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From **David Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website news.ansible.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Brad W. Foster**. Available for SAE, or trade and traffic in riddles and affairs of death.

The Charm's Wound Up

Mia Ballard's horror novel *Shy Girl* (Orbit UK, November 2025) was withdrawn from sale by Hachette Book Group and the scheduled US release cancelled, following online accusations that it was largely AI-written. This decision was taken 'after conducting a thorough and lengthy review of the text' (*NY Times*, 19 March), which old-timers thought was what publishers do *before* buying a book. Ballard blames an unnamed 'acquaintance she had hired to work on an earlier self-published version', who against her will 'incorporated AI tools'. (*Ibid*; *Guardian*, 20 March) One online comment on an earlier Mia Ballard novel, *Sugar*: 'I called it quits when she called Farrah Fawcett "Farah Faucet".' (Reddit, January)

Wesley Chu, however, is suspicious of AI tools claiming to detect AI usage. He fed Pangram – used in the *Shy Girl* case above – with his own novel *Lives of Tao* (written 2007, published 2013) and was told it has '73% AI content ... Most academic institutions and websites will not consider your text "The Lives of Tao" to be unique and ready for publication.' (Facebook, 25 March) Somehow reminiscent of a vanity press selling editorial services to fix your book, the Pangram report also includes a 'Remove AI' button which will supposedly humanify the prose. [F770]

Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki suffered a fracture of the spine in Lagos when a Chowdeck food-delivery motorcycle went out of control and hit him 'at full speed', and then a woman walking with him. They were simply left there for about four hours before the arrival of a company rep more concerned to remove the evidence – the bike was apparently unregistered – than help the victims. Ekpeki is recovering, but needs weeks of bed rest. Chowdeck denies liability, saying the rider was an 'independent contractor' not an employee. (*Sahara Reporters*, 5 March) [FD] A fundraiser to cover his medical expenses has far exceeded its \$3000 goal.

Karin Lundwall, daughter of Sam J. Lundwall, active sf fan from an early age and CEO of Sweden's specialist SF Bookstore chain, was elected as chair of the Swedish Booksellers' Association on 19 March. [J-HH]

Nnedi Okorafor was enraged by a Threads report of a US schoolboy who came home crying after a teacher told him: 'Your book report on Nnedi Okorafor doesn't count. Pick a REAL author.' Parent complained vigorously to school principal. 'Principal sided with the teacher.' (Bluesky, 23 February) Genre snobbery or unashamed racism? You guess.

Tracy Wolff, a New York judge ruled, did not plagiarise her 'Crave' fantasies from an unpublished MS by Lynne Freeman, whose expensive lawsuit claiming just this has run for years. From the ruling: 'Freeman's novel and Wolff's Crave novels are indeed similar, but only in the ways that all young adult romantasy fiction novels are similar to each other.' Also, 'hot, sexy, dangerous boys – central to virtually all young adult romance novels – cannot be copyrighted.' (*Publishers Weekly*, 16 March) [AIP]

Confronté

Until 19 Apr • **Thunderbirds and Space: 1999** (exhibition), Museum of Brands, London. 10am (Sun 11am)-5pm. See museumofbrands.com.

Until 15 Nov • **Inside Aardman**: Wallace & Gromit and Friends, Young V&A, Bethnal Green, London. See tinyurl.com/yjbeufnd.

3-6 Apr • **Iridescence** (Eastercon), Birmingham NEC Hilton. £110 reg at the door; no concession/under-18 rates given; under-7s free. Day rates £30 Friday, Monday; £50 Saturday, Sunday. See eastercon2026.org.

11 Apr • **Bedford Who Charity Con** (*Doctor Who*), King's House, Ampthill Road, Bedford, MK42 9AZ. 10am-5:30pm. Tickets £49.50; under-14s £20. See bedfordwhocharitycon.co.uk.

11 Apr • **Liverpool Horror Book Con**, Liner Hotel, Liverpool. 11am-4pm. Free. See indiehorrorchapter.uk/ournextevent.

11-12 Apr • **Compulsion** (games), The Pleasance, Edinburgh, EH8 9TJ. Tickets £28 or £18 for either day. See compulsion.org.

12 Apr • **Stars of Time** (comics), LC, Swansea. 9am-4:30pm. £11.55; under-14s £7.21. See www.starsovertime.co.uk/swanseacomicon.

18-19 Apr • **For the Love of Horror**, BEC Arena, Manchester. Tickets at various rates from www.fortheloveofhorroruk.com.

23 Apr • **A Celebration of Christopher Priest**, Waterstones, Glasgow. See waterstones.com/events/search/author/92679.

24-26 Apr • **Springmoot** (Tolkien Society), annual dinner and members-only AGM, Townhouse Hotel, Manchester. Room and dinner bookings at www.tolkienociety.org/events/agm-and-springmoot-2026.

8-9 May • **Norncon**, Hilton Lanyon Place, Belfast. £35 reg; £20 concessions. Online registration at norncon.org.

20 Jun - 13 Sep • **Cracking Exhibition Gromit: 50 Years of Aardman** in Bristol, M Shed, Bristol. 10am-5pm. See tinyurl.com/3eczs7kp.

25 Jul • **Small Press Day**, various events throughout the UK and Ireland, and online. See smallpressday.co.uk.

5 Sep • **SF, Comic & Toy Fair**, New Ferry, Wirral. 11am-4pm. Tickets £2, children 50p. See www.mseevents.co.uk/.

19 Sep • **Edge-Lit 12**, QUAD Centre, Market Place, Derby. £35 reg plus £1 booking fee. See www.derbyquad.co.uk/events/edgelit12.

19 Sep • **Innsmouth Literary Festival**, Kings House Centre, 245 Ampthill Rd, Bedford MK42 9AZ. 10am-5pm. £25 reg (early bird). Further details at innsmouthgold.com/innsmouth-literary-festival.

Infinitely Improbable

Prediction Corner. *The Large Language Model of Laputa*: 'Every one knew how laborious the usual method is of attaining to arts and sciences; whereas, by his contrivance, the most ignorant person, at a reasonable charge, and with a little bodily labour, might write books in philosophy, poetry, politics, laws, mathematics, and theology, without the least assistance from genius or study.' This is of course based on recombining fragments from existing works: '... and out of those rich materials, to give the world a complete body of all arts and sciences; which, however, might be still improved, and much expedited, if the public would raise a fund for making and employing five hundred such frames [data centres] in Lagado, and oblige the managers to contribute in common their several collections.' (Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* Part III, 1726)

Awards. *Arthur C. Clarke Memorial*: David Brin. • *Crawford* (IAFA debut fantasy): *Call and Response* by Christopher Caldwell. • *Lord Ruthven* (vampire): FICTION *Hungerstone* by Kat Dunn. MEDIA *Sinners*. NONFICTION *Killing the Dead: Vampire Epidemics from Mesopotamia to the New World* by John Blair. MAGAZINE *Dracula Beyond Stoker #7*. [F770] • *Oscars*: *Sinners* won in four categories and *Frankenstein* in three; *KPop Demon Hunters* was named as best animated feature film. • *Otherwise* (formerly the Tiptree): *Luminous* by Silvia Park. [L] • *SFWA Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award*: David Langford. Yes, I was utterly boggled. Gosh wow. Thanks!

Gatekeeping. 'If you don't know who the "Hugo" is named after, sf is not for you.' (John Sutherland, *Curiosities of Literature*, 2011) [PL]

Headlines of Our Times. 'Iranian Missile Strikes Cargo Vessel Carrying Fantagraphics Books'. (*Publishers Lunch*, 17 March) [MR]

R.I.P. *Glen Baxter* (1944-2026), UK humorous artist whose surreally captioned drawings are collected in many volumes beginning with *Atlas* (1979) and *The Impending Gleam* (1981), died on 29 March aged 82. • *Joe Bergeron* (1955-2026), US artist whose sf book covers – often astronomical – appeared from 1982 and whose several science-fantasies began with *The Bronze Portal* (2004), died on 14 March aged 70. [MLO] • *Ed Bernard* (1939-2026), US actor in *Blue Thunder* (1983), *Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey* (1993) and *Pinocchio's Revenge* (1996), died on 23 January aged 86. • *Jamie Blanks* (1971-2026), Australian filmmaker and composer who directed *Urban Legend* (1998) and *Long Weekend* (2008), and scored *Needle* (2010), *Crawlspace* (2012) and others, died on 16 March aged 54. [SJ] • *Nicholas Brendon* (1971-2026), US actor in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (144 episodes 1997-2003), *Unholy* (2007), *Coherence* (2013), *The Morningside Monster* (2014) and *On a Dark and Bloody Ground* (2024), died on 20 March aged 54. [LP] • *Barry Caldwell* (1957-2026), US artist and animator for *Animaniacs* (18 episodes 1983-1988), *Pinky and the Brain* (1995-1998), *Osmosis Jones* (2001) and others, died on 28 March aged 68. [AIP] • *Philip Castle* (1942-2026), UK artist for Andre Norton's 'Witch World' covers since 1970 and – more famously – film posters for *A Clockwork Orange* and *Mars Attacks!*, died on 20 February aged 83. [AIP] • *Alina Chu* (1956-2026), New York fan whose 1980s fanzine was *Nothing Left to the Imagination* with Teresa Miñambres, died on 27 February aged 69. [RH/BB] • *Matt Clark* (1936-2026), US

actor in *The Terminal Man* (1974), *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension* (1984), *Back to the Future III* (1999) and others, died on 15 March aged 89. [AIP] ● **Len Deighton** (1929-2026), bestselling UK thriller author whose fourth spy novel *Billion Dollar Brain* (1966) has sf elements while his alternate-history *SS-GB* (1978) is set in Nazi-occupied 1941 Britain, died on 15 March aged 97. [AIP] ● **William C. Dietz** (1945-2026), prolific US author of space opera and military sf beginning with *War World* (1986, retitled *Galactic Bounty*) – opening the ‘Sam McCade’ bounty-hunter series – died on 15 March. [PDF] ● **Paul R. Ehrlich** (1932-2026), US ecologist whose influential predictions of imminent doom-by-overcrowding in *The Population Bomb* (1968) were a little premature, died on 13 March aged 93. [JC] ● **Carrie Anne Fleming** (1974-2026), Canadian actress in *Supernatural* (2006-2011), *iZombie* (2015-2019) and other genre tv series, died on 26 February aged 51. [AIP] ● **Nikolai Garo** (1937-2026), Russian producer of and actor in the dystopian sf comedy film *Kin-dza-dza!* (1986), died on 14 March aged 88. [AM] ● **Tom Georgeson** (1937-2026), UK actor in *Doctor Who* (5 episodes 1975, 1981) and *FairyTale* (1997), died on 18 March aged 88. [KM] ● **Michael Hague** (1948-2026), US illustrator of many children’s fantasies including *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Hobbit*, *Peter Pan*, *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Wizard of Oz*, died on 10 March aged 78. [F770] ● **Judi Hodgkin**, Australian fan who worked on UK Eastercons – as treasurer in 2006, chair in 2015 and initial chair for 2019 – died in March. [CM] ● **Sam Kieth** (1963-2026), US comics creator who drew the early issues of *Sandman* and both drew and plotted *The Maxx* (35 issues 1993-1998) – which became a 1995 animated TV series – died on 15 March aged 63. ● **Jane Lapotaire** (1944-2026), award-winning UK actress in *The Asphyx* (1972), *Murder on the Moon* (1989), *Johnny and the Dead* (1995) and others, died on 5 March aged 81. [SJ] ● **Lee Martindale** (1949-2026), US author active since the 1990s (including much work for SFWA), whose first of four story collections was *The Folly of Assumption* (2001), died on 10 March. [F770] ● **Chuck Norris** (1940-2026), US actor in *Silent Rage* (1982), *Invasion U.S.A.* (1985), *Forest Warrior* (1986) and *Hellbound* (1994), died on 20 March aged 86. ● **Eric Ellis Overmyer** (1951-2026), US writer/producer who was showrunner for and wrote episodes of *The Man in the High Castle* (2018 tv), died on 16 March aged 74. [AIP] ● **Judy Pace** (1942-2026), US actress in *Frogs* (1972) and several genre tv series including *Bewitched* (3 episodes 1966), died on 11 March aged 83. [SJ] ● **Corey Parker** (1965-2026), US actor in *Friday the 13th Part V* (1985), *Encino Woman* (1996) and others, died on 5 March aged 60. [SJ] ● **Ana Luisa Peluffo** (1929-2026), Mexican actress whose very many films since *Tarzan and the Mermaids* (1948) include the genre titles *Invisible Man in Mexico* (1958), *Conquistador de la luna* (1960), *Terror, Sex and Witchcraft* (1968) and *El vampiro y la vedette* (2010), died on 4 March aged 96. [SJ] ● **Valerie Perrine** (1943-2026), US actress in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1972), *Superman* (1978) and *Superman II* (1980), died on 23 March aged 82. [SG] ● **Jennifer Runyon** (1960-2026), US actress in *Ghostbusters* (1984), *18 Again!* (1988), *Carnosaur* (1993), *Bloodsucka Jones vs. The Creeping Death* (2017) and others, died on 6 March aged 65. [SG] ● **Annabel Schofield** (1963-2026), Welsh-born *Dallas* actress whose films include *Blood Tide* (1982) and *Solar Crisis* (1990), died on 28 February aged 62. [AIP] ● **Peeter Simm** (1953-2026), Estonian director and writer of the children’s fantasy film *Arabella, mereröövli tütar* (*Arabella, Pirate’s Daughter*, 1982), died on 12 March aged 73. [AM] ● **Vasily Skromny** (1964-2026), Ukrainian former child actor with a leading role in the children’s sf tv mini-series *Priključeniya Elektronika* (*The Adventures of Elektronik*, 1979), died on 11 March aged 61. [AM] ● **James Tolkan** (1931-2026), US actor in *WarGames* (1983), *Iceman* (1984), *Back to the Future* (1985 plus sequels), *Robo Warriors* (1996) and others, died on 26 March aged 94. [SJ] ● **Slava Tsukerman** (1939-2026), Russian-born US independent filmmaker who co-wrote, produced and directed the cult sf film *Liquid Sky* (1982), died on 2 March aged 86. [SJ] ● **Kjell Waltman** (1960-2026), Swedish fan, member of Club Cosmos in Gothenberg and prolific translator (including sf by Michael Crichton, Lester del Rey, Harry Harrison and Fritz Leiber), died on 6 March aged 65. [J-HH] ● **Vitaly Zbirko** (1951-2026), Russian author of 13 sf novels since 1988, died on 23 March aged 74. [AM] ● **Albert Zuckerman**, US literary agent who founded the New York agency Writers House in 1973 and represented Octavia Butler, F. Paul Wilson and others, died on 5 March aged 94. [SJ]

The Weakest Link. *Host:* ‘What does the letter m stand for in the equation E=mc²?’ *Contestant:* ‘Marshmallows.’ (ITV, *Tipping Point*) [PE]

Awards in Progress. *British Book Awards* (*Nibbies*) shortlists have a new sf/fantasy category: *Brimstone* by Callie Hart, *Onyx Storm* by Rebecca Yarros, *Ice* by Jacek Dukaj (trans Ursula Phillips), *Katabasis* by R.F. Kuang, *The Devils* by Joe Abercrombie and *Alchemised* by SenLin Yiu. Philip Pullman’s *The Rose Field*, presumably transcending mere genre, is

a general Fiction finalist. Children’s Fiction is mostly sf or fantasy, including *Sunrise on the Reaping* (in the ‘Hunger Games’ series) by Suzanne Collins and *Skandar and the Spirit War* by A.F. Steadman, also shortlisted for Author of the Year. Graphic Novel has *Who Killed Nessie?* by Paul Cornell and Rachael Smith. (*The Bookseller*, March) ● **Climate Fiction Prize** shortlist: *Dusk* by Robbie Arnott, *The Tiger’s Share* by Keshava Guha, *Awake in the Floating City* by Susanna Kwan, *Hum* by Helen Phillips, *Endling* by Maria Reva and *The Book of Records* by Madeleine Thien. ● **Lambda (LGBTQ+)** sf shortlist: *Beings* by Ilana Masad, *Blood on Her Tongue* by Johanna van Veen, *Cry*, *Voidbringer* by Elaine Ho, *Two Truths and a Lie* by Cory O’Brien and *Volatile Memory* by Seth Haddon. ● **Nebula** novel finalists: *When We Were Real* by Daryl Gregory, *The Buffalo Hunter Hunter* by Stephen Graham Jones, *Katabasis* by R.F. Kuang, *Death of the Author* by Nnedi Okorafor, *The Incandescent* by Emily Tesh, *Sour Cherry* by Natalia Theodoridou and *Wearing the Lion* by John Wiswell. For all the Nebula categories, including the newly introduced Comic and Poem, see www.sfwaworld.com/2026/03/15/nebula-awards-finalist-announcement.

Random Fandom. *Sounds Fannish.* ‘... the Beer Survey Award shortlist is out. And you can vote on it if you’re a member of the BSFA or a member of Eastercon.’ (Transcript of *Octothorpe* 155, March) This podcast also mutters inconclusively about whether it looks good that the BSFA Chair is shortlisted for best novel in the BSFA awards while the FAAn awards administrator won two FAAn awards in both 2025 and 2026.

Get Well Soon! Ian Watson is skipping Eastercon owing to ‘a “system reboot”. Chemo treatment is under way successfully and I’m responding rather well to this. [...] I’ll be back, as somebody metallic said.’ (Facebook, 29 March) ● Ted White had a fall while watering his basement plants and lay there for 12 hours before being found. After a hospital stay he’s now in a rehab facility, with regular visits from friends. [SB]

The Dead Past. 60 Years Ago, a Hugo ruling: ‘The Tricon [Worldcon 1966] is not allowing votes for *The Lord of the Rings* in the “Best Novel” category since it is eligible under two categories this year – that, and “Best All Time Series”.’ It was felt that mere sf shouldn’t have to ‘compete with the greatest fantasy novel of all time.’ (*Focal Point* 21, April 1966) In the event, *LOTR* lost Best Series to the ‘Foundation’ trilogy. ● 30 Years Ago, James Wood wrote in *The Guardian*: ‘Science fiction novels are historical novels in reverse, and both are properly despised. Both are archaeological – so obsessed with discovery that the given is stunted. In both, world-mapping obliterates world-making; both attempt a kind of reconstruction, one backwards from the present, and one forwards. Specificity – how the sewers worked in 1880, or how they will work in 2080 – is so strategic that it wearies the reader...’ (*Ansible* 105, April 1996)

Fanfundery. *TransAtlantic Fan Fund:* a final reminder that voting in the 2026 race from North America to the Berlin Eurocon (MetropolCon, 2-5 July), with candidates Lisa Hertel and Katrina ‘Kar’ Templeton, will close on 7 April. See taff.org.uk for the ballot, platforms and online voting form. ● *European Fan Fund:* the 2026 race to MetropolCon (as above) has five contenders – Haephestion Christopoulos (Greece), Marcel Gherman (Moldova), Paul Carrol (Ireland), Jan Vaněk jr. (Czechia) and George Kharaishvili (Georgia). Voting from 2 April to 30 April at effund.github.io. [JP] ● *GUFF:* the 2026 race from Europe to Swancon (Perth, WA, 29 May to 1 June) was won by Farah Mendlesohn with 67 first-preference votes, a clear majority. (Misha Sumra 21, No Preference 9, Hold Over Funds 2; 99 ballots were counted.) See taff.org.uk/guff/ann-2603.html.

Magazine Scene. Rachel Cordasco plans to launch the free quarterly *Small Planet: The SF in Translation Magazine* at www.sfintranslation.com.

Thog’s Masterclass. *Mediaeval Geometry.* ‘A pentagram had been chalked on the stone floor, and gold wires had been stretched between candle-holders of stained iron, forming a six-pointed star above the chalk.’ (David Gemmell, *Waylander II: In the Realm of the Wolf*, 1992) [BA] ● *Testing the 3,000 mph Rocket Locomotive in Your Own Back Yard.* ‘Then there was a high-pitched whine, and the engine was away to the fence and back, almost before Mrs. Glyce’s eyes could follow it. Again, this amazing process was repeated. Six times in all, each time seemingly faster than the previous one. The final journey in both directions was accomplished so quickly that the whole object was little more than a blur until it came to a dead stop.’ (Terence Haile, *Space Train*, 1962) ● *What Goes Around.* ‘The heart sends fresh red blood to all the organs that need it, in the same way the engine sends fuel around the motorbike to make it work.’ (M.W. Craven, *The Cutting Season*, 2022) [ABL]

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