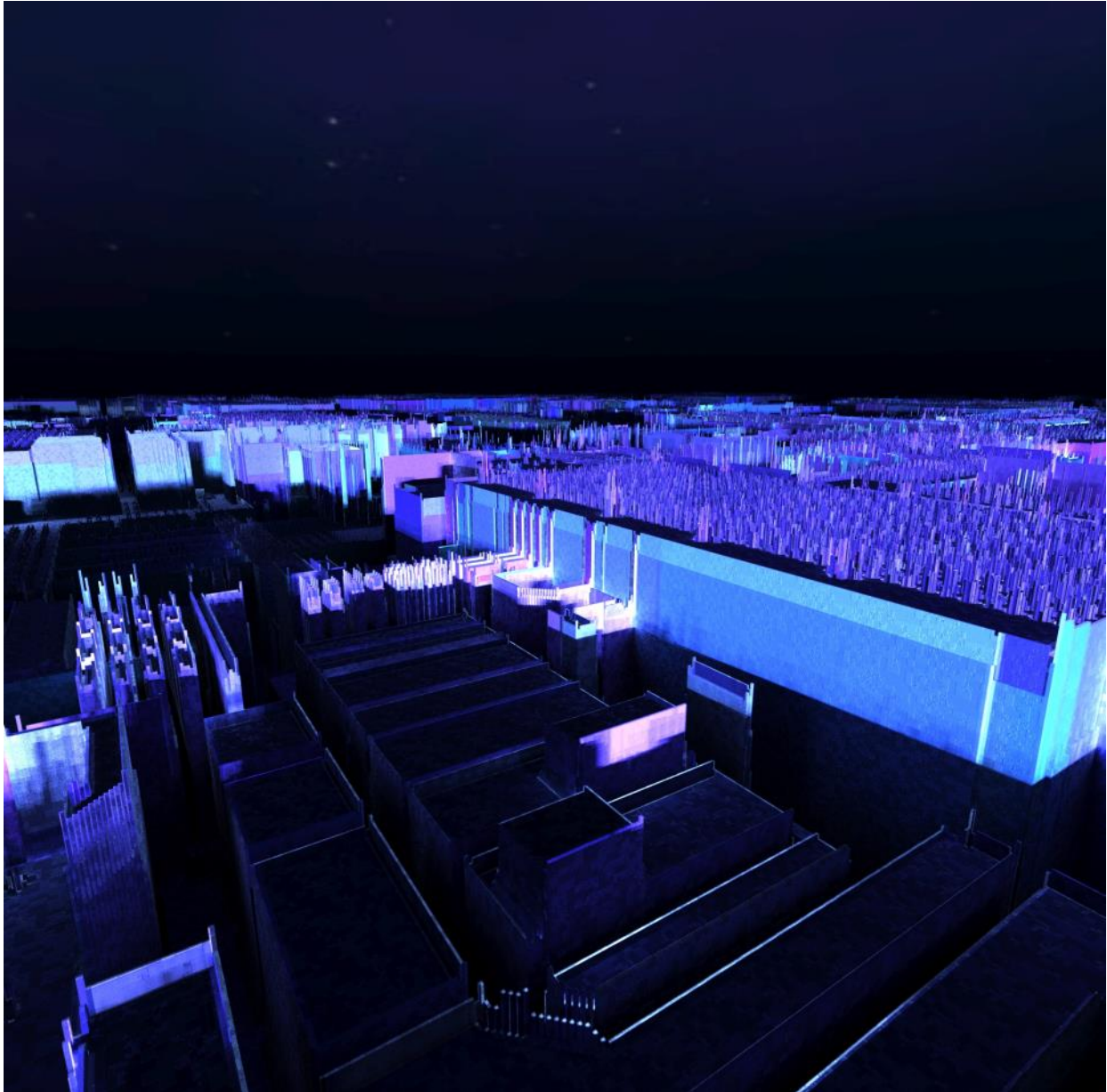


Tightbeam 353

February 2024



Cyper City
by Tiffanię Gray

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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 Neffers:

Thank you all for issue 352 of Tightbeam, and thank you to George and Jon for getting this done once again. Comments proceed apace, and sometimes gang aft agley...

While I know of the later Star Wars properties, I never watched the movie after Episode VII. It just didn't seem like Star Wars any more. Sorry, guys, I know of The Mandalorian, but have never watched it on TV.

My letter...I think Discovery returns in April, not sure. More Trek movies and series are on the way, which is making Trek its own genre. Fatigue is still getting to me, and with my own SFnal activities, plus one long day at work per week, I am probably busier than I've ever been. No complaints, given the possibility of the opposite. So many SF authors deaths lately.

Another name I remember from my bookshelf, Philip E. High. The one book I have, The Time Mercenaries, is in bad shape, but is still quite readable. So many of these authors would be forgotten if not for these columns...perhaps they should be gathered in book format so more can remember those authors we remember from when we were much younger.

We've got some busy weekends coming up, and we will be travelling...George and Jon, if you want those N3F flyers to get to the NASFiC and World Fantasy Convention, get them to me as soon as you can. Already, we have a box half-full of things to remember to take to those conventions.

Thanks for this issue, and see you with the next.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

Anime

Princess Principal Review by Jessi Silver

Five girls live in 19th century London, a city within the Albion Kingdom divided into east and west by a large wall. The girls serve as undercover spies enrolled as students at the prestigious Queen's Mayfair school. The girls make use of their individual abilities to remain active in the underground world of disguise, espionage, infiltration, and car chases. – ANN
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Streaming: Amazon Anime Strike
Source: Original

Episode 1 Summary: A new path for history was set in motion when the strange element "cavorite" was discovered. Cavorite allowed the kingdom of Albion to create an air fleet that was unmatched in the world, but this imbalance of power tore Europe apart. Albion was split



into East and West by a huge wall encircling London, and now, as in any divided country, spy networks crisscross from one side to the other trying to get the upper hand for their side.

Five young women attending Queen's Mayfair school moonlight as spies, their current job involving helping a scientist defect so that he can get the money to help his younger sister, who is suffering from cavorite poisoning. But the scientist's goals are muddled by who he's actually working for, and it isn't long before the girls discover that the ultimate goal is to draw them out from their hiding place.

Impressions: Anime is a medium that's tackled a lot of genres and sub-genres over the years, but despite the popularity of steampunk within geek culture over the last decade or so, there haven't been very many anime that have taken advantage of that. Steamboy is probably the most obvious one, and perhaps Last Exile as well, though that one has a slightly different feel. But for the most part it's kind of an untapped market for anime. That's why I was pleased to see a series like this that seems to be all-in as far as the steampunk aesthetic goes. Princess Principal seems to not only be concerned with what type of technological achievements might have been made had the world made a giant leap in discovery around the late 1800's, but also the effects on class in society as a result.



'Tis a very fancy school.

The first episode takes place in the city of London and its surroundings some years after its eponymous battle that's referenced several times throughout the episode (and which seems to play a large part in at least one of the main characters' backstories). Many of the scenes occur within the elite private school the girls attend which serves as a cover for their nightly activities, and portrays the kind of upper-class Victorianesque setting one might expect in a steampunk-focused piece. With its emphasis on aesthetics, we get the expected steam-powered inventions, English gentility, and costume-like variations upon period clothing that make the genre fun to play around in. What we also see, though, are the bits and pieces of London buried beneath the thick smog, in the gutters of the city where the lower classes dwell. There are scenes of the poor clustered in an infirmary waiting room, and homeless people lining the streets. The discovery of cavorite, and likely the war that went along with it, definitely made some people wealthy, but there are clearly many who weren't lucky enough to share in that prosperity.

The first episode doesn't really take a stance on any of this beyond allowing the audience to see how things are; it's clearly used as a means to demonstrate how stratified the world is. It does give us some perspective in that at least one of the girls now working as a spy was lucky enough to escape this kind of poverty (having been orphaned) and find a way to some kind of financial means (even if the work she and her compatriots are hired to do isn't particularly savory). Anime has a tendency to "tell" rather than to "show," so despite the fact that these visual interjections were pretty obvious, it's nice to get a little bit of background on the world without an "as you know..." info-dump up front.

In addition to its portrayal of the people populating its alternate-history milieu, the show's background art is striking and detailed, providing a lovely backdrop for the well-executed action in



Ange keeps watch on their target from on high.

from one episode, but I was truly impressed by how this show made its visual impression.

this episode. There's an incredible amount of care in the depiction of the lush plants in the Queen's Mayfair gardens, as well as in the brownish grit and grime of the city streets below the all-encompassing fog. There's just enough of a sepia-tone to give the whole thing a classic feel to go along with its old-timey vehicles and other less tangible period style. It's definitely not a universal constant, but I find that, often, when different pieces of the whole are given a lot of attention and care separately, the final product tends to reflect that extra energy and planning in its overall quality. Obviously nothing is certain

I did a panel at an anime convention a year or two ago that was a discussion of moé tropes and how employing them in character creation isn't necessarily a mark of laziness on the part of a creator, but instead can be a shortcut to get the audience up to speed quickly, with character detail and development to follow as required by the story. Some examples of this technique used well are Puella Magi Madoka Magica, or perhaps a slightly better comparison to this show, Sound of the Sky. In both of these shows, we're fooled into thinking that the characters, being who they are and marked by their moé characteristics, will have a particular, predictable story arc. In both cases the characters have much more depth than might be obvious at first glance, and as details are added to their personas, we learn more about the world they inhabit. I think many of us are still wary when the cast of an anime looks like "a bunch of girls each with her unique one-note personality," and that was my knee-jerk reaction to this show. Ange, who we spend some time with in this episode, feels like a typical "emotionless girl with a tragic past" that is meant to appeal to a certain type of fan, and there are a couple of other obvious character types within the group of characters we don't know very well yet. But I get the impression that we'll learn more about these characters as we go, and I'm interested to see that happen. And hey, if we don't end up with richer portraits of our protagonists as we go, perhaps at the very least we might end up with something like Joker Game, which oozed style despite not sharing any pertinent details about the cast; I can dig a show about cool people doing cool things.

It's not surprising to me that this show, which wasn't really on my radar, seems much more promising than I would have thought; that's something that happens every season. Though I might have some slight misgivings about the show's ability to keep up the standard of this opening episode, I'm impressed enough by the type of story it told and the environment it portrayed that I think it's definitely worth a second look.

Pros: Lots of visual style and a cool alternate history premise. Depicts class differences in a steampunk setting.

Cons: Difficult to tell if the somewhat-generic characters will develop as we go. The visuals may not be able to maintain quality going forward.

Grade: B+

Dive!! Review by Jessi Silver

Since he was a young boy, Tomoki Sakai has been in love with the sport of diving. After years of practice and stalwart determination, there's no place where he feels more at home than in those brief seconds of flight before he's submerged into the water. Unfortunately, he and the other boys of the Mizuki Diving Club (MDC) aren't doing enough to please their sponsors, and the club is on the verge of being disbanded. Enter coach Kayoko Asaki, a fiery woman who is determined to pull the boys of the MDC back from the brink. Her mission: get the MDC to the Tokyo Olympics in one year's time. Tomoki and his friends have a long road ahead of them as they begin their fight to fulfill their dreams. – ANN

Episode 1 Summary: As a youngster, Tomoki Sakai had a chance meeting that changed his life forever. He caught a glimpse of Yoichi Fujitani flying through the air as he dove into a pool below. It was then that Tomoki fell in love with diving. Tomoki's road to being a competent diver was fraught with challenges, including his fear of opening his eyes before hitting the water, but



having Yoichi as an inspiration (and occasional teacher and mentor) has helped give him the confidence to keep going. Tomoki's personal life, however, isn't quite so successful; though he accepted a request to go out from a girl named Miyu, he's unenthusiastic about the relationship and would rather spend his time worrying about his sport. When rumors start going around about the closing of the Mizuki Diving Club, Tomoki's place of training and home-away-from-home, all the members of the club are understandably

stressed. In reality, the arrival of new coach Kayoko Asaki marks the beginning of a new, ambitious goal for MDC; get the club members to the Tokyo Olympics in one year's time. But is this a goal that's within the team's grasp?

Impressions: Amazon seems to have a pretty firm grasp on many of the anime that piqued my interest this season, and Dive!! is no exception. As a part of Fuji TV's long-running noitaminA anime programming block, it's also part of Amazon's current exclusivity deal. Years ago I was quite the noitaminA devotee, having been attracted to its penchant for broadcasting anime aimed at an older (and often female) audience. In more recent years its reputation has become



Yoichi demonstrates his skill.

more spotty, but at the very least I can still say that most of noitaminA's programming is somewhat off the beaten path.

This series will obviously invite many comparisons with Free! due to its similar title stylization and penchant for portraying young men in Speedo swimsuits. It's also a sports series that seems to deal more in character dynamics and emotions, which was one of Free!'s strengths as an anime. Whereas KyoAni's famous outing made a name for itself by combining sports action, character development, and great animation, not to mention fanservice aimed at individuals attracted to the male body, this series is, thus far, much more subdued in tone and

execution. Whereas the episode ends with the introduction of a huge goal – get to the world stage by qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics – it spends much of the rest of the run time telling a much quieter, more contained tale of one young man’s internal conflict between what he feels he should like – having a girlfriend and spending time with his friends at school – and what he feels compelled to do – achieving even greater heights (literally!) in the sport he’s come to love. This fits in well with noitaminA’s catalog, which contains a lot of anime series that speak to the realities of human existence in ways both large and small within almost every sort of genre context. Despite Tomoki’s status as “yet another teenage male anime protagonist,” I actually felt like his struggles were relateable, because they’re also much bigger than high school. Many of us find ourselves pulled in multiple directions, and part of life is learning to balance our wants and needs in order to create a satisfying existence.

One moment that really pierced through some of my misgivings was the flashback to Tomoki’s one-on-one mentorship with Yoichi, the one time Yoichi seemed to find the time and inspiration to give direct instruction. Tomoki is told that he needs to keep his eyes open, to see where he’s going and orient himself to the water (this is after failing several times to enter the water cleanly from his dives and looking like a doofus). There’s an element of technical instruction to this advice, of course, but there’s also a broader message within it about facing challenges head-on with open eyes. One thing I was always told as a child when playing catch or tossing a Frisbee, was that I needed to keep my eyes open and not shy away from the object flying quickly and painfully towards my face. Practically, there’s a better chance you’ll catch the ball (or enter the water better) if you’re watching what you’re doing. There’s also a much higher chance of achieving success in life if you handle challenges head-on with as much knowledge as you’re able to gather. As someone with anxiety, this is a challenge that I have to face every day, and sometimes what essentially amounts to large-scale self-imposed exposure therapy is a terrifying proposition (and not one that works for me all the time or would work for anyone/everyone else regularly, either), but I find myself better able to cope now that I’ve at least made an attempt to face my fears. I was surprised to find myself relating to the show on this level so quickly.



Tomoki isn’t sure about his feelings for Miyu.

The unfortunate thing is that this isn’t a great looking show. This tends to be the case with a lot of noitaminA series, at least in my experience. They’re caught in a space where they’re meant to appeal to a more mainstream audience, but that means that there’s not really a built-in guarantee of financial success like there might be for a show related to a big-selling game, book, or manga property. I suspect that makes it less attractive to animators in some way, or there’s not as much energy and time devoted to sched-

uling and planning something that’s slick and produced in a way that’s meant to “wow” people. While the promo art might give the impression of shiny male abs and sports action, there’s ultimately not a lot of focus on that element. There aren’t high detail shots of abs or bodies in motion (there we go, comparing it to Free! again), but again I feel like that’s not really the point here. I do think that viewers might expect that kind of thing from this series, though, and if that’s the case there’s bound to be some disappointment.

There’s also a little bit of juvenile humor in this episode that feels really out of place considering how subdued the tone is. One of Tomoki’s friends at the MDC can’t seem to get over the fact that a beautiful woman has come to visit their coach, and there’s a much-longer-than-



necessary scene in which this character melts down over the fact of the woman's curvaceous body and his default assumption that their coach must be having an affair with her. It's the episode's one real attempt at being silly or funny, and beyond being generally out of place it's also pretty crass and doesn't add anything to the episode. I maintain that teenage boys aren't nearly as stupid as anime makes them out to be.

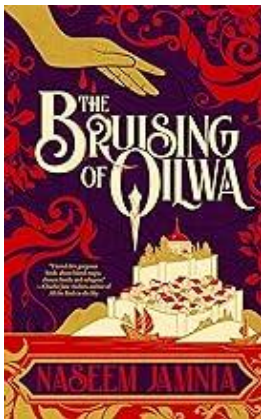
Though there are a few missteps, I'm actually, surprisingly still interested in this series despite how it went against a lot of my initial expectations (or possibly because of it). I think it runs the possibility of being a little generic, and with only 11 episodes it doesn't have much time to bring all the characters where they need to go, but I like that it seems very self-contained and doesn't seem concerned with being bombastic and intense like a lot of other sports anime. This might be a show worth spending a little time with.

Pros: Seems to have a pretty deep message about facing anxiety and balancing the various elements of one's life. The tone is pretty subdued.

Cons: The production values are lacking somewhat. There's some juvenile humor that falls flat.
Grade: B-

Books

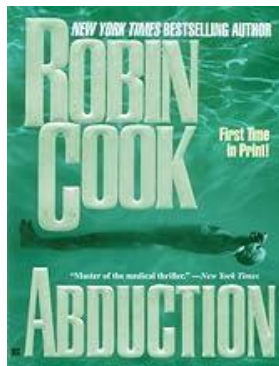
The Bruising of Qilwa by Naseem Jamnia Review by Tom Feller



Qilwa refers to a city-state in a fantasy world inspired by Persia and other countries around the Persian Gulf. It is newly independent after being part of the Sassanid and Dilmun empires for thousands of years. Now they are being inundated by refugees from their former oppressors fleeing a plague. The point-of-view character is Firuz-e Jafari, a Sassanian who flees to Qilwa along with his mother and younger brother Parviz. He was trained, although did not have time to become an adept, as both a blood magic user and a healer. He finds work assisting a Qilwan healer named Kofi, who operates a free clinic that treats anyone regardless of their ethnic origin. Jafari later adopts Afsoneh, another Sassanian who is an orphaned teenager. She also has tremendous potential as a blood magic user. Most of the story consists of their day-to-day life, although toward the end a mysterious disease which they call "blood bruising" dominates the plot. This novella left me wanting to spend more time in this world.

Abduction by Robin Cook Review by Tom Feller

After I got about a hundred pages into this novel, I realized that I had read it once before. For-

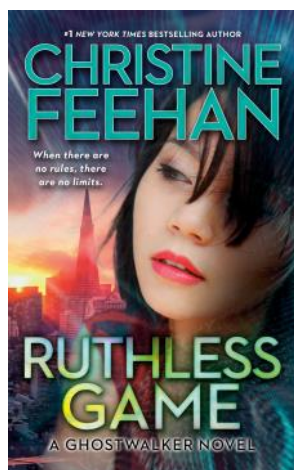


tunately, I could not remember the ending so I kept reading. Although the author is known for his medical thrillers, this one starts out like a techno-thriller but crosses the line into science fiction before it reaches the one-quarter mark. Perry Bergman, originally an engineer, is president of Benthic Marine, an oceanic exploration company. At the recommendation of Dr. Suzanne Newell, an oceanographer, they are investigating an anomaly at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean near the Azores. They join Donald Fuller, captain of the submersible Oceanus and retired U.S. Navy submariner, in a voyage to the company's drilling site, which is having problems. They were supposed to support Ex-Navy deep sea divers Richard Adams and Michael Donaghue, but all five are abducted by an undersea civilization.

The members of the civilization called themselves the Interterreans, because they reside in pockets of the Earth's crust beneath the sea, and this particular city is called Saranta. They are responsible for the legend of Atlantis, actually another of their cities, the pyramids in Egypt, and much of ancient Greek culture. Their purpose for abducting the five people is not revealed until well into the story. In the meantime, they introduce the surface humans to their culture, which involves what some would call "free love". Since the Interterreans are all exceptionally beautiful and handsome by the standards of surface humans, they initially do not complain. However, Richard and Michael, whose homophobia led to their discharge from the Navy, get themselves in trouble here, too.

I am sure that Cook's fans, who were expecting a medical thriller, were disappointed. As a life long science fiction reader on the other hand, I found it entertaining, although highly derivative.

Ruthless Game by Christine Feehan Review by Tom Feller



This novel is the 9th book in the author's Ghostwalker series. The Ghostwalkers are a top secret special forces unit in which all the members have superpowers, some natural and some enhanced through gene editing. The powers differ except that each one is telepathic, which is quite useful in small unit actions. They were created by Peter Whitney, a mad scientist. He was forced to go underground when his illegal activities were revealed to Congress and did not actually appear in person in this novel. Since he has no regard for any of the Ghostwalkers as people, but only as experiments, he functions as the series' primary villain.

The two main characters in this installment are Kane Cannon and Rose Patterson, both Ghostwalkers. In a previous book, Whitney paired them to produce offspring that were even more super super soldiers, and they ended up falling in love. After becoming pregnant, she escaped from Whitney and became a fugitive. They are re-united in the first chapter of this book, and during the first half they are hiding out in Mexico until Rose gives birth to a son, whom they name Sebastian. Despite the efforts of Whitney's minions to capture them, they make their way to the Ghostwalker compound in San Francisco, where they still have to be vigilant.

The action scenes are excellent, but they are separated by long, boring passages in which the

characters discuss how they feel about each other, especially how attractive they are to each other. Also, the sex scenes are so detailed to the point where they are almost pornographic. It is a competent sci-fi action romance.

Savage Nature by Christine Feehan Review by Tom Feller

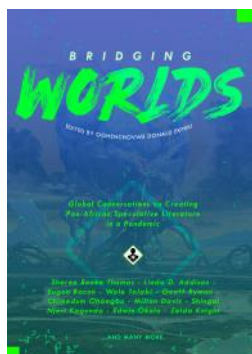


We are all familiar with were-wolves, but this is the first time I have ever read about were-leopards, although I have seen both the original and the remake of *The Cat People*. This is the fifth novel in the series. Saria Boudreaux is photographing an owl and her nest at night in a Louisiana Bayou when she sees mysterious lights. After the lights have gone, she investigates and finds the body of a dead man. She does not call the police, because she sees that man was killed by a big cat. She knows her five brothers are all were-leopards, although they don't know that she knows, and is afraid that one or more of them may be the killers. She does, however, get words to Jake Bannaconni, the owner of the land that her family and six other ones lease.

The owner dispatches Drake Donovan, himself a were-leopard, to investigate. Via telephone, he engages Saria, a highly recommended swamp guide. When they meet, it is lust at first sight, and they fairly quickly fall in love as well. It turns out that all seven families are were-leopards, which Saria had not known. Saria's parents are deceased, and her eldest brother Remy has been negligent about setting her down for a "facts of life" talk, especially since this would have included informing her that she too is a were-leopard and that her first shape-shifting experience is close at hand. The first such experience for a female were-leopard is comparable to a female cat going into heat. Together Saria and Drake work to solve the mystery of this and several other murders.

Like the other novel by Feehan, the action scenes are excellent, but, unlike the previous one, there are fewer boring passages. The sex scenes are also quite detailed, although there are fewer of them, because their relationship is not consummated until the second half of the novel. As a whodunit, it has the defect that the killer does not appear on the page until about three-quarters of the way through the book.

Bridging Worlds edited by Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki Review by Tom Feller



This is a collection of essays by and interviews with African speculative fiction writers, living in both Africa and outside the continent, African-American, African-Canadian, and even one African-Australian writer. The most common theme was how they survived the pandemic. Essays include Nikhil Singh discussing how walking helps his creative process; Yvette Lisa Ndlovu explaining the origin of the Voodooonauts Summer Workshop, a writer's workshop, and how African folklore shapes African speculative fiction; Eugen Bacon explaining how she can be so prolific; Edwin Odolo and Joshua Uchenna Omenga on living in Nigeria during the pandemic; Wole

Talabi on African speculative literature staying faithful to their origins and not becoming pale imitations of Western SF; Zela Knight on creating the Dominion anthology of African speculative fiction stories; Tobi Ogundiran on attending school in Russia during the pandemic; and others . There are also interviews with Chimedum Ohaegbu, who became the Hugo-winning managing editor of *Uncanny* in 2019 and Sheree Renee Thomas, editor in chief of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. It was quite interesting and informative.

Firestorm by Iris Johansen Review by Tom Feller



When she was ten years old, Kerry Murphy was in a fire that killed her mother. It was the work of an arsonist, and after Kerry escaped, he hit her on the head with a lead pipe so that she could not identify him. Kerry was in a coma for two years, and when she awoke, she discovered she had a psychic power. This power enables her to look at the remains of a fire and see how it began. At the beginning of the novel, she is working as a fire investigator for the Atlanta Fire Department. To conceal her power, she adopted Sam, a Labrador Retriever, from an animal shelter and claims that he can detect chemicals and other clues. Meanwhile, James Trask, a renegade scientist, has invented a weapon that can cause fires remotely. He has become a fugitive and has made arrangements to sell it to North Korea. In the meantime, he is taking revenge on his enemies with no regard for innocent bystanders. Dr. Travis, a psychiatrist who knows about Kerry's ability, refers her to Brad Silver, a strong telepath. Silver's brother and sister-in-law were two of Trask's murder victims, and he recruits her to help him find Trask. They are assisted by George, a butler/bodyguard with a special forces background. This is a solid paranormal thriller, and in the end, Kerry even learns who killed her mother.

Movies

Barbie

Review by Tom Feller



I never owned a Barbie doll, but my brother and I both had G.I. Joe toy soldiers. Both toys operated on the principle that once a kid had the starter unit, they would continue to buy accessories for several years. While G.I.Joes were more successful as comic book and animation characters, they never achieved Barbie's cultural importance. Now the latter has a film commensurate to that importance.

The premise is that Stereotypical Barbie (Margot Robbie), living in Barbie World, has a crisis involving physical changes such as her feet changing from high heel mode to flat. She consults Weird Barbie (Kate McKinnon) who recommends that she travel

to our world. Stereotypical Barbie is accompanied by Malibu Ken (Ryan Gosling). In our world, Barbie discovers sexism and Ken patriarchy, which he brings back to Barbie World. This conflict gives the film much of its plot, although the plot is incidental to film's purpose of satirizing male-female relations and the role of women in our society.

Elemental

Review by Tom Feller



This film was last year's Pixar movie, so naturally you have high expectations. The plot itself is a familiar one: a family immigrates to a new country and encounters discrimination, then one of the children falls in love with a person from a socially privileged class and/or race. It is loosely based on director Peter Sohn's family, who immigrated from Korea to the United States and lived in the Bronx. However, in this case, the immigrants are fire elementals, and their daughter Ember (voice of Leah Lewis) falls in love with Wade (voice of Mamoudou Athie), a water elemental. The animation is excellent, as you would expect, and Pixar had to buy more computers to fulfill the ambitions of the film makers. However, I thought it a second rate Pixar film, because of the conventional plot. However, this still makes it one of top animated features released last year.

Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse

Review by Tom Feller



To my knowledge, the first appearance of the concept of the multi-verse in fiction appeared in the 1934 short story "Sideways in Time" in the pulp magazine Astounding Stories by the now obscure writer Murray Leinster. I myself first encountered the concept in a comic book. It achieved the pinnacle of acceptance by the popular culture last year when Everything Everywhere All At Once won the Oscar for Best Picture. In a nutshell, the concept is that there are an infinite number of universes in which we have counterparts whose lives are slightly or greatly different from ours.

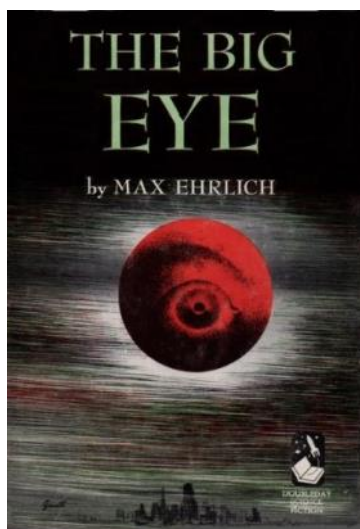
This animated film is a sequel to Spider-Man: In the Spider-Verse which won the Oscar for Best Animated Feature for that year and features alternate versions of the comic book character Spider-Man. It is set a year after the previous movie, and the main Spider-Man is Miles Morales (voice of Shameik Moore), now 15 years old. One complication is that he still hasn't told his parents that he is Spider-Man. His main romantic interest is problematic, because she lives in another universe. This is Gwen Stacy (voice of Hailee Steinfeld), who assumed the role of that universe's Spider-Person because that universe's Peter Parker was killed. Her mother is deceased, but, like Miles, she has not told her father, a police captain. Other Spider-Persons include Spider-Man 2099 (voice of Oscar Isaac), Spider-Man India (voice of Karan Soni), and Spider-Punk (voice of Daniel Kaluuya). Each Spider-Person

has their own unique animation style. The plot is driven by a villain called The Spot (voice of Jason Schwartzman), who can create portals to the other universes, which makes him hard to catch. This movie is a lot of fun.

SerCon

Max Ehrlich Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D. N3F Historian

Max Simon Ehrlich (1909 – 1983) was an American science fiction (SF) writer, best known today for his 1974 novel *The Reincarnation of Peter Proud*, and the 1975 movie of the same name that was based on the novel.



Early Life and Education

Ehrlich was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, on October 10, 1909, to Simon and Sarah Siegel Ehrlich. After attending Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, he transferred to the University of Michigan, from which he received a B.A. degree in 1933.

Career

Ehrlich began his career working for newspapers, first as a correspondent for the Albany, New York Knickerbocker Press and Evening News during his college years; and then, after graduating, as a feature writer for the Springfield, Massachusetts Republican.

From newspaper work he turned to radio, working as the chief writer in the script division of WSPR (a radio station in West Springfield, Massachusetts) in 1938 – 1939; then in the script division of the American Jewish Committee from 1939 to 1941; and, finally, from 1941 to 1945, he was the assistant script director of the radio division of the American Red Cross.

Radio, TV, and Film Work

After 1945, Ehrlich was primarily a novelist; but he was also the author of adaptations of stories for radio, television, and feature films. He wrote scripts for several popular radio programs, with some of his genre stories broadcast on *The Shadow* and *Murder at Midnight*.

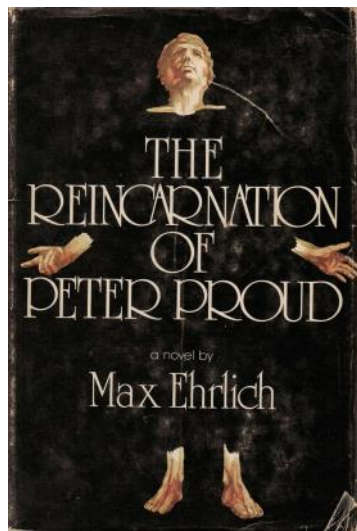
His television work included scripts for several genre series, including *Tales of Tomorrow*, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *Star Trek* (“The Apple” episode), and *The Wild, Wild West*.

Three of his feature movie scripts were adaptations of his own novels, including *The Reincarnation of Peter Proud* in 1975, starring Michael Sarrazin, Margot Kidder, and Jennifer O’Neill.

He co-authored the screenplay for the 1971 UK film *Z. P. G.* (i. e., *Zero Population Growth*) that starred Oliver Reed and Geraldine Chaplin. The film was based on Ehrlich's 1971 novel *The Edict*.

Marriage and Children

Ehrlich married Doris Rubenstein in 1940, and they had two daughters together, Amy and Jane. Amy Ehrlich became an award-winning author of children's books.



Principal Genre Novels

The Big Eye (1949)
The Edict: A Novel (1971)
The Reincarnation of Peter Proud (1974)
The Cult (1978)
Reincarnation in Venice (1979)
Shaitan: A Novel about Man into Beast (1981)

The Big Eye

Ehrlich's first novel, *The Big Eye*, set in the year 1960, told of the impending destruction of the Earth in two years. The reason? At Palomar Observatory, using their gigantic telescope (the "Big Eye"), astronomers had discovered that a new planet, named Y, would overtake the earth and end our world at Christmas in 1962. Russia and the United States had been at each other's throats and were ready for a nuclear war; but this news of the Earth's impending destruction, brought peace. The book's ending gives the reader an unexpected surprise!

It was reported that the book sold very well, encouraging Doubleday to continue with its SF book series.

Awards/Honors/Recognitions

In 1944, Ehrlich won the Writers' War Board Award; and in 1963, he was awarded a Huntington Hartford Foundation Fellowship.

Some Concluding Comments

When *The Big Eye* was published in 1949, the first book in the Doubleday SF series, our small town library obtained a copy. My SF-reading friends and I checked it out, taking turns. If I remember correctly, there was some talk among the five of us about not returning it to the library. The problem was that all of us wanted it for our own collections, as hard-bound SF books were rare, mostly due to our limited funds. Our small personal libraries consisted mainly of SF paperbacks, and some issues of the various SF pulp magazines being published at the time. For whatever reason, however, we all were good boys and each of us returned the book to the library after reading it.

Later, some of us bought copies of the 1950 Popular Library paperback edition – with cover art

by the famous pulp artist Earle Bergey.

Ehrlich dedicated *The Big Eye* to his wife and daughters.

Death

Ehrlich died on February 11, 1983, in Los Angeles, California.

Sources

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Reginald, R. *Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, Volume 2, Contemporary Science Fiction Authors II*, 1979.

Tuck, Donald H. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy, Volume 1: Who's Who, A – L*, 1974.

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

Short Fiction Reviews by Tom Feller

I had a lot of short stories from the Hugo Award packet that I have just recently gotten around to reading.

Isabel Kim

This author was a finalist for last year's *Astounding* (formerly the Campbell) Award for best new writer and finished second. Her sample for the Hugo Award packet consisted of short stories, and here are reviews of most of them. They originally appeared in *Clarkesworld*, *Strange Horizons*, *Fantasy*, *Lightspeed*, *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, and other e-magazines.

Calf Cleaving in the Benthic Black

Seam and Mica are “scavengers”, people who travel in space salvaging derelict space ships, and they find one that has never been touched. One of the dirty little secrets of scavengers is that they kill any surviving crew and passengers, because, according to the space salvage laws, the survivors would have a claim to the ships. This has never happened to Seam and Mica, but there is a first time for everything. They find a young man who must have been about fifteen when he was placed into a cryogenic chamber and have to decide what to do about him. It left me wanting more stories set in this universe.

Termination Stories for the Cyberpunk Dystopia Protagonist

“Cool and Sexy Asian Girl” pretends to help “White Boy/Tourist” in this send-up of cyberpunk detective stories. This one put me off.

Christopher Mills, Return to Sender

The title character and his prom date were murdered when he was seventeen, and the case was never solved. His soul resides in a hell that consists of him sitting in a massage chair in a mall, which is not the worst fate I can imagine, although it must get rather boring. Seven years later, his younger sister Angelica, now a necromancer, resurrects him in order to learn what really happened. This was my favorite in this sampling of Kim’s stories.

Plausible Realities, Improbable Dreams

This is a love story between two people who are caught in a chaotic multi-verse and do their best to stay together. It is quite sweet and endearing.

The Massage Lady at Munjeong Road Bathhouse

Jinah, a widow with a daughter, works at a bathhouse where she scrapes scales off the bodies of her clients. However, she does not want to do this for the rest of her life, even when the owner offers to turn over the business to her. This is a solid story about the choices people make.

Homecoming is Just Another Word for the Sublimation of the Self

The premise of this story is that when someone immigrates to another country, two people are created: one who stayed and one who left. The main character, Soyoung “Rose” Kang, had immigrated from Korea to the United States, and the American one returns for her grandfather’s funeral. It is quite poignant.

You, Me, Here, You, Her I

The point-of-view character of this story is an artificial intelligence placed into the repaired body of a female art graduate student named Valentine Manning who was killed by a car while riding her bicycle to school. While the woman’s brain is being resurrected, which takes two months, the AI passes as Valentine. She has to learn to paint and draw from scratch, because all the AI knows from Valentine comes from her social media postings, e-mails, and data gleaned from her computer. Artistic skills cannot be replicated in this way.

Khoreo

This publication finished seventh in the Hugo Semi-Prozine category, even behind “No Award”. I think this was unfair.

Phoenix Tile by Guan Un

Ah Lok is a trickster demigod starting to fade out of existence and tries to con his way

back.

Me and Seed Sheself by Celeste Rita Baker

The narrator is half of a magic tamarind seed that has been made into a pendant worn by a human female named Junisa since she was a child. At a beach party, Junisa swims out too far and almost drowns, losing the pendant.

Electric Waterfalls by Ruth Joffre

In a future Alaska, there is no more oil drilling, but the wells have been replaced by a large solar array. Xiomara is a student sent out to make repairs and frets about whether a particular girl is coming to her birthday party.

Matchmaker, Matchmaker by Evalyn Broderick

Two best friends compete in a baking contest to determine which one will marry an off-planet eligible bachelor.

Hiraeth Heart by Lulu Kadhim

A mother and daughter visit a destroyed desert city that was once the mother's home.

Sin Eater by T. M. Hurree

The title refers to a practice in some 18th and 19th Century Christian sects in which families would hire someone shortly after someone died unexpectedly and ritualistically consume a meal that is supposed to absolve the deceased of any unconfessed sins. The premise of this story is that sins can be harvested and used as cooking ingredients. For instance, the sins of a serial killer are supposed to be especially tasty. Adam is the owner of a small restaurant called a "sinner" who illegally buys sins from the warden of the local prison. Then one day one of his products is so tasteless that he concludes that the prisoner the sins came from is innocent. He then has to decide what to do about it. This was my favorite in Khoreo's sample.

Where Secrets Lie by Cindy Phan

Alice's family own a small Asian grocery. When her father finds a snake in a shipment, he wants to kill it but hesitates. Alice saves the snake and sets it free in their family's house, where it preys upon the family's secrets.

Ours But Not Our Own (Housesitting) by Joshua Tong

Liz and Owen live in a small apartment in the city, but take a house sitting job in the suburbs. The house's mirrors show them alternate versions of themselves who took different paths in their lives.

The Scumbling by J. C. Changmore

After Eliza's artistic mother commits suicide in her basement studio, she becomes a

ghost. She channels Eliza to produce the paintings that she wanted to create before her death and demands blood sacrifices, mostly mice.

Banhus by M. E. Bronstein

When Alice starts dating someone she calls “the Wordeater”, she finds he is especially interested in her memories of her grandmother’s Yiddish words. Wordeater invites her to his house in the country which turns out to be haunted. The house has absorbed the spirits of many similar young women.

Bride of the Gulf by Danai Christopoulou

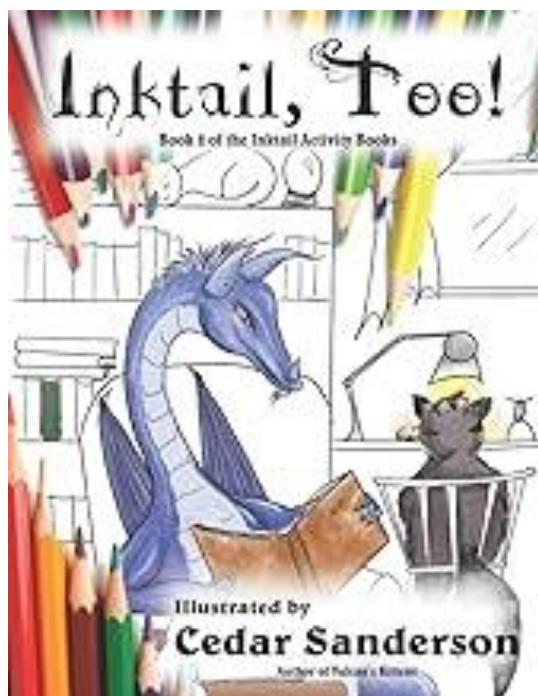
Niki, the main character in this story, is a young woman in the Greek city of Thessaloniki, but also a kind of were-mermaid. During the day, she is a barrista, but transforms to a mermaid at night. While working in the coffee shop, she becomes unsettled by the appearance of a golden haired man.

Mothership Connection by Melissa A. Watkins

This spaceship draws energy from its crew and passengers through their dancing. I found it rather offensive when one of the main characters explains that she cannot dance because she was raised by “white people”. It just so happens that I, a white man, met my wife, also white, at a dance at a Worldcon.

Food of Famous Authors

Cedar Sanderson and Huli Huli Chicken Cooking by Cedar Sanderson



As Cedar is too modest, not to mention too busy, to interview herself, your editors here present one of her books, *The Groundskeeper*, and her recipe for Huli Huli Chicken. You can keep up with her writing at cedarlila.substack.com.

Cedar says of her tale and its heroine: “The ghouls, wraiths, and ghosties had not been part of the job description. Or maybe they had, just not in so many words. The neatly printed sign next to the ornate gates had simply read “Cemetery groundskeeper and caretaker needed. Inquire within.” Now Chloe's trying to calm an irascible ghou, help a lost ghost find his way back to his grave, and get the mowing done before she needs to break out the bush hog instead... Who knew being a groundskeeper meant trying to keep things in the ground?”

This is a party dish, and the size of the recipe reflects



that. What follows will serve between 12-15 people, depending on who shows up and how many leftovers there are.

You can serve it with Mac Salad, rice, coleslaw, or other summertime barbecue sides. Up to you. It's sticky sweet, salty, savory... everything in one lump of cooked meat. Dad taught me to make this and love it, a byproduct of his teen years in Hawaii. Funny how things propagate outwards.

My recipe is ridiculously complicated for what originated as roadside bbq, which a friend informed me is usually perfumed with diesel exhaust, not that that takes away from it being good, he clarified. I enjoy playing with flavors, using what I have one hand, and that's why there will always be more than one version in the recipe box.

12-14 lbs of chicken (or cut up three roasters), mostly legs and thighs

For the marinade and sauce:

3/4 c dark soy sauce

3/4 c low-sodium soy sauce

1/2 c honey

1/2 c mirin

1/2 c rice wine vinegar

3/4 c brown sugar

1 tbsp. sesame oil

1/4 c ginger paste

1/3 c garlic paste

3 Tbsp. Chili paste

1/3 c lime juice (reserve zest from at least one lime)

1/4 c Seville orange juice (pineapple juice if you can't get this)

Whisk until the sugar and honey are mostly or completely dissolved into the marinade. Set about a third of this aside, with the grated zest of the lime in it, for later sauce.

Dump the chicken into the marinade in a very large bowl, turning it repeatedly to coat the meat.



Cover tightly with plastic wrap, excluding as much air as possible, or transfer to ziploc bags. Stash this in the fridge for no less than an hour, overnight if you were thinking ahead. Turn the bags, or mix up the bowl, a couple of times to ensure full coverage. Do not discard the marinade when it's time to put the chicken on the grill, you will use it to brush the meat when you turn it. The split-barrel grill my son built for me as his first big welding project.

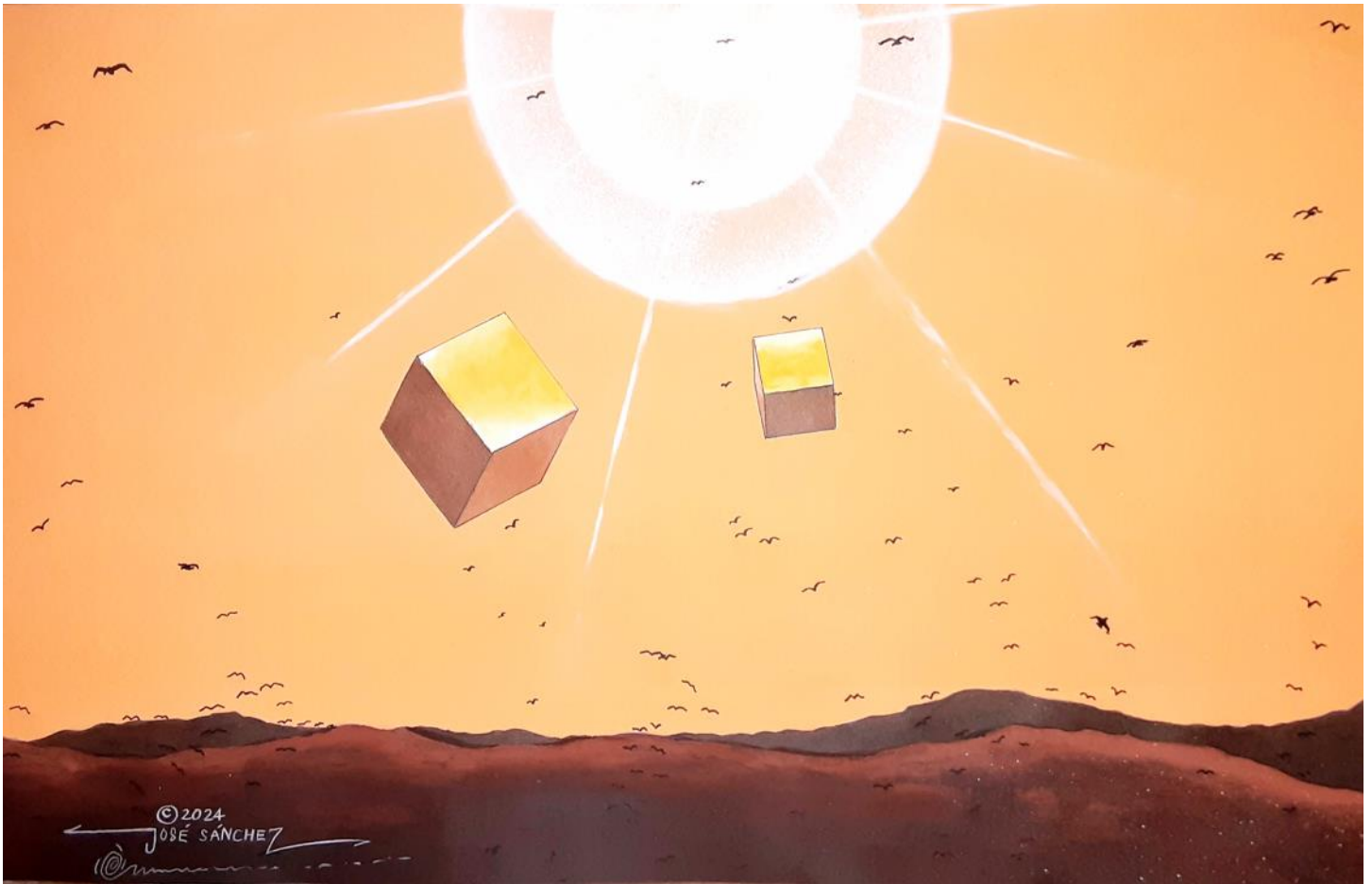
Huli means turn, and that's what you'll do, slathering the marinade on every time you turn it, which I do about every ten minutes. These repeated coats of sauce build up a fantastic sticky coating, while it's cooking. I always do this on the grill. You probably could do it in the oven, but that's no fun and will be very sticky and messy to clean up later. I prefer charcoal, but you do you. Over a nice bed of coals, with the rack high enough that the heat's not too high, cook the chicken until it's at an internal temperature of 165F, which will take 30-40 minutes. Stop brushing it with the marinade when the

last ten minutes on the heat are coming up, about 155 to 160. You want everything to cook on the outside part. You'll find you have to move the chicken as it cooks, too keep it cooking evenly as the sweet marinade can burn easily. I think this is the origin of the action that gives this bbq it's name.

In the meantime, simmer down the sauce that you held back until it has thickened up into a syrupy consistency. This will take about ten minutes (just about the amount of time in between turns and coatings of your chicken). You'll brush this on to the chicken after you remove it from the heat, just as it's time to serve.

The chicken done to a turn, and the pineapple going on to grill for dessert.

Serve while hot (although it's good cold the next day if by some means you pull off leftovers) and enjoy!



UFO Cubes

By José Sanchez