

Buffalito Contingency

Lawrence M. Schoen. Hadley Rille (Ingram, dist.), \$28 (246p) ISBN 978-0-9829467-8-7; \$16 trade paper ISBN 978-0-9829467-7-0

In this quirky romp, Schoen (*Buffalito Destiny*) continues the adventures of the Amazing Conroy, an interstellar hypnotist, gourmand, and occasional rogue. Conroy, as always, is accompanied by Reggie, his pet buffalito (a breadbox-sized creature that eats everything and farts oxygen). He tries to make a living as an entertainer for aliens to whom humans are a novelty. Just as one contract expires, he's contacted by a human representative of the ancient, unimaginably powerful Celestials, but before he can accept their offer, he has to deal with his new agent, an after-show party that lands him in jail, a xenophobic ship captain who wants to employ him as a smuggler, a caste-obsessed race that's elevated feuds to an art form, and an amnesiac ghost. Fans of old-fashioned SF will love this fast-paced, chaotic, and good-natured adventure full of semifarcical humor and pleasantly believable aliens. (July)

★ **The First Days**

Rhiannon Frater. Tor, \$14.99 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-0-7653-3126-7

"This world is fragile." This truth lies at the core of Frater's intensely compelling first novel. When Jenni wakes up one morning and discovers her husband devouring their baby, she flees into a world suddenly populated by zombies. She is rescued by Katie, a lawyer haunted by her abandonment of her now-undead wife. The two traumatized women escape the city and discover unsuspected reserves of strength as they meet other survivors, some waiting for the government to save them and others trying to support one another through the chaos. Katie and Jenni join a group in a fortified site and are faced with the enormous task of rebuilding the world. This outstanding first effort, the first book in a trilogy, will appeal greatly to zombie fans, but the undead are merely the catalyst for a far more disquieting tale of societal collapse. (July)

Eat, Slay, Love

Jesse Petersen. Orbit, \$7.99 mass market (288p) ISBN 978-0-316-10292-6

Petersen's satisfying third zom-com

shows that the Living with the Dead series has surprising staying power. At the end of *Flip This Zombie*, married zombie-hunters David and Sarah had discovered a cure for zombification. They now head toward the mythical wall that separates the zombie hordes in the west from the rest of the U.S., hoping to deliver that cure to scientists who can do something with it. Along the way, they pick up Nicole, a famous (and, to Sarah's chagrin, attractive) entertainment reporter, and McCray, a drugged-up rock star, and encounter an insular group of survivalists as well as some unfriendly soldiers. Petersen doesn't skimp on the danger and gore, all delivered through Sarah's witty narration. Her thrill at David killing a teen zombie with a Justin Bieber haircut is especially amusing, but it's an emotional scene near the end that really demonstrates her strength as a character and Petersen's growth as a writer. (July)

Dragon's Time

Anne McCaffrey and Todd McCaffrey. Del Rey, \$26 (352p) ISBN 978-0-345-50089-2

Mother and son team up again (after 2008's *Dragon Harper*) to extend Anne McCaffrey's long-running Dragonriders of Pern series. Smooth, clear writing allows the well-realized characters to resonate with the world of Pern, where heroic dragonriders telepathically bonded to their mounts fight against the voracious, all-devouring alien spores known as Thread. A shortage of dragons puts the planet at risk and golden dragon riders Fiona and Lorna, both of whom have no problem defending the planet while pregnant, decide that time travel may be the only way to get the resources they need. The concept of time travel via going "between" on giant flying dragons has always proved crucial to the survival of Pern's colonists, but in this book it becomes almost a character in its own right. With numerous characters from earlier works, this book will appeal most to longtime fans of Pern and its dragons. (July)

Let's Play White

Chesya Burke. Apex (www.apexbookcompany.com), \$15.95 trade paper (200p) ISBN 978-1-9370099-9-1

The label of "dark fantasy and horror" fits this collection both ironically and gen-

uinely. Haunted by history and past wrongs, Burke's characters are never alone, never safe, never comfortable. She weaves African and African-American historical legend and standard horror themes into stories that range from gritty subway gore fests to a sympathetic take on zombies. The magnificent closing novella, "The Teachings and Redemption of Ms. Fannie Lou Mason," follows a "hoodoo woman" as she nurtures and protects twin girls with similar powers and shows them what they are meant to do. If the urban realism doesn't always seem quite realistic, the depth of Burke's characters, the weight of their decisions, and their choices make this the very opposite of escapist fantasy. (July)

In Laymon's Terms

Edited by Kelly Laymon, Steve Gerlach, and Richard Chizmar. Cemetery Dance (www.cemeterydance.com), \$50 (616p) ISBN 978-1-58767-096-1

Richard Laymon, who was known for his lean, mean horror fiction, died in 2001 at age 54. This substantial memorial anthology features photos, fiction, and interviews from his archives, as well as scores of essays and stories written in homage to his work. Best known as a novelist, Laymon also perfected what Norman Partridge calls the "gotcha!" twist-ending tale, epitomized in the classic "Desert Pickup" (reprinted here, and the model for other top fiction contributions, including Jack Ketchum's "Hotline" and Gary Brandner's "Campfire Story"). The common sentiment of the remembrances, most written by young horror writers, is that Laymon was a helpful mentor, and that his work was greatly underappreciated due to its hefty quotient of sex and violence. The editors have produced a discerning memorial to a fine and influential writer. (July)

Romance

In the Barrister's Chambers

Tina Gabrielle. Kensington/Zebra, \$6.99 mass market (352p) ISBN 978-1-4201-2274-9

Former attorney Gabrielle (*Lady of Scandal*) launches a Regency series with legal backbone. Bluestocking Lady Evelyn Darlington's marital plans go awry when her scholarly intended, Randolph Sheldon, is