



Lambda Sci-fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 423 – June 2025

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LSF Gaming Party and Capital Pride Parade Viewing – Saturday June 7th announcement from Rob

That's right... you read it correctly... our next LSF Gaming Party is almost here! LSF Gaming Parties are an opportunity to share your favorite board/card type games or to just come and play games you know and love or learn new ones. We have plenty of space, so multiple games will be underway at any given time. We'll start at 1:30 PM and run through to 11 PM or so.

Please Note: This event will replace our normal Second Sunday Social. There will be no Second Sunday Social on Sunday June 8th. (It's Pride Festival Day... go forth and be queer!)

Peter and Rob live less than a block from the Capital Pride Parade route - and we'll plan to take a break to watch the parade as a group. The timing of the parade has changed for this year, and the parade kicks off at 2 PM (since Capital Pride is *also* World Pride) - so we'll essentially start the event with the parade viewing. For those who don't want to view the parade or want to only view it briefly, we'll plan for a way for



those who do not want to spend any significant time at the parade to be able to remain at the house during the parade viewing break.

What: LSF Tabletop Gaming & Pride Parade Viewing Party

When: Saturday, June 7th - 1:30 PM until around 11 PM - doors open 1:00 PM. Parade starts at 2 PM.

Where: Peter and Rob's Home - 1425 "S" Street NW in DC

What to Bring: Bring your favorite table game (or two or three or....). Also, please bring food/snacks and/or non-alcoholic beverages to share. Please feel free to bring friends along as well - the more gamers the merrier!

Dinner: There are many nearby options.

Questions: Contact Peter at: peter@lambdascifi.org

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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; but the next book discussion will be held on June 26, 2025.

Here are the details for the next couple of discussions:

June 26 - *I Keep My Exoskeletons to Myself*, by Mack (Marisa) Crane (moderator: Sam).

July 24 - *The Fifth Season*, by N.K. Jemison (moderator: Zena).

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***** June 7, 2025 Event *****

The next LSF event will be held on **Saturday, June 7th**. This will be a gaming party & Capital Pride Parade viewing held at Peter and Rob's home, **1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. Doors open at 1:00 PM. Hope to see you there! *There will be NO meeting on Sunday, June 8.*



What's Inside?

Page 2: Two by Aliette de Bodard, Part 1 (book reviews); Minutes of the May 11th LSF Meeting.

Page 3: *The Last Dangerous Visions* (book review).

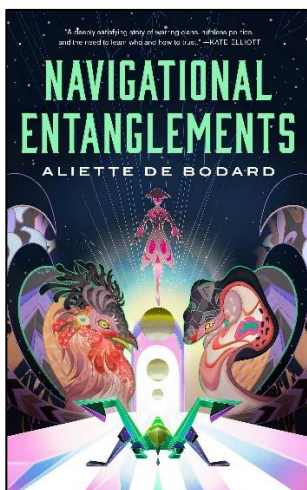
Page 4: Info About LSF: DC Area Gaylaxians; Con Calendar.

Two by Aliette de Bodard (Part 1)

short reviews by Carl

I'm a BIG fan of Aliette de Bodard, particularly of stories set in the "Xuya Universe." Here's a succinct description I ran across: "a series of novellas and short stories set in a timeline where Asia became dominant, and where the space age has Confucian galactic empires of Vietnamese and Chinese inspiration: scholars administer planets, and sentient spaceships are part of familial lineages."

Imagine my delight when I unexpectedly ran across *two* of her most recent "space opera" novellas.



Navigational Entanglements (Tor, 2024)

I was surprised at this one. Yes, the interplanetary society in *Navigational Entanglements* is based on East Asian cultures; but it doesn't seem to be part of the "Xuya Universe." (In fact, it's not advertised anywhere as being part of the "Xuya" canon.) There are no sentient spaceships; there's a whole new method of interplanetary travel; and there are rival "Clans" (Rooster, Snake, Dog, etc.) that jockey for power and influence within society and the "imperial" government.

One review describes *Navigational Entanglements* as a "xianxia-style" story. What's that, you ask? (I had to look it up, too.) It's a style heavily influenced by Daoist and Buddhist philosophies, which emphasize the pursuit of enlightenment and transcen-

Minutes of the May 11th LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

Rob displayed some comics that Peter picked up from the local comic shop on Free Comics Day. Peter & Rob enjoyed the newest MCU movie *Thunderbolts*, which has been rebranded as *The New Avengers*. There was a rolling discussion on MCU character Sharon Carter, who is Peggy Carter's niece. Wess likes actor Hugo Weaving, who plays Red Skull.

Rob talked about the **new season of Doctor Who**, saying that all of the episodes have been good.

The Apple+ trailer for the *Murderbot* series looks delightful. Peter is currently reading the "Murderbot" books by Martha Wells.

Jeff said he likes Disney+'s *Andor* and that Season 2 is better than Season 1. There was a long discussion about the *Star Wars* books and what is considered "canon."

The live-action *Lilo & Stitch* movie is coming out next week.

Andy said he's delighted with Ken McLeod's "**Corporation Wars**" trilogy, which focuses upon virtual reality and an AI revolution.

dence. It often features clashes between different factions. Protagonists experience significant character growth as they navigate challenging paths, overcome obstacles, and strive for greater strength and enlightenment. They also grapple with moral dilemmas and explore themes of justice, righteousness, and the balance between good and evil. *Xianxia* stories also include such themes as martial arts, supernatural beings, and epic scope. And *Navigational Entanglements* definitely includes all those *xianxia* characteristics.

Interplanetary travel is accomplished by moving spacecraft through some sort of unreality known as The Hollows. Four rival Clans supply the navigators who use their own vital power to create Shadows that guide ships through The Hollows and (mostly) ensure that ships aren't destroyed by Tangles, the mysterious and deadly tentacled creatures that inhabit The Hollows. The Clans also ensure that Tang-

Rob reviewed the special **LSF June 2025 Pride activities** (see details on page 1 of this newsletter). He also painfully described the current **World-Con drama** regarding the con's use of AI to automate and aggregate searches for vetting panelists. The Worldcon community (particularly authors and artists) squawked over the use of AI. He also explained that *X-Men '97* creator Beau De-Mayo was fired for egregious misconduct.

Genre films coming out soon: *Mission Impossible*, *Jurassic World*, *Fantastic Four: First Steps*.

David reported that Season 3 of Amazon Prime's *Wheel of Time* has ended. He also explained what a "squib" is in the Harry Potter universe: a non-magical person who was born to at least one magical parent. (Sort of like a wizard-born Muggle.)

Upcoming LSF book club discussions: (May) *To Shape a Dragon's Breath: The First Book of Nampeshi-weisit* by Moniquill Blackgoose; (June) *I Keep My Exoskeletons to Myself* by Marisa Crane; (July) *The Fifth Season* by N. K. Jemisin.

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lers never escape The Hollows to wreak havoc in ordinary space.

Unfortunately, a Tangler *has* finally escaped The Hollows – and it's believed to be making its way toward a heavily-populated planetary system. The imperial government orders the Clans to live up to their responsibilities and locate and capture or destroy the invisible Tangler before countless lives are lost.

Each Clan sends a representative on this mission – but they're only up-and-coming Clan juniors rather than full-fledged Clan masters. The imperial government also sends an arrogant envoy from the Dog clan as the nominal leader of the expedition.

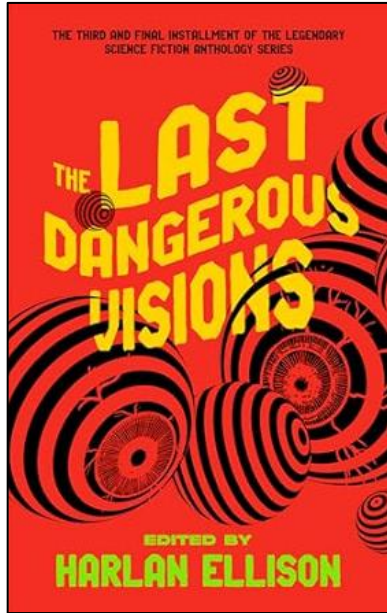
Việt Nhi is the Rooster Clan's unwilling representative on the mission. She's not good with people or politics; and she's starting to think that there's something seriously wrong with the mis-

(continued on page 4)

The Last Dangerous Visions

(Black Stone, 2024)

edited by Harlan Ellison & finalized
by J. Michael Straczynski
a short review by Carl



A little over 50 years ago, editor and “science fiction bad boy” Harlan Ellison shook up the genre as the editor of two groundbreaking volumes of short fiction: *Dangerous Visions* (1967) and *Again, Dangerous Visions* (1972). Critics and literary historians called them “the most important and influential anthologies in the history of speculative fiction.” I have fond (albeit vague) memories of the first two *Dangerous Visions* volumes from when I first read them over half a century ago. I found so very many of the stories to be simply mind-blowing. But you don’t need to believe me – just look at the record. Many of the stories in *Dangerous Visions* and *Again, Dangerous Visions* racked up a whole lotta Hugo and Nebula nominations and awards. I certainly don’t remember all of the stories, but some of ‘em have stuck in my mind over the years, such as: “Aye, and Gomorrah...” by Samuel Delaney; *Riders of the Purple Wage* by Philip Jose Farmer; “A Toy for Juliette” by Robert Bloch; “When It Changed” by Joanna Russ. Zowie!

The third and final *Dangerous Visions* volume was expected to be published in 1974 – but then came a long, unexplained, and frustrating silence. No third volume filled with more “dangerous visions.” But now – six years after Ellison’s death – comes *The Last Dangerous Visions*.

After all that wait, I’m sad to say I found that *The Last Dangerous Visions* exhibits a major fault of so very many anthologies: some stories are good, and some are not-so-good. Or maybe to state my feelings more accurately: I really, really, really *liked* some of the stories – they grabbed me at a very basic gut-level – and I *did not like* some of them at all. But, of course, this could all just be a matter of personal opinion. Maybe you’ll enjoy some of the stories that did nothing at all for me. Having said that, here are some of the stories that I really, really, really liked.

Actually, two of my favorite “stories” are two lengthy essays written by the anthology’s editor/compiler, J. Michael Straczynski. (Yes, the *Babylon 5* Straczynski.) The first is “Ellison Exegesis,” in which Straczynski relates his close personal, longtime, and rocky friendship with Ellison. (Although Straczynski never mentions it in this essay, this friendship explains – to me, at least – Ellison’s unexpected appearance as a Psi Cop in the Season 4 *Babylon 5* episode “The Face of the Enemy.”) Revelations about Ellison’s mental state were truly eye-opening. Without going into a lot of detail, I’ll just say that a manic-depressive or bipolar condition – undiagnosed and self-denied – was involved. (Which also goes some way to explain the infamous on-stage 2006 WorldCon incident with Connie Willis.) Straczynski’s closing essay (“Tetelestai! Compiling *The Last Dangerous Visions*”) provides a fascinating description of his efforts to follow Ellison’s dying wishes: finalize and compile *The Last Dangerous Visions* and get it published. If you’ve ever been a fan of the works of Harlan Ellison – and/or have been interested in Ellison’s life and works – these two essays alone are well worth the price of admission. But, wait, there’s more...

Stephen Robinett’s “Assignment No. 1” is a disturbing story about consigning aged people (such as sickly, unwanted, or problematic parents) into “sleeper pods.” I really liked “Hunger” by Max Brooks; it’s a letter from the Chinese Premier to the U.S. President (unnamed, but very Trump-like) describing an all-too-realistic-and-doable economic retaliation to U.S. opposition to China’s plans to invade Taiwan (and other U.S. “anti-Chinese” policies). Adrian Tchaikovsky’s “First Sight” relates an investigation into a failed “first contact” situation – with a really great surprise ending. And then there’s Robert Sheckley’s “Primordial Follies”; it’s a typically Sheckley-esque whacked-out story about a love(?) affair that extends down the eons, from before The Big Bang and up to current times. (It’s a hoot!) “The Final Pogrom” by Dan Simmons is a real hard-hitter. It presents an aging researcher’s whole new (and fascinating) interpretation of anti-Semitism as a virus – with creepy implications for our own times – and a sad and horrific ending. Yikes! There were other stories that I enjoyed; but these were the real stars for me.

So... my overall recommendation? If you’re a “completist” and you’ve already read the first two volumes, go for it. IMHO, there are definitely some “dangerous visions” in *The Last Dangerous Visions* – and maybe you’ll find many enjoyable reads in there, too.

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Harlan Ellison (1934 - 2018)



*** * INFORMATION ABOUT LAMBDA SCI-FI: DC AREA GAYLAXIANS * ***

Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians (LSF) is an organization for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and trans-gendered (LGBT) 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 LGBT people and their friends;
- provide forums for LGBT people and their friends to share their interest in SF/F/H;
- promote the presence of LGBT elements within SF/F/H and within fandom; and
- promote SF/F/H within the LGBT community.

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 event will be held on **Saturday, June 7th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC. It will be a gaming party and Capital Pride Parade viewing.** 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

June 7, 2025 **HANACON**. "Anime, Art, & Asian Pop culture Convention." Silver Spring Civic Building at Veterans Plaza (Silver Spring MD). Membership limited to 1,000. Membership: \$45.

For more information: www.HanaConAnime.com

August 7-10, 2025 **PULPFEST 2025**. "Celebrating pulp magazines and related materials, vintage paperbacks, digests, men's adventure and true crime magazines, contemporary genre fiction, first-edition hardcovers, series books, dime novels, original art, Big Little Books, Gold/Silver/Bronze age comic books, old time radio shows, gaming materials, film serials, B-movies, and related collectibles." DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Pittsburgh-Cranberry (Mars PA). Weekend membership = \$40 for members staying at the DoubleTree (otherwise = \$50). Webpage: <https://pulpfest.com>

August 13-17, 2025 **SEATTLE WORLDCON 2025**. Seattle Convention Center (Seattle WA). Guests of Honor: Martha Wells, Donato Giancola, Bridget Landry, K. Tempest Bradford, Nisi Shawl. Full attending membership: currently \$250 (will go up). For more information & on-line registration: <https://seattlein2025.org>

October 3-5, 2025. **GAYLAXICON 2025**. Crowne Plaza Suites AiRE MSP Airport - Mall of America (Bloomington MN). *More details as they become available.* [Home - Gaylaxicon 2025](http://Home-Gaylaxicon2025)

August 27-31, 2026 **LACON V** (2026 World Science Fiction Convention). Anaheim Convention Center, Hilton Anaheim & Anaheim Marriott Hotels (Anaheim CA). Guests of Honor: Barbara Hambly, Ronald D. Moore, Colleen Duran, Dr. Anita Sengupta, Tim Kirk, Geri Sullivan (Fan GoH), Stan Sakai, Ursula Vernon (aka T. Kingfisher). Full attending membership: currently \$200 (will go up). For more information & on-line registration: <https://www.lacon.org/>

Aliette de Bodard (Part 1)

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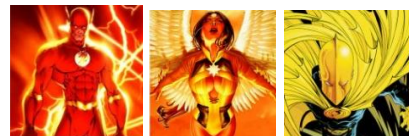
sion. Right from the beginning, the mismatched team members start arguing; and, besides their relative lack of experience, it seems that each of them has a problematic background. Then, when their obnoxious team leader is mysteriously poisoned – and the team is sent out anyway – Việt Nhi develops serious doubts about the mission's ultimate success and starts to suspect that she and her fellow team members are expendable. One of her team mates, Hạc Cúc of the Snake Clan, is trained at poisoning and other forms of assassination, and she also has serious doubts about this mission.

Hạc Cúc doesn't seem to especially like anyone; but Việt Nhi slowly comes to realize that she is developing warm and friendly feelings (possibly more?) toward her.

Can the team work past their limitations and prevent the impending slaughter of millions of citizens by the Tangler? And is there, in fact, a deeper and more insidious motive behind the entire mission? It's an exciting space opera story, definitely in the *xianxia* tradition. Even though it's not a part of the Xuya Universe, I quite enjoyed it.

(to be continued next month)

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**Have a
super Pride
celebration!**

