



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 377 – August 2021

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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. *Until September 2020, book discussions will continue to be held virtually (same "4th Thursday" schedule).* The next book discussion will be held on August 26 (via Zoom). The September 23 discussion will return to "in person".

Here are the details for the next several discussions:

Aug. 26 – *Cemetery Boys*, by Aiden Thomas (moderator: Jason).

Sept. 23 – *A Song for a New Day*, by Sarah Pinsker (moderators: Rob/Carl).

Oct. 28 – *Silver Moon*, by Catherine Lundoff (moderator: Bob A).

Dec. 2 (combined Nov/Dec discussion) – *Finder*, by Suzanne Palmer (moderators: Bob A/Carl).

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LSF Monthly Events Return to In-Person Status, Beginning in September 2021! announced by Rob

LSF is happy to announce that, starting in September 2021, our regular monthly events—the Second Sunday Social and the Fourth Thursday Book Discussion—will return to "in-person" status. While we've been able to maintain some continuity with the use of virtual events, we're anxious to start seeing each other in person again.

We expect that, after a couple of our smaller monthly events, we'll begin looking at re-launching our larger events, like the board game parties. Note: The LSF Book/Etc. Exchange will resume at the January 2022 LSF meeting.

We will NOT be conducting these events in a hybrid manner – so we will be discontinuing the use of Zoom in September. Because of this, we wanted to give people the opportunity to start thinking about their transportation/parking options and wanted to make the announcement early.



The hosts of the monthly events – Peter and Rob – request that those who are NOT vaccinated against COVID-19 will please continue to utilize safe practices and *not attend*, as there will be no mask requirement for attendees. We also ask that anyone who feels they may be experiencing symptoms of COVID or the flu or a cold please also refrain from attending – a good general practice under any circumstances! We will not be validating vaccination status, so we ask that everyone be respectful.

If you have any questions, or need help figuring out which Metro to use or where you might find parking, please reach out to Peter and Rob at:

peterpknapp@gmail.com or

robgatesdc@gmail.com

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<< August 2021 LSF Meeting TO De HELD VIRTUALLY >>

Due to Coronavirus, we plan to hold the August 8th LSF meeting virtually. Anyone who would like to participate can contact Rob for virtual meeting information at robgatesdc@gmail.com. Hope to "see" you there!



What's Inside?

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Black Hole Swallows Neutron Star!

info passed along by Carl

For the first time, astronomers have seen evidence of a black hole swallowing a neutron star – all in a split second. And 10 days later they saw the same thing happen on the other side of the universe. The first event occurred about 900 million light years from Earth; the second one was even further away. In both cases, neutron stars orbited ever closer to black holes until they finally crashed together and the neutron stars disappeared. The gravitational waves from both events (just 10 days apart) were detected in January 2020. A long-term study by over 100 scientists analyzing and interpreting the data was finally published on June 29 of this year in *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

In both cases, the black holes were significantly bigger than the neutron stars. Rather than slowly shredding the neutron stars apart, it's likely the black holes enveloped them whole. Phil Landry (an astrophysicist at California State University Fullerton and a co-author of the findings) said: "We think the black hole kind of cleanly ate the neutron star in one bite." Patrick Brady (astrophysicist at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, another of the study's co-authors) said: "It was just a big quick (gulp), gone... [each black hole] gets a nice dinner of a neutron star and makes itself just a little bit more massive." Astronomers witnessed the last 500 orbits before the neutron stars were swallowed (which took much less than a minute) and briefly generated as much energy as all the visible light in the observable universe. But astronomers were only able to detect barely perceptible distortions in beams of light captured by their instruments.

Astronomers have seen gravitational waves from two black holes colliding with each other and from two neutron stars colliding with each other;

Minutes of the July LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

Movie News:

Peter reported that he watched trashy genre movies *Breach* and *Monster Hunter* on a recent plane flight.

Dan enjoyed *Black Widow*; and the box office returns are exceptional.

Wayne enjoyed *Jupiter Ascending*, despite its trashy reviews. Rob feels that *Jupiter Ascending* is better with the sound turned off. *The Tomorrow War* includes a number of obvious themes from the *Alien* franchise.

There is a tie between *Black Widow* and the up-coming *Hawkeye*. Will Hawkeye be replaced by a younger female Hawkeye? (The actress who has been cast for the younger Hawkeye is from the *Bumblebee* movie). Rob says that the *Young Avengers* characters are ready to go. He also restated how he hated the extended "Snyder cut" of *Justice League*.

Dan read Mike Carey's novel *The Girl with All the Gifts* – he also watched the movie and says that it includes many aspects of the Pandora myth.



but this is the first time that they have seen one of each colliding. Scientists theorize that there should be many pairings of neutron stars and black holes; but they have yet to find one in our own galaxy. Back in 2017, astronomers managed to capture the afterglow of two colliding neutron stars, but not from these two events. Perhaps the black holes were too efficient at devouring their companions – or perhaps it all happened too far away and the light was just too dim for telescopes to spot.

Based on these new findings, researchers think there should be many of these neutron star and black hole pairings, but they've yet to find one in our own galaxy. They estimate that a collision between a black hole and a neutron star occurs about once a month within 1 billion light-years of Earth – but we just haven't detected one in our galaxy yet.

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TV News:

What If premieres on Disney Plus in August – animated, not live action. A series based on Asimov's *Foundation* novels will appear on Apple TV. Everyone is enjoying the *Loki* series; Peter likes the fact that there are no "fluff" episodes. Will She-Hulk get her own series? And will she talk to the audience? The new Sy-Fy Channel series *Surreal Estate* premieres this month; it has a case-of-the-week format. The new anthology series *American Horror Stories* will be premiering soon. Teresa is looking forward to the return of *The Witcher* series. Wayne says he likes Hulu's vampire comedy *Shadows*.

Other News:

The August LSF meeting will be the last meeting held via Zoom. The September LSF meeting (and the September book discussion) will return to the in-person format.

Teresa talked about organizing an LSF movie outing to see the new *Suicide Squad* movie.

Upcoming LSF book discussion titles: *The Alteration* by Kingsley Amis (July); and *Cemetery Boys* by Aiden Thomas (August).

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"Science fiction: The time machine to Tomoro [sic]. Fantasy: The navigator to never-neverland. Weird fiction? Well, I like weird fiction, too, to a certain extent, tho [sic] I have never been able to content myself that it is as laudable a facet of fiction as science-fiction. In the trinity of science fiction, fantasy & the supernatural, weird fiction I perhaps regard as the wrong angle in the otherwise righteous triangle. But this is dangerous ground and not germane to the main theme of this paper."

"Science Fiction Fans Are (Stub)Born"
by Forrest J Ackerman
from *En Garde!*

(Midpacificon publication)
included in

Pacificon Combozine (1946), 4th WSFC
(on display at Torcon, Worldcon 2003)



My Hugo Votes for Best Dramatic Presentation

by Peter Knapp

In the February 2021 issue of the LSF newsletter (#371) I reviewed the 2020 genre movies I had seen. I did the same thing in the May 2021 LSF newsletter (#374) for 2020 genre TV shows. Due to the wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey nature of publishing, my article about my Hugo nominations for the Best Dramatic Presentations got published in the April 2021 LSF newsletter (#373), a month before my genre TV show reviews article.

To complete the tetralogy, here are my Hugo votes:

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

1. *Soul*
2. *Palm Springs**
3. *The Old Guard***
4. *Birds of Prey (and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn)*
5. *Tenet*
6. *Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga****

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

1. *The Expanse*, “Gaugamela”



2. *The Mandalorian*, “Chapter 16: The Rescue”
3. *Doctor Who*, “Fugitive of the Judoon”



4. *The Mandalorian*, “Chapter 13: The Jedi”

Three of the final Hugo nominations I had not discussed in previous articles, as I had not seen two of them (both comedies starring SNL alumni) and had blanked on seeing the third one.

**Palm Springs* – I really enjoyed this genre light comedy about two wedding guests (Andy Samberg and Cristin Milioti) stuck in a time loop and reliving the same forty days over and over again. At times the movie is very funny, including the montage of creative ways they find to kill themselves. I found the way the leads’ relationship develops very touching. The move had just the right balance of comedy and drama for me.

***The Old Guard* – Netflix makes action movies full of “run-and-gun, fist-to-fist escapism...and occasionally come with tinges of comedy or sci-fi.” (Quote from trillist.com) They often star well-known movie actors. They often suck. *The Old Guard*, an adaptation of Greg Rucka’s comic series, is a great action and superhero movie with a lot of soul. Charlize Theron plays a weary warrior leading a team of seemingly immortals who are trying to save humanity from itself. Two of her male team members are still madly deeply in love with each other after millennia of being together. Their romance is relevant to the plot. This roller coaster of a movie had a lot of heart.



****Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga* – As I was watching this Will Ferrell comedy, I wondered where the frack was the genre content. Spoiler alert: Will Ferrell’s protagonist Lars sees a ghost. It wasn’t clear whether there really was a ghost or if it was in Lars’ imagination. Also, someone is murdered, and the implication is that trolls did it, though we never see the trolls. The movie was a decent over-the-top comedy. It didn’t work for me, though. Full disclosure: I’ve never seen the real *Eurovision* and I’m not a fan of Will Ferrell.

The deadline for Hugo voting is November 19, 2021 (23:59 PST), so if you’re qualified to vote for the Hugos (if you have a DisCon III membership), please do.

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Squids in Space! info passed along by Carl

No, we’re not talking about some newly discovered interstellar Lovecraftian creature. We’re talking about baby squids from Hawaii that have been sent up to the International Space Station as part of an experiment for supporting human health during long space missions.

In June, dozens of baby Hawaiian bobtail squid were taken up to the International Space Station aboard a SpaceX resupply mission. The squid were raised at the University of Hawaii’s Kewalo Marine Laboratory, and researcher Jamie Foster is studying how spaceflight affects them. Foster is the principal investigator for a NASA program that researches how microgravity affects interactions between animals and microbes.

According to Prof. Margaret McFall-Nagai (University of Hawaii),

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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, August 8th, 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

August 20-22, 2021 **AWESOME CON 2021**. Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington DC). Guests to include: George Takei ("Mr. Sulu"); Christina Ricci ("Wednesday"). For information: <https://awesome-con.com/about/> Tickets available on-line: <https://awesome-con.com/tickets/> (daily passes, weekend passes, special passes, etc.)

Dec. 15-19, 2021 **WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION (DisCon III)**. Omni Shoreham Hotel (Washington DC) – hotel information available as soon as possible: <https://discon3.org/location/accommodations> Incorporating virtual and on-site/face-to-face programming. "We are committed to having a masking and health policy which complies with local legal requirements and CDC recommendations. As the situation is still fluid, we will be updating you with our requirements to be in-person as we get closer to December." Author GoH: Nancy Kress; Artist GoH: John Harris. Adult attending membership = \$200; virtual membership (to access on-line programming) = \$75.

Website: <https://discon3.org/> Purchase memberships on-line at: <https://discon3.org/membership/membership-information/>

April 29 – May 1, 2022 **RAVENCON 15**. Virginia Crossings Hotel & Conference Center (Richmond VA). GoH: Terry Brooks; Music GoH: Rhiannon's Lark. Membership: \$35 before 12/31/2021; \$40 before 4/5/2022; \$50 at the door; day badges available. On-line registration at: <https://ravencon.com/store/Registration-c23522469> Webpage: <https://ravencon.com>

Squids in Space!

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when astronauts are in low gravity conditions, their bodies' relationship with microbes changes. "As astronauts spend more and more time in space, their immune systems become what's called dysregulated. It doesn't function as well. Their immune systems don't recognize bacteria as easily. They sometimes get sick."

Foster's study uses Hawaiian bobtail squid because they have a symbiotic relationship with natural bacteria that help regulate their bioluminescence. Hawaiian bobtail squid are plentiful in Hawaiian waters and adults are about 3 inches (7.6 centimeters) long. The luminescent bacteria that live inside their light organs actually change the gene expression in other organs of their squid host.



Hawaiian bobtail squid modulate the bioluminescent output of these microbes in response to variations in environmental light, such as from cloud cover. Foster believes that understanding what happens to the squid in space – how low gravity affects their relationship with the microbes – could help to solve health problems that astronauts face. "There are aspects of the immune system that just don't work properly under long-duration spaceflights. If humans want to spend time on the moon or Mars, we have to solve health problems to get them there

safely."

In July, the squids were brought back to Earth as part of the continuing study.

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