



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 384 – March 2022

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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 met on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM, at Peter & Rob's home. *Until April 2022, book discussions will continue to be held virtually (same "4th Thursday" schedule).* The next book discussion will be held on March 24th [via Zoom](#).

Here are the details for the next several discussions:

March 24, 2022 – *Architects of Memory*, by Karen Osborne (moderator: Bob A)

April 28, 2022 (returning to in-person format?) – *White Trash Warlock*, by David Slayton (moderator: Rob G.)

May 26, 2022 – *Iron Widow*, by Xiran Jay Zhao (moderator: Ben)



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*** Reminder ***

LSF To Remain Virtual Through March 2022

Due to the recent spike in COVID cases due to Omicron and the reinstatement of DC's indoor mask mandate, we will continue with our events being virtual – monthly social meetings and Book Discussions – through the end of March 2022. We hope to return both to “in person” starting in April, but will reassess this month. (Note: The LSF annual gift exchange is also delayed until the next face-to-face monthly meeting.)

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Virtual Book Club (VBC) Is Real!

announced by Bob Angell



The LSF Book Club will return to in-person-only events in the next month or so, but a few of us still want the convenience of Zoom meetings when we are traveling or otherwise can't make it to a face-to-face discussion. Bob Angell will host virtual “shadow” book club meetings on the first Tuesday of the month, opening at 7:00 PM, with discussion beginning at 7:30 PM. We will use the same questions as the IRL (in real life) meetings. For example: If the April discussion returns to an in-person format, then the first VBC will be held on the first Tuesday in May. Zoom links will be sent out the week before, as they are now. Future book nominations at this time may only be brought up at an in-person meeting.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY



LSF Turns 32 This Month !!!

***** March 13, 2022 Meeting = via Zoom!!! *****

Due to the resurgence of Coronavirus concerns, we will hold the March 13th LSF meeting virtually. Anyone who would like to participate can contact Rob for virtual meeting information at rob gatesdc@gmail.com. Hope to “see” you there!



What's Inside?

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Minutes of the February 2022 LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

Club News:

Rob reported that LSF has decided not to participate in the 2022 Capitol Pride festival, since the prices are now prohibitively too high. The lowest price for Capitol Pride is now over \$400 for a booth. We would also be required to take out a certificate of insurance for \$100K; and, since LSF is not a legal entity, obtaining such a certificate would be challenging and cost probably another \$100 or so. Other small groups like LSF have also been priced out from DC's main Pride festival. Rob is investigating an alternative DC-area Pride event.

Rob also advised that starting in April 2022, we hope to resume in-person LSF meetings and in-person LSF book discussions.

TV News:

Disney+'s *The Book of Boba Fett* is entertaining, but there is some question that it actually has an engaging story to tell. In comparison, *The Mandalorian* series is quite good. Bob is enjoying a Finnish language noir crime series titled *Bordertown*. David reports that NBC is working on a continuation of *Quantum Leap* – with a new team. (Rob is happy that it is not just a reboot.) Rob says “*Peacemaker* is fantastic!” (Is the Peacemaker character bisexual?) Peter described the Netflix fantasy horror drama series *Locke & Key*; he is gleeful that the series has been renewed for a third season. David advised that Season 3 of *The Orville* will premiere on Hulu this summer (relocated from Fox). Trailers for Netflix's second season of *Space Force* have been released.

Rob is enjoying the first season of *Star Trek: Prodigy*; the characters as portrayed in Episode 10 have grown since Episode 1. The new season of *Picard* premieres on March 3rd. The general consensus is that the current season of *Star Trek: Discovery* is the best; LGBTQ+ cast members Mary Wiseman, Anthony Rapp, Wilson Cruz, Blu del Barrio, Ian Alexander, Emily Coutts, and Tig Notaro have been reviewed recently in a number of articles. Paramount+'s *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* is set to premiere on May 5th,

starring Anson Mount, Ethan Peck and Rebecca Romijn.

Movie News:

The romantic adventure-fantasy *The King's Daughter* was finally released last month, after being in limbo for over five years. It is based on the 1997 Nebula novel *The Moon and the Sun* by Vonda McIntyre.

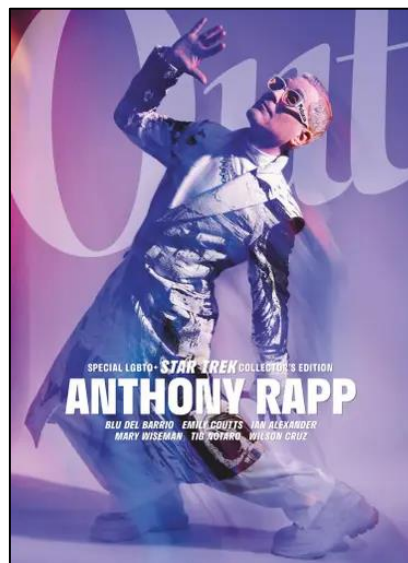
Other News:

Peter and David will be attending the annual Gallifrey One convention in Los Angeles later this week. This year's con is titled “Thirty-Seconds to Midnight.” Peter also reported that today's Super Bowl will include commercials for the four DC movies coming out this year: *The Batman*, *Aquaman*, *Flash*, and *Black Adam*.

Upcoming LSF book discussions:

A Memory Called Empire by Arkady Martine (February); *Architects of Memory* by Karen Osborne (March); *White Trash Warlock* by David R. Slayton (April); *Iron Widow* by Xiran Jay Zhao (May).

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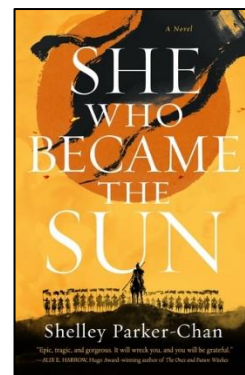
The January 2022 issue of *Out Magazine* is a “Special LGBTQ+ *Star Trek* Collector's Edition”.

It features articles about the *Star Trek: Discovery* cast members we discussed during the February LSF meeting.

A Couple of Recent Fantasy Novels from TOR

short reviews by Carl

Both these novels were recommendations from long-time friends of mine. I started reading each of them only half-heartedly, sort of as a “courtesy” to my friends. But, as things turned out, I really liked both novels.



She Who Became the Sun
by Shelley Parker-Chan
(Tom Doherty Associates, 2021)

She Who Became the Sun is an amazing work of Historical Fantasy – an action-packed epic set during one of the most turbulent periods of Chinese history: the last decades of the Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty (established by Kublai Khan in 1271) and the re-establishment of native Chinese rule under the Ming Dynasty in 1368.

The story opens in 1345. In a famine-stricken village in central Henan, the peasant boy Zhu Chongba is the recipient of an unbelievable and remarkable prophecy: “This child has greatness in him. Oh, how clearly did I see it! His deeds will bring a hundred generations of pride to your family name.” When his (unnamed) 10-year-old sister sneaks in to ask the fortune-teller what he sees for *her*, she is told: “Nothing.” Soon after, their parents and the entire village are wiped out by wandering bandits. Chongba gives in to despair and dies. His sister, however, is made of sterner stuff. (“If he took my fate and died... then perhaps I can take his and live.”) She disguises herself as a boy, assumes her dead brother's name, and seeks sanctuary in a Buddhist monastery. Through sheer willpower and determination, she gets herself

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Fantasy Novels from TOR

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admitted to the monastery as a male *novice*. Years later, when the monastery is destroyed for supporting a rebellion against Mongol rule, Zhu (still disguised as a man) hits the road as an itinerant monk and sets herself on the path of eventual greatness as predicted for the person named Zhu Chongba.

The broad outline of the novel keeps remarkably close to actual historical events of this complex period of Chinese history. When I looked up the history of the end of the Yuan Dynasty, I discovered that many of the major characters in the novel are based on real people who existed during that period. Of course, one of the major changes is Zhu Chongba's hidden gender identity. (It's an interesting variation on the "Pope Joan" legend from medieval European history.) Another major character is Ouyang, the non-Mongol eunuch who leads the Yuan armies to victory after victory against the Chinese rebels.

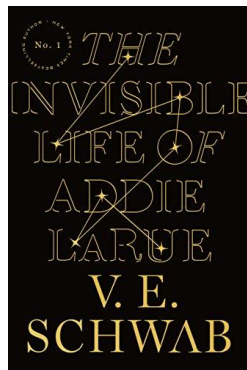
The destinies of Zhu Chongba and General Ouyang inevitably clash over the course of the novel; and Parker-Chan masterfully depicts the personal identities and conflicting motivations of both these charismatic and dynamic characters. Each of them will become instrumental in the fall of the Yuan Dynasty. Neither of them is "heroic" or "good" in the traditional sense of those terms. In their own ways, both of them rage against the restrictions of traditional paternalistic Chinese society. Zhu Chongba is driven by a burning desire to survive and (eventually) possess the Mandate of Heaven; she learns that she's capable of doing anything it takes to avoid the "Nothing" fate originally predicted for her. As the child of a high-ranking non-Mongol family, young Ouyang was originally taken as a hostage for his family's good behavior, then neutered and given as a companion to a Yuan prince. As an adult, General Ouyang, despite his high rank and military successes, strives to overcome the continual frustrations and humiliations he faces in the atmosphere of toxic masculinity pervading Yuan high society.

Fantasy elements are only lightly grafted onto this history-based drama of political intrigue and military conflict. A central conceit of the plot is the need to

possess "the Mandate of Heaven" (evidence of divine backing to rule China). An emperor only stays on the throne as long as he is believed to possess that divine Mandate and can demonstrate it through a form of magical legerdemain (sparks of lightning from his fingers, etc.). As the novel opens, it's rumored that the current Yuan emperor's ability to demonstrate his possession of the Mandate is waning; and it's uncertain who will next possess it.

Ghosts are the other Fantasy element that only rarely appears in the story. When ghosts do appear, they're not particularly horrific – mysterious and ominous, but not horrific. The only comparison I can think of would be the ghost that silently confronts Shakespeare's Macbeth during the banquet scene (*Macbeth*, Act III, Scene 4). Indications are that the second book in this series will include a larger dose of magic and the supernatural.

In 2017, Shelley Parker-Chan was awarded an Otherwise (Tiptree) Fellowship for a work of speculative narrative that expands our understanding of gender. Needless to say, *She Who Becomes the Sun* includes Queer content. And, in my opinion, it's a hugely entertaining read.



The Invisible Life of Addie Larue
By V.E. Schwab
(Tom Doherty Associates, 2020)

In contrast, supernatural elements are front-and-center in *The Invisible Life of Addie Larue*. This novel presents a version of the age-old "deal with the Devil" legend – with a number of its own fascinating variations.

It's the evening of July 29, 1714, in the village of Villon-sur-Sarthe, France. Young Adeline is literally running away from an arranged marriage. Deep in the woods, she runs into a shadowy, green-

eyed being. This being seems to be one of the numerous and nameless "old gods" that Adeline learned about from Estele, the ancient wisewoman who befriended her many years ago. In addition to her prayers to God, Adeline has secretly been offering prayers and small gifts to "the old gods" for many years, hoping to avoid just such an arranged marriage – to no avail. But tonight one of them *finally* seems to have appeared in her hour of most desperate need. Unfortunately, Adeline seems to have forgotten that Estele warned her to avoid "the gods that answer after dark." The being, in fact, identifies himself as "The Darkness." ("I am stronger than your god and older than your devil. I am the darkness between stars, and the roots beneath the earth. I am promise and potential...") Darkness asks Adeline what she most wants, and she says: "I do not want to belong to someone else... I want a chance to live. I want to be free." All Darkness wants in return is (of course) her soul. After some haggling, he agrees to an unusual bargain: he will not collect her soul until she agrees to give it up ("...when I am done with it... when I don't want it anymore..."). Done deal.

Unfortunately (as is always the case in stories like this), the deal doesn't work out as Adeline hoped it would. Yes, Darkness has certainly given Adeline "a chance to live" – she's seemingly immortal and ever-youthful; she can't be injured or harmed in any way; she can't even suffer due to illness, extreme cold, or starvation. It's the fulfillment of her other wish ("not to belong to someone else... to be free") that's not as she expected. You can't belong to anyone else (and you're certainly "free") if no one can *remember* you. And it turns out that it's not possible for anyone to remember Adeline. The moment she's out of their sight for more than a few moments, they completely forget her. She can meet people time and time again – day after day – but the moment they walk out the door, turn the corner, etc., they forget ever having met her. Down the centuries, she has had many sexual partners; but if they walk out of

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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 renewed Coronavirus concerns, the Lambda Sci-Fi meeting for Sunday, March 13th, will be held virtually via Zoom. 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

April 1-4, 2022 **COSTUME CON 40 ("Rogues, Royals, and Renegades")**. North Bethesda Marriott Hotel and Convention Center (Rockville MD). Membership: \$95 for full attending membership. On-line registration: <http://costume-con40.org/shop/>
Webpage: <https://costume-con40.org/>

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

May 27-30, 2022 **BALTICON 56**. Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel (Baltimore MD). GoH: Nancy Springer; Artist GoH: Odera Igbokwe; Special Guests: Seanan McGuire, Wen Spencer, CJ Cherryh.
Membership rates not yet announced. On-line registration at: <https://www.balticon.org/wp56/registration/>
Webpage: <https://www.balticon.org/wp56/> E-mail at: balticoninfo@balticon.org

July 15-17, 2022 **SHORE LEAVE 42**. Delta Hotels Baltimore Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). Guests: Brandon Routh (Superman/Clark Kent, Ray Palmer/Atom); Adam Baldwin (Jayne, *Firefly*), Jewel Staite (Kaylee, *Firefly*), and others. Weekend membership: \$105; daily rates available. Web page: www.shore-leave.com

Sept. 30 – Oct. 2, 2022 **CAPCLAVE 2022**. Hilton Washington DC/Rockville Hotel & Executive Meeting Center (Rockville MD). GoHs: Ursula Vernon, Irene Gallo. Membership: \$55 thru May 31st; \$60 from June 1st to Aug. 31st; \$65 from Sept. 1st to Sept. 15th. On-line registration at: <https://www.capclave.org/capclave/capclave22/registration.php>
Webpage: <https://www.capclave.org> Info at: info@capclave.org

Fantasy Novels from TOR

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the room the next morning and return, they have no idea who the woman in their bed is. Adeline can't even work around this problem by leaving some kind of record. When she writes something down, it immediately disappears. She can't be photographed; and if someone paints her picture, the artist soon won't remember who the model is. She can't even dig a hole in the ground, scratch a line in the sand, or carve her initials on a tree – it all "heals over" in a moment.

The story itself jumps around through both time and location: between 1698 and 2014; in Paris, Venice, London, Berlin, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New Orleans – revealing incidents and adventures over the course of Adeline's long life – finally settling down into contemporary New York City.

In fact, it's in NYC in 2014 that Addie meets Henry, a young man who *is* able to remember her. Mysteries – and complications – abound.

I thought I'd figured out how it was all going to end... but I was wrong.

All I'll say is that I found it to be a unique and satisfying ending.

Oh, and there is indeed Queer content in the novel. Both Addie and Henry are shown to have had same-gender sexual partners and romantic relationships.

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