



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 367 – October 2020

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.

Before the COVID-19 shut-down orders, the LSF Book Discussion Group usually met 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. Now, book discussions are held virtually (same "4th Thursday" schedule). The next book discussion will be held on October 22nd (via Zoom).

Here are the details for the next several discussions:

Oct. 22 – *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern (moderator: Zena).

Dec. 3 (combined Nov/Dec discussion) – *The Affair of the Mysterious Letter* by Alexis Hall (moderator: Carl).

Jan. 28, 2021 – *Circe* by Madeline Miller (moderator: Konrad).

Feb. 25, 2021 – *The Glass Hotel* by Emily St. John Mandel (moderator: Zena).

March 25, 2021 – *Enter the Aardvark* by Jessica Anthony (mod: Konrad). ΛΨΦ



To our ConFAB Friends,

ConFABulous 2020 will be a one-day virtual convention on Saturday, October 10 (Noon to Midnight).

The con will have some of the same features as our face-to-face conventions, including a single track of panels and plenty of opportunities to play board games, card games, and RPGs through virtual connections.

Do you have an idea for panelists or a panel topic that you'd like to organize? Please send your ideas to John Till:

programming@gaylaxicon.org

Do you have an idea for an RPG session? Send John Till an idea about the game you'd like to run: the game system, the time frame (we recommend 2-3 hours for online RPGs), and system requirements. We will work with you to make sure that players know what they may need to play in your game.

Do you have a board or card game you'd like to run? Please let Burl Zorn, our gaming coordinator, know what you'd like to run, for how long, and any system capabilities/requirements you need to run the game on-line:

burl@sourcecomicsandgames.com



"Reading is the key that opens doors to many good things in life. Reading shaped my dreams, and more reading helped me make my dreams come true."

**- Ruth Bader Ginsburg -
1933 - 2020**

<< October 2020 LSF Meeting TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY >

Due to Coronavirus concerns, we plan to hold the October 11th LSF meeting virtually. Anyone who would like to participate can contact Rob for virtual meeting information at rob gatesdc@gmail.com. Hope to "see" you there!



What's Inside?

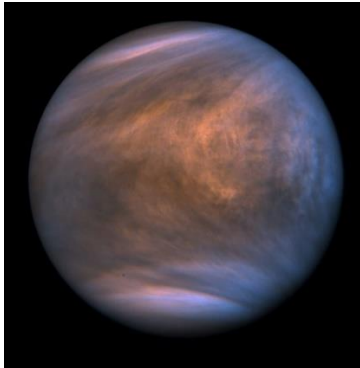
Page 2: Life in the Clouds of Venus? Minutes of the September LSF Meeting.

Page 3: Diana Rigg (obituary).

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

Life in the Clouds of Venus?

info passed along by Carl
(from a Sept. 14th on-line article by
Seth Borenstein)



Astronomers have identified a potential sign of life (possibly microbial) located high in the sulfuric acid-laden clouds of the planet Venus.

Two telescopes (Hawaii and Chile) have spotted the chemical signature of phosphine in the thick Venesian clouds. Phosphine is a noxious gas that (on Earth) is only associated with life. This was reported in a study in the journal *Nature Astronomy* co-authored by David Clements (an astrophysicist at the Imperial College of London) and Sara Seager (an MIT planetary scientist).

A major method used by astronomers to search for life on extra-solar planets is to look for “biosignatures” (chemical signatures that can only be made by biological processes). Three astronomers in Hawaii decided to look for biosignatures on Venus – they searched for phosphine (three hydrogen atoms and a phosphorous atom). On Earth, there are only two ways that phosphine can be formed – one is an industrial process (such as when the gas was produced for chemical warfare during WWI); and the other is biological (possibly as a waste product). David Clements notes that phosphine is found in “ooze at the bottom of ponds, the guts of some creatures like badgers, and perhaps most unpleasantly associated with piles of penguin guano.”

According to Sara Seager, researchers “exhaustively went through every possibility and ruled all of them out: volcanoes, lightning strikes, small meteorites falling into the atmosphere... Not a single process we looked at could

(continued on page 3)

Minutes of the September LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

The meeting took place via Zoom, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

TV News: NetFlix will be adapting *The Three Body Problem* into a series. *Lovecraft Country* is getting very positive critical reviews. (Rob says that the African-American characters face bigger terrors because they are Black in 1950s America than they do from the Lovecraftian-themed horrors.) Rob reported that Season 2 of *Umbrella Academy* and *Doom Patrol* are fantastic. Dan is enjoying Ridley Scott’s *Raised by Wolves*: “Two androids are tasked with raising human children on a mysterious virgin planet, as the human colony threatens to be torn apart by religious differences.” There is mediocre support for the animated “Star Trek” series *Lower Decks*; Rob described it “hit or miss”. The second season of *The Boys* has begun. Peter has been watching *Away*, the NextFlix personal relationships drama series, starring Hillary Swank as the lead astronaut; Dan likes the *Rashomon*-like effect that was used in the first episode. Wayne likes *Dark*, NetFlix’s German time-travel series; it tells the tale of four estranged families who unravel a sinister time travel conspiracy. The final season of *Archer* premieres this Wednesday. Wayne watched NetFlix’s *Wandering Earth*, which did not work for him – it’s based upon the book by Cixin Liu – on the other hand, Peter enjoyed it.



The faces of Halloween 2020?

Film News: Peter and Rob enjoyed the new live-action *Mulan*; it has some genre elements - sorcery and an imaginary Phoenix. There was much discussion around the controversy over the filming location in the Chinese province where the Uighurs are being incarcerated and “re-trained”. (For another look at contemporary or near-future China, Carl recommended Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Red Moon*, most of which takes place in China rather than on the Moon.) Everyone has enjoyed the trailer for the new *Dune* movie, starring Timothée Chalamet as Paul Atreides. (Karl believes that Jason Momoa isn’t too tall and big to play the role of Duncan Idaho. Rob cannot comment on the quality of the casting until he sees the movie.) Rob enjoyed Amazon Prime’s *Velocipastor* with its cheesy plot elements and special effects. The release of *Wonder Woman 1984* has been pushed back to December 2020; *Mandalorian* Season 2 is still slated for the Fall 2020.

Other News: RIP actor Chadwick Boseman; fans have suggested that the character of Shuri continue the role of Black Panther. RIP Diana Rigg of *The Avengers* and *Game of Thrones*! Some doubt was expressed that AwesomeCon will be actually held as a face-to-face convention in December 2020. Rob reminded everyone that *The Devourers* (by Indra Das) will be the subject of the September LSF book discussion (to be held via Zoom).

ΛΨΦ

HAPPY
HALLOWEEN,
LSF!!

Halloween 2020 ain't
messing around: On a
Saturday, a full moon
& We set our clocks
back that night.



Life in the Clouds of Venus?

continued from page 2

produce phosphine in high enough quantities to explain our team's findings."

But how can life exist on such an inhospitable planet as Venus, where surface temperatures are around 800 degrees Fahrenheit (425 degrees Celsius) and there is no water? Seager and Clements theorize that life *can* exist about 30 miles above the surface in the thick carbon-dioxide cloud deck, where the temperature is "about room temperature or slightly warmer". This cloud layer contains droplets mostly composed of highly acidic sulfuric acid and tiny amounts of water. The phosphine could be produced by some kind of microbes (probably single-celled) living in those sulfuric acid droplets, living their entire lives in the 10-mile-deep clouds.

Several outside experts – also Clements and Seager – agree that this is tantalizing evidence but that it's far from being proof of extraterrestrial life. Some scientists don't believe we know enough about Venus to say that life is the only explanation for the phosphine. Life is definitely a possibility, but everyone agrees that further study is needed. NASA hasn't sent anything to Venus since 1989 but is considering two possible missions into the Venusian atmosphere as early as 2026 (including one called DAVINCI+). Russia, Europe, and Japan have dispatched probes in the meantime.

ΛΨΦ



After six months of listening to people talk with masks on, I finally understand what Charlie Brown's teacher was saying!

Editor's note:

This unattributed quote was sent to me by one of my co-workers.

Diana Rigg

1938 – 2020

British stage and screen actress Diana Rigg – Dame Enid Diana Elizabeth Rigg, Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire – passed away at the age of 82 on September 10th.

Diana Rigg was born in Doncaster, Yorkshire, England. When she was two months old, her family moved from Yorkshire to Bikaner, Rajasthan, India, where her father was employed as a railway executive for the Bikaner State Railway. Diana lived in India until she was eight years old and spoke Hindi as her second language. She was later sent back to England to attend a boarding school – which she hated. She was trained as an actress at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (1955 – 1957); her classmates included Glenda Jackson and Siân Phillips.

Rigg is undoubtedly best known for two iconic roles. In the TV series *The Avengers* (1965-1968), she was secret agent Emma Peel, renowned for her signature jumpsuit outfit (aka "the Emma peeler") and as the sexy partner of the conservatively-dressed John Steed (actor Patrick Macnee). Almost five decades later, Rigg was approached by creators David Benioff and D.B Weiss for the role of Lady Olenna Tyrell during the third season of the HBO series *Game of Thrones*. The role of the witty and sarcastic political mastermind – aka "The Queen of Thorns" – was expanded beyond her appearances in GRRM's novels – a total of 18 episodes from the third to the final season. Rigg's portrayal of Lady Tyrell was wildly popular; and she has stated that she really enjoyed having a role that was "so much up my street."

The F&SF genre wasn't Rigg's mainstay by any means – she began her stage career in 1957 and a list of her non-genre stage, screen, and TV roles would fill several pages. However, she did return to F&SF again and again. In 1968, she appeared as Helena in a film version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – fellow cast members included Helen Mirren, David Warner, Ian Richardson, Judi Dench, and Ian Holm. Then, in 1969, she appeared in the film *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* – as



Tracy Bond, the only wife of James Bond (with George Lazenby, in his only appearance as Agent 007). Other F&SF roles included: Sonya Winter in *The Assassination Bureau* (1969, based on a Jack London story); Edwina Lionheart in *Theatre of Blood* (1973, with Vincent Price); Lady Holiday in *The Great Muppet Caper* (1981); and Snow White's evil stepmother in the Cannon Movie Tales adaptation of *Snow White* (1987).

In 2013, Rigg appeared as the villainous Mrs. Winifred Gillyflower in the *Doctor Who* episode "The Crimson Horror" (with Matt Smith as The Doctor). Mark Gatiss wrote the Victorian Era-based story especially for Rigg and her daughter Rachael Stirling. It was the first time that Rigg worked with her daughter; and, according to Rigg, it was also the first time in her career that she drew on her roots to find a Doncaster-Yorkshire accent for a role.

Rigg was a patron of International Care & Relief and was the public face of the charity's child sponsorship efforts for many years. In 1988, she was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire; and in 1994 she was further honored as a Dame Commander of the OBE – which made her Dame Diana Rigg. Between 1967 and 2019, she received almost two dozen nominations for various acting awards (including the Emmy, Tony, and Golden Globe Awards). She won a BAFTA TV Award (1990), a Tony (1994), an Emmy (1997), and several other theatre-related awards – all for non-F&SF roles. In 2014, Rigg received the Will Award (presented by the Shakespeare Theater Company); and in October 2015, to commemorate 50 years of Emma Peel, the British Film Institute screened an episode of *The Avengers*, followed by an on-stage interview with Rigg about her time in the television series.



**** 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. Due to Coronavirus concerns, the Lambda Sci-Fi meeting for Sunday, Oct. 11th, will be held virtually. We'll keep you informed of the status of future meetings.

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 (with help from Bob Angell)

Oct. 10, 2020 (Noon to Midnight) **CONFABULOUS III**. Converted to a 1-day virtual convention, hosted by North Country Gaylaxians; for LGBTQ geeks and gamers; featuring a single track of discussion panels and on-line gaming.

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

Oct. 17-18, 2020 **CAPCLAVE 2020**. "Due to the novel coronavirus, the Capclave team has made the decision to be virtual this year. We will be holding Capclave October 17-18. Yes, this is two days, but we will run longer on Sunday than is typical. We will be focused on presentations, panels, and small group activities such as author readings or discussions. Keep an eye on our website and social media for news regarding new participants. We plan to use Zoom for most activities, but we are looking at adding a text chat area via Discord as well."

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

Nov. 27-29, 2020 **CHESSIECON 2020**. "Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Chessiecon 2020 will be online only. The Lord Baltimore Hotel has been postponing room reservations to November 2021. Official announcement forthcoming. Do you have a Discord account? We have an official Chessiecon server where you can keep up with friends, ask questions, and get announcements straight from the staff! Contact videogames@chessiecon.org for the invite link!"

Website: <http://chessiecon.org/> Info at: info@chessiecon.org

Dec. 11-13, 2020 **AWESOME CON** (delayed from May 2020). Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington, DC). Guests include: Mario Lopez, Mark-Paul Gosselaar, & Elizabeth Berkley (*Saved by the Bell*); 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). Various selected "add-ons". Limited tickets – on-line purchase advised via their Tickets Page.

Website: <https://awesome-con.com/>

April 16-18, 2021 **RAVENCON 15**. Virginia Crossings Tapestry Collection by Hilton (Glen Allen, VA – just north of Richmond). Guests of Honor: Terry Brooks (Author), Rhiannon's Lark (Music). Membership: \$35 before 12/31/2020; \$40 before 3/27/2021; \$50 at the door.

Website: <https://www.ravencon.com/>

July 9-11, 2021 **SHORE LEAVE 42** (rescheduled from July 2020). Delta Hotels Marriott Baltimore Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). Actor GoH: Denis Lawson (*Star Wars* "Wedge Antilles"); Brandon Routh (Superman & The Atom); Robert Duncan McNeill (Lt. Tom Paris); Brent Spiner (Data); Alex Kingston (River Song). Membership: \$105 for the weekend (\$120 at the door); daily rates available. Printable registration forms & on-line registration available through the Registration Page.

Website: <https://www.shore-leave.com/info/update-2020-04-25.htm>

