



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 406 – January 2024

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Annual LSF Gift Exchange at Jan. 14th Meeting



LSF will host its *thirty-second* annual book (*et al*) exchange at the in-person monthly LSF meeting to be held on **January 14, 2024!**

All LSF members – and visitors, guests, attendees, etc. – are invited to participate in this “blind exchange.”

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 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 book-mark) 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 all 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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📖 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 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 January 25th. **All attendees MUST be fully vaccinated.**

Here are the details for the next several discussions:

Jan. 25, 2024 – *A Haunting on the Hill*, by Elizabeth Hand (moderator: Carl).

Feb. 22, 2024 – *The Space Between Worlds*, by Micaiah Johnson (moderator: Judy)

March 28, 2024 – *The House in the Cerulean Blue Sea*, by TJ Klune (moderator: Zena). ΛΨΦ



***** January 14, 2024 Meeting *****

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, January 14th**. The meeting will be held at Peter and Rob’s home, **1425 “S” Street NW, Washington, DC**. The meeting will begin at 1:30 PM and will include the Annual LSF Gift Exchange, followed by gaming at 3:00 PM. Hope to see you there!



What’s Inside?

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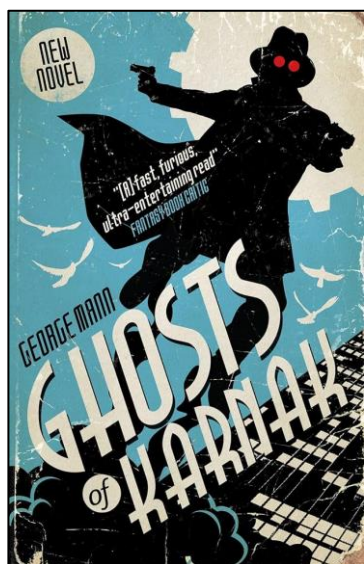
Strange Tales, Part 3

reviews by Carl

As I've said before, I enjoy reading "weird" or "creepy" or "scary" books in honor of the season of Halloween and *Dia de los Muertos*. This past October was no exception. In this third installment, I've included three more reviews.

Ghosts of Karnak

by George Mann
(Titan Books, 2016)



I've enjoyed the works of George Mann for many years now, particularly his alternate history thrillers. *Ghosts of Karnak* is the third book in a series of F&SF thrillers set in New York City in an alternate "Deco-punk" (steampunk-ish) Roaring Twenties.

The United States is locked in a bitter cold war with the British Empire (which still covers half the world); and everyone is recovering from the nightmarish trench warfare of WWI. Gabriel Cross is a wounded veteran of the War and has become "the Ghost," a masked vigilante who battles organized crime and various occult plots and supernatural terrors in the night-time, shadow-haunted streets of the Big Apple.

As this novel opens, a cargo ship has arrived from Cairo containing the highly-anticipated archeological finds of an expedition funded by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. There's a problem, though. One member of the

Metropolitan Museum of Art. There's a problem, though. One member of the expedition isn't on board: Ginny Gray (Gabriel's former lover and a participant in the Ghost's previous adventures). Soon after the expedition's artifacts are delivered to the museum, supernatural terrors begin to haunt the streets of the city, and the body count is on the rise. Meanwhile, Ginny Gray is the captive of an ancient cult that plans to resurrect several powerful Egyptian deities and bring an end to modern civilization – symbolically starting with the destruction of New York City.

Ghosts of Karnak is a Pulp-Era, masked-avenger romp, with definite Lovecraftian overtones. I quite enjoyed it. Other novels in the series are *Ghosts of Manhattan* (2010), *Ghosts of War* (2011), and *Ghosts of Empire* (2017).

Sir Hereward and Mister Fitz

by Garth Nix
(Titan Books, 2023)



Garth Nix (his real name!) is the author of multiple very popular YA Fantasy novels. But, until this book, I couldn't remember reading anything he's written. I don't exactly remember where I first heard about Nix's stories of "the Witch Knight and the Puppet Sorcerer," but the short description of the stories in this book quickly hooked me. Good thing, too, because I quite enjoyed it! This book has been touted as Nix's "adult debut;" and it collects all eight of the previous "Sir Hereward and

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Minutes of the December LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

Movie News

Karl loved the movie *Jules* (with Ben Kingsley and Jane Curtin). Here is an excellent description: "Milton lives a quiet life of routine in a small western Pennsylvania town, but finds his day upended when a UFO and its extra-terrestrial passenger crash land in his backyard." Andy is looking forward to the movie *The Creator*, about the architect of advanced AI. Peter loved the movie *Godzilla Minus One*. The new *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom* movie is coming out this month.

TV News

Rob was delighted with the *Doctor Who* "The Giggle" episode (the 3rd of the three *Doctor Who* specials). Teresa enjoyed the apocalyptic-themed Netflix film *Leave the World Behind*. Peter continues to enjoy Apple's *For All Mankind* series. Rob reported that Apple's *Foundation* series has been renewed.

Other News

There was much discussion about *Baldur's Gate 3* (the on-line RPG).

Rob reviewed upcoming LSF events:

- LSF New Year's Eve party (December 31, 2023)
- LSF January Meeting (January 14, 2024), which will include the Annual LSF Book(ish) Exchange
- Upcoming LSF book discussions: *A Haunting on the Hill* by Elizabeth Hand (January); *The Space Between Worlds* by Micaiah Johnson (February); *The House in the Cerulean Sea* by T.J. Klune (March)

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Strange Tales, Part 3

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Mister Fitz” stories, as well as one never-before-published story.

Sir Hereward and Mister Fitz are kind of a Fantasy version of the Odd Couple. Outwardly, they’re adventurers and mercenaries who wander about a world of magic and gunpowder in search of lucrative military opportunities. Sir Hereward is a swordsman and accomplished pistolier and artilleryist – and his love-life is rather rocky. Mister Fitz appears to be a diminutive, worldly-wise, self-animated puppet – a talented entertainer and tailor – with a modicum of supernatural ability via a container of magically-charged needles.

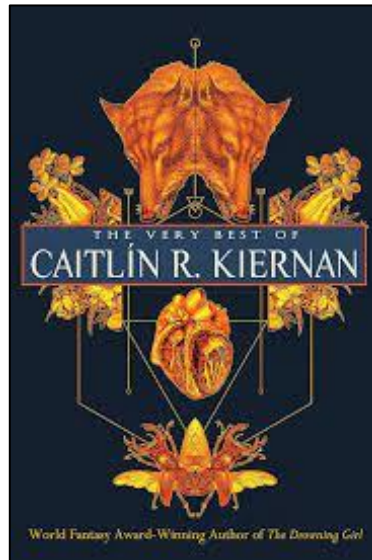
But Sir Hereward and Mister Fitz are actually “god-slayers,” agents of the [oh-so-secret] Council of the Treaty for the Safety of the World. They are charged with locating and “removing” maleficent extradimensional entities included on the Council’s list of proscribed beings. Horrifying wraiths, vampiric demons, Lovecraftian monsters, energy-sucking godlets – if they’re on the Council’s list, Sir Hereward and Mister Fitz hunt them down and deal with them.

As it turns out, these stories aren’t completely “dark and horrendous.” Yes, all of Sir Hereward’s and Mister Fitz’s supernatural opponents are indeed wicked and predatory creatures – despite the fact that some of them appear in the guise of beneficent saviors (or even sexy temptresses) – and the heroes don’t come away completely unscathed. But the relationship between Sir Hereward and Mister Fitz is most frequently light-hearted and urbanely witty – as I said, kind of a Fantasy version of the Odd Couple. I even got a kick out of the repetition (in every story) of the official statement that the Council requires them to make before engaging their targets in magical and physical combat.

The stories in *Sir Hereward and Mister Fitz* aren’t “creepy” or “scary,” but they’re definitely “weird” – and a lotta fun!

The Very Best of Caitlin R. Kiernan

by Caitlin R. Kiernan
(Tachyon Publications, 2019)



Caitlin Kiernan is one of my absolute favorite authors. She’s been called “one of our essential writers of dark fiction” in the *New York Times*. The inclusion of one of her stories is almost a sure-fire way to get me to buy a magazine or an anthology. And, now, here’s a collection of *twenty* of her “very best” short fiction, as gathered from as many different magazines and anthologies between 2005 and 2017. I’d read many of these stories before, but it’s certainly nice to have them all in one place. And there are some real rip-snortin’ reads in this collection! Here are a few of my favorites:

“Bradbury Weather” is the story of a man’s search for his rebellious daughter, who has traveled to Mars in search of the secretive (and diseased?) Fenrir cultists. “A Child’s Guide to the Hollow Hills” is a very short – and *very* creepy – story about a faery child held captive by the Queen of Decay. “The Ammonite Violin (Murder Ballad No. 4)” explores the twisted obsession of “the Collector” and his fatal confrontation with a young violinist. “The Ape’s Wife” provides a fascinating reinterpretation (in fact, several reinterpretations) of Ann Darrow’s role in the King Kong story. “Fish Bride (1970)” explores the obsessive relationship be-

tween a young man and a woman who isn’t completely human. As you probably suspect from the title, “The Maltese Unicorn” is a parody of a rather famous Dashiell Hammett story – but this time the story features a lesbian detective involved in the murderous search for a fabled object, and “the dingus” is...well...a dingus imbued with supernatural sexual powers.

Dark, disturbing, eerie, weird, compelling – pick an adjective, and probably one or more of them apply to each of the stories in this collection.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR



* * 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 held on Sunday, **January 14th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. 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

March 22-24, 2024 **OUTLANTACON/GAYLAXICON 2024** ("Atlanta's LGBTQ+ convention for Sci-fi, Pop Culture, Multi-media & Gaming!"). Atlanta Marriott Northeast/Emory Area (Atlanta GA). Weekend membership: \$60 (purchase on-line at the website). Website: <https://outlantacon.org>

May 24-27, 2024 **BALTICON 58**. Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel (Baltimore MD). Guest of Honor: L.E. Modesitt Jr; Music GoH: Rhiannon's Lark; Editor GoH: Sheila Williams; Artist GoH: Omar Rayyan. More info to be announced. Website: <https://www.balticon.org/> E-mail: balticoninfo@balticon.org

Sept. 27-29, 2024 **CAPCLAVE 2024**. Rockville Hilton (Rockville MD). Guests of Honor: Sheree Renee Thomas; Matt Dinman. Membership: \$55 from Jan to May 2024; \$60 from June to July 2024; \$65 from Aug to Sept 2024; \$70 at the door. Website: www.capclave.org Info: info@capclave.org

OSIRIS-REX Returns! info passed along by Carl

On September 24, 2023, a space capsule carrying NASA's first asteroid samples was dropped toward the Utah desert, bringing a seven-year journey to an end. The OSIRIS-REX spacecraft released the capsule from 63,000 miles (100,000 kilometers) out; and the capsule parachuted down four hours later onto the military's Utah Test and Training Range. (Note: OSIRIS-REX = Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security, Regolith Explorer.)

The capsule contained about 8.8 ounces of rubble from the carbon-rich asteroid known as Bennu. NASA's recovery team in Utah included helicopters and a temporary clean room set up on the range. Getting the sample under a "nitrogen purge," as scientists call it, was one of the team's most critical tasks. A continuous nitrogen flow into



Recovery Team and Capsule

the sample container kept out earthly contaminants to leave the sample pure for scientific analyses.

On September 25th, the Bennu samples were flown to a new lab at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. It's hoped that this sample will give scientists the opportunity to learn more about the origins of the solar system and possibly how life on Earth began. [Ed. note: Here's hoping that the research won't result in a "Wildfire Emergency" as featured in Michael's Crichton's *Andromeda Strain*. 😊]

Once free of the sample capsule, OSIRIS-REX continued its tour of the Solar System and is targeting Apophis, another asteroid. That encounter won't occur until 2029. The mission now has a new name: OSIRIS-APEX (Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-APophis Explorer).

For more details on the mission, go to:

<https://science.nasa.gov/mission/osiris-rex/>

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