



HEROSPHERE
2023

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A night-time photograph of Niagara Falls. The water is illuminated with vibrant blue, purple, and red lights. In the background, city buildings are lit up against the dark sky. A small boat with lights is visible on the right side of the river.

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AN APPRECIATION OF THE LIADEN UNIVERSE®

Elizabeth Moon

“The number of High Houses is exactly fifty. And then there is Korval.” Council of Clans census

Readers new to Sharon Lee and Steve Miller’s Liaden books, can be excused for thinking the whole thing is about Korval. So many ships, great houses in a private valley, a tree visible from miles away – many reasons to consider Korval’s initial position in Liaden society unassailable. But readers notice soon enough: Korval has many envious rivals and outright enemies who are eager to assail Korval’s solitary eminence.

Korval exists in a fictional universe much larger than most. Not just a few star systems, each with a few planets, but dozens (hundreds? I’ve never counted them all) with at least one other entire universe (full of Bad Stuff). All the space in space is not the same, including one normally empty corner where debris from the other universe sometimes just ... shows up. Like a teapot. Or a spaceship. Some planets have desirable weather; Liad seems to have neither extreme cold or extreme heat. Surebleak is notably cold; Vandar (the parts we see) resembles our own planet. Some are lethally unstable.

Populations are also complex: although there are planets with only Liadens, or only Terrans (of the human groups), many have mixed populations—sometimes polarized, as on Eylot – and sometimes (at least for a while) co-existing in more-or-less tranquil balance. Lee and Miller have exploited those possibilities to develop multiple divergent cultures, each with its own certainties, defining itself in opposition to one or more neighbors.

Some have strict religions, withdrawn from those who aren’t believers or observant. Others just as firmly reject such limits and advertise their indulgence of pleasure and hectic revelry. Criminal organizations like the Juntavas, systems wide, dominate certain occupations on the planets where they’re strong, but petty criminals operate unaffiliated with anyone at all.

And of course the others. The ones who look like humans but were manufactured or vat grown, and were designed for certain occupations, some of them dangerous. The Yxtrang, genetically modified soldiers, bred in different strains for different purposes. The various iterations of a cloned strain, which, crossed in to “normal” humans, will carry the genes designed for new talents. The Lyre Institute for Exceptional Children (and their “children” are indeed exceptional, even illegal.) Cloning is legal in places, outlawed in others. But the Complex Logic Laws are meant to outlaw autonomous machine intelligences. Other humans want them. As AI comes closer to reality, we see both motivations in play right here.

Two other character types, at opposite ends of the size scale: norbears (smaller, furry, empathic), and Clutch Turtles (very large, bipedal, hard-shelled.) Norbears like Hevelin and Podesta are not just story decoration. We know almost nothing about their activities outside their behavior with humans; they communicate by emotion and illusion, they are very social, they eat a variety of fresh greens. Some humans find them comforting and don’t mind the mild “dreams” they share, but others don’t like that intrusion and think it’s dangerous. They’re illegal on some worlds, but their empathic abilities make them prized companions for some, like Pilots’ Guild Administrators.

We know somewhat more (but not enough) of Clutch Turtle culture. Edger and Sheather belong to a clan that makes incredible knives; they live partly in caves, and something humans might call a dragon lives out in the

wilds. Clutch Turtles live a very long time and travel space in hollowed-out very large rocks, using a spacedrive unlike any other. These raw facts, however, don't show why both norbears and Clutch Turtles make worthy characters in the stories. Their personalities do.

Much as I like expansive, well-crafted world-building that includes a range of creatures and cultures, geology, topography, climate ... much as I enjoy well-crafted plots that result in books that keep me up half (or all) the night, and a "tone" to the plot that includes rollicking good fun at least once per book, what really holds me to certain writers are the characters who populate the places and cultures. The more places, the more characters are needed, and here we readers are treated to a huge cast of them, all appropriately equipped. This is where Lee and Miller's Liaden books move from "gold standard" to "gold studded with jewels of all colors, shapes, and sizes."

Every reader has favorite characters. Mine are too many to list and give the reasons for, but here are some that stick in my memory. Some are protagonists in more than one volume, some are found in a shorter work or several, and some are actually background characters I found particularly memorable.

Scout's Progress, revealing how Val Con's parents met, has Daav yos'Phelim and Aelliana Caylon – two of my favorites – written beautifully, fully presented in every way. But Aelliana's younger sister Sinit gives this minor character more than a small plot function. She could have been written more thinly, but the depth of characterization given her exemplifies Lee and Miller's respect for characterization. Immature, self-involved, but more aware than her older sisters, and as she shows, brave. Real enough that I can't help imagining her future, perhaps as Mizel's delm. Sinit isn't the only minor character written fully, of course. In that book alone, others show up at Binjali's Repair Yard or behind the scenes passing hand-crafted gossip to Delm Bindan to achieve a safe landing for two people who do not want to marry.

Don Eyr, seen first vividly in "Block Party" Constellation (#?) as one of the adults in a wayhouse in Surebleak, caring for children who survived Korval's attack on Solcintra, is another fascinating character. A quiet, courteous man easily overlooked at first, trained at the most highly rated Ecole de Cuisine on another planet, his passion for cooking is matched or exceeded by his passion for both teaching and protecting others, particularly younger people. The baker down the street, and her friend whose notebooks of procedures for the old Gilmour Agency inspired the block party, seem at first like the leading characters, but from the moment Don Eyr came into her shop, I was hooked.

Dozens more: Cheever McFarland, hired by Shan to be Pat Rin's pilot and bodyguard. Wicked dry sense of humor, as time goes on. Kezzie of the Bedel. Jerzy Entaglia, chair of the Theater Arts Department at the university where Anne Davis teaches Comparative Linguistics, who babysits her son, Shan yos'Galan. Villy, a youth in the pleasure house of Pat Rin's ally, Ms. Audrey. Yulie Shaper, Korval's nearest neighbor on Surebleak, Mr. dea'Gauss, Korval's qe'andra on Liad. The unlikely (at first glance) trio of Kareen yos'Phelium, compiler of the Liaden Code of Proper Conduct, Silain, luthia of the Bedel on Surebleak, and Honored Scholar Kamele Waitley, Theo's mother: three women from three different planets, three different cultures, with three different personalities, sitting together over tea and cookies and discussing (essentially) Professor Waitley's onagrata's specialty, cultural genetics, in light of Surebleak's needs in a time of rapid change.

Indeed, all the books can be read as an extended gloss on that so-far-imaginary academic field. Jen Sar Kiladi, holding the Gallowglass Chair of Cultural Genetics at the University on Delgado had his own background



reasons for having decided on that field as part of his alternative identity. Kamele didn't know he had a spaceship at the local airport; had no idea he had been someone else before he was Kiladi ... but when he disappeared abruptly, she took a sabbatical from her own career to follow him to Surebleak.

The books show, again and again, the qualities of character that help people build relationships and communities that work, including when change makes that a sudden necessity. Respect for others who come from another background. Desire to cooperate and make things work better, whether on a ship or in a city or in a field of work. Willingness to accept another way of doing things if it also gets the things done. Willingness to see change as an opportunity, not just an assault on their lives.

Trade, in the way traders in these books understand it, creates original contacts on the margin of closed cultures. Every culture has things and ideas worth trading, and things and ideas it needs. The obvious content of trade – the things and ideas exchanged – builds new outposts of civilization when wielded by people who want to work together to make life better for all. Without the will to cooperate, to share, chaos returns. Differences harden into dislike, then hatred. So explore these books, discover all that's in them: great characters, fascinating cultures, terrific plotting, and an underlying commitment to civilization. Come along ... Ride the Luck.

Partial Bibliography

Sharon Lee and Steve Miller

Since 1984, Sharon Lee and Steve Miller have written over 100 works together. Below is a partial bibliography. For more detail, please see the Internet Speculative Fiction Database (<https://isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?418>) or the Liaden Universe® Wikipedia entry (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liaden_universe).

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DAVID MATTINGLY

An Annotated Appreciation At Close Hand

Sharon Lee and Steve Miller

David B. Mattingly is HELIOSphere's Artist Guest of Honor and all around good guy. We're glad he's here with us this weekend.

You can find David's general bio on the HELIOSphere website, his own website, and on Wikipedia – all of those will have links to copies of his work as well. For those not familiar with his work, be warned that David has created over 2,000 covers, so you have a lot of fine viewing ahead of you.

Among those thousands of covers, more than a dozen grace our books. So far.

We love his work so much that we have made a tradition of framing prints of the covers he's done for our work. We have Mattinglys all over the house – in each of our offices, in the so-called Tech Room, in the dining room and the front hallway, where we see them daily (and we unfailingly point them out to visitors if they don't mention them first!).

How did this frequent Lee-Miller-and-Mattingly collaboration happen? Arriving as Baen authors several publishers into our career we'd been lucky to have good cover art and a good relationship with our cover artists. We'd also been art agents and convention art show runners and felt part of the SF art community already. Whatever trepidation we might have had about our new publishing digs pretty well evaporated when Baen publisher Toni Weiskopf let us know that she'd been in touch with David Mattingly about doing our covers when his schedule permitted. We were familiar with his work of, course, and from the outset have loved working with him.

David usually gets a copy of the work in progress to make preliminary sketches from, but we also depend on contact by phone and email so that scene and tone come together organically, with our input about potential scenes and also descriptions of the characters who should be featured in it, if any.

One of the great joys of working with David is his avid attention to the detail of the story. With his background in cinematic matte painting he brings the background to as much life as the foregrounds, and knows a dramatic angle when he has a chance to employ it for best effect. He's not only an excellent detail artist but a playful one – each of the cover paintings he's done for our books has included, hidden within the action of the work, an image of a cat. Many of our fans do as we do and search out the cats as soon as a cover is available.

Let's look at just a few of the covers he's done for us in one arc in particular. That thread is Theo Waitley's journey from awkward school girl to indispensable pilot along with the corresponding thread about her AI ship *Bechimo*.

The first Lee and Miller cover David did was for *Saltation*, our 2010 Liaden Universe® novel featuring Theo Waitley as a proto-pilot. On that cover young Theo has just made a difficult emergency mountain-top landing of a futuristic sailplane and is exiting that craft as pair of dog-fighting fighters flash by. There's a great sense of tension and action in the art; the close quarters of the landing are also evident and his sense of color makes Theo the center of the action without hiding the fact that action's going on around her. That cover graces our dining room.

Our 2011 Liaden novel was *Ghost Ship*; David's exciting art for that included the first depiction ever of *Bechimo* – the ghost ship of the title – performing a spectacular maneuver to rescue Theo from a hostile space

port. He caught the energy of the moment through Theo's desperate gesture and pose as well as hinting at the eldritch forces *Bechimo* has employed to arrive in the nick of time. This cover is also in our dining room.

The next cover David did in Theo's part of the Liaden Universe® was for 2013's *Dragon Ship*. This is a spectacular cover, also showing Theo in a time of troubles, but this time deep within *Bechimo*'s works. The competent young Captain on this cover is in the process of activating the most advanced and powerful features in *Bechimo*'s repertoire; she's clearly confident and fully concentrating on the task at hand while a skeptical Win Ton stands as witness. *Bechimo*'s AI presence is shown by both his chosen image in a large view screen and by the obviously tentacular arms and extensions working about Theo. The effect is both eerie and rivetingly science fictional in showing AI/ human interaction. This cover too is in the dining room, but we were running out of room ...

While David was doing other Liaden covers in between the Theo books he got to come back to her arc in 2017 with the cover for *The Gathering Edge*. This cover – a full wraparound – shows *Bechimo*, hard at work after attempting to take some time in a “safe place,” exploring the wreckage of a large ship in open space, and taking part in a rescue, this time nestling up to a work boat inching along the dead ship's skin. *Bechimo*'s look is consistent – this is the same *Bechimo* we've seen before, pilot's station topside, and a careful perusal of the back cover of the book gives an idea of the size of *Bechimo* when compared to the void-founded space liner, the kind of detail David's matte-painting expertise helps him pull off. This cover is in Steve's office.

The most recent Theo-related story on the cover of a Liaden Universe® novel is the 2019 *Accepting the Lance*. The novel includes a scene of an “in-person” meeting of AI ships, and *Bechimo*, now a character in his own right as well as part of Theo's arc, is caught by David at this pivotal moment for many of the threads of the Liaden Universe®, with the distinguishing features of the ship from earlier appearances clear, and additional details from within the stories – like Theo's Laughing Cat logo – clear. This cover art is also in the dining room.

Oh yes, we should add that David has done the cover for *Salvage Right*, due out July 3. That cover hangs in Sharon's office.

We're sorry you can't all visit Maine to enjoy our personal gallery of David B. Mattingly artwork. But, you can visit the Dealer's Room display of David's work, not to mention the man himself, with samples, and contact information, and insights.



Sharon Lee, Steve Miller, David Mattingly – Photo by Andrew Porter



DAVID MATTINGLY'S ART A SELECTION

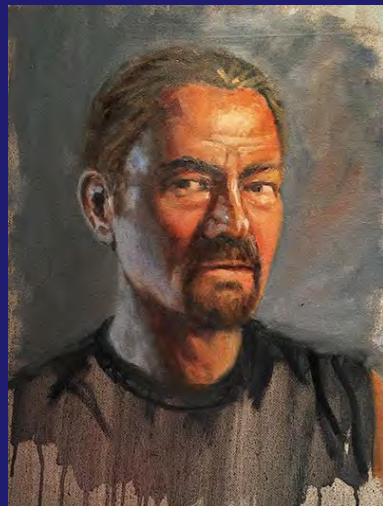
Salvage Right

Mouse & Dragon

Alliance of Equals

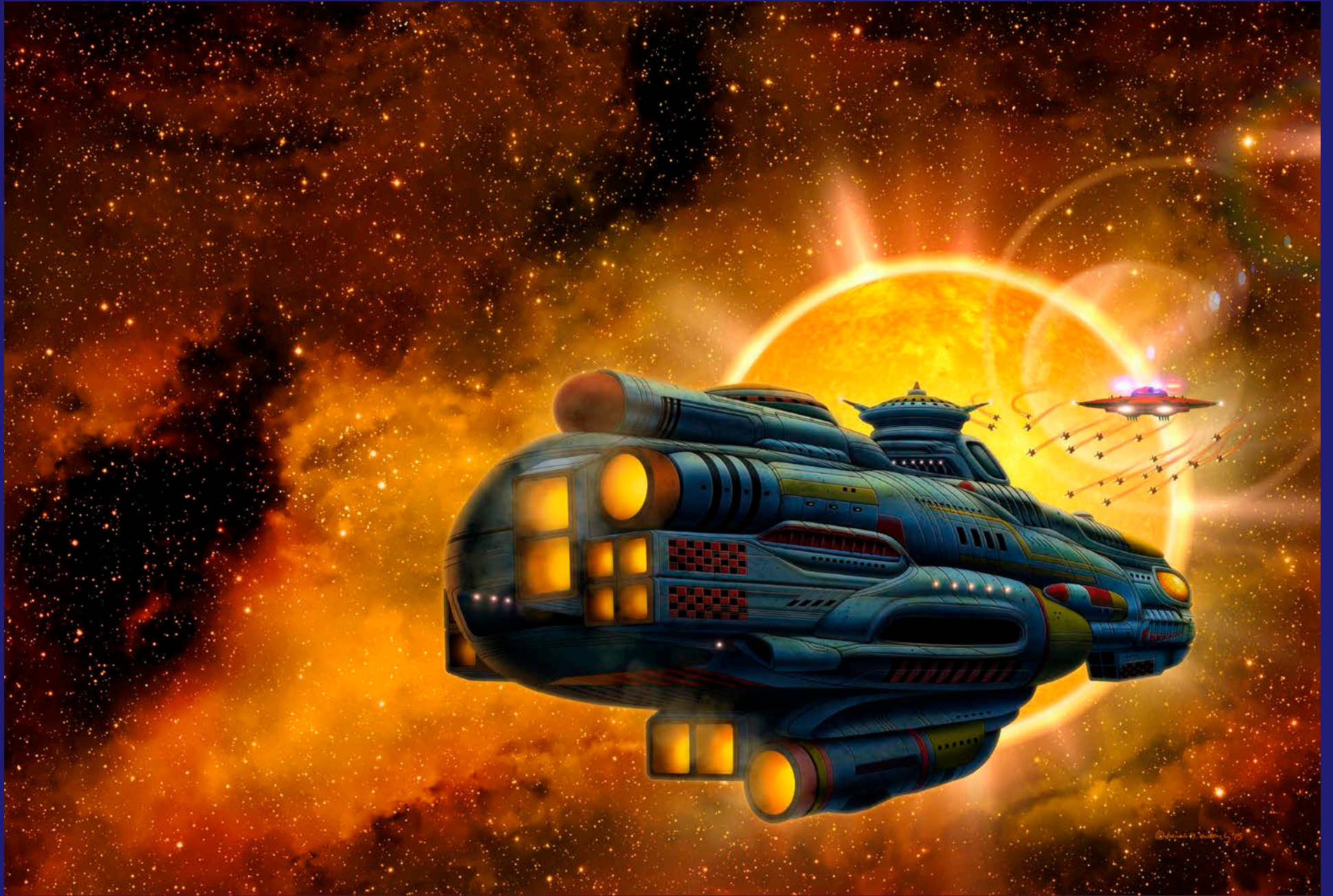
Ghost Ship

(and on the cover: Accepting the Lance)











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Excerpt from *Salvage Right*

a novel of the Liaden Universe®
by Sharon Lee and Steve Miller

Published by permission of the authors and Baen Books.
The complete novel will be available for purchase July 4, 2023

“All good,” she said. “Let’s go.”

So, they went, just the two of them, at a brisk pace, Theo’s boot heels striking the decking firmly.

Not that it likely was just the two of them, Jen Sin thought. The ship surely accompanied his captain, if the whispers he had heard about the ship when it was a-building had any basis in fact.

They walked in silence for a few minutes before Theo said, “Why?”

“Forgive me – which why in particular?”

She gave him a half-grin.

“I guess there might be more than one, given family. Are you one of the trouble-prone yos’Pheliums?”

He moved his shoulders.

“Who are we to use as our pattern-card?”

She laughed.

“Right. In particular, I’m wondering why you arrived here. Val Con’s notes said you’ve been here, on Tinsori Light, for two hundred Standards, but not why. Were you sent to –” She waved her hand energetically about, possibly indicating the Light entire – “be a light keeper?”

“No, I was *sent* to Delium, to deliver a packet.”

He took a hard breath.

“To shorten the tale considerably – there was treachery. I took damage and it became ... necessary to hit the presets – the merest blind stab –” because of the blood running into his eyes, more than half-dead as he had been – “and it brought me here. I mean to say, to Tinsori Light.”

Theo turned her head to stare at him.

“The emergency *safe-port* presets?”

“Yes,” he admitted. “And, no, Cousin, I do not know why those coords were included among the set. Perhaps Korval once had an ally here, though neither name nor clan-sign were familiar to Lorith.”

They walked on, Theo deep in thought, though he supposed she could be in conversation with the ship.

They took the right hand hall at the main intersection, and had almost gained the next, when Theo spoke again.

“Val Con said you sent a coded message meaning you were ... *suiciding* –” she said the word as if it were in questionable taste – “and the delm should strike ship and pilot from the list of Korval’s ... assets.”

“That is correct.”

“But you could have sent for help!” she said. “Clan Korval could have sent dozens! They –”

“To have done so would have provided Tinsori Light with an army,” he interrupted. “I killed my ship because it was untrustworthy, having been repaired by Tinsori Light. I stayed because I, too, had been repaired by Tinsori Light, and was equally untrustworthy, though I believed I could assist in preventing it from conquering the universe – or even a small system.”

Theo was frowning. “It was an Independent Logic. Negotiations –”

“It was an Independent Logic built by the Great Enemy. Old Tech. Surely, the Scouts still warn against Old Tech, and deactivate it when they can? Such things are – insidious.”

“The Scouts tried to confiscate *Bechimo* as Old Tech,” Theo said sharply, and seemed about to say more, but stopped, face arrested, very much as if she were listening to a voice only she could hear.

The ship was calming her, Jen Sin thought. Good. They had both spoken with more heat than was wise, given their lineage, and it was well-done, that neither had shown a blade.

“The Department of the Interior,” Theo said, sounding subdued, “used Old Tech to ... injure one of my crew. We brought him back to health – to *good* health – but he’d been a field Scout and – that’s not something he’ll be able to recover.”

Her ship assaulted, and her crew injured. Small wonder Cousin Theo was raw on that edge.

“Every coin has two sides,” he said, gently. “Allow Tinsori Light to have been the obverse of *Bechimo*.”

She took a deep breath, and nodded sharply. “Agreed. So you stayed –”

“I could not go – I had no ship,” he said. “And while two

guards against what mischief the Light might produce was trivial, two was more efficient than one, and far less dangerous than a dozen. Two guards may stand back-to-back; one may sleep and one may guard, lowering the risk of error brought by exhaustion; another person to talk to – even so little as that – increases the efficiency of the watch.”

“I hadn’t thought –” she began, but a sound had caught Jen Sin’s ear. He raised a hand, stopped, and turned.

Around the corner burst a pale blue jitney, surely traveling at or near its top speed. Hazenthull nor Phelium was piloting, Tolly Jones crammed into the bench beside her.

Theo stepped to the left side of the hall. Jen Sin remained where he was. He saw Hazenthull’s teeth in a full battle grin before she reached to the control board.

The jitney came to a gentle halt thirty centimeters from his leading foot.

“Light Keeper!” Tolly Jones said with a brilliant smile. “Good to see you! Cap’n Theo – the same, ma’am.”

“I see that Researcher Veeoni came prepared for every contingency,” Jen Sin said. “May one ask your target? Surely not the breach hall.”

“Not quite that far. Seignur Veeoni had it come into her head that there’s something she might find innerestin’ in one of the rooms just ‘round the corner, and sent Haz to fetch it. I’m along in case whatever it might be is too heavy for her to lift.”

“Or in case it may need persuasion,” Jen Sin murmured. Tolly Jones gave him a nod.

“A small winged bot was found in the deep core by the cleaning crew,” Jen Sin said. “It escaped into the station at large.”

“Heard that. We’ll keep a lookout.”

“Also, we have ships, cargo, and work crews incoming. They will be docking in a few hours.”

“*Hadn’t* heard that. We’ll keep a lookout there, too.” He patted the side of the jitney.

“You folks for the breach hall?”

“Indeed. Captain Waitley wishes to inspect it.”

“Why not?” Tolly said, and pointed over his shoulder. “Pair o’ perfectly good seats back there. We can give you a lift as far as we’re going.”

“I will,” Hazenthull said, “moderate the speed. We were conducting a capabilities inventory.”

“Very wise,” Jen Sin said gravely. “A pilot must know her craft.” He glanced across the hall.

“Cousin Theo, will you take your ease?”

Theo took a breath, shrugged, and moved toward the jitney

“Sure,” she said. “Why not?”

#

Theo shifted on the seat beside him, and he turned his head to meet her eyes.

“What would you have done, if she hadn’t stopped?”

“Jumped, of course. What would you have done, if she had veered left?”

“Jumped,” she admitted. “But, you *challenged* her.”

Ah. This was what came of being nurtured by scholars in an orderly environment, where *melant’i* was perhaps not accounted.

“I merely asserted my intention to remain where I was,” he said.

Theo drew breath . . .

He raised his hand. She exhaled.

“I am light keeper,” he said, “and have dominion in my own halls. Hazenthull challenged *that*. It may have been in jest, but even so, it required an immediate answer. Every challenge is an equation set, Cousin. Hazenthull’s question was ‘Will you yield?’ My answer was, ‘No. *You* will yield.’”

“But what if she hadn’t been joking?”

“Did we not just agree that the prudent course in such a case would have been to jump?”

“Yes, but that would have – escalated the situation, and –”

The jitney bore, strongly, to the left, curtailing conversation. Straightening, it picked up speed briefly, then the engine cut and they drifted gently to a stop.

“End of the line,” Tolly Jones called out.

Jen Sin stood up and walked to the pilot’s side.

“My thanks for your courtesy,” he said.

Hazenthull inclined her head.

“I would offer a ride back,” she said, “but Seignur Veeoni was not able to give me even approximate dimensions.”

“If it’s here at all,” Tolly Jones added. “Want us to swing up to the seal, if we got room and you’re not back by the time we’re ready to go?”

“It would be a kindness,” Jen Sin said, around a cool shiver of – memory, perhaps. He moved to the front of the jitney, frowning at the hatch with its diagonal green stripe. There was *something*, though a specific incident did not arise. “It is this room?”

“Yes,” Hazenthull said. “Seignur Veeoni was certain.”

“As always,” Jen Sin murmured. The feeling had faded. He sighed, felt the presence of someone near, and turned his head to find Tolly Jones standing at his side.

“Problem?”

“Nothing so definite. Take care, Mentor.”

“Always,” he said cheerfully, and turned away. “Hey, Haz, did Seignur Veeoni give us anything *specific*?”

“Should we stay?” Theo asked, arriving in her turn at his side.

Jen Sin moved his shoulders. “Likely not. You had wanted to see the seals.”

“I did. But if there’s danger –”

“Hazenthull and Mentor Jones are very efficient people. More, they are a seasoned security team. If there *is* danger, and they are required to act, our presence may impede them.”

“Because we’re not a team,” Theo said.

“Because, we are not *their* team,” he corrected, gently. Surely, he thought, she knew these things.

Still, it seemed for a moment that she might make another argument to stay. She did glance over her shoulder at Tolly Jones and Hazenthull nor Phelium, bent together over the tablet in his hand, then stretched her legs to reach his side.

“I’m not ... experienced in the kinds of decisions you had to make in order to – survive Tinsori Light,” she said slowly. “It must be hard to always have to think about what might give an enemy the advantage. I mean, what you said, about not giving the Light an army.”

Only see the child, how serious! The Old Light had nothing to do with her, and Jen Sin was glad of it.

“It was what came to me,” he said. “Perhaps I am one of the trouble-prone yos’Pheliums, after all.”

She laughed, and that was better.

“Just through here,” he said, putting his hand against the hatch with its orange warning stripe.

Emergency dims came on when they entered, waking abundant shadows. The air was cool, but reasonably fresh. At the end of the hall, not so very distant from the hatch, the cermasteel seal glowed an unsettling grey-green in the low light.

“What I was wondering,” Theo said, moving forward, her attention on the seal –

A section of the left wall somewhat forward of her slid silently aside, and a bot stepped into the hall.

It was a very simple bot: unadorned, articulated girders, small motors at the knees and elbows, a blank mask atop crosspiece shoulders.

It was holding an energy rifle, which it raised, aiming –

“Theo,” Jen Sin said sharply. “Stop. Do not move.”

Her head turned toward the bot. She stopped, and she did not move.

“Yes,” he murmured, and moved himself, forward and to the right, making certain his boot heels made audible contact with the decking. The bot turned, weapon following him.

Excellent.

“Tocohl,” he said, calmly, never moving his eyes from the bot, “please make contact with the guard in the breach hall.”

“I can see the guard in the hallway camera,” Tocohl said, the old speaker making her voice scratchy and unbeautiful. “I do not see it in the station systems. All of the indie circuits are closed.” There was a pause. “Jen Sin – I can’t contact it.”

Which meant, Jen Sin understood, that she could not deactivate it. He had feared as much.

“That’s all right, though,” Theo said, softly, her lips scarcely moving. “Because we’re here to help; to upgrade systems and repair damage. There’s no need to hurt us, and every reason to help us.”

“That is correct,” Jen Sin murmured, moving gently, drawing the eye of the weapon with him, away from Theo. “I am the light keeper. It is my duty and my intention to keep the station as it deserves, with care, respect and attention to the safety of all.”

He angled in, keeping the bot’s attention on him, away from Theo. Another few steps, and he would be close enough to attempt a disarm.

“Theo,” he said, keeping his voice calm and even, hoping with everything in him that the ship would support him in this – but of course he would. The ship loved his trouble-prone captain. Her safety would be prime.

“Theo, back down the hall slowly, please. Go out through the hatch.”

Her head jerked in his direction.

“What?” she said sharply. “No.”

The bot moved, weapon swinging back toward her.

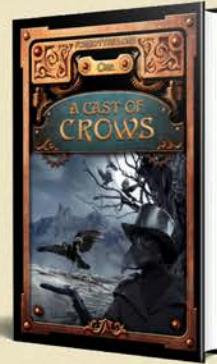
Jen Sin jumped.



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AGM Publications, and NeoParadoxa

2023 New Releases

A Cast of Crows
edited by Danielle Ackley-McPhail



A Curse of Ash and Iron
by Christine Norris

Grease Monkeys
edited by Danielle Ackley-McPhail
and John L. French



Phoenix Precinct
by Keith R.A. DeCandido

Yeti Left Home
by Aaron Rosenberg

Esprit de Corpse
by Ef Deal

Grimm Machinations
edited by Danielle Ackley-McPhail
and Greg Schauer



Invasive Species
by Hildy Silverman

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A LITTLE BIT ABOUT CHARLES GANNON

Charles Gannon, a Guest of Honor at HELIOSphere in 2018, returns to us this year as a Special Guest, and we're extremely pleased to welcome him back.

Four of Charles Gannon's award-winning Terran Republic hard SF novels featuring Caine Riordan have been Nebula finalists (*Fire With Fire* (2014), *Trial by Fire* (2015), *Raising Caine* (2016), and *Marque of Caine* (2020)), while two of those have been nominated for the Dragon Awards awarded yearly by the members of Dragon Con.

Fans of the series who are themselves well known authors came together to contribute to an anthology set in the same universe, *Lost Signals of the Terran Republic*, which came out in 2019.

Even before this, Chuck was no stranger to collaboration, having previously worked in the RPG (role playing game) industry as a writer and editor for the second edition of the Game Designers Workshop's classic SF RPG, *Traveller*, as well as other RPGs published by GDW.

He has made significant contributions to the worlds other authors have created, lending his pen to contributions in the Starfire, Honorverse, Man-Kzin, and War World universes.

Notably, Chuck is a major contributor to the 1632 or Ring of Fire shared world created by fellow HELIOSphere 2018 Guest of Honor Eric Flint, having co-written with Eric *1635: The Papal Stakes* (which made the *Wall Street Journal* hardcover SF bestseller list), *1636: Commander Cantrell in the West Indies*, *1636: The Vatican Sanction*, and *1637: No Peace Beyond the Line* (which won the previously mentioned Dragon Award in 2021 for Best Alternate History Novel).



Eric Flint and Chuck Gannon – Photo by Andrew Porter

Dr. Charles Gannon is not only an accomplished creator and contributor to fictional worlds. *In Rumors of War and Infernal Machines* he proves to be an astute observer and analyst of how those hard SF narratives may have actually affected and shaped real world military imagination and policy.

Fans of Gannon's work can also follow him on Facebook by joining his group, *Chuck Gannon's Caine-Verse Fan Society*.

Finally, besides being a prolific and accomplished author and polymath, Chuck Gannon is a genuinely nice guy.

As you will discover.

HELIOSPHERE SCHEDULE

(subject to change)

Friday, April 28

2:00 pm – 8:00 pm	Registration Open
2:30 pm	Welcome Tea
3:30 pm – 4:45 pm	Podcasting and Streaming for Hobbyists in the Age of Big Budget Professionals
3:30 pm – 4:45 pm	The Biggest Mistakes Made by New Writers
4:00 pm – 7:00 pm	MarketSpace Open
4:00 pm – 1:00 am	Gaming Open
4:00 pm – 5:30 pm	Early Bird Filk Circle
5:00 pm – 6:15 pm	What is Streaming Doing?
5:00 pm – 6:15 pm	Exploring the Uses and Ethics of ChatGPT and Other AI Models
5:00 pm – 6:15 pm	So You Want to Be in an Anthology
5:00 pm – 6:15 pm	Readings: Sharon Lee & Steve Miller
6:00 pm – 6:55 pm	Dinner Filk Circle and Break
6:30 pm – 7:45 pm	How Do You Introduce New Characters Into Existing Story Arcs?
6:30 pm – 7:45 pm	The Influence of Soaps on Serialized Storytelling
6:30 pm – 7:45 pm	Mythology – New Takes on Old Tales
6:30 pm – 7:45 pm	Readings: Amy Grech, Kathleen O’Shea David
7:00 pm – 7:55 pm	Theme Circle: Travel Songs and “Going There”
8:00 pm – 9:00 pm	Ice Cream Social
8:00 pm – 8:55 pm	Concert: John McDaid
9:00	Open Filk
9:30 pm – 10:45 pm	Favorite Science Fiction Movies. Audience Participation Encouraged
9:30 pm – 10:45 pm	Spirits, Specters, and Spooks
9:30 pm – 10:45 pm	<i>Everything I Learned About Being A Good RPG Player I Learned from BDSM (18+)</i>
10:30 pm – ?	Masked social area



Saturday, April 30

9:00 am – 6:00 pm	Registration Open
10:00 am – 5:00 pm	MarketSpace Open
10:00 am – 11:15 am	Metaphors as popular culture
10:00 am – 11:15 am	Murder, Mischief, and Mayhem
10:00 am – 11:15 am	Climbing Out of the Shadows
11:00 am – 01:00 am (Sun)	Gaming Open
11:00 am – 11:55 am	What Is Filk?
11:30 am – 12:45 pm	GoH Interview: Steve Miller and Sharon Lee
11:30 am – 12:45 pm	Don't Ruin the Moment! Paying Attention to the Little Things
11:30 am – 12:45 pm	Writing Believable Injuries for Fictional Characters
11:30 am – 12:45 pm	Readings: Jenifer Rosenberg, Randee Dawn, Nicholas Parisi
12:00 noon – 12:55 pm	Open Filk and Lunch Break
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm	Dina Leacock and Ann Stolinsky Launch party
1:00 pm – 1:55 pm	Abby Memorial Sing (Salon C)
2:00 pm – 2:55 pm	Theme Circle: Classic Filk
2:30 pm – 3:45 pm	In Conversation with David Mattingly
2:30 pm – 3:45 pm	Making Our Monsters or Finding Them
2:30 pm – 3:45 pm	Back in Time: Would Modern Doctors Make a Difference in the Past?
2:30 pm – 3:45 pm	Readings: Karen Heuler, Darrell Schweitzer, Chuck Gannon
3:00 pm – 3:55 pm	Theme Circle: The Evil That Is to Come
4:00 pm – 5:15 pm	The Teddy Bear Tea
4:00 pm – 5:15 pm	Editor's Panel: What are Editors Looking for?
4:00 pm – 5:15 pm	Internal Monologues
4:00 pm – 5:15 pm	Story Inspiration from Breaking Science
4:00 pm – 5:15 pm	Readings: Elektra Hammond, Christopher Burke, Walter Hunt
4:00 pm – 4:55 pm	Concert: Alan Beck
5:00 pm – 5:55 pm	Theme Circle: Songs about Food
5:30 pm – 6:45 pm	David Mattingly Slide Show
5:30 pm – 6:45 pm	Libraries and Librarians in Fantasy and Science Fiction
6:00 pm – 6:55 pm	Dinner Filk Circle and Break
7:00 pm – 9:30 pm	Masked Social Area
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm	ESpec Books Launch Party
7:00 pm – 7:55 pm	Theme Circle: Songs of Stars Spacers and Planets
8:30 pm – 9:30 pm	Autograph Session
8:00 pm – 8:55 pm	Theme Circle: Heroes, Villains and Missions

9:00 pm	Open Filk
9:30 pm – 10:45 pm	The “Everything Everywhere All At Once” Appreciation Circle (and movie?)
9:30 pm – 10:45 pm	Are Vampires Still the Rage or Are We Chasing Zombies?
9:30 pm – 10:45 pm	<i>Kink 101 (18+)</i>
11:00 pm – ?	The Eye of Argon Reading



Sunday, April 31

9:00 am – 12:00 noon	Registration Open
10:00 am – 11:15 am	What is “Classic”?
10:00 am – 11:15 am	Through the Door
10:00 am – 11:15 am	Weirdest New Words I Learned in 2023
11:00 am – 3:00 pm	MarketSpace Open
11:00 am – 6:00 pm	Gaming Open
11:00 am – 11:55 am	Theme Circle: Fantasy Adventures and Creatures
11:30 am – 12:45 pm	Secrets to Putting a Lasting Foundation Under Your Universe
11:30 am – 12:45 pm	Wednesday Addams! Audience Participation
11:30 am – 12:45 pm	Writing for Roleplaying Games
11:30 am – 12:45 pm	Readings: Danielle Ackley-McPhail, Hildy Silverman, Keith R.A. DeCandido
1:00 pm – 1:55 pm	Concert: Eric Schragger
1:00 pm – 2:15 pm	GoH Interview: Chuck Gannon
1:00 pm – 2:15 pm	Marketing for Creatives
1:00 pm – 2:15 pm	Fanfiction as Practice
1:00 pm – 2:15 pm	Readings: Lancelot Schaubert, Bjorn Hasseler, Lori Perkins
2:00 pm – 2:55 pm	Open Filk
2:30 pm – 3:45 pm	Genre Blending ~ You Got Ghosts in My Steampunk!
2:30 pm – 3:45 pm	Cut the Boring Parts
2:30 pm – 3:45 pm	How Much is Too Much in Horror
3:00 pm – 3:55 pm	Filk Gripe Session
4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Feedback Session
8:00 pm	Dead Dog

Guest of Honor (GoH) items are in BOLD.
18+ Only items are in BOLD ITALIC.

BOSKONE 61

An illustration of a woman in a blue dress spinning yarn in a rustic room. She is holding a long strand of golden yarn that glows with light. The room has stone walls, a window with a view of a bright sky, and various spinning tools like a wheel and a loom. There are baskets of yarn and a wooden chair in the background.

February 9-11, 2024 • Westin Boston Seaport District Hotel

**Author Guest of Honor:
Ben Aaronovich**

**Official Artist:
Emily Hurst Pritchett**

**Hal Clement Science Speaker:
Kevin Roche**

**NESFA Press Guest:
John Scalzi**

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membership.**

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

(subject to change)

Are Vampires Still the Rage or Are We Chasing Zombies? (Audience Participation)

Salon D

James Chambers (M), Hildy Silverman, Jay Smith, Marc Vun Kannon

Discussion of paranormal beings in books and movies. Why do we love this genre? What's trending now and what creatures have yet to have their day. What paranormal being would you love to see next?

Back in Time: Would Modern Doctors Make a Difference in the Past?

Salon D

Lawrence Kramer (M), James Prego, Bjorn Hasseler, Ian Strock, Jay Smith

Join us for a thought-provoking panel discussion on the possibility of modern-day doctors making a positive impact if teleported into the past. We'll explore the limitations and possibilities of transporting doctors from today's era to the medical world of the past. Would their modern knowledge and techniques be enough to change the course of history and improve medical care in earlier times? Or would they face insurmountable challenges due to the limitations of technology and societal norms of the past? Don't miss this engaging discussion on the intersection of medicine and time travel.

Climbing Out of the Shadows

Salon D

Kathryn Sullivan (M), Ef Deal, Chuck Gannon, Aaron Rosenberg

Author popularity peaks and wanes with the literary tide. Life or publishing travails get in the way, trends change, the muse stops speaking. How do you come back from the unexpected fade? What do you do to increase the visibility of your work and your brand?

Cut the Boring Parts

Salon C

Elektra Hammond (M), Sharon Lee, Keith R.A. DeCandido, Ann Stolinsky, Aaron Rosenberg

Writers are told they need to cut out all the boring parts. But boring to whom? Those who like every last detail of a ship or weapons? Those who want only action? What about quiet bits of worldbuilding – should they stay or go?

David Mattingly Slide Show

Miracle

Dina Leacock and Ann Stolinsky Launch party

Miracle

Don't Ruin the Moment! Paying Attention to the Little Things

Salon C

Hildy Silverman (M), Chuck Gannon, Christopher Burke, Elektra Hammond, Kathleen O'Shea David

Hey, we all love dragons, and they can do all sorts of stuff like swear, smoke cigars and drink whiskey. But if they don't know the basic facts about how to smoke a cigar or enjoy a whiskey, it's gonna be a total buzzkill. We're here to talk about those little details that can totally take you out of the moment, even when giant robots are pounding each other into scrap metal. It's not rocket science, just stuff you could look up on Google, but it can make a big difference in keeping your fantasy world feeling real. Join us for some tips and tricks from our panelists on how to keep your readers and viewers engaged in your fantastical worlds.

Editor's Panel: What are Editors Looking for?

Miracle

Ef Deal (M), Michael Ventrella, Neil Clarke, Ian Strock, Ann Stolinsky Kathleen O'Shea David

This is an opportunity for writers to ask what are you looking for and what should be avoided. Certain story ideas have been done to death. What should a writer do if the editor asks for a rewrite? Tips for writers.

ESpec Books Launch Party

Salon D

Danielle Ackley-McPhail

Everything I Learned About Being A Good RPG Player I Learned from BDSM (18+)

Salon D

Renee Ritchie

Exploring the Uses and Ethics of ChatGPT and Other AI Models

Salon C

Elektra Hammond (M), Lancelot Schaubert, Chris Kreuter, Liz Crefin

Artificial intelligence has made significant strides in recent years, and one of the most exciting developments is the emergence of language models like ChatGPT. Join us as we explore potential applications in various fields such as education, medicine, and creative pursuits, and the ethical considerations of using tools such as these. How might these language models shape the future of human communication?

Fanfiction as Practice

Salon D

Marc Vun Kannon (M), Kathryn Sullivan, Vikki Ciaffone, Christopher Burke Kathleen O'Shea David

What writing skills did you find easily or best developed in a fanfiction context? What sort of fanfiction writer are you, and did that play into the development of those skills?

Favorite Science Fiction Movies (Audience Participation)

Miracle

David Mattingly (M), Lawrence Kramer, Randee Dawn, Nicholas Parisi

What is great? What is thrilling? What is "I've seen this too many times before? What about the science? Would it work? What has been done to death and what would you like to see explored?

FILK: All Boardroom A unless otherwise indicated

Abby Memorial Sing - *Salon C*

Concert: Alan Beck

Concert: Eric Schragger

Concert: John McDavid

Filk Gripe Session

Theme Circle: Classic Filk

Theme Circle: Fantasy Adventures and Creatures

Theme Circle: Heroes, Villains and Missions

Theme Circle: Songs about Food

Theme Circle: Songs of Stars Spacers and Planets

Theme Circle: The Evil That Is to Come

Theme Circle: Travel Songs and "Going there"

What Is Filk?

Genre Blending ~ You Got Ghosts in My Steampunk!

Miracle

John J. Pierce (M), Ef Deal, Lori Perkins, Darrell Schweitzer, Vikki Ciaffone

Steampunk Fairy Tales, Sherlock Holmes facing down werewolves and vampires. What does the mix bring to the craft?

GoH Interview: Chuck Gannon

Miracle

Mike McPhail

GoH Interview: Steve Miller and Sharon Lee

Miracle

Kathryn Sullivan

How Do You Introduce New Characters Into Existing Story Arcs?

Miracle

Lancelot Schaubert (M), Chuck Gannon, Sharon Lee, Emily Munro, Walter Hunt

While you might be sure they belong, a misstep can unbalance a story and cloud what you've already written. We'll explore approaches that allow new characters to thrive along with your story.

How Much is Too Much in Horror

Salon D

James Chambers (M), Amy Grech, Gordon Linzner, Jay Smith

How does an author reasonably assess how far to go when depicting violence, gore, assault and more? Is there such a thing as "too far" and if so, what is the criteria?

Ice Cream Social

Everyone is invited to enjoy!

In Conversation with David Mattingly

Miracle

David Mattingly, Sharon Lee, Steve Miller, Michael Ventrella

Internal Monologues

Salon C

Marc Vun Kannon (M), Karen Heuler, Aaron Rosenberg, Chuck Gannon

Internal monologues – do you have one? How does having it or not affect your writing? Are there different writing techniques favored? Is the publishing industry skewed towards those who have one over those who don't?

Kink 101 (18+)

Salon C

The Crucible

Libraries and Librarians in Fantasy and Science Fiction

Sarah Sheenan (M), Kathryn Sullivan, Vikki Ciaffone, Bjorn Hasseler, Walter Hunt

Salon C

In TV shows from Buffy to Once Upon a Time, libraries hold the answers to defeating magical creatures. In books such as *Grimm Legacy* by Polly Schulman and *Libromancer* by Jim Hines, libraries hold the actual magical artifacts. What are some of your favorite libraries and librarians in SFF?

Making Our Monsters or Finding Them

Salon C

Gordon Linzner (M), Hildy Silverman, James Chambers, Danielle Ackley-McPhail, Dina Leacock

Making Our Monsters or Finding Them – while cryptids have always had a history with mankind going back to Carl Linnaeus and his *Animalia Paradoxa*, and even beyond, the fascination for these documented but unproven creatures has steadily increase. Some have been proven, others remain elusive, and for some, they are all just elaborate hoaxes, and even so they continue to hold appeal. Discuss.

Marketing for Creatives

Salon C

Jenifer Rosenberg(M), David Mattingly, Randee Dawn, Danielle Ackley-McPhail, Emily Munro

Are you a creative looking to expand your audience and grow your career? Do you want to improve your branding and learn effective marketing strategies? Panelists will discuss topics such as social media, email marketing, advertising, and public relations. Join us for this session to gain valuable insights and practical knowledge on how to successfully market your creative works.

Masked Social Area

Miracle

Gaming and Social area. No Food allowed.

Metaphors as Popular Culture: Why we are having so many zombie and vampire TV shows

Miracle

Randee Dawn (M), Jay Smith, Andy Campbell, Renee Ritchie, Lori Perkins

In this panel, we'll be discussing the abundance of zombie and vampire TV shows and their underlying metaphors for our collective societal fears and anxieties. For example, zombies may symbolize pandemics and the collapse of society, while vampires may embody issues around power, addiction, and mortality. We'll explore how these metaphors provide insight into our culture and why these creatures have such a strong grip on popular media. Join us for an engaging conversation on the deeper meanings behind these popular tropes.

Murder, Mischief, and Mayhem

Salon C

Amy Grech (M), Russ Colchamiro, Marc Vun Kannon, James Chambers

Dark fiction of the supernatural and human variety frequently overlap. Elements of suspense and horror often intermingle between those genres and blend well with crime fiction. Crime and mystery stories often verge on horror simply because they illuminate the darkest corners of human experience. Where can these different types of stories enhance each other? What defines and separates them? What are some classic examples that blend them?

Mythology – New Takes on Old Tales

Salon D

Kathryn Sullivan (M), Aaron Rosenberg, Andy Campbell, Danielle Ackley-McPhail

Greek and Roman mythologies have been moved to modern day in YA and MG, followed now by Norse, Egyptian and South Asian mythologies. What are the appeal of these tales?

Podcasting and Streaming for Hobbyists in the Age of Big Budget Professionals

Salon C

Russ Colchamiro (M), Jay Smith, Chris Kreuter, Renee Ritchie

Everybody wants to talk about their favorite pop culture topic on their own home-grown 'cast. How do you make your show stand out when companies are outspending you on marketing, advertising, and production value?

READINGS: All in Library unless otherwise indicated

Sharon Lee & Steve Miller

Amy Grech, Kathleen O'Shea David

Jenifer Rosenberg, Randee Dawn, Nicholas Parisi

Karen Heuler, Darrell Schweitzer, Chuck Gannon

Elektra Hammond, Christopher Burke, Walter Hunt

Sarena Strauss, James Chambers, Gordon Linzner

Danielle Ackley-McPhail, Hildy Silverman, Keith R.A. DeCandido

Lancelot Schaubert, Bjorn Hasseler, Lori Perkins

Secrets to Putting a Lasting Foundation Under Your Universe

Miracle

Lancelot Schaubert (M), Steve Miller, Chuck Gannon, Emily Munro, Aaron Rosenberg

If you're planning on using – and reusing – a universe in multiple stories or novels you'll want to avoid having to retcon yourself. Having some sense of the physics and the social structures you want to work with can ease your and comfort your readers down the line.

So You Want to Be in an Anthology

Salon D

Michael Ventrella (M), Keith R.A. DeCandido, Mike McPhail, Darrell Schweitzer, Ann Stolinsky
What editors of themed anthologies are looking for.

Spirits, Specters, and Spooks

Salon D

Jenifer Rosenberg, Gordon Linzner, Marc Vun Kannon, Amy Grech
Do you love a good ghost story? Or maybe you're into all things spooky and supernatural? Join us for bone-chilling tales that will have you checking under your bed before you go to sleep!

Story Inspiration from Breaking Science

Salon D

Lancelot Schaubert (M), Danielle Ackley-McPhail, James Prego, Sarena Strauss
Merging science and storytelling – an exploration of the latest breakthroughs and discoveries from the Social Science Research Network (SSRN) and others, and how they can inspire new and exciting science fiction and fantasy stories. From technological advancements to insights into the human condition, attendees will learn about the latest research and have the opportunity to brainstorm and share their own story ideas. Whether you're a writer seeking inspiration or a science enthusiast looking to explore the intersection of science and fiction, this session is sure to captivate and inspire.

The Biggest Mistakes Made by New Writers

Salon D

Michael Ventrella, Keith R.A. DeCandido, Mike McPhail, Lori Perkins, Ian Strock
Join our panel of seasoned writers and editors as they share their insights on the most common mistakes made by new writers. From poor world-building to cardboard characters, we'll explore the pitfalls that can trip up even the most talented authors. Our panelists will discuss their own experiences as well as offer practical tips and advice on how to avoid these mistakes and improve your writing. Whether you're just starting out or looking to refine your craft, this is a must-attend event for anyone who wants to take their writing to the next level. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from the best and take your first step toward becoming a successful author!

The “Everything Everywhere All At Once” Appreciation Circle (and Movie?)

Miracle

Keith R.A. DeCandido, Gordon Linzner, James Prego, Lori Perkins
The Everything Everywhere All At Once appreciation circle – Come discuss the many aspects of this delightfully different movie!

The Influence of Soaps on Serialized Storytelling

Salon C

Hildy Silverman (M), Randee Dawn, Russ Colchamiro, Bjorn Hasseler
Many people turn their noses up at traditional soap operas, yet their serialized storytelling form and tropes have been adopted by media and written fiction alike. Let's talk about what it is about soaps that have them drawing audiences across generations and what writers/showrunners can learn from their decades of success.

The Teddy Bear Tea

Lounge Area by Restaurant

Our Guests of Honor Steve and Sharon (and several of their traveling stuffies) will host a low-key get together with tea and snacks to let traveling fans share their fellow-traveler teddy bears or other stuffies with others who often travel with soft companions. Share their stories and names, if you dare to share...

Through the Door

Salon C

Kathryn Sullivan (M), Michael Ventrella, Elektra Hammond, Bjorn Hasseler, Chuck Gannon
Stories where people are transported to other worlds, parallel dimensions or into virtual games are becoming popular again. What are the appeal of those genres versus secondary world fantasies?

Wednesday Addams! (Audience Participation)

Salon C

Sarena Strauss (M), Gordon Linzner, Randee Dawn, Dina Leacock
She's the girl on Netflix that everyone is talking about her. Wednesday is crushing the #1 spot. What do people like? It is her? The place? The twisting plots? Are you in the anti-Wednesday crowd? You'll have your chance to talk too.

Welcome Tea

Join us in the lobby seating for tea, coffee and treats.
Hosted by Debi Chowdhury

Weirdest New Words I Learned in 2023

Salon D

Sarena Strauss (M), Jenifer Rosenberg, Christopher Burke, Lancelot Schaubert
Come share the weirdest and wildest words you've discovered this year with fellow language enthusiasts! From funky new terms in science fiction to fascinating words from other cultures, we're going to explore it all. Our presenters will keep the conversation going with their own wacky word finds, and you're invited to bring your own to add to the mix. This session is perfect for anyone who loves language and wants to connect with other language nerds. So come hang out, learn some new words, and let's have a good time together!

What is "Classic"?

Miracle

John J. Pierce (M), Aaron Rosenberg, Darrell Schweitzer, Marc Vun Kannon
What is "classic"? Is there a single concept of classic that works for everyone? Can the concept of "classic" be presented in different ways, some of which make more sense to different people?

What is Streaming Doing?

Miracle

Walter Hunt (M), Gordon Linzner, Christopher Burke, James Prego
Netflix, HBOMax, and others seem to be canceling beloved shows before their time, often only giving them one season to find their footing before pulling the plug. Is it worth getting invested in a show when there is a good chance they'll be yanked without a satisfactory conclusion? Let's discuss!

Writing Believable Injuries for Fictional Characters

Salon D

Lancelot Schaubert (M), James Prego, Mike McPhail, Amy Grech, Keith R.A. DeCandido
How do you make an injury to your character at least somewhat realistic without slowing down your story's momentum? Writers provide tips for making injuries as believable as possible given story/character constraints.

Writing for Roleplaying Games

Salon D

Renee Ritchie



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WE'D LIKE TO THANK ...



DisCon III

Discon III, the 79th World Science Fiction Convention, which took place December 15–19, 2021 in Washington DC, for their extremely generous community grant to New Amsterdam Science Fiction & Fantasy Fandom, the parent organization of HELIOSphere.



Boskone and the **New England Science Fiction Association (NESFA)** for their support, especially the donation and gifting of their registration equipment. Boskone 61 will be taking place February 9–11, 2024 in Boston.

boskone.org
nesfa.org



Philcon

Philcon and the **Philadelphia Science Fiction Society (PSFS)** for their fantastic help, support, and advice. Their next convention, Philcon 2023, is November 17–19, 2023 in Cherry Hill, NJ.

philcon.org
psfs.org



Double Exposure, Inc. and their **Envoy** program for all their help in putting together gaming at HELIOSphere. Dexcon will be returning with DEXLITE 2023 on June 20–July 3, 2023.

dexposure.com