



Lambda Sci-fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

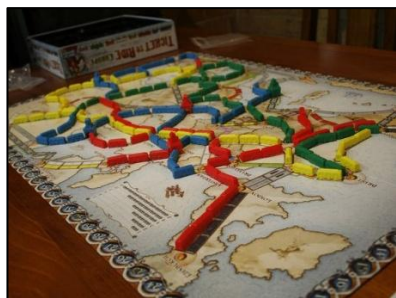
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LSF New Year's Eve Gaming Party & Potluck!

by Rob Gates



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 or card 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 2 PM and run through to a midnight toast.

Rather than our usual pizza order, we'll be doing this event as a potluck. Bring yourself, some food (main course, or side dishes, or desserts, or snacks) and/or non-alcoholic beverages to share, and a favorite game (or two, or three, or more...) and join us for an afternoon and evening of gaming fun.



For this, our New Year's Eve event, you may also bring some sparkling beverage (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) for us to use for the Midnight toast. (The party will remain alcohol free other than for the toast.)



What: LSF Gaming Party & Potluck.

When: Wednesday, Dec. 31st – 2 PM until just past Midnight.

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 and/or beverages to share (non-alcoholic). Please feel free to bring friends along as well – the more gamers the merrier!

Dinner: This is a potluck – so bring food to share (main courses, side dishes, desserts, snacks are all good choices).

Questions: Contact Rob at:

rob@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 a combined November/December meeting to be held on December 4, 2025.

Here are the details for the next several discussions:

December 4, 2025 (combined Nov/Dec discussion) – *Bright Sword*, by Lev Grossman; moderator: Dan.

January 20, 2026 – *This World Is Not Yours*, by Kemi Ashing-Giwa; moderator: Tim.

February 24, 2026 – *Gideon the Ninth*, by Tamsyn Muir; moderator: Tod.

March 24, 2026 – *Klara and the Sun*, by Kazuo Ishiguro; moderator: Zena.

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***** December 14, 2025 Meeting *****

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, December 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. Hope to see you there!



What's Inside?

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Annual LSF Gift Exchange at Jan. 11th Meeting



It's coming up on that time of year again – time for the *thirty-fifth* annual book (*et al*) exchange at the monthly LSF meeting to be held on January 11, 2026!

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 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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Minutes of the November LSF Meeting taken by Scott

Book Discussions

It was generally agreed that the “Hyperion” series by Dan Simmons (1989) is brilliantly written – the first two books were originally a single book, but it was too large to print as a single book. There was a discussion about *House of Suns* by Alistair Reynolds (1989) – the plot setting: six million years in the future, humanity has spread throughout the Milky Way galaxy; no other sentient life has been discovered, but there is a civilization of sentient robots. Elliott is reading *A Memory Called Empire* by Arkady Martin (2019) – he described it as “Space Aztecs”. Derrick has Anne McCaffrey's “Dragonriders of Pern” series on his reading list.

TV & Movie Discussions

Guillermo del Toro's 2025 *Frankenstein* is now available on Netflix. The music of Netflix's 2025 *KPop Demon Hunters* (an animated musical urban fantasy film) has received Grammy nominations. The Japanese manga series *One Piece* has been running since 1998 – the live action series came out on Netflix this year.

Andy is enjoying the current season of *The Witcher*, in which Henry Cavill has been replaced with Liam Hemsworth. Andy also reviewed Apple TV's series *Foundation* – with excellent production values. (He hate-watched the first season, but then continued to the second season.)



Liam Hemsworth as Geralt
in *The Witcher*

Peter and Rob are watching the second season of AMC+'s *Interview with the Vampire*. It was generally agreed that Amazon's *Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* (released in 2022) was horrible.

Other Topics

Are you familiar with the YouTube's The Corridor Crew channel, which reviews movie VFX effects? You can check it out at:

<https://www.youtube.com/@CorridorCrew>

Rob enjoyed listening to the “Old Gods of Appalachia” podcast and playing the related game. Here is a description: “Old Gods of Appalachia is an eldritch horror fiction podcast set in an Alternate Appalachia.”

Derrick led into a discussion of Libby, Fable, and other similar audio book services.

Are you planning to play *Misfits & Magic*, a Harry Potter satire side quest? It is live play/actual play.

Peter provided an update on *Doctor Who*. Is Billie Piper slated to become the next Doctor? Stay tuned.



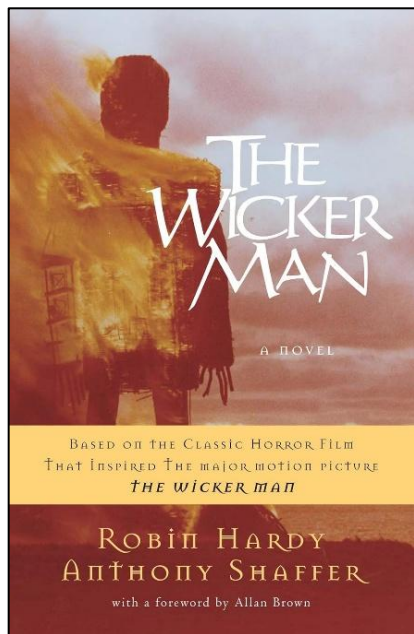
Rob will provide detailed info on the LSF New Year's Eve gaming party and the January Book-ish Exchange. [See articles in this issue.]

Upcoming LSF Book Discussions: *The Bright Sword* by Lev Grossman (November/December); *This World is Not Yours* by Kemi Ashing-Giwa (January); *Gideon the Ninth* by Tamsyn Muir (February); *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro (March).

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The Wicker Man
by Robin Hardy
and Anthony Shaffer
(Three Rivers Press, 1978)
reviewed by Carl



Ever since I first saw it on the big screen oh-so-many years ago, *The Wicker Man* (1973) has been one of my favorite movies. As mentioned in last month's "Weird Stories" article, Adam Scovell (British Film Institute) included it as one of the "Unholy Trinity" of Folk Horror, along with *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971) and *Witchfinder General* (1968).

Imagine my delight when I learned that Robin Hardy (director of the film) had adapted Anthony Shaffer's movie script into a novel. Why? Says Allan Brown in his Introduction: "The novel's existence owes much to the savage treatment its cinematic big brother received on its first release." (I refer you to said Introduction for all the gory details.) The basic plotline of the novel runs pretty much the same as the film script.

Sergeant Neil Howie is a member of the Scots West Highland Constabulary, which is responsible for policing one of the largest precincts in Scotland. Howie's assignment includes the mainland town of Portlochlie and nine or so populated islands stretching westward

out into the Atlantic. Howie travels to the furthest of those islands – Summerisle – after receiving an anonymous letter requesting that he investigate the mysterious disappearance of a little girl.

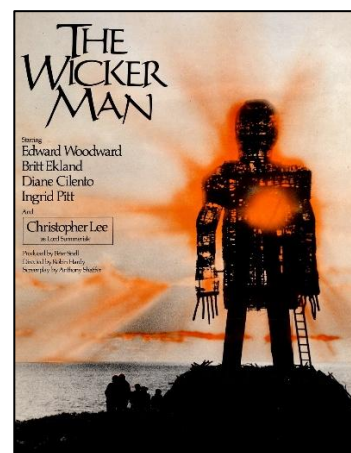
Summerisle is noted for its agricultural bounty due to a unique combination of volcanic soil and the warm Gulf Stream current that surrounds it. Its most famous product is the Summerisle Famous apple. The island has been privately owned for the past couple of hundred years by the Summerisle family. The current Lord Summerisle still lives there in his baronial manse and is the socio-political leader of the island's small population of tradesmen and agricultural workers.

As his investigation ensues, Sergeant Howie (a devout Episcopalian) is increasingly shocked by the social and religious customs of the island. In addition to being a Victorian scientific agriculturalist, the great-grandfather of the current Lord Summerisle also fostered a revival of nature-based pagan culture, practices, and religious beliefs on the island; and the current Lord Summerisle benevolently continues to encourage these traditions.

Sergeant Howie is increasingly convinced that Lord Summerisle, as well as many of the folks on the island are somehow involved in the disappearance of the little girl and are giving him the run-around. (This includes the little girl's mother.) What Howie doesn't realize is that he is being guided – step by step – to his fateful meeting with the Wicker Man.

As much as I enjoyed the film version, I *really* enjoyed Hardy's novel. It allows the reader to explore in more depth the backgrounds, beliefs, and motivations of Sergeant Howie, Lord Summerisle, and various other inhabitants of Summerisle. In his Introduction, Brown also emphasizes how the novel helps to at least partially address one unfortunate aspect of the film: the casting of Christopher Lee as Lord Summerisle. As Brown says:

"No audience watching *The Wicker Man* would be unaware of the baggage Lee brought to his role: he had played *Dracula*, Frankenstein's Monster and *The Mummy*. From the outset



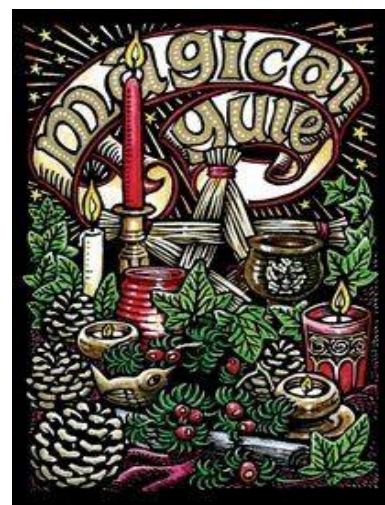
Poster for the Film

The assumption would have been that Summerisle was on the side of wrong. So the film became unbalanced in favour of the Christian consensus, becomes a conventional battle between good and evil. In the novel, Summerisle is shorn of such associations, the battle is more ambivalent, more unsettling – and, in the end, perhaps more in keeping with the treacherous moral landscape Shaffer initially envisioned."

What Brown *doesn't* mention is that Hardy's novel also allows the reader to explore the psycho-sexual attitudes of Sergeant Howie – he's a little too "damaged" for my tastes – as well as the motivations of Lord Summerisle (well-intentioned, but also somewhat blind).

Yes, indeed, I quite enjoyed this "novelization" of *The Wicker Man*. I was well aware of the ending, but the journey to get there was really satisfying. I highly recommend it.

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* * 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. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on **Sunday, December 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

May 16-17, 2026 **HANACON**. "Anime, Art, Asian & Pop Culture Convention." Sheraton Baltimore North Hotel (Towson MD). Membership: \$65 (until May 15, 2026); \$70 thereafter and at the door. Website: www.HanaConAnime.com

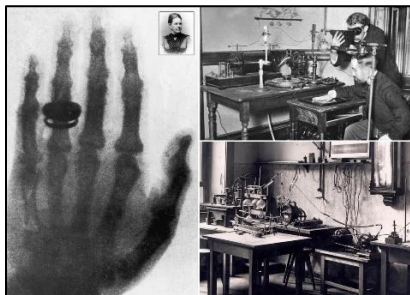
May 22-25, 2026 **BALTICON 60**. Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel (Baltimore MD). Guests of Honor: Jim Butcher, Jennifer Blackstream, Elizabeth Leggett (Art GoH). Membership: \$75 thru Feb. 29, 2026; then \$80 thru April 15; then \$85 thru May 15; \$89 at the door (daily rates available). More details as they become available. Website: <https://www.balticon.org/>

Summer 2026. **SHORE LEAVE 46**. "Celebrate Star Trek's 60th Anniversary." (Lancaster PA.) Details on membership, dates, guests and hotel as they become available. Website: www.shore-leave.com

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/>

October 2-4, 2026 **CAPCLAVE 2026**. Rockville Hilton & Executive Meeting Center (Rockville MD). Guests of Honor: Rebecca Roanhorse, Nino Cipri. Details as they become available. Website: <https://capclave.org>

Anniversary of the Discovery of X-Rays 130 Years Ago



In November 1895, German physicist Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen (Roentgen) discovered X-rays. He was conducting experiments with a Crookes tube (device used to study electrical discharges through gas) and had covered the tube in black cardboard to block visible

light. He noticed a peculiar glow coming from a nearby fluorescent screen, as if invisible light were shining through solid matter. Roentgen began systematic tests to determine what was happening; and he discovered that this mysterious radiation could pass through books, wood, and flesh and cast images of bones and metal objects on photographic plates. He called these unknown emissions "X-rays" (with X signifying the unknown quantity).

The first ever X-ray taken of a human was on December 22, 1895: the left hand (with wedding and engagement rings) of Roentgen's wife Anna Bertha.

Roentgen received the first Nobel Prize for Physics in 1901 for his discovery of X-rays. In his honor the unit of measurement for the electrical charge liberated by X-ray or gamma ray radi-

tion in a specific volume of air was called a "roentgen." In many countries, the "roentgen" has largely been replaced by the SI units of the gray (Gy) for absorbed dose and the sievert (Sv) for dose equivalent.

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**Jack Skellington as Santa Claus in
The Nightmare Before Christmas
(1993)**