye on your roasting, and turn them with metal tongs frequently. This isn't to cook the vegetables through, it's just enough to get the tomato skins loose. As you pulp them in the molcajete (I have a mortar, but a molcajete is better as it's rougher) you can pull out the skins, and with a little skill, you'll learn how to grind so the stem can be pulled out intact as well.

This is what you'll wind up with – coarse chunks of tomato, most of the skin off.

Southern (US) Paella

1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed and cut in half (I used BS chicken breast)

1/2 pound peeled shrimp*

olive oil, salt and pepper, 7 cloves garlic

butter

one sweet onion – minced

one small green pepper

1 15 oz can fire-roasted tomatoes (drain, mince, drain again but reserve liquid) (I pulped up about 4-5 roma tomatoes I had fire-roasted and saved all their juice)

2 C jasmine rice

“healthy pinch of saffron” 1/2 t. give or take (I used an equivalent amount of turmeric)

3 C chicken stock brought to a simmer

1 1/2 t. Spanish sweet smoked paprika**



1. In separate containers, marinate chicken thighs and shrimp in olive oil, salt, pepper, and minced garlic.

2. Heat large cast iron [or heavy] skillet over medium heat. Add 1 T each butter and olive oil, add chicken when oil shimmers. Ignore for a few minutes.

3. Turn chicken over and add onion, green peppers and tomatoes; add salt and pepper. Shuffle them around the chicken until the veggies soften.

Veggies that have been roasted and roughly ground, on the chicken, onion, and garlic.

4. Add rice and saffron and stir to coat rice thoroughly, or around one minute. Pour all of the hot stock into the pan and stir to distribute.

5. Keep this mixture at a small boil/ active simmer, stirring every few minutes. If the rice begins to dry out before it has cooked, add more broth or leftover tomato liquid.

Adding in the stock a cup or so at a time. I wasn't sure how much the liquid from the chicken/ tomatoes was going to offset the amount of stock, so I treated it like a risotto.

6. When rice is finished, stir in raw shrimp and cover the pan. Shrimp should cook in 4-5 minutes.



7. Top with green peas (if one is traditional or not plagued with fussy eaters) and adjust seasoning. Serve. (I like to add a few shots of good garlic balsamic vinegar, but that's just me.)

* The original recipe calls for leaving the shells on, but since they don't add flavor, I prefer the low-mess option.

** I go heavy on the paprika, because mine never seems

as warm as what other people buy.

What my pan looked like when the rice was done!



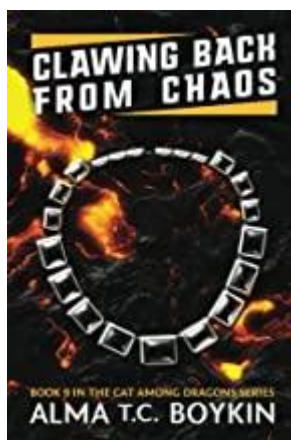
To read: Familiar Tales. This is the sort of thing Morgana Lorraine would make, as would André Lestrang. It can be adjusted to local seasonings and available seafood (or sausage, in which case add it with the veggies), takes 45 minutes at most, and only requires two bowls, a pot, and a large pan. It looks fancy, tastes good, and feeds a lot of people on a relatively small budget.

Cedar's notes: I substituted chicken breast for the thighs, as I had them on hand. I also substituted in

turmeric for the saffron, rather unhappily, but I could not find my saffron after the last organization of the spice cupboard. It came out very, very well in spite of this.

We served it with rustic homemade bread, and roasted corn on the cob (in the oven, but my son really, really wanted it)

The best thing? Not only was this delicious on the night of, and even the tomato-hater ate it all up, but the leftovers for work lunches were even better as the flavors just got melded and mmmmm... I may play with some variants on this, but it's so simple to make I may just keep it in mind for any occasion. Plus, it's given me an excuse to indulge myself in a proper molcajete next time I'm in the right shop for that.





Monster Umpire Catcher
by Jose Sanchez