



lambda Sci-fi DC Area Gaylaxians



PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044
(202) 232-3141 - Issue #268 - July 2012

E-MAIL: info@lambdascifi.org WEBSITE: www.lambdascifi.org



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 **July 26th**.

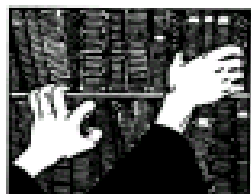
Here are the details for the book discussions for the next several months: **July 26 - *Welcome to Bordertown***, edited by Holly Black & Ellen Kushner; moderator: Greg.

August 23 - *Hav*, by Jan Morris; moderator: Carl

September 27 - *Beyond Binary*, edited by Brit Mandelo; moderator: Jack.

October 25 - *Rule 34*, by Charles Stross; moderator: Dan

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LSF Gaming Party -- July 14th --

Come join the fun at an LSF Gaming Party!

What: A gaming party. There's plenty of room for gaming, so please bring your favorite table games (cards, board, RPG, etc.).

When: Saturday, July 14; 2:00 PM until ??

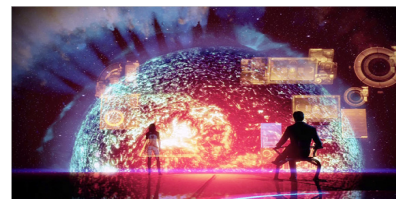
Where: Home of Peter and Rob, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC.

Directions at:
<http://lambdascifi.org/club/PeterRob.html>

What to bring: Bring your favorite table game or two. Also, please bring munchies and/or soft drinks. We'll plan a dinner break - maybe order pizzas or something.

For more information: Please contact Rob at: robgatesdc@gmail.com or call him at 202-483-6369.

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The Art of Video Games At Smithsonian's American Art Museum

The Art of Video Games, on display at the Smithsonian's American Art Museum (located at 8th and F Streets, NW), is one of the first major exhibitions to explore the 40-year evolution of video games as an artistic medium. It focuses on the interplay of graphics, technology, and storytelling through some of the best games for 20 gaming systems: from the Atari VCS to the PlayStation 3. The exhibit features 80 video games - selected with the help of the public - that demonstrate the evolution of the medium.

The games are presented through still images and video footage; and the galleries include large prints of in-game screen shots.

This exhibit runs through September 30. Museum hours are 11:30 AM to 7:00 PM daily. Admission: free. For more information: www.americanart.si.edu

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----- July LSF Meeting -----

The next LSF meeting will be held on Sunday, **July 8th**. The meeting will once again 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 will begin at 2:00 PM. Please also bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. See you there!

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WHAT'S INSIDE?

Ray Bradbury (obituary - pg.2); *Roadside Picnic* (book review - pg. 2); About Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians (pg. 4); Con Calendar (pg. 4)



Ray Bradbury 1920 - 2012

It's not easy to summarize the life and career of someone like Ray Bradbury. He was one of the most celebrated American writers of the 20th Century. His *New York Times* obituary described him as "the writer most responsible for bringing modern science fiction into the literary mainstream." From the other coast, the *Los Angeles Times* lauded Bradbury's ability "to write lyrically and evocatively of lands an imagination away, worlds he anchored in the here and now with a sense of visual clarity and small-town familiarity."

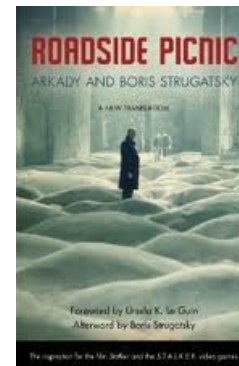
Bradbury was born in Waukegan, Illinois, in 1920 and spent his early childhood and formative years in that small town. This period of his life provided Bradbury with a foundation for many of his stories: 1920s Waukegan became the fictional "Green Town," Illinois—a symbol of safety and home, the setting for such classic works as *Dandelion Wine*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, and *Farewell Summer* and of the short stories collected in *Summer Morning*, *Summer Night*.

Between 1926 and 1933, the Bradbury family moved back and forth a couple of times between Waukegan and Tucson, Arizona. In 1934, they moved to Los Angeles, where Bradbury attended Los Angeles High School and was active in the drama club. In 1936, at

a secondhand bookstore in Hollywood, the 16-year-old Bradbury discovered a handbill promoting the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society, which met on Thursday nights at Clifton's Cafeteria in downtown L.A. Forry Ackerman invited Bradbury to join LASFS, where he met such other SF writers as Robert Heinlein, Emil Petaja, Fredric Brown, Henry Kuttner, Leigh Brackett, and Jack Williamson. It was at Forry's house that Bradbury met his other lifelong friend, Ray Harryhausen. Bradbury's first published story ("Hollerbochen's Dilemma") appeared in January 1938 issue of the fanzine *Imagination!* And in July 1939, Forry Ackerman gave the 19-year-old Bradbury the money he needed to travel to New York City and attend the first World Science Fiction Convention.

Bradbury's first professional sale was the short story "Pendulum" (*Super Science Stories*, 1941); and his first published collection of short stories was *Dark Carnival* (Arkham House, 1947). Over the course of the next 60+ years, Bradbury wrote a dozen or so novels and 300+ short stories (fantasy, SF, mystery). Many of his stories have been adapted for TV—appearing in *The Twilight Zone* (both old & new series), *Tales of Tomorrow*, *Suspense*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, and *Ray Bradbury Theatre* (1985-1986)—and for a number of comic books in the EC Comics line (such as *Tales from the Crypt*, *Weird Science*, and *Haunt of Fear*). More than 35 feature films, shorts, and TV movies have been based on Bradbury's stories or screenplays, including: *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), *The Illustrated Man* (1969), *The Martian Chronicles* (TV miniseries, 1980), *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1983), and *The Sound of Thunder* (2005). The 1953 film *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* includes a scene based on Bradbury's 1951 short story "The Fog Horn"; and in that same year, director John Huston hired Bradbury to work on the screenplay for the film adaptation of Melville's *Moby Dick* (starring Gregory Peck and Orson Welles).

Roadside Picnic by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky (Chicago Review Press, 2012) a short review by Carl



I've never been a big fan of Russian literature. Back in my college days, I blanched at one particular assignment during my European Lit class: read and review a novel by a Russian author. Yikes! I didn't particularly want to slog through a massive tome by Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky—instead, I desperately searched for the shortest Russian novel I could find. (It was Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, in case you're interested.)

So, imagine my surprise when, during a recent visit to my local Barnes & Noble, a Russian sci-fi novel somehow caught my eye—and, after only a short perusal, I decided to buy it and read it!

The Strugatsky brothers are well-known Russian sci-fi writers from the Soviet era; and *Roadside Picnic* is their most popular novel ("at least abroad"). After reading a short description of all the bureaucratic, ideological, and Party obstacles they had to overcome to get their works published, I'm amazed anything of theirs ever saw print. (They spent about eight years trying to get *Roadside Picnic* published—and the first Soviet edition is something that Boris Strugatsky still refuses to even look at because of the heavy-handed "adjustments" made to it along the way. His description of the process—included as an Afterword to this edition—had me shaking my head in dismay.)

According to Ursula K. Le Guin's Forward for this new translation, she read and reviewed the first English-language edition of *Roadside Picnic* back in 1977.

(continued on page 3)

Roadside Picnic

continued from page 2

She gave it a positive review, even though that wasn't exactly *de rigueur* to say anything good about anything Russian back then. •“What [the Strugatskys] did, which I found most admirable then and still do now, was to write as if they were indifferent to ideology—something many of us writers in the Western democracies had a hard time doing. They wrote as free men write.”

Roadside Picnic is a “first contact” novel – but it’s not your *typical* “first contact” novel. You see, the aliens arrived almost simultaneously at a number of widely-separated sites (now called “Zones”), stayed a while, and left. No one ever saw them. Well, that’s not quite true, I guess. There *were* humans living in some of the Zones when the aliens arrived – so *they* must have seen the aliens – but they *weren't* there anymore after the aliens left. Sure, there are *rumors* of atrocities inflicted upon the humans living in the Zones – but that’s all they are: rumors. No survivors, no eyewitness accounts, no bodies... nuthin’.

Well, that’s not quite true either. The aliens left all *kinds* of stuff scattered around in the Zones. The problem is that we humans have no idea what all these artifacts are, how they work, etc. Think of it like this: A bunch of travelers stop off for a picnic in a rest area and then get back on the road, leaving all their trash scattered around the rest stop. What kind of understanding do the ants and other wildlife have of the stuff the travelers left behind? (This is the best analogy that scientists in the Strugatsky novel could come up with – hence, the book title.) The artifacts include “empties” and “full empties” and “black sparks” and “spacells” and other stuff. As an example, here’s a description of an “empty”:

It’s just these two copper disks the size of a saucer, a quarter inch thick, about eighteen inches apart, and not a thing between the two. I mean, nothing whatsoever, zip, nada, zilch. You can stick your hand between them—maybe even your head, if the thing has unhinged you enough—nothing but empty space, thin air. And despite this, there must be some-



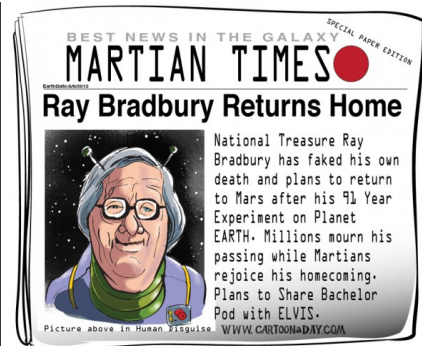
The Strugatsky Brothers

thing there, a force field of some sort, because so far no one’s managed to push these disks together, or pull them apart either.

Government scientists are, in fact, trying to retrieve and analyze artifacts, to see if they can figure out the science behind them and if there’s any use we can make of them. They’re also trying to keep everyone else out of the Zones in the meantime. But, of course, there’s a sizeable black market for Zone artifacts; and, also of course, there are people who are willing to run the Government blockades, to risk imprisonment *and* the dangers of the Zones, to retrieve artifacts for that black market. These brave, foolhardy, greedy souls are called “stalkers”.

And, trust me, the Zones *are* dangerous. The former presence of the aliens seems to have resulted in random space/time anomalies. In some spots, nothing ages – the remains of human vehicles, buildings, and whatnot are as pristine as the day they were created – and in other spots, everything ages normally. Touching other areas results in the release of a fatal electrical discharge. And there are the “bug traps” – stepping on (or even flying over) one results in a discharge of “super gravity” that flattens absolutely anything. And then there’s the “hell slime” – the less said about that, the better. And – here’s the real kicker! – despite there being no indication of radiation contamination anywhere in the Zones, the children of stalkers (should they decide to risk having them) are invariably born with unpredictable mutations or distortions of one sort of another.

Roadside Picnic mostly concerns itself with the adventures and misadventures of one particular stalker,



Jules Verne was my father.
H.G. Wells was my wise uncle.
Edgar Allan Poe was the bat-winged cousin we kept high in the back attic room.

Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers were my brothers and friends.

There you have my ancestry.

Adding, of course, the fact that in all probability Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*, was my mother.

- Ray Bradbury -
Intro to *S Is for Space* (1966)

quoted in *Science Fiction Quotations*
edited by Gary Westfahl
(Yale University Press, 2005)

Redrick Schuhart – and his family, co-workers, competitors, adversaries, and friends – in and around the Harmont Zone. I found it to be a fascinating narrative – even exciting at times. But if you’re looking for a “feel-good” story or a light-hearted romp, then this is definitely not the book you’re looking for. (Remember, this was written by *Russians*. You know, the guys responsible for such comedy romps as *Crime and Punishment* and *Doctor Zhivago*.)

Oh, and in case you’re interested, *Roadside Picnic* spawned both a film and an on-line game. The 1979 Russian film *Stalker* (directed by Andrei Tarkovsky) features a screenplay by the Strugatskys. But the first-person shooter video game *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl* (2007) – and its sequels – can only claim to be “inspired by” *Roadside Picnic*; these games feature a “Zone of Alienation” with various deadly space/time anomalies that players must avoid, but there doesn’t seem to be any space alien connection.

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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 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, **July 8th, 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 will begin at 2:00 PM. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. 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. 3-5, 2012 **SHORE LEAVE 34**. Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn (Hunt Valley, MD). Guests: TBA. Membership: \$80 pre-registration for the weekend (daily rates available). Make checks payable to "Shore Leave" and send to: Shore Leave 34, PO Box 6809, Towson, MD 21285-6809. Website: <http://www.shore-leave.com> E-mail: information@shore-leave.com

Aug. 30 - Sept. 3, 2012 **CHICON 7** (70th World Science Fiction Convention). Hyatt Regency Chicago (Chicago, IL). Guests of Honor: Mike Resnick (author), Rowena Morrill (artist), John Scalzi (toastmaster), Story Musgrave (astronaut). Membership: \$195 until 03/31/2012. (Will go up after that!) Make checks payable to "Chicon 7" and send to: Chicon 7, PO Box 13, Skokie, IL 60076. (You can also register on-line.) Website: www.chicon7.org Info: info@chicon.org

Oct. 5-7, 2012 **GAYLAXICON 2012**. Doubletree Hotel Minneapolis-Park Place (Minneapolis, MN). Guests: Gary Russell (writer/producer), Wendy Pini (*Elfquest*), Lyda Morehouse (author), Kyell Gold (furry author). Membership: \$70. Register on-line (via Eventbrite). Website: www.gaylaxicon2012.org

Oct. 12-14, 2012 **CAPCLAVE 2012**. ("A small relaxed literary convention with a program that usually focuses on the short fiction form.") Hilton Washington DC North/Gaithersburg (Gaithersburg, MD). Author GoH: John Scalzi; Author/Editor GoH: Nick Mamatas. Membership: \$50 to 7/30; \$55 from 7/31 to 9/29; \$60 from 9/30 to 10/7. Register on-line (with Paypal) or print PDF of membership form, make check payable to "Capclave", and send to: Capclave 2012 Registration, c/o Barry Newton, PO Box 53, Ashton, MD 20861. Website: www.capclave.org

Nov. 9-12, 2012 **PHILCON 2012** ("The Philadelphia Area's Conference of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror" - est. 1936). Crowne Plaza Hotel (Cherry Hill, NJ). Principal Speaker: Catherynne M. Valente; Artist Guest of Honor: Phil Foglio. Membership: \$40 for the weekend. Register on-line (with PayPal) or send membership request (with check payable to "Philcon 2012") to: Philcon 2012, PO Box 8303, Philadelphia, PA 19101-8303 Website: www.philcon.org

Nov. 23-25, 2012 **DARKOVERCON GRAND COUNCIL 35**. (A very LGBT-friendly convention.) Crowne Plaza Baltimore (Timonium, MD). Guest of Honor: Nalo Hopkinson; Artist GoH: Samantha Press; Special Guest: Katherine Kurtz. Membership: \$50 until 11/1/2012; \$55 after 11/1 & at the door. Make checks payable to "Armida Council" and send to: Armida Council, PO Box 7203, Silver Spring, MD 20907. Website: www.darkovercon.org Info at: jaille@darkovercon.org

