

Tightbeam 349

October 2023



Brandy Worked by Tiffanie Gray

Tightbeam 349

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What is Tightbeam? We are the N3F literary fanzine, not the novel and anthology fanzine, but the fanzine that tries to cover all tastes in fandom, such as anime, comics, cosplay, films, novels, biographies, poetry, music, short stories, food, ...

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Letter of Comment

Dear George and Jon:

I am still fighting to keep up and catch up, and now, two issues of Tightbeam, 347 and 348 are in front of me, getting the letter of comment treatment. I hate doing one loc for two issues, but it is all the time I have these days.

347... I have enjoyed the idea of the story arc in some shows, and Babylon 5 seems suited for it. The best part was, because it followed the lives of the people living on the space station, the arc seems just right for it. To see G'kar go from sexual deviant to religious leader of his people, to see Londo Mollari go from ambassador to emperor, to see other people set forth on their own personal journals, all seemed natural. Some years ago, we binged the show during an especially cold winter. We'd like to do that again.

Then, the Indiana Jones movies. The reviews of the Dial of Destiny makes me want to sit down with all the movies in a comprehensive boxed set (I am sure that's in the works), and binge them all.

Thank you for another great biography of William Nolan. It's important to remind readers that he wrote far more than just Logan's Run and its sequels.

348... My letter...we didn't get to a lot of places we wanted to get to, but the car has been repaired, and we are getting around again. So many conventions have gone away, the closest fan-nish convention we can get to from Toronto is in Rochester, New York, so that's what we're doing. Astronomicon 14 takes place in Rochester just before Hallowe'en.

The William Nolan bio was great to read, but so was the one on James Schmitz. Even with The Witches of Karres, I think I remember The Telzey Toy most of all. Both are on my shelves.

After The past two months, new projects beckon, and I just hope we have enough money to get it all done. We are hoping to be able to go to The NASFiC in Buffalo, NY, and the World Fantasy Convention in Niagara Falls, NY, both with a few months of each other in 2024. We will see what we can save. Thanks for these two issues, and I always look for more. Hope this loc is in time.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

Anime

Planzet

Review by Heath Row

As seen in Telegraphs & Tar Pits 81

While my wife is out of town, I also watched this 2010 anime film, which focuses on a brother and sister striving to fight against an alien invasion that's already decimated much of the Earth's population. Other humans have already absconded to Mars. After the failure of a giant limited-use (one shot!) terrestrial cannon to destroy the aliens' mothership, the older brother, a

soldier out to avenge the death of his father, dons a large robotic suit accompanied by two others to fight the incursion. He later uses another weapon, and humanity is left to rebuild from its ashes.

Directed by Jun Awazu, *Planzet* is computer animated and highly realistic, though it falls short of entering the uncanny valley. At the time of its release, the film was promoted as groundbreaking. 13 years later, it seems less so, and I'm glad the animation style hasn't become the predominant method.

The portrayal of the ruins of Earth's built environment makes for some nice eye candy, and everything is deliciously weathered. While the aliens' spacecraft are widely portrayed, no attention is given to the aliens themselves, their physiology, or culture. So the threat is a bit faceless, which is actually a reasonable approach. Is a foe you can't envision or comprehend more or less fearsome than a foe you can describe?

I wasn't at all convinced by the hard-edged youthful female military leader who faces her own parent issues. That she belonged in her position wasn't persuasive, and her actions after the failure of the one-shot cannon mystified me. It was good that other people were around.

Nobunaga the Fool episodes 1-4
Review by Heath Row
As seen in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* 81

This review concentrates on the first four episodes of the 24-episode anime series *Nobunaga the Fool*, created by Shoji Kawamori. Originally a multimedia stage play utilizing live actors and projected animation, the anime series aired between January and June 2014. Satelight provided the animation for the play and anime series.

It's an odd duck. There are two worlds, the Western Star and the Eastern Star. They're generally not in communication, though you can travel between them, which seems to happen rarely. On the Eastern Star, a slightly less technological location, Nobunaga, the wastrel son of a head of state, witnesses the horrors of war along with two of his friends. It might just be the voice acting, but I find two of those three characters—including the titular protagonist—highly irritating and uninteresting, which makes the show somewhat of a challenge.

The Western Star is slightly more interesting. King Arthur seeks to unify the different societies with his round table of people such as Julius Caesar. Leonardo da Vinci rescues Joan of Arc in order to take her to the Eastern Star. The captain of the spaceship they book passage on is Magellan. No historical figure is safe. There are robot battle suits in both worlds. There's a love triangle, square, or pentagon because everyone seems to love Nobunaga. A woman disguises herself as a man in order to take to the battlefield. The female leader of another country—who's also a pop idol, apparently—arranges a wedding with Nobunaga, who agrees to the coupling so he can access her Sacred Treasure of Lightning as a weapon. And each episode is named after cards in a tarot deck.

I don't know if I'll make it through all 24 episodes, but at 30 minutes in length with a commercial break in the middle, each episode of *Nobunaga the Fool* makes for short fun so far. What I really want to now is: What was the stage play like? I've only been able to find one picture online.

Aura: Koga Maryuin's Last War
Review by Heath Row
As seen in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* 81

At first, I felt like this hour and a half-long anime directed by Seiji Kishi was a bit of a bait and switch. Instead of a heroic fantasy taking place in a mundane high school—what we might expect, right?—it ended up being an animated movie about escapism, bullying, friendship, and growing up.

A high school student is assigned to spend time with a girl who's lost in a fantasy world in which she is an otherworldly researcher striving to keep the world safe from dragons or somesuch. In part, the movie is inspired by Miguel de Cervantes's novel *Don Quixote*. It also draws on the idea of *chunibyō*, or middle-second syndrome, in which some Japanese eighth graders want to individualize and differentiate, develop grandiose delusions, and think that they have hidden knowledge or secret powers.

The concept turns so much of young adult fiction—child revealed as wizard, young man as vampire or werewolf, orphan as surprise inheritor of wealth, family as superspies—on its ear. Over the course of the movie, the boy attempts to befriend the delusional girl, who is persistently bullied; is bullied himself; and is revealed to have experienced the same situation in middle school—during which he portrayed the hero Koga Maryuin.

This, then, is Koga Maryuin's final battle—for the health and wellbeing of his new friend and eventually girlfriend, which flummoxed me a little. The character design and pacing is well done, dialog compelling, and there's one great scene in which a bully goes too far in his bullying—to be turned against by the rest of the students, even his fellow bullies, as well as the school administrators.

Middle-second syndrome apparently plays a role in other works, as well, including the light novel series *Love, Chunibyō & Other Delusions*. Hikaru Ijuin, who coined the term in 1999, has since disavowed it, though it's now studied by psychologists. In the late 2000s, Hyōya Saegami wrote *Toriatsukai Setsumei Sho*, a *chunibyō* user manual that identifies three types: delinquents, those who opt out of mainstream trends, and youth who act like they have special powers.

I'm glad I watched it just for the introduction to the concept of *chunibyō*, which seems to have infiltrated American YA writing and media for decades.

[Editor: And for the curious, courtesy Wikipedia: *Chūnibyō* (中二病) is a Japanese colloquial term typically used to describe early teens who have grandiose delusions, who desperately want to stand out, and who have convinced themselves that they have hidden knowledge or secret powers. It translates to "middle-second syndrome" (i.e., middle-school second-year).]

Books for Tweens

George Phillis writes: I have a friend with a daughter. Daughter is just starting seventh grade. She likes to read manga and novels. However, the novels she reads all make her cry, which

sounds undesirable. In any event, I sent her through her dad five of my novels. However 'the novels made her cry' sounds anomalous and undesirable, so suggested alternatives would be appreciated. Writing novels suitable for a tween-age girl, with a positive view on the world, might also be good. I asked fellow writers for ideas.

One writer suggested Diana Wynne Jones' Chrestomancy books.

Another writer said I think girls would also enjoy the Narnia books, and maybe the Hobbit, too. One of my daughters did, at least. The Little House books and Anne of Green Gables went over well. I strongly recommend L. Jagi Lamplighter's "Unexpected Enlightenment of Rachel Griffin" series. It's like Harry Potter, but better: "Lovecraft meets Narnia at Hogwarts." The other daughter really liked those, as did I.

Comics

Daredevil

Review by Heath Row

As seen in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* 81

Because of the program's focus on Daredevil rather than the Hulk, I read a relatively recent issue of the comic book, #14 (October 2023). It was a fun enough read that I'll read other recent issues I have on hand, as well. Opening with a memorial to John Romita Sr. (De Profundis #588), the issue was written by Chip Zdarsky and drawn by Marco Checchetto.

As the conclusion to the Red Fist Saga, this issue drops readers in at the end of what looks like a pretty action-packed story arc. The Hand has defeated the Fist and its king and queen—Daredevil and Elektra—and the souls of Foggy Nelson and others are trapped in hell. Daredevil died at the hand of Elektra to go to hell in order to free those who are trapped. “[H]e was transformed with a blazing white costume and otherworldly powers,” says the editorial introduction. Now, that I've got to see! Apparently, Daredevil remains in hell.

This issue, however, doesn't take place in hell. Foggy Nelson and law partner Cole North, a former police officer, continue accepting legal clients “to help people,” occasionally seeing people they mistake for Murdock. Elektra has donned a Daredevil-like uniform to continue the hero's street patrols, stopping a van she expects to be full of weapons—but which is empty.

She confronts Butch Pharris, who's recently taken his father's last name: Fisk. “[T]he Fisk name does carry some weight with it,” he says. Apparently he'd stolen the missing weapons from Tombstone so Hammerhead wouldn't buy them. “Ludicrous men with ludicrous names.”

Reed Richards returns Murdock's chess set to Nelson. And Elektra encounters a priest whom she mistakes for Murdock. So will readers. Is it Murdock, back from the dead—and hell—without memory? I particularly enjoyed the exchange between a street-clothed Elektra and the proprietor of a party store. Thugs have been harassing her because of a window display of Daredevil uniforms.

“You were the first person to put on the mask when he was missing,” Elektra says.

To which the woman responds, “[T]here's something about that mask, isn't there? It's the ano-

nymity—like you don’t have to be scared anymore because you’re not... yourself, with all your baggage and limits.”

“[I]t’s also a spotlight,” Elektra says. “Everyone sees Daredevil. Everyone takes notice. You’re responsible to the idea of it.” Heroes exhibit heroism and other higher qualities. When we emulate our heroes, we become beholden to such qualities.

Subsequently, I also read Daredevil #3-7 and #10-11 (November 2022 to March 2023 and June-July 2023). Zdarsky’s run writing the comic has been excellent, and these issues—even with a gap—are quite impressive in terms of storytelling. The artwork by Rafael de Latorre and, later, Checchetto is also excellent, perfectly dark for the storyline.

The issues from this series have been collected into at least three trade paperback volumes: Daredevil & Elektra by Chip Zdarsky, volumes 1-3. He also wrote the previous Daredevil series, which has been collected in at least seven volumes. I expect that that series is similarly excellent.

Without giving an issue-by-issue breakdown, here are some highlights. Luke Cage is now mayor and meets with the manipulative Stromwyn siblings, from whom Daredevil and Elektra stole \$3 billion. Daredevil faces Aka, a Hand leader who trained Elektra. The hero returns to the Fist in order to prepare for the war to come.

He and Elektra challenge the “souls of the Hand’s dead” before they marry, becoming the king and queen of the Fist. Stick officiates a very brief wedding ceremony. There’s a self-writing prophetic book that Daredevil can eventually read himself, though blind. The team goes to the Myrmidon, a “super villain prison in the ocean” to release and enlist criminals to undertake their cause. Training them to channel their anger and frustrations more productively proves challenging.

The Hand has been replacing heads of state with doppelgangers, and the Punisher is leader of the Hand. The Avengers and other heroes try to intervene, not understanding what Daredevil’s trying to do—thinking Elektra killed the president, who was a doppelganger.

After the gap in issues, Daredevil is despondent, and North rouses him to action again. The hero confronts the Stromwyns before dying, perhaps to go to hell himself. The backup story in #11 featuring a newly youthful Iron Fist also proves interesting. All that because of a Hulk TV movie. Reportedly, the screenplay for The Trial of the Incredible Hulk is available on the DVD as an HTML file, but I couldn’t see it when I used the DVD with my computer. I was looking forward to reading it, too!

Novels

Sea Creatures Prefer Redheads by Brianne Gillen

Review by Heath Row

As seen in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* 81

I also picked this up at the Ripped Bodice late last week after mailing APA-L. “A romance novella from the Phoenix Pictures vault,” the book was written by Los Angeles-based Gillen, whose Phoenix Pictures series focuses on “fierce dames and cinnamon-roll gents” in the golden

age of Hollywood. There are three novels in the series so far. (What's a cinnamon-roll gent? I'm glad you asked! Neither alpha nor beta male, they're sweet as well as spicy, and somewhat soft centered.)

This is Gillen's first monster movie-themed work in the series, drawing on *Creature from the Black Lagoon*—even referring to Mallory O'Meara's *The Lady from the Black Lagoon* in the Acknowledgments—and perhaps a logical extension of *The Shape of Water*.

A makeup artist and costumer who designed the rubber monster suit for a movie shoot falls in love with the actor portraying the creature—who is revealed to be a selkie in human form because of a family curse. The book details their developing relationship, the female costumer's challenges on the job—including a buffoon of a male manager who takes credit for her work—and her discovery of the actor's true identity. Similar to *The Shape of Water*, the two make love despite their different species, in human and selkie form. Multiple times.

Gillen's romantic and sex scenes are more explicitly written than Carriger's above but are still very fun and loving. This is not your traditional male-oriented erotic prose, though it's spicier than other romance novels I've read (mostly older Harlequins, which are delightfully but occasionally frustratingly and nonsensically chaste).

Focusing on the golden age of Hollywood as she does, monster movies are a logical extension for Gillen. I emailed her a brief note encouraging more. But I'm not sure whether the idea has legs, as fun as this novella was. He's a vampire! She's a werewolf! They're both aliens from outer space!

At some point, perhaps relatively quickly, the gambit might get old—we already have *Sookie Stackhouse*, the *Twilight* series, and *Outlander*, after all—but Gillen included enough interesting narrative around the selkie revelation and its repercussions that perhaps it could still work. Regardless, reading *Sea Creatures Prefer Redheads* makes me want to explore the novels in the series, particularly if any of them are especially hard boiled. Her *Single Indemnity* seems promising along those lines.

The combination of the golden age of Hollywood, the cast and crew of movie productions, and monsters—or other film genres (noir, sf, etc.) is a recipe I'd seek again.

Defy or Defend by Gail Carriger
Review by Heath Row
As seen in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* 81

Carriger participated in the Aug. 17, 2023, meeting of the LASFS as a special guest, offering a reading from her most recent book, *Divinity 36*, and answering questions from members.

While picking up another title recently at the Ripped Bodice in Culver City (<https://www.the-rippedbodice.com>), I scanned the Paranormal section, which seems to have incorporated the smaller science fiction and other genre-related—while still romance-oriented—sections I'd seen in the past. Carriger's name stood out, and based on the back cover copy and By Gail Carriger page in the front of the book, I gave this a go.

It's the second novel in her *Delightfully Dreadful* series, which seems to take place 25 years later than the books in her *The Finishing School* series—both of which reside in her *Parasolverse*. The *Finishing School* seems to be an educational institution that prepares youth for lives in high society and supernatural espionage. The titles from that series give readers a hint of what's to come: *Etiquette & Espionage*, *Curtsies & Conspiracies*, *Waistcoats & Weaponry*, and so on. (Looking at those titles, they resonate somewhat with my apazine titling, though I'm less consistent thematically.)

Given that this novella takes place around the introduction of the bustle, it takes place in the mid-19th century. (The bustle was patented in 1857.) The protagonists, Dimity Plumleigh-Teignmott, code named Honey Bee, and Sir Crispin Bontwee are assigned by the War Office to infiltrate a vampire hive and determine why its queen has gone Goth, isolating herself and letting the hive fall apart without leadership.

Dimity reminded me of a younger Diana Rigg from *The Avengers*, equally a sweet seductress, society belle, and assassin. Crispin is assigned to safeguard her, and they discover the hive to be in disarray, its few remaining vampires disconnected from the community of Nottingham and perhaps victim of a drone who has aspirations of his own. Their assignment: Bring new life to the queen and her hive before the War Office sends in a kill team staffed by werewolves.

It's a good read, well written and clever, fun and funny. And because it's a romance, there's some friskiness. Dimity and Crispin recognize their love for each other, eventually consummating it, and one of the vampires in the hive has taken a local young man as a lover. The sex scenes are subtle and tastefully rendered, sweet and salty in equal measure.

Other characters in the *Parasolverse* are referred to throughout the novella. I don't know how present Dimity is in the other books, but I'd return to a story featuring her in a hot minute. She's quite a handful. A defiant defender, for sure.

Radio

Old-Time Radio: *Lights Out!* and *The Shadow*

Reviews by Heath Row

As seen in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* 81

There are two episodes of genre interest in the August 2023 CD set from the *Monthly Classic Radio Club*. The May 4, 1943, broadcast of *Lights Out!* featured "Heavenly Jeep." Written by Arch Oboler and starring Raymond Lawrence, the episode focuses on a couple of soldiers who might have died—and their travels to another world in which giant insects dominate the surviving humans. An enjoyable story, even if I thought the other characters' voices were irritating. Meanwhile, the Oct. 16, 1938, episode of *The Shadow*, "Night Without End" concentrates on a villain who's stolen a fog-generating machine. Not only does he plan to blanket the city in impenetrable fog, he intends to mix that with poisonous gas. William Johnstone does a good turn as the Shadow, with Agnes Morehead beside him as Margot Lane.

I also listened to a third episode, which is less pertinent: *Suspense*, "Love's Lovely Counterfeit" (March 8, 1945). Notable because it's Humphrey Bogart's only appearance on the program, the story is a pretty straightforward crime and love story in which a gangster tries to ele-

vate himself by aligning with a reformed politician—becoming attracted to a woman worth aspiring to.

SerCon

The Six Most Badass Women In All of Science Fiction and Fantasy

By Jim McCoy

Number Six: Princess/General Leia Organa Solo (Star Wars)
"Someone has to save our skins. Into the garbage chute, flyboy."

Princess Leia is the woman who stared down Darth Vader, the woman who saw her lover frozen in carbonite and rescued him, the woman who led the Rebel Alliance to victory and who refused to back down from anyone or anything. She was good with a blaster and never gave up.

I can't help but think that if I were going into danger and had to take one woman with me, it would be Leia. Fans of the Star Wars Extended Universe know how hard she fought to protect her children. Anyone else needs to do some reading. Leia was loyal to a fault and strong without being brittle. She didn't just lose her family or her friends. She lost her whole planet and everyone she grew up with and - after that - she kicked the Empire's ass. Leia Organa Solo is the woman who was forced into a metal bikini and choked to death the thing that did it to her .

So that's the first half. Ready for the rest?

Number Five: Ellen Ripley (Alien)

"I say we take off and nuke it from orbit. It's the only way to be sure."

Going on missions to explore strange planets takes enough guts for a lifetime. Having an alien organism attack you after sneaking aboard your ship would be worse. Having it kill crewmembers left and right before you can finally take it out yourself is straight up gangsta.

Alien came along during the heyday of topless, screaming women fleeing from monsters. Ripley was having none of that. She went straight at the threat and killed it. Her decision to nuke the remainder of the hive was not only the most intelligent thing she could have done, it was the safest. She managed to protect the entire human race from what was down there. At least until the next movie came along.

It doesn't get any more intense than it does in Alien. The courage of a character like Ripley is amazing. How did she not panic in that situation? I'd like to know. Lord knows if people were dying, murdered by some weird freaking alien whatever and I didn't know what it was, where it was or the best way to fight back I'd be more than just a little worried.

Ripley may very well have felt that way but she never let that limit her ability to do her job and get out alive. That fact alone is enough to put her in the top five.

Number Four: Katniss Everdeen (Hunger Games)

"I realize that the answer to who I am lies in that handful of poison fruit."

Katniss Everdeen was a badass before the beginning of the first novel. I mean that seriously. In a world where gun control is so complete that you can be executed for owning a bow, she found a way to not only own one, she used it to feed herself, her family and a lot of other people, besides. Those who have never fired a bow may not realize this, but hitting what you aim at with a bow is not an easy task. Katniss was known to use one to take down small animals. That's hardcore folks. I've bow hunted, but I've never even thought of shooting a bow at something smaller than a deer. The amount of skill needed to hit a squirrel in a tree or a bird on the wing is something I just don't possess. Katniss did, and that's how she made her living.

Then, having established her bona fides as a hunter, she steps in to keep her sister from having to go to the Hunger Games and probably die. Given the fact that twenty four kids go into the Games and only one survives, her odds don't look good. But not only does she survive, she brings Peeta with her, angering no small amount of people.

Then, of course there's a second Hunger Games, the rebellion, a win and, of course, killing the Communist who deserves it. She loses Prim (the same little sister whose life she volunteered to save) at the big battle and keeps fighting. One gets the feeling that there is absolutely nothing Katniss can't do. The Girl on Fire is among the Baddest of the Bad because she's earned it.

Number Three: Hermione Granger (Harry Potter)

"Now, if you don't mind, I'm going to bed before either of you come up with another idea to get us all killed, or worse - expelled."

Is it humanly possible to say enough about Hermione?

Okay, first things first. There are multiple ways to be a badass:

Some people are badasses through sheer physical skill. They can beat someone to the ground/shoot them/blow them up, etc.

Some are badass leaders: I've already mentioned Captain Janeway, and George Patton would be a good, real -life, example. The ability to pull people together and get them to work toward a common goal is a rare one.

They can be badass schemers: This is the third Harry Potter character to get mentioned on a list of ten women, so let me make one more HP reference: Voldemort/Tom Riddle is a schemer of the baddest order. There aren't many Death Eaters really, but he manages to infiltrate, connive and scheme his way almost to the top of the wizarding world, if only it weren't for that kid and all of his little friends.

But the ultimate badass, and the one that is most useful to any endeavour, is the Intellectual Badass. The IB is the person who can look at a problem and find a solution. They know where to look to get the information you need, because sending your physical badass to the wrong

place to fight the wrong people is worse than useless. The IB will find a way where none should exist. Hermione Granger is that person.

I mean, don't get me wrong. Hermione fought the Snatchers. She was at the Department of Mysteries. She was at the Battle of Hogwarts. She destroyed a horcrux. She impersonated Bellatrix Lestrange and got into her vault. Anyone who says Hermione can't or won't fight is a liar.

But Hermione was more than just a soldier. Hermione was the brains that made the whole thing work. Think about it like this: There was no danger that Harry wouldn't brave. He went to his death knowingly and willingly with no idea that he wouldn't actually die. But he never would have made it that far without Hermione's help along the way.

Hermione discovered the Basilisk. Hermione deciphered the clues to find out what and where the Philosopher's/Sorcerer's Stone was and how to get to it. Hermione is the reason Ron didn't flunk out of Hogwarts. Hermione solved all of the riddles except one and who really wants to eat Gillyweed anyway?

I may be waxing a bit eloquent (in my own mind, at least) here because the Intellectual Badass is the kind of woman I've always wanted and, alas, thought I had at one point, but that doesn't take away from Ms. Granger's unbelievable badassness. I almost feel like she's underrated at three, but I couldn't put her in front of the next two for reasons that will soon be revealed.

Number Two: Susan Ivanova (Babylon 5)

"I am Susan Ivanova, Commander. Daughter of Andre and Sophie Ivanov. I am the right hand of vengeance and the boot that is going to kick your sorry ass all the way back to Earth, sweetheart! I am death incarnate, and the last living thing that you are ever going to see. God sent me."

Hold on. That is, quite simply, the single most badass moment of TV in the freaking history of TV. No, that wrestling spot wasn't better. Yes, I saw the cage break and I know that JR thought Mick Foley was actually dead. It doesn't matter. Claudia Christian has you beat, bro.

Susan FREAKING Ivanova. Listen folks, this is the last woman you want to mess with. First, she was the executive officer of Earth's last, best hope for peace. Then she was the executive officer of Earth's last, best hope for victory. Somewhere along the line, Earth's government went bad and she led the effort to remove them. Regime change happened. Then, of course, came the Shadow War and they had to be vanquished, and...

Yeah, Ivanova did it all. She lost one commanding officer, then lost another and then became the commanding officer, lost her lover....

And shot down anything that got in her way.

Just being real, Ivanova probably would not have made the list if Babylon 5 had gotten cancelled before the fourth season. That season is, simply put, the best season of television in the history of ever and I'm a ST:DS9 fan. (IYKYK) The fact of the matter is that Season Four is where Ivanova went from being someone who ACTED like a badass to someone who ACTUALLY WAS a badass. Seriously, don't get in her way when she's in a bad mood. Ivanova be-

comes, quite simply, an unstoppable force of nature while leading the White Star Fleet.

It's weird too because, in like one or two episodes (it's been awhile since my latest rewatch) you go from feeling bad for her because she's been forced out of the uniform she's worn her entire adult life into a new one that's just been invented and has no real history to it to hiding under the bed every time she gives someone a dirty look. There is no one who can lead a fleet like Ivanova except...

Number One: Honor Harrington (The Honorverse)
"Let's be about it."

If you read that phrase the Big Fight is about to start and people are going to start dying in job lot quantities.

But first...

I can hear the wailing now. Someone out there has read this far, is interested to see who the Number One Most Badass woman is and...

Doesn't know about Honor Harrington because she's the only one here with no TV show or movie.

Please allow me to express my sympathy to you in my most sincere and heartfelt terms.

YOUR BAD. GO READ THE BOOKS.

It's not my fault that Hollywood doesn't have the guts to do the right thing and turn Honor's exploits into a movie.

Seriously, David Weber is the highest selling Science Fiction author still capable of drawing breath for a reason and her name is Honor Harrington. There's a reason I'm a member of the fan club.

Honor is the single most badass woman ever for a number of reasons, but the first is that she is a badass leader. Honor starts out the books in command of a destroyer in the Royal Manticoran Navy. Things go awry quickly and she and her ship get sent to the worst posting imaginable, where she very quickly notices things that could be improved and sets about improving them, despite the fact that her CO abandons his post and takes the larger of the two ships that should be guarding the post along with him. Somewhere along the way, she prevents a major invasion from happening...

And that's the end of the first book in the series named after her. In book two, she saves an entire star system from conquest and they're technically not even allies yet. They end up so amazed with her that she's made the first female Steadholder (Basically the equivalent of a medieval duke) in the history of the planet and they name a class of ship after her.

Then her lover gets killed. She manages to find and kill not just the paid duelist who shot him, but the man who hired him. The latter she kills while wounded, if I recall correctly. It's been a minute. But please believe me when I say that dude had it coming and I wanted it just as badly

as she did. Then again, I'm a McCoy of the McCoy's and Hatfields so that kind of thing just comes naturally to me.

Harrington is gene engineered, is over six feet tall, has increased muscle mass, and is trained in the Martial Arts. She can fire a ten millimeter semi-automatic pistol well enough to hit her target flawlessly and has a pulser (think high caliber gun except deadlier) installed in a bionic arm that was implanted to replace an arm that got blown off.

She gets captured, saves her home planet from invasion, both while in command of an entire fleet, and still manages to get married and have a couple of kids. In the last book she turns down promotion to First Lord of the Admiralty and goes home because she's tired of all the killing. At that point I couldn't blame her. What she has gone through to get there would have broken most human beings.

And there it is. Feel free to flame me in the comments because I got one wrong. I know someone is upset because their favorite didn't make it on the list. I'm a big boy, I can take it.

Kris Neville Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D. N3F Historian

Kris Ottman Neville (May 9, 1925 – December 23, 1980) was a science fiction (SF) writer from California. He was born, however, in Missouri. His first SF story, "The Hand from the Stars," was published in *Super Science Stories* (July, 1949, issue); his most famous work, the novella *Bettyann*, is considered a SF classic.



Personal Life

He was the son of Gilbert Ottman Neville (a white collar worker) and Ethyl Mae Peters Neville (a waitress), and graduated from UCLA in 1950 with a major in English.

During World War II, he served in the Army Signal Corps as a radio operator.



He married his second wife, Lil Johnson, on September, 28, 1957, and they raised five children. They had two together, a boy and a girl, and Johnson had three children, a boy and two girls, from a previous marriage. Neville and wife Lil later collaborated on several stories, including the novel, *Run, the Spearmaker* (1975), published only in Japanese.

Pseudonym

Neville wrote fantasy stories under the pseudonym of Henderson Starke.

Genre Novels

The Unearth People (1964)
 The Mutants (1966)
 Special Delivery (1967)
 Bettyann (1970)
 Invaders on the Moon (1970)
 Bettyann's Children (1973)

Short Story Collections

Mission: Manstop (1971)
 The Science Fiction of Kris Neville (1984)

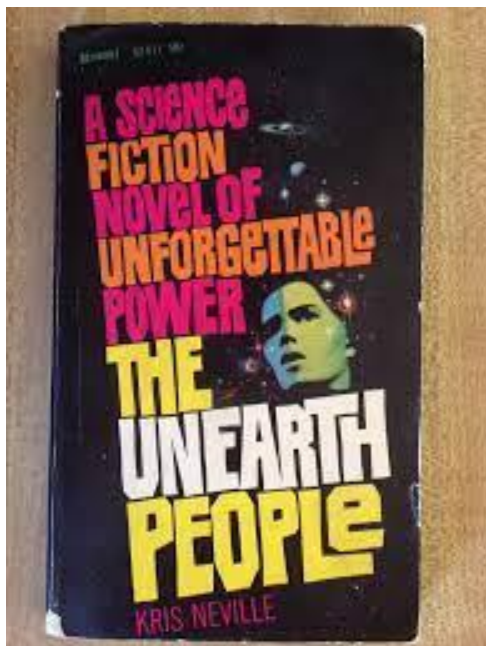
Neville's Stories Were Reprinted in the Following Anthologies

Stories for Tomorrow (1954)
 Dangerous Visions 3 (1967)
 New Worlds of Fantasy (1967)
 One Hundred Years of Science Fiction (1968)
 On Our Way to the Future (1970)
 A Sea of Space (1970)
 Universe 5 (1975)
 Science Fiction of the Fifties (1979)
 100 Twisted Little Tales of Torment (1998)

Awards/Honors/Recognitions

He was a member of LASFS, and was given a Forry Award in 1975.

Critical Comments

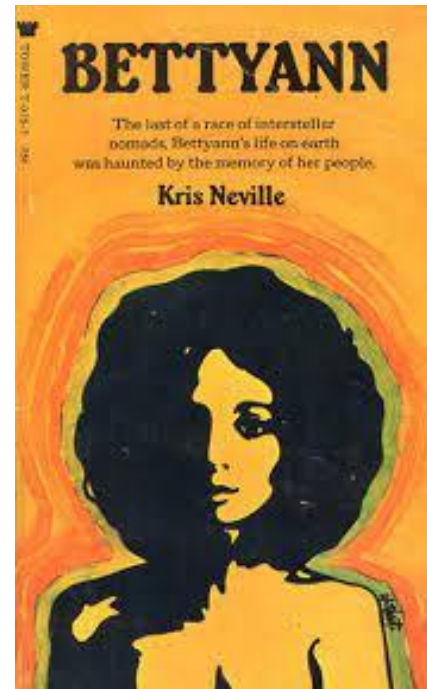


Fellow SF author Barry Malzberg once wrote about Neville: “He liked wine, hated Nixon, deplored the mass media, missed Tony Boucher, had grudging and deep respect for the memory of John W. Campbell, loved his children, had a deep suspicion of American industry and its products but no particular reverence for his Volvo, found [science fiction] conventions, finally, wearying and had a deep and abiding love for the science fiction community.”

His Clute and Nicholls entry stated, in part, “his intelligence was acute and his artistic control over his material was always evident.”

Concluding Comments

He once said that he got involved in SF through SF fandom.



He was a collector of American folk music and folklore.

In the mid-1950s, he said that he had run out of things to say.

He worked for many years as a technical writer specializing in plastics technology; and through his connection with the EpoxyLite Corporation, co-authored several texts on epoxy resins.

He died in 1980 in Los Angeles, California.

Sources

Clute, John & Peter Nicholls (eds.). *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, 1993.

Reginald, R. (ed.). *Contemporary Science Fiction Authors*, 1974.

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Swartz, Jon D. *Pseudonyms of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Authors*, 2010.

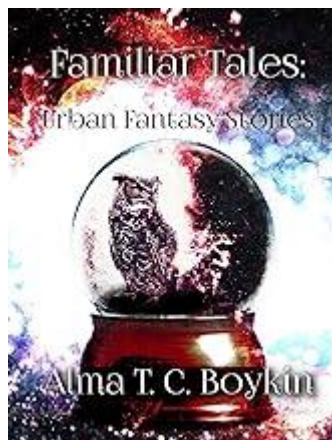
Tuck, Donald H. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy, Volume 2: Who's Who, M – Z*, 1978.

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

Food of Famous Authors

Alma Boykin

Cooking by and Photography 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.

To read: Familiar Tales. This is the sort of thing Morgana Lorraine would make, as would André Lestrang. 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 store near me (see notes below for why ‘near’ was important) but on the other hand, I know how to do that, 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 also 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.

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.

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.

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

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. 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.

What my pan looked like when the rice was done!

Cedar's notes: I substituted chicken breast for the thighs, as I had them on hand. I've been doing very little shopping! I also substituted in turmeric for the saffron, rather unhappily, but I could not find my saffron after the last organization of the spic cupboard, and the store where I would buy it is further than I wanted to go under the current state of affairs. 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.





Futurescape
by Jose Sanchez