



ASFACTS 2021

"2ND YEAR OF PANDEMIC" APRIL ISSUE

(SO, GET VACCINATED & WEAR A MASK!)

Winners will be announced at the 56th Annual Nebula Banquet during the Nebula Awards Weekend, to be held as an online event June 4-6.

2020 NEBULA BALLOT REVEALED

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) released the final ballot in mid-March for the 2020 Nebula Awards. Nominees associated with New Mexico and/or Bubonicon include Rebecca Roanhorse, Rae Carson, James S.A. Corey, and T. Kingfisher:

Novel: *Piranesi* by Susanna Clarke, *The City We Became* by N.K. Jemisin, *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia, *The Midnight Bargain* by C.L. Polk, *Black Sun* by Rebecca Roanhorse, and *Network Effect* by Martha Wells.

Novella: "Tower of Mud and Straw" by Yaroslav Barsukov, *Finna* by Nino Cipri, *Ring Shout* by P. Djèlí Clark, "Ife-Iyoku, the Tale of Imadeyunuagbon" by Ekpeki Oghenechovwe Donald, *The Four Profound Weaves* by R.B. Lemberg, and *Riot Baby* by Tochi Onyebuchi.

Novelette: "Stepsister" by Leah Cypess, "The Pill" by Meg Elison, "Burn or the Episodic Life of Sam Wells as a Super" by A.T. Greenblatt, "Two Truths and a Lie" by Sarah Pinsker, "Where You Linger" by Bonnie Jo Stufflebeam, and "Shadow Prisons" by Caroline M. Yoachim.

Short Story: "Badass Moms in the Zombie Apocalypse" by Rae Carson, "Advanced Word Problems in Portal Math" by Aimee Picchi, "A Guide for Working Breeds" by Vina Jie-Min Prasad, "The Eight-Thousanders" by Jason Sanford, "My Country Is a Ghost" by Eugenia Triantafyllou, and "Open House on Haunted Hill" by John Wiswell.

Game Writing: *Blaseball*, *Hades*, *Kentucky Route Zero*, *The Luminous Underground*, *Scents & Semiosis*, and *Spiritfarer*.

Ray Bradbury Award (Drama): *Birds of Prey: And the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn*, *The Expanse: "Gaugamela,"* *The Good Place: "Whenever You're Ready,"* *Lovecraft Country* Season 1, *The Mandalorian: "The Tragedy,"* and *The Old Guard*.

Andre Norton Award: *Raybearer* by Jordan Ifueko, *A Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking* by T. Kingfisher, *Elatsoe* by Darcie Little Badger, *A Game of Fox & Squirrels* by Jenn Reese, and *Star Daughter* by Shveta Thakrar.

MARTIN SIGNS HBO DEAL

George R.R. Martin has signed a five-year contract with HBO, reportedly worth "mid-eight figures," reported Locusmag.com in late March. The network is developing six *Game of Thrones* prequel projects based on Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, including *House of the Dragon*, scheduled to air in 2022.

Martin will also executive produce an adaptation of Nnedi Okorafor's post-apocalyptic novel *Who Fears Death*, and an adaptation of Roger Zelazny's fantasy novel *Roadmarks*, for HBO.

WILLIAMSON LECTURESHIP GOES VIRTUAL

The 44th Jack Williamson Lectureship will be held entirely online this April 22-23. An online announcement reminds attendees to "save the date," and that more info (and a schedule of events) are coming soon.

Guests of Honor for 2021 are James Patrick Kelly and Rebecca Roanhorse, with Mistress of Honor Connie Willis. Other participants include Michael Cassutt, Reese

UPCOMING ASFS MEETINGS

- **Friday, April 9:** We had a virtual visit from Colorado author Carrie Vaughn!
- **May 14:** Movie Time! We'll watch a cheesy sci-fi film found on YouTube (and do jokes/comments via Zoom chat).
- **June 11:** Program unknown, hopefully a guest speaker. In-person or virtual? Not known yet.
- **July 9:** If we can meet in-person, perhaps the Annual Club Auction? Otherwise ?? Plus summer's issue of *ASFacts* (deadline 7 pm Mon, July 5).
- **August 6 (week early):** Bubonicon 52: Take Two preview if the con can be held in-person. Plus some other entertainment. *This could become August 13!*
- **August 13:** B'con 52 Gofer Meeting if needed.
- **September 17 (week late):** Reports on Bubonicon 52 (if live), and hopefully DragonCon. Something completely different if B'con 2021 goes virtual.

Craig Chrissinger, normal editor. **Darth Vader**, guest editor each December. Please Send All Correspondence to — 2018 Cardenas Dr NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110. Phone: (505) 266-8905. E-mail: cwcraig@nmia.com. *ASFACTS* published February, April, July & October for the Albuquerque SF Society. *SITHFACTS* out each December. NEXT DEADLINE: Monday, July 5. **Club Officers:** Craig Chrissinger & Jessica Coyle, co-Zec Secs (505) 266-8905. Harriet Engle, Moderator. Grant Kuck, Alternator. COVID-19, stupid interloper. **B'con Con Chair:** Craig Chrissinger (505) 559-0931.

Hogan, Darynda Jones, Jeffe Kennedy, Emily Mah, Laura J. Mixon, Lauren C. Teffeu, and Walter Jon Williams.

A campus tradition since 1977, the Lectureship usually draws well-known authors to visit ENMU annually and discuss the interactions of science and the humanities. Last year's Lectureship was cancelled as the first wave of COVID-19 rolled across the world.

Williamson, long-time SF author and professor of English passed away in 2006. Williamson's novella, "The Ultimate Earth," won a 2001 Hugo Award, and his last novel, *The Stonehenge Gate*, was released in 2005.

Roanhorse of Santa Fe won the Nebula and Hugo Awards for her short story, "Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™," and the 2017 John Campbell Award for Best New Writer. Before turning to writing full-time, she was a lawyer. She has had two novels in the Sixth World series published – *Trail of Lightning* and *Storm of Locusts* – and a *Star Wars* novel, *Resistance Reborn*, which served as a prequel to 2019's *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*. Her YA novel *Race to the Sun* and epic fantasy *Black Sun* were released last year.

Kelly made his first fiction sale in 1975 after graduating magna cum laude from the University of Notre Dame in 1972, with a BA in English Literature. He attended the Clarion Workshop twice, and in the 1980s he became involved in the humanist/cyberpunk debate. Despite being a humanist, Kelly also wrote several cyberpunk-like stories – such as "The Prisoner of Chillon" and "Solstice" in 1985 and "Rat" in 1986. He has won Hugo Awards and a Nebula Award. He currently is on the Popular Fiction faculty for the Stonecoast MFA Program in Creative Writing at the University of Southern Maine. Kelly also is a frequent contributor to *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, and has turned his hand to editing with John Kessel.

Details for 2021's virtual event still are being confirmed. April 22 runs 4:00-6:30 pm, and April 23 goes 10:00-5:30 pm. Roanhorse does her reading/Q&A 5:00 pm on Thursday the 22nd while Kelly reads and answers questions 11:00 am Friday the 23rd. The Lectureship's main event - comments from Willis, Roanhorse and Kelly - takes place 12 Noon-1:30 pm Friday, April 23. On Saturday, April 23, Connie Willis leads a writing workshop at 10:00 am (registration is required).

More info: facebook.com/WilliamsonLectureship, or contact Cris Watson at Cristine.Watson@enmu.edu.

WORLDCON MOVES DATES & VENUE

DisCon III, the 79th World Science Fiction Convention, announced on April 7 that it will be held as an in-person convention December 15-19, 2021, at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC, reports [Locusmag.com](https://locusmag.com). The move comes "after nearly two-thirds of respondents to a public survey put out by DisCon III said they would prefer an in-person December convention over a virtual convention in August." Virtual memberships to the December convention will still be available.

This marks the first time since 1948 that a Worldcon will not take place in August or September, and the first time a Worldcon will be held in December. Changes to the Hugo Award voting timeline will be announced April 13 with the release of the Hugo Award finalists.

On their website, the DisCon III staff stated, "The COVID pandemic has had a lasting impact on fandom. Last year, ConZealand became the first Worldcon to be virtual. This year, with the release of several viable vaccines, the return of in-person conventions has become possible. We considered our members, staff, and potential members' preferences. We have monitored the legality of an in-person event. As well as preference, we had contractual obligations which were developed long before the pandemic hit, and we had to make the adjustments we could agree with our partners. None of this was simple and to not say anything which would force us into a breach of contract situation, we haven't been able to say much until now."

CHERRYH WINS 2021 HEINLEIN AWARD

C.J. Cherryh (GoH at Bubonicons 12 & 49) is the winner of the 2021 Robert A. Heinlein Award, given for "outstanding published works in science fiction and technical writings that inspire the human exploration of space," recognizing her body of work, "with emphasis on her detailed social science and commercial relationship based stories set in the space station rich Alliance-Union universe." The award is administered by the Baltimore Science Fiction Society (BSFS), reported [Locusmag.com](https://locusmag.com) in early March.

The winner will receive a plaque, a sterling silver medallion, and two lapel pins, all featuring the likeness of Robert A. Heinlein. The award will be presented May 28 during the virtual opening ceremonies of Balticon 55.

BOOK GROUP STILL READING

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group is discussing *Bridge of Birds* by Barry Hughart in a Zoom session 7:30 pm Monday, April 19. The group then focuses on *A Memory Called Empire* by Santa Fe's Arkady Martine on Monday, May 17, in another virtual gathering.

In "normal times," the group meets at Jason's Deli



(northwest corner of Louisiana & America's Parkway NE - across the street from Bubonicon's Marriott Hotel). But current Health Order pandemic restrictions make that impossible.

D&D Meetings are open to readers on the third Monday of each month. Books for discussion are chosen two months in advance, and group members receive a 20% discount on selected novels at Page One Books in the Mountain Run Shopping Center. For more info, contact Leah at mrsransom@hotmail.com or Craig at 266-8905.

WILLIS WINS SFWA SERVICE AWARD

Connie Willis has been awarded the 2021 Kevin O'Donnell, Jr. Service to SFWA Award, which "recognizes a member of SFWA who best exemplifies the ideal of service to his or her fellow members," reported Locusmag.com in mid-February. Willis has volunteered for mentorship roles in SFWA as well as the Emergency Medical Fund (EMF) and the Nebula Awards Rules committees.

SFWA president Mary Robinette Kowal said, "Connie Willis is one of my favorite people. She's been a tireless volunteer for SFWA for decades with clear, compassionate service. She makes every task lighter for those around her."

The award will be presented during the 56th Annual SFWA Nebula Conference, to be held online June 4-6.

STINE WINS 2021 PK DICK AWARD

Road Out of Winter by Alison Stine (Mira) won the 2021 Philip K. Dick Award, announced April 2 during the virtual Norwescon 43, reported Locusmag.com. A special citation was given to *The Book of Koli* by M.R. Carey (Orbit US).

Other finalists were: *Failed State* by Christopher Brown, *Dance on Saturday* by Elwin Cotman, *Bone Silence* by Alastair Reynolds, 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 were F. Brett Cox, Brendan A. DuBois, Cynthia Felice, Tim Pratt, and Jessica Reisman (chair).

For more, see the award website.

NORTON JUSTER DIES

Author Norton Juster died March 8 at home in Northampton MA of complications following a stroke, reported Locusmag.com. He was 91 years old. Juster is best known for his first book, children's classic *The Phantom Toll-*

booth (1961), illustrated by Jules Feiffer and later adapted as a film and a stage musical. Other books include *The Dot and the Line: A Romance in Lower Mathematics* in 1963, collection *Alberic the Wise and Other Journeys*, *AS: A Surfeit of Similes*, *The Hello, Goodbye Window*, *Sourpuss and Sweetie Pie*, and *The Odious Ogre* in 2010, with Feiffer.

Juster was born June 2, 1929, in New York City. He attended the University of Pennsylvania, studying for his career as an architect. He joined the civil engineer corps of the Navy in 1954, and after his discharge began his career as an architect and teacher. After first working for other firms, he founded his own architecture company in 1970. That same year he began teaching architecture and environmental design at Hampshire College, where he remained until his retirement in 1992. He was predeceased by his wife of more than 50 years, Jeanne Ray, who died in 2018.

BUTLER INDUCTED INTO NAT'L WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME

Octavia E. Butler is among the National Women's Hall of Fame (NWHF) inductees for 2021, reported Locusmag.com in early March. The list also includes NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson. The inductees will be honored during a ceremony on October 2 at the NWHF headquarters in the remodeled 1844 Seneca Knitting Mill building in Seneca Falls, NY. A livestream of the ceremony will also be available free to the public.

For more information, including the full list of inductees, see the NWHF website.

MARS ROVER LANDING SITE NAMED FOR OCTAVIA BUTLER

NASA has named the landing site of the Mars 2020 Perseverance rover after SF author Octavia E. Butler (1947-2006). The rover was launched from Cape Canaveral, FL on July 30, 2020, and landed in Jezero Crater, Mars on February 18, 2021. The mission will spend at least one Mars year (two Earth years) exploring the landing site region.

For more information, see NASA's website.

ARTIST DEAN MORRISSEY DIES

Artist and author Dean Morrissey died March 4 in Marshfield, MA, reported Locusmag.com. He was 69 years old. He was a prolific cover illustrator, and also wrote and illustrated his own acclaimed children's books, including 1994's *Ship of Dreams*, *The Great Kettles*, *The Christmas Ship*, *The Moon Robbers* and *The Winter King*, both with Stephen Krensky; *The Monster Trap* in 2004,

The Crimson Comet, and 2011's *The Wizard Mouse*. His honors include four Chesley Awards and a Spectrum Gold Award.

Dean Walter Morrissey was born October 1, 1951, in Quincy, MA. He was self-taught as a painter, and renowned for his realistic renderings of fantasy scenarios. He began his professional illustration career with a cover for *Dragon* magazine in 1978, and by the mid-'80s was regularly painting book covers for genre publishers. In the '90s he shifted focus to creating and illustrating his own stories. He is survived by Shan, his wife of 33 years, and daughter Ani; daughter Kate predeceased him.

STOKER AWARDS BALLOT RELEASED

The Horror Writers Association (HWA) announced the final ballot for the 2020 Bram Stoker Awards on February 22:

Novel: *The Only Good Indians* by Stephen Graham Jones, *The Deep* by Alma Katsu, *Devil's Creek* by Todd Keisling, *Malorie* by Josh Malerman, and *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia.

First Novel: *The Taxidermist's Lover* by Polly Hall, *The Return* by Rachel Harrison, *Tome* by Ross Jeffery, *The Fourth Whore* by EV Knight, and *True Story* by Kate Reed Petty.

Young Adult Novel: *Clown in a Cornfield* by Adam Cesare, *Bent Heavens* by Daniel Kraus, *The Bone Carver* by Monique Snyman, *Cemetery Boys* by Aiden Thomas, and *Ghost Wood Song* by Erica Waters.

Long Fiction: "Beyond the Reef" by Gabino Iglesias, *Night of the Mannequins* by Stephen Graham Jones, *The Invention of Ghosts* by Gwendolyn Kiste, "I Will Find You, Even in the Dark" by Jess Landry, and *Two Truths and a Lie* by Sarah Pinsker.

Short Fiction: "Am I Missing the Sunlight?" by Meghan Arcuri, "Introduction to the Horror Story, Day 1" by Kurt Fawver, "One Last Transformation" by Josh Malerman, "The Thing I Found Along a Dirt Patch Road" by Cindy O'Quinn, and "Should Fire Remember the Fuel?" by Kyla Lee Ward.

Fiction Collection: *Velocities: Stories* by Kathe Koja, *Children of the Fang and Other Genealogies* by John Langan, *The Cuckoo Girls* by Patricia Lillie, *Grotesque: Monster Stories* by Lee Murray, and *Bloody Britain* by Anna Taborska.

Anthology: *Miscreations: Gods, Monstrosities & Other Horrors* edited by Michael Bailey & Doug Murano, *Black Cranes: Tales of Unquiet Women* edited by Genevieve Flynn & Lee Murray, *Worst Laid Plans: An Anthology of Vacation Horror* edited by Samantha Kolesnik, *Not All Monsters: A Strangehouse Anthology by Women of Horror* edited by Sara Tantlinger, and *Arterial Bloom* edited by Mercedes M. Yardley.

Non-Fiction: *The Science of Women in Horror: The Special Effects, Stunts, and True Stories Behind Your Favorite Fright Films* by Kelly Florence & Meg Hafdahl,

1000 Women in Horror by Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, *End of the Road* by Brian Keene, *Women Make Horror: Filmmaking, Feminism, Genre* edited by Alison Peirse, *Writing in the Dark* by Tim Waggoner, and *The Streaming of Hill House: Essays on the Haunting Netflix Adaptation* edited by Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr.

Short Non-Fiction: "The Beloved Haunting of Hill House: An Examination of Monstrous Motherhood" by Rhonda Jackson Joseph, "I Need to Believe" by Cynthia Pelayo, "Lost, Found, and Finally Unbound: The Strange History of the 1910 Edison Frankenstein" by Kelly Robinson, "Final Girl: A Life in Horror" by Christina Sng, and "Speaking of Horror" by Tim Waggoner.

Poetry Collection: *Whitechapel Rhapsody: Dark Poems* by Alessandro Manzetti, *A Complex Accident of Life* by Jessica McHugh, *Into the Forest and All the Way Through* by Cynthia Pelayo, *A Collection of Dreamscapes* by Christina Sng, and *Cradleland of Parasites* by Sara Tantlinger.

Graphic Novel: *The Masque of the Red Death* by Steven Archer, *Spectre Deep 6* by Jennifer Brody & Jules Rivera, *Road of Bones* by Rich Douek & Alex Cormack, *Mary Shelley Presents* by Nancy Holder, Chiara Di Francia & Amelia Woo, *Her Life Matters: (Or Brooklyn Frankenstein)* by Alessandro Manzetti & Stefano Cardoselli, and *Lonesome Days, Savage Nights* by Steve Niles, Salvatore Simeone & Szymon Kudranski.

Screenplay: *Color Out of Space*, *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, "The Altar of the Dead," *The Invisible Man*, *Lovecraft Country*, "Jig-a-Bobo," and *Lovecraft Country*, "Sundown."

Winners will be honored at a gala during StokerCon 2021, to be held May 20-23 at the Curtis Hotel in Denver, CO. For more info, see the Stoker Awards website.

WANDA JUNE ALEXANDER DIES

Editor and fan Wanda June Alexander died February 14 in Santa Fe, reported Locusmag.com in late March. She was 69 years old. She was an editor for Tor from 1984 until 2006, where she worked with authors including George R.R. Martin. She was active in fandom starting in the '70s.

Alexander was born June 15, 1951, and grew up in Montrose, NY. She worked for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in the '70s, then returned to New York, where she worked as an editor before moving to Montana to get her Master's in English. She was an English teacher in Alaska, on a Navajo reservation, and in New Mexico, where she taught high school until her retirement in 2006.

Alexander was diagnosed with lung cancer last year, and though she underwent successful treatment, her lungs were severely damaged, and she entered hospice care in January 2021. She is survived by her daughter, author and illustrator Raya Golden (who works with George RR Martin).

In a tribute on his blog, Martin wrote: “The end, when it came, seemed to be as peaceful as it was sudden; she went to sleep, and died sometime in the night... Right up to the last she was as sharp, funny, and loving a woman she had always been. A lot of friends came to visit her and spend time with her over the holidays and afterward, and she enjoyed their company as much as she enjoyed theirs. Wanda June was always a delight.”

SFWA SUPPORTS ASIAN COMMUNITIES

The Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) board unanimously signed a statement about anti-Asian hate crimes and racism, reported [Locusmag.com](#) in early April. The statement reads, in part:

“Anti-Asian racism has long been a part of America’s fabric from the Page Act to the Chinese Exclusion Act and includes our own SF/F communities. We’ve seen it in the tropes and stereotypes that fetishize Asian women as dragon ladies and butterfly maidens, portray Asian people as suspicious or perpetually foreign Others, and treat Asian cultures as exotic settings to be used and consumed for entertainment.

“We condemn the anti-Asian racist hate and violence that has targeted some of the most vulnerable among us, including women, seniors, disabled people, sex workers, queer folks, low-income workers, and immigrants. These attacks are influenced by narratives put forth by elected officials, public figures, and by the stories that we tell. SFWA is committed to creating a safer, more equitable industry in SF/F for Asian and Asian American creators, and other marginalized communities.”

The board listed a series of concrete steps they plan to take, including hosting a free seminar on responsible representation in science-fiction and fantasy, creating a free five-part panel series by Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander (AAPI) creators, appointing a dedicated liaison for outreach, and providing free registration for 25 Asian and AAPI writers to attend the 2021 Nebula Conference.

FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN TO BUY TOLKIEN’S OXFORD HOUSE FAILS

Project Northmoor, a fundraising campaign with the goal of buying J.R.R. Tolkien’s Oxford house and turning it into a literary center, failed to raise the £4.5 million needed to purchase and renovate the house, reported [Locusmag.com](#) in late March.

As of February 4, it had raised just 17% of its goal. However, organizers announced that “we have been offered an alternative home for the first literary centre dedicated to Tolkien in a very suitable venue in the heart of Oxford that fits our needs perfectly for in-person courses and a base for tours visiting locations that inspired Tolkien.”

The house on 20 Northmoor Road was Tolkien’s

home from 1930-1947 while he was professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford University and where he wrote *The Hobbit* and the first two volumes of *The Lord of the Rings*. The campaign was started by author Julia Golding and gained the support of *The Lord of the Rings* actors Martin Freeman, Ian McKellen, and John Rhys-Davies.

The Tolkien Society refused to support the project, noting that “the property itself is a listed building in a conservation area – with a blue plaque proudly showing its connection to Tolkien – meaning the property is well protected under the law and not in need of rescue.”

EMILY VANCAMP TALKS *FALCON*, POWER BROKER RUMORS

Who is Madripoor’s mysterious Power Broker? Could it possibly be Sharon Carter (Emily VanCamp), who, after being branded a traitor in *Captain America: Civil War*, became a high-ranking art broker in the lawless pirate nation? She’s definitely a lot shadier compared to when we last saw her in 2016 says SyFy Wire.

The rumor mill is hard at work for *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier*, cranking out arguments that the former CIA agent is too far into the criminal underworld to turn back now. But if *WandaVision* taught us anything, it’s to take fan-generated hypotheses with a large grain of salt and an injection of super-soldier serum.

During a recent interview with *Variety* about Episode 3 of the new Marvel series, VanCamp sounded off on the rumors that Sharon is Madripoor’s most powerful Mafioso. “The Power Broker could be anybody,” she said. “Also, there are several characters that have yet to be seen. So, I mean, I can’t say anything.”

Ok, not a definitive answer, but a pretty cagey response all the same. Following the events of the most recent episode, Sharon decided to continue her forced exile abroad, while Sam (Anthony Mackie) makes a promise to try and get her pardoned by the U.S. government.

“I think for Sharon, the biggest goal – as you see in Episode 3 and we’ll continue to see – is she wants to be pardoned. She’s been on the run. Enough is enough. She’s sacrificed enough,” the actress explained, adding that the character could really muck things up for our heroes if she wanted to (giving a little more credence to the Power Broker speculation).

“I think that’s her main goal, to get back to some semblance of the life that she had, if that’s even possible. I mean, that was my biggest take,” she continued. “This is her ticket. She sees [Sam and Bucky], and as much as in her mind there are many reasons that she would just want to lash out and ruin their lives, they’re also a ticket for her to get her life back. So that’s an interesting dynamic to see as well.”

Speaking with SyFy Wire, co-cast member Erin Kellyman (Flag Smasher Karli Morgenthau) stated that fan theories aren’t exactly hitting the mark. “I actually

don't think I've seen anybody close yet," she admitted. "There's a lot of guessing, but I don't think anybody's got it just right yet."

The first three episodes of *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* are now available to stream on Disney+. Episode 4 (of 6) debuts on the streaming service Friday, April 9.

LOKI HAS TIME-TWISTING TRAILER

We already have Marvel Studios streaming series to consume us right now thanks to *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier*, but we're also looking ahead to one of the most anticipated MCU projects in recent memory: *Loki*, the Disney+ miniseries led by Tom Hiddleston's triumphant return as the God of Mischief himself, is now just two months away from its streaming debut – and Disney just dropped a new trailer Easter weekend to remind us why we should still be so excited about it, says Syfy Wire.

Spinning out of the events of *Avengers: Endgame* (and technically the events of *The Avengers* since *Endgame* involved copious amounts of time travel), *Loki* will follow the version of the title character who was captured by *The Avengers* in 2012, only to then steal the Tesseract and disappear when *Endgame*'s time-travel shenanigans put it right in his hands.

That means this version of *Loki* is significantly more devious than the one we came to know by the end of his chronological MCU run, so when his new journey puts him in conflict with the Time Variance Authority, the time-monitoring bureaucracy knows to expect him to be up to no good. Still, at least one TVA agent, Mobius M. Mobius (Owen Wilson) has hope that *Loki* actually has it in him to help mend reality itself, and so the God of Mischief is off on a reality-hopping journey that takes him...

We've, of course, seen plenty of *Loki* footage up to this point, but this trailer is striking for two key reasons. For one, it really plays up the bureaucratic comedy of the TVA in ways even prior footage didn't, and for another it's easily the most plot-heavy of the trailers. We've seen *Loki* hopping through dimensions, running for president and being D.B. Cooper and a host of other things before, but now we know why. This version of *Loki* – you know,

the one who tried to conquer Earth in 2012 – is once again doing his level best to play along with the good guys. Though, as Mobius points out, he has "literally stabbed people in the back



like 50 times," so who knows if this'll actually work out.

It's also worth noting a lot of the vibe, set-up and even aesthetic visuals bare a striking resemblance to The CW's *Legends of Tomorrow* and its Time Bureau that was a key part of that series' story for a few seasons – though obviously this feels more epic and big budget, with that very particular Hiddleston swagger coming to the concept.

Led by Hiddleston and Wilson and also starring Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Sophia Di Martino, Wunmi Mosaku and Richard E. Grant, *Loki* debuts June 11 on Disney+.

NEW PICARD TEASER REVEALS RETURN OF A TREK FAN-FAVE

At first glance, the latest teaser trailer for the second season of *Star Trek: Picard* doesn't reveal much, reports Syfy Wire in early April. It doesn't show any shots from the upcoming season. It doesn't show any characters. Heck, it doesn't even show *Picard* himself (though we do hear his voice). But despite not showing any scenes or cast members from the show's sophomore season, it still sets the stage for what's to come in a big way.

Introduced by series star Patrick Stewart at the top of April 5's First Contact Day virtual global panels, the new teaser for *Picard* is a series of shots and pans through the former U.S.S. Enterprise captain's unoccupied vineyard home while he provides a voiceover narration talking about how the final frontier is not space, but actually time, and how "time offers so many opportunities, but never second chances."

But then, the camera pans down to a playing card – the Queen of Hearts – before the card dissolves, leaving behind only one solitary letter. Then we hear another familiar voice, reciting a familiar line.

That's right; Season 2 of *Picard* not only promises the further adventures of Jean-Luc Picard, but also the return of the iconic *Star Trek* character Q, to be once again played by John de Lancie, who also made a surprise appearance on the panel to confirm that he will indeed appear in the show's second season.

Picard has Stewart reprising the role he played for seven seasons on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and follows this character into the next chapter of his life. *TNG* opened and closed with Q, a trickster god, putting humanity on trial... or more accurately, toying with, testing and pestering Picard and the crew of the Enterprise. He also introduced the starship to the Borg, another major adversary of the United Federation of Planets.

In addition to Stewart, *Picard* stars Alison Pill, Isa Briones, Evan Evagora, Michelle Hurd, Santiago Cabrera, Jeri Ryan, Orla Brady and Brent Spiner. Akiva Goldsman and Terry Matalas serve as co-showrunners for Season 2.

Production on the second season of *Star Trek: Picard* has officially begun and will premiere in 2022 on Paramount+.

LUCIFER 5TH SEASON TO HAVE ALL-MUSICAL EPISODE

Lucifer, the Netflix series about the Devil (Tom Ellis) helping police solve mysteries in Los Angeles, is currently on a mid-season break. But the show's co-showrunner recently revealed that the wait for the second half of the fifth season is almost at an end, reported SyFy Wire in early April.

While appearing on the Word Balloon podcast to promote his upcoming Image comic *Shadecraft* (for which Netflix recently optioned the TV rights), Joe Henderson reminded fans that they won't have to wait long for Season 5B, as it'll be arriving to Netflix on May 28. And included in that batch of eight episodes will be the full-on musical episode we were promised back in January.

The upcoming musical episode, "Bloody Celestial Karaoke Jam," written by co-showrunner Ildy Modrovich, puts Lucifer in the same company as such shows as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (which had the musical episode "Once More With Feeling") and *The Flash* (whose musical episode "Duet" brought in *Supergirl* star Melissa Benoist to croon and hoof it with Grant Gustin). However, unlike "Once More" and "Duet," Henderson let it be known that "Bloody Celestial Karaoke Jam" will feature all covers, but no original tunes.

"We're doing covers," said Henderson, who implied he couldn't write a song if his life depended on it. "I don't know what kind of insane people write songs, that just...dear lord."

Having said that, he did clarify that Modrovich could indeed write songs if she wanted to, which is probably why she wrote the episode.

"By the way, Ildy could actually write songs. Ildy was in a band," Henderson added. "I could never write a song, which is also why whenever people were like, 'are you ever going to do a musical episode I was like, Ildy can! 'Cuz...not me. But man, it is one of my favorite episodes."

Henderson went on to explain that the upcoming musical episode exemplifies an aspect of the show that he loves.

"There are episodes that some of us couldn't do but would also love to do and then find a way to do," He said. "That's an episode that I could never write. Or at least one I couldn't write as well as Ildy did."

Henderson also revealed on the podcast that the sixth and final season of *Lucifer* would be 10 episodes. And though careful not to give away anything resembling a spoiler, he also promised that in Season 5B "Lucifer and Dad [aka God, played by Dennis Haysbert] are going to have a lot of conversations about where they've been," and that there's a trailer coming between now and that May 28 release date, which he does not downplay. "You guys are gonna s**t yourself when you see that trailer," said Henderson. Um...good to know, sir. Good to know.

New episodes of *Lucifer* drop on Netflix May 28. The rest of the series is able to watch on the streaming service now.

STAR WARS & DUCK DODGERS?

Well, this is certainly interesting. MeTV's *Toon in With Me* series revealed, and Mark Hamill has confirmed, that George Lucas really, really wanted the Warner Bros. cartoon "Duck Dodgers in the 24½th Century" to run before all screenings of *Star Wars: A New Hope* back in 1977, reported io9.gizmodo.com in early April. And then he also wanted a "Duck Dodgers" sequel cartoon to run before *The Empire Strikes Back*.

In a tweet, Hamill posted, "George really did want this classic Daffy Duck cartoon shown before every screening of #SW. It would've been an icebreaker to let the audience know what was coming was less than dead serious. I was disappointed when we couldn't get the rights to it & it didn't happen. #TrueStory."

Since *Star Wars* was originally released by Fox, it seems Lucasfilm couldn't negotiate the rights to use the 1953 Daffy Duck cartoon in time for the release of the movie in May 1977. However, this was cleared up before *The Empire Strikes Back* premiere, and Lucas requested an all-new animated sequel to the original, titled "Duck Dodgers and the Return of the 24 ½th Century." However, the cartoon was not finished in time for *Empire's* May 1980 premiere, and Lucas was thwarted again.

It's weird imagining watching *Duck Dodgers* before either *Star Wars* film, although it would obviously be wholly separate from the movie and have no bearing on it. Of course, it makes sense why Lucas would choose that cartoon, given it was a parody of the same classic sci-fi serials of the 1930s and '40s that inspired *Star Wars*. Plus, as Hamill said in his tweet, "It would've been an icebreaker to let the audience know what was coming was less than dead serious," which feels weirdly relevant now.

First of all, there are many fans who take *Star Wars* much too seriously. Second, given Disney's focus on releasing *Star Wars* movies that are rated PG-13 and designed to appeal to and sate older fans over targeting newer, younger, and less cultish audiences, the idea of any kind of kids' programming running before, say, *The Rise of Skywalker* is anathema. George Lucas probably is bummed out by that.

BUBONICON 52: TAKE TWO STILL IN COVID-19 LIMBO

Will it be in-person or have to go virtual again? That's the question facing the Bubonicon 52: Take Two committee and the Bubonicon Inc Board. The con is scheduled for August 20-22, but it's still unclear whether it can be held at the ABQ Marriott Uptown or will happen on Facebook and YouTube in this second pandemic year.

It's all dependent on the progress of New Mexico COVID-19 vaccinations, and what the state's Health Order might be for the maximum size of mass gatherings/events in late summer. (Some people who work on performing art events/concerts have told con-com folks that the state might only be up to 250 people in September.)

As a result, weekend and daily passes will not go on sale until at least May 1. "There's no sense in collecting monies and then having to refund people," con chair Craig Chrissinger said. "All we can do is cross our fingers and wait on more information for a definite decision to be made. We might be asking for financial donations to help with expenses if we have to go virtual again."

Invitations are being sent out to potential participants soon, with the question of whether each person can do in-person and/or virtual programming. Other aspects of Bubonicon 2021 also are being discussed and evaluated.

Co-Guests of Honor for 2021 are Rae Carson (*The Girl of Fire and Thorns*, *The Shadow Cats*, "Badass Moms in the Zombie Apocalypse") and Keith R.A. DeCandido (*Mermaid Precinct*, *Alien: Isolation*, *Serenity: The Movie Novelization*), while Toastmaster is A. Lee Martinez (*Constance Verity Saves the World*, *Gil's All Fright Diner*, *Emperor Mollusk versus The Sinister Brain*) and Artist Guest is Colorado's Chaz Kemp (Book Covers, Posters, Tarot Cards, Oracle Deck – "SteamPunk/Art Nouveau style"). Chrissinger serves as con chair with Jessica Coyle and Mandy Self as assistant chairs.

More info is available at www.bubonicon.com. Questions can be sent to bubonicon@gmail.com.

NEW KICKSTARTER FOR MORE *MST3K*

It's been a long, strange journey for *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, but more episodes might finally be on the way — that is, if the new Make More *MST3K* Kickstarter from series creator Joel Hodgson hits its funding goal, reported collider.com on April 7.

The initial goal of \$2 million will cover three new episodes, reuniting Jonah Ray's Jonah Heston with robot pals Tom Servo and Crow T. Robot, and would also fund the development of "The Gizmoplex," a new "online theater" that would host live episode premieres, real-time watch parties and special live events year-round. This frees the show from any network, allowing it to interface directly with its fans.

"A year in quarantine gave us a lot of time to think, and we realized two important things," said Hodgson in a statement. "First, nobody's virtual Zoom background is as amusing as they think it is. And second, that *Mystery Science Theater 3000* is back because it's what the fans wanted. So, you know, it doesn't make sense for a network to decide the show's fate after each season. That should be up to the people we're making the show for. We want our fans to decide how long we keep going, and how many new episodes we make each year."

The Kickstarter also features stretch goals that would

add more episodes, as well as fund the development of Gizmoplex apps, live events, and a companion season of shorter episodes. This isn't the first time *MST3K* has turned to Kickstarter for funding. Back in 2015, the show surpassed its \$5.5 million stretch goal to fund its 11th season, which premiered on Netflix in 2017. The top stretch goal this time around is also \$5.5 million, which bodes well for the prospect of a complete new season.

Turning directly to its fanbase is an obvious choice. Built on a culture of trading VHS tapes of the earliest episodes, *MSTies* are certainly dedicated, following the show across various channels over its 30-year history. And with networks out of the way, Hodgson can now honor one of the most common requests he hears from fans: releasing each new episode directly to fans as it is finished, rather than holding them until the entire season is complete.

"Back in the day, each new episode of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* was kind of an event to look forward to, and you could discover it with your family or friends," Hodgson said. "So, we're pretty excited by the idea that each new episode can become this kind of 'communal event' again. Also, we've got a lot of fun ideas to make our virtual theater, The Gizmoplex, feel different from any other place you can watch *MST3K* online."

The Netflix revival of *MST3K*, like the original, was set on the Satellite of Love where the host (Ray) was held captive and forced to watch an unending stream of bad B movies peppered with snide comments from his robot compadres. In addition to Ray, the series also starred Baron Vaughn as the voice of Tom Servo, Hampton Yount as the voice of Crow, Felicia Day as Kinga Forrester, and Patton Oswalt as Max, a.k.a. "TV's Son of TV's Frank."

Hodgson has confirmed that the Netflix cast will be back for this new effort, plus "we've also got some big plans to expand the world — and cast — of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*."

Mystery Science Theater 3000 originally aired on Minneapolis UHF station KTMA-TV starting in 1988 before it was picked up by Comedy Central and then the Sci-Fi Channel (now Syfy). The original series ran for 10 seasons and 197 episodes before going off the air in 1999.

Despite the constantly changing networks, writers, and cast members, the premise has always remained basically the same: a guy and his two robot buddies are trapped in space and forced by mad scientists to watch bad movies. To stay sane, the host and his two bots make fun of, or riff on, the films. Hilarity ensues.

In its first day, the new effort (MakeMoreMST3K) had already become Kickstarter's 5th "Highest Funded" and 15th "Most Backed" Film & Video project ever with more than 11,000 people jumping on board to be part of *MST3K*'s next chapter.

And by April 9, the Kickstarter campaign had raised more than \$2.5 million in pledges. The current campaign effort will end on May 7.



TV Thoughts

THE FALCON, THE WINTER SOLDIER, & THE LEGACY OF CAPTAIN AMERICA

by Mandy P. Self

Four months into 2021, and Marvel has yet to disappoint! Wanda's journey through grief and television history riveted us to our screens, partly because it was such a unique offering. With *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* on Disney+, Marvel is back to a more traditional business of battles, banter, and bromance.

From the first episode it's clear that this show's primary question is about the legacy of Captain America. Sam Wilson, who was bequeathed the shield by Steve Rogers himself, felt it was a role he couldn't take on – that without Steve Rogers there is no Captain America. The government on the other hand seems to have a different idea: that since it was the Army who made Steve Rogers into Captain America in the first place, it is their right to give the title to another again. Enter John Walker.

Walker is everything the government thinks a man needs to be to fill the role: tall, white, blonde, a killer smile, and a strong jaw. Walker is cheered as Captain America in the middle of a high school football field, the very high school where he was once captain of the football team. Contrasted to Walker in episode 2, is Isaiah Bradley, an elderly black man. Bradley was never given the name Captain America, and yet it is he who has the super soldier serum. Isaiah paid for his service with being imprisoned and experimented on by the very government he served. Which is the legacy of Captain America: the white man with the sparkling smile or the black man with tiredness in his eyes? Or perhaps the show will make us ponder the fact that it is both.

As the best of SF/F does, maybe *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* is making a point about our larger world. *WandaVision* made us ponder our relationships and grief, while *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* is making us question the legacies we base our world on. Nothing is black and white, purely bad or purely good. Legacies are complicated and messy. The figure of Captain America could on the one hand inspire a young Phil Coulson to serve his country. On the other hand, that same legacy led to the creation of both the Hulk and the Abomination.

The show asks us to look at these shades of gray face on, not only with Steve's legacy, but with the Sharon Carter's fate, the Flag Smasher's cause, and even Bucky's amends. Sharon broke the law, and without the coverage of the Avengers, she was hung out to dry. The Flag Smashers are trying to help the people displaced by the Blip – a worthy cause even if the way they are going about it is questionable. And while for Bucky it is easy to make amends when it involves taking down a corrupt politician, it's much harder when it involves revealing to a friend that he is the one who killed his son.

It's all a question of legacy: of Steve's, of Sharon's, of the world pre-Blip, and of the Winter Soldier's. It may be inevitable in the end that the bad guys will be subdued, Bucky will admit the truth, and Sam will don the cowl and shield, but the show is taking us on a narrative journey that makes us grapple with the legacies of our own nation and past. In the end inevitably it will remind us, that what Dr. Erskine wanted for Captain America was “not a perfect soldier, but a good man.”

(On a much lighter note: my count of *Young Avengers* confirmed to be in the MCU is now up to a solid five: Cassie Lang, Billy Kaplan/Maximoff, Tommy Shepherd/Maximoff, Kate Bishop, and now Eli Bradley! We may get a *Young Avengers* show yet!)

The Falcon and the Winter Soldier streams on Disney+, with new episodes released each Friday. The series will end on April 23.

BOOK REVIEW ROUND-UP

Fugitive Telemetry: Murderbot Diaries 6 by Martha Wells, 2021 Tordotcom, hc \$19.99, 176 pages.

Review by Craig W. Chrissinger

Fugitive Telemetry is the newest in the entertaining Murderbot series from Texan Martha Wells, and this tale is a bit different. Instead of protecting its human sponsor or being on the hunt for a villainous rival company, the security android nicknamed “Murderbot” is getting involved in a murder case aboard a space station.

When Murderbot finds a dead body, it thinks, “No, I didn't kill the dead human. If I had, I wouldn't dump the body in the station mall.”

It's a locked-room mystery, or so it initially seems. Unfortunately, Murderbot will have to assist station security in finding the killer and the motivation. It all means our SecUnit will have to voluntarily interact and speak with humans, again. Of course, all it would rather do is watch its video stories and be left alone.

In this standalone adventure, Wells continues the tradition of using a nonhuman to explore human nature to good effect. Murderbot makes keen observations and also has snarky interior monologues that draw the reader in. Wells continues to make the *Murderbot Diaries* entertaining space opera adventures that are well worth reading. This *Fugitive* is no exception. Recommended.

Burning Girls and Other Stories by Veronica Schanoes, 2021 Tordotcom, hc \$25.99, 336 pages.

Review by Becky Davis

Veronica Schanoes begins *Burning Girls*, her story collection, with “Among the Thorns,” a macabre fairy tale about a daughter burning with revenge against the German town which tortured her Jewish peddler father with thorn bushes and then hanged him in public outside the town. The daughter makes a compact with a Jewish demon of the pre-biblical faith so she can go into the town to gradually, resolutely kill the people who assisted with her fa-

ther's execution. She then places a curse upon the town as she leaves.

The author moves on to other stories, similarly dark or threatening. All have a tone of magical realism juxtaposed against either well-known fairy tale tropes or up against real historical characters, such as Emma Goldman, who championed Russian socialism in the early 1920s. They often feature the fervid anti-Semitic persecution against – mostly – Eastern European or Russian Jews.

Her best tales, I hesitate to attach “fairy” to the word, are the aforementioned “Among the Thorns,” “Phosphorous,” “Emma Goldman Takes Tea with the Babba Yaga,” and the final tale, “Burning Girls,” which brilliantly mines the Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory fire of 1911 (110 years as of March 25th, 2021) wherein 146 young women died from fire around a nine-story New York building.

Read this smart collection with a memory of German and Russian folk tales, early 20th century history and a rich sprinkling of magical realism. You will enjoy (almost) all of them, and probably be frightened by several others.

***Ready Player Two* by Ernest Cline, 2020 Ballantine Books, hc \$28.99, 384 pages.**

Review by Craig W. Chrissinger

In a lot of ways, *Ready Player Two* is very similar to Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* released in 2011. Wade Watts now is co-owner of the OASIS, the virtual reality world where many people spend significant portions of their lives. There's a new riddle and quest, and this time the book is peppered with a lot of 1990s-related trivia.

But a lot has changed, too. Arguing over a new technological advancement that will intensify a player's experience in the OASIS, Wade and Samantha have split up. And the new quest comes with a new rival and a threat that puts millions of people's lives in danger. And with unlimited power and unlimited money, Wade has become a bit corrupted, and is not always thinking about others in his decisions. But in other ways, he has matured from the teenager he was in the first book – and he does grow as a person during the course of *RP2*.

Cline introduces the ONI (OASIS Neural Interface), a direct computer-to-brain connection. Not the newest idea in science fiction, but it works here to create a real problem for Wade and crew as he races to complete Halliday's newest quest. The idea of AI singularity also is touched upon in the quest that revolves around Kira Morrow, co-creator of the OASIS and the love of the Great and Powerful Og. Some of the quest takes place on a John Hughes film world, obscure parts of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth, and a world centered around Prince (the musician).

While not quite the showstopper that *Ready Player One* was, it's a fast and good read. Some interesting new characters are introduced, and Cline obviously still is having fun with the world he's created. The beginning is a little slow, but it quickly picks up speed. If you liked the first book, you probably will enjoy this novel as well. Just know it is similar and different at the same time.

***The Wood Wife* by Terri Windling, 2021 Tor Books (reprint edition), tp \$17.99, 304 pages.**

Review by Michael Collins

The Wood Wife takes place in the mountains outside Tucson, where a poet, Davis Cooper, has died mysteriously: he has drowned, but his body is found in a wash that has been dry for years. A younger poet, Maggie Black, has inherited his estate and moved into his house. Cooper had been a mentor to Maggie, who now hopes to discover unpublished poems and write a biography.

Maggie almost immediately encounters a variety of strange and disturbing events: unidentifiable animals trashing the house, a man who appears out of nowhere, inexplicable notes left behind by Cooper. Maggie has entered a land inhabited by shape-shifters, tricksters, and other desert spirits; they have been given visible form in the surrealist paintings of Cooper's long-dead wife Anna. Some of these beings are guardians of the land and embodiments of its awesome beauty: but of course, as in all classic faerie stories, many creatures of the other realm are very frightening. They are not exactly malicious, but so casually indifferent to human concerns that they might as well be, if you are caught up in their affairs.

Maggie becomes part of a rural community that includes Johnny Foxxe, a carpenter and musician who wants to learn to speak the language of the desert like Cooper could; and Juan del Rio, a painter whose creative impulse has suddenly turned toward self-destructive obsession, mirroring the fate of Anna decades ago. Maggie's personal journey of overcoming a failed relationship and disappointing career becomes intertwined with the mystery of Cooper's death. She eventually must play a role in protecting the human community from the dark side of the supernatural, while learning herself to speak the language of the desert.

The Wood Wife is full of well-drawn characters and evocative images of the southwest, and the quotations from “Cooper's” poems show Terri Windling to be a poet herself – despite the fact that she is better known as an editor than as an author. Maggie's experiences also brought back memories of my own experience as an easterner first encountering the southwest: vaguely expecting a landscape of Saharan sand dunes, yet still taken aback by how hot and dry it is. A beautiful book, highly recommended.

***The Best of R.A. Lafferty* edited by Jonathan Strahan, 2021 Tor Books, tp \$18.99, 288 pages.**

Review by Craig W. Chrissinger

R.A. Lafferty certainly was an interesting writer for his stories are unique, different, and sometimes more examples of linguistic wordplay than totally coherent and chronological. Lafferty spent most of his life in Tulsa, OK, working as an electrical engineer and didn't start selling fiction until he was in his 50s. He noted that science fiction didn't come easy for him, and the stories in this volume collected by Jonathan Strahan show his Native American and Irish influences.

These tales are definitely original and unconventional, and sometimes have odd twists or offbeat angles to them. Some are even loopy tall tales. It helps that the stories are introduced by such people as Neil Gaiman, Connie Willis, Nancy Kress, Robert Silverberg, John Scalzi, Harlan Ellison, and even actor/comedian Patton Oswalt. “In Our Block” is a fun tale of possible alien invasion, while “Ride a Tin Can” is ultimately a sad tale of genocide. “Seven-Day Terror” gets into the mindset of children, “Land of the Great Horses” is a unique what-if story, and “Continued on Next Rock” is baffling yet fascinating.

Readers who are not familiar with Lafferty may find several stories not to be their cup of tea, but it is worth dipping your toes into *The Best of R.A. Lafferty* for the experience. It’s a nice collection from a man who won a World Fantasy Award for Lifetime Achievement, and left this world in 2002. His writing style was definitely unique.

Calculated Risks: InCryptid 10 by Seanan McGuire, 2021 DAW, mmpb \$7.99, 448 pages.

Review by Craig W. Chrissinger

When we last left our intrepid cryptozoologists (in *Imaginary Numbers*), Sarah Zellaby the Cuckoo (Johrlac) had used mind-boggling math against her will to transport cousin Annie, maybe-boyfriend Artie, a handful of allies, and an Iowa college campus to another dimension. Oh, and she wiped their minds of all memories of her. Not good when Cuckoos, telepathic ambush predators obsessed with math, are generally dangerous sociopaths.

Now in *Calculated Risks*, the 10th book of the urban fantasy series, Sarah must convince her family and friends that she’s trustworthy and ethical – and, of course, figure out how to get them all safely home. Problem is that the math that transported them tends to burn out Cuckoo and human brains.

Along the way to solving that problem, our little Earth group will meet humanoid aliens, giant predatory spiders and large praying mantises. And Annie and James will find their magic powers are stronger in the alien dimension. To a degree, all that gives the book a little bit of an Edgar Rice Burroughs vibe.

For those who have not been reading the InCryptid books, *Calculated Risks* is not a good jumping-in spot. As noted, the previous book ended on a cliffhanger – and this tale is more focused on Sarah than the actual Price family (other than Annie being pulled along for the ride).

And, sadly, it’s not the best written of the series. For whatever reason, Seanan McGuire is very repetitive here with internal monologues. Sarah repeats her feelings and observations many times throughout the story to the point it feels somewhat like filler. And after a lot of painful thoughts, adventures and such, the ending of the book is somewhat rushed.

Fans of McGuire will enjoy this book, and it does conclude Sarah’s dimensional story. While it does have problems, it’s worth reading. A stand-alone prequel novella at the back about Annie, Sarah, Verity and Artie at Emerald City Comic Con is a nice entertaining bonus.

ASFS MEETING REPORTS — FEBRUARY 2021: BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

For Valentine’s month, 20 people showed up on Zoom to discuss books read in 2020, whether good or bad. A book title mentioned by more than one person is indicated by an asterisk.

Among reading materials named were the *Praxis* trilogy by Walter Jon Williams, *The Ghosts of Sherwood* and *The Heirs of Locksley* by Carrie Vaughn, *MacGyver: Meltdown* by Eric Kelley and Lee Zlotoff, *Call for the Dead* and *Tinker, Tailor Soldier Spy* by John Le Carre, various music autobiographies, *Exile’s Honor* and *Exile’s Valor* by Mercedes Lackey, *By the Sword* by Mercedes Lackey, the *Vows and Honor* series by Mercedes Lackey, *Peace Talks: Dresden Files 16** by Jim Butcher, *Star Wars: Heir to the Empire* by Timothy Zahn, *All Systems Red* by Martha Wells, *The Stand** by Stephen King, *Flowers in the Attic* Saga by V.C. Andrews, *Resident Evil* books, *Underhanded Bridge* and *Underhanded Chess* by Jerry Sohl, magazines and comics, *Counting Heads* by David Marusek, *The Holographic Universe* by Michael Talbot, “Call Him Lord” by Gordon Dickson in *Analog*, *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Summers* edited by Sarena Ulibarri, *For Small Creatures Such As We* by Sasha Sagan, *Of Water and the Spirit* by Malidoma Patrice Some, *Skyward Vol. 1: My Low-G Life* by Joe Henderson, *Invisible Kingdom Volume 1* by G. Willow Wilson, *Prairie Fires: The American Dream of Laura Ingalls Wilder* by Caroline Fraser, *The Last Herald-Mage* trilogy by Mercedes Lackey, quilting books, *Black Sun* and *Race to the Sun* by Rebecca Roanhorse, *The Queen’s Gambit** by Walter Tevis, *The Floyd Collins Tragedy at Sand Cave* by John Benton & Bill Napper, *Fire & Blood: 300 Years Before A Game of Thrones* by George RR Martin,

King’s Blood by Judith Tarr, *The Emperor’s Soul: Elantris Book 2* by Brandon Sanderson, *The Last of the Moon Girls* by Barbara Davis, *Salvation Lost* by Peter Hamilton, *Go Set a Watchman* by Harper Lee, *The Outsider* by Stephen King, the *Sookie Stackhouse* series by Charlaine Harris, books on yoga and zen, books on art, *My Brother Michael* by Mary Stewart, *No Time Like the Future: An Optimist Considers Mortality* by Michael J. Fox, *Me and Sister Bobbie: True Tales of the Family Band* by Willie Nelson & Bobbie Nelson, *I Have Something To Tell You* by Chasten Buttigieg, *Imaginary Numbers: InCryptid Book 9** by Seanan McGuire, *Penric’s Progress* by Lois McMaster Bujold, the *Murderbot Diaries* by Martha Wells, *The City We Became* by N.K. Jemisin, the *Haunted Guesthouse* series by E.J. Copperman, *The*



Angel of the Crows by Katherine Addison, *The Cobra Event* by Richard Preston, the *Mars* trilogy by Kim Stanley Robinson, *The World Without Us* by Alan Weisman, *Ghost of a Potion* by Heather Blake, *Witches and Wedding Cake* by Bailey Cates, *Behind the Seams* by Betty Hechtman, *Laguardia* by Nnedi Okorafor, *Minor Mage* by T. Kingfisher, *Death by Dumpling* and *Dim Sum of All Fears* by Vivian Chien, *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Lost Symbol* by Dan Brown,

Gilded Latten Bones and *Wicked Bronze Ambition* by Glen Cook, *The Golden Princess* and *The Desert and the Blade* by S.M. Stirling, *Battle Ground: Dresden Files Book 17* by Jim Butcher, *Kris Longknife Emissary* by Mike Shepherd, *Kris Longknife's Maid Goes On Strike & Other Short Stories* by Mike Shepherd, *Sandy Santiago* series by Mike Shepherd, *Vanguard* and *Ascendant* by Jack Campbell, *Devil's Due: Destroyermen Book 12* by Taylor Anderson, *The Wolf in Winter* by John Connolly, *Vanilla Ride: Hap & Leonard Book 7* by Joe R. Lansdale, *The Walking Dead Compendium 4* by Robert Kirkman, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* by Suzanne Collins, *The Immortal Conquistador** by Carrie Vaughn, *Dungeons & Dragons Art & Arcana: A Visual History* by Michael Witwer and Kyle Newman, *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel, *Finder* by Suzanne Palmer, *Flex* by Ferrett Steinmetz, *Ed Wood: Nightmare of Ecstasy* by Rudolph Grey, *Step Right Up! I'm Gonna Scare the Pants Off America* by William Castle, *The Only Pirate at the Party* by Lindsey Stirling, *Vampira: Dark Goddess of Horror* by W. Scott Poole, *Vampira and Her Daughters* by Robert Michael Cotter, *Growing Up with Manos: The Hands of Fate* by Jackey Neyman Jones, *Betwixt* and *Bewitched* by Darynda Jones, *Emperor Mollusk vs the Sinister Brain*, *Helen & Troy's Epic Road Quest* and *Robots versus Slime Monsters* by A. Lee Martinez.

MARCH 2021: VIRTUAL GAME SHOW

Just 15 people were on hand for a virtual attempt at *Transwarp Trivia*, a game show played before at ASFS and at Bubonicon. We had planned to have teams of 3-4 people, and then send them into breakout rooms to discuss their answer. Unfortunately, we couldn't get this Zoom feature to work. So instead of teams, it was every person for themselves! Two rounds of the game were played. In the first round, Stephanie Piegzik came in first place with Al Kulp as runner-up. In the second round, Al Kulp came in first place with Greg Nelson as runner-up. While it was a small virtual meeting, everyone had fun guessing answers (or making up their own responses).

EDITOR NOTES TO FILL THIS SPACE

• **A YEAR AGO, MOST OF US** were in lockdown, only venturing out for toilet paper, cleaning supplies and basic groceries. And we all still thought that maybe the pandemic danger would be over by August or September. We had no idea just how long this COVID-19 worldwide pandemic would last. Who could have guessed we'd be in it 13 months later.

• **AT LEAST NOW** most of us are getting vaccinated, so there is a light at the end of the tunnel (and it appears not to be the headlight of an oncoming train). And yet we all need to remember that it's not over yet - there still is a need to

wear masks, wash our hands frequently, and social distance. And we need for people to respect science again! Too many don't seem to understand that Coronavirus won't totally go away. Vaccinations reduce the risk but don't eliminate it.

• **ALL THE PROGRESS AND YET NEED** for caution has made it very difficult to figure out what happens to Bubonicon this year. The Washington, DC Worldcon just decided to postpone until mid-December and Denver's big comic/media con has been canceled again. For Bubonicon, it all boils down to what New Mexico's Health Order might say about gatherings/events in late summer, and how comfortable people will be with crowds inside. Let's just say it's not looking that good.

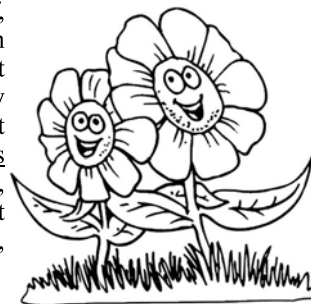
• **AT LEAST THINGS HAVE BEEN** calmer the last couple of months, and time seems to be at about normal speed. The first three months of 2021 certainly have gone faster than the pandemic's beginning or during 2020's contentious election. Of course, the most recent hate crimes and mass shootings have been horrifying and disturbing. They need to stop.

• **I'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH PHOTOS & MAGAZINES/FANZINES** the past couple of months to get rid of stuff in closets and file drawers I don't need. Found a lot of bad and duplicate pictures, and zines I had kept for maybe one article. It's been fairly nostalgic, and sometimes interesting looking at events I barely remember the details of. Also have found cool stuff I didn't know I had kept. Sometimes it's hard not to hoard stuff, and other times I wonder why the heck so much stuff is here. Ah, the culmination of 59+ years of life.

• **WE'VE BEEN ENJOYING** *The Umbrella Academy* on Netflix (really like the characters, especially Klaus, Number Five and the Handler), *WandaVision* and now *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* on Disney+ (and are looking forward to *Loki* and *Star Wars: The Bad Batch*), and our usual shows of *Young Sheldon*, *The Goldbergs*, *Big Sky*, *Svengoolie*, *Kenan*, *The Rookie*, *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist*, *The Unicorn* and such. *The Equalizer* with Queen Latifah has been pretty good so far, but *Debris* has turned into a weekly fest of love and/or the human condition defeating alien tech. And we watched *Tom & Jerry: The Movie* before it left HBO Max. Not quite Green Slime material, but pretty bad. Need to watch *Godzilla vs Kong* next, and then *Mortal Kombat* (which looks pretty bad).

• **BOOKWISE**, almost everything is reviewed in this issue. Except for *Anyone* by Charles Soule, which is a quick read of consciousness jumping between bodies, and the very pretty *Firefly Artbook: A Visual Celebration of Joss Whedon's Swashbuckling 'Verse*. It's an interesting variety of artists interpreting *Serenity* and its crew.

• **SO, THAT'S ABOUT IT** for another issue of *ASFacts*. This one is about normal length, but still not completed by the time of April's ASFS meeting - sorry. I really, really want to thank Michael C, Becky D and Mandy S for their contributions! It's really nice to have some stuff in here that's not written by Jessica or myself, or "borrowed" (reprinted) from online reports. Just like last year, let's hope we can actually hand out the Summer issue at July's club meeting! Deadline is Mon, July 5. Stay safe, be well, stay strong, and take care. Get vaccinated, smell the flowers, and hang in there. — Craig C



ASFacts, April 2021