



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 360 – March 2020

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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 March 26th.

Here are the details for the next couple of discussions:

March 26, 2020 – *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern (moderator: Zena).

April 23, 2020 – *Lovecraft Country* by Matt Ruff (moderator: Carl).

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Happy 30th Birthday to Lambda Sci-Fi!!



And Happy Year of the Rat to Everyone!



From Last Year's Birthday Celebration

<<<<< March 2020 LSF Meeting >>>>>

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, March 8th**, at Peter and Rob's home, **1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. The meeting will begin at 1:30 PM. The "group watch" will begin about 3:00 PM. Hope to see you there!



What's Inside?

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LSF “404 Page Not Found” Gaming Party (Saturday, April 4th)

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

When: Saturday, April 4th

Time: 2 PM to 11 PM

What to Bring: Bring your favorite table game (or two). Also, please bring munchies and/or soft drinks.

Dinner: For those who are interested, we’ll order pizza. 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 Mid-city (14th and “U”) Corridor. Also, delivery menus will be available at the party.

Where: Home of Peter and Rob, 1425 “S” St NW, Washington, DC. Their home is in the Mid-city (14th and “U”) neighborhood between Dupont Circle and Logan Circle.

Directions (with Metro and parking advice) at:

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

Questions: Contact Peter at:
PeterPKnapp@gmail.com

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Minutes of the February 2020 LSF Meeting taken by Scott

Carl reminded everyone that LSF will be turning 30 next month. (Has it been 30 years already? Wow!)

Carl received a *Dune* game as a birthday gift, and he’s looking forward to learning the rules and playing it at an upcoming LSF gaming party. (Carl said that he believes someone brought the game to a gaming party some years ago.)

Teresa says she’s been listening to LGBTQ “Dungeons and Dragons” themed podcasts, plus “Werewolf Ambulance”, a horror movie comedy podcast.

ScrumCon, which features tabletop RPGs and miniature wargaming, will be held in Silver Spring on Saturday, February 29th.

Movie News: Carl mildly enjoyed *Star Wars: Rise of Skywalker*. Teresa is looking forward to *Birds of Prey*, featuring Harley Quinn, Black Canary, Huntress, Renee Montoya, Cassandra Cain and more DC characters. (Are the two main male characters – Black

Mask and Mister Zsasz – intentionally-queer coded?) Karl says he liked *Light-house* (starring Willem Dafoe and Robert Pattinson), even though it was dark and weird. Carl recently saw *The Color Out of Space* (starring Nicholas Cage); he said it’s peculiar but manages to “touch bases with the Lovecraft story from time to time.” (It was only in theaters for a short time.)

TV News: David is enjoying *Pi-card*, the new *Star Trek* series; Whoopie Goldberg has been invited to join the cast in the second season. David and Teresa are both enjoying the current season of *The Magicians*. David announced that there will be a Superman-and-Lois-Lane spinoff series, featuring the actors from *Supergirl*. Teresa said she and Dan are watching *Emergence* – a little girl with mysterious magnetic powers is being pursued by government agents.

Upcoming LSF Events: Book Discussion Group on Feb. 27th, featuring *Wonder Woman: The Golden Years, Vol. 2*. At next month’s LSF meeting (March 8th), we’ll celebrate LSF’s 30th Anniversary.

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Roving Scoundrels short reviews by Carl

In *The Empire Strikes Back*, Han Solo says to Princess Leia: “You like me because I’m a scoundrel. There aren’t enough scoundrels in your life.” Hmmm. Isn’t that true for so many of us? Don’t we secretly admire – nay, long for – scoundrels? There are certainly a lot of them in F&SF – Han Solo or Lando Calrissian, for instance. Or, if you prefer your scoundrels *à la noir*, there are Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) or Rick Blaine in *Casablanca* (1942) or Easy Rawlins in *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995). In fact, popular scoundrels have a long history in literature: A.J. Raffles (various stories by E.W. Hornung in the 1890s), and Scaramouche (from the novel of the same name by Rafael Sabatini, 1921) quickly come to mind. There’s just something about a scoundrel...

At any rate, I’ve recently read some F&SF books featuring scoundrels as main characters. But these examples definitely aren’t cut from the same mold as Han, Rick, or Raffles. I’m not even sure I’d rank them as highly as “scruffy lookin’ nerf herders”. But I found their adventures definitely made for satisfying reads.

Forays of a Fat Man by Matthew Hughes (Drugstore Indian Press/ PS Publishing Ltd, 2019)

Forays is a collection of four “Luff Imbry” stories by Matthew Hughes. Luff Imbry is an interplanetary scoundrel, plying his nefarious (and dangerous) trade on Old Earth and amongst the many worlds of The Spray. Here’s how Imbry is described in “The Yellow Cabochon”:

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Roving Scoundrels

continued from page 2

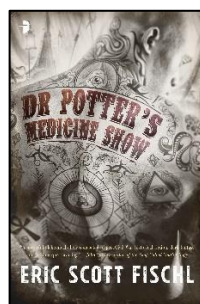
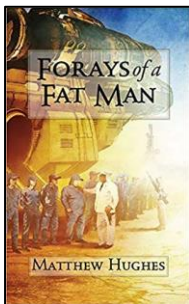
“Imbry was a thief, a forger and an adept at several of the varied arts of relieving the careless—or even those who were merely not quite careful enough—of the burden of owning precious goods.”

“But wait,” you say, “isn’t the title of the collection *Forays of a Fat Man*? What the hey?” Ah, yes, indeed, Luff Imbry is described as being of “heroic” – nay, “substantial” – physical size. He takes every opportunity to indulge in the culinary delights available at Xanthoulian’s (a “fabled” Old Earth restaurant) or Quirk’s (his favorite club). And, in point of fact, as Hughes states in the collection’s Introduction, Luff Imbry is “modeled on Sydney Greenstreet’s characters in *The Maltese Falcon* and *Casablanca*.” (If you’re not familiar with Greenstreet or his roles – another of my favorites being his appearance as “Mr. Peters” in *The Mask of Dimitrios*, 1944 – I’ll wait right here while you go out and treat yourself to some classic cinema.)

At any rate, back to the review... Each of the four “forays” in this collection centers on one of Luff Imbry’s intricate (and potentially very lucrative) capers or scams. In each story, something goes Terribly Wrong; and Imbry is forced to rely on his well-honed talents and wits to keep him out of either prison or the grave. Hughes has an arch and witty writing style; and I found each story to be delightful.

One of the reasons I probably liked these stories so much is that they reminded me of classic Jack Vance works, particularly such space opera stories as his “Demon Princes” novels: *The Star King* (1964), *The Killing Machine* (1964), *The Palace of Love* (1967), *The Face* (1975), and *The Book of Dreams* (1981). There are also references in “The Yellow Cabochon” that struck me as very similar to magical practices I’d seen in Vance’s “Dying Earth” stories – on top of the unmistakable similarities between Hughes’s Old Earth (with its orange sun) and Vance’s Dying Earth (with its red sun).

After I finished reading *Forays of a Fat Man*, I decided to do a bit of research and see if there were other works by Matthew Hughes that might interest me. It



was then that I discovered that Matthew Hughes is particularly noted for his own “forays” into the “Vance-verse”. He has penned quite a number of stories set in either Vance’s SF “Oikumene” settings or Vance’s Fantasy “Dying Earth” settings. If *Forays of a Fat Man* is any example, then Hughes’s stories aren’t simply re-hashes or pastiches of Vance’s works – they’re fresh new stories very much in the “Vance” style that take place in the “universes” originally created by Vance. In a review of one of Hughes’s works, Carl Hays even referred to Hughes as “Vance’s heir apparent” (*Booklist*, Aug. 2005). I think Hughes’s other works are definitely worth checking out, especially if you’re as much of a Jack Vance fan as I am.

Oh, and I also discovered that *Forays* wasn’t my first encounter with Matthew Hughes after all. It seems that I’d previously read his short stories in several of the massive Martin/Dozois cross-genre anthologies, such as *Old Mars* (2013) and *Rogues* (2014). (I’ve reviewed those anthologies in previous LSF newsletters.)



Sydney Greenstreet, as
“Señor Ferrari” in *Casablanca*

Dr. Potter’s Medicine Show by Eric Scott Fischl (Angry Robot, 2017)

In this Dark Fantasy novel, we move from interstellar space to the American Wild West. And if you’re in the American Wild West, what more iconic place to find a scoundrel than a traveling medicine show?

Dr. Alexander Potter is a disgraced Civil War surgeon who now travels the Pacific Northwest during the late 1870s selling Chock-a-saw Sagwa Tonic to the rubes, claiming it to be a miraculous cure-all elixir (“Cures Complaints of Mind and Body”). In addition to the good doctor’s talents as a huckster, Dr. Potter’s Medicine Show consists of several wagons and features a strongman, an illusionist, a “gypsy” fortune-teller, and a “chanteuse” (aka a “soiled dove”).

But behind the expected flim-flammy, there’s something rather more sinister going on. A nasty and vicious man named Lyman Rhoades is actually controlling everything connected with Dr. Potter’s Medicine Show. He plays on the weaknesses of everyone involved with the Medicine Show and bends them all to his will. He also has a captive alchemist back in Portland, Oregon, who produces experimental potions that Rhoades secretly and selectively distributes here and there along the Medicine Show’s travels; and these potions often have unexpected and horrifying results. When a young girl shows up trying to find out what happened to her sister-in-law – accompanied by her brother (a drunken ex-dentist) and two naïve young cowpokes on the run from the law – the true nature of Rhoades’s hideous experiments are gradually revealed. Can Dr. Potter and his associates be freed from Rhoades’s control? And how many more people must meet excruciating deaths before Rhoades can be stopped?

Dr. Potter’s Medicine Show is a grim little tale of the Weird West, with unexpected twists, turns, and horrors throughout – as well as unexpected humor here and there.

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(to be continued)

*** * 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.

Annual membership fees are \$10, for which you will receive an e-mailed copy of this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. 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, **March 8th, 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

April 24-26, 2020 **RAVENCON 15**. DoubleTree by Hilton Williamsburg (Williamsburg VA). GoH: Terry Brooks. Membership: \$40 until 4/3/2020; \$50 at the door. (Daily rates also available.) On-line registration.

Website: www.ravencon.com

May 1-3, 2020 **AWESOME CON**. Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington, DC). Guests include: Zachary Levi ("Shazam!"); Ron Perlman ("Hellboy"). Includes "Pride Alley, a celebration of queer creators and fans curated by GeeksOUT." Membership: 3-day passes = \$80; 1-day passes = \$40-\$55 (depending on the day). "Tickets on sale soon." Limited tickets – on-line purchase advised via their Tickets Page. Website: <https://awesome-con.com/>

May 22-25, 2020 **BALTICON 54**. Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel (Baltimore MD). GoH: Wen Spencer; Artist GoH: Lee Moyer; Musical GoH: Cheshire Moon; 2019 Compton Crook Award winner: R.F. Kuang. Membership: \$66 until Feb. 29, 2020. On-line registration. Website: <https://www.balticon.org/wp54> Info at: balticoninfo@balticon.org

July 10-12, 2020 **SHORE LEAVE 42**. Delta Hotels Marriott Baltimore Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). Actor GoH: Denis Lawson (*Star Wars* "Wedge Antilles"); more TBA. Membership: \$105 for the weekend (\$120 at the door); daily rates available. Printable registration forms & on-line registration available through the Registration Page.

Website: www.shore-leave.com

July 29 – Aug. 2, 2020 **CONZEALAND, the 78th World Science Fiction Convention**. TSB Arena, Intercontinental Hotel *et al* (Wellington, New Zealand). GoH: Mercedes Lackey & Larry Dixon; Artist GoH: Greg Broadmore; Toastmaster: George RR Martin. Membership: currently \$452NZ (approx. \$272US); it will go up! On-line registration. Website: <https://conzealand.nz>

Aug. 20-23, 2020 **COLUMBUS NASFiC 2020, the North American Science Fiction Convention**. Sheraton Columbus Hotel at Capitol Square (Columbus, OH). GoH: Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson; Artist GoH: Stephanie Law; Science GoH: Marc Millis (NASA). Membership: currently \$100 (will go up!). Make checks payable to "Columbus 2020 NASFiC" and sent to: Columbus 2020 NASFiC, c/o Kim Williams, 4227 Beechrun Rd., Whitehall, OH 43213. On-line registration also available.

Website: <http://columbus2020nasfic.org/>

Sept. 4-7, 2020 **TCEP 27** ("Ted and Craig's Excellent Party"). "A relaxed gaming convention." Hampton Inn & Suites Washington Dulles Airport (Sterling VA). Membership: \$30 for the weekend. Website: <https://www.barkingmad.org/>

Oct. 16-18, 2020 **CAPCLAVE 2020**. Rockville Hilton & Executive Meeting Center (Rockville MD). GoH: Peter S. Beagle and Troy L. Wiggins (editor/blogger). Membership: \$50 thru the end of 2019 (will go up). On-line registration.

Website: <https://www.capclave.org/capclave/capclave20/>

Nov. 27-29, 2020 **CHESSIECON 2020**. Lord Baltimore Hotel (Baltimore MD). GoH: Charlie Jane Anders; Music GoH: Tom Smith. Membership: \$45 until March 17; \$55 from March 18 to October 31; \$60 at the door. Make check payable to "Thanksgiving Science Fiction Society" and send to: TSFS, Inc., PO Box 83032, Gaithersburg, MD 20883-3032. On-line registration also available via PayPal. Website: <http://chessiecon.org/> Info at: info@chessiecon.org