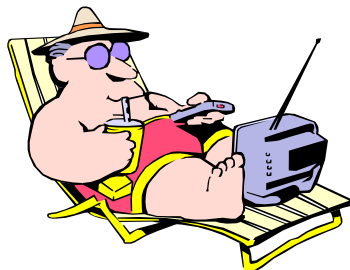




ASFACTS 2026

JULY "SO HOT & FIREWORKS" SUMMER ISSUE



2025 NEBULA AWARDS WINNERS

On June 6, the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association (SFWA) announced the winners for the 2025 Nebula Awards in Chicago.

The Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master Award was presented to N. K. Jemisin. The Infinity Award was presented to the legacy of Roger Zelazny. David Langford received the Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award, and Gay Hal-deman received the Kevin O'Donnell, Jr. Service to SFWA Award.

This year, SFWA celebrated two inaugural awards: one for Poem, and one for Comic. Like the Ray Bradbury Nebula Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation and the Nebula Award for Best Game Writing, these new awards celebrate writers at the heart of productions that also involve editors, artists, publishers, producers, and a wealth of others who make the magic happen.

NOVEL: *The Buffalo Hunter Hunter* by Stephen Graham Jones, NOVELLA: *The River Has Roots* by Amal El-Mohtar, NOVELETTE: "Uncertain Sons" by Thomas Ha, SHORT STORY: "Laser Eyes Ain't Everything" by Effie Seiberg, POETRY: "The World To Come" by Jennifer Hudak, ANDRE NORTON AWARD: *Into the Wild Magic* by Michelle Knudsen, COMIC: *Mary Shelley's School for Monsters: The Killing Stone* by Jessica Maison, RAY BRADBURY AWARD: *Murderbot Season One*, and GAME WRITING: *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33*.

Winners were announced at the 2026 Nebula Conference and Awards, held June 3-7 in Chicago IL, and virtually online. For more, see the SFWA website. The 2027 Nebula Conference will take place in Seattle.

ROGERS/DENNING TO HOST PRE-CON PARTY

Patricia Rogers & Scott Denning are upholding a local fannish tradition by hosting the Bubonicon 57 Pre-Con Party 7:30-10:15 pm Thursday, August 20, at their home in Bernalillo – located at 909 Highway 313.

The easiest way to get there is north on I-25 to exit 242 east (Rio Rancho's backdoor and the road to Cuba).

At Highway 313 (N. Camino del Pueblo just past Walgreens), turn right to head north. You will pass Bernalillo High School and the closed Country Store on your right. Look for a cow crossing sign and Mile Marker 9. The house – with a mummy on the gate – is on the west side of the road. Please park your car on the shoulder of Highway 313 or in the mowed field to the north.

In addition to socializing, attendees can help assemble the membership packets, & check out the 2026 artwork by Jon Sanchez.

Please bring snacks & drinks to share. Also welcome: plates, napkins, cups and ice. As with any hosted party, please keep the house clean and in good shape!

ABQ'S PUPPETEER MCCORMICK DIES

by Logan Royce Beitmen, ABQ Journal 6-6-2026

Groundbreaking puppet-maker and performer Michael McCormick died May 24 while in his Albuquerque studio. He was just three weeks shy of his 86th birthday.

McCormick is best remembered for helping to design and build many of the iconic creatures seen in Jim Hen-

UPCOMING ASF\$ MEETINGS

- **Tonight, July 10:** Santa Fe author Rebecca Roanhorse talks about *Star Wars*, short stories & more.
- **August 7 - One Week Early:** Bubonicon 57 schedule preview, and Hot Wheels zombie bowling, board & card games. All in the Adult Education Room!
- **August 14:** Bubonicon 57 Gofer Organizing Meeting in the Activity Room.
- **September 11:** Bubonicon 57 and Other Early Fall Convention reports.
- **October 9:** Benjamin Radford talks about "Solving The Pachacamac Mystery." Plus Club Officer Elections & the Halloween *ASFacts*.
- **November 13:** Author Betsy James visits.
- **December 11:** Holiday Party Gathering/Potluck! With Film Shorts & the annual issue of *SithFacts*.

Craig Chrissinger, normal editor. Darth Vader, guest editor each December. Please Send All Correspondence to — 2018 Cardenas Dr NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110. Contact: (505) 266-8905 or via cwcraig@nmia.com. ASFACTS published February, April/May, July & October for ABQ SF Society, *SithFacts* each December. Next Deadline: 3 pm Sunday, Oct 4. 2026 Club Officers: Craig Chrissinger & Jessica Coyle, co-Zec Secs (505) 266-8905. Eric Klammer, Moderator. Danielle & Arthur Maurici-Pollock, co-Alternators. Perry Rodent, con mascot. **Bubonicon Chair:** Craig Chrissinger (505) 559-0931.

son's *The Dark Crystal* (1982) and *Labyrinth* (1986) and George Lucas' *Return of the Jedi* (1983), among other films. For *The Dark Crystal*, McCormick worked on the fabrication team that made the vulture-like Skeksis monsters, and for *Labyrinth*, he built the prototype for the gentle giant known as Ludo, designed the armor for all of the goblin characters and helped construct David Bowie's costumes. He was among the original puppeteers and sculptors for such memorable *Return of the Jedi* characters as Salacious Crumb, Sy Snootles and Ephant Mon.

At the time of his death, McCormick was hard at work on several new projects. He was making puppets for an independent film series, *Positive Vibes Only*, with Albuquerque-based filmmaker Ian Rafael Black and had plans to revive his long-running puppet show, *Punch and Judy* – an adaptation of the 17th-century original – with his son, Sean McCormick.

Born in New York City, McCormick moved to Los Alamos with his family at the age of five, when his father came to the state to work on the Manhattan Project toward the end of World War II. He graduated from Albuquerque's Highland High School and attended the University of New Mexico, initially as a psychology student, before transitioning into art.

"He was studying psychology to become an art therapist for a long time," Sean McCormick said of his father. "That's how he started doing the *Punch and Judy* show, because it came out in his therapy. He was going through memories of seeing that show when he was a kid."

Positive Vibes Only director Black said McCormick brought psychological depth to all of his characters.

"Mike was really big on the idea of puppetry as therapy," Black said. "...Big, heady concepts were very important to us. All of our talks returned to philosophy, psychology and mythology – and the strings that tie all of them together."

Black and McCormick first worked together in 2008 on a film called *Personal Growth* – a dark comedy about a cancerous tumor that sings. Black said McCormick was not only a collaborator but a father figure and a friend.

McCormick mentored generations of New Mexico-based artists, including the Emmy-winning director and puppeteer Devon Hawkes Ludlow, who had grown up admiring McCormick's work. He later met McCormick at Meow Wolf, and the two made and operated puppets for a Carlos Medina music video, which Ryan Thompson directed in 2017. Ludlow and McCormick collaborated again in 2019 on Ludlow's punk puppet musical, *The Love That Would Not Die*.

"His work was technically astute, but at the same time imaginative and wild," Ludlow said. "He was a really skilled and talented sculptor and puppeteer, but he was also really interested in the profound psychological depths of the form, so our conversations usually revolved around Freudian and Jungian psychology."

Beyond these unofficial mentorships, McCormick also served as an art professor for many years. In 1963, he joined the faculty of the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe and ran the school's sculpture program. A number of his students, including Kevin Red Star (Crow Tribe of Montana), went on to have very successful art careers. McCormick also taught puppetry for film and

television at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces until his retirement from university teaching in 2008.

Artist Dennis Larkins, best known as a Grateful Dead illustrator, was McCormick's friend for nearly 60 years.

"I had come to Santa Fe in 1967, just out of art school, and that was the beginning of my painting career. A mutual friend of McCormick's...introduced us. We became immediate friends, and our friendship lasted all this time," Larkins said. "For the people who knew him – and not just knew of him, and his impact on the world stage, which was significant... he was magnetic."

Filmmaker Linda Carfagno had been filming McCormick for a forthcoming documentary, *Blueprint: The Genius of Production Design from Silent Film to AI*, which she is hoping to complete later this year. She described McCormick as a very funny, gregarious and engaging storyteller but also someone who wasn't afraid to explore the darker aspects of life.

"He told me there's power in shadows," Carfagno said. "Shadows bring you in. Shadows are interesting. There's all kinds of stuff in the shadows. And shadows can be a bridge to other worlds."

McCormick's other credits include make-up effects on the 1992 feature *White Sands*, and puppetry for the 2000 short film *The Phoenix*. He designed the puppets for his show *Punch and Judy* in his Albuquerque studio. His son Sean says the show was his proudest accomplishment, and the effect it had on people.

McCormick is survived by his wife of 63 years, Linda McCormick, and their son, Sean.

His family is planning an open house September 13 at his studio, welcome to those who knew him and those who were inspired by his work.

HELP NEEDED AT BUBONICON

It's true! Volunteers or "gofers" are needed to help out at Bubonicon 57 the weekend of August 21-23 at the Albuquerque Marriott Uptown. We're looking for people who can donate four, seven or even 12 hours of their time during the con to help things run smoothly and give committee workers much needed breaks from time to time.

It should be noted that gofers will not be handling money – that's for the Bubonicon staff. We especially need people to check badges/wristbands at doors to meeting rooms, the gaming space and the con suite this year.

Volunteer workers will be in drawings for various goodies liked bookstore gift certificates, restaurant gift certificates, Guild Cinema passes, signed books, toys, genre t-shirts, and more!

The Volunteers (Gofers) Organizational Meeting takes place 7:30 pm Friday, August 14, in the Activity Room of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, 5301 Ponderosa Ave NE (between San Mateo and San Pedro, south of Montgomery – park on the backside of the building. All attending volunteer workers at this meeting will receive some kind of appreciation gift.

If you're willing to help us during the convention, please email coordinator Susanne Caro at volunteers@bubonicon.com.



2026 LOCUS AWARDS WINNERS

The Locus Science Fiction Foundation announced the winners in each category of the 2026 Locus Awards on May 30 during the Bay Area Book Festival. Tananarive Due, Stephen Graham Jones, and Nnedi Okorafor were Guests of Honor, with Featured Local Artist Alyssa Winans. Additional weekend events included readings, panels with leading authors, and a catered reception.

SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL: *Death of the Author* by Nnedi Okorafor, FANTASY NOVEL: *The Everlasting* by Alix E. Harrow, HORROR NOVEL: *The Buffalo Hunter Hunter* by Stephen Graham Jones, YOUNG ADULT NOVEL: *Star-strike* by Yoon Ha Lee, FIRST NOVEL: *Sour Cherry* by Natalia Theodoridou, TRANSLATED NOVEL: *On the Calculation of Volume III* by Solvej Balle and translated by Sophia Hersi Smith & Jennifer Russell,

NOVELLA: *The River Has Roots* by Amal El-Mohtar, NOVELETTE: “We Begin Where Infinity Ends” by Somto Ihezue, SHORT STORY: “In My Country” by Thomas Ha, ANTHOLOGY: *We Will Rise Again* edited by Karen Lord, Annalee Newitz & Malka Older, COLLECTION: *Uncertain Sons and Other Stories* by Thomas Ha,

MAGAZINE: *Clarkesworld*, PUBLISHER: Orbit, EDITOR: Neil Clarke, ARTIST: John Picacio, ILLUSTRATED AND ART BOOK: *The Space Cat* by Nnedi Okorafor with art by Tana Ford, NON-FICTION: *Enshittification* by Cory Doctorow, and SPECIAL AWARD 2026 (Supporting the Speculative Writing Community): *The Submission Grinder*, David Steffen & Volunteers.

GENRE BOOKS STILL DISCUSSED

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group meets 7:30 pm Monday, July 20, in the back room of the 66 Diner, 1405 Central Ave NE (west of University Blvd) - to discuss *The Spare Man* by Mary Robinette Kowal. The group then recommends 2-4 books read in the last year but not in group August 17 at the 66 Diner.

Meetings of D&D are open to all interested 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 msransom@hotmail.com or Craig at 505-266-8905.

AUTHOR JANE YOLEN DIES

Author Jane Yolen died peacefully in her home, surrounded by family, in Hatfield, MA, on June 11. She was 87 years old, reports locusmag.com.

Jane Hyatt Yolen was born February 11, 1939, in New York City. She graduated Smith College with a BA in 1960, at which time she was already writing poetry and articles, and received a master's in education from the University of Massachusetts in 1978. Between degrees, in 1962, she married David W. Stemple, and they were married for 44 years before he died of cancer in 2006.

She gained attention as a writer through children's book *Pirates in Petticoats* (1963), published on her 22nd

birthday and went on to write more than 450 books and a monumental oeuvre of short fiction and poetry. From 1986 to 1988, she was president of the Science Fiction Writers Association and later was named a Damon Knight Grand Master. She ran her own young adult fiction imprint at Harcourt Brace from 1990 to 1996, and she was on the board of directors for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators for over 25 years. She lived in Western Massachusetts and had a house in Scotland which she would visit for a part of the year.

Yolen's more than 40 novels were mostly aimed at young adults and children, and she produced many series: To name a few, the Mythopoeic Award-winning Young Merlin trilogy included *Passager* (1996), *Hobby* (1996), and *Merlin* (1997); the Great Alta series included *Sister Light*, *Sister Dark* (1988), *White Jenna* (1989), and *The One-Armed Queen* (1998); the Pit Dragon series included *Dragon's Blood* (1982), *Heart's Blood* (1984), *A Sending of Dragons* (1987), and *Dragon's Heart* (2009); and the Seelie Wars series, written with her son Adam – *The Hostage Prince* (2013), *The Last Changeling* (2014), and *The Seelie King's War* (2016). She also wrote standalones *The Devil's Arithmetic* (1988), which was nominated for a Nebula Award and a World Fantasy Award; adult fantasy *Briar Rose* (1992), which won a Mythopoeic Award and was nominated for Locus, Nebula, and World Fantasy Awards; and Locus Award winner *Pay the Piper* (2005), among many others.

Her poetry was nominated for 13 Asimov's Readers' Poll Awards, of which four won: “Angels Fly Because They Take Themselves Lightly” (1991), “A Street Away” (2019), “Ode to Cassini” (2020), and “Mars Rover, Curiosity” (2021). Her poetry and short fiction were published frequently in *Asimov's*, as well as in *Eye to the Telescope*, *Sycorax*, *Shoreline of Infinity*, *Strange Horizons*, *Star*Line*, and more, plus many anthologies and more than 60 of her own collections and chapbooks. Among the more notable collections are Locus Award nominee *Sister Emily's Lightship and Other Stories* (2000) and World Fantasy Award winner *The Emerald Circus* (2017). “Sister Emily's Lightship” (1998) is one of her two works to have won a Nebula Award, along with novelette “Lost Girl” (1999). She also edited over a dozen anthologies, including *Things That Go Bump in the Night* (1989) with Martin H. Greenberg and *Mirror, Mirror* (2000) with her daughter Heidi.

Yolen collected multiple lifetime achievement awards, including NESFA's Skylark Award in 1990, the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement in 2009, the SFWA Grand Master Award for poetry in 2010, and the SFWA Grand Master Award in 2017.

She is survived by her children Adam, Heidi, and Jason, and a community that loved her.

STARLOG MAGAZINE TO RELAUNCH

Starlog, the magazine devoted to “visionary sci-fi and cutting-edge science,” has announced its return to print for November 13, 2026. The magazine will be published annually; there will also be a weekly email newsletter, *Lode-star*, reports locusmag.com.

Annalee Newitz will serve as editor-in-chief, with

Meredith Borders as senior editor and Jason Kauzlarich as senior art director.

In a podcast episode announcing the relaunch, Newitz described the goals of the print issue: “What is required of a magazine is to have something that you can’t get online, and that’s really thoughtful, engaging articles and beautiful, full-color images that just pop off the page... We’re going to have a healthy dose of articles about cutting-edge science, speculating with scientists about where we’re headed next. And we’re also going to have deep-dive essays from experts about all your favorite movies and books.”

The magazine will also be accompanied by *The Starlog Podcast*, hosted by Jordan Hoffman and Dave Gonzales. The show will feature “conversations with visionary creators, filmmakers, and scientists.”

Starlog magazine previously ran from August 1976 to April 2009, concluding with issue #374. The relaunch will be part of Fangoria’s media network.

SEVERAL DEATHS OCCURRED SINCE THE MAY 2026 ASFACTS

There have been several deaths in the science-fiction world since the May 2026 issue of *ASFACTS*, so here is a summary of the ones we noted –

British author Justin Richards (*Doctor Who* author), died June 28 at the age of 64 years old. He has written dozens of *Doctor Who* spin-off novels, reference books, and audio dramas dated back to his first novel in 1994.

British actor Michael Byrne (*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Part 1*, *Braveheart*, *Tomorrow Never Dies*), passed away June 20 at the age of 82 years old.

Actor Daveigh Chase (the voice of Lilo in *Lilo & Stitch*, *Donnie Darko*, *Spirited Away*, *The Ring*), died June 16 at the age of just 35 years old.

Actor Anne Schedeen (the mom in *ALF*, plus *Embryo*, *Exo-Man*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Judging Amy*), passed away June 14 at the age of 77 years old.

British actor Anthony Stewart Head, best known for his role in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, passed away June 1 at just 72 years old. Who will Watch the Slayer now that Giles is gone? (He also had great performances in *Ted Lasso*, rock opera *Repo! The Genetic Opera*, on stage in *The Rocky Horror Show*, audio adventures of *Doctor Who*, and in *Merlin*.)

SUPERGIRL DECENT SOLO MOVIE — SO WHY SO MUCH HATE?

by Tiffany Kelly, ew.com 6-30-2026

Here we go again. A woman-led superhero movie is out in theaters, and people can’t stop gleefully bashing it, as well as prematurely analyzing its performance based solely on its opening weekend earnings.

And okay, I’ll admit it – before I watched *Supergirl* in a movie theater this past weekend, my expectations were

medium to low.

Part of the reason was the reviews; the second film in the reboot of the DC Universe under James Gunn and Peter Safran received a “rotten” score of 55% on Rotten Tomatoes (the audience score is much more positive). Another reason is superhero blockbuster fatigue. I’ve seen nearly every live-action superhero movie in theaters during its opening weekend for the last 20 years. I’m a fan of the genre, but studios are pushing them out quicker and quicker. Audiences barely get to breathe between sequels and spinoffs.

Yet I loved Gunn’s *Superman*, which opened last summer to positive reviews all around and earned \$618 million at the global box office. Gunn did not direct *Supergirl*, but I trusted his vision after last year’s hit. Plus, *House of the Dragon*’s Milly Alcock was leading the film, so how bad could it be?

As it turns out, *Supergirl* isn’t bad at all. Directed by Craig Gillespie (*I, Tonya*) and written by Ana Nogueira, the film is a fun detour that gives a backstory to Superman’s cousin, Kara Zor-El. Based on the critically acclaimed comic book series *Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow*, it follows Kara as a reluctant (and often drunk) superhero who teams up with Ruthye Marye Knoll (Eve Ridley), a teenage girl seeking revenge after her family is murdered.

Although the plot is darker than *Superman*’s, the film still feels like it’s in the same universe as last year’s hit. The visuals, dialogue, and world-building are all in line with the new DCU. I was entertained for the duration of the film, which, in case we forgot, is the goal of every moviegoing experience! I can’t say the same for every other superhero film released in the last few years, yet many of those films weren’t judged as harshly.

So why are people acting like *Supergirl* is the worst movie ever made? (One critic even said it had the “worst script I can remember.”) There’s a simple answer: misogyny. While it doesn’t apply to every negative review and reaction to the movie, the growing hatred and resentment of women across the world have definitely impacted women-led superhero films.

In the weeks leading up to the June 26 release of the film, men mocked 26-year-old Alcock’s appearance across social media. The narrative was clear: Alcock, who spends most of *Supergirl* wearing loose T-shirts and minimal makeup, wasn’t styled to fit the male gaze. It’s quite the opposite: with a human trafficking plot tied to the villain, Krem (Matthias Schoenaerts), the story calls out those who sexualize young girls and women.

Additionally, Kara doesn’t have a love interest, and the film isn’t interested in giving her one. *Supergirl* is a story about a depressed, super-powered woman who is pulled out of her bar-hopping to help other people and find



her purpose.

To be clear: The story isn't for everyone, and, despite everything I wrote above, I don't think you're a bad person if you don't like it.

But we need to talk about how the public responds to women-led stories in a genre that historically has been consumed by male-majority audiences. *Supergirl* was set up to fail with the backlash that started as soon as the first trailer hit the internet. Now, after an opening weekend that earned the film \$38 million domestically against a budget of over \$170 million, everyone is quick to call it a failure...when the film hasn't even been in theaters for a week. DC Studios doesn't appear to be confidently promoting its film, either.

Safran, co-chairman and co-chief executive of DC Studios with Gunn, told the *New York Times* on June 29, "While *Supergirl* didn't meet our box office expectations, it's just one component of a broader, long-term strategy at DC Studios that we remain confident in."

The statement doesn't exactly inspire audiences to jump to see it during the upcoming holiday weekend.

Supergirl is not the awful film the public is being led to believe it is. It's a decent standalone movie that gives Supergirl a backstory before she next appears with David Corenswet in 2027's *Man of Tomorrow*. There's humor, an emotional core, and engaging performances. It deserves more attention.

Supergirl is now playing in theaters.

NO DR WHO CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

by Meredith Jacobs, tvinsider.com 6-10-2026

It's been just over a year since a new *Doctor Who* episode aired, but a Christmas special was slated to come this year. However, it's now been announced that it will not air in 2026.

On June 10, the BBC released the following statement about the future of *Doctor Who*: "As part of securing the next phase of the show for future generations, and in line with the BBC's Charter and Agreement requirements, the BBC will put *Doctor Who* out to competitive tender this year. *Doctor Who* remains an important part of the BBC and this tender underpins the BBC's continued commitment to *Doctor Who* ensuring audiences will enjoy the show for years to come."

The statement continues, "After careful consideration, the BBC, Russell T Davies and Bad Wolf have collectively decided not to go ahead with the previously announced *Doctor Who* Christmas episode. This decision was not taken lightly, and we know it will be disappointing for fans, but in order to set the show up for future series, it was decided that rather than bridge the gap with a one off special, we are choosing to push forward to invest in the long-term future of the show which ensures that when the TARDIS lands once more, it does so in all its glory. Details of the tender will be announced in due course. The BBC retains all IP in *Doctor Who*."

Davies also shared his own statement about his exit from *Doctor Who* on Instagram. The showrunner was with the series from Seasons 1 through 4 of the new era (with Christopher Eccleston and David Tennant) and returned for the 60th anniversary specials (with Tennant and Cathe-

rine Tate) as well as the two seasons with Ncuti Gatwa.

"And so GOODBYE from me to *Doctor Who* but HELLO to a big new future for the show, as the BBC announces it's putting the show out to tender," he wrote. "As a result, there won't be a Christmas Special – we only cooked that up to guarantee a future when no one knew what would happen, but now we do know, there's no need for it. You'll have to wait a bit longer for new *Doctor Who*... but you'll be waiting for MORE *Doctor Who* than a one-off. So it's worth it!"

He also revealed what had been done so far for the Christmas special that had previously been announced:

"For the record: there was no script, I never wrote it, and no actor was ever approached to play the next Doctor. You may disagree; fine, sit in that chair and wait to be proved right. You'll wait a lonnnng time. Now I'm as excited as anyone to see what comes next! Will they keep the theme tune? Will they lose the blue box? Will they bring back the Drahvin?! It's all up for grabs, which is so *Doctor Who*, exciting and unpredictable and new! Here comes the future, vworp vworp."

This news comes after, when asked about possible news about a new Doctor soon on BBC Radio 2 on Monday, June 1, Davies, who will be writing the special, said, "You will get an announcement. There's a press release lumbering through the BBC, which, as you know, is like the Jurassic period. And 57 people have to sign off on every single word. So, I promise you, in about, oh, a week or two weeks, there'll be some sort of press release, and yet I can hear the gears slowing down, even as I say that."

Read on for everything we know so far about the 2026 Christmas special, from what it will be about to who will star and more.

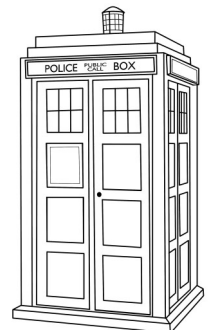
IS THERE A 2026 *DOCTOR WHO* CHRISTMAS SPECIAL? No. While one was announced in October 2025, with Davies set to write it, on June 10, it was announced that the BBC would not be moving forward with it.

WHO WOULD'VE STARRED IN THE 2026 *DOCTOR WHO* CHRISTMAS SPECIAL? That had yet to be announced, though it did feel like Billie Piper had to at least make an appearance due to...

WHERE DID *DOCTOR WHO* LEAVE OFF? Ncuti Gatwa's Fifteenth Doctor, with time shifted by one degree, used his regeneration energy to fix things. In doing so, he kickstarted his regeneration ... into Billie Piper, who previously played companion Rose Tyler, alongside the Ninth (Christopher Eccleston) and Tenth (David Tennant) Doctors. The big mystery is who exactly she's playing now. There are a few possibilities.

WHAT WOULD THE 2026 *DOCTOR WHO* CHRISTMAS SPECIAL HAVE BEEN ABOUT? That had yet to be revealed. Presumably, it would have had to explain Piper's appearance.

WILL THERE BE ANOTHER *DOCTOR WHO* SEASON? It sounds like it with the statement noting "*Doctor Who* remains an important part of the BBC and this tender underpins the BBC's continued commitment to *Doctor Who* ensuring audiences will enjoy the show for years to come" and the mention of "future series."



ON THE CONVENTION FRONT:

BUBONICON 57 JUST SIX WEEKS AWAY

by Craig Chrissinger, con chair

Bubonicon, New Mexico's annual science fiction convention, celebrates its 57th edition August 21-23 at the Albuquerque Marriott Uptown, 2101 Louisiana Blvd NE (at I-40). More than 40 authors, artists, scientists & fans will be participating in programming.

This year's convention features special guest talent from Texas, Washington, and New Mexico. Guests of Honor for Bubonicon 56 are Washington novelist Patricia Briggs and Texas writer Martha Wells; Guest Artist is Jon Sanchez of Albuquerque; and Toastmaster Travis Baldree of Washington.

Retired civilian scientist Matt Fetrow of Albuquerque, is giving the feature science talk Friday of the convention on "Space: How Space History, Economics, and Technology Impact Earth and Beyond."

We also are happy to have with us (among others) Lynn Barker, John Barnes, Jeff Benham, Jon Black, Livia Blackburne, Jeremy W. Brett, Gabriella Buba, Aaron Campbell, Peri Charlifu, Yvonne Coats, Dale Ray Deforest, Stephen R. Donaldson (*Saturday Only*), Dr. J.L. Doty, Mark Fenton, Gordon Garb, Josh Gentry, David Gerrold, Henry Herz, Brian D. Hinson, Betsy James, Darynda Jones, Carolyn Kay, Chaz Kemp, T. Kingfisher (aka Ursula Vernon), Kathy Kitts, Jane Lindskold, George RR Martin (*Saturday Mass Autographing Only*), Arkady Martine, Rae Oestreich, Marie Parks, Jarrett "Doom Kitten" Querubin, Benjamin Radford, M.T. Reiten, Diana Rowland, Joan S. Saberhagen, Vivian Shaw, Melinda M. Snodgrass, Kevin Sonney, Jim Sorenson, S.M. Stirling, David Lee Summers, John Sumrow, Lauren C. Teffau, Ian Tregillis (*Saturday Only*), Tiffany Trent, Jess Tucker, Sarena Ulibarri, Robert E. Vardeman, Catherine Wells, Walter Jon Williams, and Connie & Courtney Willis.

At least \$500 from Friday's charity auction and a portion of any Bubonicon 57 profits will benefit the ENMU Williamson Library Collection, Roadrunner Food Bank, World Food Kitchen, American Red Cross, and hopefully NM PBS and the ABQ Public Library Foundation.

Bubonicon 57 opens with Pre-Registered check-in 1:00-2:30 pm Friday the 21st, with regular registration open at 3:00 pm; and goes almost nonstop through 5 pm that Sunday. The first programming is at 4 pm, the same time Gaming opens. The Art Show opens at 4:30 pm, with the Con Suite open at 5 pm.

The theme for the weekend is "Androids & Robots and Droids, Oh A.I." The five tracks of programming at the Marriott should be fairly full (we're working on the tentative schedule now), so don't be surprised if you're torn between attending two or three panels/readings at a time! And by the way, we have flipped Main Programming with the Dealers Room, and are using the Library Room for the con office, so smaller program will be in the Santa Fe and Carlsbad.

Two Programming Notes – Kevin Sonney will serve as Master of Ceremonies for the Costume Contest at 7:15 pm Saturday; with Jessica Coyle hosting the Green Slime Awards at halftime. Geneva Schult is organizing the cos-

tuming event, and has judges lined up. And the Charity Auction on Friday remains at the earlier time of 9:10 pm.

Don't forget about the hospitality suite – located on the Top Floor. The Con Suite will be serving individually wrapped snack items and canned drinks, and patrons will place orders at a counter. A Sunday Afternoon Tea should be held at 2:00-3:20 pm, currently with six participants assisting.

Gaming takes place in the large room by the Art Show and also on the 2nd Floor. The Dealers Room, which is full for 2026, is in Salons A-E which is the same size as last year and includes a "Community Table."

Art Show rules/forms are now online as a downloadable .zip file on the Bubonicon website. With the Silent Auction happening again, bidding on pieces goes until 12 Noon Sunday (unless you claim the Quick Sale Price). Plan ahead if you really want a specific art piece!

There will be a Dead Dog (post-con gathering) 7:30-11:30 pm in the hospitality suite, hosted by Eric Klammer, Mark Gillespie, Geneva Schult and Michelle Melendez. Again, mostly single-serve items will be on hand.

We need volunteer workers (gofers in con speak) to help us throughout the weekend (see separate blurb earlier in this newsletter). If you can help, please email Susanne Caro at volunteers@bubonicon.com, and/or come to the meeting Friday, August 14, in the Activity Room of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church on Ponderosa NE (home of ASFS).

Passes for the whole weekend are \$48 if purchased by August 7. After that, you'll have to wait to pay \$55 at the door. Daily memberships are \$20 Friday, \$35 Saturday and \$15 Sunday. Youths 13-19 years old are \$29 for the whole weekend. Children under 13 years are free when accompanied by an adult.

There are two ways to pay: Send payment with the registration form to arrive by August 7 to Bubonicon Inc at 933 San Mateo Blvd NE, Suite 500-208, Albuquerque, NM 87108; or use your PayPal account/Credit Card on our website (make sure to include all names for passes).

The Bubonicon special \$159 room rate (single-quad occupancy) is only guaranteed through 10:00 pm Friday, August 7, so get your reservation now at 800-228-9290.

Info is available from www.bubonicon.com, by email at bubonicon@gmail.com or by calling our Google voicemail at (505) 559-0931.

BOOK & FILM REVIEWS ROUND-UP

We Burned So Bright by TJ Klune, (April) 2026 Tor Books, hc \$25.99, 176 pages. Review by Jessica Coyle

We Burned So Bright is the latest stand-alone novella from best-selling author T.J. Klune. A rogue black hole is going to destroy the world in a month. Husbands Don and Rodney, who have been together for 40 years, decide to go on a cross-country RV trip to Washington state to complete some unfinished business before they run out of time. Along the way, they meet the best and worst of humanity while their history and the reason for their trip unfolds.

It's a heart wrenching story. The more readers discover about Rodney and Don's life together, the more they root for them to succeed on their long put-off quest. The supporting characters that they meet on their journey are

very believable in their actions and reactions when faced with the end of the world. If you enjoy Klune's other work, you should definitely read *We Burned So Bright*.

***The Castle & the Cloister* by Laura E. Weymouth, (August) 2026 Saga Press 2026, tp \$20.00, 448 pages.
Review by Arthur Maurici-Pollock**

Laura E. Weymouth's seventh book and first for adult audiences, *The Castle & the Cloister*, offers a fascinating universe. A conquered nation – Honoria – whose peaceful goddesses are at odds with the war-built ruling dynasty's own deities. A war-torn nation that lies between two countries at odds with one another. Worshipers of the goddesses grappling with how to retake their own country while adhering to the strict pacifism their religion requires.

In this world, we meet Fiametta Raeanna, a postulant of the Sun Goddess Raea who only wants peace and safety for her daughter but soon finds herself immersed in politics and intrigue; a nameless Priest who is grappling with his own relationship to the violence that surrounds him; Ariana, formerly a Soria of the star Goddess Lyria and now the Queen who has been fighting her own calling from her goddess for years; and Orden Inver, the current King, his war-like nature barely tempered by his love for Ariana. These characters are compelling, their relationships masterfully developed, and their positions in the machinations of politics and religion make an intriguing read.

The political movements in the book, intertwined with the incompatible religions, are handled expertly. The world is painted in gorgeous detail for the reader, drawing you in and making you want to know what could possibly be coming next, how these irreconcilable differences could possibly reach any sort of conclusion. And as the first of the duology comes to a close, everything is set up masterfully for the sequel.

A final piece I must touch on is motherhood. Weymouth has talked about how she began working on *The Castle & the Cloister* in 2012 after the birth of her first child. Specifically, she speaks about how, while dealing with the post-partum experience, she turned to fantasy and could find nothing that grappled with that experience and that specific stage of parenthood – especially motherhood – so she decided to tackle it herself. The love and care of a mother, the experience of motherhood, especially early motherhood, is ingrained into the pages of this book. Weymouth approaches these experiences with care and grace, and these experiences are as integral to the book as the politics and religions. It is as beautifully handled as every other piece that makes *The Castle & the Cloister* a gorgeous and unique fantasy experience.

As with all of her previous books, *The Castle & the Cloister* showcases Weymouth's gorgeous prose. Her writing is lyrical and engrossing, so it's truly a treat to read every one of her books. I truly cannot recommend her work highly enough, and this novel is a stunning example of what a fantastic writer she is.

***Startup Hell: Everyday Enchantments 2* by Caitlin Rozakis, (May) 2026 Titan Books, tp \$19.99, 432 pages.
Review by Jessica Coyle**

Startup Hell is the second book Caitlin Rozakis' best-selling Everyday Enchantment series. Fresh out of college, Morgan Blackwater-McKey is a failed magician working at an entry level job at a tech startup in Manhattan. The

company is slowly falling apart due to a changing product and questionable leadership. Morgan walks in on her boss summoning a demon to trade his soul to make the company successful, but instead he dies before making the deal. This leaves the demon stuck on the earthly plane with only Morgan to help him figure out how to return home.

Morgan takes the demon Lucaroth (Luke for short) home with her to try and figure out what to do. She sets him up as an intern at her company while also trying to hide him from her demon-hunting mother. When the CEO of her company sells his soul to Luke for company success and barriers to getting Luke back to his plane continue to grow, Morgan also begins to worry about losing her job or maybe even doing damage to the world as she knows it.

Startup Hell is a fun and fast-paced read. While the book is part of the Everyday Enchantment world, the story is stand-alone. If you enjoy a light read that combines fantasy with a contemporary setting and light romance, you will enjoy this book.

***The Abyss* by Nicholas Binge, Tor Nightfire 2026,
Review by Arthur Maurici-Pollock**

Abyss follows our main character, Joe, as he begins a new job at a company called Ponos. Neither Joe nor the reader is entirely certain what Ponos is or does, but Joe needs the job and it seems promising enough. Except Ponos is strange immediately – there are floors that are completely empty, workers in offices who seem oblivious to anything beyond their four walls, and an employee wellness AI bot that seems harmless enough until it starts changing Joe's work schedule...among other things.

And there's a man named Virgil tucked away in the building, as removed from Ponos's prying eyes as he can be, who may have all the answers Joe needs.

Conveniently.

Abyss starts out strong. Joe's doom-scrolling disaffectedness and post-pandemic unmoored life is uncomfortably relatable. Ponos is immediately unsettling and it draws the reader in, hooking you and keeping you reading. There are strange, unsettling, and definitely dangerous things in this office building and Joe (and the reader) desperately wants to know what is going on and why.

Unfortunately, the narrative comes to a grinding halt in Chapter Three with Virgil's first appearance. It's a scene where we seem to be about to get a big revelation about what's going on, but instead Virgil tells Joe that there is a big, important secret but that he can't tell Joe what it is yet. That revelation doesn't come until a later scene that is almost identically set up to the first one, and leaves us wondering why we couldn't just have gotten that over with the first time.

As the novella continues, it feels less like a complete story and more like an outline that needed to be further fleshed out. I very much enjoy the ideas here, but wasn't as satisfied with the execution as I would have liked.

Abyss is a quick and creepy read that unfortunately winds up feeling incomplete.

***And Side By Side They Wander* by Molly Tanzer, (May) 2026 Tordotcom, hc \$24.99, 112 pages.
Review by Craig Chrissinger**

For three hundred years, Earth's greatest works of art have been protected by an alien race and put on display at the far-away Greenwood Museum. But when humanity

feels like it's safe for the art to come home, the alien curators are disinclined to return them. And thus starts an intergalactic heist caper by a ragtag group of misfits, all wrapped in a modern space opera. Molly Tanzer's short and clever tale has comments about artwork, originals versus perfect copies, human intelligence and robots, and what is real and what is not.

At such a short length, *And Side By Side They Wander* has to keep its plot and character notes tight, yet the author is smart with her word choices and allows the reader to fill in blanks with their imagination. There are moments where I wished that Tanzer was allowed a few more chapters or a couple more pages. The ending certainly leaves open more exploration of this universe and these characters. And if the ragtag group reminds one a little bit of the crew of *Firefly*, well, there's nothing wrong with that.

I enjoyed this short book, and recommend it.

***Sea of Charms: The Spellshop 3* by Sarah Beth Durst, (July) 2026 Bramble, hc \$29.99, 384 pages.**

Review by Jessica Coyle

Sea of Charms is the third book in Sarah Beth Durst's *New York Times* best-selling series *The Spellshop*. This novel follows the story of sailor Marin, who previously appeared in *The Enchanted Greenhouse*. Marin is working as a supply runner, traveling from island to island with her crew Ree the shrub and Peri the sea serpent. On a supply run to Alyssium, the capital city, she finds a revolution underway. She goes to the city's music school to rescue her friend Dax, a famous music student. Her plan is to drop him and the other musicians she saves on a nearby island, but Dax requests to stay with her as part of her crew.

In exchange, Marin asks him to pretend to be her boyfriend at the End-of-Harvest Festival on her home island. As they sail together, Marin begins to fall for Dax against her better judgment. Will the two choose to return to their former lives or create a new one together?

Sea of Charms is an excellent addition to this popular cozy fantasy series. I enjoyed learning Marin's backstory and seeing how the character grows and changes throughout the novel. I also really enjoyed learning more about her crew Ree and Peri (who also appeared in previous stories) and their expanded stories. If you enjoy light cozy stories, this series is one you will definitely enjoy.

***Alchemy and a Cup of Tea: Tomes & Tea 4* by Rebecca Thorne, (August) 2025 Bramble, tp \$19.99, 320 pages.**

Review by Danielle & Arthur Maurici-Pollock

When we last left Kianthe, Mage of Ages, and Reyna, newly-crowned ruler of the Queendom, they'd just been married and pulled off a successful coup. But a happily ever-after for two of the most famous people in the realm isn't going to come that easily. This latest and final installment in the *Tomes and Tea* series opens with Queen Reyna's kidnapping and Kianthe confidently riding to the rescue. But when they find a mysterious alchemical sigil beneath the floor of Reyna's cell, they soon realize all isn't as it seems. The duo travel to the Magicary, Kianthe's former home, for the Mid-Winter Alchemical Showdown in hopes of getting some answers. There Kianthe discovers something very wrong with the Stone of Seeing that gives her and other elemental mages their powers.

Meanwhile, it's becoming more and more difficult for Kianthe and Reyna to lead a quiet life together running

New Leaf, the book and tea shop they established back at the beginning of the series. The challenge isn't just the enormity of their respective responsibilities or the fact that they keep having adventures like this one. It's also a new and terrible menace, one not often seen in fantasy, that threatens to destroy the very foundation of the life they've built together: the sheer number of tourists now overrunning their small town thanks to our heroes' celebrity.

The stakes are relatively high in this one and there's a quite lot going on, but the book retains the cozy fantasy charm and sense of humor of the rest of the series, including the usual helping of terrible puns. We get to spend more time exploring how both alchemy and elemental magic function in the Realm, as well as Kianthe's own relationship with the Stone of Seeing. Many of the series' regular characters make an appearance here and we're introduced to some new ones, including the Alchemicor, Kianthe's equivalent among the alchemists, whose name is...Albert Chemicor. (We did warn you about the humor.)

By the end, multiple plotlines are brought to a satisfying conclusion including one still-unanswered question involving the dragons from back in book one. There is a time-skip epilogue as well as a bonus short story featuring one of the series' other sapphic couples at the end. Overall, this is a satisfying conclusion to the series.

***A Long and Speaking Silence: The Singing Hills Cycle 7* by Nghi Vo, (May) 2026 Tordotcom, hc \$24.99, 136 pages.**

Review by Jessica Coyle

A Long and Speaking Silence is the seventh novella in Nghi Vo's Huge Award-winning Singing Hills Cycle. The story finds Cleric Chih in the town of Luntien at the start of a large festival. After having all of their money stolen by a pickpocket, the cleric is working as a server at a local restaurant while they wait for money to reach them from the Singing Hills Abbey.

In addition to the people attending the festival, Luntien has a recent influx of refugees from the Verdant Isles. The refugees are ostracized and abused by the residents of Luntien, but Chih wants to collect the refugees' stories and help them in any way they can. As the anger and violence against the refugees begins to boil over, Chih finds themselves in a precarious position.

I really enjoyed this novella and think it is a wonderful addition to Nghi Vo's Singing Hills Cycle. This story is the first after Chih's promotion from Novice to Cleric, and it finds them struggling with what that means and how they think a cleric should be. The story also has interesting things to say about refugees that is applicable to the current political climate as well. I highly recommend all of the books in the Singing Hills Cycle.

***Eat the Ones You Love* by Sarah Maria Griffin, (April) 2025 Tor, hc \$27.99, 288 pages.**

Review by Danielle & Arthur Maurici-Pollock

Shell has recently lost both her job and her fiancé when she spots a HELP NEEDED sign at the florist shop in her local mall. She's almost instantly drawn to Neve, the attractive and charismatic florist, and accepts a role as her assistant. But Neve needs more help than Shell realizes. Because Neve has a dark secret and another admirer in her life: a carnivorous orchid named Baby.

As Shell begins her new role and gets to know Neve and the rest of the mall's remaining employees, she soon

learns the Baby is intertwined with everything. Literally.

We love a good killer plant story, and Griffin does an excellent job of maintaining an unsettling atmosphere throughout the work, starting with the setting: the Woodbine Crown Mall, a liminal space fallen into disrepair, where most shops are already empty and the rest are on the verge of closing, with Baby functioning as the mall's dark heart and extra-creepy root system. Neve and Shell's relationship is never a healthy one – nor is Neve a healthy person – and never free of Baby's manipulations. Among the supporting cast is the fantastic Dr. Jen, Neve's scientist ex, who we learn about mostly through her emails, and who might, through her research, be able to save the day. If you're looking for fun, weird, disturbing horror with a dash of sapphic romance and truly alien point of view, check out *Eat the Ones You Love*.

Disclosure Day, released June 12, 2026, directed by Steven Spielberg, screenplay by David Koepp, music by John Williams. Rated PG-13, 145 minutes. Starring Emily Blunt, Josh O'Connor, Colin Firth, Eve Hewson, and Colman Domingo. Review by Troy Stull

The latest offering from Steven Spielberg – *Disclosure Day* – is something of a mixed bag. The first 90 minutes is a convincing *X-Files* adjacent plot about extraterrestrials visiting earth post-1947 and governmental experimentation on UFO crash survivors along with attempts to prevent this information from going public. That becomes increasingly difficult as every human on earth is now armed with a camera and instant access to the global internet. The remaining roughly hour of the film is a bit of a wandering, borderline self-indulgent mess. Particularly the religious subplot about a former candidate for Catholic Sisterhood (see: nun aspirant) swept up in her boyfriend's attempt to release the truth about extraterrestrial visitation which added very little while taking up a solid 20 minutes of screen time.

Emily Blunt (*Edge of Forever*) anchors the cast and provides a quality performance as exactly what you would expect from a mid-market local weather presenter with ambitions to be remembered for something other than “the weather shimmy” she uses as the hook for her presentations. Colman Domingo (*The Running Man*, 2025) and Colin Firth (*The Kingsmen*) round out the cast and play off each other's energy famously.

All told the film will likely be a minor footnote in the Spielberg canon and a cautionary tale about what happens when you become so successful people stop telling you “no.” Overall, an enjoyable popcorn flick that fails at attempts to probe at deeper questions of the human condition but succeeds as passable entertainment. 6/10.

ASFS MEETING REPORTS —

OCTOBER 2025: B. RADFORD VISITS

For his annual visit, Benjamin Radford talked to 32 people about the real events that inspired *The Entity*, a film about spectral visits and attacks based on a “true story.”

“The 1970s were a heyday for blockbuster horror franchises,” he continued. “There was *Alien*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Phantasm* and such. This didn't reach the level of *Amityville Horror* or *The Exorcist*, but *The Entity* was a

minor success in 1982. The real version and inspiration involved a California woman, Doris Bither, who said she was assaulted by three ghostly presences.”

Radford stated that that by all accounts, Bither's case is tragic. She was an alcoholic and drug user, had several failed marriages, and lived in a squalid, condemned home with her three teen boys and a preteen daughter. Parapsychologist investigator Barry Taff got involved because he was approached in a bookstore. The Bither case turned out to be his big claim to fame.

“It is remarkable how rarely the Bither case is mentioned in books on ‘true’ ghost stories or paranormal events,” he remarked. “It's a very curious oversight. I think it's because it's complex and it strains credibility. It's bullshit. Being assaulted by ghosts is pretty creepy and not family friendly. Also, Taff and Kerry Gaynor interviewed Bither in August 1974, shortly after *The Exorcist* was released in theaters.

“A trained psychologist or medical anthropologist might have seen a troubled woman who needed help,” he continued. “Taff and Gaynor saw a golden opportunity. During a ten-week investigation of the reportedly haunted house in Culver City, Taff said it demonstrated evidence of an infestation of spirits.”

Radford believes what really happened is that it was “a half-assed investigation from day one. Half a century later, it's impossible to be sure of much. Many of the key participants have passed away. Also, the biggest and most dramatic events happened supposedly when Taff and others weren't there. So, they were forced to rely on what Bither told them.

“Given the stark lack of any good evidence, the most likely explanation is that Bither, like many ghost experiencers, imagined most or all of her spectral encounters,” Radford concluded. “Taff's lack of evidence would be less of an issue if others collaborated the story.”

CLUB BUSINESS: In Elections, Eric Klammer was retained as Moderator, Danielle & Arthur Maurici-Pollock were chosen as co-Alternators, and Craig Chrissinger & Jessica Coyle were confirmed as co-Executive Secretaries. For the December Holiday Party, the group decided they would prefer to do a normal potluck.

EDITOR NOTES THAT FIT THIS SPACE

- **MORE THAN HALF OF 2026** is done. Most of it seemed pretty quick, but the heat lately has made late Spring & Summer drag... Even though it's the 250th birthday for the USA, it seems like the fireworks weren't as bad as some years. Now let's get some monsoon rain!

- **WITH SUMMER RERUNS HERE**, we've managed to watch the final season of *Resident Alien*, the 4th & 5th seasons of *Star Trek: Lower Decks*, and the 5th seasons of *Stranger Things* and *Hacks*. We've gotten out to see *The Sheep Detectives*, *Disclosure Day*, *The Mandalorian & Grogu*, and *Minions & Monsters*. Still have to watch various Green Slime film and TV show nominees (oh joy).

- **HARD TO BELIEVE BUBONICON 57** will be here in just six weeks as of this ASFS meeting. Yikes! Still so much to do to get ready. Volunteers are always welcome at the con!

- **OUT OF ROOM!** Many thanks to Jessica C, Danielle & Arthur M-P, and Troy S for reviews. Next *ASFacts* will be in October - Submissions needed by Sunday, Oct 4! Be well & see you next month at Bubonicon 57. -- Craig C

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Plus folks like Danyrda Jones, T. Kingfisher, Jane Lindskold, Diana Rowland, Melinda Snodgrass, John Sumrow, Tiffany Trent & Connie Willis

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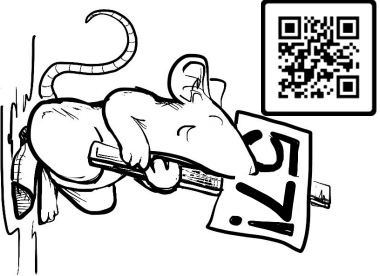
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