



SPOOKY "STILL QUITE WARM" OCTOBER EDITION

ASFACTS 2024



2023 DRAGON AWARDS WINNERS

The winners of the 2024 Dragon Awards were presented at Dragon Con, held August 29 – September 2, 2024 in Atlanta GA, reported Locusmag.com.

BEST SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL: *Starter Villain* by John Scalzi by **BEST FANTASY NOVEL (INCLUDING PARANORMAL):** *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros, **BEST YOUNG ADULT / MIDDLE GRADE NOVEL:** *Midnight at the Houdini* by Delilah S. Dawson, **BEST ALTERNATE HISTORY NOVEL:** *All the Dead Shall Weep* by Charlaine Harris, **BEST HORROR NOVEL:** *Black River Orchard* by Chuck Wendig, **BEST ILLUSTRATIVE COVER:** Kelly Chong for *Of Jade and Dragons* by Amber Chen, **BEST COMIC BOOK OR GRAPHIC NOVEL:** *Monstress* by Marjorie Liu & Sana Takeda, **BEST SCIENCE FICTION OR FANTASY TV SERIES, TV OR INTERNET:** *Fallout*, and **BEST SCIENCE FICTION OR FANTASY MOVIE:** *Dune: Part Two*.

Winners in digital and tabletop gaming-related categories were also announced.

GREEN SLIME AWARDS ANNOUNCED

In a ceremony August 24 during Bubonicon 55, Green Slime Mistress Jessica L. Coyle (with a cameo appearance from Poppa Sasquatch) presented the following with recognition of their wretchedness in the last 12 months:

FOOD: *Sour Patch Kids Oreos* (Cookie has an unpleasant flavor when eaten without the crème – a little funky. More of a gimmick than a successful flavor. Just weird. Some call them “death cookies”).

BOOK: *Eruption* by Michael Crichton & James Patterson (Most shallow book in years; characters are laughable caricatures; dialog and writing are repetitive; cliched and super predictable with factual failures).

TELEVISION: *The Spiderwick Chronicles* (Stomps out the fantastical, wondrous themes of books; instead we get angry teens and two forced love stories; characters talk and talk; poorly written and poorly acted).

“TV” MOVIE: *Atlas* on Netflix (Cinema made by *Mad Libs*; hodgepodge of extremely obvious references to *Aliens*, *Blade Runner* & *Avatar*; J-Lo doesn’t fit the role and tries to hard to “act”; pacing is a mess; no depth to the writing).

FANTASY MOVIE: *Sasquatch Sunset* (Unwatchable mess with no plot; actors communicate in grunts, snorts and howls; lots of bodily fluids & Bigfoot boners; like a Jack Links ad written by Seth MacFarlane; makes you wonder whether everyone involved was high).

SCI-FI MOVIE: *Rebel Moon* (Zack Snyder manages to zap entertainment out of outer space; a *Star Wars* story

with any trademarked terms replaced; awkward dialog; no emotional or philosophical engagement; a soulless slog).

WORLD FANTASY FINALISTS NAMED

The World Fantasy Awards ballot for works published in 2023 were announced August 11, reported Locusmag.com. The awards will be presented during the 2024 World Fantasy Convention, scheduled for October 17-20, 2024 in Niagara Falls, NY

The Life Achievement Awards, presented annually to individuals who demonstrate outstanding service to the fantasy field, will go to Ginjer Buchanan and Jo Fletcher.

The World Fantasy Awards finalists are:

BEST NOVEL: *The Reformatory* by Tananarive Due, *The Possibilities* by Yael Goldstein-Love, *Starling House* by Alix E. Harrow, *Shigidi and the Brass Head of Obalufon* by Wole Talabi, *Looking Glass Sound* by Catriona Ward, and *Witch King* by Martha Wells.

BEST NOVELLA: *The Crane Husband* by Kelly Barnhill, *Thornhedge* by T. Kingfisher, “Prince Hat Underground” by Kelly Link, “Half the House Is Haunted” by Josh Malerman, *A Season of Monstrous Conceptions* by Lina Rafter, and *Mammoths at the Gates* by Nghi Vo.

BEST SHORT FICTION: “How to Raise a Kraken in Your Bathtub” by P. Djèlí Clark, “Once Upon a Time at The Oakmont” by P. A. Cornell, “John Hollowback and the Witch” by Amal El-Mohtar, “Waystation City” by A. T. Greenblatt, “The Sound of Children Screaming” by Rachael K. Jones, and “Silk and Cotton and Linen and Blood” by Nghi Vo.

UPCOMING ASFS MEETINGS

- **October 11 (Tonight):** Benjamin Radford returns to talk on “Mysterious Menaces and Sinister Syringes: The 2021 Needle Spiking Panic.” Plus club officer elections & Holiday Cook-Off discussion...
- **November 8:** Jon Sanchez & Jeremy Montoya do an encore presentation of “Bubonicon Presents: Making A Movie Poster.”
- **December 13:** Our Holiday Social, with food treats & video amusements. Plus, the annual issue of *SITHFACTS* (deadline 6 pm Sun, Dec 8).
- **January 10, 2025:** Club reports/discussion on what members read in 2024...
- **February 14, 2025:** Unknown! The Valentine’s *ASFACTS* will be published (deadline Sun, Feb 9).
- **March 14, 2025:** Again unknown! Maybe the annual Club Auction? Or a Science Talk?

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: cwrcraig@nmlia.com. *ASFACTS* published February, April, July & October for the Albuquerque SF Society. *SITHFACTS* out each December. **NEXT DEADLINE: Sun, Dec 8.**
Club Officers: Jessica Coyle & Craig Chrissinger, co-Zec Secs (505) 266-8905. Eric Klammer, Moderator. Marian Skupski, Alternator. HAL 9000, Advisor. Jack Skellington, Pumpkin King. **Bubonicon Chair:** Craig Chrissinger, google voice (505) 559-0931. www.bubonicon.com

BEST ANTHOLOGY: *Christmas and Other Horrors* edited by Ellen Datlow, *Year's Best Canadian Fantasy & Science Fiction: Volume One* edited by Stephen Kotowych, *The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy 2023* edited by R.F. Kuang & John Joseph Adams, *Out There Screaming: An Anthology of New Black Horror* edited by Jordan Peele & John Joseph Adams, and *The Book of Witches* edited by Jonathan Strahan.

BEST COLLECTION: *The Essential Peter S. Beagle, Volumes 1 & 2* by Peter S. Beagle, *The Fortunate Isles* by Lisa L. Hannett, *White Cat, Black Dog* by Kelly Link, *No One Will Come Back for Us and Other Stories* by Premee Mohamed, *Jackal, Jackal* by Tobi Ogundiran, and *Jewel Box* by E. Lily Yu.

BEST ARTIST: Audrey Benjaminsen, Rovina Cai, Stefan Koidl, Charles Vess, and Alyssa Winans.

SPECIAL AWARD – PROFESSIONAL: Bill Campbell for Rosarium Books, E. M. Carroll for *A Guest in the House*, M. John Harrison for *Wish I Was Here: An Anti-Memoir*, Stephen Jones for *The Weird Tales Boys*, and Liza Groen Trombi for *Locus*.

SPECIAL AWARD – NON-PROFESSIONAL: Scott H. Andrews for *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, Trevor Kennedy for *Phantasmagoria*, Brian J. Showers for Swan River Press, Lynne M. Thomas & Michael Damian Thomas for *Uncanny*, and Julian Yap & Fran Wilde for *The Sunday Morning Transport*.

This year's judges are Douglas A. Anderson, Stephanie Feldman, Pat Murphy, Thomas Olde Heuvelt, and Angela Slatter.

SF BOOK GROUP READS ON

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group meets 7:30 pm Monday, October 21, inside Slice & Dice Pizzeria (southwest corner of Menaul Blvd & Wyoming Blvd NE) to discuss *Nova* by Samuel R. Delany. The group then meets November 18 to talk about *Starter Villain* by John Scalzi.

Meetings of D&D are open to all interested readers on the 3rd Monday each month. Books for discussion are chosen two months in advance, and group members receive a 20% discount on them at Page One Books. For more info: Leah at mrsransom@hotmail.com or Craig at 505-266-8905.

SFWA SPECIAL ELECTION CANDIDATES ANNOUNCED

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association (SFWA) finalized candidates in late September for its upcoming special election for the roles of president and secretary, Locusmag.com reported.

Candidates for president are Jennifer Brozek, Kate Ristau, and Christine Taylor-Butler. The candidate for secretary is Matthew Reardon aka JRH Lawless.

A voting link will be posted and optional paper ballots will be mailed on October 9. Ballots will be counted after October 23. Elected candidates will serve out the remainder of the current terms, which end on June 30, 2025.

Candidate platforms have been posted at SFWA.org and are viewable to members. SFWA also has a forum for

members to ask questions of the candidates. For platforms, forums, and more information, see SFWA's announcement page.

The election follows the resignations of president Jeffe Kennedy (of Santa Fe) and vice-president Chelsea Mueller, among others. Secretary Anthony W. Eichenlaub is currently interim president.

On August 7, New Mexico's Kennedy sent a message to members of the SFWA: "I'm writing today to announce my resignation as President of SFWA. I've served in this role for over three years and on the Board of Directors for more than seven years. It has been a privilege and an honor to serve this organization. However, the last several months have been particularly demanding in my personal life, and I have come to the realization that I can no longer provide the focused attention SFWA needs from its President. Without going into too much detail, I continue to be the sole caregiver and financial support for my disabled husband, whose progressive condition is worsening. In addition, my stepfather of twenty years passed away suddenly, widowing my elderly mother for the third time, and I am in the process of taking over all of her finances and care. These family obligations will require far more attention than I could have anticipated when I accepted the nomination to serve a second term as SFWA President."

While there have been rumors of problems and issues within SFWA, Kennedy noted in her message that "My legal and fiscal responsibility to SFWA – and my own personal integrity – prevent me from commenting on any issues related to SFWA's administration and operations. Throughout my tenure I did my best to serve the organization and all of its constituents with sincerity and respect, and to fulfill all of the duties I was elected to perform. Now it is time for me to step back."

About a week later, Kennedy's vice-president and subsequent interim president Chelsea Mueller resigned as well.

GARCIA WINS 2024 STURGEON AWARD

"Tantie Merle and the Farmhand 4200" by R.S.A. Garcia (*Uncanny*, 7/23) was announced in early September as the winner of the 2024 Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award for the best short science fiction story, presented by the J. Wayne and Elsie M. Gunn Center for the Study of Science Fiction.

The second-place runner up was "Patsy Cline Sings Sweet Dreams to the Universe" by Beston Barnett (*Strange Horizons* 11/20/23). The third-place runner up was "The Year Without Sunshine" by Naomi Kritzer (*Uncanny* 11-12/23).

Established in 1987 by James Gunn and the heirs of Theodore Sturgeon, including his partner Jayne Engelhart Tannehill and Sturgeon's children, the Sturgeon Award is "a memorial to one of the great short-story writers in a field distinguished by its short fiction." This year's jurors were Elizabeth Bear, Kelly Link, Sarah Pinsker, Noël Sturgeon, and Taryne Taylor.

The award will be presented in-person at the third annual Sturgeon Symposium at the Hall Center for the Humanities in Lawrence, KS. The Sturgeon Award ceremony, to be held on October 24, will feature a reception, opening

remarks, presentation of the award, a reading by Garcia, and a Q&A session. The theme of this year's symposium is "Stars in Our Pockets: Celebrating Samuel R. Delany."

HUGO, LODESTAR & ASTOUNDING AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The winners of the Hugo Awards, the Astounding Award for Best New Writer, and the Lodestar Award for Best Young Adult Book were announced on August 11 by Glasgow 2024, the 82nd World Science Fiction Convention, reported Locusmag.com.

The winners are:

BEST NOVEL: *Some Desperate Glory* by Emily Tesh, BEST NOVELLA: *Thornhedge* by T. Kingfisher, BEST NOVELLETTE: "The Year Without Sunshine" by Naomi Kritzer, BEST SHORT STORY: "Better Living Through Algorithms" by Naomi Kritzer, BEST SERIES: *Imperial Radch* by Ann Leckie,

BEST GRAPHIC STORY OR COMIC: *Saga, Volume 11*, BEST RELATED WORK: *A City on Mars* by Kelly Weinersmith & Zach Weinersmith, BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, LONG FORM: *Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves*, BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, SHORT FORM: *The Last of Us*: "Long, Long Time," BEST GAME OR INTERACTIVE WORK: *Baldur's Gate 3*,

BEST EDITOR, SHORT FORM: Neil Clarke, BEST EDITOR, LONG FORM: Ruoxi Chen, BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: Rovina Cai, BEST SEMIPROZINE: *Strange Horizons*, BEST FANZINE: *Nerds of a Feather, Flock Together*, BEST FANCAST: *Octothorpe*, BEST FAN WRITER: Paul Weimer, BEST FAN ARTIST: Laya Rose,

LODESTAR AWARD FOR BEST YOUNG ADULT BOOK [NOT A HUGO AWARD]: *To Shape a Dragon's Breath* by Moniquill Blackgoose, and ASTOUNDING AWARD FOR BEST NEW WRITER [NOT A HUGO AWARD]: Xiran Jay Zhao.

GRRM's 2024 ALFIE AWARDS

The Alfie Awards were presented on August 9 by George R.R. Martin, who dusted off the awards this year once again to honor those who were deleted from the 2023 Hugo Awards ballot. The presentation took place at a private banquet held at the Kimpton Blythswood Square Hotel in Glasgow, to an audience of authors, colleagues, and previous Alfie holders.

The awards recipients were *Babel* by R.F. Kuang for Novel; Xiran Jay Zhao for New Writer; *Sandman* for Dramatic Presentation; and Paul Weimer for Fan Writer.

LOS ANGELES GETS WORLDCON 2026

The LA in 2026 Bid Committee won the right to host the 2026 Worldcon. LAcon V, the 84th World Science Fiction Convention, will be held August 27-31, 2026, in Anaheim CA.

Guests of Honor announced so far include Barbara Hambly, Ronald D. Moore, Colleen Doran, Anita Sengupta, Tim Kirk, Geri Sullivan, Stan Sakai, and Toastmaster Ursula Vernon.

Chair Joyce Lloyd said, "Thank you everyone who supported us and voted for us. We are proud, excited and humbled by the trust you put in us. We will do everything we can to live up to that trust. Adventure Awaits!"

The LA bid received 452 out of 531 votes cast. Full voting details are available on the Glasgow 2024 website. And for more info, see the LAcon V website.



JAMES EARL JONES DIES

James Earl Jones, the prolific film, TV and theater actor whose resonant, unmistakable baritone was most widely known as the voice of *Star Wars* villain Darth Vader, died September 9 at his home in Dutchess County, NY. He was 93 years old.

After overcoming a profound stutter as a child, Jones established himself as one of the pioneering Black actors of his generation, amassing a bountiful and versatile career spanning over 60 years, from his debut on Broadway in 1958 to his most recent performance in 2021's *Coming 2 America*. Jones voiced King Mufasa in Disney's animated feature *The Lion King* in 1994, the 1998 direct-to-video sequel and the 2019 remake, and played CIA deputy director Vice Admiral James Greer in three Jack Ryan movies.

Among his more than 80 film credits, Jones' other notable movies include as a B-52 bombardier in Stanley Kubrick's 1964 Cold War satire *Dr. Strangelove* (his feature film debut), as the fearsome villain Thulsa Doom in 1982's *Conan the Barbarian*, as a reclusive author in 1989's *Field of Dreams*, and as a blind former baseball star in 1993's *The Sandlot*.

Jones was paid \$7,000 to lend his voice to Darth Vader in 1977's *Star Wars: A New Hope*, but he declined screen credit for that film and its sequel, 1980's *The Empire Strikes Back*, out of deference to the actor who played the role on screen, David Prowse. By 1983's *Return of the Jedi*, however, Jones had become fully synonymous with one of the most memorable and terrifying villains in cinema history, and received credit for his work. He returned to Vader's voice again for 2005's *Star Wars III: Revenge of the Sith* and 2016's *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, but for the 2022 Disney+ series *Obi-Wan Kenobi*, Jones instead authorized Lucasfilm to use archival recordings and AI technology to recreate Vader's voice.

James Earl Jones was born in 1931 on a farm in Arkabutla, MS. When Jones was five, he moved with his maternal grandparents to Michigan. The shock of the relocation induced a stammer so severe that he often could communicate only in writing. It wasn't until high school when he started to overcome his stutter, when his English teacher, upon learning that Jones composed poetry, encouraged him to read his writing aloud in class.

As an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan, Jones initially set out to study medicine, but wound up more interested in drama. His first stage role was a small part in the 1957 Off Broadway production *Wedding in Japan*.

In 1977, things truly shifted for him. Besides *Star Wars*, Jones also appeared in ABC's *Roots* playing the author Alex Haley, whose genealogical novel of the same title inspired the groundbreaking miniseries. He never quite became an outright star in the classic sense of the word, but the back-to-back successes that year did ultimately make Jones a household name, whose presence connoted a stature and gravitas to projects.

Jones was first married to actress-singer Julianne Marie. His second wife of 34 years, actress Cecilia Hart, died in 2016. He is survived by his son, Flynn Earl Jones.

DAME MAGGIE SMITH DIES

Dame Maggie Smith, the masterful, scene-stealing actor who won an Oscar for the 1969 film *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and gained new fans in the 21st century as Countess of Grantham in *Downton Abbey* and Professor Minerva McGonagall in the *Harry Potter* films, died September 27 in a London hospital. She was 89 years old.

Smith was frequently rated the preeminent British female performer of a generation that included Vanessa Redgrave and Judi Dench, with two Oscars, a clutch of Academy Award nominations and a shelf full of acting trophies.

She made her film debut in the 1950s, won Oscars for work in the 60s and 70s and had memorable roles in each subsequent decade, including an older Wendy in Peter Pan story *Hook* (1991) and a mother superior of a convent in Whoopi Goldberg's comedy *Sister Act* (1992).

A commanding stage actor, she played Shakespearean tragedy – 1965 adaptation *Othello* – and voiced Shakespeare-inspired animation in *Gnomeo & Juliet* (2011).

Smith drily summarized her later roles as “a gallery of grotesques,” including Professor McGonagall. She once quipped: “*Harry Potter* is my pension.”

From 2010, she was the acid-tongued Violet Crawley, Dowager Countess of Grantham, in hit TV drama *Downton Abbey*, a role that won her legions of fans, three Emmy Awards, a Golden Globe and other awards nominations.

She continued acting well into her 80s, in films including the big-screen spinoff to *Downton Abbey* in 2019, its 2022 sequel *Downton Abbey: A New Era* and 2023 release *The Miracle Club*.

Margaret Natalie Smith was born in Ilford, on the eastern edge of London, on December 28, 1934. She summed up her life briefly: “One went to school, one wanted to act, one started to act, one's still acting.”

Her father was assigned in 1939 to wartime duty in Oxford, where her theater studies at the Oxford Playhouse School led to a busy apprenticeship.

Smith married fellow actor Robert Stephens in 1967. They had two sons, Christopher and Toby – who both grew up to be actors – and divorced in 1975. The same year she married the writer Beverley Cross, who died in 1998.

WEDNESDAY SEASON 2 STARTS FILMING

by Meaghan Darwish, tvinsider.com 9-19-24

It's almost time to return to Nevermore Academy for *Wednesday*'s second season as the Netflix series gets back to work. The streamer unveiled that the production is officially underway for Season 2. While it's been nearly two

years since fans were introduced to Jenna Ortega's spin on the titular Addams Family daughter, the fervor around the Tim Burton-produced project remains high.

In anticipation of the show's long-awaited return, TV Insider is breaking down everything we know about Season 2 so far from casting to production details and everything in between.

Who Stars in *Wednesday* Season 2?

Ortega is set to reprise her titular role alongside other returning stars Luis Guzmán, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Isaac Ordonez, Fred Armisen, Emma Myers, Hunter Doohan, and Joy Sunday among others. New series regulars include Steve Buscemi, Billie Piper, Evie Templeton, Owen Painter, and Noah Taylor.

Meanwhile, new guest stars include Christopher Lloyd, Joanna Lumley, Thandiwe Newton, Frances O'Connor, Haley Joel Osment, Heather Matarazzo, and Joonas Suotamo. Other Season 2 stars include Victor Dorobantu, Moosa Mostafa, Luyanda Unati Lewis-Nyawo, and Georgie Farmer. Former star Percy Hynes White will no longer be a part of the Nevermore crew.

In a video released by Netflix, the characters played by Buscemi, Newton, Piper were revealed to be Barry Dort, Dr. Fairburn, and Capri. Further details remain unknown at this time.

What is *Wednesday* Season 2's production status?

Season 2 production is officially ongoing in Ireland. The production is run by creators Alfred Gough and Miles Millar, who executive produce the show with Burton, Steve Stark, Andrew Mittman, Kevin Miserocchi, Kayla Alpert, Jonathan Glickman, Gail Berman, Tommy Harper, and Kevin Lafferty. In a statement released by Gough and Millar, they said, “We are thrilled that the entire Addams family will be enrolling in Nevermore Academy this season along with a dream cast of icons and new faces.”

In an interview with BuzzFeed in August 2024, Ortega teased that the team was currently “shooting Episodes 201 and 204.” Filming is going well, according to the star who added, “All I'll say is I think we kind of laugh at ourselves a bit more [this season].”

In the latest update on production, Netflix unveiled a behind-the-scenes sneak peek at Season 2 in a new featurette from the streamer's annual Geeked Week celebration. The tease offers a glimpse at the sets and stars back in costume as Ortega tells viewers, “If we showed you any more, your eyes would bleed, and I'm not that generous.”

When will *Wednesday* Season 2 premiere?

No premiere date is currently set for *Wednesday*'s second season, but as filming begins, fans get one step closer to the returning episodes.

Bubonicon 55 Successful: ATTENDANCE BACK TO NORMAL

by Craig Chrissinger, con chair

A good number of people showed up this year for Bubonicon, making it the largest affair since 2018 (two years before the Covid pandemic struck). As such, we financially are in the black. Bubonicon 55 took place August 23-25 at the ABQ Marriott Uptown with Author co-Guests of Honor TJ Klune and Mur Lafferty, Toastmaster Duo Ursula Vernon & Kevin Sonney, Guest Artist Dale Ray Deforest,

and Science Speaker Dr. Darren A. Raspa.

With 751 attendees, Bubonicon 55 was back to pre-pandemic average level – with 119 more people than 2023. Attendees spent good money in the Auctions, in the Art Show and at Bubonicon’s sales table – and the convention committee was thoughtful with spending – so we are in the black about \$4,700, which continues to help rebuild our nest egg after large losses in 2019-2022. People were happy to be in-person, and all in all the 2024 convention was a success.

With the most successful Friday night Charity Auction to date, Bubonicon 55 has donated \$3,175 to non-profit organizations. The Williamson Library Collection at Eastern NM University has received \$450, the Roadrunner Food Bank received \$750, World Central Kitchen got \$550, the Storehouse of NM received \$425, the American Red Cross of NM received \$500, New Mexico PBS was given \$200, and the Albuquerque Public Library Foundation got \$300.

Bubonicon 55 saw six new programming participants – Jeremy W. Brett, Rachael Kuintzle, Chris Panatier, Darren A. Raspa, Cassie Sanchez, and Jess Tucker; plus the return of Michael Cassutt, Liz Danforth, and Jeremy Montoya.

The Art Show had 38 artists displaying their wares with sales of \$16,173 – 51.2 percent of all artwork entered was sold. The Sunday Auction was strong with sales of \$1,997 (*Froomb* went for \$69). Of that, 56.8 percent went to Bubonicon.

Bubonicon 55 marked the 11th year at the Albuquerque Marriott Uptown, and all went as well as possible. While most lighting panels in rooms still don’t work properly after the building was hit at least twice by lightning in storms that happened right before the 2018 con, at least now Carlsbad has a dimmer switch! The Good News is that the Marriott is expecting to fix more of the lighting issues before August 2025. And it remains true that a large percentage of the hotel staff are closet fans!

We continued to use Ron Oakes’ audio system with multiple microphones, which seemed to work out quite well overall. And we set up Bubonicon’s table-top screen in Cimarron the whole weekend, which meant renting one less item from the Marriott.

COSTUME CONTEST AWARDS: Best of Show was “The Goddess Bastet” by Karen Lopez, Best Beginner was “Rune the Satyr” from Axel Lewis, Best Intermediate was “Fallout Vault Dweller Companion” by Susanne Caro, Best Master was “Wei Wuxian” by Jennifer Senn, and Best Use of Theme went to “Master of Dragons” from Ryan Holton.

ART SHOW AWARDS: Professional to Elizabeth Leggett, Amateur to Asa Rodriguez, Student to Lucy Steffen, and Beast of Show (theme) to Jon Sanchez & Jeremy Montoya.

All in all, while we have a few minor things to address (and new tablets to purchase), Bubonicon 55 went very well thanks to every individual who pitched in! So, a tip of the con-com’s hats to everyone who contributed their time & efforts!

BUBONICON 56 will be held August 22-24, 2025 – the normal weekend and five days after the Seattle Worldcon – hopefully at the Albuquerque Marriott Uptown (Louisiana & I-40), with Guests of Honor Delilah S. Dawson & Joe

Haldeman, Toastmaster Jeffe Kennedy, and Guest Artist John Sumrow. Rooms most likely will be around \$149 single-quad with free WiFi in sleeping rooms. Con chair is Craig Chrissinger, with Jessica Coyle & Mandy Self as assistant chairs. Suggestions/program ideas are being taken at bubonicon@gmail.com.

REVIEWS ROUND-UP

***The Naming Song* by Jedediah Berry, 2024 Tor Books, hc \$28.99, 384 pages.**

Review by Chris Gwin

The Naming Song has a fascinating premise, but the story fails to deliver. It fails to deliver because the implications of the premise were not explored, and we’re left lacking too much information that would have engaged our interest in this story. We’re told that the world went through a catastrophic event where words were removed and meaning was lost for humanity. Throughout the entire story, there is no clue as to what the catastrophic event was. This matters because it helps to explain how the world came to be as it is, how people are the way they are now and what lessons could be learned for the players going forward. That would provide a meaningful dialogue between the protagonist and antagonist that would correct the sins of the past. That would create interest for the reader.

We are told that this catastrophe removed all words from humanity. There was a missed opportunity to fully explore the implications of this. The study of language tells us that language and cognition are strongly linked together. You cannot have one without the other and they mutually reinforce each other. That’s why for normal cognitive development, we read to our children at a very early age. What happens to current generations that lost the use of language? What happens to successive generations? Do they revert to animals incapable of abstract thought? Do we not communicate in pictures or symbols? Do we only process in the concrete, in only the here and now? If that’s so, I can see a truly chaotic world. However, in the nameless regions, they seem to live just as those in the named regions do.

Jedediah Berry’s story would be more effective if the machinations of Frost were somehow tied to a critical mistake humanity made in unleashing the Wordless Catastrophe. This would give his role as antagonist some meaning. It’s never clear why his waging all out war on the nameless even matters. What’s more, how did it come to be that ghosts are impressed into eternal servitude in a system they no longer have a stake in? How did this arrangement come to be. The ghost that records everything in drawings was an opportunity missed. By revealing his story, the writer could have shed light on an origin story of this world and the how the arrangement with the ghosts came to be.

It seems that in this world, people grow food, the form communities, but we don’t know much about them? What are their fears, their hopes, aspirations, and dreams? What is meaning for them in a world such as this? Do they know how the world used to be and do the pine for a return or do they work for something better?

We never really get to know any of the characters. We need to see consequences for why the Courier doesn’t have a name. Does she feel socially isolated? Is she not resentful at the power structures she serves over the loss of her father? She clearly loved her sister Ticket, but we don’t learn much about Ticket once reunited. These characters lack depth.

The Naming Song could be a successful story if the details mentioned were fleshed out. As it is, this is far from a finished product.

When Among Crows by Veronica Roth, 2024 Tor Books, hc \$19.99, 176 pages. Review by Arthur Maurici-Pollock

In *When Among Crows*, Veronica Roth expertly immerses the reader in an otherworldly Chicago, one populated by creatures of Polish myth who have developed

The story follows Dymitr, who is deemed worthy to pick the flower of an enchanted plant before he starts on his journey into this strange underbelly of Chicago. Here, he is joined by Ala, a cursed zmora, and Niko, a strzyga, and together they go on a quest to find Baba Jaga in the hopes she will be able to help them break at least one curse.

While I found the weaving of myth and magic into a modern city cleverly executed, there were some shakier bits of world building – most notably the different perceptions of how zmora (who feed on fear), strzyga (who feed on anger), and banshees (who feed on sorrow) have set up systems to ensure they have enough sustenance. Some of this may stem from Dymitr's point of view, but there's little within the narrative to challenge his conclusions.

Despite this, I felt that the way each of the creatures approached feeding in modern Chicago to be an interesting aspect of world building that really highlighted their own desires to survive and coexist among regular humans in our ever-changing world.

Overall, *When Among Crows* is a well-crafted story. It feels like novella length was the perfect fit for this tale, neither too long nor too short. The book provides a fascinating mixture of fantasy and mythology, melding them into the modern city of Chicago beautifully.

Bury Your Gays by Chuck Tingle, 2024 Tor Nightfire, hc \$26.99, 304 pages. Review by Craig W. Chrissinger

There has been much speculation around author Chuck Tingle and his pink mask – whether he is a well-known author hiding his identity or perhaps someone who has much social anxiety. Regardless of who Tingle is, one thing is sure. He can write a damn compelling story. I was amazed at how quickly I was swept into the story of *Bury Your Gays*, and guessing what might happen next. Tingle's writing is very effective.

Misha Byrne's time in Hollywood finally seems to be paying off. He is the successful screenwriter of some popular horror films, has been nominated for an Academy Award for a short film, and has a long-running streaming series. There's just one problem – the executives at the studio want him to kill off the series' gay characters in the upcoming season finale. They say the algorithms reveal the show will be even more popular as a result.

Misha refuses, not wanting to fall into Hollywood's cliché of “burying the gays.” Unfortunately for him, this decision seems to put a target on his back – monsters and creepy characters from his horror movies seem to be coming to life to stalk him and his friends.

How is that possible? Is Misha losing his mind? And if real, what's behind the stalking? Could the studio actually be involved or has he stumbled into *The Twilight Zone*? If he can't figure out what is going on and how to stop it, these horrors just might find a way to bury him for good!

Bury Your Gays is a quick read and a nightmarish page-turner. It is at times chilling, darkly humorous, and engaging. Very entertaining and highly recommended.

ASFS MEETING REPORTS —

JULY 2024: DIANA ROWLAND VISITS

Albuquerque author Diana Rowland talked to 32 people about her various jobs and how they influenced her writing.

“The idea for *White Trash Zombie* came from working in a morgue,” she said. “They often scoop out brains and throw them away. I thought, ‘What a waste. Think of all the starving zombies.’ I also wanted to write something about addiction and keep it light. I somehow managed to pull it off. It's been my most successful series.”

Talking about her past, Rowland said she read to distract herself from a “crappy” childhood. “I graduated college with a math degree, which is pretty useless. I got married and we moved to New Orleans. I became a blackjack dealer - my math degree made it so I could count to twenty-one really fast! I divorced, and I got to know a lot of cops at the gym. They seemed like fun, so I became a cop. I met my second husband when he was prosecuting a case where I was a witness. And then I became a detective and computer forensic specialist, and then I worked in the coroner's office.”

While she has done some *Wild Cards* stories, Rowland said she is working on a novel as she “thinks in bigger terms.” She recently did plot-breaking with Daniel Abraham and Ty Franck, and the first three chapters have been well received. She noted, “It was set in Louisiana, but I want to change it to New Mexico as there's a lot of cool stuff here.”

She said that Angel Crawford of *White Trash Zombie* is in a good place, so there probably won't be more of her adventures. “It was a coming-of-age story, and she has grown up,” she said. “But Pietro's (zombie leader) origin story would be interesting. He's been around a long time, so I might do something with him.”

Asked about her process, she said she handwrites her first drafts in spiral notebooks as it's easier for her than typing. And then she can insert stuff with arrows. “The rewriting and editing is the worst part,” she commented. “I like writing and then figuring out the path and the landscape. I'm both a planner and a pantsner. I use whiteboards and sticky notes, especially with all the colors and sizes now.”

Rowland said she does read for pleasure. “I go through spurts like romance - Nora Roberts and J.D. Robb - cozy mysteries, and whatever grabs my attention.”

EDITOR NOTES THAT FIT THIS SPACE

▪ **WHAT'S UP THIS SPOOKY MONTH?** ABQ still is warmer than usual, and looking for rain! The Balloon Fiesta is here, *Beelejuice Beetlejuice* (entertaining & fun) is in theaters, *Agatha All Along* (good so far) is on streaming, and the final season of *What We Do in the Shadows* is about to start. I got my Covid & Flu shots last weekend, and am crossing fingers I don't have a repeat of last October when I finally had Covid and we had to cancel plans. Jessica and I are planning on Milehicon 56 in Denver (our first since 2019) in a couple of weeks. We will see *SNL*'s Leslie Jones in Santa Fe on the way up on the Friday, and then go to the Maurice Sendak exhibit at the Denver Art Museum afterward.

▪ In September we saw Robert Plant & Alison Krauss at the Santa Fe Opera, which was very good (with a thunderstorm as extra lighting) - and we went to the 2nd Morgue & Krypt Horror Fest, where Jessica worked, we shopped and visited folks. It was a nice, friendly and fun con. Congrats to the M&K staff & volunteers on a good job! And they will be doing a 3rd con next year...

▪ **THANKS** to Chris G & Arthur M-P for contributions. More stuff needed for December's *SithFacts!* **Happy Halloween & Thanksgiving.** Take care, get vaxed & stay strong! — Craig C.