

2015 Gaylactic Spectrum Awards – for 2013 Titles
Best Novel



Winner

Death by Silver
by **Melissa Scott & Amy Griswold**
Lethe Press ISBN13: 978-1590210550

In this Fantasy novel, there are two clever men, a love affair and its complications, magic, a mystery to solve, dangerous antagonists, and a richly-developed, detailed, and nuanced world – as well as language that is graceful and beautiful, and honest and very, very witty.

Death by Silver is set in Victorian England, yet not quite the historical one. In this England, young men who go to Oxford can study to be a metaphysician and learn magic, a magic that Scott and Griswold have carefully and convincingly constructed, a magic of wands and letters and signs and sigils, a magic of the written word.

The novel's two clever men are metaphysician Ned Mathey and private detective Julian Lynes. Mathey ("just up from Oxford") has only recently hung out his shingle and can't afford to turn away clients, not even Edgar Nevett, the rich and arrogant father of the bully who made Ned's life hell at boarding school. Nevett wants an investigation into a possible curse upon certain pieces of silver owned by the Nevett family. It becomes something of a side issue whether the silver is actually cursed or whether Nevett wants the romance of a curse, when Nevett is found dead in his study, felled by a heavy silver candlestick that lay bloody beside him. When Scotland Yard seeks Ned's assistance, he brings Julian, another old school friend, onto the case. The game is afoot.

Who murdered Edgar Nevett? And how? Had Ned failed to detect the curse when he declared the silver candlestick to be "magically harmless"? Where will solving this mystery take Ned and Julian—how deep into London's criminal underworld and homosexual demimonde? Can Ned and Julian work with Victor Nevett, the son who so bullied them at school and who Julian still wishes were dead? The memories of what happened at school are still painful, and far closer than either Ned or Julian could have imagined.

Ned and Julian are charming men, real and authentic. How they sort out their feelings for each other rings true for the repressed nuances of Victorian sexuality. The end is very satisfying. This novel really works.

2015 Gaylactic Spectrum Awards - Recommended List – 2013 Novels



Angel on the Ropes by Jill Shultz
Jill Shultz ISBN13: 978-0984889228

Amandine is a “leopard”, one of the humans widely believed to be plague-carriers on off-world colony. As a high-wire walker, she hides out as a star performer at a circus, secretly guiding other leopards to an underground shelter. Numerous characters, including Amandine are involved in either bisexual or same-sex relationships.

Dead in the Desert by Lou Harper
Harper Books ISBN13: 978-1492252849

Roommates turn into lovers. Jon Cooper is a painter/carpenter recovering from a serious accident and taking college art courses; Leander Thorne is a psychic specializing in finding lost pets, jewelry, etc. Jon and Andy become involved with investigating several mysterious deaths and locating missing persons.

Indexing by Seanan McGuire
47North ISBN13: 978-1477809600

ATI Management Bureau is a secret government agency that struggles to keep Fairy Tales (“the narrative”) from taking over the lives of unsuspecting humans and resulting in murder and mayhem. Andy, one of the five members of the field team, is gay; and the twin “brother” of a team member is a post-operative transgendered person who’s had a love affair with another member of the team. No one bats an eye at openly queer people – ATIMB is quite amiable in that regard – and these queer characters are valiant fighters in the battle against “the narrative”.

The Magpie Lord by KJ Charles
Samhain Publishing ISBN13: 978-1619221147

In an alternative Victorian England, where magic exists, the new Earl Crane is the target of a series of sorcerous murder attempts. His life is saved by the “practitioner” Stephen Day; and Crane hires Day to protect him from future attacks – little knowing the earlier tortured history that Day has had with the Crane family. The two men face a series of dark magic attacks and gradually fall in love.

The Summer Prince by Alaya Dawn Johnson
Arthur A. Levine Books ISBN13: 978-0545417808

The myth of Gilgamesh and Enkidu transformed into a story of love, death, technology, and art set in the tropics of a futuristic Brazil. Enki is selected as the next Summer King, and he’s destined to die for the good of the city. Gil and Enki and their friend June add fuel to a growing rebellion against the Government’s strict limits on emerging technologies.

Widdershins / Threshold / Stormhaven by Jordan L. Hawk
JLH/Widdershins ISBN13: 978-1482528152 / 978-1490964638 / 978-1493759255

The first three “Whyborne and Griffin” adventures. In the 1890s, Perceval Whyborne (an introverted comparative philologist) and Griffin Flaherty (an ex-Pinkerton agent, turned private investigator) face a series of Lovecraft-like supernatural and otherworldly threats; and, contrary to societal norms, they fall in love.

Blood Oranges by Kathleen Tierney (Caitlin Kiernan)
Roc ISBN13: 978-0451465016

Siobhan Quinn is a self-appointed hunter of “nasties” (demons, vampires, werewolves, etc.) and a drug addict - a bad combination. When a werewolf hunt goes bad, she’s bitten by it and a vampire – double trouble! Soon she discovers she’s in way over her head, a pawn in a deadly game between powerful entities she hasn’t yet identified. Siobhan’s sexual preferences are predominantly lesbian, hence her love affair (sort of) with a horned demoness in a supernatural brothel.

The Holy Road / His Sacred Bones by Ginn Hale
Blind Eye Books ISBN13: 978-1935560258 / 978-1935560265

(Books 2 & 3 of “The Rifter Trilogy”) John opens a letter to his mysterious roommate Kyle and finds a key that transports him to the magical world of Basawar. Kyle is actually a cross-dimensional assassin named Kahlil, sent to our world to keep tabs on John - apparently an avatar of a highly-destructive being called “the Rifter”. When Kyle/Kahlil attempts to follow John to Basawar, he is thrown into a later time period with scrambled memories. John and Kyle eventually meet and become lovers in a world damaged by John’s appearance.

The Left Hand of Justice by Jess Faraday
Bold Strokes ISBN13: 978-1602828636

In 1820s Paris, after the Bureau of Supernatural Investigations has been disbanded, Inspector Elise Corbeau tries to keep her job in the Sûreté. She must prove her skills in a special investigation assigned by the ruthless Prefect of Police. A series of supernatural outbursts have broken out in the slums of the Montagne Ste. Geneviève; a notorious but influential religious leader has been kidnapped; and a foreign female scientist might be deeply involved in all of it. Meanwhile, a femme fatale (and love interest) from Elise’s secret past turns up again.

Something More Than Night by Ian Tregillis
Tor Books ISBN13: 978-0765375780

The Seraph Gabriel has been murdered and the Jericho Trumpet (the most powerful and deadly device in the universe) is missing. A young lesbian, Molly Pruett, is killed so that she can become a member of the Heavenly Choir and investigate the murder-and-theft – and maybe save the Universe. But even with her new – and uncertain – angelic powers, Molly is opposed by a powerful and mysterious conspiracy that doesn’t want her investigation to succeed... at any cost.

The Violent Century by Lavie Tidhar
Hodder & Stoughton ISBN13: 978-1250064493

In 1926, Dr. Womacht activated his quantum wave device; it had unexpected results worldwide. Seemingly randomly, people (and some other things) are irrevocably changed. And thus the Changed – i.e. superheroes – were born. This is a fascinating re-examination of the 20th (and early 21st) Century and how the Changed affected (and didn’t affect) it. (At least one of the major superheroes is gay.)