



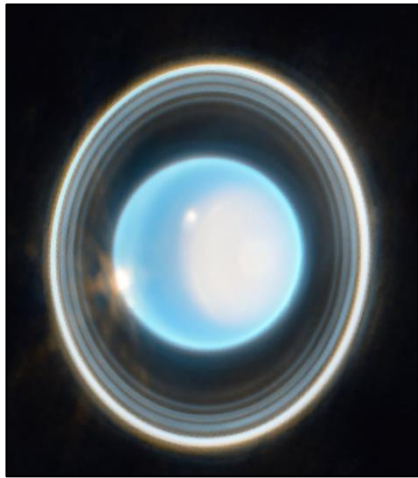
lambda Sci-fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

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On February 6th, NASA's James Webb Space Telescope captured this image of the planet Uranus, with its rings and bright polar cap. For more details, check out the NASA webpage:

<https://www.nasa.gov/feature/goddard/2023/nasa-s-webb-scores-another-ringed-world-with-new-image-of-uranus>



Happy Star Wars Day!



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 May 25th. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.**

Here are the details for the next several months:

May 25 – *Of Wars, and, Memories, and Starlight*, collection by Aliette de Bodard (moderator: Carl).

June 22 – *Sins of the Black Flamingo* (collected 5 issues), by Andrew Wheeler & Travis Moore (moderator: Ben).

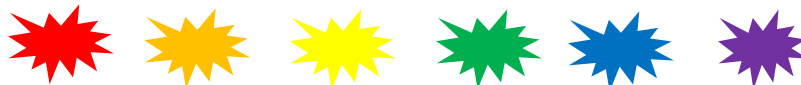
July 27 – *Even Though I Know the End*, by CL Polk (moderator: Carl).



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***** May 14, 2023 Meeting *****

The next LSF meeting will be held on Sunday, May 14th. 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 1:30 PM and the meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Hope to see you there!



What's Inside?

Page 2: *Jackalope Wives and Other Stories* (book review); Minutes of the April LSF Meeting.

Page 3: Food and F&SF (book review).

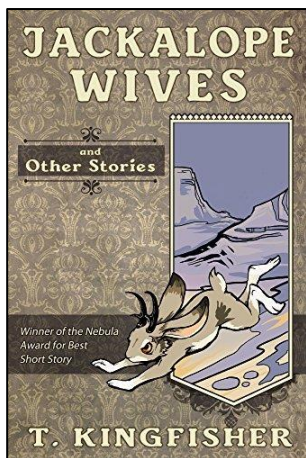
Page 4: Info About Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians and Con Calendar.

**Jackalope Wives
and Other Stories**
by T. Kingfisher
(Red Wombat Studio, 2017)
a short review by Carl

In January of this year, the subject of the LSF Book Discussion Group was *What Moves the Dead* by T. Kingfisher (the pen name of writer Ursula Vernon). I quite enjoyed this short novel: Kingfisher's re-telling of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" – with a Lovecraftian twist. I enjoyed it so much that I decided to look for some of her other works. I discovered that Kingfisher had won a Nebula Award in 2015 for her short story "Jackalope Wives" and that I'd be able to read it on-line. If you're interested, here's the link:

<https://apex-magazine.c.com/short-fiction/jackalope-wives/>

And I enjoyed "Jackalope Wives" so much that I decided to buy a copy of *Jackalope Wives and Other Stories*, a collection of Kingfisher's short stories.



This collection contains 17 of Kingfisher's short works, including four poems. I enjoyed everything in the collection. Of course, I had some favorites – with four of those favorites featuring a Wise Woman as the main character.

Two of the stories feature Grandma Harken, an old woman living beyond the outskirts of a small town somewhere in the American Southwest. In the title story – "Jackalope Wives" – Grandma Harken relies on her knowledge of the supernatural to help a jackalope

**Minutes of the
April LSF Meeting**
taken by Scott

Film News

Rob likes the Chonky Dragon character in the *Dungeons & Dragons* movie; he has seen it twice now. ("The right mix of action and humor.") Andy recommended the Tollywood movie *RRR*. Even though the movie *Renfield* includes Nicholas Cage in a starring role, this movie might have some redeeming features. MGM's 2023 fantasy film *Portable Door* (based upon the book by Tom Holt) is about a door that provides teleportation. Teresa is looking forward to the *Blue Beetle* movie with the leading DC comic character Jamie Reyes (and not the characters of Dan Garrett or Ted Kord.)

TV News

David passionately reported that a second season of the musical spoof *Schmigadoon* (starring Cecily Strong and Keegan-Michael Key) has started – it's titled *Schmicago*. Amazon Prime's adult animated fantasy *Legend of Vox Machina* is based upon Campaign One of the game *Critical Role*. Rob loves Opportunity and Spirit, the two robots in Amazon Prime Video's *Good Night Oppy* series. Season III of *Picard* has exceeded expectations. (Can Picard and his team overcome the shape shifters?) Thumbs-up for the Netflix series *Shadow and Bone*, which is based upon two series of books in the "Grishaverse" by author Leigh Bardugo. The Amazon Prime series *The Power* is based upon Naomi Alderman's book of the same title; the four episodes of Season 1 have just come out.

lope wife who has been captured and unintentionally harmed by her attractive (albeit thoughtless) grandson. (Side note: Jackalopes look like jackrabbits with antelope horns. The "wives" are female jackalopes who occasionally shed their skins to dance as beautiful women on certain moonlit nights. If such a being is captured when in human form – and if her jackalope skin is burned – she can be kept as a human wife. Grandma Harken's grandson screwed up his capture.) Grandma Har-

Apple TV's *Big Door Prize* is a comedy series based on the book of the same name by author M.O. Walsh. The premise is that a machine called Morpho appears in a grocery store one day in a small town; it is able to predict the destinies of those who use the machine. Does this plot sound like the 1960 "Nick of Time" *Twilight Zone* episode about a fortune-telling machine at a diner in Ohio (starring William Shatner)?

Carl enthusiastically described the web series *Neil's Puppet Dreams* (starring Neil Patrick Harris and Muppets), many episodes of which can be viewed on YouTube. [Ed. Note: Here are links to two of the episodes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7kkVYSbXVc>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8H1tG7Dlwzc>]

Other News

Peter and Rob plan to attend *Angels in America* at Arena Stage. Then there was a robust discussion about *Star Wars* characters: Ahsoka and Mandalorian.

Rob reviewed the upcoming LSF events:

- April 15 (Saturday) – LSF Tax Day Gaming Party
- April 27 (Thursday) – LSF Book Discussion of *Queers Destroy Science Fiction* (a special issue of *Lightspeed Magazine*)
- May 14 (Sunday, Mother's Day): LSF Monthly Meeting
- May 25 (Thursday) – LSF Book Discussion of *Of Wars, and Memories, and Starlight* by Aliette de Bodard

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ken also appears in "The Tomato Thief" – this time trying to discover who's stealing the best ripe tomatoes from her garden. (It turns out that the thief is a bird that has been subjected to a very unusual curse.) Kingfisher went to great pains to retain the "American Southwest" flavor of these stories while avoiding the potential for "cultural appropriation" in her depictions of various supernatural beings. Both stories

(continued on page 3)

Jackalope Wives

continued from page 2

are absolutely delightful; and I certainly hope Kingfisher will write more “Grandma Harkness” stories in the future.

“Razorback” is also set in the American Southwest – but this time the two women in the story are specifically identified as “witches.” Sal has never used her powers to harm anyone – but when her favorite razorback hog is stolen and brutally killed by a really awful man, Sal goes to her acquaintance Elizabeth Gray (a “darker” witch) to help her get revenge against the man.

“Pocosin” – the fourth of the stories featuring wise old women – takes place somewhere in the wilds of the Carolinas. (Side note: A *pocosin* is the term used for a Carolina peat wetland.) This time, a wise woman named Maggie Grey agrees to help a dying old rat god; and she’s willing to successively confront God, the Devil, and Death to help him.

Kingfisher is well-versed in fairytale and folklore themes; and she says she enjoys developing stories (often, dark ones) inspired by those themes. Three of my other favorite stories in this collection demonstrate her skill at adapting fairytales and folklore into marvelous Fantasy short stories. “Wooden Feathers” is a modern-day – and quite dark – variation on the story of Pinocchio. (Surprises at every turn!) In “The Dryad’s Shoe,” Kingfisher masterfully mixes a dryad (tree spirit) into a variation of the Cinderella storyline. Finally, there’s “Let Pass the Horses Black.” This time, Kingfisher turns to Faery folklore to create a variation on the centuries-old story of Tam-Lin (in which a captive human youth is rescued from the Queen of Faerie). Along with stunning images of the Faerie Court, Kingfisher has woven a grim story of less-than-satisfactory sibling relationships, as a young girl attempts to free her kidnapped brother. (Quite a surprising ending, I must say!)

Between *What Moves the Dead* and the stories collected in *Jackalope Wives and Other Stories*, I’ve become quite a fan of T. Kingfisher (aka Ursula Vernon). I look forward to reading more of her works.

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Food and F&SF

short reviews by Carl

Here are short reviews of a couple of books that illustrate the relationship between F&SF and food.

OK, I can already hear your objections. “Food?” you ask. “Are you serious? What the heck does F&SF have to do with food?” I can’t imagine why you’re so surprised. I can think of several rather well-known examples right off the top of my head. And I’m not just talking about F&SF works that include banquet scenes here and there. (Although *The Game of Thrones* certainly features at least a couple of banquets where major plot twists occur.) No, I’m talking about F&SF works that specifically explore our relationship with food and drink.

One of the earliest examples I can think of is a classic 1963 *Twilight Zone* episode: “To Serve Man” – based on the 1950 short story of the same name by Damon Knight. And there’s Disney/Pixar’s *Ratatouille* (2007), featuring a young cook who becomes a gourmet chef under the guidance and tutelage of an extremely talented rat. (I remember thinking: “If you’re not hungry when this animated feature begins, you *will* be by the time it’s over.”) A lesser-known novel is *The Sol Majestic* by Ferrett Steinmetz (Tor, 2019), a space opera of sorts that tells how a rag-tag band of misfits work to save the galaxy’s most renowned (and exclusive) restaurant – lots of exotic food and drinks here.

Oh, and if you’re willing to take a short jaunt into non-F&SF mystery stories, I *highly* recommend the “Rickey and G-Man” (or “Liquor”) novels by F&SF author Poppy Z Brite (now Billy Martin): *The Value of X* (2002), *Liquor* (2004), *Prime* (2005), and *Soul Kitchen* (2006). They’re set in contemporary New Orleans and follow the adventures of a gay couple who (at various times during their careers) work in or own diners, restaurants, bars, cocktail lounges, etc. Makes you want to head down to the Big Easy for a fabulous meal and a couple of rounds of cocktails.

And now on to the reviews...

Galactic Stew, edited by
David B. Coe and Joshua Palmatier
(Zombies Need Brains LLC, 2020)

I stumbled across this little anthology while noodling around in Amazon.com. “What brought about this anthology?” you ask.

Here’s what editor David Coe says in the Introduction: “...for those of us who also love speculative fiction, food often receives short shrift in the stories we read and write. Generic stews, c-rations, even *Lembas* bread—it all gets a bit grim. Hence this anthology. In these pages, food is not a prop or a vague addition to setting. Food is the star, the centerpiece of each remarkable story.”

Galactic Stew contains an assortment of 15 all-new F&SF short stories. As with many anthologies, I found that I enjoyed some of the stories more than others. Some of my favorites are:

“Blue” (by Paige Christie) tells how a caring woman serves up food to help solve the deep personal problems of the customers who have managed to find her nondescript roadside diner. One of my absolute favorites is “My Brother’s Leaves” by Diana Hart. It’s an Asian-influenced futuristic SF story set on a planet that specializes in growing and fermenting tea in a unique manner; and the main character is attempting to prevent seizure of her tea plantation by her wastrel brother’s creditors. “Snow and Apples” by AL Tompkins is an endearing Russian-themed Fantasy story about the hazardous quest an old widower takes to ensure the passage of his beloved wife’s spirit into Paradise. Another one of my big favorites is Chaz Brenchley’s “Pickled Roots and Peeled Shoots and a Bowl of Farflower Tea.” In this SF story, a seemingly benign cloistered community resists being drafted to support an interplanetary war effort. And then there’s RS Belcher’s “Tender,” a truly wild tale of at-home food delivery services for an assortment of horrific clients. It’s a hoot, with a surprising ending.

If you pick up a copy of *Galactic Stew*, I’ll bet you’ll find some stories that you’ll enjoy, too.

(to be continued)

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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.

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 on Sunday, May 14th, 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

May 5-7, 2023 **GALACTIC DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CONVENTION**. Pennsylvania Convention Center (Philadelphia PA) – Philadelphia Marriott Downtown (hotel). "Gaaays in Spaace (GIS) is an LGBTQ+ non-profit organization dedicated to advancing diversity and inclusion in Hollywood and the Aerospace industry." Guests include: Denise Crosby, Nana Visitor, Robert Picardo, Garrett Wang, and more. Membership available on-line: \$160 (+ \$11.32 fees) for the weekend; daily passes and various "executive" (more expensive) passes available. Website: www.dnicon.org

May 26-29, 2023 **BALTICON 57**. Renaissance Harborplace Hotel (Baltimore MD). GoH: Jane Yolen; Special Guest: John Scalzi (2023 Robert Heinlein Award Winner); Artist GoH: Ariel Burgess. Registration: \$75 until April 15; \$85 from April 16 to May 15; \$95 after May 15 and at the door. On-line registration. Website: <https://www.balticon.org/wp57/>

July 7-9, 2023 **SHORE LEAVE 43**. Delta Hotels Baltimore Hunt Valley (Hunt Valley MD). "Guests will be announced as soon as they are confirmed." Weekend membership: \$105 (daily rates available). On-line membership application if paying by credit card. Website: www.shore-leave.com

June 16-18, 2023 **AWESOME CON 2023**. Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington DC). Guests include: Billy Dee Williams; and many more to be announced. On-line registration: \$95 for the weekend; daily badges and various "premium" (more expensive) memberships available. Website: <https://awesome-con.com>

July 21-23, 2023 **CONFLUENCE**. Sheraton Pittsburgh Airport Hotel (Pittsburgh PA). Guest of Honor: Ada Palmer; Featured Artist: Susan Dexter; Featured Music Guest: Sassafras+. Weekend membership: \$55 to 7/10/2023; \$65 thereafter (daily rates available). On-line registration. Website: confluence-sff.org

July 28-30, 2023 **OTAKON 2023** (celebrating Asian pop culture, including anime and manga). Walter E. Washington Convention Center (Washington DC). On-line registration: \$75 for the full weekend; daily memberships available. Website: <https://www.otakon.com>

Aug. 3-6, 2023 **PULPFEST 2023** ("celebrating Mystery, Adventure, Science Fiction, and More") Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Pittsburgh-Cranberry. Weekend membership = \$40 if you stay at the Doubletree \$50 if you stay elsewhere (daily rates available). For registration via PayPal, go to the con's website: www.pulpfest.com

Sept. 29 – Oct. 1, 2023 **CAPCLAVE 2023**. Rockville Hilton & Executive Meeting Center (Rockville MD). GoHs: Sarah Pinsker, Kameron Hurley. Registration details: \$55 until 5/31; then \$60 until 8/31; and \$65 thereafter. Website: <https://www.capclave.org/capclave23/>

