



# Lambda Sci-Fi

## DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 369 – December 2020

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### The LSF Book Discussion Group

If you're interested in lively discussions of F&SF books (with an emphasis on elements of interest to the LGBT community), we invite you to join the LSF Book Discussion Group. Each month, we conduct fascinating round-table discussions of works by significant F&SF authors.

Before the COVID-19 shut-down orders, the LSF Book Discussion Group usually met on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM, at Peter & Rob's home: 1425 "S" St., NW – for directions or more details, call 202-483-6369. Now, book discussions are held virtually (same "4th Thursday" schedule). The next book discussion will be held on December 3rd (via Zoom).

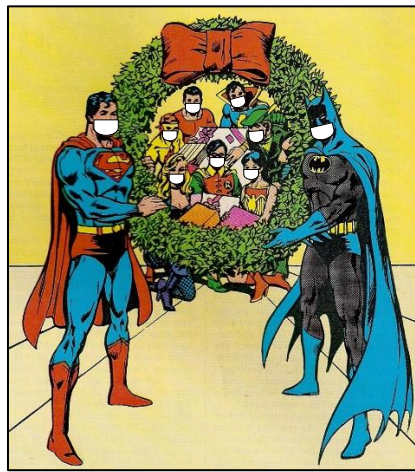
Here are the details for the next several discussions:

**Dec. 3** (combined Nov/Dec discussion) – *The Affair of the Mysterious Letter* by Alexis Hall (moderator: Carl).

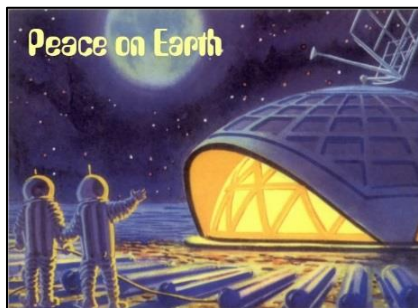
**Jan. 28, 2021** – *Circe* by Madeline Miller (moderator: Konrad).

**Feb. 25, 2021** – *The Glass Hotel* by Emily St. John Mandel (moderator: Zena).

**March 25, 2021** – *Enter the Aardvark* by Jessica Anthony (mod: Konrad).  $\Lambda\Psi\Phi$



*A Happy  
(and Safe)  
Holiday Season  
to All at LSF!*



**Uptown Theater  
1936 – 2020**

We were reminded at the November LSF meeting (held via Zoom) that the Uptown Theater (DC's last "big screen" film venue) had permanently closed. Its final day of operation was March 12<sup>th</sup>; and the last film screened at the theater was Pixar's *Onward*.

The Uptown first opened in 1936 and was originally run by Warner Brothers. (It was later run as part of the AMC Theatres chain.) In 1968, the Uptown was the site of the world premiere of *2001: A Space Odyssey*; and in 1993, the Uptown hosted the premiere of *Jurassic Park*.

It was noted that LSF had held numerous movie outings at the Uptown over the years, often followed by dinner at the Yenching Palace just down the street. (That Chinese restaurant closed some time ago and was replaced by a Walgreens.) *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

### << December 2020 LSF Meeting TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY >>

Due to Coronavirus concerns, we plan to hold the December 13th LSF meeting virtually. Anyone who would like to participate can contact Rob for virtual meeting information at [robgatesdc@gmail.com](mailto:robgatesdc@gmail.com). Hope to "see" you there!



### What's Inside?

Page 2: Minutes of the November 2020 LSF Meeting; The Last Days of Stan Lee.

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Page 4: Information About LSF & Con Calendar; Sean Connery (short obituary)

## Minutes of the November 2020 LSF Meeting

taken by Scott (held via Zoom)

Discussions ranged all over the map during the meeting.

Peter described the two new *Star Trek: Discovery* characters – one is non-binary (Adira) and the other is transgender (Gray). The human is nonbinary, and the Trill is transgender. For more information:

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/vafiey.com/2020/tv/news/star-trek-discovery-trans-non-binary-blu-del-barrio-ian-alexander-1234824183/amp/>

There was discussion about the concept of “synthelol” – “It allows drinkers to experience all of the enjoyable, intoxicating effects of alcohol without unpleasant side-effects like hangovers.” It was noted that there are inconsistencies about synthelol between the various *Star Trek* series.

David displayed all of his *Star Trek* face masks. Check out:

<https://peachtree.co/collections/face-masks>

Dan announced that he is working on an RPG.

David K. described GLAAD’s “Vito Russo Test”, which is similar to the “Bechdel Test”. To pass the Vito Russo Test, the following must be true:

- (1) The film contains a character that is identifiably lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender.
- (2) That character must not be solely or predominantly defined by their sexual orientation or gender identity. (i.e. they are made up of the same sort of unique character traits commonly used to differentiate straight characters from one another.)
- (3) The LGBTQ character must be tied into the plot in such a way that their removal would have a significant effect. Meaning they are not there to simply provide colorful commentary, paint urban authenticity, or (perhaps most commonly) set up a punchline. The character should “matter.”

Ben was unhappy that the *Star Trek: Discovery* character of Hugh Culber (husband of Paul Stamets) was killed off (even though the character of Hugh Culber was revived in the subse-

quent season). Then there was a flurry of side discussion about the gay characters on *Buff*.

Peter described the COVID-19 steps and precautions that were taken during the filming of the latest movie in the *Jurassic Park* series: 40,000 COVID tests. Check out:

<https://deadline.com/2020/11/jurassic-world-chris-pratt-bryce-dallas-howard-universal-covid-tests-wrap-1234610291/amp>

Carl talked about binge-watching the first (and, as it turns out, only) season of the HBO series *Penny Dreadful: City of Angels*. He reported that it’s unconnected to the original *Penny Dreadful* series; and it takes place in Los Angeles during the late 1930s, where avatars of a malevolent entity are inciting the worst aspects of human nature. He says it’s full of obvious references to the Trump years (sex tapes, foreign interference, racist and populist politics, etc.). He said he really enjoyed it.

Ben loves the animatronics used in the *The Mandalorian*.

Peter mentioned that the next person to be given the 007 designation in the “James Bond” franchise will be a black lesbian: actor Lashana Lynch. (Can the straight white male fans handle it?)

Rob talked about *Wonder Woman 1984* (slated for release on Christmas Day) and *Black Widow*. Will these movies really be released in theaters soon?

The rumored *Animorphs* movie has lost its original creators.

Johnny Depp will no longer be playing the role of Grindelwald in the “Fantastic Beasts” series – this is related to claims of spousal abuse against him.

Based on discussion, the most popular Sean Connery movie is *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. (But what about *Zardoz*?)

Season 2 of BBC’s *His Dark Materials* starts in a week. The fifth season of *The Expanse* starts soon on Amazon Prime. *Wanda Vision* premieres in December on Disney+.

The trailer for the *Star Wars* Lego holiday special looks promising – mixes all of the *Star Wars* storylines. The release date is Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>.

Upcoming LSF book discussions: *The Affair of the Mysterious Letter* by Alexis Hall (Nov./Dec. 2020); *Circe* by Madeline Miller (Jan. 21); *The Glass Ho-*

*tel* by Emily St. John Mandel (February 2021); *Enter the Aardvark* by Jessica Anthony (March 2021).

Rob noted that WorldCon 2021 (here in DC) still plans to hold its con in-person in August 2021. We’ll see if that happens! Also, Awesome Con 2020 has been cancelled.

F&SF and Mystery author Deborah Doyle author passed away on Halloween.

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**The Last Days of Stan Lee:  
A heartbreaking tragedy about  
the (alleged) abuse of the Marvel  
Comics creator by those who  
swear they loved him**  
info passed along by Peter Knapp

The Marvel comics universe would not be what it is today without the contributions of Stan Lee, who created Spider-Man, Black Panther, and many other heroes and villains. During the last years of Stan Lee’s life, I heard rumors of elder abuse by people close to him. The October/November issue of *AARP the Magazine* includes an article by David Hochman that recounts many of the rumors I had heard. It also gently educates the reader about elder abuse: “1 in 10 Americans over age 60, [suffer from] elder abuse, which can include physical violence, emotional torment, financial exploitation and willful deprivation.” While the author of the article makes it clear that he’s writing about alleged elder abuse, but it’s clear the author thinks those allegations are true. He points out that, “a half-dozen civil suits are pending and a criminal elder-abuse prosecution by the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s office remains mired in pretrial maneuverings.” One of the people being investigated is Lee’s daughter, J.C. Three of Lee’s business associates are also accused of elder abuse. The author compares what (allegedly) happened to Stan Lee with what happens to 10% of Americans over age 60. The article is a fascinating read and I recommend checking it out. Here is a link to the article:

<https://www.aarp.org/entertainment/cel-ebrities/info-2020/stan-lee-elder-abuse.html>

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## NASA's OSIRIS-REx Mission Part II: Touchdown! info passed along by Carl

The January 2019 issue of the LSF newsletter included an article announcing the arrival of the OSIRIS-REx spacecraft at asteroid 101955 Bennu. (As a reminder, OSIRIS-REx stands for Origins-Spectral Interpretation-Resource Identification-Security-Regolith Explorer.) After more than a decade of development, OSIRIS-REx was launched from Cape Canaveral on September 8, 2016 atop an Atlas V rocket; and, after traveling over 200,000 miles, it arrived at Bennu on December 2, 2018. The mission goal is to retrieve samples of dust, dirt, and pebbles from the surface of Bennu and return them to Earth for study.

Since December 2018, the spacecraft has spent nearly two years orbiting the diamond-shaped asteroid, surveying and mapping its boulder-riddled surface to select the best sampling spot. Its five on-board instruments gathered data using visible light, infrared, and X-rays; it also mapped Bennu's surface, and began piecing together the asteroid's story.

Bennu has been called a "rubble pile" asteroid. It was created about 4.5 billion years ago, when a gigantic impact smashed a larger asteroid into pieces and ejected dust and debris into the void. Gravity forced the rubble to clot together in the shape of a boulder-studded spinning top with a diameter of about 500 meters (about a third of a mile). Since its formation, Bennu has been orbiting the sun between Earth and Mars.

Researchers were able to detect widespread carbon-bearing material on the surface of Bennu, as well as a series of bright veins with the tell-tale signs of carbonate minerals. According to Hannah Kaplan (Research Space Scientist, Planetary Systems Lab, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center), the veins tell us about water in the very early solar system. "Water likely flowed through these veins, depositing the carbonates," she says. Because Bennu is believed to be the remains of a larger asteroid that roamed the solar system in its early days, this helps paint a picture of that body and the water system it contained. "The size of the veins suggest that the fluid system was large, possibly kilometers in size." Bennu is

thus thought to be a window into the solar system's past: a pristine, carbon-rich body carrying the building blocks of both planets and life. Some of these resources, such as water and metals, could also be worth mining at some point in the future for use on Earth or in space exploration.

During close fly-bys in 2019 to get a high-resolution look at the surface, instruments caught Bennu unexpectedly spewing debris into space. The fly-bys also allowed for a detailed examination of the most likely target for the upcoming touch-down: a crater nick-named "Nightingale". Nightingale is only about the size of a few automobile parking spaces, but it's one of the few sites where boulders are not as plentiful and there appeared to be an abundance of fine material to collect.



**Artist's rendition of OSIRIS-REx**

On October 20<sup>th</sup>, OSIRIS-REx began its 4-hour approach, maneuvering in toward the Nightingale crater. It was operating largely autonomously because of the 18-minute communications delay with Mission Control on Earth. Everything went well. The spacecraft's robotic sampling arm, TAGSAM (Touch-And-Go Sample Acquisition Mechanism), successfully touched down on Bennu for about 15 seconds. It fired a canister of gas through TAGSAM that disrupted the surface of Bennu enough for a sample to be caught in the arm's collector head (which basically looks and works like the air filter in an automobile engine). The goal was to collect about 60 grams of dust, dirt, and pebbles.

Then OSIRIS-REx moved off to a safe position and moved its arm into position to take photos of the collector head and weigh how much mass it contained. Comparing images of the empty collector head with images of the TAGSAM head after sample collection, the team believed that a sufficient sample had

been collected – well over 2 ounces of Bennu regolith – and a second attempt was unnecessary. In fact, images showed that the collection head was overflowing with material and a few particles were escaping. To prevent further sample loss, the mission team decided to cancel the Sample Mass Measurement activity scheduled for October 24<sup>th</sup>. Next step: stow the collector head into the Sample Return Capsule (SRC), where any loose material would be kept safe during the return to Earth.

The mission team spent two days working around the clock to complete the stowage procedure. The process required the team's continuous oversight and input, assessing images and telemetry each step of the way before moving on to the next step. (Remember, Mission Control is over 200 million miles away from OSIRIS-REx; and there's a time delay of slightly more than 18 minutes while signals to travel between them.) By the evening of October 27<sup>th</sup>, the TAGSAM arm had placed the collector head into the SRC. The following morning, the mission team verified that the collector head was thoroughly fastened into the capsule; and the TAGSAM arm was disconnected from the sampler head and the SRC was closed. The Bennu samples were safely stored and ready for the return trip to Earth.



**NASA Images of the collector head being stowed into the SRC**

The OSIRIS-REx team will now focus on preparing the spacecraft for the next phase of the mission, the return to Earth. The spacecraft will continue to hang around Bennu for the rest of 2020 before performing a departure maneuver. The departure window opens in March 2021 for OSIRIS-REx to begin its two-year voyage home. When it returns to Earth in September 2023, the spacecraft will jettison the SRC, which will land in the Utah desert.

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## \* \* INFORMATION ABOUT LAMBDA SCI-FI: DC AREA GAYLAXIANS \* \*

**Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians** (LSF) is an organization for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and trans-gendered (GLBT) people, and their friends who are interested in science fiction, fantasy, horror and related genres in all forms (SF/F/H). LSF's primary goals are to have fun, to provide a community, and to:

- promote SF/F/H, with particular attention to materials of interest to GLBT people and their friends;
- provide forums for GLBT people and their friends to share their interest in SF/F/H;
- promote the presence of GLBT elements within SF/F/H and within fandom; and
- promote SF/F/H within the GLBT community.

Annual membership fees are \$10, for which you will receive an e-mailed copy of this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. Newsletter submissions are always welcome.

Meetings are usually held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. Due to Coronavirus concerns, the Lambda Sci-Fi meeting for Sunday, Dec. 13th, will be held virtually. We'll keep you informed of the status of future meetings.

Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians is an affiliate of **the Gaylactic Network**, an international organization for gay people and their friends who are interested in science-fiction and fantasy.

## \* \* Con Calendar \* \*

by Carl (with help from Bob Angell)

Dec. 11-13, 2020 **AWESOME CON**. "As a consequence of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, Awesome Con 2020 has been canceled."

April 16-18, 2021 **RAVENCON 15**. Virginia Crossings Tapestry Collection by Hilton (Glen Allen, VA – just north of Richmond). Guests of Honor: Terry Brooks (Author), Rhiannon's Lark (Music). Membership: \$35 before 12/31/2020; \$40 before 3/27/2021; \$50 at the door. Website: <https://www.ravencon.com/>

July 9-11, 2021 **SHORE LEAVE 42** (rescheduled from July 2020). Delta Hotels Marriott Baltimore Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). Actor GoH: Denis Lawson (*Star Wars* "Wedge Antilles"); Brandon Routh (Superman & The Atom); Robert Duncan McNeill (Lt. Tom Paris); Brent Spiner (Data); Alex Kingston (River Song). Membership: \$105 for the weekend (\$120 at the door); daily rates available. Printable registration forms & on-line registration available through the Registration Page. Website: <https://www.shore-leave.com/info/update-2020-04-25.htm>



**Sean Connery**  
1930 - 2020

Sean (born Thomas) Connery was, of course, the first actor to portray British secret agent James Bond; he starred in seven "Bond" films between 1962 and 1983 (starting with *Dr. No* and ending with *Never Say Never Again*). He acted in smaller theater and television productions until his breakout role as Bond.

In addition to his "sci-fi adjacent" role as James Bond and dozens of other roles, Connery appeared in a number of F&SF films: *Darby O'Gill and the Little People* (1959); *Zardoz* (1974); *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975); *Time Bandits* (1981); *Outland* (1981); *Highlander* (1986); *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989); *Dragonheart* (1996); *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (2003).

Connery's acting achievements were recognized with an Oscar (Best Supporting Actor, *The Untouchables*, 1987), two BAFTA Awards, and three Golden Globes. In 1987, he was made a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters in France. In 1999, he received the US Kennedy Center Honors Lifetime Achievement Award. And in 2000, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for services to film drama. *People* magazine voted him the "Sexiest Man Alive" in 1989 and the "Sexiest Man of the Century" in 1999.



Connery at a Tartan Day celebration in Washington D.C. (wearing the green-and-black hunting tartan of his mother's MacLean clan)