



# Lambda Sci-Fi

## DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 - Issue # 305 – August 2015

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☹ ☹ ☹ **Bent-Con/Gaylaxicon 2015 Cancelled!** ☹ ☹ ☹

[Y<sup>e</sup> Olde Editor sayeth: *We received this e-mail from the Bent-Con organizers on July 2nd. Unfortunately, the July newsletter had already gone to press. Please note that this also means that Gaylaxicon 2015 is also cancelled. See information elsewhere in this newsletter regarding Gaylaxicon 2016, which will be hosted by the Minneapolis Gaylaxians!*]

Hello Attendees of BENT-CON!

I am sharing this with you all to inform you that as of now there will be no 2015 show and celebration of BENT-CON. While we do wish otherwise, it is in fact, to our and your best interests that we take this reprieve to regroup and review to decide how BENT-CON can and should continue in the future.

Suffice to say: we are taking a step back, so we can take the best, next possible step forward.

For the sake of both transparency and time, we are in the process of working with the Los Angeles Burbank Marriott for those of you who may have already made reservations for the BENT-CON celebration to have those reservations cancelled and refunded to you. BENT-

CON's Attendee Relations will also be scheduling refunds to you by mail respectively, for your attendee membership fees within a respectable window of time.

As BENT-CON is a federally recognize tax-exempt organization, you also have the option of opting out of a refund by simply replying to this e-mail informing us as such. Otherwise, there will be a follow-up message alerting you when those refund checks have been sent out.

Please feel free to follow up with us, if you have any other questions we can answer.

The entire BENT-CON team wishes to personally thank you for your excitement, contribution and involvement with our humble and ever-growing presence in the convention world.

If you wish to stay abreast of BENT-CON related news, you can do so via our website, our community or fan pages on Facebook for any and all your BENT-CON update needs.

Thank you so much again. Best Wishes and Regards from the BENT-CON Team.



### 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 August 27, 2015.

Here are the details for the next couple of book discussions:  
**Aug. 27** – *Shadowdance*, by Robin Wayne Bailey (moderator: Josh).  
**Sept. 24** – *Remembrance of Things I Forgot*, by Bob Smith (mod.: Bob A).



### <<<<< August 2015 LSF Meeting >>>>>

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, August 9th**. 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!

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### What's Inside?

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Page 4: Information About Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians and Con Calendar.



## Gaylaxicon 2016 info passed along by Carl

With all the sad news about the cancellation of Bent-Con/Gaylaxicon 2015, I'm pleased to be able to pass along some *good* news! Everything is still going according to plan for Gaylaxicon 2016 in Minneapolis, MN, hosted by the North Country Gaylaxians (who have previously hosted two successful Gaylaxicons). Here are the details currently available:

Dates: Friday, Oct. 7 (1:00 PM) to Sunday, Oct. 9, 2016 (Midnight).

Location: DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Minneapolis-Park Place, 1500 Park Place Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55416 (Please make your hotel reservations on-line via the con's website, so they can be credited toward the convention's room-block.)

Registration: \$50 thru 2015; \$80 at the door; on-line registration available.

Website:  
<http://www.gaylaxicon2016.org/>

The North Country Gaylaxians are once again planning all of the typical fun-filled activities: a Saturday Buffet Dinner (info to be posted later); a Saturday afternoon Chocolate Symposium; an art show; a Dealers' Room; discussion panels; a film program; a Meet-the-Pros Reception; a con-suite; gaming, gaming, and more gaming; and much, much more. Trust me, the North Country Gaylaxians know how to show us all a good time!



Gaylaxicon  
2016

## Minutes of the July LSF Meeting taken by Scott

**MOVIE NEWS:** Peter enjoyed the movie *Inside Out*, especially the anthropomorphizing of the main character's emotions. Peter said that the Marvel Cinematic Universe is ahead of the DC movie universe; but DC might have the first female lead superhero movie. Lots of discussion about the rumored (and long-anticipated) *Wonder Woman* movie. Neill Blomkamp, the director of *District 9*, is also directing a new *Alien* movie starring Sigourney Weaver. Carl says he enjoyed *Jurassic World*, despite the unexplained "retro" dinosaurs. Peter reported that most of the ten US top-grossing movies are F&SF genre. Robert O'Brien's *Z for Zachariah* has been made into a film starring Chris Pine, set to come out in August; a disaster has left most of civilization dead, leaving only a few people to survive. *The Martian*, the new movie starring Matt Damon as an astronaut stranded on the Red Planet, looks good; it's based on the recent novel by Andy Weir. The plot of the new movie *Self/Less* is reportedly predictable. (Yawn!) The new *Man from UNCLE* movie might actually have sci-fi content. Peter and Carl plan to see the new Ian McKellan film *Mr. Holmes* this week at a special AARP showing.

**TV NEWS:** The spinoff series based on *Walking Dead* will air its first episode on Sunday, August 23rd. Philip K. Dick's classic novel *The Man in the High Castle* – Japan and Nazi Germany have occupied the US – is being made into a TV series by Amazon Studios. AMC's eight-part series *Humans* (based upon a Swedish sci-fi drama called *Real Humans*) has just premiered – AI servants in a parallel present-day world. SyFy's *Killjoys* and *Dark Matter* have dark-themed formats and sets similar to *Firefly/Serenity*. Dan reported that DC/Vertigo's *Preacher* is coming to the small screen; and Image Comics' *The Authority* may also be adapted for TV. Xena says she is enjoying *Hannibal*.

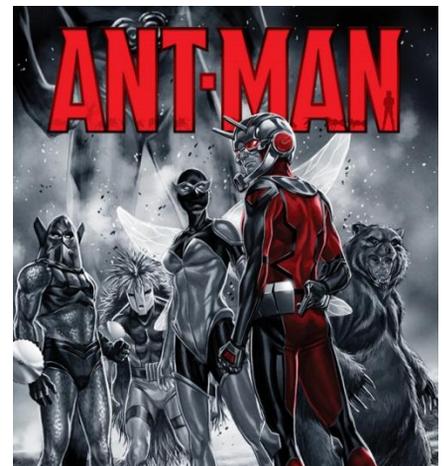


**OTHER:** Dan reported that he enjoyed Michael Crichton's 2001 posthumously-completed novel *Micro* (completed by Richard Preston), which has parallels to Asimov's *Fantastic Voyage*. Peter passed around some free comics he received at AwesomeCon. He also announced WashingCon, a tabletop gaming con to be held at the Westminster Presbyterian Church (401 "I" St SW) on Saturday, September 12th. Carl highly recommends the interactive "Indiana Jones and the Adventure of Archaeology" exhibit at the National Geographic Museum.

**AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT:** Peter played a number of fascinating videos for us: a trailer for *Superman vs. Batman: Dawn of Justice*, which includes Wonder Woman; a trailer for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*; a preview of *Doctor Who*'s next season; and two short, funny Strongbow Apple Hard Cider commercials featuring Patrick Stewart. Finally, have you watched any of the Google Deep Dream videos? We did. Hallucinogenic and totally creepy.

**UPCOMING LSF EVENTS:** Rob will be coordinating an LSF outing to see the new *Ant-Man* movie on Saturday, July 18th. Upcoming sessions of the LSF Book Discussion Group will feature the following: *Ms. Marvel Vol. 1: No Normal*, a graphic novel (July); *Shadowdance* by Robin Wayne Bailey (August); and *Remembrance of Things I Forgot* by Bob Smith (Sept.).

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**The Soul of an Octopus:  
A Surprising Exploration  
into the Wonder of  
Consciousness  
by Sy Montgomery  
(Atria Books, 2015)  
reviewed by Carl**



It's certainly been a long time since I last reviewed a non-fiction book in the LSF newsletter. I just couldn't pass up *this* book! Not only did I find it fascinating, but I think it also has lots of resonances for SF fans.

One of the staples of the SF genre is the "alien intelligence" story, where Humans contact an alien race and then try (often unsuccessfully) to figure out "how the aliens think". (I'm sure you can easily think of half a dozen examples right off the bat.) Well, we don't need "a five-year mission" into space to find one; we've got a truly "alien intelligence" right here on Earth: the octopus. And we're only just beginning to figure out some of how their minds work.

Yes, Virginia, octopuses have "minds". (By the way, "octopi" is an *incorrect* plural form.) In fact, they seem to have the ability to ascribe thoughts to other creatures, thoughts that might differ from their own. This is called "theory of mind", which is an important component of consciousness because it implies self-awareness. Octopuses are, in fact, intelligent. But, unlike most of the other non-human animals that we consider "intelligent" – such as chimpanzees, elephants, parrots, and whales – octopuses are not vertebrates; they're mollusks (related to clams and snails). Also, unlike intelligent vertebrates, octopuses are short-lived and (on the whole) notoriously solitary creatures. In fact, octopuses developed their complex brains (*and* eyes) by a *very* different path from all us vertebrates. The closest common ancestor of humans and octopuses was a primitive, tube-shaped creature that

lived so long ago that neither brains nor eyes had yet evolved. "Short of Martians showing up and offering themselves up to science," the author quotes neuroscientist Cliff Ragsdale (University of Chicago) as saying, "cephalopods are the only example outside of vertebrates of how to build a complex, clever brain."

As it turns out, the octopus brain is even *more* different from ours. Human brains have four lobes; octopus brains have 50-75 different lobes. Yes, humans have about 100 billion neurons, and octopuses have only about 300 million; but a surprising three-fifths of an octopus's neurons are located in its arms, not in its brain. In fact, the arms seem to be capable of independent thought! (Shades of Doctor Octopus in *Spi-derman* 2!!)

In *The Soul of an Octopus*, naturalist Sy Montgomery leads the reader through a series of her encounters with a number of octopuses, both in sea-quariums and in the wild. Her narrative includes discussions with and research from a number of other naturalists, animal psychologists, neuroscientists, aquarists, and others. In addition to all the evolutionary and physiological information about octopuses and other cephalopods, she provides a number of surprising revelations: octopuses dream, play, and use tools (although they don't actually *make* tools). Despite being primarily solitary and short-lived animals, they are curious and exploratory; and they are famously able to learn how to solve multi-step problems.



But *The Soul of an Octopus* isn't simply a compendium of "gosh-gee-wow!" factoids about octopus intelligence – it's got a lot of "heart" to it, too. Despite all her attempts to avoid anthropomorphizing the animals she studied, Ms. Montgomery couldn't help but become emotionally attached to several octopuses she has known at the New England Aquarium in Boston: Athena, Octavia, Kali, and Karma. Starting from the same basic level of ignorance and misunderstandings about octopuses that most people have, she finds herself developing "a deeper understanding of what it means to think, to feel, and to know."



As I was reading this fascinating book, I kept having SF-related thoughts (some of which I've already mentioned). For example, there was that wonderful 2002 documentary *The Future Is Wild* (available on DVD), which purported to show how life could evolve if, for whatever reason, humans and many other larger mammals and birds disappeared. One of its 13 episodes featured an intelligent tree-swinging octopus-creature that lives among the mangrove swamps. (Did you know that some contemporary octopuses have come out of the water after prey? And that they can survive for about 10-15 minutes out of water?) And then there's H.G. Wells and the Martians he featured in both his 1897 novel *The War of the Worlds* and his 1897 short story "The Crystal Egg". Even knowing as little as he did about cephalopods, is Wells really so far off the mark when he says of his octopus-like Martians that they possessed "intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic [and] regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us"? After reading *The Soul of an Octopus*, I can't help but wonder. Good book!

## \* \* 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, **August 9th, 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



Aug. 7-9, 2015 **SHORE LEAVE 37**: A Fan Run Science Fiction Media Convention. Baltimore Hunt Valley Inn (Hunt Valley, MD). Guests: TBA. Weekend membership: \$90 (higher at the door). Enclose SASE and check payable to "Shore Leave" and send to: Shore Leave 37, PO Box 6809, Towson, MD 21285-6809.

Website: [www.shore-leave.com](http://www.shore-leave.com)

For more information: [information@shore-leave.com](mailto:information@shore-leave.com)

Oct. 9-11 **CAPCLAVE 2015**. Hilton Washington DC North/Gaithersburg (Gaithersburg MD). Guests include: Gordon Van Gelder (Editor, *F&SF Magazine*); Alastair Reynolds (*Revelation Space*). Membership: \$55 until July 31st; \$60 until Sept. 30th; \$65 at the door. On-line registration thru the convention website. Website: [www.capclave.org](http://www.capclave.org)

Nov. 20-22, 2015 **PHILCON 2015**. Crown Plaza Hotel (Cherry Hill, NJ). Membership: \$40. Make checks payable to "Philadelphia Science Fiction Society" and send to: Philcon Registration, PO Box 8303, Philadelphia, PA 19101-8303.

For on-line registration and additional information: [www.philcon.org](http://www.philcon.org)

Nov. 27-29, 2015 **CHESSIECON 2015** ("Where Traditions Evolve"). Radisson North Baltimore Hotel (Timonium, MD). Author GoH: Seanan McGuire; Artist GoH: Ursula Vernon; Music GoH: Heather Dale; Special Guest: Tamora Pierce. Membership: \$55 until Nov. 15; \$60 at the door. On-line membership available (using PayPal), or print out the membership form and mail it and a check payable to "Thanksgiving Science Fiction Society" to: TSFS, Inc., PO Box 83032, Gaithersburg, MD 20883-2032.

Website: <http://chessiecon.org>

Info at: [info@chessiecon.org](mailto:info@chessiecon.org)

Feb. 12-14, 2016 **FARPOINT 23**. Radisson Hotel North Baltimore (Timonium, MD). Guests to include: Sean Maher ("Simon Tam" from *Firefly*); more guests TBA. Membership: \$80 for the weekend (daily rates available). On-line membership available (using Everbrite). Website: <http://www.farpointcon.com/>

Feb. 12-14, 2016 **KATSUCON 2016** (anime, manga, cosplay, etc.). Gaylord National Resort (National Harbor, Washington DC). Membership: \$60 until August 31st; \$70 until Jan. 31, 2016. Registration is on-line.

Website: <http://www.katsucon.org/>

Oct. 7-9, 2016 **GAYLAXICON 2016**. DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Minneapolis-Park Place (Minneapolis, MN). More information as it becomes available.

Website: <http://www.gaylaxicon2016.org/>

