

# Tightbeam 365

## February 2025



Crow on Stone by Alan White

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

To join or renew, use the membership form at <http://n3f.org/join/membership-form/> to provide your name and whichever address you use to receive zines.

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## Letters of Comment

Dear Messrs. Phillies and Swartz:

Hello! It's been a while since I've written a letter of comment—perhaps January 2023! While I read *The National Fantasy Fan* monthly, I've been neglecting the other Nefzines in recent months, and as a former member of the directorate and editor of *The Fan*, the least I can do is write an LOC. After all, how can I better express appreciation for and celebrate my recent Laureate Award as best fan writer than as a letterhack? Hack on, I say.

This morning, I spent some time organizing my back issues of various Nefzines I've received over the years—as well as other personal files related to the club. So doing, I felt closer to the N3F than I have in quite a while—as well as distant and removed. Writing letters of comment is an easy way to begin to remedy that! I hope this missive finds you and yours relatively happy and healthy.

While reading *Tightbeam* #364, I found the description of the clubzine to be somewhat confusing. “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.” That seems to position *Tightbeam*—a general interest fanzine—against *The N3F Review of Books*—our literary reviewzine, but not other clubzines. Here's how I might break that down:

- Eldritch Science: fiction, poetry, and art
- Fanactivity Gazette: news and events
- Films Fantastic: movies and television (media fandom)
- Mangaverse: anime, manga, and comics
- N'APA: the amateur press association
- *The National Fantasy Fan*: the N3F newsletter
- *The N3F Review of Books*: book reviews and writing guidance
- *Tightbeam*: everything else, or a little bit of everything?

I'm actually at a bit of a loss trying to identify what *Tightbeam* can do that the other Nefzines don't—cosplay, music, and food seem to be the least overlapping topics—but I'm glad we're still publishing it frequently. As the club's third-oldest periodical, it's worth continuing—even if it's strayed from its original intent as a letterzine.

Jessi Silver's anime reviews piqued my interest given that Anime LA occurred just last weekend. We're still in the midst of widespread wildfires in southern California, though the Santa Ana winds have died down, Los Angeles is no longer surrounded by red flag zones, the friend we took in during the evacuations has returned home, and the fire containment efforts are heading in the right direction. I decided not to participate in Anime LA, deeming Long Beach too far away from home should the situation change, but was there in spirit. As I detailed in *Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #147, which will be included in the February issue of *The Stf Amateur*, I planned my programming schedule for the day as though I were at the con and watched and read the first two volumes of *Akira*. The anime holds up well for repeat viewing, and I'd never read the manga before. It's absolutely stellar, and I look forward to reading the remaining volumes.



The magazine reviews by Tom Feller might be the best material in the issue. I just recently learned about khōréō during the early-January Eaton Symposium (T&T #146, also in the forthcoming *Amateur*), for which I was a panelist—my first time on the program at a con! I take a similar approach to prozines and semiprozines with my “Tables of Contents” items in the *Amateur*, and I’ll pay eager attention to Feller’s future contributions. In fact, I’ll check out recent back issues to see what other periodicals he might be reading regularly! I’ve yet to read khōréō.

Thank you for reprinting my review of Junji Ito’s *Shiver: Selected Stories*. My wife and I have been spending more time in Portugal in recent years, and one of my friends there is a tremendous fan of Ito. Every time we visit, I take him a book by Ito—his work isn’t as widely available in Portugal—and benefit from being able to read it before I surprise my friend. This morning, I picked up Uketsu’s *Strange Pictures* (HarperVia, 2025), a “mystery-horror sensation” by an anonymous, masked Japanese author. (My uninformed take is that he’s kind of like No-Face by way of the *Purge* series and the *Residents*.) You can check him out on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/@uketsu>. I’m curious about Patrick Ijima-Washburn’s perspective on Uketsu.

It was also fun to see my reviews of *Gattaca* and *Predestination* again, but Jim McCoy’s commentary on the *Under the Dome* series really resonated with me. I haven’t seen the television program—or read the Stephen King book on which it’s based—but it reminded me gently of the 2015 DC Comics Convergence event, the *Wayward Pines* series based on Blake Crouch’s novels, and perhaps even *The Prisoner*. Maybe even *The Mist*—the movie, not the later series—which was also based on a King story. I hadn’t really thought about this until now, but I wonder how much the narrative experience parallels real-world examples of enforced isolation: the global pandemic, quarantines, curfews, and other lockdown situations. No lockdowns were enforced during the recent wildfires, but it felt similar to the pandemic in terms of how close we chose to stick to home. Especially hosting a friend who’d evacuated.

As always, I enjoyed Cedar Sanderson’s “Cooking by Famous Authors,” though I missed which author or work the column was inspired by. Regardless, my wife and I also enjoy *Adagio Teas*. Their manga-inspired lines can be quite fun. They currently feature a range of teas inspired by Sherlock Ward’s *Jujutsu Kaisen*, and you can explore other fandom-related options at [https://www.adagio.com/signature\\_blend/fandoms.html](https://www.adagio.com/signature_blend/fandoms.html).

Even though I’m still not sure where Tightbeam fits in among the other Nefzines, I enjoyed reading this issue and identified multiple options for further exploration. Keep up the good work!

Putting it on a tight beam,  
Heath Row

Dear George and Jon:

Tightbeam 364 is here, and of course, is due some comments. I am not sure how many I will make, but it is the attempt at responding that counts. I just keep telling myself that...

We have had very cold temperatures here the last week or so. I know my part of the US has been cold, but we have had close to -30°C, which is about -22°F. Cold, no matter what scale it’s

on.

Books...we are already working on Amazing Stories: Best of 2024! We simply want it out this year earlier than the Best of 2023 came out last year. We plan to take copies of this, plus any other books we have up to Ottawa in October for Can\*con, one of Canada's conventions for SF&F writers. We plan to take a sales table there to see issues of the magazine, and copies of our latest books.

Given we were in the US for the NASFiC and World Fantasy, I doubt we'll be able to return, and we will have to find other things to do. At this time, we are not sure what your new president plans to do to our economy. No offence, but we are proud and happy Canadians, and we'd like it to stay that way.

I think I have done all I can for the moment. Take care, and see you nextish.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

## Anime

### The Genius Bakabon Review by Jessi Silver



The pinnacle of gag manga as well as one of Akatsuka Fujio's most renowned works, "Tensai Bakabon", returns after 18 years since its last anime with Director Hosokawa Toru's new original story! Bakabon and his family, who made the phrase "This is how it should be" famous, are back along with the eccentric cast of Mr. Police-man, Rerere no Ojisan and Eel-Dog letting loose in a much more modern setting! The new frontier

of "Bakabon" that'll take place in a late-night slot is about to begin, 10 years after Akatsuka Fujio's death. – Crunchyroll



Episode 1 Summary: It's been eighteen years since the previous animated incarnation of Akatsuka Fujio's (Osomatsu-kun) manga Tensai Bakabon, and the characters are back and ready to take on the modern era. Papa, however, has the idea in his head that his family and their anime's setting hasn't changed nearly enough in the interim, so he starts making arbitrary alterations left and right. He hires a new voice actor to perform his role, and then hires a famous surgeon to give him a dramatic new look. He also has Bakabon, his son and the show's namesake, cloned into sextuplets to capitalize on the fame of that other classic remake. Papa's tunnel-vision towards dramatic change continues to escalate until the family's youngest child, Hajime, is about to be falsely arrested for dealing drugs. It's Mama's anger that brings the family back down to Earth. Sometimes

change for the sake of itself isn't really such a great idea, but with a familiar-but-updated look and feel, the family can start their new show on the right foot.

**Impressions:** As a member of the geek community I often witness firsthand how a lot of fans are exhausted with remakes and sequels of properties that they consider to be a part of their personal canon. Ghostbusters and Star Wars are the two major examples that immediately come to mind, especially since both have recently attracted the ire of groups who are quite angry about some of their favorite properties being updated and/or expanded-upon. I'm in the camp that's pretty neutral about remakes; it's easy enough for me to identify problems in the cartoons I used to watch as a kid, and if someone wants to take those shows and movies and try to fix those issues while retaining the aspects that attracted me to the properties in the first place, that's great. I also think that remakes can serve a greater purpose in that, in the right hands, they can open up a fandom to a group of fans who were excluded in the past. Both examples above have taken an established universe and included more gender, sexual, and racial diversity, to the delight of many and the ire of some. Both of those properties in particular can also be interpreted as commenting on toxic masculinity in fandom and beyond, which I gather is part of the reason why



Papa and Bakabon go from 4:3 to 16:9.

they didn't appeal to some (it's difficult to look into your reliable magic mirror and suddenly be presented with the truth of your own internal ugliness laid bare, I suspect).

Anime, too, is no stranger to remade classics. Some of my favorite anime series and movies are those which are remade from older, established titles. Devilman: Crybaby is a recent example, which I love not only because my favorite director was involved, but also for the fact that it took what it needed to from previous versions while

also telling a very new story about marginalized groups in our modern society. Casshern: Sins is another anime remake that I think is misunderstood and underrated; what I love is that it takes a pretty standard tokusatsu-style premise (a cyborg hero fights bad robots) and re-imagines it into a story about humanity extricating itself from the unnatural desire for eternal life and a reliance on religion. More standard remakes, such as Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood which takes a more manga-centric path than its predecessor, gives the fandom something interesting to discuss; which version is "better," and for what reasons? Even Osomatsu-san, which was purely a comedy, had the added effect of appealing to a different fandom, one interested in attractive male characters and voice actors. I think remaking our stories and bringing them up to speed with our current social beliefs (or even using them to push the envelope of those beliefs) is a necessary part of creating media.

That said, not all sequels and remakes are so high-minded, nor are they successful at taking older properties and providing them the ability to stand on their own two feet within modern fandom. The first episode of Late Night! The Genius Bakabon attempts to profess (and demonstrate) that change for the sake of change is meaningless and extreme, but its message becomes muddled with each of Papa's escalations. Continuing further and further down that path, a lot of the potential humor is lost. I was actually hopeful that the humor might be snarky and more appealing based on the first (and probably funniest) gag in the episode – Papa calls up Yoshiki from the famous heavy-metal band X Japan (which got back together in between the previous series and this one) and lampshades the fact that, though it's not Yoshiki's voice behind the ani-

mation, Yoshiki provided his full permission for the gag. Considering that Osomatsu-san got in some hot water for a couple of parodies that ended up being too close to their source material, I found the repeated reference to Yoshiki's blessing to be very funny. Unfortunately, the episode kind of deteriorates from that point onward. There are a lot of gags that reference what I assume are very specific Japanese pop-culture and political icons (it's not the show's fault that I didn't



Mama takes out the police.

understand them, but I can't lie and say I found those references entertaining), and then there's an extended gag which stems from Papa's gender reassignment surgery and falls incredibly flat.

I don't know why, but I continue to be shocked by the ways in which media creators continue to foul-up representation of marginalized groups. In my mind it's completely out-of-the-question to make jokes that ignore or belittle the existence of people who are already discriminated against.

Having Papa, simply for the sake of change, walk in and get surgery to change gender is in extremely poor taste; it reads not as an actively malicious choice (though it's hard to say for sure), but at the very least an extremely ignorant one, and it truly soured the rest of the episode for me.

There's also a policeman character whose shtick appears to be his propensity towards stripping down to nothing but a necktie (I'm not sure if this is something from the original anime series, but it's implied that it is). The big revelation is that, nowadays, you actually get arrested and carted away for exposing yourself to other people. As if this is a bad thing?

Like I mentioned, the theme of this episode is focused on the pros and cons of change, and how change might not necessarily be a good thing, but its messaging isn't clear. Sometimes things that were considered funny twenty years ago are eventually understood to be in incredibly poor taste, and that's not a bad thing. Sometimes (always) you should be arrested for whipping it out in public.

I'm a bit at a loss over this episode, to be honest; by the time it meanders to the end, it's not entirely clear whether what's occurred during the previous twenty minutes will actually have any bearing on the series as a whole, so I'm almost a little curious to watch the next one and see if it suffers from the same problems. On the other hand, I found this episode to be mostly unfunny and plagued by issues that make me not really want to come back for more. I'm all for remakes, but some things are better left in the past.

Pros: The opening gag about Yoshiki and X Japan was funny. The modernized style the show arrives at by the end of the episode is bright and stylish.

Cons: Gender reassignment surgery is used for the sake of an extended gag. The episode gives a very poor sense of what the original anime series or manga was about. A lot of the humor requires an extensive knowledge of Japanese pop culture outside of anime.

Grade: D



## Kino's Journey: The Country of Adults

### Review by Jesse Silver



*CW: Stabbing.*

Kino and Hermes are traveling through a field of deep red flowers, when Kino decides to stop for a while. This is a place of long-ago memories, some of which Kino decides to share.

Many years ago, Kino was a child in a country near this place. They were a girl with a floral name that's been lost to memory. In the day's before Kino's official transition to adulthood, a traveler arrived in the country – a skinny man named Kino. Looking for a place to stay, he asked the girl her advice – she offered her parents' inn. While staying there, the man acquired an old motorrad and set to work repairing it. As a traveler, he explains, he and the motorrad enter into a pact for their mutual benefit – the motorrad can take him places much more quickly than he could reach them on foot, and the traveler offers the motorrad the chance to be useful and fulfill its purpose. The conversation shifts to adulthood, and what that will mean to the young girl. She talks about the surgery she will undergo on her twelfth birthday which will “remove the child” from her, allowing her to become an adult and hold a job. Kino is troubled by this, and offers an alternative – perhaps adulthood can be obtained through means other than a surgery. Perhaps adulthood means something more than being able to tolerate drudgery and perform a difficult job. Perhaps adulthood isn't a concrete thing at all.

The girl seems affected by this revelation, and tells her parents the next day that she would prefer not to undergo the surgery and asks to become an adult some other way. This goes against all teachings of their society and the girl is berated as a sinful creature by her parents and the other adults in the room. Her father retrieves a kitchen knife to dispose of his defective “property.” Kino, the traveler, is blamed for poisoning the child's mind. As the girl's father lunges with the knife, Kino blocks him and is stabbed in the heart. As the adults attempt to interpret this turn of events, the girl hears a small voice telling her to get on the motorrad and ride off. As she escapes to a field of red flowers, she offers her name – Kino, like the traveler. The motorrad's name is Hermes, the name of the traveling man's old friend.





## Comics

### DC Comics Earth 2 Volume 1: The Gathering by James Robinson Review by Jim McCoy

Dude...

I haven't read something this awesomely confusing since I picked up my copy of *Foundation and Earth* at a rummage sale at the age of roughly thirteen having never read any Isaac Asimov previously. That was a great story, but coming at it cold was perhaps not the smartest thing I've ever done. Then again, maybe it was. I ended up reading both the *Foundation and Robots* series because of that one book just so I could understand it. It was much better the second time because I actually had a clue.

But today I picked up a copy of *DC Comics Earth 2 Volume 1: The Gathering* by a whole bunch of people all of whom deserve credit and would get it if I wasn't too lazy to type all that stuff out. It's on the subtitle bar. And there was a bit of a learning curve here. *The Gathering* is an origin story. It looks like a potential lead in for a new Justice League. And yes, I know this content is over a decade old, but I haven't read it and seriously don't know where it's headed. I'm going to find out though.

*The Gathering* takes place on Earth, but not the one we know and not the one from previous comics. This is Earth 2. There were only eight "wonders", that's what they call superheroes, before the big war against Apokolips. I'm missing a lot of the details of that war, but I think that's what's intended. Apparently all of those wonders were killed in action during the war. The planet was devastated. And something -as of this point we're not sure what - worse is about to happen. In the words of Jim Ross, "Business is about to pick up."

The four new "wonders" are Atom, Green Lantern, Hawkgirl and the Flash, but they're not the characters we're used to. Every one of them has a new secret identity and a different take on their powers. This makes me happy because they made a change to Green Lantern that would have offended me if it was one of the previously existing characters but that I was okay with given the fact that they weren't changing one of my old favorites in that way. Maybe somebody learned something at some point.

And as far as the ol' ring-slinger goes, they made a change to his powers that I'm not quite sure if I'm okay with. Green Lantern, whether he's Hal Jordan, Guy Gardner, John Stewart, Kyle

Rayner, or someone else, has always been a spacefaring character. That's why he's my favorite superhero. I grew up on Star Wars and Star Trek and he fit in well with that. I don't want to spoil too much but it looks like that's going to change with this new series and I'm going to whine a lot if that happens. And believe me, I can whine like a vineyard in France.

Tell me somebody got that.

Anyway...

The rest of the characters have powers like you'd expect, even if they're not one hundred percent the same. I'm okay with that. New characters, slightly different powers, so be it. It's a good time. It leaves something to be discovered in people we thought we already knew and that makes sense.

These guys have no training. That should be blatantly obvious to anyone who reads *The Gathering* but it really sticks out to someone who has been reading a series of books that stresses training to no end recently. That would be me. It makes sense though. This is the very first day as "wonders" for at least two of these guys and the other two I'm not sure of. They have no experience and have no one to teach them how to use superpowers because all of the old wonders are dead.

I'm excited about that though because it gives these new supers some room to grow. I've always loved the Green Lantern Corps in general and Kilowog in particular, but there's just something about a clueless newbie learning what they're doing on their own. It's going to take awhile and Lord knows I had to have help figuring out my way through *World of Warcraft*, never mind the real world. This is going to be fun.

The main villain of the first volume is just named Grundy. He's a heck of a lot more powerful than what Solomon Grundy always has been even if he looks similar. This is a major twist on an existing character, but it makes him so much more of a threat and that's good in a villain. I enjoyed seeing him do his thing and make a bunch of new heroes figure out a weakness to exploit. I have a feeling we'll be seeing him again though. I'll find out soon.

The art in this book was awesome. Let's face it, one of the best parts of any comic is the pictures. The art staff knocked it out of the park on this one. I don't have the technical knowledge to explain exactly what techniques they used and that's my failing and not theirs. What I can tell you is that it freaking looked cool. One of the scenes with Green Lantern almost gave me vertigo because it looked so real.

All in all, this looks like a promising start to a new series. I'm really sad that I missed it when it first came out but, then again, I was going through a divorce at that point and didn't have the mental wherewithal to read anything. The good news is that I can make up for lost time in the here and now and I'm looking forward to it.

Speaking as someone who has gotten a bit tired of the constant reboots that movie and television studios are churning out, I find *Earth 2* to be a breath of fresh air. There is a new origin story for the Green Lantern but it's a new story. There is no Abin Sur in evidence. He's just flat out not there. This is a good thing. It's a new take and not the forty hundred and thirty seven

millionth retelling of the same story. I'm going to keep reading. If you love comics, you should too.

Bottom Line: 5.0 out of 5 Nuclear Missiles

**DC Comics Absolute Green Lantern: The Sinestro Corps War**  
**by Geoff Johns and Dave Gibbons**  
**Review by Jim McCoy**

First off the disclaimer:

I am a Green Lantern mark. I have been since the Eighties when I used to ride my BMX up to the Antique Paper Shop (that was my Local Comic Shop) to buy comics. I would get money from wherever I could (everything from birthdays and holidays, to shoveling snow, to gathering bottles and cans off the street and turning them in at the 7/11) and go grab whatever I could get, but my favorite was always Green Lantern. I loved comics. I loved superheroes and I loved Science Fiction especially Science Fiction with lots of weird looking aliens.

You know, like little blue guys with big heads, or a big pink guy that looked like a hippo. Intelligent squirrels were cool too. And if they could travel through space with no ship, just a green force field around them, that was awesome. Of course, they were kind of like police and they got things done and saved lives and...

You get the idea.

Really though, I never outgrew that. I've always loved Green Lantern whether that was Hal Jordan, Guy Gardner, John Stewart, Kyle Rayner or \*GASP\* a GL that isn't from Earth. I've seen a bunch of the animated films and I was at the midnight release for the live action movie. Ryan Reynolds did a good job, but they tried to cram too much into the movie. Anyway...

I recently got my hands on a copy of Absolute Green Lantern: The Sinestro Corps War. I'm pretty sure it's the first hardcover graphic novel I've read and oh wow, was it a lot of fun. I'd forgotten how good this story was, how action packed and crazy it was. This is the arc that led to the Blackest Night storyline. It was the beginning of a bunch of major changes to the GL universe. New characters, new corps, new enemies and the reappearance of several old ones. It's like a party where everybody is trying to kill each other. Good times.

OMG I JUST GOOGLED TO MAKE SURE I SPELLED THE STEWART IN JOHN STEWART RIGHT AND FOUND OUT THAT THERE'S A NEW LANTERNS SERIES COMING!!

(True story, bro. I can never remember if it's Stewart or Stuart and I read the freaking comics. It's kinda embarrassing though, so don't tell anybody.)

Continuing on...

Part of my reaction here may be that I read most of my comics on a computer screen nowadays



and I read *Absolute Green Lantern: The Sinestro Corps War* in physical form but WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOWWWW is the art in this book gorgeous. Some of the larger panels are in fact two pages long and just beautiful. They jump right off the page.

It's a real kick for a guy like me who can remember when comics were printed on newsprint and it just wasn't possible to produce anything that looked this good no matter how unbelievably awesome your artist was. I know I've said this before, but I don't have the technical knowledge to lay out exactly what they did here, but it was amazing.

Of course, I've loved to hate Sinestro since, uhh... well...

Yeah, it's been awhile. I'm pretty sure Hal Jordan still had gray hair. (He must use hair dye now.) Seeing him rise and fall is epic. Something about that guy makes me want to break his nose. I'm not saying I could. I'm just saying I'd be willing to try. At any rate, one of the things I love in any story is a good villain to root against and Sinestro is and always will be that for me. That made this story so much more fun for me.

Of course, Sinestro's not the only old villain we get to see. Just for kicks, the Anti-Monitor and Parallax show up too. And, of course, you can't have *The Sinestro Corps War* without an entire corps worth of people that we get to root against. For some reason it doesn't feel quite as personal with most of the normal Sinestro Corps members but it's still fun to watch them take a beating.

There is a lot at the back of *Absolute Green Lantern: The Sinestro Corps War* as well. From a bit of added story after the end of the war, to an overview of important things in the GL universe, to character sketches (in both senses of the word) to an interview with the creators of the book and just some art at the end, there is an absolute ton to go through after you've finished the story. I am, and always will be, a story guy first and foremost. That much having been said, the back matter was still freaking awesome. I read it twice.

The character sketches were terrific. First, there was the chance to check out any characters you weren't familiar with or who you couldn't quite place. The GL universe is a big place. Even more fun for me was the chance to look over what they had to say about some of my favorite/most hated characters and take a brief tour down memory lane. I should read it again.

All in all, *Absolute Green Lantern The Sinestro Corps War* was a great experience. Just having a comic to hold in my hand has been great but even if I was still a regular at my LCS this would have been a great time. There's not much better than an epic story with great art. Every page of this thing was a new discovery and a great time. I'll be reading more GL soon and I can't wait to find out what I've missed and go over some of my old favorite storylines. There is a copy of the *Blackest Night* omnibus out there somewhere with my name on it. I can't wait to find it.

When I do you can rest assured that I'll tell you all about it. *Blackest Night* is my favorite GL centered storyline in the history of ever. Until then, though, I'll keep myself entertained with memories of *Absolute Green Lantern The Sinestro Corps War*.

## Films

### How Tremors Can Save Hollywood by Declan Finn

The lessons of 35 year old horror franchise:

I've had the Tremors film collection for a few years, but I never watched beyond movie one.

My sister got me the SciFi channel TV series on DVD a while back, and we finally decided to watch it.

After seeing how surprisingly smart it was, we decided to watch the rest of the Tremors films.

Having seen (only) Tremors 1-3 thus far, I got to wondering, "Why are the Tremors movies smarter than their budgets?"

First, did you look at the CVs for the writers? Short Circuit (1 & 2). Batteries Not Included. Et al. That helps.

Strangely, movies 2 & 3 are driven by What we don't know about the monsters "graboids." Namely, their biology and stages of their life cycle. (Worms to "shriekers" to flyers)

It's like someone weaponized their high school biology classes.

Then they made it into chess. "Humans learned this from the last movie, what's the counter-move?"

And yes, the film makers knew how to stretch a dollar. They put a dollar on the rack and they just kept twisting until the dollar screamed. Mostly by using horror tropes to their advantage — using the Monster's POV (like Jaws), having Bad Things Happen to secondary characters out of sight, hidden monsters (also Jaws). And pyrotechnics are comparatively cheap.

Of course, there is solid character design. Yes. I mean Burt Gummer. He is so Adam West serious, he's almost a parody character of a prepper ... until everything hits the fan, and he's not so funny. The secondary characters provide some nice variety, innovations, coming from their own perspectives of a rotating cast.

Funny thing is, if the Hollywood idiots currently driving their industry into the ground took notes, they could probably save movie making. They wouldn't, because a Tremors film would not make a billion dollars, and they only want MCU money. (Also, in Hollywood's whacky accounting scheme, a budget has to be more expensive, because if the film's budget is \$X, the marketing budget is always \$2X.)

Funny thing is, the closest to Tremors-level budget Hollywood has these days may be the John Wick franchise (Stunt men are cheaper than excessive CGI). If Hollywood took notes on THAT, they'd make a mint. But Chad can't be everywhere. And stuntmen turned directors,

sadly, don't grow on trees.

Anyway, that's all I've got for today.

Go away now.

## Magazines

### Reviews by Tom Feller Beneath Ceaseless Skies #392

The editor of this e-zine, Scott H. Andrews, was nominated in the Best Editor-Short Form category, and this was his sample for the packet. The ruler of a medieval-style city goes undercover in “The Tyrant’s Heir’s Tale” by Carrie Vaughn. He secretly meets with his father’s old friends to find out what really happened in the coup fifteen years previously that brought his father to power. Construction workers renovating the palace had just found the body of a young woman who had just given birth, and the young king wants to know if there was a connection with his father’s ascension to the throne.

“The Light of Setting Suns” by Samuel Chapman takes place in a fantasy world in which there are floating islands. A grandfather tells the story of his life to his granddaughter. As a young man, he was exiled to one of the islands by the empire that had murdered his family.

Gladiators are the main characters in “Between Blades” by Filip Hajdar Drnovsek Zorko. They fight in pairs, and one of them transforms into a weapon such as a sword, axe, or a spear. Leshin actually prefers to be the weapon, especially a spear, and her partner Gerthe is comfortable with that. This is a novella rather than a short story, so the author takes the time to build this world, based on the Roman Empire, and delve into the backgrounds of the characters. Leshin left home because of her culture’s rigidity over male and female roles, and Gerthe’s body actually contains two minds, hers and her twin brother’s.

## SerCon

### Charles Beaumont Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz N3F Historian

Charles (“Chuck”) Beaumont (January 2, 1929 – February 21, 1967) was a prolific author of science fiction (SF), fantasy, and horror. He is remembered today primarily as a writer of classic episodes on television’s *The Twilight Zone* and *The Hitchcock Hour*, such as “The Howling Man,” “Miniature,” “Printer’s Devil,” and “Number Twelve Looks Just Like You.”

He also wrote the screenplays for several popular genre films, among them *The Premature Burial*, *Queen of Outer Space*, *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm*, *The Masque of*



the Red Death, and Burn, Witch, Burn.

### Personal Life

Beaumont was born Charles Leroy Nutt in Chicago. According to Beaumont, “Football, baseball, and dime store cookie thefts filled my early world.” School did not interest him, and his last name exposed him to ridicule; but he found solace as a teenager in SF, and later had his name legally changed to Charles Beaumont.

In May, 1945, he published an issue of his own genre fanzine, *Utopia*.

### Publications



His first genre publication was “The Devil, You Say?” in the January, 1951, issue of *Amazing*.

His 1963 book, *Remember? Remember?*, collected a baker's dozen of his articles on popular culture. Many of the articles had been published originally in *Playboy Magazine*, for which Beaumont was a contributing editor.

### Awards/Honors/Recollections

He won a *Playboy* Writing Award in 1960. His genre awards included a posthumous Bram Stoker Award (Collection) in 1989.

In the early 1950s, in California, he was close friends with other young SF writers, including William Nolan, Ray Bradbury, Richard Matheson, George Clayton Johnson, Jerry Sohl, and Chad Oliver. He and Oliver authored several SF stories together. Nolan called these friends “The Group.”

Genre critics later called The Group The Southern California Writers and The Southern California Sorcerers.

The anthology, *California Sorcery* (1999), edited by Nolan and William Schafer, contained stories by members of The Group: Beaumont (“The Wages of Cynicism”), Nolan, Matheson, Oliver, Johnson, Bradbury, and Sohl, among others.

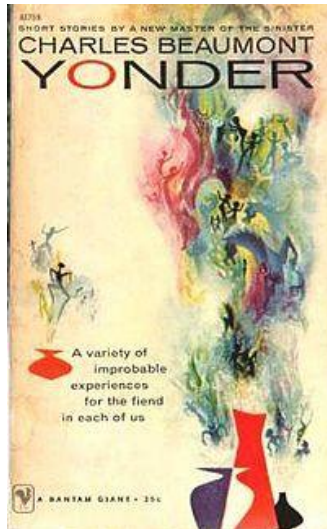
### Radio Program

Beaumont’s story “Last Rites” was adapted for broadcasting on SF 58, a South African SF radio program.

### Concluding Comments

Charles Beaumont died at the age of 38. His son later said that “he looked ninety-five and was,





in fact, ninety-five by every calendar except the one on your watch.” Beaumont had been diagnosed in his thirties as having early onset Alzheimer's Disease simultaneously with Pick's Disease, diseases for which there was little treatment and no cure.

His son, Christopher Beaumont, is also a writer.

### Sources

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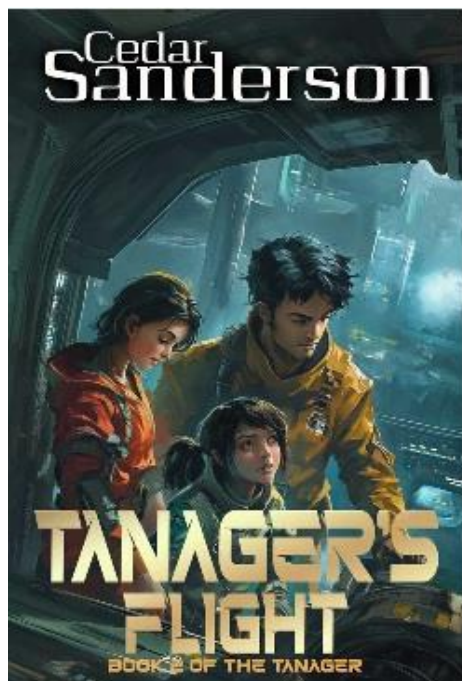
Note: In addition to the above, several Internet sites were consulted, including Fancyclopedia 3, ISFDB, and Wikipedia.

## Cooking by Famous Writer

### Anise Seed

### Day 3 of Spicemas

### Cedar Sanderson



When I shared this morning in my book-club discord that today's spice was anise seed, one of the first comments was 'the most controversial spice of them all!' which, given the flak and teasing on yesterday's Pumpkin Pie Spice, is saying something!

Not everyone likes licorice, of course. In fact, it really seems to be a love-it-or-hate-it flavor. Anise seed (not to be confused with Star Anise, which flavors Pho, among other things) is a sweeter, milder licorice than licorice root itself is, at least in my opinion. I love it. My husband... does not. Which is why today's recipe using this spice is sheer self-indulgence all the way (without breaking my diet!). I got complicated, because I could.

Inspired in part by Victorian seed cakes, and by flourless cakes that are more friendly in general to low-carb

adaptations, I whipped up this and hope it will turn out well... you'll know by the end of the blog!

### Anise Seed Cake

- 1 1/2 c Almond flour
- 1/2 c coconut flour
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 4 eggs, separated
- 1/2 c tahini
- 2 tsp anise seeds, ground
- 1 tbsp dried lemon peel, finely chopped
- 1 heaped tbsp dried rose petals
- 1/2 c Brown Swerve Sweetener (or brown sugar, in a 1:1 replacement)
- 1/4 c granulated xylitol (or granulated sugar in a 1:1 replacement)
- 1/2 c olive oil
- 3/4 c water
- 1/4c sesame seeds plus some for decoration
- 1/2 tsp orange blossom water

Preheat oven to 350F

Separate eggs, setting whites aside in a scrupulously clean bowl.

Grind the anise seeds in a mortar, or with a spice grinder.

Mix together the dry ingredients. Mix the wet ingredients into the dry. Grease two 8" cake pans, placing a parchment paper round in the bottom of this. Sprinkle sesame seeds on this, which will wind up on the tops of the cakes when you turn them out.

Beat the egg whites until stiff peaks appear. Fold them into the batter carefully, but completely. Pour this stiff batter into the pans, smoothing it out to the edges. Place into the oven to bake for 30-40 minutes until cake center is firm to the touch and edges are browned lightly.

Personally, I don't see the need to frost or glaze these. If I did, I'd thin a little more than a tablespoonful of honey by warming it with a teaspoonful of lemon juice and perhaps a little more of the anise seeds (a quarter teaspoonful) and drizzling that over the top of the slightly warm cakes before slicing and serving with strong spiced tea.

Fresh out of the oven... and I did go grab my good camera. It smells so good!

And the survey of one says... wow. I'm making this again. It is more than I expected, has a fantastic crumb for a flourless cake, being light and fluffy without being a bit dry. The flavor is sweet but not overly sweet - this isn't cake-mix level of sugary - and deeply complex. The anise seed comes through in fragrance and taste, supported by the lemon and sesame along with the nuttiness of the flours. Even my husband asked for a bite and said, as his eyebrows rose in surprise, that it worked far better for him than he would have thought, since it's more than one flavor he doesn't usually care for.

One bonus, and something I was designing the flavors towards, is that I can't taste the sweeteners as anything besides 'sweet'. Generally, they have a noticeable aftertaste or 'off' taste to me, so I try to work around that by using complementary flavors that mask it - here, that's the tahini with its trace of bitterness, I think. Given the anise makes the sensation of sweet on its own, I also kept the level of added sweetener down to a minimum, and it works quite well. This would be simply amazing with a honey-lemon glaze and... oooh! Thin candied slices of lemon, or orange, on top! Super thin, otherwise they are objectionably chewy, but they would dress up the layers and make it more elegant than the simple tea cake it currently is. You could, I suppose, fill the layers with lemon curd and top it off with a cream cheese frosting but that would be gilding the lily.





*Moonlight on the Water*  
by Tiffanie Gray