



# Lambda Sci-Fi

## DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 401 – August 2023

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**LSF  
September  
Gaming  
Party**



info  
passed  
along by  
Rob &  
Peter

### **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.

The LSF Book Discussion Group usually meets on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM, at Peter & Rob's home: 1425 "S" St., NW. The next book discussion will be held in person on August 29th. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.**

Here are the details for the next several months:

**Aug. 29** – *Into the Broken Land*, by Tanya Huff (moderator: Rob).

**Sept. 28** – *Middlegame*, by Seanan McGuire (moderator: Judy).

**Oct. 26** – *Hellboy: The Chained Coffin & Others*, art and stories by Mike Mignola (moderator: Greg).

**Dec. 7** (combined Nov./Dec.) – *The Expert System's Brother*, by Adrian Tchaikovsky (moderator: Andy).

Come join us for our next LSF Gaming Party as we celebrate the "end" (??) of summer with a day of gaming in air-conditioned comfort!

### **Saturday September 9th LSF Tabletop Gaming Party**

**What:** It's a gaming party. There will be plenty of room for gaming, so please bring your favorite games (cards, board, etc.).

**When:** Saturday, September 9th; 2 PM to 11 PM or so.

**What to Bring:** Bring your favorite table game (or two or three). Also, please bring munchies and/or soft drinks to share (non-alcoholic please).

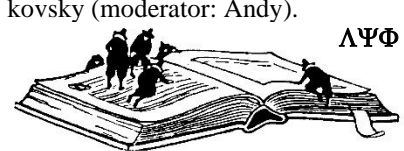
**Dinner:** For those who are interested, we'll order pizza for dinner. To get in on the pizza order, please bring \$10 in exact change. If you don't want pizza, you can order take-out or go forage for food. There are a lot of food choices in the Midcity (14th and "U") Corridor. Also, delivery menus will be available if needed.

**Where:** Home of Peter and Rob, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC. Their home is in the Midcity (14th and "U") neighborhood between Dupont Circle and Logan Circle. Directions (with Metro and parking advice) at <https://www.lambdascifi.org/peterrob>

**Questions:** Contact Peter at: [peter@lambdascifi.org](mailto:peter@lambdascifi.org)



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### \*\*\*\*\* August 13, 2023 Meeting \*\*\*\*\*

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, August 13th**. The meeting will be held at Peter and Rob's home, **1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. The meeting will begin at 1:30 PM. Hope to see you there!



### What's Inside?

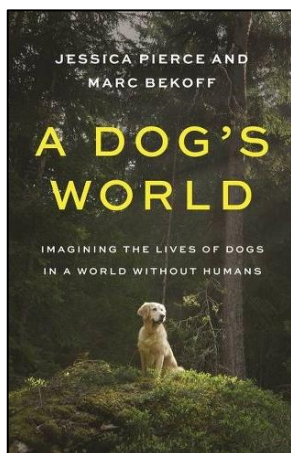
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## ***A Dog's World: Imagining the Lives of Dogs in a World Without Humans***

by Jessica Pierce & Marc Bekoff  
(Princeton University Press, 2021)



I've long been fascinated with speculations about what the world could be like if *Homo sapiens* disappeared. (And we will, you know. No species lasts forever.) One of my favorite books is the delightfully illustrated *After Man: A Zoology of the Future* by Dougal Dixon (1981), which speculates about the course of evolution in the absence of humanity and all other larger mammalian, avian, and reptilian life forms. There was also a fascinating History Channel series entitled *Life After People* (2008 – 2010), in which various scientists, mechanical engineers, and ecologists speculated on what might happen to the environment and the artifacts of human civilization (cities, dams, power stations, roads, etc.) if humanity suddenly disappeared.

Recently I was browsing the books for sale in the Smithsonian Natural History Museum, and I ran across *A Dog's World*. I couldn't resist. Here's how the authors describe their work:

*This book is a thought experiment about the survival and evolution of dogs in a humanless future. In embarking upon a thought experiment about posthuman dogs, we are connecting with a broader line of inquiry called speculative biology in which scientists make predictions about the trajectory of evolution. The general form of such a thought experiment is "What would happen (or what would have happened) if...?"*

## **Minutes of the July LSF Meeting**

taken by Scott

### **TV News**

There are mixed reviews of the current season of *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*.

### **Movie News**

Peter and Rob enjoyed the new *Indiana Jones* movie; Rob noted that most of Harrison Ford's action scenes were in vehicles. ("A fun popcorn movie.") Rob said that the rollout of the DC Multiverse in the current *Flash* movie was weak; and it was noted that the new DC movies will ignore all of the prior DC universe. The *Blue Beetle* and *Aquaman 2* movies have yet to be released. The movie theaters at Gallery Place were previously slated to close, but now they will remain open. Rob is eager to see the *Barbie* movie, with Ryan Gosling as the main Ken character. ("Looks bonkers fun!") Teresa discussed *Poor Things*, set to be released in September 2023: a surrealist genre film based on the 1992 novel by Alasdair Gray. (A young woman is resurrected and lives a "life free of the prejudices of her time." Sounds wild!) Even though Christopher Nolan is pretentious, will you still go see his new film *Oppenheimer*?

They begin by wondering what would happen to dogs if humans suddenly disappeared. Would they survive? Are they physically, physiologically, mentally equipped for survival? Would only some of them survive? How would they survive? And so on. (This is, of course, if we haven't managed to destroy all canine *and* human life at the same time in a nuclear war or something.) As the authors explore these concepts, the book goes off on a number of fascinating tangents: the origins of dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*, as they call them); the *current* situation(s) of dogs (pets, free-ranging, feral, etc.); the origins of dog breeds (many breeds, but still only *one* species); comparisons to other existing canine types (wolves, coyotes, dingoes, etc.); determining "what makes a dog a dog?" (as opposed to a wolf or coyote); and so on. The

### **Other news**

Peter reported on the Earth Information Center physical and virtual exhibit in the lobby of NASA headquarters: "Worth visiting!" AI is now being used to write scripts and short stories. Peter advised that Outlantacon 2024 is slated for March 22-24, 2024. Carl advised that Shelley Parker-Chan's new novel *He Who Drowned the World* (the follow-up novel to *She Who Became the Sun*) is due to be published next month – a fantasy novel about the origins of the Ming Dynasty in China.

The big hit for this month's LSF meeting was the appearance of noted author and filmmaker Keith Hartman, who was a guest at the 2011 Gaylaxicon in Atlanta. He filled us in on the past 23 years of his life. Great to have guest stars appear!

Rob listed off the upcoming LSF events:

Upcoming book discussions: *Even Though I Knew the End* by C.L. Polk (July); *Into the Broken Land* by Tanya Huff (August); *Middlegame* by Seanan McGuire (September); *Hellboy: The Chained Coffin & Others* by Mike Mignola (October); *The Expert System's Brother* by Adrian Tchaikovsky (November/December).

LSF Gaming Party planned for Saturday, September 9<sup>th</sup>. ΛΨΦ

book includes the results of many, many fascinating studies, many of them the result of little-known and groundbreaking research projects. The authors also aren't shy about admitting "we just don't know" certain things, because nobody has yet studied dogs in certain ways – which, of course, suggests various avenues for future research.

I *really* enjoyed this book. Since reading it, I've noticed that I've started looking at dogs in a whole new light.

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**"Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read."**

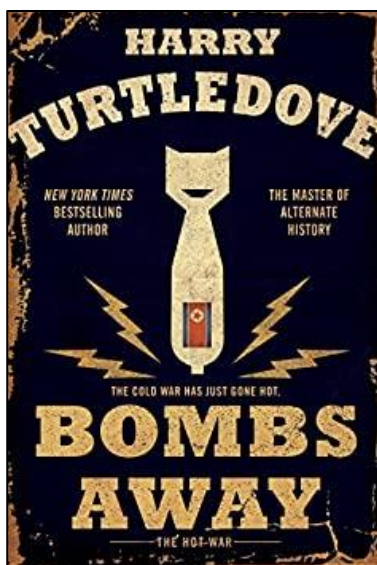
**- Groucho Marx -**

***Bombs Away***  
**by Harry Turtledove**  
**(Del Rey, 2015)**  
a short review by Carl

Harry Turtledove has been one of my favorite authors for decades now. However, it's been quite a while since I've read one of his huge war-related alternate history novels. Recent events in Ukraine caused me to pull *Bombs Away* out of one of my "to read" piles. It's the first volume in his "Hot War" trilogy. Unlike most of Turtledove's alternate histories, the "point of divergence" in *Bombs Away* occurs in comparatively recent history. In fact, *Bombs Away* opens in November 1950, just two months after I was born.

As I said, it's late November 1950 and the Korean War is going *very* badly for the USA and its UN allies. Worried about the establishment of a pro-Western government on the Korean Peninsula, Mao Tse-tung has decided to commit Red Chinese forces in support of his beleaguered Korean ally Kim Il-sung. Massive Red Chinese armies pour across the border into North Korea; and, in spite of astonishingly heavy casualties, it looks as though Communist forces are on the verge of driving the Americans and their allies into the sea. It's at this time that President Truman decides to take the advice of General Douglas MacArthur – despite the President's rocky relationship with the General – and authorizes dropping atomic bombs on several Chinese supply centers and rail hubs in Manchuria, to disrupt supplies for the massive Chinese attacks. MacArthur has convinced Truman that Stalin won't come to the aid of his Communist Chinese comrades. As it turns out, MacArthur is wrong, tragically wrong. (By the way, these suggestions were in fact made; but Truman – the man who authorized the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki – rejected the idea of again using atomic bombs.)

In the following months, the Soviet Union and the US engage in a limited (but increasingly devastating) nuclear exchange. Fortunately for the world of the 1950s, the ability to engage in nuclear warfare is much more limited than it is in our present timeline; there



are no guided missiles or nuclear submarines or supersonic fighter-bombers capable of raining nuclear destruction on a massive scale; and the ability to build and stockpile nuclear weapons is still fairly restricted. (And the Soviets and the Americans are still the only ones capable of producing them.) So these nuclear strikes are delivered in the "good, old-fashioned way" – a single massively heavy atomic bomb is loaded into each heavy bomber (not much more advanced than the B-29s used during WWII); one or more bombers are flown to the target; and (if they get through) the bombs are dropped.

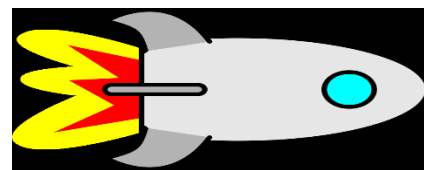
The bombings start off slow, but they increase in frequency and severity as the novel progresses. Meanwhile, Stalin also orders a massive armored (non-nuclear) invasion of West Germany, with Soviet forces pushing ahead of them troops from various Communist "client states" (such as Poland, Hungary, and the Ukraine).

That's the "big picture." But, in typical Turtledove fashion, the reader is presented with up-close-and-personal views of what's going on, as seen (over the course of multiple chapters) through the eyes of such individuals as: a housewife and her children living in a suburb outside of devastated Seattle; bomber crews from both the US and the Soviet Union; Ukrainian farmers; US servicemen stationed in Britain; an appliance store owner living near Los Angeles; West German "freedom fighters" facing the Communist invasion (in-

cluding several former members of the Nazi Wehrmacht); and Hungarian and Polish soldiers at the forefront of the Soviet invasion of West Germany. I've always found this aspect of Turtledove's "war-related novels" to be sobering and/or chilling.

As I said, *Bombs Away* is the first volume in Turtledove's "Hot War" trilogy; and the novel – quite literally – ends with a bang, as Paris is destroyed by a couple of Soviet A-bombs. The following two novels are *Fallout* and *Armistice*.

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**New Image from the  
James Webb Space  
Telescope**

info passed along by Carl

The spacecraft carrying the James Webb Space Telescope was launched from French Guiana on Christmas morning in 2021. The Webb is a joint effort of NASA and the European Space Agency, successor to the 33-year-old Hubble Space Telescope. It's the largest and most powerful astronomical observatory ever launched into space. The first Webb pictures were released in July 2022. On the anniversary of that occasion (July 13<sup>th</sup>), NASA has released a mind-blowing picture of the Rho Ophiuchi cloud complex. (*See the picture on page 4.*)

The Webb is in a gravitationally stable orbit around the sun roughly a million miles from Earth and has completed about 1½ orbits. After six months devoted to deploying its huge array of gold-coated hexagonal mirrors and a huge sun shade to keep them cool (as well as fine-tuning its instrumentation), NASA released the Webb's first batch of data and images last year. Now – one year later – they've released the Rho Ophiuchi image. Jane Rigby (NASA's senior project scientist for the Webb) says: "The telescope is working better than we could possibly have hoped for."

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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.

Newsletter submissions are always welcome

Meetings are usually held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on Sunday, **August 13th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC. All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.** We hope to see you there.

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

Aug. 3-6, 2023 **PULPFEST 2023** ("celebrating Mystery, Adventure, Science Fiction, and More") Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Pittsburgh-Cranberry. Weekend membership = \$40 if you stay at the Doubletree \$50 if you stay elsewhere (daily rates available). For registration via PayPal, go to the con's website: [www.pulpfest.com](http://www.pulpfest.com)

Sept. 29 – Oct. 1, 2023 **CAPCLAVE 2023**. Rockville Hilton & Executive Meeting Center (Rockville MD). GoHs: Sarah Pinsker, Charlie Jane Anders. Registration details: \$60 until 8/31; and \$65 thereafter.

Website: <https://www.capclave.org/capclave23/>

March 22-24, 2024 **OULANTACON/GAYLAXICON 2024** ("Atlanta's LGBTQ+ convention for Sci-fi, Pop Culture, Multimedia & Gaming!"). Atlanta Marriott Northeast/Emory Area (Atlanta GA). Weekend membership: \$60 (purchase on-line at the website).

Website: <https://outlantacon.org>



**New Image from the James Webb Space Telescope**  
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Rho Ophiuchi is the star-forming region that's closest to Earth. It's 390 light years away from us, which means that the starlight visible in this NASA image left there in 1633 (when Galileo went on trial in Rome for saying that the Earth revolved around the sun). This cloud complex is full of illuminated gases, jets of hydrogen, dense cocoons of dust, 50 "baby stars" (each about the size of our Sun), and even more stars in the early stages of formation. NASA notes that details are so good that some of the stars display shadows, possibly indicating that planets are forming. Eric Smith (a NASA program scientist) reported: "It's like a glimpse of what our own system would have looked like billions of years ago when it was forming."

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