



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 393 – December 2022

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A Proposed Membership Change to Lambda Sci-Fi (to Be Discussed and Decided at December LSF Social Meeting on Sunday 12/11) proposed by Peter and Rob

Please give the following some thought – and if you have an opinion about the proposal and wish to be involved in the decision about it – please plan to be in attendance at our December Second Sunday Social Gathering/Meeting on Sunday, December 11th. The gathering officially starts at 2:00 PM; and we will have this as a discussion and decision item before we shift to our normal social circle activities that day.

Background: Lambda Sci-Fi has officially been, for its 33+ years of existence, a paid membership organization – while at the same time providing a safe and open geek space and events for everyone in the community regardless of their membership status with us. Over the years we’ve seen our numbers grow on both our e-mail list and our Facebook group to the point where they swarf our “paid member” numbers. (We currently have fewer than 20 paid members, while on our
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LSF New Year's Eve Gaming Party and Potluck! announced by Peter & Rob



****All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.****

Come join Lambda Sci-Fi as we ring out the old year and ring in the new year with an afternoon and evening of gaming.

Date: Saturday, Dec. 31, 2022

Time: The doors will open at 2:00 PM. We’ll all ring in and toast the New Year with champagne, sparkling wine, and/or sparkling cider at midnight.

Where: Rob & Peter’s home: 1425 “S” St NW, Washington, DC

What to Bring: Your favorite table game or two or three (cards, board, etc.). And it’s a potluck meal, so bring something to eat: appetizers (veggies, chips, etc.), main course item (enough to serve at least 4-5 people), dessert, and/or non-alcoholic drinks (both regular and diet). For the New Year’s toast, it’s OK
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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. The next book discussion will be held **in person on December 1st (a combined Nov/Dec discussion)**. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.**

Here are the details for the next two discussions:

Dec. 1, 2022 (combined Nov/Dec discussion) – *She Who Became the Sun*, by Shelley Parker-Chan (mod: Keith W)

Jan. 26, 2023 – (two works) *What Moves the Dead*, by T. Kingfisher and “The Fall of the House of Usher,” by Edgar Allan Poe (moderator: Carl)

Note: The Virtual Book Club has been discontinued. **ΛΨΦ**

***** December 11, 2022 Meeting = IN PERSON! *****

The next LSF meeting will be held on Sunday, December 11th. The meeting will be held at Peter and Rob’s home, 1425 “S” Street NW, Washington, DC. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.** The doors open at 2:00 PM with a short business/social meeting, followed by the gaming party. Hope to see you there!



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Proposed Membership Change

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Facebook group has just under 500 followers and our email list has over 550 active subscribers.) In fact, with a steady decline in paid members, we now sometimes see more people at our gaming events than we have as actual paid members.

Proposal: We think it's time to align the official structure of Lambda Sci-Fi with the reality of who we are these days and abolish the concept of paid membership completely for the organization. Events would remain open to all, voting on any important item would be done by whomever is present at a given discussion, and everyone would have immediate access to each newsletter as soon as we publish it. For financial support Lambda Sci-Fi would run once or twice annual fundraising drives through our e-mail list and Facebook group – reaching a wider audience and also allowing people to support the club at any level they feel comfortable with rather than through the specific

membership dues amount (which has been \$10). LSF has the financial reserves to cover our expenses for several years; and the membership concept could be revisited if we find that the small amount of support that membership was providing is not being matched or exceeded.

What Would This Mean:

What would this mean for most of the community that is LSF? Nothing would really change at all for our activities. We'll still host monthly social gatherings and book discussions; we'll still have gaming parties and other events; we'll still publish a newsletter; we'll still have our online presence; we'll still be the social club we've always been. Those who participate in activities will simply have a little more "in the moment" say in future decisions. We'll also lose the printed membership directory, but we haven't done one of those for years. It's easy enough for people to make connections with each other online; and we may even look at seeing if there's an add-on for the website that people could choose to add themselves to on their own.

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Annual LSF Gift Exchange at Jan. 8th Meeting



It's coming up on that time of year again – time for the *thirty-second* annual book (*et al*) exchange at the in-person monthly LSF meeting to be held on January 8, 2023!

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, fan-

tasy, or horror book. (*NOTE: Over the years, LSF has expanded the concept of "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!)

LSF New Year's Eve Gaming Party and Potluck

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to bring some sparkling wine or cider (champagne, if you're feeling generous).

The hosts request that no one drink alcohol during the party other than at midnight.

For more information, send e-mail to:

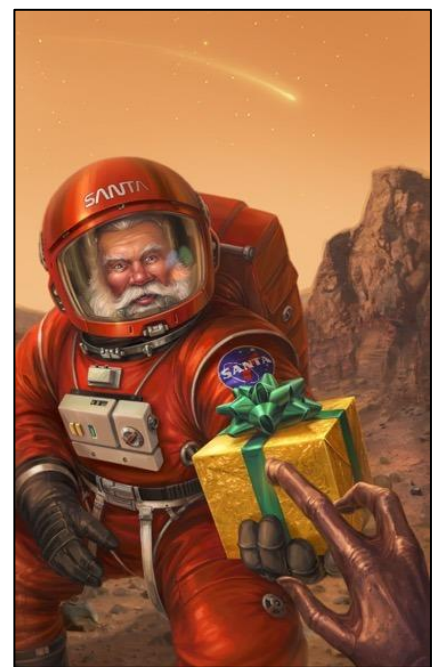
PeterPKnapp@gmail.com or
RobGatesDC@gmail.com

Directions and Parking Suggestions:

<https://www.lambdascifi.org/peterrob/>

Remember: Attendees **MUST** be fully vaccinated.

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(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!)

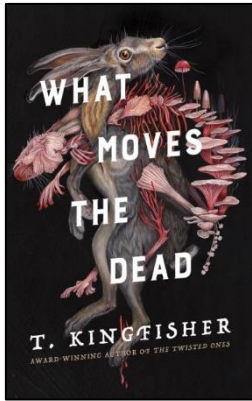
(5) When your number is called, you pick one of the packages from the pile. And when you open it up, you'll find out who it's from. See how easy?

I can hardly wait to see what shows up *this* year!

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October Reading – Part 2 – reviews by Carl

In honor of the Halloween season, I generally enjoy reading “weird” or “creepy” or “scary” books. This October was no exception, and I certainly read a lotta creepy stuff *this* October. So here are *more* of the titles from my October 2022 reading list.



What Moves the Dead
by T. Kingfisher

(Nightfire/Tom Doherty Assoc., 2022)

This dark little gem – a novella? a novelette? – arrived just in time to get added to my October reading list. I’d never read anything by T. Kingfisher before; but if this is an example of her authorial skills, it certainly won’t be the last one I read.

In her Author’s Note, Kingfisher states that her “horror career involves revisiting classic stories.” *What Moves the Dead* is no exception. Her inspiration this time is a classic story of gothic horror: Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” – and she’s written one heckuva chilling variation on the Poe short story. (And, yes, I re-read Poe’s story for comparison purposes.)

The general setting for Kingfisher’s version remains the same: the creepy, deteriorating Usher mansion located in the middle of a miasmatic swampy lake. But Kingfisher has additionally identified its location as somewhere in Ruravia, a fictional European country. (The name of the country is a variation on Ruritania, the setting of Anthony Hope’s classic *The Prisoner of Zenda*.) In both Poe’s and Kingfisher’s

stories, the Usher mansion is the home of the last two remaining members of the Usher family: the sickly and mentally-unstable Roderick and his dying sister Madeleine. However, Kingfisher has changed a couple of other characters. The (unnamed male) narrator of the Poe story – a boyhood friend of Roderick Usher – is transformed by Kingfisher into Alex Easton, a retired (genetically female) Gallacian soldier and former childhood companion of Madeleine Usher. The (also unnamed) “physician of the family” – who appears for about 15 seconds in the Poe story – becomes a significant character in Kingfisher’s story: James Denton, a retired American Civil War physician whom Roderick Usher had asked to examine the dying Madeline Usher.

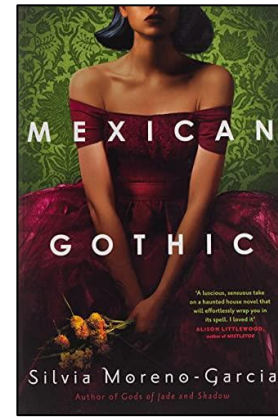
However, the biggest change made by Kingfisher is that she changed Poe’s story of decadence and madness into a well-nigh-Lovecraftian horror story. She took Poe’s apparent fixation (or maybe obsession) with fungi (references to which pop up time and time again in “The Fall of the House of Usher”) and... well, no spoilers. Suffice it to say that *What Moves the Dead* has undertones of H.P. Lovecraft’s “The Colour Out of Space” and one of the episodes in George Romero’s 1982 horror film *Creepshow*: “The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill” (based on the Stephen King short story “Weeds”). Very creepy and... well... icky. I really enjoyed it!

Incidentally, *What Moves the Dead* also includes a fascinating examination of stereotypical gender roles, as well as a discussion of the use of gender-neutral terminology in the Gallacian language. An unexpected treat!

Mexican Gothic
by Silvia Moreno-Garcia
(Del Rey, 2021)

I decided to read *Mexican Gothic* on the basis of a recommendation by T. Kingfisher in her “Author’s Note” in *What Moves the Dead*. In addition, I was attracted by the description of *Mexican Gothic* as “Lovecraft meets the Brontës in Latin America!”

The setting is Mexico in the early 1950s. Noemí Taboada is a head-



strong, impulsive, sophisticated socialite, the daughter of a *nouveau riche* businessman in Mexico City. When a frantic and confusing letter from her cousin Catalina is received, Noemí packs her bags and takes a train to the quaint little town of El Triunfo to see if she can find out what’s wrong. Some time previously, Catalina (heir to a family fortune) had unexpectedly married Virgil Doyle, who promptly whisked her off to High Place, his family home in a remote mountain province of Mexico. The Doyles are an impoverished aristocratic English family that has been exploiting the silver mines near El Triunfo for generations and generations

Noemí is shocked at conditions at the Doyle mansion. Her formerly vibrant and lively cousin Catalina has become a pale and sickly invalid. Catalina’s husband, the darkly handsome and sexually-provocative Virgil Doyle, seems to direct all family affairs; and behind him is the shadowy presence of Great Uncle Howard Doyle, whose pain-wracked ancient body mostly keeps him confined to his bed. Care for Catalina is under the direct supervision of the strict and dour Florence Doyle, who also commands the High Place staff with an iron hand. And then there’s the shy and ineffectual Francis Doyle, Virgil’s younger brother, who is dominated by the other Doyle family members. (From this description, I think you can see the influence of such classic gothic novels as Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.)

Early on, Noemí decides that she must get her cousin Catalina away from High Place to Mexico City, where she can get the medical and psycho-

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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-generated (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; but the next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be on Sunday, December 11th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.** We 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

Feb. 10-12, 2023 **FARPOINT**. Delta by Marriott Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). Guest: Wilson Cruz (*ST: Discovery*), Rylee Alazraqui (*ST: Prodigy*). Membership (register on-line): \$90 for the weekend; daily rates available.

For more information: www.FarPointCon.com

May 26-29, 2023 **BALTICON 57**. Renaissance Harborplace Hotel (Baltimore MD). GoH: Jane Yolen; Artist GoH: Ariel Burgess. Registration details TBA. Website: <https://www.balticon.org/wp57/>

June 16-18, 2023 **AWESOME CON 2023**. Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington DC). Guests TBA. On-line registration: details TBA. Website: <https://awesome-con.com>

July 28-30, 2023 **OTAKON 2023** (celebrating Asian pop culture, including anime and manga). Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington DC). On-line registration: details "currently being updated" on their website.

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

Sept. 29 – Oct. 1, 2023 **CAPCLAVE 2023**. Rockville Hilton & Executive Meeting Center (Rockville MD). GoHs: Sarah Pinsker, Kameron Hurley. Registration details: TBA. Website: <https://www.capclave.org/capclave23/>

**October Reading
– Part 2 –
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logical care she so desperately seems to need; but she's unable to get Catalina to agree to leave the malign influence of the Doyles. And slowly – oh, so slowly – Noemí also gathers disturbing rumors and gossip about the history of High Place and the Doyle family: Howard Doyle's multiple (and fatal) marriages; mysterious deaths among the workers at the failing silver mine and among the High Place staff; the tenuous state of Doyle family finances; and other creepy stuff that I can't tell you without spoiling the fun. (In fact, almost the first half of the novel is "set-up" – which some readers might find a tad slow.)

The Lovecraftian influence in *Mexican Gothic* is a bit more difficult to parse. Don't expect appearances by cosmic horrors from beyond the stars. The "hidden secrets" in *Mexican Gothic* have a greater similarity to the "generational horror" you'll find in Lovecraft's "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward". *Mexican Gothic* also has some thematic similarities to Kingfisher's *What Moves the Dead* – but they're in no way identical.

Silvia Moreno-Garcia has also received popular acclaim for *Gods of Jade and Shadow*, a novel of a modern girl's encounters with the Mayan God of Death. Based on the enjoyment I got from reading *Mexican Gothic*, I just might give *Gods of Jade and Shadow* a try, too.

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