



lambda Sci-fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 382 – January 2022

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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.

Before the COVID-19 shut-down orders, the LSF Book Discussion Group meet on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM, at Peter & Rob's home. *Until April 2022, book discussions will continue to be held virtually (same "4th Thursday" schedule).* The next book discussion will be held on January 27th [via Zoom](#).

Here are the details for the next several discussions:

Jan. 27, 2022 – *Far Out: Recent Queer Science Fiction & Fantasy*, anthology edited by Paula Guran (moderator: Carl)

Feb. 24, 2022 – *A Memory Called Empire*, by Arkady Martine (moderator: Judy).

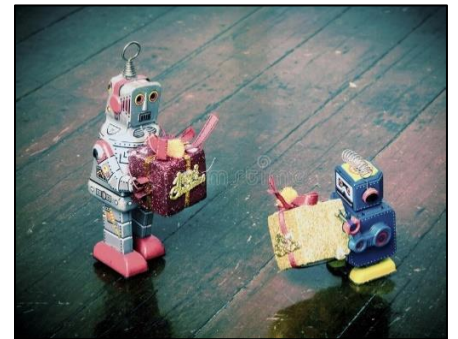
March 24, 2022 – *Architects of Memory*, by Karen Osborne (moderator: Bob A)

April 28, 2022 (returning to in-person format!) – *White Trash Warlock*, by David Slayton (moderator: Konrad) **ΛΨΦ**



Cheerful Gaylactic New Year Wishes to Everyone at lambda Sci-fi!!

Annual LSF Gift Exchange at Jan. 9th Meeting



As announced at the December 2021 LSF Meeting, we'll resume a year-delayed tradition and host its *thirty-first* annual book (*et al*) exchange at the in-person monthly LSF meeting to be held on **January 9, 2022!**

All LSF members – and visitors, guests, attendees, etc. – are invited to participate in this “blind exchange.” (*Remember: You MUST be fully vaccinated to attend this meeting.*)

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*

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***** January 9, 2022 Meeting = In-Person Meeting!!! *****

Unless you hear otherwise, the January 9th LSF meeting will once again return to the “in-person” format. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.** This meeting will also feature the (resumed) Annual LSF Gift Exchange. Hope to “see” you there!



What's Inside?

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Page 3: Recent Coelacanth Studies; *War at the Speed of Light* (short review).

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Minutes of the December 2022 LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

Club News/Updates

Rob advised everyone that monthly LSF meetings will once again be “in person” at Peter & Rob’s residence, starting on January 9, 2022. (Pending a worsening of the COVID situation, they will no longer be held via Zoom – nor will they be “hybrid” in-person/Zoom meetings.) Rob also announced the resumption of the annual LSF Gift Exchange at the January 9th meeting and described the process.

Rob also announced that LSF book discussion will resume “in person” discussions beginning in April 2022 (not as “hybrid” Zoom/in-person meetings). Bob A. raised the question of holding parallel/“shadow” LSF book discussions – he will poll club members for their input on this idea.

Movies

There was some discussion about the 2019 comedy-horror movie *Velocipastor* – which, of course, led to a brief discussion of *Llamageddon*..

Television

The general consensus is that the most recent *Doctor Who* episode was horrible. Teresa does not like the current companion – his accent is too hard to follow, and she feels subtitles are necessary. It was also commented that there is too much emphasis on the details of the origin of The Doctor.

Peter enjoyed Netflix’s low-budget live-action remake of *Cowboy Bebop*. He felt it ended reasonably well.

Amazon Prime’s *Wheel of Time* series: Rob likes the first four episodes. It was commented that the pilot was weak, but each episode gets progressively better. The plot of the TV series differs in a number of ways from the plots of the novels.

David heard that there are fewer “naked Henry Cavill” appearances in the next season of Netflix’s *Witcher*.

Carl talked about the short-film sci-fi series DUST (available via YouTube). (*Ed. note: See his review elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter.*)

Teresa loves the new *Hawkeye* series on Disney+. It was noted that a *Spiderverse* sequel is in the works. Rob

described Prime Video’s *Don’t Look Up* genre comedy (to be released on Christmas Eve). Season 2 of Syfy’s *Resident Alien* (starring Alan Tudyk) returns in January 2022.

Other News

Rob noted that gothic novelist Anne Rice has just died.

Upcoming LSF books discussions: January 2022 = *Far Out: An Anthology of Recent Queer Science Fiction and Fantasy*, edited by Paula Guran; February 2022 = *A Memory Called Empire*, by Arkady Martine; March 2022 = *Architects of Memory*, by Karen Osborne; April 2022 (returning to “in person” format) = *White Trash Warlock*, by David Slayton.

The meeting wrapped up with a discussion of DisCon III being held next week here in DC. Several LSF members plan to attend.

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LSF Gift Exchange

(continued from page 1)

“book” to include comics, graphic novels, 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.) New or used, it makes no difference, as long as it’s one of your favorites!

(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 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!

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DUST – Short SF Films

info passed along
by Carl (and Richard and Rob)

Just after Thanksgiving, Richard passed along some info about “a great sci-fi short film with gay content.” It’s one of the DUST films, and it’s titled “Jeff Drives You”: [Sci-Fi Short Film: "Jeff Drives You" | DUST | NSFW - YouTube](#)

Thank you, Richard! It’s *really* good – sort of like a short *Queer Outer Limits* episode. It intrigued me enough to go looking for more info.

When I asked Rob if he’d ever heard of DUST, he looked it up in IMDB, which describes it as follows:

DUST is a sci-fi brand that presents thought-provoking visions of the future by searching for the best sci-fi stories from filmmakers, writers and creators around the world. From feature films to short films, series and podcasts, DUST works with established and emerging voices. DUST is Gunpowder & Sky’s sci-fi entertainment brand. The current content library consists of more than 400 cutting-edge stories.

Well, I went surfing around to watch more of them. So far, I’ve watched an even dozen of their shorter films on YouTube. (None of the ones I watched was over 20 minutes long.) They’re all pretty darn good. Other than “Jeff Drives You”, I haven’t run across another Queer-themed DUST film. Some of them had sexual content (of the human-machine variety), such as “Come F*ck My Robot” (weird and thought-provoking) and the award-winning “A Week with Rebecca” (tugging the heartstrings). “Instant Doctor” is a mind-bending examination of “advances” in medical science. Several of them were animated: “The Ocean-Maker” (post-apocalyptic), “World War” (mecha rides again!), “Floaters” (kind’a funny), and “The Lonely Orbit” (which wasn’t one of my favorites).

Do a little Internet/YouTube search of your own. I think you’ll find something to enjoy!

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Recent Coelacanth Studies

info passed along by Carl



Coelacanths have been called “living fossils.” They are the only surviving members of an otherwise extinct lineage of lobe-finned fish that have been slowly swimming around in the deep seas for about 400 million years. They were once thought to have gone extinct at the end of the Cretaceous Period, 66 million years ago. The earliest fossils of coelacanths were discovered in the 19th Century. The first living specimen was discovered on December 23, 1938, by museum curator Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, among the catch of a local fisherman who had caught it off the east coast of South Africa.

Two species of coelacanths are currently known: the West Indian Ocean coelacanth, *Latimeria chalumnae* (primarily found near the Comoro Islands off the east coast of Africa) and the Indonesian coelacanth, *Latimeria menadoensis*. The West Indian Ocean coelacanth is considered a critically endangered species. Coelacanths are considered so endangered that scientists can only study specimens already caught and dead.

Coelacanths are large lobe-finned fish. They can grow to more than 2 meters (6 ½ feet) in length and weigh around 90 kilograms (200 pounds). They are more closely related to lungfish and tetrapods (four-legged creatures) than they are to other fish. They produce a relatively small number of offspring; and a female retains the fertilized eggs within her body until they are born (measuring around 35 centimeters – a little over a foot – at birth). Coelacanths are believed to be nocturnal “passive drift-feeders,” slowly drifting along with the current with only minimal self-propulsion and eating whatever prey they encounter. During the daytime, coelacanths either rest in caves anywhere from 100 to 500 meters deep or migrate to deeper waters. Their thick scales form a type of body-armor.

Coelacanths have few predators; and the major threat to coelacanths is their accidental capture by fishing operations, especially commercial deep-sea trawling. Recent studies have turned up a number of new and surprising facts about these weird creatures. Of particular interest are the results of a study by a team of French scientists that were published on June 17th of this year in *Current Biology*.

First off, it seems that coelacanths live *much* longer than was previously thought. Scientists long believed that coelacanths live about 20 years; they calculated the age of coelacanth specimens by counting the lines on a specific scale (the standard technique for calculating the age of commercial fish). But French scientists found that they were missing smaller lines that could only be seen using polarized light. Bruno Ernande (co-author of the study, a marine ecologist at France’s marine research institute) said that polarized light revealed five smaller lines for every big one; and they concluded that each of these smaller lines better correlates to a year of coelacanth age. Using this method, they calculated that the oldest available specimen was 84 years old when it was captured in 1960. They also studied two embryos and calculated that the larger was five years old. Based on this information, Ernande’s study seems to indicate that coelacanth pregnancies last at least five years.

Coelacanths seem to grow and mature at an achingly slow pace. The French study indicates that females don’t reach sexual maturity until their late 50s, while males are sexually mature at 40 to 69 years of age. Coelacanths apparently age slowly, like other dwellers of the deep (such as sharks and rays). Ernande says: “They might have evolved similar life histories because they are sharing similar type habitats...” even though they’re genetically unrelated to other deep-sea fish. The cooler waters below 120 meters reduce metabolic costs; drifting toward reefs and night-feeding saves vital energy; and resting in caves during the day saves energy that would otherwise be used to fight current.

Gene sequencing studies have led to another important discovery. Coelacanths are still evolving today, but at a



very slow rate. There is a comparative lack of evolutionary pressure on them: they have few predators and they live deep in the ocean where conditions are very stable. Without much pressure for them to adapt to survive, the rate at which coelacanths have evolved is much slower compared to other organisms. So, coelacanths may indeed be considered “living fossils,” but they haven’t remained “unchanged” over the course of their 400 million years in the ocean depths.

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War at the Speed of Light

by Louis A. Del Monte
(Potomac Books, 2021)

Wayne #1 passed along a short review of this eye-opening non-fiction book. The review appeared in the October 2021 issue of *Military Officer* magazine. Here’s a short excerpt from this review:

This work is Louis Del Monte’s sobering description of “hyperwar,” the rapidly accelerating pace of modern warfare, with directed-energy weapons making nuclear weapons and the accepted concept of mutually assured destruction irrelevant... He focuses on four categories of directed-energy weapons: lasers, microwaves, electromagnetic pulse (EMP), and cyberspace weapons. He tells how they have been weaponized, their offensive applications, potential countermeasures, and how “swarm” tactics can easily overwhelm defenses. He reveals how artificial intelligence has created autonomous weapons that can detect, select, and engage targets without human interaction, creating great risk of unintended escalation.

Says Wayne: “Would that this were still sci-fi!”

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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 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.

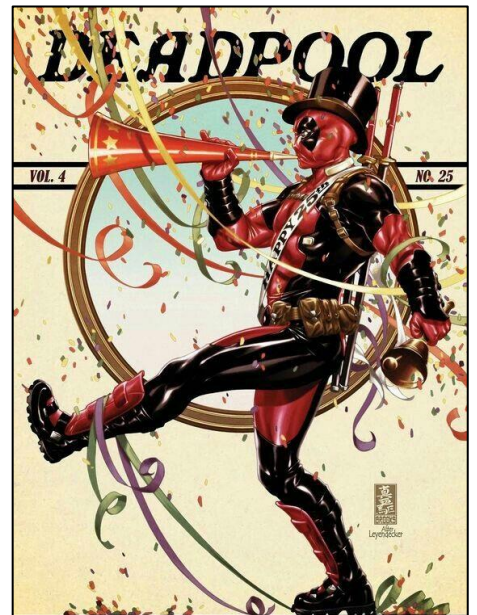
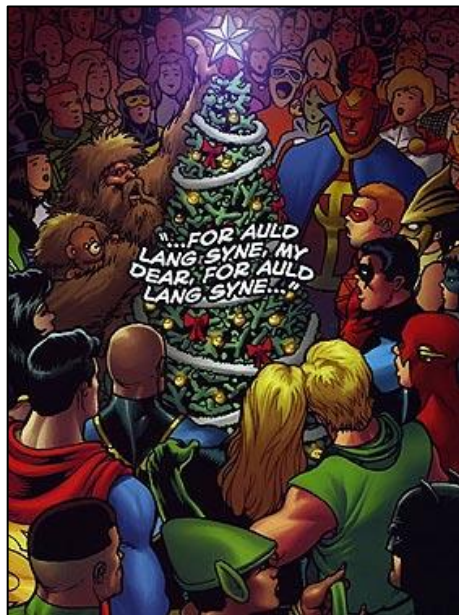
Annual membership fees are \$10, for which you will receive an e-mailed copy of this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. Newsletter submissions are always welcome.

Meetings are held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. Unless there is a serious downturn in the Coronavirus situation, the January 9, 2022 LSF meeting will once again return to the "in-person" format. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.**

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 29 – May 1, 2022 **RAVENCON 15**. Virginia Crossings Hotel & Conference Center (Richmond VA). GoH: Terry Brooks; Music GoH: Rhiannon's Lark. Membership: \$35 before 12/31/2021; \$40 before 4/5/2022; \$50 at the door; day badges available. On-line registration at: <https://ravencon.com/store/Registration-c23522469> Webpage: <https://ravencon.com>



Here's wishing everyone a SUPER 2022!!