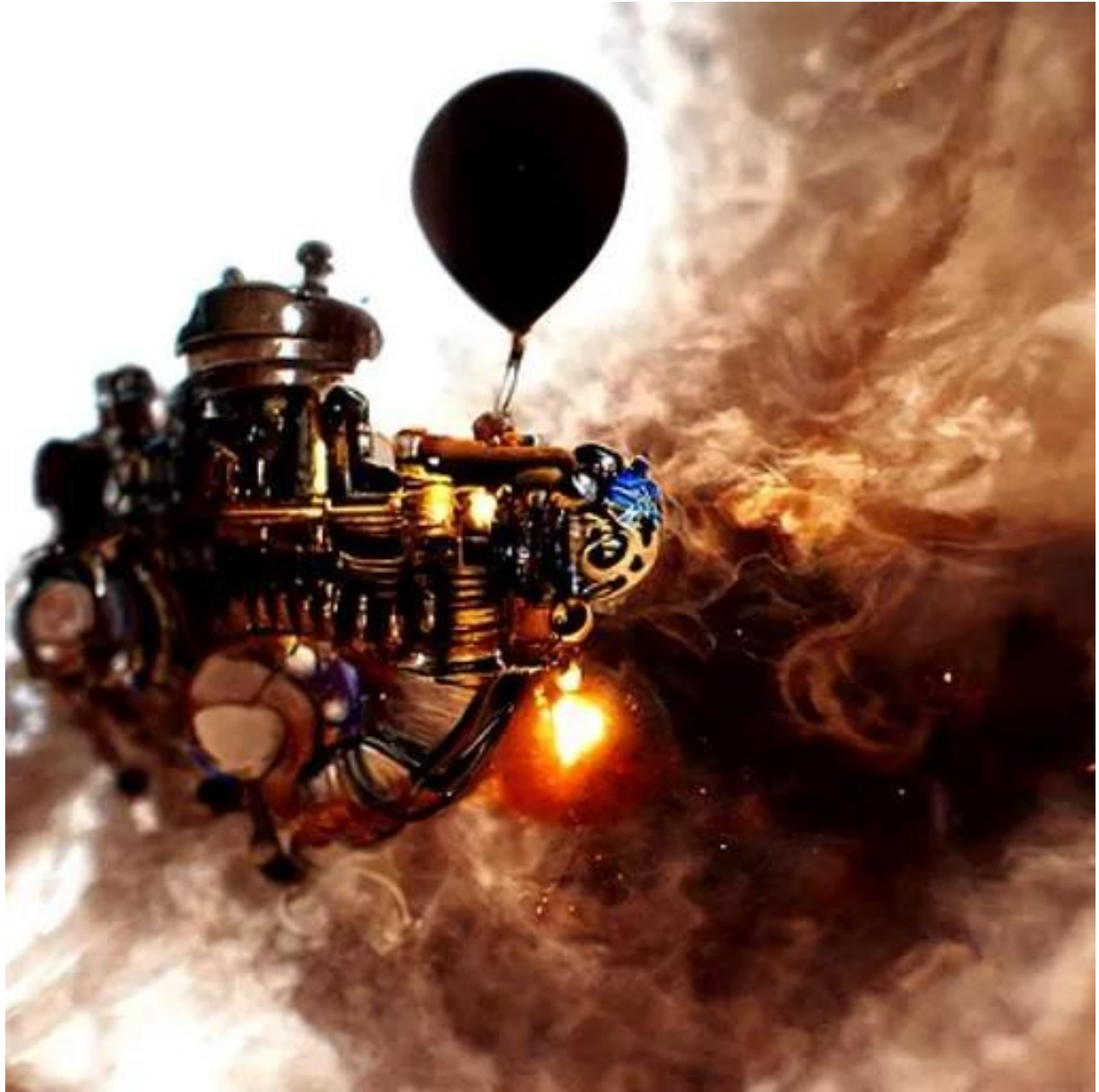


Tightbeam 350

November 2023



Sailing the Nebula by Tiffanie Gray

Tightbeam 350

November 2023

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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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.

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Letters to the Editors

Editors:

Announcing the latest First Fandom Annual: "First Fandom Conversations" - Edited by John L. Coker III and Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D. Featuring Forrest J Ackerman, Robert Bloch, Hugh B. Cave, Lloyd A. Eshbach, Ray Harryhausen, Tim Hildebrandt, David A. Kyle, Sam Moskowitz, and Robert Silverberg. Fifty-six pages, printed on 28# paper with heavy gloss color covers, printed end-papers, face-trimmed, saddle-stitched, and color illustrations throughout. This edition is limited to only (25) copies, which are available for \$35 each (includes packaging, USPS Priority Mail, and insurance). To ensure that copies are still available, please send a confirming e-mail message to jlccoker3@bellsouth.net. To order your copy, please send a check or money order (payable to John L. Coker III) to 4813 Lighthouse Road, Orlando, FL - 32808. Thank you for your support, and all best wishes.

John L. Coker III

Editors:

I have a printout of Tightbeam 349 here, and even with more than a day's caffeine in me, no guarantees on what I can say. The creative batteries might be a little discharged, but I have no place to plug them into...

My loc... Star Trek: Enterprise had a story arc in its last season, and I have to wonder if that was what killed it. I also wonder if the same kind of story arc has led to the cancellation of Star Trek: Discovery after its upcoming fifth season? How many other shows have tried story arcs, with limited success? (Babylon 5 did story arcs extremely well, and also had the opportunity to complete the story arc, because it wasn't beholden to any networks.)

This past weekend, just before Hallowe'en, we did drive to Rochester, New York for Astro-nomicon 14, at the R.I.T. Inn in the south of the city. (R.I.T. stands for Rochester Institute of Technology, and I think this hotel is a training ground for students learning all about hospitality management.) Very nice facilities available there, and we did enjoy ourselves, even though we spent most of our time running registration for chairman Wayne Brown. Our biggest want from the weekend was seeing friends we hadn't seen in years, and we got that done. Greetings to the Dorsai Irregulars! This was our first American convention in over five years.

Our future plans are to go to some major conventions in 2024. First of all, the NASFiC for 2024 is in Buffalo, New York, a short drive away for us. We want to do a little Amazing Stories promotion. Second is the World Fantasy Convention in 2024, in Niagara Falls, New York, even closer to home. Same for AS promotion. Then, we would like to go to Loscon 50 in LA, and also spend a few days at the Harry Potter exhibits and park at Universal Studios. We are thinking of this as our farewell tour, for after this year, we probably won't be able to afford to go to any more major conventions. All the minor ones have gone away, so...

Heath Row... One of my favorite SF characters is Susan Ivanova in Babylon 5. She took no crap from anyone. I still remember one of the later episodes, where General Ivanova is at her desk, and the camera is taking an arc shot of her at her desk, and the B5 Hugo Award is front and cen-

tre, hidden in plain sight, you might say.

With Astronomicon done, it looks like we are done for the season, so the saving for an expensive 2024 starts immediately. Wish us luck in finding the funds to get it all done. However, I will continue with writing letters of comment...I have to stay in touch somehow. Thanks for this issue, take care, and I hope to see issue 350 very soon.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

Cartoons

The Doom That Came to Gotham Review by Jason P. Hunt



It's definitely an Elseworlds title, in case any of you had any doubts. And it almost seems a foregone conclusion that out of all the pantheon of DC Comics heroes, of course Batman would be the one in the middle of a Lovecraft story.

Batman: The Doom That Came to Gotham is full of clever twists on the familiar, from origin stories to villains to sidekicks. Set in the 1920s, the story follows Bruce Wayne (Grimm's David Giuntoli) in the Antarctic with his sidekicks Dick Grayson (Jason Marsden), Sanjay "Jay" Tawde (Karan Brar), and Kai Li Cain (Tati Gabrielle) as they search through the wreckage of an expedition led by Professor Oswald Cobblepot (William Salyers). It's a type of beginning you'd find in almost any

Lovecraft story about an expedition gone horribly wrong upon the discovery of an Eldritch Horror. And as soon as I saw that first beast in the ice, I knew I was in for a wild ride. I was not disappointed.



This works mainly because Batman as a character has evolved into this superhumanly brilliant genius-level smart guy who never gets anything wrong, and we're almost at a point where that actually makes him less interesting. Here, though, he's challenged with a situation that goes beyond logic and book-learning. He's confronted with something that his mind can't fit into a box. He can't "science" his way out of it. Add that on top of the Lovecraftian elements,

and you have a Gothic tale that really works with Batman's origin as a darker "in the shadows" type of character.

And yes, there's the obligatory origin scene, but even that is presented with a filter that ties it into the overall story. It's also not teased out with the camera lingering on pearls hitting the streets, for once.

Things ramp up once we're back in Gotham City, where Bruce has brought the last survivor of

the expedition, Grendon (David Dastmalchian) — for all intents and purposes, the Renfield analogue — because Bruce knows something’s about to come apart in Gotham. And the situation very quickly escalates with the death of Kirk Langstrom (Jeffrey Combs) and the arrival of Talia al Ghul (Emily O’Brien), who’s goal is to revive her father so that he can open a portal for Iog-Sotha, the darkness out of time (Yog-Sothoth, anyone?).

There’s death. There’s chaos. There’s a dark horror descending into Gotham, and only the Batman has the power to stop it. The final solution is, shall we say, unique.



There’s also the surprisingly emotional sub-plot involving Oliver Queen (Christopher Gorham). His quoting “The sins of the father are heaped upon the son.” is something that comes back to play a very big part of the ending. This is not your usual free-wheeling liberal hippie Ollie. He’s got layers. And where his story goes is an interesting twist on his “Robin Hood” swashbuckling schtick. The fact that he’s friends with both Bruce Wayne and Harvey Dent adds a new wrinkle to the dynamic between Bruce and Harvey, and the Oliver Queen we see at the beginning of the story is quite a bit different from the one we get towards the end, as those layers get pulled back by circumstances.

Most of the Rogues Gallery is in attendance, and the twists on their stories are right in line with the dark cosmic horror aspects of the setting. I don’t want to give too much away, as their appearances in the story are organic and fresh takes on their usual origins, and I don’t want to spoil the fun of discovery as the story unfolds. Suffice to say, I think you should see for yourself.

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Stefan Smith’s music score is definitely influenced by Danny Elfman’s work. I suppose at this point, Elfman and Tim Burton are the standard by which all Batman projects will be measured, just as Christopher Reeve and John Williams have become synonymous with Superman. It’s not necessarily a bad thing. That kind of tone works just fine in the 1920s horror setting here. But at some point, someone needs to throw in a little Nelson Riddle for balance.



I was surprised at how well David Giuntoli works as Batman. I don’t remember his voice being that deep in Grimm, and I’m glad that he doesn’t exaggerate the tonal switch between Bruce Wayne and Batman. It’s there, but it’s more Kevin Conroy and less Christian Bale. Not too much guttural growling here, which is good. We need to get away from that mess. Tim Russ is an inspired choice to play Lucius Fox, and Emily O’Brien turns in an appropriately

mysterious femme fatale in Talia. The biggest surprise for me was John DiMaggio as Police Chief Gordon. DiMaggio usually sounds like DiMaggio, but here he’s using a voice that sounds less stylized, and it works very well to help ground the supporting cast of “normal” people as Gotham becomes the center of cosmic nightmare fuel.

The biggest disappointment, if you can point to one, is that the demon Entrigan isn't in it as much as the trailer hints. He and Jason Blood (Matthew Waterson) make an appearance, but I was figuring he'd get more screen time, given the subject matter in the story. But I guess we can't have everything.

This is one I figure I'll be watching more than once. It's a good one to have in your collection. The animation recalls Mike Mignola's art without getting too blocky, and the performances are rightly balanced to ground the more fantastical elements of the story. I'm definitely recommending this one.

Comics

The Orphan King by Tyler Chin-Tanner & James Boyle

Review by JR Handley

JR Handley reviews for UpstreamReviews



Hey Space Cadets; I hope this review finds you well! I found this book at our local library while introducing my son to the joys of walking up and down the isles looking for a book to catch his fancy. For this graphic novel, the image on the cover is what caught my attention. The picture of a knight in golden armor, with what appears to be a witch behind him instantly drew me in. The art is amazing, I loved the visceral imagery that the artist created.

What is this book about? It's a fantasy novel about a young man who was sent away by his dad, the king, to grow up. When he finally comes home three years later, he finds things vastly different, and an adventure begins. I loved it and I think you will too!

The Story

This is the story of the young Prince Kaidan, heir to the throne of Aesolan. He was sent off to complete his secret training with his aunt, the magical Lady Taleissa on the Isle of Woman when tragedy struck his family. He returned home, only to find things were quite different than when he'd left three years ago. This story was the illegitimate love child of an Arthurian myth, mated with Robin Hood and Beowulf. The first novel was a slow burn, as the author set up the world building for a five novel arc and forced Kaidan to deal with the enemy soldiers left behind in the ruins of his kingdom.



The art style was well done and gripping. I'm not an artist, and I'm colorblind, but I really loved this artistic imagery. The style of this art was similar to that of John Byrne, famous for his work in the superhero genre. This story, The Orphan King, was illustrated by James Boyle and evoked similar feelings. The illustrator gave this story clean lines and he paid attention to the little details that brought the story to life. From the articulation of Kaidan's armor, to the wings of the griffin, this book had everything you need to sink into the worlds of The Orphan King. The imagery was dark in places, yet never losing that hopeful vibe. It had crisp earthtone colors that even I could see and

stopped the pictures from being too busy. The art was just right, never trying to do too much, but they also managed not to undersell it either. I loved how they used those tiny details to allow you to envision yourself in the story.

The writing was well done, though as a graphic novel we see that mostly through the choice of art paired with the dialogue. The pacing of the story was an interesting choice of the current times, set in grim-dark colors and the prince's past depicted in sepia hues. It strung you along, waiting for the next shoe to drop as the young man made his way in the world. In the end, we were left wanting more as the authors joined the Cliff Hangerin Bastard's Club.

The Characters

The main character of this graphic novel was Prince Kaidan, the son of King Gorlan. He is the heir to the throne of Aesolan and determined to earn his father's affection. At the beginning of the story, he's a young kid sent away to train with his aunt on the Isle of Women. He was supposed to be there for four years, but came home early to find his father dead and his kingdom conquered by an enemy from the North. Throughout the first novel we see this character grow into his role as the once and future king. He becomes a competent young teen with strong moral convictions, in spite of the danger to himself. He was so well written that I went on to find the next books in this series.

Personality wise, Kaidan evolved from spoiled brat to humble young knight willing to learn and improve. His willingness to sacrifice for his kingdom and family's future, instead of slinking into the Wild Woods to hide is commendable. They've shown him to be the type of leader you'd want to follow, if he lives long enough to attain command of Aesolan. The authors balanced the need to write a believable child and the desire to make him the hero his people needed.

The World

This story was set in the Kingdom of Aesolan, which gave me Sherwood Forest vibes. The choice of art and shading in this graphic novel really set the mood and helped show the kingdom before and after its fall. It gave you a sense of yearning for the glory days, despite King Gorlan not appearing to be a very nice guy. It was just enough to keep you reading and age appropriate for the target audience. It was shown through the art and the flashbacks to Kaidan's past memories of his time just before he left his home to move in with his aunt. The story didn't re-invent the wheel, instead relying on classic fantasy tropes. The space that this decision gave the dynamic duo of Tyler Chin-Tanner and James Boyle to have the room to build the world and the characters residing in it.

Politics

This novel has no real-world politics and doesn't stray outside of the normal power plays that happened in the medieval world. That absence gave you room for you to just dive in and enjoy some good old-fashioned historic fun!

Content Warning

This was a young adult story, so there was nothing that wasn't PG-13 in this graphic novel.

Who is it for?

This book is for people who enjoyed Beowulf style adventures with flavors of Arthurian legends and Robin Hood's band of merry folk.

Why buy it?

I'm not the normal audience for a graphic novel, but this was a fun little story perfect for younger readers. This is a solid escapist story for when you want sword fighting and justice in a hurry. The art is compelling, the prose is clean and the story arc had me unable to stop turning the page.

If this review didn't sell this book, I don't know what it'll take to convince you! Seriously, click [here](#) and buy the book already!

Movies

Aquaman

Review by Heath Row

Editor of Telegraphs & Tar Pits



While on the flight to Tokyo from Los Angeles, I watched the 2018 Warner Bros. picture, Aquaman. When it came out, I wasn't overly interested in it, but I'd recently read about reputed Lovecraftian influences on the more recent Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom (perhaps / Film's Sept. 14, 2023, article "Horror Master James Wan Says Aquaman 2 Features 'Lovecraftian' Villains"), so its precursor piqued my interest. Besides, it's been a while since I've seen a DC-related movie, and I not long ago watched a whole bunch of Marvel movies. (Snow Poster Township #12)

Aquaman is an enjoyable flick. The character's appearance in the 2017 Justice League was promising, and Jason Momoa brings a slightly dark, rough virility to a superhero who's not been portrayed as aggressively masculine in the past. At the same time, Aquaman is no The Dark Knight (the comic book, not the movie). Instead, we have DC's take on its aquatic hero—the counterpoint to Marvel's Su-Mariner, as in Black Panther: Wakanda Forever—and an exploration of a love affair between the surface and undersea worlds, tensions between the two societies, and divisions among the seven underwater kingdoms, the seven seas. The romantic introduction is also a compelling origin story for the hero, which pretty much maps to that in the Silver Age comics.

Momoa shines as Aquaman and is joined by a quality cast including Willem Dafoe as his mentor and trainer. Like Harrison Ford in Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny, Dafoe was digitally de-aged for flashback scenes (T&T #74). Dolph Lundgren's King Nereus shows some signs of the wonder that was the actor's Street Preacher in Johnny Mnemonic (T&T #41). And Yahya Abdul-Mateen II as Black Manta falls slightly short of the villainous character's impact even as late as the New 52 and Rebirth series.

But what I found most interesting were the seven kingdoms. Like the four tribes of Wakanda, each sea is characterized by distinguishing features. The seven kingdoms that formed after Atlantis sank beneath the waves include Atlantis, Xebel, the Kingdom of the Trench, the Kingdom of the Brine, the Kingdom of the Fishermen, the Kingdom of the Deserters, and the Kingdom of the Valor. The Kingdom of the Trench is where H.P. Lovecraft's influence comes in most strongly, and its population is delightfully similar to that of Dunwich in the author's fiction. (In fact, *The Dunwich Horror*, the book itself, appears in a scene in the movie.)

The scene in which Aquaman descends into the Trench as its denizens swarm to follow him is extremely visually impressive and reason enough to watch the movie. Aquaman is an excellent cinematic extension of the ongoing comic book series—and a welcome infusion of new ideas and energy into the capabilities and character of a superhero you might have thought you already understood.

Joker

Review by Heath Row

Editor of Telegraphs & Tar Pits



I also hadn't seen the 2019 Joker vehicle, which would have made for a wonderful movie even if entirely isolated from the rest of the Batman storyline—though the filmmakers tie it into the hero's origin story, replacing Joe Chill with an anonymous follower of the titular villain. (Or, making Chill such a follower.) Regardless, Joker is effective, forceful cinema and not at all a traditional superhero movie or cartoony portrayal of the villain in line with that of Cesar Romero's TV role.

Instead, the movie is a dark and somber portrayal of a failed sign spinner and clown who aspires to stand up comedy whose frustration with taking care of his mother and confusion over who his real father is—perhaps Bruce Wayne's father—lead to an accelerating descent into madness, murderous self-defense, murder itself, and class war street riots.



The pivotal subway shooting resonated with a similar scene in *The Trial of the Incredible Hulk* (T&T #81). Joaquin Phoenix is absolutely riveting as the Joker, and as uncomfortable as the movie might be, it's worth watching every minute of his performance. The things that man did with posture, facial expression, and gesture were quite impressive. One scene even offered gentle echoes of Jack Nicholson's 1989 portrayal. Additionally, Robert De Niro's role as a late-night TV host is wonderful, as is the way the two characters are brought together.

I quite like the idea of standalone superhero-inspired movies that don't necessarily tie into a universe. Like Grant Morrison and Dave McKean's *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth* or even perhaps *Batman: The Killing Joke*, there's a lot that can be done with the Joker. And the Joker, in turn, can do a lot. Not any of it good, but absolutely wonderful to watch unfold.

Novels

The Membranes by Chi Ta-Wei

Review by Heath Row
Editor of Faculae and Filigree



Part of Columbia's Modern Chinese Literature from Taiwan series, this novel was originally published in complex Chinese by Linking Publishing and dates back to 1996. It's an interesting story, combining post-apocalyptic cli-fi and speculation on transgenderism in domes on the ocean floor in the year 2100.

At times reminding me of the fiction of Banana Yoshimoto or Sayaka Murata, it's partly a gently mundane fiction about the relationship between a young professional woman who's sought independence by opening her own salon and her mother, a very successful and publicly visible business leader. The narrative addresses their contentious relationship and a mutual friend who bridges both their worlds, and could have worked as a novel even without the sf elements.

The novel is also an sf story about gender, automated surgery, pervasive communications media, skin cancer concerns driving humanity underwater by 2060, corporate territorialism in the Pacific Ocean, laserdiscs, plastic surgery, gender reassignment, nanotech-infused skin cream, and the ability to capture others' experiences so you can experience them yourself in a virtual reality-like setting.

There are multiple pop culture references throughout the novel—from an aria by the castrato Farinelli to Jacques Derrida—and translator Ari Larissa Heinrich's accompanying essay "Promiscuous Literacy: Taipei Punk and the Queer Future of The Membranes" ably situates the work in a broader context internationally. A surprisingly rich read I bought on a whim seeking non-American literature. Worth seeking!

The Mind Net by Herbert W. Franke

Review by Heath Row
Editor of Faculae and Filigree



I read this immediately before *The Membranes*, above. Originally published in German in 1963, the novel was translated by Christine Priest and features a lovely cover by Kelly Freas, as well as interior illustrations by Jack Gaughan. Not a bad pairing!

At first seeming like a collection of short stories, or perhaps interconnected short stories, the book reveals itself to be a rather inventively constructed novel as the story proceeds. I had to refer back to previous sections to make sure character names had indeed been repeated and were the same person a couple of times, and in the end, the at times confusing structure works really well.

A spaceship well underway on a voyage encounters an unexpected planet. Once populated, its buildings are now ruins, more than two million years old. Tunneling beneath the ruins, the crew finds tissue samples that they bring back to the ship and revive. In the next section, explorers investigate a form of quickly growing and reorganizing coral that seems to house intelligent energies. Crew members debate what to tell their superiors about what happened, and one character is forced to make a challenging decision.

Thirdly, a political leader seeks to escape the consequences of his actions in the midst of growing civil unrest. A long-time friend must choose whether to help or hinder his former comrade.

All of this leads to a tribunal in which the actions undertaken by a character are investigated, discussed, and judged. I won't describe any more of the novel because this sets up the rest, and what's been happening is quite fascinating indeed. There's even a twist at the end that reveals another layer—all resulting in a fascinating reading experience.

At least two other books by Franke were translated into English, including *Zone Null* and *The Orchid Cage*, but most of his work ended up only in German, or in Romanian, Japanese, or Italian, in order of frequency. I will seek out other English translations of Franke's work and am so glad I came across this book. What a delightful, random find!

Sercon

The Ten Most Badass Men in Science Fiction

By Jim McCoy



Dark Wings by Artist Fish

The Speculative Fiction genre encompasses all types of things, but one thing that really pushes a Science Fiction or Fantasy story along is a true bad ass. Seriously, fans of works like *BattleTech*, *Honor Harrington*, or even to a certain extent *Star Wars* are well versed in political wheeling and dealing. It goes on all the time. But the thing that really pushes a story along is a dude (or chick, if you prefer. The link to that list is above.) that does what he has to do to get things done. The man who, alone or with allies, has the can-do attitude and achieves results. To a badass, nothing matters so much as getting the job done, whatever that job happens to be. What follows is a list of the Ten Most Badass Men in Science Fiction and Fantasy.

At any rate, here we go...

Number Ten: Tony Stark (Iron Man)

"Genius, billionaire, playboy, philanthropist."



What could possibly be more badass than taking shrapnel to the chest, hooking yourself up to a car battery and killing the people who took you prisoner, only to walk away? How about building a suit around a new power source and using it to fight evil? How about having it all and knowingly giving up your life anyway? Or building a suit for your little buddy to take him safe, just because you can?

Yeah, Tony Stark is a true badass. Whether in Civil War, protecting the rights of persons with super powers or fighting the bad guys in Central Park, Tony Stark is among the baddest of the bad.

Number Nine: Gotrek Gurnisson (Gotrek and Felix)
 "No slayer has anything to be proud of."

Gotrek Gurnisson is a Slayer: His job is to seek out and destroy the enemies of dwarves and kill them while, and yes you're reading this right, dying in the process. A Slayer has been disgraced, his name placed in some clan's Book of Grudges and the only way to atone for what he's done is to die in honorable combat. A Slayer will, in all cases, seek out the biggest, baddest, most evil opponent and kill it or, even better, die trying.

The problems for Gotrek is that he's a little too good at the slaying part and not so good at dying. He is the star of a series of books by the Black Library in which he kills all kinds of big bads and, at least to the point I've read to (I kind of lost the thread after my divorce) managing to somehow not end up dead. If you see Gotrek coming for you, run. He is a dwarf after all. They can't keep up. And, let's face it, you have to be alive for it to matter that he just called you a coward.

His buddy Felix follows him around chronicling his adventures and that just adds to the fun. One often wonders why Gotrek allows it since he has no reason for pride, and his axe would surely put an end to this silly human following him, but he does. I'm usually more of a fan of dwarves with hammers than with axes, but for Gotrek I'll make an exception. He's way too good with the thing to argue with him.



Number Eight: Inigo Montoya (The Princess Bride)

"My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die."

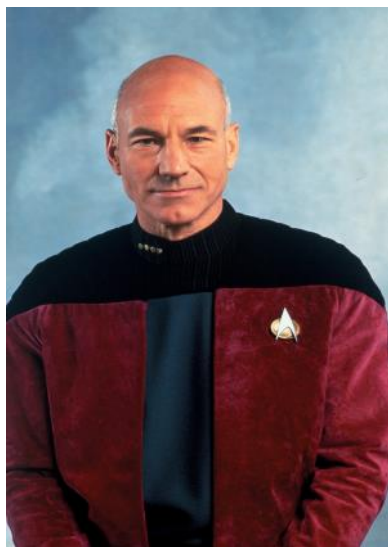
One of the defining traits of any badass is persistence, right? Doing something easy doesn't make you a badass and the hard stuff you have to gut your way through. Of course, having a sword and being prepared to use it doesn't hurt and neither does having the guts to make your father's killer

beg for his life before you stab him in his guts.

And let's not forget loyalty. Who was it who took Westley to see Miracle Max? It would have been pretty easy to give up on a guy who was, admittedly, dead and move on after possibly shedding a single, manly tear. Montoya didn't. He didn't give up on his quest. He didn't give up

on his friends. And, at the end of the day, he accomplished his mission.

Above all though, he was a man of honor. Montoya did what he needed to do in a manner befitting his quest. Climbing ropes, fighting left handed until he realized that he had a worthy opponent and seeing the error of his ways and joining with his erstwhile (TWO POINTS FOR USING ERSTWHILE IN A SENTENCE! MY ENGLISH TEACHER WOULD BE SO PROUD!!!) enemy all mark Inigo Montoya as not just a man of action, but of thought and total badassery.



Number Seven: Jean Luc Picard (Star Trek: The Next Generation)

"Things are only impossible until they are not."

Jean Luc Picard stopped at nothing to do what was necessary. He would hem, he would haw and he would consider the ramifications of his actions, and then he'd do it anyway. This is a man who faced down Q on multiple occasions. Picard faced the Borg and became one of them before returning to his normal self. Most of what Picard did was unpredictable because he was, in many ways, the wise Old Man that everyone wishes he could serve under. Picard lost subordinates (not the least of whom was Tasha Yar) but he never did so cavalierly or unnecessarily and he always made their deaths mean something.

And who gets a knife through his back and out his front, passing directly through his heart, and goes on to serve in deep space duty anyway? That Nausicaan must have assumed that Picard was dead, only he wasn't.

Picard was also a man who understood obligation. When his friend passed in the service, Picard took his wife and son aboard The Enterprise to make sure that both of them prospered. He got his friends' kid into Starfleet Academy with real world experience. A true badass looks after his own.



Moon Dreamer
by Angela K. Scott

And yes, although I know he belongs nowhere near a list like this, I am a Wesley Crusher fan. Wil Wheaton is four years older than me, so Wesley was like the cool big brother that gets to do all the stuff that you don't. Bring the hate if you need to, but understand that I've heard worse and didn't care about it then, either.

Number Six: Westley (The Princess Bride)

"To the pain means this: if we duel and you win, death for me. If we duel and I win, life for you. But life on my terms. The first thing you lose will be your feet. Below the ankle. You will have stumps available to use within six months. Then your hands, at the wrists. They heal somewhat quicker. Five months is a fair average. Next your nose. No smell of



dawn for you. Followed by your tongue. Deeply cut away. Not even a stump left. And then your left eye—"

"And then my right eye, and then my ears, and shall we get on with it?" the Prince said.

"Wrong!" Westley's voice rang across the room. "Your ears you keep, so that every shriek of every child shall be

yours to cherish—every babe that weeps in fear at your approach, every woman that cries 'Dear God, what is that thing?' will reverberate forever with your perfect ears."

So, you leave home. Then you're threatened with death every day. Then the guy who was threatening you retires and leaves you his way of making money. Somewhere along the way you learn to swordfight like there's no tomorrow. Then of course, you take on a prince and all of his followers after having been mostly dead all day.

Yep, you're a badass.

We'll leave out the Rodents of Unusual Size and taking down a giant in a fight, but drinking a poisoned goblet on purpose is something we have to bring up. Oh, and threatening an armed man when Westley was too weak to stand was unbelievably badass.

I spoke earlier of persistence and coming back from the dead is probably the best example of persistence in the history of literature. The only better example may be Orpheus, but even he faltered at the end. Westley never did. And he got to call someone a "warthog faced buffoon" which is something none of us will ever do.

Chan Davis Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian



Horace Chandler (Chan) Davis was an American - Canadian mathematician, writer, educator, poet, musician, and political activist.

He was born on August 12, 1926 in Ithaca, New York, to parents Horace Bancroft Davis and Marian Rubins, both of whom were members of the Communist Party. In 1948, he married Natalie Zemon; they had three children together, a son and two daughters.

He served in the U. S. Naval Reserve during 1944 - 1946. He was educated at Harvard University (B. S., 1945; M. A., 1947, Ph. D., 1950,



in mathematics).

Publications

Davis's science fiction (SF) writing career was restricted to short stories, usually under his working name of Chan Davis, beginning with "The Nightmare" in the May, 1946 issue of Astounding Science Fiction. He published other stories in Astounding during 1946 – 1953. Additional fiction appeared in Planet Stories, Star Science Fiction, and Infinity Science Fiction during the late 1950s.

As a mathematician, he published many academic papers.



His story, "The Names of Yanils" (Spring, 1999, issue of Crank!), originally a contribution to Harlan Ellison's The Last Dangerous Visions, had been held for two decades before it was released for publication elsewhere.

It Walks in Beauty: Selected Prose of Chandler Davis (2010) assembled his best work, including the title story "It Walks in Beauty" (January, 1958, Star Science Fiction) and "The Names of Yanils," plus essays and a 2003 interview.

Fannish Activities

Davis was a member of the Stranger Club and was one of the members who attended Noreascon 3 as Fan GoH. He edited/published the FAPazine Blitherings in the 1940s (also published in VAPA) as well as the apazine macVert for VAPA.

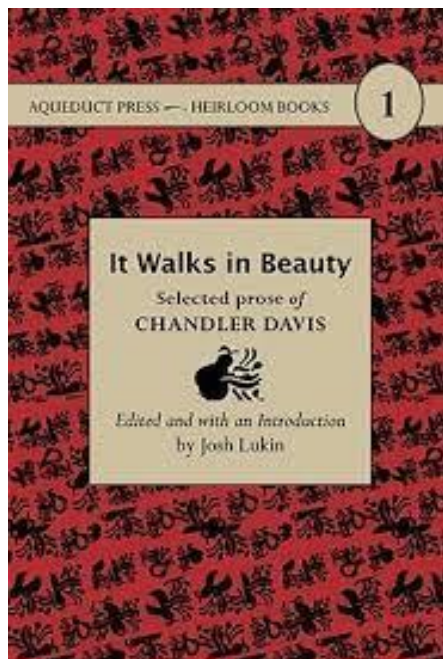
He was a member of the Brain Trust. He had something to do with the fireworks at Philcon, the 1947 Worldcon, where he also played piano and sang his own SF songs, and he attended Torcon, the sixth Worldcon, in 1948.



Later Life

He served a six-month prison term in 1960 for refusing to testify to the House Un-American Activities Committee, and consequently lost his position at the University of Michigan.

In 1991, the University initiated an annual lecture in honor of his stand for his beliefs, named for him and others who had been simi-



larly treated.

Conclusions

A professor emeritus at the University of Toronto, he died on September 24, 2022, survived by his wife and children.

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Video

HALO 4: Forward Unto Dawn

Review by J.R. Handley of UpstreamReviews.com

First, let me say that none of what I'll say in this section couldn't be found on the back copy of the movie. Heck, I cribbed this summary from the back, and then I added my own twist! And



not even much of one, since most of the movies I watch have kick butt descriptions (aka blurbs). If the blurb and cover don't catch my eye, then I tend to skip the movie unless a friend recommends it. Generally speaking, my goal is to provide a spoiler-free review, so here goes nothing!

In 2526, as mankind has begun to colonise space, a group of cadets are training to fight against human insurrectionists. One of those cadets, Thomas Lasky, has doubts about his abilities as a soldier and his convictions for this war. He's the son of a famous war hero, who lost his brother and best friend to the war. He begins to question why it was necessary, much to the chagrin of his fellow cadets. Whilst he struggles with himself, the planet is invaded by an unknown alien race. Reeling under the assault, Lasky and his squad mates are rescued by John-117, one of the UNSC's legend-

ary SPARTAN-II super-soldiers. John must inspire Lasky to fulfill his potential as a soldier and a leader to fight against an enemy deadlier than any that humanity has faced before.

The blurb on the back of the movie did an excellent job at setting the scene, so I won't elaborate past that! The movie is the main character reflecting on how he came to be on one of the iconic ships in the Halo universe, and the movie serves as his origin story. The movie was originally released online as 15 minute episodes, and was an effort to market the HALO 4 game when it was released. I'm a huge fan of the HALO franchise, so if you like military science fiction, I'd highly recommend you give this movie a chance! If you're a HALO junky, and haven't seen this movie, you should go stand in the naughty corner. When you're done punishing yourself, go watch this movie! It has plenty of action, adventure and just enough explosions to move the story along. The action is authentically gritty, without being over the top and I enjoyed it. If this sounds like your flavor of Spartan badassery, then you've come to the right place!

Characters:

In this movie we meet a diverse group of cadets, who collectively make up Hastati Squad at the Corbulo Academy of Military Science on Circinius IV. It's a training facility for the children of high-ranking UNSC officers, and forces all of them to live under the shadow of their successful family members as a training and inspiration technique. The UNSC, or United Nations Space Command, is struggling to keep the officer ranks full during a period of political upheaval. During the course of the movie we meet several main characters, who were pretty well flushed out. The actors and actresses were on their A game, but I'd expect nothing less from Microsoft Studios and 343 Industries. All of the characters felt flushed out and three-dimensional. They added to what is clearly a vast and expansive universe. All of the characters were a lot of fun to get to know, so let's dive in!

Cadet Thomas Laskey: He was one of the main point of view characters, and was played by actor Tom Green. The acting was solid, and in that regard I had no complaints. The character was flushed out, and I felt for his angst. He had a clearly defined motivation, though I wanted to smack him and tell him to grow up. As a freshman at the military academy, he's a young kid stuck in an uncertain world, where terrorism muddies the waters between the good guys and the bad guys. If you know anything about the HALO franchise, you can see the links between this story and the larger world of the games and books. In the books, the Innies, or Insurrectionist Terrorists, have sympathetic motivations, but they attack gatherings of women and children. Clearly, they've crossed all sorts of lines in their quest, and Laskey gives more depth to that. Overall, I really felt for this character and loved his story arc. As with the character of the Master Chief, there is more out there about him but I chose to stick with his portrayal in this specific movie.

Senior Cadet April Orenski: She was one of the main secondary point of view characters, and was played by actress Enisha Brewster. She was the squad leader of Hastati Squad, and pushed all of them to be better and to work as a team. She's a hard ass, and punished her cadets by denying them food and other strict techniques as a way to get through to them. Normally I'd say she was overly harsh, but unlike my time at a military college, she was attending in a time of extreme violence and knew every one of her charges would lead men and women into battle. That does change things, and I appreciated that this was taken into account. She didn't have much of a character arc, though as a senior she was pretty much done with the sort of development you'd expect at a military academy. During the attack by the unknown aliens, which we

know to be the Covenant, she held her own and proved herself worthy of the commission she would soon receive. I'd certainly follow officers like her into battle.

Cadet Walter Vickers: He was one of the secondary point of view characters, and was played by actor Iain Belcher. The acting was spot on, and the character served as the adversary of the main character, Cadet Laskey. There isn't too much to say about him without spoilers, but let's just say he was never meant to be a tactical genius, but in the end he was brave when it counted.

Cadet Dimah Tchakova: She was one of the secondary point of view characters, and was played by actress Kat De Lieve. Her acting was spot on, and I loved seeing her character arc through the movie. She becomes more confident throughout the course of the training, and then haughty when she uses her familial position to get special consideration during the evacuation from the alien assault. She uses her mother's status as the Secretary of FLEETCOM to garner protection for herself, cutting the line of fleeing cadets. It made you want to punch her in the face for that narcissistic behavior. I'd never hit a woman, but dang I'd grab popcorn if she was taken to task by her female classmates. We didn't see too much out of her, but what we did see was well executed and she felt fleshed out.

Cadet Michael "Sully" Sullivan: He is one of the secondary point of view characters, and was played by actor Masam Holden. The actor did an outstanding job, and was a good friend of Cadet Laskey, the main character. He's a fun loving and skilled computer hacker, who managed to find classified videos of the first Spartans in action. He then completely decrypted them, and out smarted Section II of ONI, or Office of Naval Intelligence. His character serves as a foil, allowing us to learn about the broader world of the HALOverse. Even cooler, the director did this without making it too obvious that it was happening.

Cadet Chyler Silva: She was one of the secondary point of view characters, and was played by actress Anna Popplewell. Her acting was spot on, and she helped her character serve her role in this film and the HALOverse writ large. She serves as Cadet Laskey's love interest, and motivates him to do his part. She acknowledges his lofty ambitions, but reminds him that its all for naught if nobody follows him. Her character is more than just the love interest, she's a bad ass in her own right. She's one of the best marksmen in the squad, and serves as the units sniper during the extraction from the school to the waiting Pelican shuttle. That was the vehicle that was to evacuate the cadets off of the planet that the aliens had captured. And now, for your uber fans, she also goes down in HALO lore as the first human to fire the Type-51 Carbine, which was used by alien snipers.

Mast Chief, John-117: He was one of the main point of view characters, and was played by actor Daniel Cudmore. Wow, he stepped into some big shoes, as Master Chief is one of the most iconic characters in science fiction gaming. Not much is known about John-117, he was kidnapped as a baby and raised to be a warrior. He was surgically crafted into the ultimate killing machine and weapon for his ONI masters. In this movie we get to see him from the eyes of the soldiers and sailors he supports, which was extremely refreshing. When stuff hits the fan, he rises to the occasion, but you could do no less as THE Master Chief. The acting was well done, though given the full body costume it wasn't that hard. There is a lot more out there about this character, but I'm keeping this to what we saw in the movie, so we'll end this here and keep it spoiler free.

Overall, I will give these characters 5 out of 5 Grenades and can't wait to see where Microsoft

Studios take these characters!

Plot:

This was a fairly simple plot, and it made the acting by the main characters even more compelling. It was a coming of age and an origin story for Thomas Laskey, someone who tied into the larger HALO canon. Despite the role of this film in the larger universe, you still have a decent plot about a kid at a military school struggling with his role in the world. In this, the opening parts of the movie remind me of [The Lords of Discipline] novel by author Pat Conroy. It becomes something more when the aliens show up, then you get the standard first contact story full of chaos and confusion. Unlike most of the science fiction I love, this movie wasn't as action-packed until the end. However, I'm a HALO nut and loved every second of it. I've watched it many times, the last one for this review as an excuse to justify the time away from the keyboard. The story was fun, though it blended the escapism I love with some hefty political and moral themes. Not the in your face moral sermonizing, but it was still an insightful look at the nature of war and insurgencies. I watched this movie with my youngest son, so this could potentially color my thoughts on the movie. I mean, it's hard not to enjoy a movie that's bringing your baby boy so much joy. In a nutshell, the plot was well set-up, and extremely well executed. The build up was slow, but I didn't care because it was a HALO film. My only concern would be how this would be received by people not already fans of the universe. I think they could still enjoy it, but some of the one star rankings on Amazon suggest a few didn't. Maybe your mileage will vary, but it's definitely worth giving it a chance to form your own opinion. That said, I loved it! I again give this movie a 4 out of 5 Grenades!

World Building & Cinematography:

This movie was originally shown as several mini-episodes, and was intended to sell the HALO 4 game. I watched those segments after they were combined and couldn't tell, so you don't need to worry that the story was choppy. This movie did a lot to fill out the HALOverse, telling the origin story of Thomas Laskey. He's an important character in later games, and we meet him as he becomes that man. We get to see his first interaction with the Master Chief, which becomes significant later in the universe.

Internally, the story was consistent with itself but there was a problem with how the facts from this story fit within the larger universe. This story was set in 2526, and John-117 introduced himself as "Master Chief," but his rank at that time would be Petty Officer. Depending on the conflicting canon, he should be a Petty Officer Second Class or a Petty Officer Third Class. I suspect that this was done because of the renown of the character "Master Chief," and the director wanted name recognition. Everyone knows who he is through his title, so canonical purity was thrown to the side.

On the message boards some fans justify this as the narrator of the story, Thomas Laskey, confusing timelines since he was a friend of John-117, who was a Master Chief at the time of the narration of these events. I don't buy it, since the Master Chief introduced himself as such. That action has implications, and we know through later plot points that Thomas Laskey isn't an unreliable narrator. Regardless of this, my son and I loved this movie and ignored that minor flaw.

Our main complaint was with the lighting choices, it was filmed so darkly that we had to watch it in the pitch black to see all of it. This was done intentionally, clearly to set a dire mood, but it was a bad artistic decision. Otherwise, I loved how the movie used creative camera work to

make this world came alive. Seeing a real life Warthog ground vehicle was amazing, as well as the other parts of the game canon, so I loved how that was built in. I especially loved seeing the ODST Helljumpers fall from the sky, it gave me a case of the feels. Can you tell that I absolutely loved this movie? Can I say that enough?

Okay, back to the nitty gritty of the review. This movie had a very flushed out world that was visual consistent, made sense and sucked you in. The director didn't reinvent the wheel, but that's hard to do in a world as deep and rich as the HALOverse. It was an origin story of a principle character, so there wasn't a lot of wiggle room. Overall, the world building and cinematography was well done, but the canon issues bugged me. The world felt believable, and the characters fit within the universe the director created. It was a fun ride that made me want a sequel, well at least with the characters who made it out alive! I give the world building and cinematography 4 out of 5 Grenades. It would've been a 5 if they'd stuck to the canon!

Overall:

I really loved this movie, it was a lot of fun to watch. I'm a huge fan of this universe, and this gave me everything I love. The visuals of this movie had me hooked, and allowed me to ignore the one place where the canon wasn't as pure as I would like. To make this better, this movie was well acted, which makes it stand out against movies that count on green screens and tricks to make up for flat acting and flaccid scripts.

This was a fun story, and I watched it with my 14 year old son. We both screamed like loons as we saw Master Chief and the various Covenant aliens come to life. It was glorious, and we nerded out like crazy people. I was glad that the actors did such an outstanding job portraying their characters, and didn't rest on the laurels of the HALO name. I lost myself in the world that Microsoft Studios built. It brought back the epic space battles I've played through the various additions to this gaming universe. I was reminded of the other books in this universe that comforted me when I was going insane after Iraq, so I'm VERY biased on this game.

That said, I recognize that this might not apply to everyone. The only reason the movie didn't get five stars was because of the decision to tell the story out of order, and my understanding that it might not stand alone for those unfamiliar with the game. Overall, they had me hooked from the beginning and kept it going throughout the entire 90 minutes. This is a movie I would happily recommend, and a director I will definitely watch again. Buy or rent this movie! But hey, it's easy to spend someone else's money! The movie was so good I can forgive the continuity issue, so I give this film a 4 out of 5 grenades!

Food of Famous Authors

Books by Sam Schall
Cooking by Cedar Sanderson

Sam's Smoked Chicken. Sometimes I wonder about that woman's sense of humor. I mean, the books are collectively the Honor and Duty series. But the first one is Vengeance from Ashes and she asks me to smoke some chicken. I snorted, and then I got to thinking.



Smoked chicken isn't so much a recipe as a method. It's a way of imparting a lot of flavor to what is essentially a blank slate. Why does everything taste like chicken? Because chicken tastes like nothing much. So smoking the chicken, after using a dry rub on it, is a way to wind up with flavorful, moist, delicious chicken that can be used as leftovers (if there are any, but I planned for it) to add flavor to other things. Like Sam's series, it's a gift that keeps on giving. So grab the book of your choice, whether you want to begin at the beginning with Sam's Vengeance, or pick up the latest in the series, Risen from Ashes. There's a fair amount of sitting and waiting in this, so you will have time to read while cooking!

You're going to want a lot of chicken. I picked up a 10 pound bag of leg quarters to use in this cooking session. I'm a busy woman, and if I made more than the family would eat in a sitting, I'd have leftover chicken, which is so versatile. You could also pick up two whole roasters and cut them up, or simply spatchcock them, if you

prefer.

Mix up the rub at any point. You can store this, tightly sealed, and I do. I make this up in large quantities to use for ribs, for instance.

Dry Rub

- 1 c brown sugar
- 1/2 c salt (I use kosher, a larger flake here will help keep the salt dispersed and not clumping)
- 1/2 c chili flakes (1/4 c chili powder if you don't have those)
- 1/4 c cumin
- 1/4 c garlic powder
- 1/4 c onion flakes (powder is better, I didn't have any this time)
- 1/4 cup paprika (I usually have sweet on hand)

Blend all the spices, salt, and sugar together. A food processor works nicely for this. Take a cupful out to use on the chicken, store the rest.

Prep the chicken by rinsing it, and patting it dry with paper towels. Arrange in a pan, then coat it on all sides with the rub. At this point you can wrap it snugly in saran wrap and refrigerate overnight, or you can go ahead and fire up the grill/smoker.



I like to pre-soak my woodchips before use, as this keeps them from simply going up in flames. If I had access to nice smoking wood I'd handle it differently, but sadly I have to buy my chips. I used hickory for this chicken. You'll want one of the milder woods (apple, peach, cherry, pecan, hickory...) rather than a harsher flavor like mesquite. Or maybe not. I like the milder smoke for chicken.



I have an offset grill-smoker, so I build my charcoal fire in the offset and put the chips on there, then draw the smoke through the main chamber with the chimney. My poor grill is about rusted out, and I'm thinking about moving to a barrel smoker for the next one. You can smoke in a direct-fire grill, just expect your meat to cook faster and therefore pick up less flavor. I have no idea if this would work on a gas grill. I've never used one, any more than I've ever used lighter fluid (gross. Yes, I am a snob. You should be, too! Get a chimney, you won't regret it).

Now, for a quick smoke, which is what I was going to do, I'll finish in the oven. I worry a lot more about making sure my chicken is up to a proper internal temperature of 165F (75C) and sometimes on a slow smoke this can take quite a while. However, the longer you leave it on the smoke, the more yummy smoky flavor you soak up into that bird. If you do bring it in to finish, I recommend putting it on a rack, to allow the schmaltz and juices to run away from the meat, and setting your oven no more than 300F so we cook this thing, not turn it into boot leather. Chicken needs to be safely done, but it can still be moist as long as the juices run clear and the meat is opaque and firm. I can't give you a precise time. I use a probe thermometer inserted partly into the thickest thigh I have, but not touching a bone, to monitor the chicken. My thermometer has a little alarm that sounds when the desired temp is reached.

And that's all there is to it! Well, no, really it's so much more nuanced. There are a lot of variables, from what grill configuration you are using, to how long you leave it on the smoke, and what cuts you are using... but the general idea is to come away with pieces of chicken that have crispy skin, smoke-ruddied outer meat layers, and done all the way through.

If you get enough smoke, you can see a ring of reddish color on the outer layer of meat.

And then you can kick back with some cornbread, salad, an adult beverage, and a book. Happy reading and eating!

Oh, leftovers? I tata, and smoke the New Mexico



made smoked chicken frit-chicken enchiladas (I prefer style), and...



Mothman Perched
by Jose Sanchez