



# Lambda Sci-Fi

## DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 403 – October 2023

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**ConFABulous**  
Oct 20-22, 2023



To our ConFAB Friends,

October is here, and we are thrilled to, once again, provide a safe and friendly space for the LGBTQ+ community and allies/friends to get together for gaming and panels of interest to our community.

Keep reading below to learn a little more about what to expect at our 6<sup>th</sup> ConFABulous convention, then register to join us!

**Our Space:** ConFABulous is returning to the Crowne Plaza Suites MSP Airport—Mall of America (3 Appletree Square in Bloomington, MN). Our gaming, panel, and (NEW this year) vendor area are all on the second floor of the hotel this year, providing greater accessibility and convenience for all attendees. There is also a nice lounge area, on the same floor of the hotel, available for hanging out between panels or games.

**Hotel Room Block:** Our hotel room block is OPEN! Staying at the

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 **New LSF**   
**Second Sunday Format**  
from Rob

Starting with our October Second Sunday gathering, we'll be trying out a new format for the gathering – adding a board gaming portion to the afternoon event. The goal is to see if having a planned activity will be a more effective draw than just general socializing. We'll start as we always do with doors opening at 1:30 PM and a general social circle officially starting at 2 PM running until about 3 PM. Around 3 PM we'll open up for gaming. We plan to identify 1 to 3 specific recommended game options each month, which we'll announce in advance via our mailing list and Facebook; but folks will be welcome to bring alternatives or to suggest alternatives from our game collection. While we expect things will wrap up sooner, we'll want to close out no later than 6 PM, so we suspect we'll be sticking with easier/quicker games – which should also allow for continued socializing over the game table(s). We'll be trying this new model for the next several months and will then decide whether to keep it, go back to the general socializing model, or try new ideas.

Hope to see more of you there!

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**LSF Dungeons & Dragons Demo/Intro Adventure Day (Sign Up Required!)**

announced by Rob, LSF Treasurer

Greetings All –

That's right... you read it correctly. We are holding a **special event** by request, with a Demo/101 session and Intro Adventure for those interested in learning how to play Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition.

The event will include a little bit about role playing games in general, a short run through of some of the basic rules and concepts in Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition, and an introductory adventure. Because of the preparation effort required for this event, we will actually need those interested to **sign up in advance** so we can plan for the proper headcount (see signup link be-low).

The event will take place on **Saturday, October 28th from 1:00 PM to 6:00 PM, with doors opening at 12:30.** We'll need interested participants to be on time for this event, so please check your calendars before signing up.

No experience with roleplaying games or D&D is required, and no equipment is required. Everything you'll need will be provided. If you'd

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### \*\*\*\*\* October 8, 2023 Meeting \*\*\*\*\*

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, October 8th.** 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 followed by gaming at 3:00 PM. Hope to see you there!



### What's Inside?

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## Minutes of the September LSF Meeting taken by Scott

There was an abundance of cookies available in the kitchen of our hosts, which everyone enjoyed!

**TV News:** Rob enjoyed seeing the Flash appear in a recent *Harley Quinn* episode. Jim likes the Apple+ series based upon Hugh Howey's dystopian *Silo* trilogy; he is also plodding through Apple+'s *Foundation* series, which is vaguely based upon the Asimov books. (Jim questions the need for a precog character, who was not in the original novels.) Rob feels that the *Babylon 5* animated movie was disappointing. The final season of *Archer* (shown on Hulu) has started.

AMC's *Interview with the Vampire* series is set in post-WWI America, rather than the antebellum South of the original novel – but this change in time period seems to work well. It was noted that the character of Claudia is about 14 in the current series and not a little girl as in the Anne Rice novel.

**Book News:** Carl reported that he is enjoying the collection *The Very Best of Caitlin R. Kiernan* (Tachyon Publications); and he's looking forward to next year's release of a collection of Kiernan's dark science fiction stories. Rob described the libertarian bent at Baen Books, as tempered by Southern socio-religious influences.

**Other News:** Jim shared the sad news that the Hunt Valley Inn in Maryland is closing down permanently. The hotel has been home to many cons over the years, such as Shore Leave, Far Point, and (temporarily) Balticon. Jim recalled meeting actor Sally Kellerman, who was in an *Outer Limits* episode and a *Star Trek* episode.

In gaming news, both *Baldur's Gate 3* and *Starfield* have come out.

There was a brief discussion about the Wasteland Weekend (inspired by *Mad Max*) and the Neotropolis cyberpunk-themed festival – both held in the middle of the desert. (Good heavens!) There was also some discussion of the stormy-weather-woes of

## ConFABulous continued from page 1

convention allows you to relax and fully enjoy a fun weekend of gaming with friends – and it helps support of this convention space. Please consider staying at our hotel; we'd love to have you join us?

**Safety:** Safety of our convention attendees remains incredibly important for us. For this year's COVID-19 Safety and Policies, please visit the "Safety and Policies" page on our website for the latest updates and complete details.

**Transportation:** All attendees have access to free parking in the attached Crowne Plaza Suites parking ramp, the upper level of which connects with the second floor of the hotel and our convention spaces. Additionally, our hotel is right next to the American Boulevard light rail station for easy access via public transportation.

**What's Gaming Without Munchies:** To satisfy your hunger during gaming we will again periodically have the hotel cater hot and cold food for our members. We also have a ConSuite on the fourth floor, easily accessed by elevator, with breakfast and things to eat and drink throughout the convention. And on Saturday we have our annual Chocolate Symposium, where we set out lots of chocolate to break up your gaming day. (Please remember to bring some chocolate to share!)

**Our Programming:** Our programming includes panels and gaming.

**Panels:** Please send your panel ideas to:  
[programming@ConFABulous.org](mailto:programming@ConFABulous.org)

this year's Burning Man Festival.

**Rob advised that starting next month, the social portion of the LSF meeting will be shortened somewhat and followed by a gaming event of some kind. An announcement will be issued.**

Upcoming LSF Book Discussions: *Middlegame* by Seanan Mc-Guire (Sept.); *Hellboy: The Chained Coffin and Others* by Mike Mignola (Oct.); and *The Expert System's Brother* by Adrian Tchaikovsky (Nov./Dec.).

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and let us know if there are panels or panel topics you would like to see or to volunteer to be a panelist. To see the current list of panels, visit our Programming page:

<https://confabulous.org/wordpress/programming/>

### RPGs and Board Games:

We are dedicating two full rooms this year to role-playing games (RPGs), so the anguished screams of the vanquished and the joyous shouts of the victors will be less disturbing to the concentration of other enthusiastic gamers. Additionally, our large open board gaming room will provide lots of space for all your gaming adventures. If you would like to run an RPG at ConFABulous or request a specific board game for playing or to be demonstrated, please send your role-playing ideas or board game requests to: [gaming@ConFABulous.org](mailto:gaming@ConFABulous.org)

To see our current list of RPGs being offered, visit our Gaming page:

<https://confabulous.org/wordpress/gaming>

**Video Games:** We are excited to partner with 2D Con this year, who plan to bring a selection of video gaming options for attendees.

**Vendors:** NEW this year, we will be including a vendor area at ConFABulous. If you are interested in vending at this year's convention, please email:

[dealers@ConFABulous.org](mailto:dealers@ConFABulous.org)

**Ongoing Updates:** Visit our website <https://confabulous.org> for the latest information on panels, board games, and RPG games being offered as it becomes available. While there, register for the convention and book a room at the hotel, so you can stay up late for gaming.

We hope to see you at the con on October 20-22, 2023. Remember to bring your gaming energy (and some chocolate for the Chocolate Symposium)!

~~ Don Kaiser, Chair,  
ConFABulous & Gaylaxicon  
Minnesota



## My Pick for the 2023 Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form Hugo

by Peter Knapp

Every year I try to pick the nominees and then the winners of the two Best Dramatic Presentation Hugo awards. I missed creating a nominee list, but I want to share my picks before the award ceremony on October 21, 2023 at Chengdu Worldcon, the 81st World Science Fiction Convention. Last month I talked about the Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form Hugo nominations. This month I'll tackle the Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form Hugo nominations.

Episodes from four shows that I've already watched made the cut. Before ranking them, I decided to re-watch the episodes, especially since I know I have biased opinions regarding the shows. I loved *The Expanse*, *For All Mankind*, and *Stranger Things*, I enjoyed *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law*, and I really had to force myself to watch *Andor*, which I thought was slow and meandering.

This can be a hard category to judge if one is trying to judge the individual episode, as most modern genre TV series are serialized shows. Each episode continues a story spread out among the whole season or even series. If I were to watch these nominees with no pre-knowledge of the show, would the episode hold its own? Probably not. I tried to think about how much the episode stood on its own while I rewatched them.

A note about the queer content in the nominees. All four shows had major queer characters. Only the nominated *For All Mankind* episode included the character's queerness as part of the episode. I think it says something positive that all five shows contained queer characters in their respective universes.

Here are my rankings.

### 1. *The Expanse*: "Babylon's Ashes"

I think *The Expanse* is one of

the best modern hard science fiction shows. The story follows three factions of humans, the United Nations of Earth and Luna, the Martian Congressional Republic on Mars, and the Outer Planets Alliance (OPA) fighting for control of precious resources and trying to control an alien protomolecule that threatens to destroy humanity. Spanning six seasons, this show is part hard science fiction (no warp drives or transporters) and part character driven drama with a bit of alien horror thrown in. "Babylon's Ashes" finishes the series in a very satisfying way, wrapping up most of the ongoing plots while keeping the door open for a future series. I think enough references to ongoing characteristics and situations would allow someone not familiar with the show to enjoy the show. Don't do that though...start from the beginning!

### 2. *For All Mankind*: "Stranger in a Strange Land"

I think *For All Mankind* is one of the best modern alternate history science fiction shows. Instead of the United States landing on the moon first in 1969, the Russians got to the moon first. Each season, the show jumps a decade. The third season takes place in the 1990s, with another space race to get to and colonize Mars. "Stranger in a Strange Land" finishes the season with a South Korean cosmonaut crash landing on Mars, a crisis on the now joint American and Soviet base as one of the astronauts has to get off the base to an orbiting space station to deliver her baby or die, a recently outed lesbian president dealing with the fallout of being outed, and a terrorist group trying to blow up the Johnson Space Center. While bad things happen, I think this is an optimistic show about the potential of mankind to better itself. Season 4, which I'm really looking forward to, launches November 10, with episodes dropping weekly on Apple TV+. A word of caution: the pacing of this show can be slow at times. I think the payoff after watching the burn is well worth it.

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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.

The 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 October 26th. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.**

Here are the details for the next couple of discussions:

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

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

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## D&D Demo/Intro

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like to bring your own dice, or paper and pencils/pens, or even a favorite miniature you're welcome to do so - though again it is not required. We also encourage folks to plan to bring snack(s) and/or non-alcoholic beverage(s) to share.

- **What:** LSF Dungeons & Dragons Demo/Intro Adventure Day
- **When:** Saturday, October 28th – 1 PM until around 6 PM - doors open 12:30 PM
- **Where:** Peter and Rob's Home - 1425 "S" Street NW in DC
- **What to Bring:** Bring yourself, your creativity and sense of adventure, and snacks/beverages to share!
- **Questions:** Contact Rob at: [rob@lambdascifi.org](mailto:rob@lambdascifi.org)

**To sign up for this event** please visit: <https://www.lambdascifi.org/lfs-special-events-sign-up-form/>

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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, **October 8th, 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

Nov. 17-19, 2023 **PHILCON 2023**. DoubleTree by Hilton (Cherry Hill, NJ). Principal Speaker: Jonathan Maberry; Artist Guest: Rob Carlos; Special Guest: Kelley Armstrong. Membership: \$65 until Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> (when pre-registration closes); higher at the door. Website: [www.philcon.org](http://www.philcon.org) On-line registration: <https://philcon.org/registration/>

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>

**Short Form Hugo**

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**3. *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law*: "Whose Show is This?"**

Disney+ Marvel shows have ranged from truly exceptional to *meh*. *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law* thankfully is closer to exceptional than *meh*. The show is about Jennifer Walters (Tatiana Maslany), an attorney accidentally infected by her cousin's blood, which results in her being able to turn into a green 6-foot-7-inch superpowered hulk. At times a law procedural show, at times a superhero show, and almost always presented as a fourth-wall-breaking dramedy, I found this show hysterically funny. The season finale "Whose Show is This?" not only breaks the fourth wall but crashes through it, with Jennifer not accepting the script, breaking out of her show through the Disney+ Marvel menu screen, and confronting the writers of the show and then Knowledge Enhanced Visual Interconnectivity Nexus — better known as K.E.V.I.N (an AI spoof of Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige) to demand a better ending. I laughed and laughed.

**4. *Stranger Things*: "Chapter Four: Dear Billy"**

Now in its fourth season, *Stranger Things* lovingly recreates the 1980s and pits a group of kids, teenagers, and a few adults against unimaginable horror. The show is well written, acted, and produced. It's a must-see TV show in my household. "Chapter Four: Dear Billy" is a stand-out (episode four of nine in the season). Because it picks up where episode three leaves off and sets the stage for episode five, I don't think it stands by itself as an award-winning stand-alone episode. That's why I rated it fourth after *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law*, which I don't love the way I love *Stranger Things*. Due to the ongoing Hollywood strikes, season five will probably premiere sometime in late 2025 or early 2026.

**5. *Andor*: "One Way Out"**

**6. *Andor*: "Rix Road"**

What can I say... I don't like this prequel Disney+ *Star Wars* series. This series follows Cassian Andor as he slowly, ever so slowly, decides to become the rebel hero of the best Disney *Star Wars*

movie, *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, which premiered in 2016. My perceived rhythm of the show was of two episodes of setup followed by one show where something actually happens, followed by the same pattern. In both "One Way Out" and "Rix Road" something happens. "One Way Out" is the third episode showing Andor in prison. In this episode he decides to break out and convinces his fellow prisoners to attack their captors and escape. It's one of the most self-contained episodes in the series, which is why I ranked it higher than "Rix Road," the season finale. The finale does show Andor finally becoming a rebel freedom fighter, after twelve episodes with a total running time of eight hours. Alas I didn't care.

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