



Craig Chrissinger, normal editor. Darth Vader, guest editor each December. Please Send All Correspondence to — PO Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176-7257. Contact: (505) 266-8905 or via cwcraig@nmia.com. *ASFACTS* published February, April, July & October for the Albuq SF Society. *SITHFACTS* out each December. NEXT DEADLINE: Mon, April 5. **Club Officers:** Craig Chrissinger & Jessica Coyle, co-Zec Secs (505) 266-8905. Harriet Engle, Moderator. Grant Kuck, Alternator. Cupid, holiday host. **B'con Con Chair:** Craig Chrissinger (505) 559-0931.

our best recommendations for your consideration. There will be titles you loved that do not appear here; any one of the recommending group would have built a distinct list, but this is the aggregate, compiled with great affection for the field.”

Among those works and authors mentioned are these with connections to Bubonicon and/or New Mexico:

SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS: *The Relentless Moon* by Mary Robinette Kowal, *The Last Emperox* by John Scalzi, and *Fleet Elements* by Walter Jon Williams.

FANTASY NOVELS: *Black Sun* by Rebecca Roanhorse, and *Or What You Will* by Jo Walton

HORROR NOVELS: *The Hollow Places* by T. Kingfisher (Ursula Vernon).

YOUNG ADULT NOVELS: *A Wizard’s Guide to Defensive Baking* by T. Kingfisher, and *Race to the Sun* by Rebecca Roanhorse.

ANTHOLOGIES: *The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy 2020* edited by Diana Gabaldon & John Joseph Adams.

ILLUSTRATED & ART BOOKS: *A Storm of Swords: The Illustrated Edition* by George RR Martin with art by Gary Gianni.

NOVELETTES: “Color, Heat, and the Wreck of the Argo” by Catherynne M. Valente.

SHORT STORIES: “Badass Moms in the Zombie Apocalypse” by Rae Carson.

LEVAR BURTON NAMED PEN/FAULKNER CHAMPION

Actor LeVar Burton (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Reading Rainbow*, *Roots*) has been named the inaugural PEN/Faulkner Literary Champion to “recognize devoted literary advocacy and a commitment to inspiring new generations of readers and writers” reported *Locusmag.com* in early February. PEN/Faulkner executive director Gwydion Suilebhan said, “For decades, LeVar Burton has inspired readers all over the world. He has brought stories to life in a magical and meaningful way for generations of book-lovers, and his work has made a lasting, positive impact in literature.”

Burton said, “I come from a family for whom service to others is the highest possible calling. Whatever efforts I have made toward advancing the cause of literacy, give honor to my mother, Erma Gene Christian, my first teacher and from whom I have inherited my love for books and reading. As we move forward out of a time when alternative facts and mendacious propaganda shaped public opinion, the work you do through the PEN/Faulkner Award, and your committed investment in DC schools, has never been more important. I couldn’t be more honored to be the inaugural PEN/Faulkner Literary Champion.”

He also hosts the *LeVar Burton Reads* podcast, regu-

larly featuring stories by science fiction and fantasy authors including Charlie Jane Anders, Ray Bradbury, Octavia E. Butler, John Chu, Amal El-Mohtar, Neil Gaiman, Nalo Hopkinson, Ken Liu, Bruce McAllister, Haruki Murakami, and Nnedi Okorafor.

Burton will be honored along with the PEN/Faulkner Award winner and finalists in a virtual ceremony on May 10. For more information, see the PEN/Faulkner website.

BOOK GROUP KEEPS READING

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group meets 7:30 pm Monday, February 15, virtually in a Zoom chat session to discuss *Blindsight: Firefall Book 1* by Peter Watts. The group then meets virtually March 15, to talk about *Anyone* by Charles Soule, and on April 19 to chat about *Bridge of Birds: A Novel of an Ancient China That Never Was* by Barry Hughart.

Meetings of the D&D Book Group are open to all readers on the 3rd Monday of each month. Books for discussion are chosen two months in advance, and group members receive a 20% discount on them at Page One Books. For more info: Leah at msransom@hotmail.com or Craig at 266-8905.

WEBER BACK HOME AFTER COVID-19 HOSPITALIZATION

David Weber, author of the *Honorverse* and *Safehold* books – and Bubonicon 40’s Guest of Honor – was hospitalized with COVID-19 for eight days at the beginning of January. He went home January 9 and still is on the mend.

Weber went into the hospital January 1 for observation of a fever, his blood pressure and lung function. Per a Facebook post, he was put on a regimen of Remdesivir for at least five days at the time.

He noted, “They just admitted me to the hospital COVID floor. O2 level had fallen to about 83%. Got it back up to 88 or so, but still not good and the fever was spiking again. So our lovely daughter Morgan Rice-Weber drove her dad’s butt to the ER, where they told me there was a 95% chance they’d keep me. I sent her on home, they hooked me up to an IV, and told me they are going to pretty much blast me with everything they’ve got, including steroids, plasma, and all that other stuff. Got here about 3:30, I think, but it was closing in on 7 pm before they could find me a bed. SUPER nurses, and everyone is taking really good care of me. Fever has broken, O2 level is up to 95%, but they don’t like the chest X-rays, so I’m pretty sure they’ll be keeping me for a bit.”

On January 3, he posted, “Therapy proceeding. We’re on top of the fever; the high blood pressure looks like it’s under control; hydration levels look good. Still having trouble keeping the Oxygen up. They’ve got me on a pressure setting of 6, and I’m still dropping into the upper

80s whenever I move around. Takes a minute or two to get back up to the 90s once I'm back off my feet. Problem seems to be getting the lung function up to speed again. I'm confident we're moving in the right direction, but it's gonna take however long it takes."

On January 5th, Weber mentioned the doctors were "still worried a bit about my heart (remembering I was scheduled for a heart catheter last week before all this blew up) and about clotting." Even with that concern, he was officially taken off a heart monitor.

Weber also said that day, "Still coughing up wet phlegm. Not as many blood draw sticks, thank goodness! Breathing is a lot better, at least when not moving. I've been limited to sort of shooting out half-dozen word bursts and then gasping for breath. I'm up to whole sentences (well, phrases) now between breaths. Soon as I move, the panting and dizziness starts in, but I think even that is better."

His blood pressure was at an acceptable level on January 6, and his lungs were mostly clear though his oxygen levels still were lagging clinically. Weber reported that night he slept "hugely better on the CPAP, and I FEEL much, much better."

However, Weber had a slight scare on January 7th when he almost grayed out while walking on his own. On Facebook, he posted, "So my therapist and my doc just finished fussing at me for doing too much walking (and walking the last 20 steps or so without my O²). Had the cannula on the bridge of my nose in case I needed it, but not pumping up my nose. Was fine.

"Now, yesterday they had me up walking (supervised), and I understood them to say it would be good to do more of it on my own," he continued. "That was, however, before I kind of grayed out before the therapist left. At that point, she decided unsupervised walking would be a bad idea, but I didn't get the memo. And, uh, she never did suggest that deciding to take the O² off would be a good idea. Anyway, she came in just before lunch and I told her what I'd done, at which point SHE

told ME that I'd been... unwise. She didn't exactly yell at me. In fact she said patients who work hard are good. As long as they're not stupid about it. (Actually, she said "unwise," but I think she MEANT stupid.) And then she rattled me out to the doc, who had pretty much the same conversation with me."

The next day, Weber said the doctors were happy with the improvement, but that "the damage was pretty bad and they expect progress to be very much day-by-day." He was not sure whether he might be released on the Saturday or not.

So it was a pleasant surprise the next day – January 9 – when Weber was released to continue his recovery at home. A Facebook post on the 10th from Weber's assistant noted, "Thanks everyone for the well wishes, and continued good luck!"

Friend Jane Lindsfold, who has co-written two *Treecat/Star Kingdom* novels with Weber, reports that while Sharon also caught COVID, she was not hospitalized. "Even better, their three kids (twin college freshmen and one high school senior) seem to have managed to dodge the virus, which is pretty great."

As of early the week of February 8th, Lindsfold says that David and Sharon are both on the mend, "but Sharon says they still are inclined to fatigue and afternoon naps."

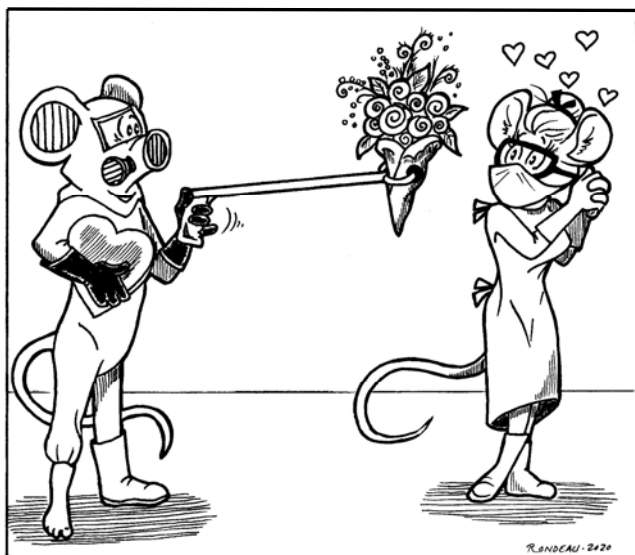
STOKERCON™ 2021 GOES VIRTUAL

The Horror Writers Association (HWA) has decided to change StokerCon 2021 "from an in-person event to a virtual platform" according to a special announcement posted on the StokerCon 2021 site and reported by Locusmag.com in early February.

"Our hope is to preserve the spirit of StokerCon™ and create an event that will resemble as closely as possible our usual programming—panels, presentations, interviews, author readings, ceremonies, and the Bram Stoker Awards® presentation. At this time our plans include the Ann Radcliffe Academic Conference, Librarians' Day, Horror University, and the Final Frame Film Competition. And while we won't be able to gather in the same place, all attendees of this virtual StokerCon™ will receive – or, outside the U.S., have the option to receive – a printed copy of the beautiful souvenir book created and edited by Josh Viola and HEX Publishing."

Some logistical details, "such as how to register for the virtual event, the price of registration, specific options for the many folks already registered, and so on" have yet to be determined; refunds and transferring registrations to the following year are among possibilities under discussion. According to the announcement, the Curtis Hotel will automatically cancel all reservations which had been made by attendees for the event.

StokerCon 2021, originally scheduled for May 20-23 in Denver, CO, will be virtual those four days. And then StokerCon 2022 is scheduled for May 12-15, 2022 at the Curtis Hotel in Denver CO, and will include the Bram



Stoker Awards banquet. For more information, see the official website: stokercon2021.com.

PK DICK AWARD 2021 NOMINEES

The 2021 Philip K. Dick Award nominees were announced in later January: *Failed State* by Christopher Brown, *The Book of Koli* by M.R. Carey, *Dance on Saturday* by Elwin Cotman, *Bone Silence* by Alastair Reynolds, *Road Out of Winter* by Alison Stine, and *The Doors of Eden* by Adrian Tchaikovsky.

The award is presented annually to a distinguished work of science fiction originally published in paperback form in the United States. The award is sponsored by the Philip K. Dick Trust and the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society, and the ceremony is sponsored by the Northwest Science Fiction Society. This year's judges are F. Brett Cox, Brendan A. DuBois, Cynthia Felice, Tim Pratt, and Jessica Reisman (chair).

The winner and any special citations will be announced on Friday, April 2, during the virtual Norwescon. For more, see the award website.

KATHLEEN ANN GOONAN DIES

Author Kathleen Ann Goonan died January 28, reported Locusmag.com. She was 68 years old.

Goonan was born May 14, 1952, in Cincinnati, OH, and at age eight moved to Hawaii for two years while her father worked for the Navy, after which the family moved to Washington DC. She got a degree in English from Virginia Tech in 1975, and earned her Association Montessori International Certification in 1976.

She taught school for 13 years, ten of those at Montessori schools, including eight years at a school she founded in Knoxville TN. She spent a year back in Hawaii and took up writing full time before returning to the DC area in 1988, the same year she attended Clarion West. She began teaching at Georgia Tech in 2010, where she was a Professor of the Practice.

Goonan's first story "Wanting to Talk to You" appeared in *Asimov's* in 1991. Notable stories include "Kamehameha's Bones" (1993), Nebula Award nominee "The String" (1995), British SF Award finalist "Sunflowers" (1995), and Sturgeon Memorial Award finalist "Memory Dog" (2008).

Debut novel *Queen City Jazz* (1994), a *New York Times* Notable Book, was shortlisted for a British Science Fiction Association Award, and launched her Nanotech Quartet: sequel *Mississippi Blues* (1997), Nebula Award-nominated prequel *Crescent City Rhapsody* (2000), and final volume *Light Music* (2002), also a Nebula Award finalist. Standalone *The Bones of Time* was a Clarke Award finalist in 1996. Alternate history *In War Times* (2007) won the Campbell Memorial Award and was the American Library Association's Best SF Novel of 2007,

and was followed by sequel *This Shared Dream*, a 2011 Campbell Memorial Award finalist. *Angels and You Dogs*, a short story collection, was published in 2012.

Goonan and her work were featured in venues such as *Scientific American* ("Shamans of the Small") and *Popular Science* ("Science Fiction's Best Minds Envision the Future"). As a member of SIGMA, she gave talks for the Joint Services Small Arms Project and the Global Competitiveness Forum in Riyadh. She published more than 40 short stories, including "A Love Supreme" (*Discover Magazine* 10/12), "Bootstrap" (*Twelve Tomorrows* 9/13), "Sport" (*ARC* 2/14), "What Are We? Where Do We Come From? Where Are We Going?" (*Tor.com*), "Girl in Wave; Wave in Girl" (*Hieroglyph*), and "Tomorrowland" (*Tor.com*).

Goonan lived in Tennessee and Florida with husband Joseph Mansy, whom she married in 1977.

LE GUIN STAMP TO BE ISSUED

Ursula K. Le Guin (1929-2018) is the subject of the 33rd stamp in the Literary Arts series from the United States Postal Service, reported Locusmag.com in mid-January.

The stamp features a portrait of Le Guin and a background scene from *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) with art by Donato Giancola. It will be available later this year. "The words 'three ounce' on this stamp indicate its usage value. Like a Forever stamp, this stamp will always be valid for the value printed on it," says a USPS release.

BOVA, CAINE & SHEFFIELD RECEIVE SOLSTICE AWARDS

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) has announced Ben Bova, Rachel Caine, and Jarvis Sheffield as recipients of the Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award "for distinguished contributions to the science fiction and fantasy community," reports Locusmag.com.

The Solstice Award, created in 2008 and given at the discretion of the SFWA president with the majority approval of the Board of Directors, is for individuals, living or dead, who have had "a significant impact on the science fiction or fantasy landscape, and is particularly intended for those who have consistently made a major, positive difference within the speculative fiction field." Previous winners include Octavia E. Butler, Alice B. Sheldon (AKA James Tiptree, Jr.), Tom Doherty, Carl Sagan, Stanley Schmidt, Michael Whelan, Kate Wilhelm, Terri Windling, Donald A. Wollheim, John Clute, Sir Terry Pratchett, Toni Weiskopf, Gardner Dozois, Sheila Williams, Neil Clarke, Nisi Shawl, and most recently, David Gaughran and John Picacio.

The award will be presented during the 2021 SFWA Nebula Conference, to be held online June 4-6.

ANTON STROUT DIES

Writer Anton Strout died unexpectedly on December 30, 2020. He was 50 years old.

Strout was an author of urban fantasy, best known for his *Simon Canderous* series. He was also the host of the *Once and Future Podcast*, where he interviewed authors beginning in 2014, producing more than 200 episodes. He worked in publishing as well, as a longtime sales rep for Penguin Random House.

Anton Strout was born January 24, 1970, in Pittsfield, MA, and grew up in Dalton. He attended the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, graduating in 1993 with a degree in English and Theater. He began working in sales for Penguin 1998. Strout lived with his family in New Jersey.

His 2008 debut novel *Dead to Me* launched the *Simon Canderous* series, which continued with *Deader Still* (2009), *Dead Matter* (2010), and 2011's *Dead Waters*. He also wrote the *Spellmason Chronicles: Alchemystic* (2012), *Stonecast* (2013), and 2014's *Incarnate*. In addition to novels, he also published several stories and wrote webcomic *The Write Stuff*. He had plans to edit urban fantasy anthology *Claw and Order*, successfully crowd-funded in 2020.

Strout is survived by his wife Orly Trieber Strout, and their two children.

2021 SF NOTABLE LISTS RELEASED

The Core Committee Recognizing Excellence in Children's and Young Adult Science Fiction, a division of the American Library Association (ALA), announced the selections for its 2021 Notable Lists.

Hal Clement Notable Young Adult Books List includes, reported Locusmag.com in late January: *Crownchasers* by Rebecca Coffindaffer, *The Sound of Stars* by Alechia Dow, *Malice* by Pintip Dunn, *Girl of Flesh and Metal* by Alicia Ellis, *Sia Martinez and the Moonlit Beginning of Everything* by Raquel Vasquez Gililand, *Catfishing on CatNet* by Naomi Kritzer, *The Loop* by Ben Oliver, *The Cloven: Book One* by Garth Stein & Matthew Southworth, *Swamp Thing: Twin Branches* by Maggie Stiefvater & Morgan Beem, *Hard Wired* by Len Vlahos, *School for Extraterrestrial*

Girls #1: Girl on Fire by Jeremy Whitley & Jamie Noguchi, and *Devastation Class* by Glen Zipper & Elaine Mongeon.

Selections were also made for the Golden Duck Notable



ble Picture Books and the Eleanor Cameron Notable Middle Grade list.

Titles were chosen in previous years by the Library Information Technology Association (LITA), now part of the Core division of the ALA. For more information, including complete lists, see the ALA website.

JAMES GUNN DIES AT 97

Grand Master James Gunn died December 23, 2020. He was 97 years old, reported Locusmag.com.

Gunn was one of the field's true polymaths, excelling as an SF author, editor, and scholar. Gunn served as President of Science Fiction Writers of America in 1971-1972, and the organization honored him with a Damon Knight Grand Master Award in 2006. He was inducted into the SF Hall of Fame in 2015.

James Edwin Gunn was born July 12, 1923, in Kansas City, MO. He attended the University of Kansas, where he earned a BA in journalism and a Master's in English, though his education was interrupted by three years serving in the US Navy during WWII. He briefly worked at Western Printing in Racine, WI, on the Dell paperback line. After attending the 1952 Worldcon in Chicago, where he met Mack Reynolds, Clifford D. Simak, Jack Williamson, and his agent Frederik Pohl, among others, he began writing SF more seriously.

Gunn's long association with the University of Kansas extended beyond his studies. He began teaching there in 1958, and his involvement continued until he retired in 2010, when he was named Professor Emeritus. He was a professor of English and journalism, and director of the Center for the Study of Science Fiction, now known as the Gunn Center for the Study of Science Fiction.

He was instrumental in running the annual Campbell Conference there, where the Campbell and Sturgeon Awards are presented; the event was renamed as the Gunn Center Conference in 2019. He founded the Intensive Institute on the Teaching of Science Fiction in 1975 and the Speculative Fiction Writers Workshop in 1985, both of which continue under the direction of Christopher McKittrick and Kij Johnson.

He ran the Literature of Science Fiction film series from 1969-75, featuring talks by Forrest J Ackerman, Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov, John Brunner, Harlan Ellison, Damon Knight, and Frederik Pohl, and conversations with Gordon R. Dickson, Simak, and Williamson. He made documentary short film *Lunch with John W. Campbell* in 1971, filmed just a few months before Campbell's death.

Gunn began publishing SF with story "Paradox" in 1949, the first of ten stories under the pseudonym Edwin James. His debut under his own name, "The Misogynist," appeared in *Galaxy* in 1952. Other notable stories include "Breaking Point" (1953), "Wherever You May Be" (1953), Nebula Award finalist "The Listen-

ers” (1968), and Sturgeon Award finalist “The Giftie” (1999). Some of Gunn’s stories were collected in 1964’s *Future Imperfect*, *The Witching Hour* in 1970, *Breaking Point* (1972), *Some Dreams Are Nightmares* (1974), *The End of the Dreams: Three Short Novels About Space, Happiness, and Immortality* (1975), *The Unpublished Gunn, Part One* (1992), *The Unpublished Gunn, Part Two* (1996), and 2002’s *Human Voices: Science Fiction Stories*.

His debut novel was *This Fortress World* in 1955, followed by his classic collaboration with Jack Williamson, *Star Bridge* (1955). Many of his novels are story suites or fix-ups, including *Station in Space* (1958) and *The Joy Makers* (1961). His most famous work, 1962’s *The Immortals*, formed the basis for an eponymous TV series in 1969, and Gunn wrote a novelization of the series called *The Immortal* in 1970.

Other books include *The Listeners* (1972), *The Magicians* (1976), *The Burning* (1972), *Kampus* (1977), *The Dreamers* (1980), *The Mind Master* (1982), *Crisis!* (1986), and *Gift from the Stars* (2005). *The Millennium Blues* (2000) is literary fiction. His *Riley and Asha* series began with *Transcendental* (2013) and continued with *Transgalactic* (2016) and *Transformation* (2017). He also wrote *Star Trek* novel *The Joy Machine* (1996), based on a Theodore Sturgeon script.

Gunn was a celebrated scholar and critic. His non-fiction includes *The Discovery of the Future: The Ways Science Fiction Developed* (1975), *Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction* (1975), Hugo Award winner Isaac Asimov: *The Foundations of Science Fiction* (1982), *Inside Science Fiction: Essays on Fantas-*

tic Literature (1992), *Speculations on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction* (2005, with Matthew Candelaria), and *Reading Science Fiction* (2008, with Marleen S. Barr & Candelaria). He also edited *The New Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (1988). His honors for criticism include the Pilgrim Award in 1976, and the Thomas D. Clareson Award in 1997. He was president of the Science Fiction Research Association 1980-1982.

As a fiction editor he’s best known for his anthology series *The Road to Science Fiction*, with six volumes 1977-1998. He also edited *Man and the Future* (1968), *Nebula Awards Stories Ten* (1975), and three volumes of *Astounding Stories: The 60th Anniversary Collection* (1990). Gunn’s autobiography, *Star-Begotten: A Life Lived in Science Fiction* (2017), is a wide-ranging survey of his 70 years in the field. He also was the subject of Michael R. Page’s *Saving the World Through Science Fiction: James Gunn, Writer, Teacher and Scholar* (2017).

Gunn kept writing until the end, submitting a story just days before his death. He is survived by son Kevin.

WIRED’S BEST OF 2020 FANTASY

Wired announced its list of best fantasy books of 2020 just before Christmas, selected by Jason Kehe: *A Luminous Republic* by Andrés Barba, translated by Lisa Dillman, *Tender Is the Flesh* by Agustina Bazterrica, translated by Sarah Moses, *Piranesi* by Susanna Clarke, *Surrender* by Ray Loriga, translated by Caroline de Robertis, *Riot Baby* by Tochi Onyebuchi, and *Network Effect: The Murderbot Diaries Book 5* by Martha Wells.

The article includes discussions of N.K. Jemisin’s *The City We Became*, Naomi Novik’s *A Deadly Education*, and Patrick Rothfuss’ *Kingkiller Chronicles*. Wired also released other best-of reading lists as part of their extensive Year in Review, located at www.wired.com.

GRR MARTIN PROMISES HE GOT A LOT WRITTEN IN QUARANTINE

It’s about time io9.gizmodo.com had its annual-ish update on the status of *The Winds of Winter* – the next book in George R.R. Martin’s epic *A Song of Ice and Fire* saga. It’s taken so long to come out that literally an entire adaptation of the saga has managed to release, achieve critical acclaim, and then torch most of the goodwill associated with it in the time between it and the most recent release, *A Dance With Dragons*, reported the website in early February.

Bad news: You’re still not gonna be reading it any time soon. Good (?) news: Martin took spending nearly a year in isolation thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic to really get some work done on the long-awaited novel.

Writing on his personal Not a Blog site February 2,



Martin reflected on a year that has been mostly kind of terrible, because, y'know, global pandemic, political and social upheaval, and all that. But one thing that kept the writer looking for a bright light in it all was the chance to really focus on his writing. "I wrote hundreds and hundreds of pages of *The Winds of Winter* in 2020," the writer noted. "The best year I've had on *WOW* since I began it. Why? I don't know. Maybe the isolation. Or maybe I just got on a roll. Sometimes I do get on a roll.

"I need to keep rolling, though," he added. "I still have hundreds of more pages to write to bring the novel to a satisfactory conclusion. That's what 2021 is for, I hope."

Given that even with vaccination programs underway across the world, it's clear that we're far from done with quarantine measures and social distancing yet, there's still plenty of time ahead for Martin to keep building on what he sees as his best year of progress on a novel he's been writing for almost a decade off-and-on. "I will make no predictions on when I will finish. Every time I do, assholes on the internet take that as a 'promise,' and then wait eagerly to crucify me when I miss the deadline," Martin concluded. "All I will say is that I am hopeful."

So perhaps, if we allow ourselves to hope even a tiny little bit as well, io9.gizmodo's next annual-ish update on *Winds of Winter* might actually give readers a concrete idea of when to expect those winds to blow.

OBAMA'S FAVORITE 2020 BOOKS

President Barack Obama announced his list of Favorite Books of 2020 a week before Christmas Eve via Twitter, including several of genre interest:

The Glass Hotel by Emily St. John Mandel, *The Ministry for the Future* by Kim Stanley Robinson, *Sharks in the Time of Saviors* by Kawai Strong Washburn, and *How Much of These Hills Is Gold* by C Pam Zhang.

For more information, see Barack Obama's Tweet at @BarackObama.

BABYLON 5'S MIRA FURLAN DIES

Mira Furlan, an actress best known for her roles on the fantastical television series *Babylon 5* and *Lost*, died on January 20 at her home in Los Angeles. She was 65 year old, reported *The New York Times*.

The cause was complications of the West Nile virus, her manager, Chris Roe, said.

"It is with great sadness that I confirm the passing of Mira Furlan," he wrote. "She was a woman full of kindness, strength and compassion. ... She died peacefully at her home in Los Angeles, surrounded by her family. We will all continue to celebrate her life and legacy, and know she'll always be here with us."

From 1993 to 1998, Furlan was one of the stars of *Babylon 5*, a space opera that followed the relationships,

politics, interspecies tensions and galactic conflicts aboard a United Nations-type space station in the mid-23rd century. Her character, Ambassador Delenn, represented an alien race, the Minbari, on the space station.

"Delenn is a wonderful creation, a woman who must be a leader and must be strong, but who is also full of emotion and secrets," Furlan said in an interview with *The Chicago Tribune* in 1997.

She twice won a Sci-Fi Universe Award for best supporting actress for her work on the show, which also starred Bruce Boxleitner and Stephen Furst. She appeared in all 111 episodes and in two *Babylon 5* TV movies.

Babylon 5 creator J. Michael Straczynski took to Twitter to share a lengthy tribute on January 21.

"We've known for some time now that Mira's health was failing...I'm not sure that this is the right time or place to discuss the sheer randomness of what happened...and have all been dreading this day. We kept hoping that she would improve," Straczynski wrote.

"Mira was a good and kind woman, a stunningly talented performer, and a friend to everyone in the cast and crew of *Babylon 5*, and we are all devastated by the news, Straczynski continued. "The cast members with whom she was especially close since the show's end will need room to process this moment, so please be gentle if they are unresponsive for a time. We have been down this road too often, and it only gets harder."

On *Lost*, the popular ABC drama about a group of survivors stranded on a remote mysterious island after the crash of their jetliner, Furlan portrayed Danielle Rousseau, a scientist often referred to as just "the Frenchwoman," from 2004 through the show's final season, in 2010.

Mira Furlan was born on September 7, 1955, in Zagreb, Croatia, where she was a leading actress in theater, film and TV and was part of the Croatian National Theater. One profile described her as "the Balkan equivalent of Meryl Streep."

Amid civil war in her homeland, she immigrated in 1991 to New York City with her husband, Goran Gajic, a writer and director. She lived in the city and worked as an actress until moving to Los Angeles for *Babylon 5*. In addition to her husband, she is survived by their son, Marko Lav Gajic.

Her other notable credits include *My Antonia* in 1995, and the Oscar-nominated Yugoslavian film *When Father Was Away On Business* in 2000. She guest starred in a Season 6 episode of *NCIS* as Dina Risi in 2009.

She most recently appeared in another science fiction series, *Space Command*, playing a former archaeologist. The web series, which launched in early 2020, is written, directed and produced by Marc Scott & Elaine Zicree. It shows a hopeful vision of the future in which viewers follow the development of the United Planets and Space Command as mankind steps off planet Earth to colonize the rest of the solar system.

In 1998, she released an album, *Songs From Movies That Have Never Been Made*. And she wrote the play *Un-*

til Death Do Us Part (Croatian: *Dok nas smrt ne razdvoji*), which is set in 1970s Zagreb. A collection of her columns in the now-defunct Croatian magazine *Feral Tribune* was published as the book *Totalna rasprodaja* in 2010.

At her death, Furlan was working on her autobiography. An excerpt released by her manager and posted on her website invoked space to describe her sense of peace as she battled illness.

"I look at the stars," she wrote. "It's a clear night and the Milky Way seems so near. That's where I'll be going soon."

RESIDENT ALIEN GOES TO TV SERIES

Nearly a decade ago, writer Peter Hogan and artist Steve Parkhouse co-created Dark Horse Comics' *Resident Alien* as a recurring series of miniseries, reported SyFy Wire in early February. The comic follows Captain Hah Re, an alien biologist marooned on Earth who assumes the life of Dr. Harry Vanderspeigle in *Patience*, a small town in Washington.

In late January, *Resident Alien* made the leap to live-action as a SYFY original series, with Alan Tudyk (*Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, *Firefly*) leading the cast as the titular extra-terrestrial, who takes on the form of a local doctor: Harry Vanderspeigle. Stranded on our planet, the alien visitor is forced to awkwardly assimilate into human society, which he hopes to wipe out ... just as soon as he can find his missing doomsday device.

Sara Tomko ("Asta Twelvetrees"), Corey Reynolds ("Sheriff Mike Thompson"), Levi Fiehler ("Mayor Ben Hawthorne"), Meredith Garretson ("Kate Hawthorne"), Judah Prehn ("Max"), and Elizabeth Bowen ("Deputy Liv Baker") co-star. *Terminator* alum Linda Hamilton will eventually show up as General McCallister, a shady member of the military who sends out two operatives – David Logan (Alex Barima) and Lisa Casper (Mandell Maughan) — to track down the alien. As it so happens, the ending of Episode 2, which introduced the mysterious substance known as Tellurium, gave us our initial look at the two government agents. It's clear that they're onto the strange stuff that's been happening since the alien first crash-landed.

"I have so much respect for Tudyk. He has paid his dues so well and for so long as the character actor that we all know and love from *Firefly*, and the multiple sci-fi roles that he's had after that in *Star Wars* and *Moana*," Alice Wetterlund, who plays maverick bartender D'Arcy Bloom, told Syfy Wire. "He has just done so much great work in his career, but to see him step into the role of leader and be at the mantle of a cast like this is great. I feel like it gives me hope as an actor and he has such empathy. It's really important for a leader in the center of a cast to have the kindness and patience alongside the professionalism that he has. I feel really safe acting with Alan. It's easy, it's fun, and I think it comes across."

There have been a few creative liberties taken with the source material, like *Patience* moving to Colorado. However, Hogan isn't bothered by any discrepancies between the comic and the show, as you can see in SyFy Wire's latest Behind the Panel video, which also includes plenty of footage from the show, and interviews with Tudyk and more of the stellar *Resident Alien* cast.

"You're never gonna get a 100% faithful adaptation," Hogan says. "And in a way, if you do, why bother? Because that's what the comic is. I think comics and movies/TV, they're different mediums and they have different strengths and they work in slightly different ways. So it's bound to be different. I think if I feel anything about all of this, it's a relief that it's something I can sit down and watch. I'm not sort of trying to hide under the sofa because it's so awful."

Regardless, Hogan did admit that he was afraid that he wouldn't like the finished show until he finally saw it.

"I've had real kinds of ups and downs with it," Hogan continues. "I wasn't sure it was going to turn out okay. And you get sort of slightly cheered up by hearing, 'Oh, it's Alan Tudyk!' And you think, 'Well, yeah!' You know Alan's great, so this should be good. But I was very nervous when I sat down to watch the pilot. After about 10 minutes, it won me over. They're doing different things, it is very different, and there's no denying that. But I don't really mind because it's really good, it's done really well."

Resident Alien premiered on SYFY on January 27.

CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER DIES

Christopher Plummer, the sophisticated star who in 2012 became the oldest actor to ever win a competitive Oscar – a just reward for his seven standout decades as leading man on the stage and screen – died on February 5. He was 91 years old, reported *The Hollywood Reporter*.

A legendary performer on Broadway, for the National Theater and The Royal Shakespeare Company in England and for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Canada, Plummer died peacefully at his home early morning of February 5 in Connecticut, with Elaine Taylor, his wife and best friend for 53 years by his side, his agency ICM Partners announced.

"Chris was an extraordinary man who deeply loved and respected his profession with great old fashion manners, self-deprecating humor and the music of words. He was a National Treasure who deeply relished his Canadian roots. Through his art and humanity, he touched all of our hearts and his legendary life will endure for all generations to come. He will forever be with us," his longtime friend and manager Lou Pitt said in a statement.

Plummer earned two Tony Awards: in 1974 for his portrayal as swordsman/poet Cyrano de Bergerac in the musical *Cyrano* and in 1977 for playing Hollywood legend John Barrymore in the one-man tour de force *Barrymore*. He's one of only four actors to win the top two acting Tonys.

A delighted Plummer accepted his supporting actor Oscar in 2012 for playing an elderly widow who explores life as an openly gay man shortly after the death of his wife in *Beginners*. On the stage, Plummer, then 82, looked at his statuette and said, "You're only two years older than me, darling. Where have you been all my life?"

Two years earlier, the Toronto native had received his first Oscar nomination, for his portrayal of Leo Tolstoy in *The Last Station* (2009). And in 2018, Plummer became the oldest actor ever to be nominated after he stepped in for the disgraced Kevin Spacey at the last minute to play J. Paul Getty in *All the Money in the World*.

Despite all the recognition he received as an octogenarian, Plummer is probably most widely recognized for his performance as Captain Von Trapp opposite Julie Andrews in 1965's *The Sound of Music*, the family musical classic that he once referred to as "The Sound of Mucous."

"It was so awful and sentimental and gooeey," he told *THR* in 2011. "You had to work terribly hard to try and infuse some minuscule bit of humor into it." He also said most of his singing parts in the movie were performed by someone else.

Plummer, however, had changed his tune when he appeared with Andrews before a screening of the musical at the 2015 TCM Classic Film Festival in Hollywood and added his hand- and footprints to the collection outside the TCL Chinese Theatre.

With his towering demeanor, lush baritone voice and air of gravitas, Plummer was often cast in sinister or heavy roles, often playing men of grave distinction and power.

Among these authority-type figure roles, he did turns as a tyrannical studio head in *Inside Daisy Clover* in 1965, as German field marshal Erwin Rommel in *The Night of the Generals* (1967), as Rudyard Kipling in John Huston's *The Man Who Would be King* (1975), as Sherlock Holmes opposite James Mason's Dr. Watson in 1979's *Murder by Decree*, as 60 Minutes interrogator Mike Wallace in *The Insider* (1999) and as attorney F. Lee Bailey in the 2000 NBC telefilm *American Tragedy*.

Plummer also played a bad guy televangelist for laughs in *Dragnet* (1987), starred as a Shakespeare-savvy Klingon in 1991's *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, and was the mysterious Dr. Rosen in the 2001 Oscar best picture winner *A Beautiful Mind*.

He remained quite busy as of late, with roles in *Muhammad Ali's Greatest Fight* (2013) for HBO; *Elsa & Fred* (2014) opposite Shirley MacLaine; *The Forger* (2014), playing the father of John Travolta's character; as the manager of an aging rocker (Al Pacino) in *Danny Collins* (2015); and as a wealthy crime novelist in *Knives Out* (2019).

Arthur Christopher Orme Plummer was born on Friday the 13th – December 13, 1927 – the great-grandson of former Canadian Prime Minister John Abbott. He began his career in his native country on stage and in television,

and with his stentorian voice perfect for Shakespeare, he became a leading actor at the National Theatre of England, The Royal Shakespeare Company and Canada's Stratford Festival.

He palled around with Jason Robards and George C. Scott in his early days in New York and made his Broadway debut in 1954 opposite Mary Astor in *The Starcross Story*. "It opened and closed in one night! One solitary night! But what a night!" he wrote in his autobiography.

He won notice in his first film, Sidney Lumet's *Stage Struck* in 1958, as a playwright alongside Henry Fonda and Susan Strasberg, and also appeared that year in Nicholas Ray's *Wind Across the Everglades*.

"I didn't really begin to enjoy the real depth of the screen until I did *The Man Who Would Be King*," he told *THR*'s Scott Feinberg in 2018. "I was no longer a leading man; I was a kind of supporting actor, a character actor, and the minute I became a character actor, the parts grew much more interesting."

His many motion picture credits also include *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964), *Oedipus the King* (1968), *Battle of Britain* (1969), *Waterloo* (1970), *The Return of the Pink Panther* (1975), space opera *Starcrash* (1978), *Somewhere in Time* in 1980 (based on a book by Richard Matheson), *Dreamscape* (1984), *Wolf* (1994), *Dolores Claiborne* in 1995 (based on a Stephen King novel), Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkeys* (1995), *Dracula 2000* (2000), *Arrat* (2002), *Inside Man* (2006), *Alexander* (2004) and *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* (2011).

He won an Emmy Award in 1977 as a banking executive in the NBC miniseries *The Moneychangers*, an adaptation of the Arthur Hailey novel, then received another in 1994 for narrating a *Madeline* cartoon.

He also provided voices for animated films *An American Tale*, *The Gnomes' Great Adventure*, *Rock-a-Doodle*, *Babes in Toyland*, Pixar's *Up*, 9, *The Legend of Sarila*, *Pixies*, *Howard Lovecraft and the Frozen Kingdom*, and the upcoming *Heroes of the Golden Masks*.

In 2008, he published an autobiography, *In Spite of Myself*. Plummer was married from 1956-60 to two-time Tony-winning actress Tammy Grimes, the mother of Amanda, and was married to journalist Patricia Lewis from 1962 until their divorce in 1967. He and his third wife, British dancer-actress Elaine Regina Taylor, had been married since 1970.

SUPERMAN & LOIS FACE TEEN TWINS

"It's a Bird... It's a Plane... It's Super...dad?"

When The CW's new take on the Superman mythology premieres Feb. 23, be prepared for the domestic side of The Man of Steel, as he focuses on being a husband to Lois Lane and the father of twin teen boys, reported Syfy Wire in early February.

Starring Tyler Hoechlin and Elizabeth Tulloch, *Superman and Lois* will give the CW-verse edition of the couple – introduced in the *Crisis on Infinite Earth* event –

their own series to explore the family moving back to Smallville from Metropolis.

At February 8's Television Critics Association (TCA) winter panel for The CW, the showrunner of *Superman and Lois*, Todd Helbing, was joined by most of his cast including Hoechlin and Tulloch, as well as Jordan Elsass and Alexander Garfin as the twins, Jonathan and Jordan Kent.

Helbing told reporters that in the early days of developing this series with fellow executive producer Greg Berlanti, their goal was making a Superman story that was in general very different from what's been presented in the myriad television adaptations that came before.

"We talked a lot about shows like *Everwood* and *Friday Night Lights*, and that this would be a family drama with Superman in it," Helbing explained. He also said to separate it from the current crop of CW cape shows, they chased a feature aesthetic with everything from the aspect ratio to the cinematography. "We're competing with streamers and cable nets now with big budgets, so we have to offer the audience an equal in quality."

For her part, Tulloch says she was immediately sold when Helbing and Berlanti pitched the series idea to her and Hoechlin as more like *Friday Night Lights* than *Arrow*. "It was really grounded and real," the actress said. "The series makes Lois Lane and Superman relatable because of lost jobs, and parenting their hormonal teenagers. Superman and Lois could be your next-door neighbors."

Seeing super-progeny run around the Kent farm that isn't baby Clark/Kal-El is certainly a new angle that hasn't been a core narrative of any previous television version of the Superman story. But the actors playing the twins say that despite the two having wildly different personalities – Jonathan is the successful jock and Jordan is anxiety-ridden and more troubled – their relationship is also grounded in love.

"They have the common experiences of being the same age," said Elsass. "They'll bond more and get closer as they grow up. And that closeness is really important."

Garfin added that the first conversations they had about portraying their relationship were about making sure it was clear that they love each other. "They can have fights, and can hate each other sometimes, but that's because it's built on a deep and wide foundation of love."

Garfin was also quick to praise how the twins are written in the series, without the trite, teen defiance seen on many other shows. "It's great to express teen characters in a more mature light," he said of Superman and Lois. "The writing makes me so happy to have intelligence written into the characters and people can relate to that."

Asked if powers manifesting for one or both of the twins will become an issue to deal with, Elsass said diplomatically: "Even if one doesn't have powers and the other does, like Lois there will still be a superpower for the other twin. And their superpower will be [looking out] for the other twin."

Speaking to that, Tulloch added that the series is all about showing how rooted the Kent family is, despite the rough spots all of them are experiencing in the pilot. "Moving them all to Smallville is about Lois and Superman realizing they were prioritizing the wrong things," the actress said. "The kids are out of control and they need help, and maybe it's a small town with fewer distractions that will be good for them. The cool thing about how we play them as a couple is that their relationship is all about respect and admiration."

Superman and Lois debuts with a two-hour premiere event Tuesday, Feb. 23, at 8:00 p.m. ET on The CW.

WANDA VISION'S KAT DENNINGS HOPES FOR POSSIBLE SPINOFF

WandaVision, the Marvel Cinematic Universe's first Disney+ streaming series, has packed quite a few big surprises into its first five episodes, and one of the most delightful is the surprising team-up of two MCU supporting characters in Episode 4. That episode, *[Spoiler Alert]* which stepped back from Wanda and Vision's sitcom adventures just a little bit to show us what was going on outside the idyllic TV bubble, featured the return of both *Ant-Man and the Wasp's* Agent Jimmy Woo (Randall Park) and *Thor: The Dark World's* Darcy Lewis (Kat Dennings) as they teamed up to investigate the strange happenings in Westview.

The chemistry between Park and Dennings drew a lot of love from fans even as much of the episode focused on the rise of Monica Rambeau (Teyonah Parris) in the MCU, and it wasn't long before calls for an *X-Files* style spinoff starring the duo began. It's an idea that's gotten so much attention over the last week that TV writers are even tweeting about drafting pitches for Marvel.

So, what does Dennings herself think?

"I'm in!" Dennings said in an interview with *Extra* when asked about the spinoff idea. "If it happens, I'm in."

The notion that these two characters would carry their own series is, of course, still very hypothetical, but in discussing the sudden popularity of their team-up, Dennings attributed the fan reaction to the sheer unexpected nature of the combination.

"As a fan, you don't think that you're gonna end up acting with certain people, so Darcy and Jimmy Woo...you wouldn't expect that pairing, right? So, it's even more fun to do," she said. "And I think when we were sitting there doing the scenes, I was like, 'Oh, I bet people will like this.'"

The return of Darcy, who at one point seemed done in the MCU after *The Dark World's* Earthly subplots were abandoned for *Thor: Ragnarok*, has also led fans to wonder if Dennings might be secretly planning a big-screen return in *Thor: Love and Thunder*. That film, Taika Waititi's second in the MCU, is already confirmed to feature a major return for Natalie Portman's Jane Foster, and since

Darcy was Jane's assistant, a reunion would make sense. Sadly, it seems Dennings – who still noted that returning to the MCU in any form has been "gratifying" – didn't wind up on that particular call sheet.

"I'm gonna say no only because they're shooting it," Dennings said when asked about appearing in *Love and Thunder*. "I'm here with you and they're in Australia, so I'm gonna say probably not."

Will Dr. Lewis continue to have a role to play in the larger MCU beyond *WandaVision*? Time will tell.

GILLIGAN'S DAWN WELLS DIES

by Lisa Respers France, CNN 12-30-2020

Dawn Wells, who played the lovable castaway Mary Ann Summers on *Gilligan's Island*, died in Los Angeles on December 30 from COVID-19 complications, her publicist Harlan Boll confirmed to CNN. She was 82 years old.

Tina Louise, who portrayed movie star Ginger Grant on *Gilligan's Island*, said in a statement to CNN, "I was sad to learn of Dawn's passing, I will always remember her kindness to me.

"We shared in creating a cultural landmark that has continued to bring comfort and smiles to people during this difficult time," Louise continued. "I hope that people will remember her the way that I do – always with a smile on her face."

Born in Reno, NV, on October 18, 1938, Wells represented her home state in the Miss America pageant in 1959.

That opened the door for her to start a career in Hollywood where she appeared in a multitude of television shows, including *77 Sunset Strip*, *Maverick*, *Bonanza*, *The Joey Bishop Show* and *Hawaiian Eye*.

She beat out 350 other actresses to nab the role of girl-next-door Mary Ann on *Gilligan's Island*, which aired on CBS from 1964 to 1967 and later in syndication.

In a 2016 interview with *Forbes* magazine, Wells revealed that the job was not as lucrative as many people believed.

"A misconception is that we must be wealthy, rolling in the dough, because we got residuals. We didn't really get a dime," she said. "I think my salary – of course, I was low on the totem pole, Ginger (Tina Louise) and Thurston (Jim Backus) got more – was \$750 a week. Sherwood Schwartz, our producer, reportedly made \$90 million on the reruns alone!"

She starred in more than 150 TV shows, seven motion pictures including *Winterhawk* (which she also narrated) and more than 60 productions on and off Broadway. Credits include appearances on *The Invaders*, *The Wild West*, *The Love Boat*, *Fantasy Island*, *ALF*, and *Herman's Head*; and in films *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*, *Return to Boggy Creek* and *Silent But Deadly*.

Beyond acting, Wells also served as a producer, author, journalist, motivational speaker, teacher, humanitari-

an, spokesperson and chairwoman of the Terry Lee Wells Foundation, an organization for women and children in northern Nevada, as well as running her Film Actors Boot Camp for seven years in Idaho.

She received the Elephant Sanctuary Trumpeting Award for her activism in supporting The Elephant Sanctuary. The sanctuary, founded in 1995, is the nation's largest natural habitat refuge developed specifically for African and Asian elephants.

But it was her pigtail-wearing character on *Gilligan's Island* which made her a beloved star – and she had fun with it.

Wells acted as the "castaway correspondent" for Channel 9 in Sydney, Australia, where she interviewed actors and directors including Robin Williams, Eddie Murphy, Julia Roberts, Rene Russo, Mel Gibson, Ron Howard, and Richard Donner.

At the premiere of the film *Gravity*, she presented star Sandra Bullock with a coconut cream pie, in honor of their shared experience with being "stranded."

Gilligan's Island was an unexpected hit and in honor of the 50th anniversary of the series, Wells released *A Guide To Life: What Would Mary Ann Do?* in which she wrote about the meaning of the Mary Ann character and observed the cultural shifts that have happened since she was on the island.

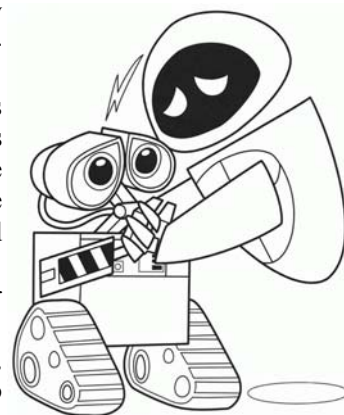
In 1993, Wells published *Mary Ann's Gilligan's Island Cookbook* with co-writers Ken Beck and Jim Clark, including a foreword by Bob Denver. Alan Hale Jr., who played The Skipper on *Gilligan's Island*, contributed a family recipe ("Kansas Chicken and Dumplings") to her cookbook. Hale's character was the inspiration behind such concoctions as Skipper's Coconut Cream Pie, Skipper's Navy Bean Soup, and Skipper's Goodbye Ribeye. She said in a 2014 interview with GoErie.com, "Alan could not have been kinder to a young actress. He was a real peach."

In 1997, Wells starred as her *Gilligan's Island* character in a music video for the song "Mary Ann" by the pop-punk band Squirtgun (Lookout Records label mates of Green Day). The song describes an infatuation with Mary Ann and sings praises to the wholesome character, specifically choosing her over Ginger. The video reached the top 40 of MTV's Alternative Music charts, and was featured as part of a variety of alternative-themed music video programs.

Her gingham dress and famous short shorts from *Gilligan's Island* are currently on display in the lobby of The Hollywood Museum.

She is survived by her stepsister, Weslee Wells.

In lieu of flowers, donations are requested to



either The Elephant Sanctuary, Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum or The Shambala Preserve.

MANDALORIAN & LOVECRAFT COUNTRY NOMINATED FOR GOLDEN GLOBES

The Golden Globe award nominees were announced February 3, and although it's been a pretty quiet year for entertainment in general, there are still a few choices that should pique your interest – especially since Baby Yoda and Cthulhu are finally getting the Hollywood recognition they've deserved, reports io9.gizmodo.com.

The Mandalorian, the only *Star Wars* entertainment universally recognized by its divisive horde of fans as great since 1980, has been nominated for Best Television Drama Series, as has HBO's adaptation of Mark Ruff's horror-drama period piece, *Lovecraft Country*.

Movie-wise, time-loop comedy *Palm Springs* has been nominated for Best Comedy/Musical Movie, as well as star Andy Samberg for Best Actor in the same category (although Cristin Milioti, who plays the movie's female lead, was omitted from the Best Actress category). George Clooney's recent sci-fi flick *The Midnight Sky*, Christopher Nolan's mind-bender *Tenet*, and Pixar's *Soul* all got nods for Best Score, while the Best Animated Film nominees are *The Croods 2*, *Onward*, *Over the Moon*, *Soul*, and *Wolfwalkers*.

The Mandalorian and *Lovecraft Country* are not favorites to win, given that they're up against *The Crown*, which has had infinitely more buzz, while historical dramas (which don't include monsters) have always been Hollywood favorites. Less certain are the odds for *Palm Springs* and Samberg as they're up against Disney+'s recording of the beloved Hamilton musical and even more beloved star Lin-Manuel Miranda.

It might be of note that *Tenet* was almost totally ignored, possibly because Nolan demanded it be released in theaters during a time no one wanted to or should have gone to theaters.

HAMMER'S BARBARA SHELLEY DIES

Barbara Shelley, best known for her numerous appearances in Hammer Horror titles across the 1950s and 1960s, died January 4, reported *The Hollywood Reporter*. She was 88 years old.

The actress passed away from underlying conditions after contracting COVID-19, her agent revealed.

Shelley starred in some of the best known horror titles from Brit production house Hammer, including *The Gorgon*, *Dracula: Prince Of Darkness*, *Rasputin: The Mad Monk* and *Quatermass And The Pit*, appearing alongside other icons of the genre such as Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. Her regular appearance as the glamorous gothic leading lady in these films helped earn her

the nickname the 'Queen of Hammer'.

"Hammer was like a family, a very talented family... with a wonderful atmosphere on the set and a wonderful sense of humor," said Shelley, who born Barbara Kowin in London on February 13, 1932.

"When I first started doing Hammer, all the so-called classic actors looked down on the horror film. All the other things I did, nobody remembers those. But the horror films, I'm very grateful to them because they built me a fan base, and I'm very touched that people will come and ask for my autograph. If you went to see a [Hammer] film in the cinema, the gasps were interspersed with giggles because people were giggling at themselves for being frightened, they were frightening themselves; and this is what made Hammer very special."

Alongside her time at Hammer, Shelley starred in more than 100 films and TV series across a career that lasted until 2000, including 1960's *Village of the Damned* (in which her character gives birth to an alien child), *The Saint*, *Ghost Story*, *Man in the Dark*, *Hazel*, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *Crown Court*, *Doctor Who* and *Uncle Silas*.

Shelley appeared in a string of 1984 *Doctor Who* episodes, in which she played Sorasta in the "Planet of Fire" story. Peter Davison was playing the Doctor during her time on the show.

She had other parts in the likes of *EastEnders*, *Blake's 7*, and *The Avengers*, while her last major acting credit came in 1989 in Peter O'Toole's BBC miniseries *The Dark Angel*, according to IMDB.

Shelley's agent Thomas Bowington told Press Association: "She really was Hammer's number one leading lady and the technicolor queen of Hammer. On screen she could be quietly evil. She goes from statuesque beauty to just animalistic wildness."

He added that she is likely to have caught COVID-19 during a hospital check-up. She spent two weeks in hospital alone with the virus in the run-up to Christmas. "It's most likely COVID is going to come up on the death certificate," Bowington said.

In an interview with the *Express* newspaper in 2009 she said she was told at a convention by female fans that they loved her for her strong roles.

"Which I thought was a brilliant thing to have said about one. I never thought of it in that way. The fact that I'm still getting mail from my horror fan base really touches me," she said.

"No one told me I was beautiful. They said I was photogenic but no one said I was beautiful. If they had I would have had a lot more fun!"

NETFLIX TO ADAPT REDWALL

In the wake of Disney cancelling Fox's *Mouse Guard* movie, Netflix is looking to fill the niche of rodent-inspired genre content, reported SyFy Wire in early February. *Variety* confirmed February 10 that the streamer

has partnered with Penguin Random House Children to produce animated film and TV projects based on Brian Jacques' *Redwall* novels. The series, which first kicked off in 2000, now comprises 22 books and takes place in a Tolkien-esque fantasy universe populated by anthropomorphic mice, moles, hares, and badgers.

The feature film, which will be based on the very first novel, is being written by *Over the Garden Wall* creator, Patrick McHale. If all goes well, Netflix has the ability to kickstart a brand-new franchise that won't be running out of source material anytime soon. The TV adaptation, on the other hand, is said to be focused on the character of Martin the Warrior, "a wise and ferocious mouse who co-founded Redwall Abbey along with Abbess Germaine," writes *Deadline*.

"We couldn't be more delighted to announce this deal," Ben Horslen, Fiction Publisher, Penguin Random House Children, said in a statement published by *Variety*. "These perennially popular stories have been etched onto the hearts of millions of readers, and we are thrilled to partner with Netflix to bring those beloved characters on screen for families worldwide to enjoy."

"Brian often travelled the globe to tell his *Redwall* stories to young audiences, more often than not at their schools," Alan Ingram, a rep of The Redwall Abbey Company (owner of Jacques' IP since the author passed away in 2011), said in a statement run by *Deadline*. "Brian would have been very happy to see that Netflix shares his joy and desire to bring his stories to life as a new universe of films, series and potentially much more for audiences of all ages to enjoy."

EJIOFOR TAKES ON BOWIE ROLE

Oscar-winner Chiwetel Ejiofor will take the stardust-coated reins of *The Man Who Fell to Earth* in a new series for Paramount+, reported io9.gizmodo.com in early February. Based on the 1963 novel by Walter Tevis and the 1976 film directed by Nicolas Roeg starring David Bowie (and also a 1987 made-for-TV movie with Wil Wheaton), the story follows Thomas Jerome Newton, an alien who arrives to Earth in search of water for his home planet, Anthea, which has been devastated by war and drought.

The Man Who Fell to Earth is being adapted by frequent J.J. Abrams collaborator Alex Kurtzman and Jenny Lumet, writer of the film *Rachel Getting Married* and co-executive producer on *Star Trek: Discovery*. The two are also collaborating on CBS's upcoming *Clarice*.

"Chiwetel Ejiofor's stage and film career are staggering in their bravery, commitment and quality," Kurtzman and Lumet said in a statement to *Deadline*. "He's everything we could imagine and a million things we can't.



We couldn't be more thrilled."

Paramount+ arrives March 4 in the US and will replace CBS All Access.

BOND GIRL TANYA ROBERTS DIES

Tanya Roberts, known for playing Stacey Sutton in the 1985 James Bond film *A View to a Kill* and Midge Pinciotti on *That '70s Show* 1998-2004, died January 4 after it was prematurely reported by many outlets that she had died the night before. She was 65 years old, reported the *Chicago Tribune*.

Roberts' partner, Lance O'Brien, told *The New York Times* that she died the night of January 4 at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles. O'Brien did not respond to *Variety*'s request for comment.

O'Brien originally thought she had died on Sunday, January 3, but the hospital called Monday morning to report she was still alive. However, Roberts was in the ICU in "dire" condition.

On Christmas Eve, Roberts fell out of bed and could not get up, following intestinal pain and breathing difficulties that began on a hike the day before. Although she was put on a ventilator and the hospital was following COVID-19 procedures, she was critically ill from a urinary tract infection that entered her organs and bloodstream, leading to a blood infection made worse due to Roberts's history of hepatitis C.

The straight-talking actress has interacted with fans in a weekly online program streamed from her official Facebook page, on which she last participated December 19. But the first show of 2021, scheduled for January 2, was canceled without public explanation.

Born Victoria Leigh Blum, Roberts had a successful modeling career and appeared in some off-Broadway roles. She stepped into films in 1975 with horror feature *Forced Entry* (later retitled *The Last Victim*).

Thereafter, she appeared in a series of films that attained cult status, including *Body Slam* in 1987 and *Night Eyes* in 1990. But it was as Kiri in the 1982 sword-and-sorcery fantasy adventure *The Beastmaster* that she gained true genre status. The film starred Marc Singer and was very loosely based on an Andre Norton novel.

She also made an impression in 1984's fantasy *Sheena: Queen of the Jungle*, in which she starred as the titular character, a female version of Tarzan. Shot in Kenya, *Sheena* bombed at the box office and with critics, earning five Golden Raspberry Awards, including worst actress for Roberts. The film would become a campy cult classic.

"The director screwed up everything," Roberts recalled bluntly in her Dec. 19 fan chat.

She portrayed Velda, the secretary to private detective Mike Hammer, in the television movie *Murder Me, Murder You* (1983), based on crime novelist Mickey Spillane's iconic *Mike Hammer* private detective series. The two-part pilot spawned the syndicated television series

Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer. She declined to continue the role in the *Mike Hammer* series to work on her next project, *Sheena*.

Many TV fans will remember her for one season (1980-81) of *Charlie's Angels* when she played private detective Julie Rogers. She was the sixth actress to play one of the female crime fighters, following in the footsteps of Kate Jackson, Farrah Fawcett, Jaclyn Smith, Cheryl Ladd and Shelley Hack.

Roberts starred on *That '70s Show* as Midge Pinciotti, the lovable, beautiful mother of cynical teenager Donna Pinciotti (played by Laura Prepon). She left the series in 2001 to care for her terminally ill husband, Barry Roberts, who died in 2006. The show's writers dealt with Roberts' absence by citing Midge's move to California. Roberts was absent from the sitcom for Seasons 4 and 5 and made a return in Season 6.

Roberts' final on-screen appearance was in the television series *Barbershop* in 2005.

Britt Ekland, who played a Bond girl in *The Man With the Golden Gun* (1974), tweeted: "Rip Tanya Roberts, once a Bond Girl always a Bond Girl!"

In *A View to a Kill*, Roberts played geologist Stacey Sutton, who teams up with the British spy to stop a madman (Max Zorin) played by Christopher Walken.

The Beastmaster director Don Coscarelli tweeted: "I just heard the sad news that actress Tanya Roberts passed away. Tanya was a beautiful person, inside and out. I will always remember Tanya for being incredibly sweet and for her genuine love of animals. She was beloved by 'Beastmaster' fans everywhere. RIP."

MANY NERDY ADS DURING SUPER BOWL

The world has changed (almost beyond recognition) since the last Super Bowl aired in 2020, but the annual slew of can't-miss commercials from the biggest studios, networks, and brands remained the same during this year's Big Game...almost, reported Syfy Wire in early February.

With so many blockbusters constantly being delayed amid the COVID-19 pandemic, movie trailers were, unsurprisingly, few and far between. Food, car, and tech companies; television shows; and one PVID film release – Disney's *Raya and the Last Dragon* – picked up some of the marketing slack as Hollywood and the theatrical industry continue to grapple with the health crisis, which celebrates its macabre one-year anniversary next month. Most curiously, Warner Bros. sat out the event, despite the fact that it has a robust slate of new movies that will simultaneously play on big screens and HBO Max this year, starting with next month's *Godzilla vs. Kong*.

Nevertheless, the usual parade of ads still contained plenty of nerdy, pop culture content that got Syfy Wire excited for what's to come in 2021. So, they've rounded up all the genre goodies from Super Bowl LV into one convenient story, so you don't have to wear out the YouTube search bar...

Edgar Scissorhands (All-Electric Cadillac LYRIQ): In this nod to Tim Burton's 1990 classic, Timothée Chalamet plays Edgar Scissorhands, the son of the original movie's Edward (famously portrayed by Johnny Depp). Winona Ryder returns to the role of Kim Boggs, who also happens to be Edgar's mother. Burton himself signed off on this hilarious and heartfelt tribute.

The Falcon and the Winter Soldier: We never knew that we needed to see Bucky Barnes (Sebastian Stan) and Sam Wilson (Anthony Mackie) go through couples therapy, but here we are. Sorry, boys, we're gonna have to cut the staring contest a little short. *Captain America: Civil War* villain Zemo (Daniel Brühl) has busted out of prison and wants to rid the world of superheroes after what happened in his homeland of Sokovia.

Old: A seemingly tranquil beach reveals a dark underside when the tropical paradise stars accelerating people's ages in the first teaser trailer for M. Night Shyamalan's latest horror-thriller: *Old*. The project, which marks the writer-director's first feature film since *Glass*, arrives in theaters Friday, July 23.

F9: The Fast Saga: The Fast & Furious family is back for some more death-defying hijinks (and possibly a trip to outer space?) in the latest teaser for the third-to-last chapter of the long-running action franchise. Series veteran Justin Lin, who has directed four entries to date, helmed *F9*. Penned by Daniel Casey, *Fast & Furious 9* drives into theaters May 28, 2021 – more than a year after its intended release date.

Raya and the Last Dragon: Get another sneak peek at the latest effort from Disney Animation. Inspired by the rich cultures of Southeast Asia, *Raya and the Last Dragon* opens in select theaters Friday, March 5. On the same day, Disney+ subscribers may purchase the animated film for an extra fee (à la the studio's live-action remake of *Mulan*). The voice cast includes: Kelly Marie Tran, Awkwafina, Izaac Wang, Gemma Chan, Daniel Dae Kim, Benedict Wong, Jona Xiao, Sandra Oh, Thalia Tran, Lucille Soong, Alan Tudyk, Gordon Ip, Dichen Lachman, Patti Harrison, Jon "Dumbfounded" Park, Sung Kang, Sierra Katow, Ross Butler, François Chau, and Paul Yen.

Clarice: Agent Starling's famous *Silence of the Lambs* monologue about the slaughter of baby sheep comes to vivid life in this Big Game spot for CBS's sequel series to the 1991 classic. In *Clarice*, Rebecca Breeds takes on the role made famous by Jodie Foster. The show premiered Thursday, Feb. 11. Just don't expect any mention or cameo from Hannibal Lecter.

Amazon Alexa: *Black Panther*'s Michael B. Jordan makes a sensual turn as a personified Alexa with Amazon's spot that essentially channels the dystopian themes of *Black Mirror*. It's as sexy and it is unnerving.

Verizon 5G: You've seen Samuel L. Jackson play many characters, but have you ever seen him as a *Ready Player One*-esque avatar riling up an army of gamers about network speeds like some sort of virtual Patton? Well...you have now!



Paramount+: "Sweet Victory" finally got its Super Bowl due! To promote its newly-rebranded streaming service, Paramount+ (formerly known as CBS All Access), ViacomCBS mashed up some of its most well-known IPs like *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Star Trek*, *Beavis and Butt-Head*, and even *The Ring*.

DoorDash: Moral of the story for *Snowpiercer*'s Daveed Diggs? Don't ask *Sesame Street* characters to live with you; they order the weirdest things for delivery (like, *ALL* the cookies). This trilogy of spots for the door-to-door service features Cookie Monster, Big Bird, and Super Grover.

Pringles: Houston, we've got a problem. Mission Control is stacking Pringles again...

ARTIST ROWENA PASSES AWAY

Artist Rowena Morrill died February 11 following years of poor health. She was 76 years old.

Morrill was one of the most prominent artists in the field, with an active career that spanned decades. Some of her work has been collected in Hugo Award finalist *The Fantastic Art of Rowena* in 1983, and *The Art of Rowena* in 2000.

Born September 14, 1944, Morrill graduated from the University of Delaware in 1971 with an art degree and attended the Tyler School of Arts MFA program (though she left before completing the degree). She moved to New York, where she worked in advertising.

She soon began her career as a cover artist, starting in romance, and did her first genre cover for *Isobel* by Jane Parkhurst in 1977. She painted covers for books by Philip K. Dick, Harry Harrison, Ellen Kushner, H.P. Lovecraft, Anne McCaffrey, Robert Sheckley, Piers Anthony, Theodore Sturgeon, and others. She was prolific throughout

the 1970s and '80s, and though her output slowed in the '90s, she remained highly visible, and garnered a Chesley Award nomination for *The Garden of the Stone* by Victoria Strauss (1999). Her output declined in the 21st century owing to poor health. She was chosen as Artist Guest of Honor at the 2012 Worldcon, but could not attend due to health problems.

Morrill was nominated for the Hugo Award for best professional artist in 1982, '83, '84, and '86, and won a British Fantasy Award for best artist in 1984. She was nominated for artist World Fantasy Awards in 1981, 1982, and 1984, and she received the World Fantasy Award for life achievement in 2020.

IT'S NOT JUST YOU: A LOT OF US ARE HITTING A PANDEMIC WALL

by Julia Ries, [Huffpost.com](https://www.huffpost.com) 02-04-2021

Within the past couple of weeks, many of us have been slammed with major pandemic fatigue. We're burnt out. We're expected to be productive at work or to parent (or often both) as though we haven't been living in hell for the last year. The winter has been bleak and could potentially get bleaker. And even though the vaccines are bringing us some much-needed hope, our feelings of exhaustion and hopelessness are swallowing any positive emotions whole.

It makes sense. We've been at this for a year now, and our fight-or-flight system — the emotional reaction to stress that has been otherwise energizing us throughout the pandemic — is totally overloaded. When that happens, the constant flow of adrenaline starts to drain and apathy settles in. It seems that we've all gone over that tipping point.

Feeling emotionally zapped, especially in this stage of the coronavirus crisis, is very normal, mental health experts say.

If you find yourself stuck in a pandemic-fueled rut, first take a moment to pause and acknowledge your feelings. Go easy on yourself as you sit with these dismal emotions — the pandemic's been brutal, and it's time we all cut ourselves a break.

THE PANDEMIC HAS OVER-ACTIVATED OUR STRESS SYSTEM.

When we experience a stressful event (like, say, literally any- and everything that's happened during the past year), our brain sends a burst of energy through our body that enables us to respond to nearby threats.

Typically, the brain and body calm down and rest once the stressor is removed. Throughout the pandemic, however, we've been exposed to so many stressors that our system hasn't been able to catch a break. Cortisol is just pumping through our bodies at rates we haven't had to contend with before.

When our fight-or-flight system has been totally overworked like that, even little things that might not

have bothered us before can get to us, explained Amy Cirbus, a licensed mental health counselor in New York and the director of clinical content at Talkspace. Eventually, those feelings build up and can become emotionally exhausting.

“We’re at more risk for burnout because of the circumstances and because of the fact that we’re continually re-traumatized and [reactivating] that cortisol spike,” Cirbus said.

UNCERTAINTY ALSO PLAYS A HUGE ROLE IN HITTING THIS WALL.

Jessica Gold, an assistant professor in the department of psychiatry at Washington University in St. Louis, said it can be difficult to process the fact that we’ve been at this for essentially a year now and there’s still no clear end in sight.

Every measure or milestone we’ve reached – like the one-year mark of when we first heard about COVID-19 – makes us more aware of how long we’ve been enduring the pandemic and the uncertainty of how much longer it’ll last.

Even now that there’s promising news about the vaccines, any optimism may be shielded by a layer of doubt and pessimism since so many things have gone wrong, Gold explained.

“People are afraid of getting their hopes up in some capacity because there are so many ways to be let down, and overall, it’s been disappointing in a lot of ways,” Gold said.

HOW CAN WE GET THROUGH THIS PERIOD?

It’s normal for burnout to occur after a period of chronic stress and uncertainty. Emotional endurance dwindles over time, and given the nature of the pandemic, we don’t have the same sense of security we could fall back on during pre-pandemic times. Those traditional outlets – the gym, a vacation, going out with friends, visiting family – aren’t necessarily options right now.

Most of us have had to learn new ways to cope with everyday stress since our usual coping skills may not be working.

Cirbus advises her patients to first identify the things stressing them out the most – maybe it’s the news, a job, or toxic convos with a friend – and make a plan to address them and set some healthy boundaries. From there, she recommends focusing on one or two things a day that you can accomplish.

“It’s the accumulation of those small things over the course of time that are going to make a difference. They do add up,” she said. Gradually, things will change and you’ll eventually feel like you can walk through that wall again.

It might also be a good time to work with a therapist if you don’t have pandemic-friendly coping skills or if what you’ve been doing the last few months isn’t working for you now. A mental health professional can provide you with specific techniques that work with your life. (A tip from Gold: Don’t rely on what works for other people;

try on different things and figure out what brings you some relief.) Of course, mental health care is incredibly expensive; if it’s a financial burden, try looking into some affordable or free resources that can help.

Lastly, cut yourself some slack. No matter how the pandemic has disrupted your life, recognize that this is hard and that hitting a wall is a completely valid response to totally irregular circumstances.

“Have compassion for yourself and don’t belittle your feelings,” Gold said. “At a certain point, we’ll all get through it.”

BOOK REVIEW CORNER

Remote Control by Nnedi Okorafor, 2021 Tor.com, hc \$19.99, 160 pages.

Review by Jessica L. Coyle

Nnedi Okorafor’s latest work is a novella from Tor.com, which has become known for publishing shorter fiction from some of the best science fiction and fantasy authors working today. *Remote Control* tells the story of Sankofa, a mysterious young girl who brings death with her wherever she goes. People live in fear of her because she kills all electronic devices and people that she touches, so she wanders from place to place, never settling for long.

However, before she was forced to wander, Sankofa lived a happy life under a different name with a family that loved her and she barely remembers. The book tells the story of how Sankofa became what she is now and why she is forced to never stop traveling.

As a fan of Okorafor’s work, I was very excited to receive *Remote Control*, and it did not disappoint. The mystery at the center of the novella keeps the reader engaged, and Okorafor is excellent at doling out hints in a way that keeps you longing for more. My only complaint is that I wish the story was longer. But I highly recommend it.

Across the Green Grass Fields: Wayward Children Book 6 by Seanan McGuire, 2021 Tor.com, hc \$19.99, 176 pages.

Review by Craig W. Chrissinger

Among her many series of the past few years, Seanan McGuire has been telling tales of *Wayward Children*, those who don’t feel like they fit in our world and step through mysterious doorways into other lands. *Across the Green Grass Fields* is a standalone fantasy without any references to the more connected five books that have come before.

Regan, a young girl who is bullied by her blossoming pre-teen friends, runs away from school one day and discovers a portal in the woods near her home that leads to a land filled with centaurs, unicorns, minotaurs, fauns, and kelpies – the Hooflands. And while the coming of a human to the Hooflands means that a change or something bad is coming, she is taken in by a herd of centaurs who accept her and come to love her.

But not all magical equines are happy to see her. They fear the coming change and the wrath of their Queen. Regan is kidnapped at a Fair, escapes, and lives hidden with her centaur family for years. That is, until she decides it’s time to face her destiny, and find the hero within herself.

All of the *Wayward Children* series is for all the kids who never fit in. *Across the Green Grass Fields* is no exception. In some ways, this book feels lighter and Regan's "difference" is not mentioned much beyond the initial school bullying. Or so it seems, for the book is subtly focused on what makes a person and how the physical differences between humans and equines really mean. McGuire is a fine wordsmith, and the book is a fun fantasy and worth reading for those wanting to jump on this series.

***The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* by V.E. Schwab, 2020 Tor Books, hc \$26.99, 448 pages.**

Review by Jessica L. Coyle

The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue is another masterpiece from V.E. Schwab, one of the best and most popular genre writers working today. The novel follows the story of a young girl in early 1700s France who desires more than marrying and living in her small village her entire life. In order to escape, she makes a deal with a demon that allows her to live for as long as she desires. The part that Addie does not realize is that the demon has also cursed her so that she is immediately forgotten by everyone that she meets.

Addie spends the next three centuries learning how to live within the confines of her deal. She explores the world and carves a life out for herself; the only constant in her world is the demon who cursed her and still visits her on the anniversary of their deal. All of this changes one day in New York City, when a young man who works in a bookstore remembers Addie. Soon she becomes involved in the kind of relationship she thought she would never be able to have with anyone, and wondering just how long it can last.

The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue is a beautifully written book that explores what it means to be truly alive, and the impact that a person's relationships have on them. Schwab deftly explores segments of Addie's life from different places and time periods; she obviously did her research in a way that makes the story completely believable. I loved the book from beginning to end, and definitely recommend it to everyone.

***Black Sun: Between Earth and Sky Book 1* by Rebecca Roanhorse, 2020 Saga Press, hc \$27.99, 464 pages.**

Review by Craig W. Chrissinger

New Mexico's Rebecca Roanhorse tries her hand at epic fantasy with a twist – her world is inspired by the civilizations of the Pre-Columbian Americas. And while there is magic and giant crows, there also is the science of celestial observations (and thus prophecies). *Black Sun* is full of political intrigue and hidden agendas as in George RR Martin's *Game of Thrones* and Victor Milan's *Dinosaur Lords* – and most of the book takes place during the countdown to a predicted solar eclipse that will take place during the winter solstice.

In the holy city of Tova, a young woman anointed the Sun Priestess, tries to balance her power with keeping peace among the many factions that live in and around the city. That's especially challenging when there is a mysterious assassination attempt on Naranpa's life.

Meanwhile, across the Crescent Sea (much like our Gulf of Mexico), disgraced Teek sailor (and magician) Xiala has been tasked with delivering a blind, mysterious and cloaked young man, Serapio, to Tova before the winter solstice arrives. The only way her crew can do that is by sailing straight across the large body of water instead of hugging the coastline. That's a strategy most of her crew does not like.

Roanhorse has crafted a well-executed fantasy adventure with unique characters and dynamics, hidden magic, interesting details and world-building, and a head-on collision between tribes, science, traditions and power. It may not be perfect – sometimes the pace is slow or the language is difficult – but it's darn near it. *Black Sun* shows a writer who is continually honing her craft, and just getting better.

***Spell on Wheels 2: Just To Get To You* by Kate Leth with art by Megan Levens, 2020 Dark Horse Books, tp \$19.99, 136 pages.**

Review by Craig W. Chrissinger

In this second *Spell on Wheels* graphic novel adventure, Kate Leth takes our trio of witches – Andy, Claire and Jolene – back on the road. Seems that a mysterious witch out west is using a dark force to connect psychically with Claire and Jolene. So, they head west through the Southwest with stops in New Orleans and Phoenix along the way. As they drive west, the coven of three face phantoms, cryptids and spells. Secrets and feelings will be revealed. And it becomes clear that blonde LA-gal Annabelle is using her gifted powers for evil and control.

Leth writes an appealing and straight-forward story that draws the reader in, and her witches are all distinct and interesting. Megan Levens' artwork nicely compliments the tale, and she adds to the flavor of *Just To Get To You*. It's an enjoyable graphic novel that's worth the read.

ASFS MEETING REPORTS — **DEC 2020: HOLIDAY SHOW & TELL**

Twenty-one people were on Zoom for a virtual holiday gathering in which people showed off any *PANdemic Foods* (made in pans) they had, and special holiday decorations and/or clothes.

Brenda Cole made cookies, Carol Kandl made beef stroganoff and a cake, Al Kulp showed off pizza, pasta, popcorn and potato pancakes, Cricket Cortney made gingerbread, Becky Davis made coffee, and Stephanie Piegzik made breakfast tacos.

In Show & Tell, Mike McCommas had a stuffed Bill the Cat with Santa hat and a Taz shirt, Cricket showed her Spock ornament and holiday sweater, Brenda had a light-up tree and a tin tree with punched-out holes, Daniel Boyer showed off his T. Rex ugly sweater and a vinyl picture disc of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* soundtrack. Tanley McMullan was working on a tree quilt, Dawn Barela had a stuffed polar bear and a Winter Fairy shirt, Jessica showed her Beaker and Miss Piggy ornaments, and Craig Chrissinger shared his *Plan 9* flying saucer and Robby the Robot ornaments, and the Christmas stocking his grandmother made.

After socializing, videos were shared of *Simon's Cat* "Christmas 2020", "2020: The Musical" from *The Tonight Show*, "A Puppy for Hanukkah" from the Disney Channel, Beaker's "Ode to Joy," The Muppets' "Carol of the Bells," James Corden's "Thanksgiving 2020" (from TikTok), *Sesame Street*'s "W-ORD News" with John Oliver and Cookie Monster, and *Simon's Cat* "Christmas 2019."

JAN 2021: CONNIE WILLIS VISIT

Colorado's Connie Willis read from her newest Christmas story, "Take a Look at the Five and Ten" (*Asimov's* Nov/Dec 2020), to 22 people in a virtual visit, and then took part in a discussion of winter holidays with Jamie Kravover, Mandy Self, Lauren C. Teffeau, Cordelia Willis, Jessica Coyle and Craig Chrissinger.

Connie said that she had helped edit and pick out stories for a forthcoming Christmas collection from the Library of America ("a history of the Christmas story in America"), which lead to a discussion of holiday stories such as Charles Dickens' "The Chimes," *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* by Barbara Robinson, "The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry, and SF anthologies edited by David G. Hartwell and Martin H. Greenberg.

It was noted that all winter holidays seem to have candles as part of their traditions. "It's shining a light in the dark," noted Cordelia.

Holiday films and TV shows discussed included *Love Actually*, *Last Christmas*, *Rare Exports*, *Holidate*, *Jingle Jangle*, *A Christmas Story*, *The Princess Switch 2*, *Pee Wee's Playhouse Christmas Special* ("the dinosaurs are celebrating Hanukkah"), and "A Rugrats Chanukah" TV episode. "It's always good to find a new and enjoyable holiday film," remarked Connie.

Also talked about were Twelfth Night, British desserts, writing holiday stories, treasured gifts and traditions, and whether *Die Hard* (with Bruce Willis) is a Christmas film.

EDITOR NOTES TO FILL THIS SPACE

- **HARD TO BELIEVE THIS ASFACTS** marks a year of the pandemic. We've all been social distancing for almost 12 months now, and it's a good question how much longer we'll be under the control of COVID-19. Vaccinations have started, though many of us may not get our first inoculation until April or even June. And there are new virus variations that are more contagious. Bernalillo County has reached the Yellow Level on New Mexico's reopening scale, but we're still very limited on the size of gatherings. All we can do is hang in there, remain strong, and keep doing our best with masks, washing our hands, and social distancing. It's not easy on we social animals, but hopefully we can meet the challenge.

- **WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT BUBONICON 2021** yet. Still waiting to see how vaccinations proceed, whether the virus mutations become dominant, and what NM's Public Health Orders dictate on the maximum size of gatherings. The Board of Bubonicon Inc hopes to make a decision by the beginning of April. But we can say we are doubtful that groups of more than 250 will be allowed by the end of summer. (Heck, even

at the Green Level for the County, we can only have 20 people - not even enough for an ASFS monthly meeting.)

- **OUR HOLIDAYS WERE QUIET** as a result of the pandemic. But we did get out to see the lights and decorated houses, and we almost made it to midnight as sucky 2020 finally ended. And then 2021 punched us in the nose with the Capitol insurrection and the attempt to steal American democracy - not to mention all the genre deaths in January and early February. Still, things seem to have calmed down a bit, and we can all work toward unity, listening to both sides, finding common ground, or at least having peaceful disagreement.

- **WE'VE SEEN SEVERAL MOVIES & SHOWS** on TV, such as genre sitcoms *What We Do in the Shadows* and *Santa Clarita Diet* (yes, we went from vampires to zombies). We've been enjoying *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist*, the thriller *Big Sky* (based on C.J. Box books), *Young Sheldon*, *Mr. Mayor*, the 1st season of *Star Trek: Discovery*, *The Rookie*, the 2nd season of *The Mandalorian*, and now *WandaVision* (great satire/tributes to classic sitcoms and also a very interesting look at the Marvel Cinematic Universe). During the Christmas-New Year's week, we saw Pixar's *Soul* (incredibly good and beautiful, interesting spiritual/metaphysical concept) and *Wonder Woman 1984* (enjoyable, though flawed - Gal Godat very good, one villain would have been enough). We're looking forward to other Warner Brothers releases on HBO Max this year. And we've made a habit of watching *MST3K's* The Mads do monthly livestream riffing of movies and shorts (*Brain from Planet Arous*, *Santa Claus*, *The Choppers*). We are happy to support Trace & Frank in their endeavors.

- **DURING THANKSGIVING WEEKEND**, we took part in the Turkey Day MSTie Meet-Up, watching Q&A sessions with stars from *MST3K* and *RiffTrax*. We also participated in a RiffTrax Trivia Bowl, and won some random drawings (and one charity raffle). During this MSTie event, we listened to Jackey Neyman Jones (little Debbie in *Manos: The Hands of Fate*) read from *Growing Up with Manos*. So, we ordered a copy from Jackey and have had some correspondence with her about the *Manos* reunion panel I was on with Richard Brandt and two of the film's "stars" at AmigoCon in El Paso, April 1994 (I need to send her some photos). Very cool.

- **ALSO BEEN NOSTALGIC** with looking at old issues of *The Green Slime Times* (edited by Roy Tackett) and *ASFACTS* (edited by Jeri DeButy, Chad Lundgren and myself). It's been interesting looking at things that happened at club meetings 10-27 years ago, and at news columns and book reviews I barely remember writing.

- **ALMOST OUT OF ROOM**. As always, more stuff needed (Mon, April 5 deadline). Thank you to Jane Lindsfold and Jessica for their contributions. - Craig C

