



# Lambda Sci-Fi

## DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 - Issue # 298 – January 2015

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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 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 – for directions or more details, call 202-483-6369. The next book discussion will be held on January 22, 2015.

Here are the details for the next several book discussions:

**Jan. 22, 2015** – *Children of Kings: A Darkover Novel*, by M. Z. Bradley & Debra J. Ross (moderator: Randy).

**Feb. 26, 2015** – *Through the Woods* (a graphic novel), by Emily Carroll (moderator: Claire).

**March 26, 2015** – *One-Eyed Jack*, by Elizabeth Bear (moderator: Carl).

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### Annual LSF Book (et al) Exchange at Jan. 11th Meeting



That's right, gang, it's Holiday time again; and it's time for Lambda Sci-Fi's *twenty-fifth* annual book (et al) exchange, which will occur at the upcoming Jan. 11th meeting! All LSF members – and visitors, guests, attendees, etc. – are invited to participate in this "blind exchange."

In case you've never participated in one of these before (or in case you've forgotten), here's how it works:

(1) Go out and purchase a copy of your "favorite" science-fiction, fantasy, or horror book. (NOTE: Over the years, LSF has expanded the concept of "book" to include comics, videotapes, "books on tape," etc. If you want – or if you're feeling particularly wealthy – you can even make it several favorite books or whatever.)

(2) Insert a piece of paper (or bookmark) with your name on it. That's so whoever eventually ends up with the item will know who it's from and will get to know a little more about you – at least to know what one of your "favorites" is.

(3) Wrap up the exchange item, but don't put any identifying marks or anything on the wrapped package to say who it's from. That's to make sure it's a "blind" exchange – i.e. no one is supposed to know who it's from at first. (And, by the way, all of that leftover Holiday wrapping paper should come in handy here!)

(4) At the meeting, add your wrapped exchange item to the pile with all the others; and you'll be assigned a number. (Only one exchange item – i.e. one package – per person, please!)

(5) When your number is called, you pick one of the packages from the pile. And when you open it up, you'll find out who it's from. See how easy?

I can hardly wait to see what shows up *this year!* ΛΨΦ



I want YOU to have fun!

### <<<<< January 2015 LSF Meeting >>>>>

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, January 11th**. The meeting will be held at Peter and Rob's home, **1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. The business meeting will begin at 1:30 PM and the social meeting at 2:00 PM. Please also bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. Hope to see you there! *And remember the Book Exchange!!* ΛΨΦ



### What's Inside?

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## Come to the Circus! (F&SF-style)

book reviews by Carl



Ah, the circus! What fond and fantastical memories that brings to mind! (I'm using the term "circus" rather loosely here. For purposes of these reviews, I'm including other "circus-like" entities such as carnivals, carneys, side-shows, medicine shows, midways, and related amusement parks.) Cotton candy, clowns, animal acts, Ferris wheels and merry-go-rounds, funhouses, acrobats and highwire artists – all things different and wonderful and exciting (and maybe even a little scary) showing up right in the middle of your own everyday world. If you've ever attended a Cirque du Soleil performance, you've got to admit that the Cirque has more than a little of the "otherworldly" about it.

Is it any wonder that something as mystical/magical as the circus has served as the basis for F&SF stories, books, and films?

Some of my favorite authors have written circus-related stories. Mike Resnick wrote a whole series of SF circus novels for his "Tales of the Galactic Midway" series: *Sideshow* (1982), *The Three-Legged Hootch Dancer* (1983), *The Wild Alien Tamer* (1983), and *The Best Rootin' Tootin' Shootin' Gunslinger in the Whole Damned Galaxy* (1983). Joe Lansdale ("hisself") wrote a cool little Weird West circus novella: *The Magic Wagon* (1986). And, granted, Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Catch Trap* (1979) has no F&SF content, but it's certainly an enjoyable tale of gay love on the highwire (a ground-breaking novel in its day).

Three of my favorite circus-related F&SF films are all based on previous novels or story collec-

tions. (And, truth to tell, I actually find the films more enjoyable than the books they're based on.) There's *The 7 Faces of Dr. Lao* (1969, adapted for the screen by Charles Beaumont), based on the Charles Finney novel, *The Circus of Dr. Lao* (1935). And there's *The Illustrated Man* (1969, screenplay by Howard Kreitsek). It's based on three stories from a collection by Ray Bradbury (*The Illustrated Man*, 1951) – with the title character "Carl" being a roustabout at a traveling circus. And – one of my all-time favorites – *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1983), with screenplay by Ray Bradbury, based on his 1962 novel of the same name.



Oh, and we certainly shouldn't forget to give a nod to Disney for the 1941 animated feature *Dumbo*: sweet, poignant, and magical, like all the early Disney works.



*Joyland*  
By  
Stephen King  
(Hard Case  
Crime/Titan,  
2013)

This is the book that got me started on my recent "reading about F&SF circuses" kick.

Oddly enough, I think I've only read three Stephen King novels – and none of them are among his more famous ones. I started with *The Colorado Kid* (a crime/mystery novel from Hard Case Crime, 2005). Several years later I read *Blockade Billy* (a creepy little baseball novella from Cemetery Dance, 2010). And now *Joyland*. I enjoyed all three of them.

*Joyland* is set in the mid-1970s. The scene: the small seaside town of Heaven's Bay, North Carolina – and Joyland, a small indepen-

dently-run carny-cum-amusement park. Like a traveling carny, Joyland has rides (including two roller coasters and a tunnel of love), funhouses, a fortune teller booth, fast food concessions, shooting galleries and similar attractions. But it doesn't travel; and it pretty much closes down after the Labor Day weekend. Like an amusement park, it features Happy Helpers (usually summer hires), a Wiggle Waggle Village (where young kids can be left to play with trainee supervisors), and Hollywood Girls (who go around taking photographs that they try to sell to customers). It even has its own mascot: Howie the Happy Hound – and some poor kid is always assigned to "put on the fur" and wander around the park amusing the children.

Joyland is where young Devin Jones ends up working as a Happy Helper (and, of course, "putting on the fur"). He's fleeing heartbreak following the breakup of his first big college crush up in New Hampshire and decides to give Joyland a try (just for the summer, of course). Devin meets nice people and makes new friends; he finds a nice boarding house to live in; he really enjoys the work (except for one crotchety old supervisor); and gradually the heartache of being dumped diminishes.

But Joyland has its darker side. About four years previously, an unidentified stranger murdered his "date" in the Horror House funhouse ride – slit her throat, but didn't molest her. He was never identified or caught. And the victim's ghost supposedly haunts the Horror House upon occasion. Well, Devin and his sleuthing friends Annie and Mike start investigating. At first they just want to find out the details of the murder and see if they can figure out whether the hauntings are true. (Sounds like "the Scooby-Doo Gang," doesn't it?) But eventually they learn that the Joyland murder is somehow linked to several other gruesome murders throughout the South. Is the killer still on the loose? Will he return to Joyland?

As far as I can tell, *Joyland* is a bit of a departure for the Hard Case Crime label, which publishes crime

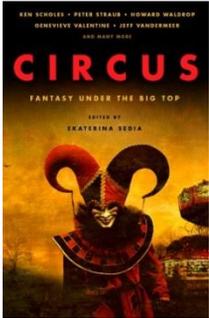
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## Come to the Circus!

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novels, *noir* novels, murder mysteries, adventure-detective novels, and such like. Yes, there's a series of unsolved murders in *Joyland*; but (uncharacteristically) there's also a strong supernatural element to the tale: psychic experiences, and encounters with the ghosts of some of the murder victims. Hey, it's a Stephen King novel – there's just *got* to be an F&SF angle, doesn't there?

I quite enjoyed *Joyland*. It made me think of the film *Stand By Me* from time to time. Almost the first half of the novel deals with Devin Jones getting used to his new life in Heaven's Bay and his new job at Joyland. Might be a bit slow for some readers – but it's a good set-up for when the mystery and action starts piling on later. Exciting ending, too. (Much better than what I've always considered a disappointing ending for the TV miniseries based on King's novel *It*.)



*Circus:  
Fantasy Under  
the Big Top*  
edited by  
Ekaterina Sedia  
(Prime Books,  
2012)

This one is an anthology. Despite the subtitle, some of the stories are rather more SF than Fantasy; but I'm certainly not going to quibble about that. All of the stories have previously been published (ranging from 1979 to 2011). I originally picked it up because of contributions by either "big names" (such as Peter Straub, Barry Longyear, or Neal Barrett Jr.) or favorite new authors (such as Amanda Downum, Holly Black, or Christopher Barzak).

As with almost any anthology, I found some of stories rather more enjoyable than others. Oddly enough, it mostly wasn't the stories by the "big names" in this anthology that thrilled me; I found that I much preferred many of the stories by the newer authors. Here are some of my favorites:

"Smoke and Mirrors" by Amanda Downum, in which a witchy woman is invited to join a traveling circus and help a conjure man hunt down and neutralize an ancient demon that feeds on the spirits of the recently-departed.

"Calliope: A Steam Romance" by Andrew McKiernan, in which a man falls in love with a steam-powered android and vows to free her from servitude to the venal owner of McKenzie's Universal Circus & Museum of the Bizarre.

"Vanishing Act" by E. Catherine Tobler, in which a young, castaway alien is rescued and befriended by the magician of a traveling circus – and her rescue leads to *his* salvation, too.

"Scream Angel" by Douglas Smith, in which a small interplanetary carny rescues and hides fugitive alien slaves and deserters from the armed forces of the Merged Corporate Entity.

"26 Monkeys, Also the Abyss" by Kij Johnson, in which a monkey act is rather more than it seems.

"Courting the Queen of Sheba" by Amanda Davis – a Weird West tale, in which a mummified carny sideshow attraction proves to be more deadly than anyone could believe.

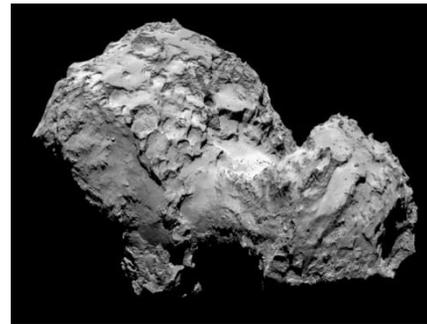
"Phantasy Moste Grotesk" by Felicity Dowker – a truly grotesque little tale of retribution and karmic just desserts.

"Ginny Sweethips' Flying Circus" by Neal Barrett, Jr. – sort of a combination of *Mad Max* and *Tank Girl*.

And you just gotta *love* the names some of these authors came up with: *Carson & Kindred's Circus Fabulatoris and Menagerie of Mystical Marvels* (Amanda Downum, "Smoke and Mirrors"); *Jackson's Unreal Circus and Mobile Marmalade* (E. Catherine Tobler, "Vanishing Act"); *Salioso's House of Monsters, Moste Grotesk and Phantastique* (Felicity Dowker, "Phantasy Moste Grotesk"); *Ginny Sweethips' Flying Circus* (Neal Barrett Jr., story of the same name); or *Stoker's Distorted Carnival & Sideshow* (Cate Gardner, "Manipulating Paper Birds").

(continued in next month's newsletter)

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## So *That's* a Comet? passed along by Carl

Who'd'a thunk it? But according to images from the European Space Agency's Philae-Rosetta mission, that is indeed what Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko looks like.

On November 12, 2014 (10 years after leaving Earth), the Rosetta lander detached from the Philae spacecraft and (7 hours later) made the first-ever controlled touchdown on a comet's nucleus.

Images from the mission can be viewed at:

<http://www.esa.int/spaceinimages/Missions/Rosetta>

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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 transgendered (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. (Hard copies of the newsletter cost an additional \$15 per year.) 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, **January 11th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC.** 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



February 13-15, 2015 **FARPOINT 22**. North Baltimore Plaza Hotel (Timonium, MD). Guests: Colin Ferguson ("Jack Carter" from *Eureka*), Tim Russ ("Tuvok"), Marc Okrand, Timothy Zahn (author), and more. Membership: \$80 weekend rate (daily rates available).  
Website: [www.FarpointCon.com](http://www.FarpointCon.com)

May 22-25, 2015 **BALTICON 49**. Hunt Valley Inn (Hunt Valley, MD). GoH: Jo Walton; Artist GoH: Ruth Sanderson. Membership: \$55 until 2/28/2015; \$60 from 3/1 thru 4/15; \$65 thereafter. On-line registration thru the convention website.  
Website: <http://www.balticon.org/>

May 29-31, 2015 **AWESOME CON 2015**. Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington, DC). Guests include: Michael Rosenblum ("Lex Luthor", *Smallville*), David Yost (the blue Power Ranger), James Marsters ("Spike", *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*). Weekend membership: \$70 until 1/1/2015; \$75 after that (daily rates available). On-line registration thru the convention website. Website: <http://www.awesome-con.com/washington-dc/>

June 19-21, 2015 **CAPITAL CON DC 2015**. "A new science fiction/fantasy convention for the Washington DC area." Washington Court Hotel on Capitol Hill (Washington DC). Media GoH: Doug Jones ("Abe Sapien" in *Hellboy* and *Hellboy 2*). Author GoH: Sherrilyn Kenyon. Artist GoH: Ruth Sanderson. More info as it becomes available.  
Website: <http://www.capitalcon.org/>

Nov. 6-8, 2015 **BENT-CON/GAYLAXICON 2015**. Los Angeles Marriott Burbank Airport Hotel and Convention Center (Burbank, CA). Membership: \$60 weekend rate. More info as it becomes available.  
Website: <http://bent-con.org/>

