

Tightbeam 384
September 2026



Smuggler's Cave at High Tide
by Tiffanie Gray

Tightbeam 384

September 2026

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, ...

The Editors are:

George Phillies phillies@4liberty.net 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester, MA 01609.

Jon Swartz judgeswartz@gmail.com

Art Editors are Angela K. Scott and Jose Sanchez. Art Contributors are Tiffanie Gray, Alan White, Cedar Sanderson, and Artist Fish.

Anime Reviews are courtesy Jessi Silver and her site www.s1e1.com. Ms. Silver writes of her site "S1E1 is primarily an outlet for views and reviews on Japanese animated media, and occasionally video games and other entertainment." Cedar Sanderson's reviews and other interesting articles appear on her site www.cedarwrites.wordpress.com/ and its culinary extension. Jason P. Hunt's reviews appear on SciFi4Me.Com Jim McCoy is now found at Jimbossffreviews.substack.com.

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

The N3F offers four different memberships. To join as a public (free) member, send 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.

Memberships with TNFF via email are \$6; memberships with The National Fantasy Fan (TNFF) via paper mail are \$18. Zines other than TNFF are email only.

Additional memberships at the address of a current dues-paying member are \$4.

Public (non-voting) memberships are free. Send payments to Kevin Trainor, PO Box 143, Tonopah NV 89049. Pay online at N3F.org. PayPal contact is treasurer@n3f.org.

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Letters

Hi George and Jon;

Received the latest issue of Tightbeam and thot I would shoot off a few random comments.

I was interested in your recent excursion to a local book store. I wish you had mentioned the name of the store. Very few brick and mortar book stores have survived in the central Mass area and I am curious as to which one you found within easy driving distance.

I am not surprised that toys, gadgets, novelties, clothing and other merchandise have become the center of attention with the actual books being shoved to the back and sides of the establishment. The unfortunate reality has been that novelty merchandise and clothing have been selling better than books for a long time now, especially with the very high retail prices for most books these days.

I was very surprised to learn that you found no mass market paperback books in the establishment. Paperback sized books have been dying for the past five to ten years, due mostly (in my opinion) to the very high retail prices paperbacks now demand. Mass market paperbacks used to be an affordable alternative to hardback books. They carried a complete novel length story in compact form, usually for the same cover price as a magazine.

A few years after paperbacks began to be popular they were seriously cutting into the sales of pulp magazines and even the slick paper mags. The paperbacks were priced at a quarter, the same price as most pulps and most mainstream magazines. When the prices of magazines went up to thirty-five cents, and then fifty cents in the 1950s and 1960s, the paperbacks stayed right alongside at the same price.

Today hardly any magazines seem to be left, and the cover prices seem to be around six to eight bucks a copy, but in the meanwhile, beginning around the turn of the new century, the mass market paperbacks were consistently priced higher than most magazines. Today the typical price of a paperback has reached the ten to fifteen dollar mark, which the reading public has apparently decided is too expensive for what was originally seen as an inexpensive, disposable reading format designed to be read, maybe passed on to friends or family, and then tossed out. Because of cheap paper and glued spines most paperback books didn't survive more than a few readings, but they were so inexpensive that nobody cared. Today, at ten bucks or more per copy almost everybody cares, and almost nobody seems to be buying them any more.

I suspect that e-books are going to be the future of inexpensive literature, but I wish there were more information about the sell-thru rates. The last info the publishing industry has supplied claims that e-books only account for 20% of all books sold, with print versions still dominating the market. I am not sure that this is an accurate accounting, but those are the figures the industry continues to report.

However, as other people have noted, those sales figures only apply to big name publishers, whose e-book prices tend to be, shall we say, robust. The vast majority of e-books are being sold thru on-line retailers such as Amazon. Amazon's contract with the major publishers prevents them from discounting their e-book titles (whereas Amazon heavily discounts all material

that is actually printed on paper), but Amazon carries an incredible assortment of e-books from small, independent publishers, and also from individual authors who sell on the Amazon platform, and these are sold at a steep discount price.

Amazon also has several e-book publishing divisions where it issues its own e-books, primarily fiction, at affordable prices, and while they will not report their actual sales, the numbers moved thru by popular authors who mention such things on their websites is noteworthy.

The unfortunate thing about this is that Amazon and most of the other e-book publishers/sellers, including Smashwords, do no editing for quality. There are thousands of really badly written crappy novels being turned into e-books constantly, and they are offered for sale over the internet with fake hype and no guarantee that the material has even been properly edited.

This is where reviews become very important. Reading reviews by people whose opinions you trust can save lots of time and money. I think the N3F provides a very valuable service with their book review zine and I only wish more people would contribute reviews. I guess I'm in that guilty majority. I read a lot of books, but generally only write reviews of books that I consider either outstanding and worth recommending to everyone, or noting titles that have been hyped by the publishers but that actually are not good at all. Readers should be warned about cruddy books as well as being steered toward the good material.

I also have to admit that at this point in life I am really not interested in buying any more physical books. I get my reading these days thru the local library, and the wonders of inter-library loan, which works very well for me. I noted Lloyd Penney's frustration with his own local library, but I have not had many problems getting the stuff I want to read thru my own town library. Some obscure, specialized reprints of pulp or dime novel stuff has been impossible to find, but these are the exceptions, not the rule. Generally books published by recognized publishers get picked up by some library somewhere, and can be moved along to this particular wanna-be-reader thru interlibrary loan services.

And toward that end, let me mention that I was impressed by Jim McCoy's review of "Fade" by Daniel Humphreys enuf to order it thru the library service. His ambivalent attitude toward the protagonist and his enthusiasm for the actual plot sparked my curiosity. I may do a mini-review myself when I finish reading it.

I was disappointed at Jon's coverage of Murray Leinster's career. He only reported the barest of bare bones outline of this writer's very long and very prolific career. I think Jon should have at least mentioned that Leinster wrote his first important long science fiction story back in 1919, "The Runaway Skyscraper" where it appeared in Argosy magazine, and was subsequently reprinted in the third issue of Amazing Stories in June 1926 with enthusiastic praises by editor Hugo Gernsback. It has since been reprinted in hardback and holds up very well today. It introduced several new concepts to the genre, and today that story can be read for free at several internet sites, including Project Gutenberg.

Leinster wrote well over 1500 fiction stories. He wrote almost until the very end of his life. He was very friendly with John W. Campbell (with whom he swapped story plot ideas) as well as Robert A.W. Lowndes, for whose magazines he also wrote science fiction stories. Unfortunately, the mags Lowndes edited routinely paid half a cent per word. By scrounging and judicious editing he was able to pay Leinster a penny a word for his long stories, but clearly writing for

Lowndes was an act of friendship, since he was much better paid by every other magazine on the market.

As always, the recipes mentioned this time round look delicious, but they also clearly involve more work and expertise than I can manage.

I enjoyed the issue. Keep up the good work.

---Bob Jennings

They say you are what you eat. Really? I don't remember eating anxiety, back pain or arthritis.

George answers: Nearby bookstores: Bearly Read Books — becoming Athina Books — in Sudbury has an extensive collection of used books of all sorts, mostly fiction. Tatnuck Booksellers, just off Route 9, has an enormous collection of toys and a limited range of books. Their SF collection is minimal, two low standards, a larger collection of fantasy, and a still larger YA collection. Most modern book covers are odd. I visited with a friend, who is even more of an SF fan than I am. Her personal library (and her husband's, may he rest in peace) runs ca. 22,000 volumes. Neither of us saw anything that we wanted to take a chance on buying. It was a Sunday; the café was closed. Tidepool Books in Worcester is small, tightly arranged, with an excellent children's and younger adult section. Next door, just opening is a café, Crusts. Toward the South end of town is Annie's Book Stop, used books, lots of older SF volumes. Going through Amherst, just short of the Connecticut River, is Gray Matter Books, used books, ca. 20,000 volumes, all areas. Their SF collection was depleted during the 2020 plague.

Dear George and Jon:

Many thanks for Tightbeam 383. I've made a few notes, and will relay them to you...right now.

My loc... used books and used book stories have become a specialty item. Both seem to have lost their value, at least to the majority of the public, while new books have increased in value to the point where the general public can't afford them. (They could go to the public library, but library systems are under-funded, and they can't afford the new books, either.) No wonder literacy is down. We also assign little value to e-books because they aren't a material product, but a computer file we can easily ignore. There are book festivals and other gatherings, thank goodness. I will be at one of these festivals in Toronto called Word on the Street, and I will, with luck, sell my remaining Amazing Selects books.

An Adventure in Bookshopland...I've seen that the traditional pocket paperback type of book has been discontinued, leaving the more expensive hardcovers and trade paperbacks. E-books seem to be the future, but I am old school, I still like something physical to hold as I read. Perhaps we have aged out of the current demographic for publishers and publishing, whatever the perfect age is, if that even exists.

Thank you, Jon, for another thorough bio, this time for Murray Leinster. Your researches, plus essays from others, could be the basis of a series of books on SF writers, or perhaps populate a website designed to help us remember those great SF writers of the past.

My latest news... I have some Amazing Stories content in The Pulpster 35, and in the 2026

First Fandom Annual. In *The Pulpster* 35, there are articles about AS's 100th anniversary, and I respond to questions from former *Pulpster* editor and old friend Tony Davis, and in the 2026 First Fandom Annual, I also respond to questions, but it's more in the form of an essay, and there are pictures of me and friends at the Merrill Collection AS event this past April 29.

A new project that Yvonne and I are working on...Mythcon. This annual convention, sponsored by The Mythopoeic Society, was held in Oklahoma this year, and will be Toronto in 2027, Mythcon 55. We are assisting Society convention Steward Tim Lenz (who happens to currently live in Toronto) with getting a convention hotel, and Yvonne will work with Tim on Canadian accounting practices. On site, Yvonne and I may be in charge of the Vendors' Room. Mythcon usually gets anywhere between 100 and 300 people, but I can see 300 or more next year, for there are lots of Canadian fans who have been starved for any kind of convention that is fan-run, rather than pro-run. More Mythcon 55 information to come.

Done for the time being! Many thanks for continuing with it, and keeping everyone informed. That's what keeps community going.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

Editor Jon responds:

Lloyd,

Thanks for the update on your recent projects. I always enjoy your locs.

You're not the first to suggest I do something with the bio-bibliographies I've written, but -- at my age -- I'm lucky to just meet my obligations to N3F and the First Fandom Foundation.

Congratulations on your recent awards.

Jon Swartz

My dearest fellow Neffers:

Now that my Portugal residency card is firmly in hand and it's August, when schools are closed, business slows, and many Portuguese families take their férias (vacations or holidays), there's a brief lull in our activities and responsibilities. That means it's been a good week to catch up on fanzine reading! This issue of *Wahflestomper* is published in response to *Tightbeam* #381-382. I hope it finds you all well.

First off, #381...

Cedar Sanderson's piece "Commoditizations"—first published in 2018!—raised an interesting point. "[This is hardly the first time that cheap books have upset the market, and it probably won't be the last...," she wrote. "Mass market paperbacks, and the pulps of yore, did it first. Ebooks are the children of the cheap paperbacks in the drugstore racks." That might be the case if we primarily consider the opportunities offered to authors of self-published or independently published ebooks. Mainstream publishers' ebooks are still largely priced close to that of their physical counterparts and it's just as hard, if not more challenging, to get a contract with one of

the Big Five, so the democratization aspect there—in terms of barriers to entry—isn’t as strong. Ebooks have democratized independent and self-publishing, if not writing, perhaps more than they have democratized traditional publishing or reader access to its options. After all, the pulp magazines and mass-market paperbacks were entirely commercial, industrialized efforts.

While recently gathering some of my past bylines from the newspapers and magazines I’ve written for over the years, I was struck by the May/June 1996 cover for *WebMaster* magazine: “Will the Web make your job disappear?” Such florid, alarmist—but not entirely incorrect, depending on the business sector—language can be seen in many articles about generative artificial intelligence these days, three decades later. In recent years, mobile phones and their applications have also been disruptive, especially in the taxi and photography industries. Streaming media has affected television and the movie industry. People express concerns—rightfully so—about the time we (and children) spend online and on our phones. Similar concerns were expressed when television, radio, even the novel were introduced. Imagine thinking that people, specifically women, reading novels would have deleterious effects.

When I consider the commoditization aspect of the emergence of ebooks, I also think about the learning, training, and personal development industries built around business, marketing, and writing. Many people are able to make a relatively good living, at least for a while, teaching other people how to operate small businesses, work as a marketer, or write. Whether they’re good business people, marketers, or writers is almost beside the point. Many such businesses come and go quickly, so it’s possible they’re not good business people. You have to be able to write and market relatively well to make any amount of money, but even then, if the business doesn’t last, how good are they really? It’s important to determine whether they’ve operated a business, worked as a marketer, or written professionally—successfully—elsewhere, other than offering their training or other materials. Why be trained by the unsuccessful?

In the early days of online courses, email newsletters, and ebooks, such people would chase niches, identifying a little-served but high-interest topic and throwing information products against it until the niche stopped working—and they moved onto the next potentially lucrative topic. That is an opportunity—and a risk—we might face as books and ebooks continue to be commoditized. (We also see this in Temu and other dropshipped products, similar to Cedar’s mention of T-shirts.)

Are you writing what you want to write? Or what you think will sell? Of course, as writers, we need to consider that for more traditional publishing markets, but the ability to chase niches in fiction ebooks is more readily apparent than it is in traditional publishing. Do you want to write a novella set during the Soviet era featuring gay vampires who love playing bridge, or do you do so because those things—for some reason—seem to be drawing readers’ heat at the current point in time? Depending on the market, your submissions could be that specific, and if you’re publishing ebooks, who knows who’ll find you for \$0.99 on Amazon or via Amazon Unlimited? Depending on the topic, selling hundreds of quickly written short stories as “books” for \$0.99 a pop might very well add up. (Ebooks can radically change the definition of “book” when it comes to word or page count.)

The phrase “strong female protagonist” comes to mind. (<https://www.ooliganpress.com/strong-female-character>) The “child mage” trope resonates similarly. I cannot tell you how many books and book series my son read as a youth that focused on an orphaned boy who turned out to be the only one who could save the world with his magical powers. Another example is the “hurt/comfort” trope. “Cozy” is another increasingly popular concept. So is romantasy. I have-

n't been able to find a good way to identify the most popular tropes, topics, or subgenres—Smashwords only goes down so far; All > Fiction > Science fiction > Utopias & dystopias, for example—so this might not be as great an opportunity or concern.

The reviews of *RErideD: Derrida, Who Leaps Through Time* and *Paradise* were interesting—I hadn't heard about either—but I'm curious what connection, if any, the anime has with the work of Jacques Derrida.

Jon D. Swartz's Bio-Bibliography of Frank Robinson is an excellent resource—and a wonderful excuse to seek out the writer's work. We need more slan shacks. Robinson's connection with *Rogue*, *Cavalier*, and *Playboy* is also interesting; all three published genre fiction over the years. What a rich life he lived!

Now for #382...

When I started reading Jason P. Hunt's review of *Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir, I misread "the movie adaptation of *Project Hail Mary*" as suggesting that a novelization of the movie had been published. Just imagine, a novel adapted for film, and then novelized. Has that ever happened before? I haven't read any of Weir's books, or seen the movies, and if I do, I'll likely read the books first. Jason's review was detailed and well reasoned, and I'll do my best not to dismiss the novels entirely. They are definitely a Thing. That'll hopefully bring more readers to sf. I also appreciated the review's comparisons to Joss Whedon and Chuck Wendig.

Jason's review of *The Mandalorian and Grogu* was also interesting. While I enjoyed watching *The Book of Boba Fett* and *The Mandalorian*, I haven't rushed to see the movie. I feel like the Fett-related spinoffs might be my favorite recent Star Wars-adjacent media because they return to the space western trope of the first movie. Tonally, they're very similar.

Go figure: Including Grogu added 15 to 20 minutes and made the movie drag? Well, of course it did. But as you said, Grogu's there for a reason. And I'm glad that you mentioned Phil Tippett's stop-motion work. That might be reason enough alone to see the flick.

Following Jon's profile of Frank Robinson in the previous ish with a Bio-Bibliography of Thomas N. Scortia makes a lot of sense. Thank you for publishing them in sequence! The Harlan Ellison connection was interesting; I'll have to learn more! "It has been speculated that [Scortia's] leukemia was induced by his exposure to nuclear tests," was a chilling sentence to read.

Say, wasn't the *Paradise* review just published in the previous issue? Harrumph. Hey, Quality Control! The rest of the issue was also enjoyable. But given the amount of material our club-zines reprint, I'm curious how many of the contributors are N3F members.

As always, *Tightbeam* serves up plenty of reading and viewing ideas, as well as tasty recipes! It might be more useful for me to read monthly than two issues at a time, as I did here, but between the Robinson and Scortia profiles alone, there's plenty to follow up on.

Putting it on a tight beam,
Blasted Lloyd Penney

SerCon

J. F. Bone Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian



Jesse Franklin Bone, a veterinarian turned science-fiction (SF) writer, was born June 15, 1916, in Tacoma, Washington. Except for six years of military service, he spent his entire life in the Pacific Northwest -- where his father, Homer Truett Bone, was a United States senator and federal judge. His mother was the former Eva K. Wildt.

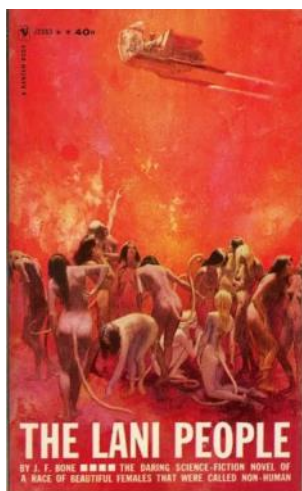
Later History

In 1933, Bone entered Washington State University, where he received a B. A. (1937), just before joining the U. S. Army. With his college degree, he entered service as an officer, and with World War II prolonging his service, he rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Continuing service in the Army Reserve after the war, Bone also returned to his alma mater, where he received a B. S. in biology in 1949, and a D. V. M. in 1950.

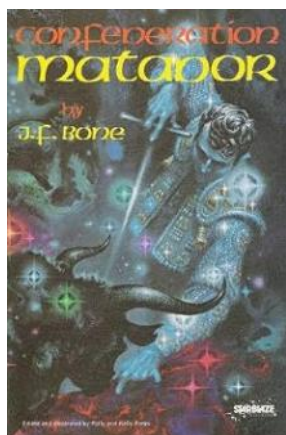
He was a Fulbright Lecturer in Veterinary Pathology in 1954 – 1955, and attended Stanford University in 1969 – 1970.

After graduating with his D. V. M., Bone turned to teaching. He was hired right out of graduate school by Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon, where he remained for his entire teaching career.

He married Jayne M. Clark in 1942; they divorced in 1946. In 1950, he married a fellow teacher, Faye M. Endter, with whom he had four children.



Writing Career



He was invited in 1957 to write a column in the professional journal Modern Veterinary Practice, which he continued for ten years. With the success of this column, Bone felt he had found a second career as a writer.

In 1957 he published his first SF story, "Survival Type," in Galaxy Science Fiction. His next story, "Triggerman," published the following year in Astounding Science Fiction, was nominated for a Hugo Award. Despite continuing to publish SF for another twenty years, Bone did not win a major SF writing award.

He was not prolific by usual genre standards: in twenty years he published

only five novels and a dozen short stories. The reason is obvious. He was never a full-time writer, enjoying a successful career as a college professor and writer of veterinary textbooks that would remain in print well after his death: *Canine Medicine* (1959), which went into a second edition in 1962; *Animal Anatomy* (1958), which went through four editions; and *Equine Medicine and Surgery* (1963).

Science Fiction Publications



His first SF novel, *The Lani People* (1962), about an interplanetary veterinarian, was a popular success. His veterinary training enabled him to give his descriptions of alien life forms believability. “One index of its importance was its inclusion in 2000 in the Gutenberg Project, which digitized books for Internet access.”

It was another fourteen years before Bone completed his second novel, *Legacy* (1976); but then he produced three others in quick succession: *The Meddlers* (1976), *The Gift of the Manti* (1977, with Roy Myers), and *Confederation Matador* (1978).

Jesse F. Bone Resurrected, a collection of his short fiction, was published in 2011.

During his career, he published short fiction in most of the popular SF prozines of the day, including *Amazing*, *Astounding/Analog*, *Fantastic*, *Fantastic Universe*, *Galaxy*, *If*, *Satellite*, and *Super Science Fiction*.

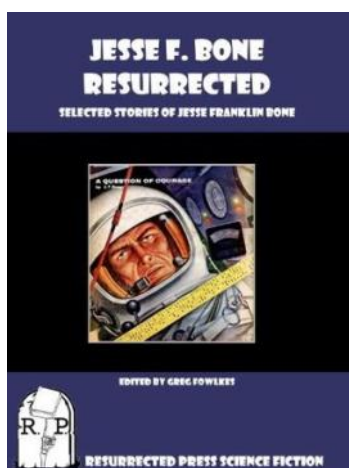
Other Work

As chair of the board of governors at Oregon State University Press, Bone fought against “fair use” copyright legislation -- which would deprive professional writers of their intellectual property rights.

A Remembered Comment

He once commented, when asked about his writing: “I’d rather be sailing!”

Death



On January 6, 1986, Bone died at the age of 70 in Sierra Vista, Arizona.

He was survived by his wife, Faye; sons Michael Bone of Sacramento, California, and David Bone of Sierra Vista, Arizona; daughter Brigitta Fernandez of Corvallis, Oregon; nine grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Sources

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

Writing

The Power of Cozy Cedar Sanderson

Musing on the world and making it better

My initial response, when I was condescendingly told to run along and create something cozy, was to boil over and retort ‘you realize I got my start with noir? And horror?’ but I didn’t say anything. I retreated, retrenched, and ruminated. The dismissal hit me like a horse’s kick to the chest, and just like that time, I wound up lying on the ground staring at the sky feeling disoriented. It wasn’t just the dismissive tone, the assumption that only real value is in the darkness, the hardness, that anything soft must also be worthless. It was the irony of being told that only portraying edgy, sexy, lean and polished would result in being seen as worthwhile, that old-fashioned was invisible, by someone who clearly had no idea what my past work looked like in art or writing. It isn’t just one person’s opinion. There is an assumption that softness is synonymous with weakness or lack of imagination. It is commonly accepted that coziness is a lesser category, a pastel diversion for people who can’t handle the “real” work of darkness.

Then, slowly, I began to think about the true value of the cozy world I’d created in Groundskeeper, in my cute art, in the comfort and encouragement I try to give not only here on the blog but in person to friends and those near to me. That world is not an escape from the dark. It is a deliberate counterweight. I’ve been dark places. Far darker than the person who felt they knew what badass was, and dismissed my art because it didn’t fit their version. I know the taste of the air when hope feels theoretical. I prefer not to dwell in the darkness. I hug hope, the thing with warm feathers, close to my soul and I know it’s shape. I know that it’s not all bleak edges. It’s round, and soft, and welcoming. It has bloody knees, bruised knuckles, and a fire in the eyes that cannot be quenched. All those things can be true at once.

That is the part the dismissive voice never seems to grasp: coziness is not the absence of struggle. It is the refusal to let struggle have the final word. It is the decision to keep the kettle on, the lamp lit, the door unlocked for the people who need a place to set down their weight for a while. In the cozy worlds I spin from my imagination the gentleness is only on the surface, beneath everything is the undercurrent of what the characters have survived and what they continue to carry. The cozy surface is the visible part of a much deeper architecture. The same is true

of the little drawings I make, the bread I bake for friends, the steady presence I try to offer. None of it is decorative. It is structural.

My version of cozy might include a bookstore, spiced coffee, and an inconvenient body, but it's not what most will think of when they open the pages. The body is inconvenient because bodies often are; the coffee is spiced because pleasure is a form of resistance; the bookstore is a place where stories of every temperature can sit side by side without apology. Furthermore, I'm just getting started. I think I will create something cozy. Might be the loaf of bread I have rising, flavored with cardamom, orange peel, and black pepper. Complex sweetness with a bite at the end. Might be a twinkling of an idea I have about grandmothers who belong to a secret society of assassins because they are overlooked (and yes, I adored Mrs. Pollifax; why do you ask?) Those women move through the world as background noise until the moment they are not. Their strength is hidden in plain sight, wrapped in cardigans and practical shoes and the assumption that no one is looking.

Might be stories of a young woman rising to heroic interstellar espionage exploits while serving her apprenticeship to a tailor, a baker, and a shepherdess. The skills that keep people clothed, fed, and safe are the same skills that can dismantle an empire if applied with precision and patience. The possibilities are infinite.

Warm, welcoming, and relentless. Cozy is far more than it seems on the surface, and those are the very best characters, don't you think? The ones who look soft until you notice the set of the jaw. The ones who offer you a cup of tea and, in the same breath, refuse to let you disappear into despair. The ones whose hope has been tested in the dark and came back carrying light: not the harsh, clinical kind, but the kind that fits in a pocket, that can be shared without diminishing.

I used to think the dark was the only place seriousness lived. I know better now. Seriousness also lives in the decision to keep making beauty when beauty feels frivolous. It lives in the quiet insistence that people deserve comfort even when the world is on fire. It lives in the hidden places, in the overlooked grandmothers, the apprentices who learn more than their trade, the hope that has bloody knees and still gets up. Coziness, done honestly, is not a retreat. It is a form of strength that does not need to announce itself. And I am only beginning to map its full territory.

Anime

Endro!

Review by Jessi Silver



In the land of Naral Island, a land of magic and swords, humans and monsters live together. Once upon a time, there used to be a terrifying Demon Lord, but long, long ago the first Hero defeated the Demon Lord. The Demon Lord would revive again and again throughout the ages, but every time a Hero would appear to defeat it... Now these young girls attend an Adventurer's Academy to prepare



them to defeat the Demon Lord that will one day rise again. This is the beginning of a laid-back fantasy life with no sign of the Demon Lord for these four who hope to become a party of heroes. – Crunchyroll

Streaming: Crunchyroll and Funimation

Episodes: 12

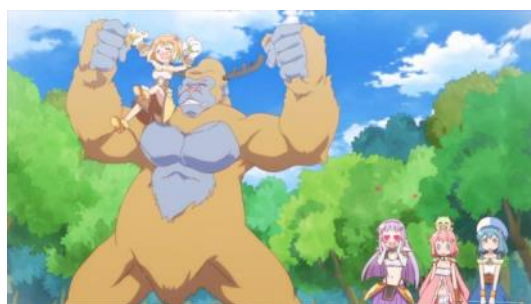
Source: Original

Episode Summary: Yulia, the hero, and her three companions soundly defeat the Demon Lord, sending them into a prison of time and space. The world is saved! ... or so it seems. In truth, the magic spell that sealed the Demon Lord was a fluke with accidental consequences, sending the near-powerless enemy back in time several years before the final conflict.

The Demon Lord finds her way to Yulia-and-company's hero school to nip the whole adventuring party thing in the bud before it becomes a problem for her. The issue is that, while the heroes aren't very competent yet, they seem to have a talent for being lucky. That alone may be difficult for a very small Demon Lord to overcome.

First Impressions: The concept of heroism is something that many cultures hold in high regard. Individuals who act selflessly to protect others are admired and remembered long after their heroic deeds are performed. There are many reasons why people may take on the mantle of "hero;" some are reluctantly thrust into that position after simply doing what they believe to be their duty. There are others, though, who seek the admiration that comes along with the title. They may not be well-suited in the traditional sense, and their motives might be a bit too selfish, but if the end result is that they're able to help those in need, does it really matter?

Endro!'s heroine is the type whose competency level doesn't inspire a lot of confidence. Yulia's well-meaning, kind-hearted and cares about others, but her lack of basic knowledge (including the fundamental fact that the "Hero" class in which she self-classifies is only conditionally



Sometimes getting sidetracked is its own fun. Screenshot from Crunchyroll.

available based around the existence of a major foe) means that she's not the typical hero "type." Some of my anime pet peeves are characters who apply for or are hired to do jobs about which they know almost nothing; it's a great entry point for an audience who might not know much about the ins-and-outs of certain careers, but realistically by the time someone is at the point in their life where they're applying to do something specialized, they ought to at least know the basic tools and expectations of the work. While I can tolerate fairies, magic spells, and divine relics just fine, anime hiring practices are just too much for me to deal with

sometimes (I'm only slightly joking).

Luckily this series is billed as a fantasy comedy, and thus far it seems to be a pretty decent one. The first episode does a good job of being self-aware enough to be able to razz on its main protagonist while also setting her up to achieve victory in spite of her obvious (and adorable) shortcomings. Yulia's friends, all appropriately-skilled (and classed) party members, seem like they could do much better for themselves by forming their party around a leader with some creden-

tials, but there's a sense that their group only exists because Yulia is the beating heart at the center of it. I find the whole situation amusing because the protagonist clearly doesn't know what she's doing, but the narrative avoids taking a mean-spirited tone when examining that. It's more a whole-hearted proclamation that, in some cases, heroism is 10% skill and 90% dumb luck, and somehow it just works out.

The show's guileless approach is what really appeals to me, probably more so than its silliness. The Demon Lord, now in the form of a little girl, seeks revenge even though her power to do so has been severely limited by both her size and her standing. Unfortunately, Yulia is the exact opposite of threatened by her eventual mortal enemy at this point in the timeline. There's a lot of hugging, exclamations of how cute the Demon Lord is, and just a general mitigation of any brewing animosity through the softness of the characters. Demon Lord-Chan, for her part, resists the all-enveloping friendship being thrust at her, but her impotent position (which lends her the threat level of a barking chihuahua) leaves her looking more lovable than menacing.



The Demon Lord can't quite see over the podium. Screenshot from Crunchyroll.

Speaking of adorable things, this episode is that and then some. The characters are different variations on "soft, round, and pastel," dressed in baggy costumes that convey a more laid-back aesthetic than your typical fantasy adventure series. Even the fighter/berserker character's weapons are cartoonish cat-pawed mitts rather than something more traditionally threatening. The golem the characters battle is constructed from round shapes and has a cutesy cat-like visual theme. Even ignoring the dialog or plot elements, the intent is made pretty clear through the distinctly non-

-threatening visual style. There are a couple of character design missteps, including an adventurer-school student whose design seems based on Native American stereotypes – I'm not sure why a Japanese series would reach that far for design inspiration, besides it probably seeming "exotic" in some fashion. There's also the question of coverage; as is the norm with a lot of fantasy anime, the characters don't seem protected by their clothing, which bares a lot more skin than would be ideal when faced with slashing blades and malevolent magic. Considering the episode's general focus on benign incompetence, though, at least that element is fitting.



The party expects a cake-walk, but Demon Lord-chan has other ideas.

I just started reading the manga Spirit Circle, and while I feel that manga and this TV anime are in separate leagues as far as philosophical storytelling, I'm wondering if there might end up being some similarities in the general story arc worth talking about. Spirit Circle is the story of characters whose various past lives intersected in ways that were primarily negative. In the current age, there's a sense that, while the person who was frequently wronged is about ready to murder the one who wronged her, that there may be enough of a two-sided story for the characters to come to an eventual understanding.

Through this magical time-skip, the characters of Endro!, especially our chibi Demon Lord, have been given a gift – the gift to change the future for the better. The idea of what's "better" is obviously different based on who's talking, but I think even our antagonist

here might have a soft enough heart to conclude that maybe animosity and world-domination might not be the most productive path.

That obviously lays a particularly large burden on a series that seems content to engage in moé antics and cutesy comedy while also actively ignoring the darker and more violent fantasy genre elements that seem to have become more popular as of late. It's not groundbreaking material by any stretch of the imagination, but considering the time and place in anime fandom I feel like it might be just the silly genre-parody I need to start enjoying fantasy anime more. Heroics in this series might skew toward the "inadvertent" side of the spectrum, but to accidentally cobble together an amalgamation of silly tropes into something lighthearted and entertaining is its own sort of heroism, I suppose.

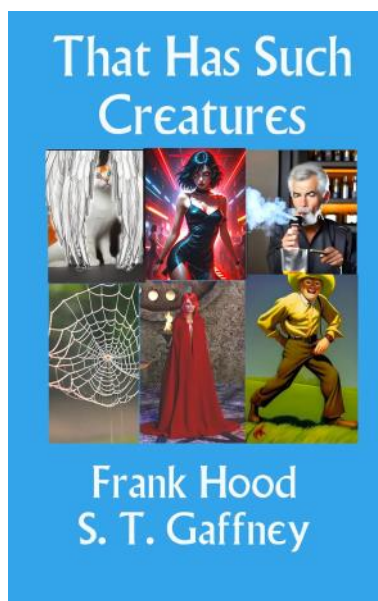
Pros: Pretty cute and pretty funny. A "Wile E. Coyote" set-up with very limited blow-back so far.

Cons: Some brief character design insensitivity. The hero's incompetence might become irritating.

Grade: B-

Cooking

Eat This While You Read That: Frank Hood Fig & Olive Cracker Recipe Cooking by Cedar Sanderson



Many years ago, in the Before Times, I came up with a creative way to promote fellow authors. One of those authors (Stephen Simmons) dubbed the column "Eat This While You Read That" and although it's long, it stuck. I often shorten it to ETWYRT, which acronym could be pronounced 'eat write' and that's close enough to work. What I did back then, and I'm doing it again now that I've got the time to try and help others, is ask the author to give me the name of a dish, and the name of the book they want me to promote. I then develop a recipe for the dish, photograph it all pretty, and write these posts up.

I got to meet Frank Hood in person this spring at FenCon, and enjoyed having him in my Discord for some time now. I was amused at his 'dish' suggestion but really, it pairs beautifully with the book he's promoting. What better for a collection of short stories than a charcuterie plate?

While this could have been very easy for me — gather cheese, salami, veg, and crackers — I wanted to stay faithful to the plate his author wife S. T. Gaffney had assembled. Plus, it gave me an excuse to make crackers, something I rarely do!

First, though, you'll want to grab a copy of the book collection this husband and wife team have written, *That Has Such Creatures*¹ (conveniently in Kindle Unlimited) and then, assemble your ingredients. You'll have time for reading during prep with this recipe, as it's a twice-baked cracker! Short stories are perfect for short waits.

One of Frank's books, and a good cover!

Fig & Olive Crackers

8 oz coarsely chopped dried figs
1 c whole wheat flour
1 c all purpose flour (reserve 4 tbsp)
2 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
1/3 c brown sugar
1/4 c honey
1 c greek yogurt
1 c milk
1 tbsp fresh, chopped rosemary
1/2 c poppy seeds
1/4 c chia seeds
1/4 c sesame seeds
1/4 c hazelnuts (roughly chopped)
1 1/4 c kalamata olives (pitted)

Preheat the oven to 350F.

Grease small baking tins (soup cans with the end off, washed and labels removed, would also work if you want round crackers), I used small loaf tins.

Sift together the flours, baking soda, and salt. Toss the chopped figs and drained olives in the reserved flour and set aside

Whisk together the yogurt, milk, honey, and sugar.

Mix the seeds, nuts, herbs, and floured fruits with the dry ingredients, then mix in the wet ingredients. This will make a fairly rough batter, don't worry about mixing out lumps!

Turn evenly into your greased pans.

Bake 20-30 minutes until a tester comes out cleanly.

Cool to room temperature, then freeze for an hour or two until quite firm. Slice very thinly - I'd say an eighth of an inch - and lay flat on pans lined with parchment paper. Bake again at 275F for 30-40 minutes until dry and crisp (note that if you prefer these not be too hard, err on the lesser side of that time).

In my pans I wound up with three small loaves, and I made two into crackers, shared some with a friend group dinner, where we had it with a smear of goat's cheese and a slice of ripe nectarine and they were sublime. The third loaf I will freeze for another time, if I freeze, then vacuum

seal the frozen loaf it will keep a good long time in the freezer. When I want it I will pull it out, slice, and enjoy!

This was before second baking, and it was amazing. My new favorite snack. The second baking preserves the bread, turning it into crackers that can be stored dry for potentially months without spoiling.





Hans Reinhardt The Black Hole
by Jose Sanchez