

Tightbeam

August 2022



Costa Rican Cryptid
by José Sánchez

Tightbeam 335

August 2022

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

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Artist's Note

Costa Rican Cryptid

My completed illustration is based on a highly unusual cryptid sighting that was caught at night on a cctv security camera in Costa Rica in April of 2021. In it, you can see a strange "crablike humanoid" walk out from an opening in the back walls and then be chased down by two angry dogs that bark and growl at it ferociously following it for a few minutes. One of them, even getting close up to it and then temporarily confused in response to its odd behavior as it just walks past the dog and towards the camera with a weird wobbly gait. As it moves across the back alleyway, you can see that it has the torso of a crab but no head and four strangely bent limbs or "human like arms" that it uses to quickly scurry across the pavement.

... Jose Sanchez

Letters of Comment

Editors:

Oh, and I take note of Eric Jamborsky's and Bob Jennings's letters of comment. "In Search Of" rings a bell for Leonard Nimoy's show. And I'm pleased the Alley Oop comic strip is still running. As for the CBS Mystery Theater, well, I stand corrected.

Will Mayo

Editors:

Tightbeam is I understand at least as old as 1960. I believe its first editor was Marion Zimmer Bradley. Her contribution to *Button-Tack*, the Rick Sneary memorialzine edited by June and Len Moffatt and me, may have been her last fanac. Later editor Stan Woolston was a great friend of the Moffatts. Joe Siclari grew famous in song and story. Sally Syrjala was a regular *Vanamonde* reader. I've lost track of Janine Stinson.

In Tightbeam 332, Will Mayo has a short review of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The best treatment I know of that story is Nabakov's in his *Lectures on Literature*. I recommend it and him.

Will Mayo asks about *Dick Tracy*. I hear it is currently written by Shelley Pleger, distributed by the Tribute Content Company, and available to the electronic at *Go Comics* (gocomics.com).

Cedar Sanderson discusses the southeast Mediterranean sweet baklava. I agree it is best if made with lemon juice in the syrup but there are many variants. Determined handicrafters indeed pull their own phyllo dough, insisting it's worth the trouble like sharpening one's own knives.

I'm for fanart and always hope to see it in fanzines.

Every good wish,

John Hertz

Anime

Summer 2022 First Impressions – Prima Doll

By Jessi Silver



Streaming: HIDIVE
Episodes: 12
Source: Mixed Media Project

Episode Summary: Automata or “dolls” are human-shaped tools used by the military to help command large platoons of mechanical soldiers. Unfortunately doing this can be such a strain on the dolls that they can sometimes end up broken.

When a pink-haired doll awakens in a basement, she doesn’t remember her name or her purpose. This place happens to be the workshop of Nagi Tooma, a mechanic who repairs dolls and puts them to work in his café. He gives her the name Haizakura and informs her that her memory has been reset, which is why she awakened so disoriented.

Haizakura doesn’t seem to have a talent for being a server or a cook, but she does happen to have a strange knack for singing. This comes in handy when she has to defend her new friend Chiyo from an errant military robot, and also seems to be the key to waking Yugiri, a doll whose circuits were so overloaded that it didn’t seem possible to repair her. It so happens that Chiyo and Yugiri were once like sisters, so being able to spend time with Yugiri again is like a miracle for Chiyo. Yet, though Yugiri seems to be repaired, looks can be deceiving.



Haizakura senses a threat to her new friend Chiyo.

Impressions: I became interested in Japan from a young age, and once I discovered anime and had the means to purposely seek it out, one thing I grasped pretty quickly is that a not-insignificant amount of Japanese animated fiction involves robots in some form or fashion. From giant robots and mecha, to androids of various flavors, it’s a constant bit of speculative subject matter in anime. I’m not sure how many people reading watched *Obsolete* on the Bandai Namco channel a while back, but that series speculates on what might happen if aliens provided Earthlings with mecha technology regardless of national borders.

Of course the series ends with a final episode in which the mecha exoskeletons have been personified as cute girls who fight one-another in space – mostly divorced from their actual mechanical origins.

Prima Doll is ostensibly about humanoid robots but chooses to eschew some trappings of “hard” sci-fi in favor of focusing on the emotions of the characters as a consequence of that state of being. It’s a choice that likely has some detractors – I know there’s a not-insignificant contingent of anime fans who got into the fandom through hard(er) sci-fi, mecha, etc. That said, in a world where technology is already moving forward at quite a clip, for better or for worse, I think we’ve not had much time to wrestle with the emotional complications of our forward progress as much.



Chiyo finds solace in Yugiri's presence – but does Yugiri really remember Chiyo?

Of course, in this case that means that the named automata characters are all cute girls who are nigh-indistinguishable from actual humans aside from a power pack or some similar mechanism attached to their backs. One could dive deep into a rabbit hole of trying to analyze just why entities created by humans for the purpose of servitude (and servitude in a manner that in this example often seems to leave them mentally broken down) are so often given the appearance of cute, juvenile girls, but I should probably save that for another time.

Needless to say it was something I found weirdly obvious in its use and a bit off-putting.

I think there's an interesting story to be told here – a world that allows itself to get emotionally attached to its creations is certainly ripe for different takes on the subject. I don't, however, have a ton of confidence after watching this episode that this isn't just another assembly of moé tropes for the purposes of appealing to the robot girl fan market.

Pros: This episode does a decent job of introducing some solid emotional beats. It telegraphs a lot of what eventually happens – it's obvious early on that Yugiri's return to consciousness can't possibly be as cut-and-dry as it appears – but that isn't necessarily a bad thing. It makes it clear that these automata were used to accomplish decidedly terrible things, and that those actions had consequences for both the automata themselves, as well as their human handlers.

There's also an apparent separation between the Dolls and the other humanoid-shaped mechanical individuals that I hope could be explored more. The dolls are nearly human, while these others don't speak and don't have the human-like appearance of their brethren.

Tooma seems to have rescued both to work in his café (and I'm sure his motivations are more complicated than they appear on the surface) and I find this interesting.

Cons: Haizakura is definitely an example of the “clumsy girl” trope, and while I feel like there's some message buried in there about how sometimes one's true talents might just not be obvious (it's clear that she wields some kind of special power which is left unexplained for the time being) it's tough to just watch this kind of kawaii incompetence for very long.



Green Lady by
Angela K. Scott

Content Warnings: Scenes of large-scale military battles. Intense scenes involving physical threats from mechanical entities. Memory loss.

Would I Watch More? – Probably not. While I'm all-in on science fiction that focuses more on the humanity as it relates to the science, I also feel like this show is more a vehicle to show off cute characters where the story is secondary.

Summer 2022 First Impressions – Shine On! Bakumatsu Bad Boys By Jessi Silver

Streaming: Crunchyroll
Episodes: 12
Source: Original



Episode Summary: In the Bakumatsu era, the Shinsengumi were nearly wiped out by a mysterious group of masked foes. In order to help defend the local populace against these enemies who seem to have some connection to the Shogunate, Todo Heisuke, the one Shinsengumi member left standing, kidnaps a group of death row inmates and provides them with a choice – either join the ailing Shinsengumi by “becoming” its lost members, or be executed immediately.



Ichibanboshi has no love for Samurai.

Most of the criminals choose to take on these new roles. Among them is Ichibanboshi, a brawler with a laser-focused desire for revenge. When he discovers that his personal goals align with that of the Shinsengumi, his decision to join them is an easy one. Unfortunately his brash attitude and unique fighting style leave something to be desired within an organization that prides itself on its swordplay. Yet, when he encounters one of the masked Ronin about to raise his sword against an innocent family, Ichibanboshi is able to draw from the power of the Shinsengumi he now embodies to dispel the strange, malignant forces controlling the Ronin.

Impressions: The longer you engage with the anime medium, the more interesting the Shinsengumi become. Part historical figures, part mythological entities, they’ve been transformed into folk heroes along the lines of how we like to picture some of the American founding fathers and past presidents. They’re distant enough in the past that it’s easy to attribute all sorts of accomplishments to them, and if we choose not to do too much digging they can help us feel good about the history of where we live.



Never bring a foot to a sword fight.

They’ve also been codified enough that we feel free to riff on their personas. Here in the US that means we get to enjoy such masterpieces as Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter. Likewise in Japan there exists media like Shine On! Bakumatsu Bad Boys.

This is a fairly fun take on the Shinsengumi mythos, proving to some extent that the Shinsengumi endure just as much due to their legend as their literal real-life accomplishments. Case-in-point: it seems fairly easy for the characters in this series, in spite of some of their

often... disturbing personal quirks, to step into the personas provided to them. What they're trying to fulfill isn't so much the function of a body-double, but more the purpose of a (benign?) boogeyman and a force to help counteract the type of political movements that are harming the rest of the local populace. This doesn't require the criminal characters to look or act like their Shinsengumi namesakes; it simply requires them to become them in name. The rest will (hopefully) follow.

I'd classify this episode as "silly fun." Our focal character is the sort of red-color-coded brash doofus that plays off of the other color-coded character stereotypes in an entertaining, if not entirely original, manner. There's nothing particularly off-putting here. It's the perfect kind of low-commitment Summer entertainment that doesn't ask too much of its viewers. That may or may not be your thing, but I had some fun with it.

Pros: This show has a unique visual style that I enjoy. I can take or leave the texture filtering – it's not intrusive here but I'm not sure it really adds anything either – but the character designs have a lot of personality and the animation is fairly good. It's a fun episode to watch.

Cons: Partly because of the type of show this is – an ensemble series with several different named focal characters – some of the character designs resort to annoying visual and personality stereotyping. The most egregious of these is Bou, who's essentially a "big dumb fat guy who likes to eat." He speaks in stilted Japanese and his personality thus far is mostly that he hits hard and is always hungry (and sometimes even steals food). In the year of our Lord 2022 it bothers me that we're still being asked to endure things like this.

Content Warnings: Violence, including hand-to-hand combat and sword-related violence. PTSD/trauma.

Would I Watch More? – It's difficult for me to say. There are certainly some aspects of the episode I really liked and I have a soft spot for original stories. On the other hand, this series seems to have a sort of brash shounen energy that I really have to be in the right mood for.

Films

Thor: Love and Thunder is a Hot Noisy Mess Review by Jason P. Hunt of SciFi4Me.com

Thor: Love And Thunder (2022)
Directed by Taika Waititi
Written by Taika Waititi & Jennifer Kaytin Robinson
Story by Taika Waititi
Produced by Kevin Feige and Brad Winderbaum
PG-13, 1h 59m

"I was entertained. Probably won't remember much after that." Such was Mrs. Boss' reaction to Thor: Love and Thunder, and it's somewhat more charitable than I'm willing to give it.



Basically, Thor Odinson (Chris Hemsworth) has been off “finding himself” in the midst of adventures with the Guardians of the Galaxy — who are completely wasted in this film and don’t even really need to be there — and it’s during these adventures they get a slew of distress calls from across the galaxy. Turns out there’s this guy named Gorr (Christian Bale), a true believer whose daughter dies in his arms, destroying his

belief in his gods. When the legendary weapon known as the Necrosword connects with Gorr, he goes on a rampage to kill all the gods everywhere. A signal from Sif (Jaimie Alexander) gets Thor out of his contemplative navel-gazing and back in the fight with a purpose. Learning from Sif that New Asgard is the next target, he runs back to Earth, where he finds that Mjölfnir has a new best friend in Jane Foster (Natalie Portman).



That’s the setup. And it really feels like they shot two films and mashed them together. Bale’s chewing the scenery with the best of them, and he delivers an acceptable level of menace, but the contrast with the slapstick humor is enough to give you whiplash, and a lot of the humor feels forced.

It gets interesting when they get to the Shadow Realm (the black & white footage we’ve seen in the trailers), but there’s just as much of a plot hole mess in and around these scenes. If you stare too long at any one element of this film, it all starts to fall apart pretty quickly. As a visual contrast, the rest of the film has over-saturated color, especially in the moments off Earth when Thor goes before Zeus to request aid in fighting Gorr. The bright colors are very much in keeping with the idea that this is a comic book movie, but there are moments when it feels over-baked. And given that we’re now hearing about the issues visual effects artists have had with Marvel, one starts to wonder if some pieces were overdone just because there might not have been a 100% solid plan.



All that aside, however, and despite the logic bombs with how she gets the hammer, Jane’s cancer arc is handled fairly well. And if Natalie Portman never comes back to the MCU, at least Jane has a bit of closure in her arc, something we weren’t likely to get after her appearance in *Avengers: Endgame* was accomplished by using previously existing footage. Having said that, it’s pretty lame that we don’t actually see the moment where Jane gets the hammer.

That seems like it would be a pretty important piece, but if we were to get that scene, it would ruin the

Comedy Gold™ moment when Thor realizes she’s wielding Mjölfnir (“Jane?!”). Personally, I’d rather get the dramatic character moment than the comedy bit, because it’s so overdone.

And really... Jealous Stormbreaker is just stupid.

The occasional narration bits from Korg (Waititi) are the jarring needle scratch across the record to make this film every bit as annoying as it can be. They’re badly timed and interrupt the



flow of the story, killing the pace so we can get a dose of “wink wink silly” moments before diving back into the story. I can see having them as bookends, or even just the first one at the beginning of the film, but the rest of them were wholly unnecessary.

Coming out of the theater, I felt like I had just watched Green Lantern again. The film tries too hard, injecting over-the-top humor into the story at random points in the story, and at some times it feels forced. It’s like Waititi and Marvel looked at the success of Thor: Ragnarok and decided this one needed to be a comedy, too. Only it’s just a comedy in certain moments, and those come into glaring conflict with the menace presented by Gorr. It’s almost as if there were two filmmakers, Waititi and maybe Feige? Who knows...

I told the PR people at the screening, that it felt like The Three Stooges got dropped into a Greek tragedy. The more I think on it, the more convinced I am that all three Stooges in this picture — Thor, Jane, and Valkyrie — are all just Larry Fine (with all due respect to Larry). Larry was never the one in charge, but also never the goofus who caused all the trouble. Larry was the one caught in the middle going along with whatever happened. And our Three Stooges here feel like that. They’re reacting and bouncing from one scene to the next because the plot needs them to be at a certain place to do a certain thing so we can get to the next scene.

Honestly, I felt a bit angry after coming out of the theater. There were some parts that were OK, but the majority of the film hangs together on slapstick at the expense of some really good work by Bale.

And the ending... Oof.

Swing and a miss for me, Marvel.

Will Mayo Reviews Demon Seed

There was, it's worth noting, the 1977 movie Demon Seed, starring Julie Christy as a woman who is raped by a giant, room-sized computer and subsequently gives birth to an android with glittering eyes. It was pretty hokey by today's standards but back then we took it fairly seriously. This was the tail end of the Sex Revolution after all and here was unfinished business. Good for fans of robots and blonde beauties everywhere.

Games

Ares Mission

Review by Wesley Kawato

Ares Mission is a version of Terraforming Mars. Up to four players may play. Each turn each player picks to play one of five possible actions. No player may pick the same action two turns

in a row. So each turn could consist of up to four phases, if each player chose a different action. Alternatively, a turn may consist of only one phase, if all players pick the same action. All players get to play in all phases regardless of what they picked for their action.

There are five kinds of action. Development and construction allow players to activate new cards from their hands. That costs money. Another possible choice is action. That phase lets players activate a special ability of one of the cards they have purchased. Production allows players to get more resources, including money. Research lets players draw more cards. There is a ten card hand limit in this game.

Players score points each time they make Mars more habitable. The game ends when Mars is fully terraformed. To win the game, keep your eyes open for cards that score extra victory points at the end of the game. Most of the time points scored for terraforming won't be enough to win the game.

SerCon

Leslie Perri
Bio-Bibliography by
Jon Swartz, Ph.D.
N3F Historian



Leslie Perri (April 27, 1920 – January 31, 1970) was the principal pseudonym of Doris Marie Claire “Doë” Baumgardt, a science fiction (SF) fan, writer, and illustrator. She was a member of the Futurian Society of New York (The Futurians), the popular and influential SF fan club of the 1930s and 1940s.

She is reported to have exhibited a will of her own from an early age. In 1932, when she was 12, her father condemned all pulp magazines in her presence. She immediately went out and bought a copy of *Weird Tales* at the local newsstand.

Personal Life

She was born in Brooklyn, New York, to Fritz and Marie Baumgardt, German immigrants who settled in New York in the mid-1910s. She subsequently married two fellow SF writers and Futurians, first Frederik Pohl (1940 – 1942), and later Richard Wilson (1951 – 1965). She was also married for a time to Thomas Llewellyn Owens (circa 1944 - 1951), an artist, poet, and writer.

Pohl described her as “strikingly beautiful, and strikingly intelligent, too, in a sulky, humorous, deprecatory way that matched well with most of the other people I admired.”

Owens, her second husband, was described by a female friend as “the handsomest man you ever saw in your life.” When she left him to marry Wilson, he had a nervous breakdown and



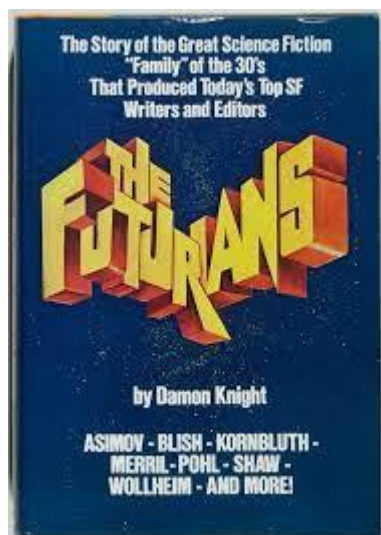
threatened to kill Wilson.

Wilson, a fellow Futurian and her third and last husband, later became head of the news bureau at Syracuse University, where he founded a SF works collection said to be one of the most important in the world.

While she was married to Wilson, Perri became a reporter and journalist. Wilson was, at the time, the bureau chief for the Reuters wire service in New York City.

She had two children, Margot Owens (with Owens), and Richard David Wilson (with Wilson). Her grandson, Dirk Llewellyn van der Meulen, is named for Dirk Wylie (born Harry Dockweiler), a SF author and poet who was also a member of the Futurians. Perri was the Futurian member who suggested he change his name to Dirk Wylie.

While her main pen name was Leslie Perri, she was known to her friends as "Doë", pronounced "dough-ee".



Fan Activities

Perri was introduced to the Futurians through Pohl, whom she was dating at the time. She was also a founding member of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA). In addition, at one time or another, she was a member of the Committee for the Political Advancement of Science-Fiction (CPASF), the Science Fiction League (SFL), and the Science Fictioneers.

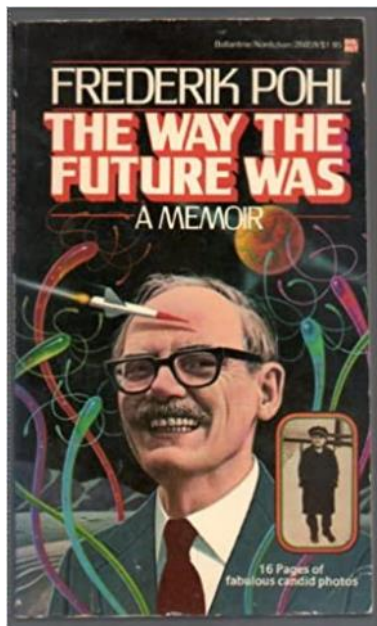
She was one of five members of the Futurians allowed into the first World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon) in NYC in 1939 by con organizer Sam Moskowitz. The other four Futurians admitted were Isaac Asimov, David Kyle, Richard Wilson, and Jack Robins (born Jack Rubinson).

Publications

Perri wrote extensively for fanzines, and edited a movie magazine; but only published three SF stories during her career. She also contributed some illustrations to *Astonishing Stories*.

“Space Episode” is the earliest of Perri’s stories. It appeared in *Future Combined with Science Fiction*, December, 1941, issue (with a cover by Hannes Bok, a popular SF/fantasy artist who was also at one time a member of the Futurians).

The stories she wrote (all as by Leslie Perri) were originally published in magazines edited by fellow Futurians. A few of these were later reprinted in anthologies, one of which (*Womanthology*, 2003) was edited by Forrest J Ackerman and consisted solely of stories by female writers.



As an artist, Perri contributed work to *Astonishing Stories*, edited by Pohl during 1940 - 1941.

Her other published SF stories were “In the Forrest” (1953, *If Science Fiction*) and “Under the Skin” (1956, *Infinity Science Fiction*; later reprinted in *New Worlds Science Fiction* as “The Untouchables,” also in 1956). Larry T. Shaw, another former Futurian, was associate editor of *If* in 1953, and editor of *Infinity Science Fiction* in 1956.

In addition to her short fiction, she contributed both artwork and written pieces to a variety of SF fanzines such as *Future Art*, *Futurian News*, *Le Vombiteur Litteraire*, *Mind of Man*, *Mutant*, and *Fantasy Fictioneer*. She sometimes signed her artwork as by Perri.

Through her Futurian connections, she worked on romance fiction magazines, such as *Movie Love Stories*, which she edited for a time.

In her SF writing, she seemed to have been influenced by magazine editor Frederick Orlin Tremaine's idea of the “thought variant tale” rather than stories of adventure and/or gadgetry.

Reprints

“Space Episode” has been reprinted in:

Frank, Janrae; Jean Stine, & Forest J Ackerman, eds. (1994). *New Eves: Science Fiction About the Extraordinary Women of Today and Tomorrow*. Stamford, Connecticut: Longmeadow Press.

Yaszek, Lisa; Sharp, Patrick B.; Goonan, Kathleen Ann, eds. (2016). *Sisters of Tomorrow: The First Women of Science Fiction*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.

Yaszek, Lisa, ed. (2018). *The Future is Female! A celebration of the women who made science fiction their own, from pulp pioneers to Ursula K. LeGuin*. New York: Library of America.

“In the Forest” has been reprinted in: Arment, Chad, ed. (2016). *Other Life: An Anthology of Non-Terrestrial Biology*. Coachwhip Publications.

“Under the Skin” was reprinted in: *New Worlds Science Fiction* as “The Untouchables (1956)”. In 2022 a chapbook titled *Under the Skin* was issued, containing this short story.

Some Conclusions

She and her friend, Rosalind Cohen, were the earliest female members of The Futurians. Rosalind married fellow Futurian Dirk Wylie.

Perri was 18 when she joined the Futurians. Despite her young age, she was known for her remarkable character sketches of her fellow Futurians.

SF fan Art Widner, a founding member of both First Fandom and The National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F), once proposed marriage.

Perri died of cancer at age 59, less than 3 months shy of her 60th birthday.

Photos of her appear in Damon Knight's book *The Futurians* (1977).

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Davin, Eric Leif. *Partners in Wonder*, 2005.

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Tymn, Marshall B. & Mike Ashley (eds.). *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines*, 1985.

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



Gladiator Horse by Angela K. Scott

Remembering Orson Welles

By Will Mayo

Yet if there is one figure I admire from my boyhood in the 1970s it's that aging actor Orson Welles. Appearing as a guest on other stars' shows and on his own TV specials, his inquiries into the supernatural were uncanny both for their eeriness and their candidness. It's been nearly fifty years later and I have to say I miss the guy.

Song

Will Mayo Reviews John Fogerty's Bad Moon Rising

To my knowledge, no song sums up that eerie feeling that comes with the night like John Fogerty of Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Bad Moon Rising." With lines like "I hear hurricanes flowing" and "Be prepared to die," it is well worth the listen. It is no wonder that this song was included in the soundtrack for the horror movie, "An American Werewolf In London." It is bound to make you hear the howl of the night

Will Mayo Reviews Stevie Wonder's Superstition

But perhaps no song sums up the supernatural like Stevie Wonder's "Superstition." With lines like "The writing's on the wall" and "The devil's on the way," it's got a beat to make you consider the possibilities beyond this life. Tune in, give it a listen and zone out to the territory.

Will Mayo Reviews Warren Zevon's Roland — The Headless Thompson Gunner

But you want a good song that sums up the fantastic and the supernatural? Try Warren Zevon's "Roland — The Headless Thompson Gunner." It brings in everything from the CIA to the Congolese War to the Symbionese Liberation Army. With lines like "You can still see the headless Thompson gunner stalking through the night" and "He blew Van Owen's body from there to Johannesburg," it is sure to make your night. Just easy on that trigger, folks.

Will Mayo Reviews Bart Howard's Fly Me To The Moon

And surely no song shows how lovemaking can conjure up the glory of space travel like the old jazz standard "Fly Me To The Moon," written by Bart Howard and most famously sung by Frank Sinatra. With lines like "I want to see what life is like on Jupiter and Mars" and "You are all I adore," it shows how an evening spent in a beloved's arms can lead to a trip through the cosmos. Tune in to fly high.

Will Mayo Reviews John Prine's Linda Goes To Mars

But if you want a totally different take on outer space adventure check out John Prine's song, "Linda Goes To Mars." With such lines as "Her inner space gets tortured by some outer space alien" and "She must have gone out and gotten her money's worth," it's one man's version of how to zone out and head for the heavens. Definitely cool in my book.

Will Mayo Reviews Micah Nelson's If I Die When I'm High

And then there's the song Micah Nelson wrote for his father Willie Nelson, the famous, pot smoking, elder statesman of country music. Titled, "If I die when I'm high I'll be halfway to heaven," it considers two of Willie's pursuits, smoking marijuana and, lately, talking of the end

of his days. Some of the lines are especially memorable for lovers of the fantastic and alternate afterlives such "They say I've begun to fade./Well, I'm afraid I've let them down" and "Catch me if you can." The reader might want to give Micah's song here a listen. Willie and Micah both could give some tips on going out in style.

Special Effects

The Changing Face Of Werewolves by Will Mayo

In these strange times in which the absurd is an everyday occurrence I think of no less than the changing face of werewolves. Surely there's no better topic to be had. I think of Lon Chaney, a favorite of years past who transformed into a werewolf with fur cropping up on his face and hands. Yet there always seemed something ridiculous about the whole affair. Like, "Run for your lives! It's a man with a beard!" It wasn't until the Eighties flick *An American Werewolf in London* that the viewer was treated to a realistic portrayal of a man being transformed into a wolf. And what a magnificent, gigantic wolf it was, ready to devour friend as well as foe. This then is the changing face of horror. And when the full moon rises the magic begins.

Stage

Will Mayo Reviews The Little Shop Of Horrors

And of special interest when it comes to the fantastic and the horrible is that old musical "The Little Shop Of Horrors." When the plant that is the star of this movie sings out, "Feed me, Seymour!" you don't know whether to shudder or smile in gratitude. And when the plant at last feeds on its beloved Seymour, it seems to more than one viewer as a case of just desserts. Watch carefully for there's a mutant waiting around every corner.

Video

Will Mayo Reviews Michael Jackson's Thriller

One favorite of us kids when videos for rent were just beginning to be the rage was Michael Jackson's *Thriller* in which Michael starred and sang and danced and transformed into a werewolf that threatened to devour his date as well as make love to her. Vincent Price, the old horror master, did an excellent job as narrator and the makeup and special effects were cutting edge for the time. Still worth seeing after forty-odd years and worth the wait if you haven't seen it. Michael always did put on a good show.

Will Mayo Reviews The Elephant Man

One movie of historical interest that I saw about forty years ago that also presents aspects of the

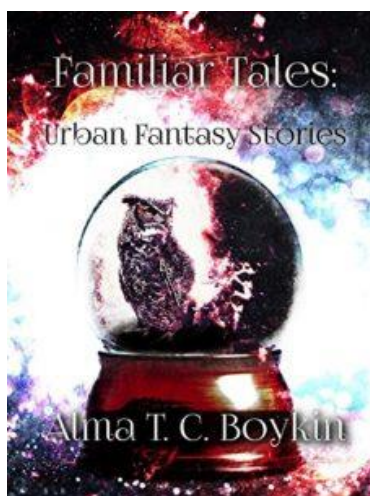
fantastic is the movie "The Elephant Man." Based on the nineteenth century real life figure of Joseph Merrick, it presents the case of a man who, with growths all over his head and face, is given the appearance of monstrosity. When this man cries out from the depths in a train station while surrounded by a crowd gone mad, "I am not an animal. I am a human being," the viewer learns that the true horror is not the monster but the world outside. A must see for lovers of the fantastic and human nature.

Will Mayo Reviews The Howling

Although it seems almost unheard of now, a werewolf movie called The Howling was the sensation of the Eighties about forty-odd years ago. One particular scene comes to mind where a couple transforms into werewolves in the throes of making love. It was the hit of its season, yes, but is perhaps little thought of today. Bring it up on your video channel and give it a watch if you like. You just might howl with delight.

Food of Famous Authors

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



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

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

Alma calls for canned fire-roasted tomatoes, which I could not find in store near me (see notes below for why 'near' was important) but on the other hand, I know how to do that, even when the weather outside keeps me from lighting the grill to do it that way for optimum flavor and fire.



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

I used a gas burner with a wire rack to keep the smallish Roma tomatoes from falling through. My sweet peppers are also smaller, so they needed the rack as well. You'll want to keep a close eye on your roasting, and turn them with metal tongs frequently. This isn't to cook the vegetables through, it's just enough to get the tomato skins loose. As you pulp them in the



molcajete (I have a mortar, but a molcajete is better as it's rougher) you can pull out the skins, and with a little skill, you'll learn how to grind so the stem can be pulled out intact as well.

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

Southern (US) Paella

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

1/2 pound peeled shrimp*

olive oil, salt and pepper, 7 cloves garlic

butter

one sweet onion – minced

one small green pepper

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

2 C jasmine rice

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

3 C chicken stock brought to a simmer

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

** I go heavy on the paprika, because mine never seems as warm as what other people buy.

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

Cedar's notes: I substituted chicken breast for the thighs, as I had them on hand. We served it with rustic homemade bread, and roasted corn on the cob (in the oven, but my son really, really wanted it).

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





Keeping Tabs by Jose Sanchez