



The subject of today's interview, Julie McGalliard, is the author of the story "98 Hill" from [Space Grunts: Full-Throttle Space Tales #3](#). Julie is a second-generation geek and enjoys many typical geek pastimes, such as coffee, comic books, science fiction and computer programming. At some point she has even gotten paid for most of these things.

Her biggest love, after writing and her husband (not necessarily in that order) is travel, followed by a long list of other obsessions, from carnivorous plants to fountain pens.

She is a 2006 graduate of the Clarion West Writers Workshop. Her website is www.gothhouse.org.

How did you get involved with *Space Grunts*?

I met writer David Boop at the Talebones Live reading at Seattle's [Norwescon](#) last year, and he put me on the Full Throttle submission invitation list.

What angle did you explore on the theme of soldiers in space in your story "98 Hill"?

One of the members of our local science fiction group was a helicopter pilot during Vietnam. I asked him, "tell me about grunts." The things he told me formed the genesis of "98 Hill." What struck me about grunts is that in a war they are the ones most likely to pay the highest price, but least likely to have a sense of the big picture.

Where do you get your story ideas?

Random ideas are flitting through my brain all the time, like cosmic rays. I don't always know what ideas are going to work until I actually sit down and try to write them. I always feel a bit like Dr. Frankenstein. "There, I've assembled all the pieces that seem like they belong, now I'll apply generous amounts of lightning and hope it gets off the table and does a little song and dance number."

What do you see as some of the advantages of the short story format over longer fiction formats, such as novels?

The short form allows for more experimentation and variety. In the word count of a typical novel you can have a dozen short stories -- that's a dozen different voices, a dozen different worlds. You can read a short story in a single session, write one in a week. It's easier to force all your friends to read a short work. And if the story is really good, I think it can have as much impact as a novel.

Who do you envision as your reader when you write your short stories?

I imagine different people depending on the story, but in general my ideal reader is myself as a teenager.

What advice do you have for someone who is just starting out as a writer of short fiction?

Write. There is no substitute. Also, read. There's no substitute for that either. Try to look at your own fiction the way you would if somebody else wrote it. Remember: readers do not care how hard you have to work to keep them entertained.

What can readers expect from you next?

I have a number of short stories making the rounds, so with any luck you'll be seeing a lot of me in the coming months.