

The background of the entire page is a vibrant, painterly illustration. On the left, a woman with dark hair and a crown-like headpiece stands in a long, flowing dress covered in intricate floral patterns. Her right arm is raised, and a red, winged figure is visible behind her. On the right, a wolf-like creature with blue and purple fur and glowing orange eyes looks towards the viewer. The overall color palette is dominated by pinks, purples, and reds.

ARISIA

2024

RYKA AOKI

Author Guest of Honor

WINONA NELSON

Artist Guest of Honor

TANYA DEPASS

Fan Guest of Honor

JANUARY 12-15, 2024

WESTIN WATERFRONT HOTEL

ARISIA

2024

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RYKA AOKI

Author Guest of Honor

19: Excerpt from *Light From Uncommon Stars*

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WINONA NELSON

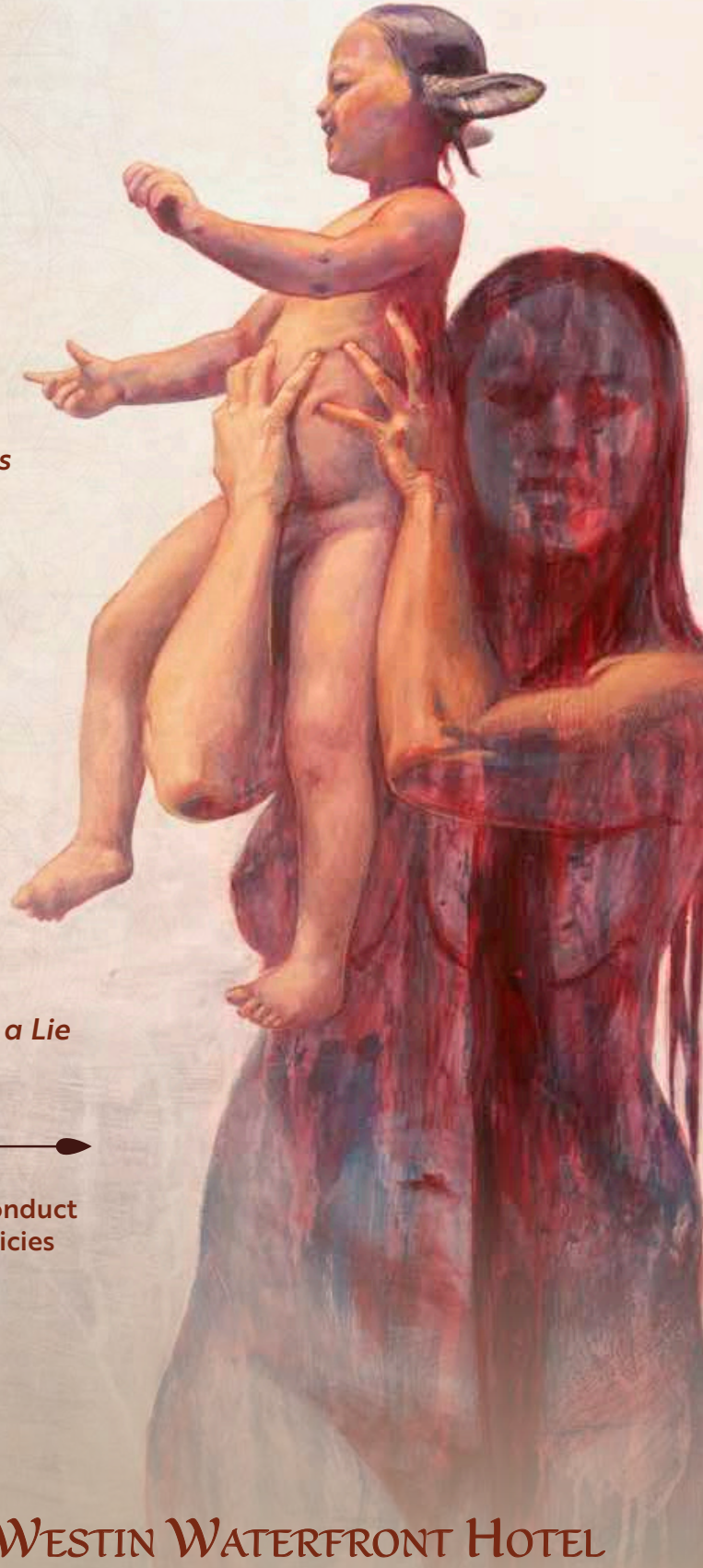
Artist Guest of Honor

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TANYA DEPASS

Fan Guest of Honor

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and Staff

JANUARY 12-15, 2024



WESTIN WATERFRONT HOTEL

From the CONVENTION CHAIRS

We take this moment to acknowledge that we come together on the unceded ancestral land of the Massachusetts people. To celebrate and speculate on other presents, other futures, other pasts, we must be informed of the context we gather in. We pay respects to and honor with gratitude the traditional stewards of this land, past and present. Arisia Corp. will be making a donation to the Massachusetts tribe and we encourage members of our community who are able to do the same. Learn more at <https://massachusetttribe.org/>

Somewhere in the past twenty years, stories of hope and happy endings became something to be scoffed at. Faced with the dark realities of real life, we wanted fantasy and science fiction to help us imagine something better. If now is dark and scary, can we imagine that next comes something joyful and exciting? That line of thinking influenced every decision we made during the process of planning this convention. Stepping up the accessibility features of our event, because we really hope that's where the world is headed. Working with indigenous artists, because we want everyone to know that they are a part of our present and our future. Embracing the potential of altered reality art, because it feels like science fiction happening right now. Our guests of honor give us worlds that have never felt the touch of colonialism, worlds where alien bakers can defeat the devil, worlds where people and nature are in harmony creating beauty we couldn't make on our own.

After all, Arisia is a spark in the (sometimes) coldest, darkest days of winter, both figuratively and literally. It's a place to go be and talk about fandoms, nerdiness, and geekery, sure. So many of us look forward to Boston in January in a way that very few people do, because we know Arisia is a place of joy to us.

That spark is also being used to light a path of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility (DEIJA). We'll be the first to admit—that light is far from full or perfect. But as we've walked the path, we've learned so much about other people from communities other than the ones in which we were raised and live. And every day, as we read books from a growing selection of diverse authors and talk to friends who have different lived experiences than us, we are grateful for that opportunity to learn and experience. All thanks to this one science fiction and fantasy convention in Boston.

Arisia is going to continue to change with the times. There's no point where we can ever say "we're done, it's everything it needs to be!" because the fandom will keep changing, audiences will keep changing. We did a lot this year, but there's a lot more to be done. There will always be more to be done and hopefully, there will always be people to do it.

Ilene Tatroe and Melissa Kaplan
Arisia 2024 Co-Chairs



From the **ARISIA PRESIDENT**

Welcome to Arisia! Whether this is your first, your fifth, or your thirtieth, we are excited to have you join us. I'm writing this letter as the President of the Arisia Eboard, the corporate body that handles the legal, financial, and business matters that enable us to put on the convention each year. And I'd like your help.

Take a look around at the convention and find the thing that brings you the most happiness and excitement, whatever part of the con it is. Maybe it's something that is a tradition for you every year? Maybe it's something that you have just discovered this year! Whatever that thing is, I'd like you to ask: "How can I help make this happen again next year?"

Arisia runs on volunteers. We need people to make the con happen. If there's a part of the con that you want to see, the best way to make sure we can do it is to help out. And if there is an obstacle that makes you think "I don't think I want to volunteer" or even "I don't think I can volunteer," tell us what that obstacle is, and we can work to remove it.

Now that I have asked for your help, I'd love to know what we can do for you! How can we make not only the convention a better convention, but how can we make the Arisia community a better community? How can we make you feel more welcome and more supported? Where would you like us to change and grow? What things that we had in the past, but no longer support, should we bring back?

We are running two feedback sessions during the convention, as well as the corporate meeting on Sunday at 1:00 pm. Drop by and let us know! Or, if you are enjoying the other parts of the convention, drop me an email at president@arisia.org. I would love to hear from you!

Vivian Abraham
Arisia Inc. Eboard President



Leap, Winona Nelson

Winona

Convention Committee and Staff

CON CHAIR

Con Chairs: Ilene Tatroe
and Melissa Kaplan

Assistant Con Chair: Gail Terman

**Liaison to Student Art
& Student Writing Contests:** Etana

Meeting Scribe: Julia Austein

Senior Staff Advisor:
Dale Meyer-Curley

CON CHAIR SPECIAL PROJECTS

Vaccine Verification: Priscilla Ballou

CONVENTION TREASURER

Treasury Staff: Kelly Fabijanic,
Nicholas “phi” Schectman,
William Sherman

ACCESS

Division Head: Etana

Access Staff: James Boggie, Vinny,
Priscilla Ballou, Gosh

Access Tactile Tour: Julia Rampone

Access Safe Space/Quiet Room: Lisa
Weber, Ro, Priscilla Ballou,
Julia Rampone

Audio Description Narrator:
Chris Cinneas

ASL Interpretation:

Partners Interpreting

CART Services: Gibson Realtime
Reporting Services

ART SHOW

Art Show Co-Directors:
Julia Austein and Nick Brown

Assistant Art Show Director:
Zach Melisi

Build Chief: Rex

Mail-In/Mail-Out: Eyal Sagi

Tour Director: Zach Melisi

**General Art Show Staff
& Runtime Crew:** Faye Levin-O’Leary

COMMUNICATIONS

Division Head: Vivian Abraham

Social Media: Kayleigh Tatroe

Photography: Leah Cirker-Stark

NEWSLETTER

Newsletter Staff: Ken London

Press Liaison: Justin du Coeur



PUBLICATIONS

Souvenir Book Layout: Kate Wechsler

Pocket Program: Gail Terman

Quick Reference: Benjamin Levy

Family Friendly Guide:

Dale Meyer-Curley

SIGN SHOP

Sign Shop Area Head:

Cate Schneiderman

EVENTS

Division Head: Mike Sprague

Assistant Division Head:

Brendan Conroy

Weapons Demonstrations Liaison:

Mark Millman

Events Liaison: Audra Congress

MASQUERADE

Masquerade Director: James Hinsey

Masquerade Table: James Hinsey,

Tree Murphy

MC: Andy Hicks

Stage Manager: Gosh

Presentation Judges:

Antonia Pugliese, Sharon Sbarsky

Workmanship Judges:

Alder Fehler, telekineticManiac

Repair Table Manager:

Arisia Cosplay Repair

Project Cosplay: Fast Track

Head Ninja: Ann Catelli

Backstage Pirate: Greykell

Official Photographer:

Derek Kouymoujian

Assistant Photographers:

Sarita Kouyoumjian, Daniel Pearson,

Emma Pearson, Roger Pearson

Videographer: James Hinsey

Hall Costume Awards:

Northern Lights Costumers' Guild

Masquerade Computer Guru:

James Hinsey

EXHIBITS

Division Head: Benjamin Levy

CREATORS' CORNER

(Formerly Artist/Author Alley)

Creators' Corner Liaison:

Ann Muir Thomas

DEALERS

Dealers Liaison: Ed Trachtenberg

Assistant Dealer Liaison:

Heather Spencer

Dealers' Room Coordinator:

Ruth Addams

Tax ID Czar: Benjamin Levy

FAN TABLES

Fan Tables: Benjamin Levy

GALLERIA MANAGEMENT

Galleria Layout: Benjamin Levy

PROJECTED MEDIA

Video Theater: Stephen Wilk

Video Theater Hosts: Paul Geromini,

Naomi Nabbit, Heather Young





FOOD

Division Head: Brett Sherman

GREEN ROOM/STAFF DEN

Green Room/Staff Den Area Head:
Paul Traite

GAMING

Division Head:
Daniel Abraham (he/him)

Gaming Team at Large: Trysh (she/they)

TABLETOP

Tabletop Gaming Area Head:
Marley Bessette

**Tabletop Gaming
Assistant Area Head:** Nick Bessette

LARP

LARPs Area Head:
Anne Ratchat (ze/zir)

VIDEO GAMES

Video Games Area Head: L33t

GOH LIAISON

Liaison to Writer Guest of Honor:
Patricia Adams

Liaison to Fan Guest of Honor:
Chris Cinneas

Liaison to Artist Guest of Honor:
Samantha Immele

HOTEL LIAISON

Division Head: Wendy Verschoor

At-Con Liaisons: Joel Herda,
Matt Ringel, Diana Hsu

INNKEEPER

Innkeeper Area Head: Kelly Fabijanic

Pre-con Assistant Innkeeper:
Nikki Roman

Space Pilot Area Head:
Allison Feldhusen

IT SUPPORT

IT Support Area Head: Mike Tatroe

LOGISTICS

Division Head: Kylie Selkirk

Assistant Division Head: Rex

Logistics Staff: Mieke Citroen, Beth
Kevles, Santiago Rivas,
Patrick Flaherty, Paul Selkirk,
Frances Selkirk, Jeremy Thorpe, Opus,
Vivian Abraham, Yuki Mikazuki,
Darion Breslau, Charles Olson,
Steven Lee, Joshua Burson,
Aedyn Downey, Heather Young,
Leon Marr

Logistics Drivers: Rick Kovalcik,
Shayna Downey, Violet Zitola





MEMBER SERVICES

Division Head: Jenne Foronjy

Arisians of Color Safer Space:

Marley Bessette

Coat Check: Linda Brennan

Coat Check Staff: Melissa Sims,
Cass Travers, Greykell, Barb Jewell

Cosplay Repair Station:

Melissa Schuman

Cosplay Repair Station Staff:

Mieke Citroen, Jess Steytler,
Damion Masotta, Jim Leonard,
Shana Burstyn, Phaedra Lewis,
Kate Brick

Food Trucks: Jude Shabry

Info Desk: Kristen Page

PROGRAMMING

Division Head: Jason Schneiderman

Panel-balancing Point Taker:

Kris "Nchanter" Snyder

Assistant Division Head (Retired):

D. J. Toland

PROGRAM AREAS

Art & Maker: Scott Lefton

Comics: E. J. Barnes & Daniel Miller

Communities: Rachel Tanenhaus

Cosplay & Costuming: Raven Stern

Fan Interest: Melissa Honig

Gaming: Griffin Ess

Literature: Mar Hammitt-McDonald

Media: Reuben Baron

Music: Heather Caunt-Nulton

Planorama: Gail Terman

Relax-a-Track: Tanya Washburn

Science: Charity Southworth (retired)

Workshops: Tanya Washburn

Writing: Ilene Tatroe (acting)

PROGRAM NEXUS STAFF

Wendee Abramo, Reuben Baron,
E.J. Barnes, Anna Bradley, Griffin Ess,
Sid Hackney, Melissa Honig,
Scott Lefton, Megan Lewis,
Mar Hammitt-McDonald (Alastor),
Daniel Miller, Misty Pendragon,
Cate Hirschbiel Schneiderman,
Jason Schneiderman, Mike Sprague,
Raven Stern, Jennifer Trethewey, Rachel
Tanenhaus, Ann Thomas,
Tanya Washburn

REGISTRATION

Division Head: Melia Vaden

Assistant Division Head: Brooks H.

Registration Managers:

La Sweet, Kelly Fab, Pete B, Rob C.

At-Con Tech Lead: Kelly V., TMike

Pre-Con Staff: Melia, Brooks, Kelly V.

At-Con Staff: Etana, Jasra, Henry,
Lenore, Vivian, Wendy, Carolyn, La

SAFETY

Division Head: Adam Burdick

Assistant Division Head:

Andrew Clapper

THE SAFETY TEAM

Safety Team Area Heads:

Garret DeJong

Safety Team Staff: Aedyn Downey,
Andrew Hommel, Ben Gunness,
Chris Greenbriar, Kitty Jess,
Mary Elizabeth Bahl,
Miyuki Mikazuki, Shayna Downey,
Todd "Tex" Whittemore



Spark, Winona Nelson

INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM (IRT)

Area Head: Susan Weiner

Assistant Area Head: Kris Pelletier

IRT Shift Manager: NChanter,
Jaime Garmendia, Kris Pelletier

IRT Team Members: Anna Bradley,
Emily Neumann, Etana,
Nightwing Whitehead, Tikva,
Vivian Abraham, Wyldekyttin,
Darion Breslau

FIRST AID

Handled by Westin hotel staff

First Aid: Dial 0 on any house phone
and say "I have a medical situation"
24 hours/day

In case of emergency, dial 911

TEAM ARISIA SERVICES

Division Head: Erik Meyer-
Curley

Team Arisia Services Advisor:
Mike Sprague

Duck Hunt Coordinator:
Martha Meyer-Curley

Ribbons: Sharon Sbarsky

**Team Arisia Headquarters
Staff:** Diane

TECHNICAL SERVICES

**Division Head/Technical
Director:** Brendon
Chetwynd

**Assistant to the Technical
Director:** David Silber

Lighting Designer: Lowell

Gilbert

Tech Rental Inventory:

Brendon Chetwynd / Lowell Gilbert

Drape Crew Chief: Covert Beach

Tech Suite Manager: Covert Beach

YOUTH SERVICES

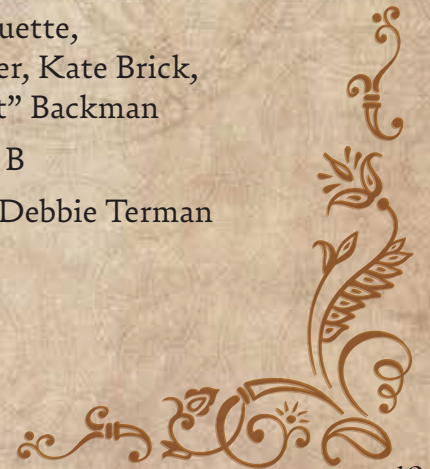
Acting Division Head: Gail Terman

Fast Track (Children's Programming):
S. Nabbit

FT Staff: Dennis Duquette,
Tara Halwes, Em Miller, Kate Brick,
Jenna V, Charles "Spot" Backman

Teen Lounge: Delenn B

Youth Services Staff: Debbie Terman



Guests of Honor

Amal El-Mohtar



Rebecca Roanhorse



Memorial Guest of Honor

Naomi Mitchison

July 11 - 14, 2024

Boston Quincy Marriott
Quincy, MA

<https://readercon.org/>
info@readercon.org
Registration is open.

Weekend adult tickets \$60 until March 1, 2024



Arisia Code of Conduct and Behavior Policies

To help ensure our members' happiness and a successful convention, we have established a Code of Conduct and Behavior Policies for all members and staff. Please read this document and help us have a safe and welcoming convention for all.

Arisia reserves the right to revoke, without refund, the membership of anyone for just cause. This may also lead to being banned from future Arisia conventions. We will refund the membership fee of anyone who finds the policies contained herein unacceptable prior to accepting their badge. The general principles of this Code of Conduct apply to the Arisia convention and also to all the activities of the convention committee, whether before or after the convention.

GENERAL DEMEANOR

Arisia expects its members to respect each other and behave in a responsible manner. Members should respect common sense rules for public behavior, personal interaction, common courtesy, and respect for private property. Assistive devices must be considered an extension of their users' bodily autonomy with regard to touching, photographing, and other conduct. Service dogs, as defined by the ADA, are also an extension of their handlers and must not be touched, photographed, deliberately distracted, or


otherwise impeded without permission of their handler.

If you wouldn't do it in public, please don't do it here. Additionally, all Staff are representatives of Arisia and therefore are held to a higher standard of behavior, even when off duty.

Reminder: The hotel is not dedicated completely to our use for the weekend. Members of the general public stay here or visit the hotel to dine and socialize. Please be considerate of non-convention individuals at all times.

Arisia forbids abusive, insulting, and/or harassing behavior. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to: stalking, discriminatory statements, inappropriate physical contact, unwelcome sexual attention, and display of hateful iconography. These prohibited behaviors can include but are not limited to those related to: race, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, physical appearance, age, religion, ability, family/marital status, or socioeconomic class. Examples of hateful iconography can include, but are not limited to, those listed on the websites of the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League.

Please report any incidents in which a member of the convention is abusive, insulting, intimidating, bothersome, or acting in an unsafe or illegal manner to Incident Response Team (IRT), an



Assistant Div Head, a Division Head, an Assistant Con Chair, or the Con Chair.

Sleeping in public or convention areas of the hotel is forbidden by the hotel management. This is private property.

Program participants, moderators, and event coordinators are responsible for the comfort and safety of convention members in their areas. Disruptive behavior by adults or children is not acceptable. Any request to leave an area must be complied with immediately; appeals should be brought to attention of “The Watch” (Arisia Security Staff) and directed to the responsible Division Head, the Convention Chairperson, or the Arisia Corporate Executive Board.

Convention Badges must be worn by all attendees and volunteers and must be visible to access any convention area (including Dealers Room and Open Parties). Exceptions may be made for special cases, e.g., uniformed professionals (police or nurses) and masquerade participants while on-stage (but masquerade participants do need to have memberships in any case).

Student Memberships for ages 13-25 require a current valid student ID for students aged 18 and older.

CHILDREN AS FANS AND COMPANIONS

Note: In this section where “Parent” is used, it can mean a parent, guardian, or person charged with a child’s welfare.

Arisia makes every effort to protect fans of all ages and provide a healthy environment with many opportunities for

fun and learning. Children are a valued part of our membership, and we welcome their appropriate participation.

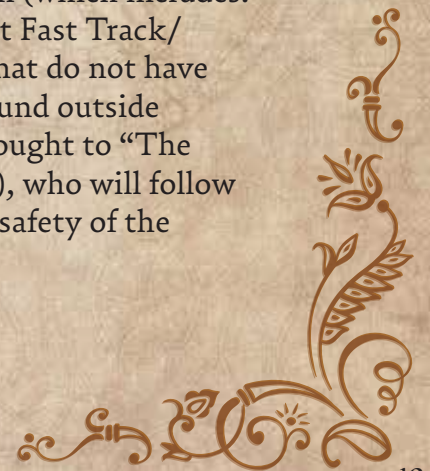
All children aged 8 and under must be with an adult, in Turtle Track (Childcare), or in Fast Track (Children’s Programming) con areas.

Parents of children ages 9-12 who believe their children are mature enough (and who have their own paid membership) may choose to allow their children to freely roam the convention on their own. Any child who excessively misbehaves or engages in inappropriate, disruptive or dangerous behavior is subject to having free-roaming privileges or their entire membership revoked.

Children under 12 years old may attend with either their own paid convention membership, or with a free Kids-in-Tow membership (with and under the supervision of an authorized adult at all times). Arisia requires that there be at least one supervising adult with a membership accompanying every three Kids-in-Tow members.

Parents should make sure to be aware of the hours of Fast Track and Turtle Track. Parents who are late in picking up children may have their children barred from Babysitting and/or Fast Track at the current or future conventions.

Any unattended children (which includes: children not picked up at Fast Track/Turtle Track; children that do not have free-roaming ribbons found outside of Fast Track) will be brought to “The Watch” (Arisia Security), who will follow procedure to ensure the safety of the child.





www.winonanelsonart.com

Third Fire, Winona Nelson

Please remember that the convention and hotel is not “child-proofed.” There are many items (including costumes, displays, art, etc.) that are easily damaged. Additionally there are things that might place a young child at potential risk. It is the parents’ responsibility to supervise their children so they do not venture anywhere or touch anything inappropriate.

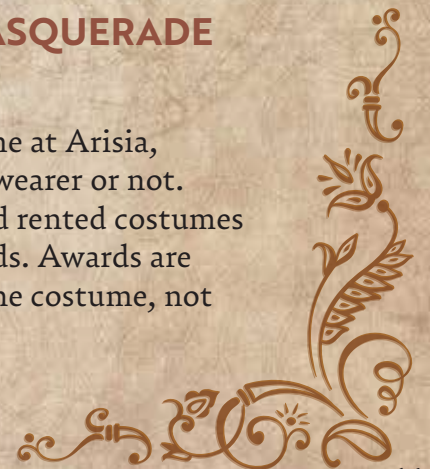
Participation in some regular program items by minors may require parental permission or the presence of a supervising adult. Some program items dealing with adult topics may be closed to children under 18 years of age. Although children under 18 years of age may register as “adults,” membership in the convention in no way supersedes local, state, or federal laws. Some items

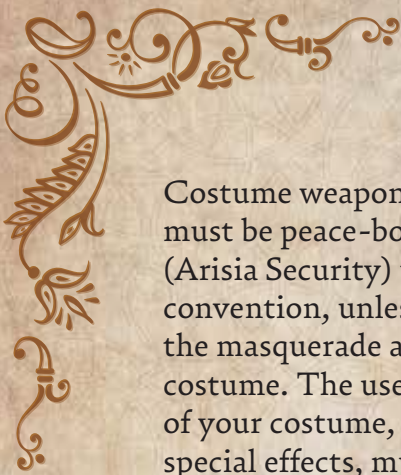
may require the supervision of a child by parents. It is the parents’ responsibility to review the schedule and decide which items they will allow their child to participate in, either with or without adult supervision

Please review the separate [Children’s Policies](#) for a full description and restrictions.

COSTUME AND MASQUERADE GUIDELINES

All costumes are welcome at Arisia, whether created by the wearer or not. However, purchased and rented costumes are not eligible for awards. Awards are made to the creator of the costume, not the wearer.





Costume weapons are permitted, but must be peace-bonded by “The Watch” (Arisia Security) upon arrival at the convention, unless worn solely for the masquerade as part of an on-stage costume. The use of any weaponry as part of your costume, as well as the use of any special effects, must first be approved by the Masquerade Director. Remember, it’s okay to surprise the audience, but not the staff.

During the masquerade, flash photography and laser pointers are forbidden. If you take photos or videos during the Masquerade, do not obstruct the view of other audience members. All electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, pagers, tablet computers) must be silenced and their screens must be dimmed.

Participants in the masquerade must read and agree to the terms contained in a separate costumer release and [masquerade rules](#).

PARTIES IN GUEST ROOMS

For individuals or groups wishing to host a party (Open or Closed), you must register with the convention in advance and use a room in the “Active” room block. Parties registered in advance with Arisia will be moved to a “Party Host room”, which ensures that you are covered by Arisia’s corkage agreement (allowing you to serve food and non-alcoholic drinks).

Parties may be “open” (all convention members welcome, or with doors open or ajar, or publicly advertised) or “Closed Parties” (private, doors closed, no advertising). Serving of alcohol is not allowed in Open Party areas.

Party hosts are responsible for adhering to convention policies, hotel rules, and local, state, and federal laws, including the enforcement of the drinking age. All Party Hosts must review and adhere to the separate [Party Host Rules](#).

SMOKING, ALCOHOL, WEAPONS, NUDITY AND ILLEGAL ACTS

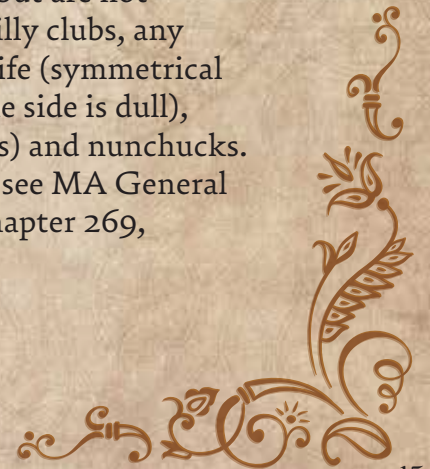
The Westin hotel bans smoking in all areas of the hotel, including all guest rooms. Smoking is allowed outside the building away from the doorways.


Arisia prohibits the consumption of alcohol in all convention areas except for alcohol purchased from the hotel and consumed directly in the area in which it was purchased. The legal drinking age in Massachusetts is 21. You may be asked to provide a valid ID if ordering alcoholic beverages.

Arisia’s corkage waiver does not apply to serving of alcohol. According to hotel policy all alcoholic beverages must be purchased through the hotel.

Laws governing illicit substances, obscenity, weapons, public behavior, and the treatment of minors must be strictly observed.

The list of Illegal weapons in Massachusetts include, but are not limited to: blackjacks, billy clubs, any sort of double-edged knife (symmetrical cross-section, even if one side is dull), shuriken (throwing stars) and nunchucks. For further information see MA General Laws, Part 4, Title 1, Chapter 269, Section 10.





While the hotel is private property, the hotel is still required by the Boston Licensing Board to enforce standards of conduct and nudity. Accordingly, street-legal attire is required in all convention spaces and hallways.

RECORDING POLICY

Arisia's Code of Conduct requires respect for other attendees, including obtaining permission to make recordings (including but not limited to still photographs, audio recordings, and video recordings), not using recordings for malicious purposes, and following the applicable laws and regulations established by the hosting facility. Further details may be found [here](#).

VENDING POLICIES

All vending (exchange of money for goods or services) must be authorized by the convention, and only take place in authorized locations. Vendors must comply with all applicable laws (including but not limited to copyright and tax laws).



Vortex Stalker, Winona Nelson

OTHER POLICIES

All raffles and drawings, whether for profit or charitable reasons, must comply with the City of Boston guidelines.

Attendees may only post signs on official Arisia Sign Kiosks, located around the hotel, using the tape provided.



BOSKONE 61

A woman in a blue dress is spinning yarn in a rustic room. She is holding a glowing yellow thread that loops through the air. The room has stone walls, a window, and various spinning tools like a wheel and a basket of yarn.

February 9-11, 2024 • Westin Boston Seaport District Hotel

Author Guest of Honor:
Ben Aaronovich

Official Artist:
Emily Hurst Pritchett

Special Guest:
Bradford Lyau

Musical Guest:
Amy Kucharik

Hal Clement Science Speaker:
Kevin Roche

NESFA Press Guest:
John Scalzi

Register online at boskone.org.

Adults - \$60 • Young Adults (18-25) - \$35
Teens (13-17) - \$25 • Children (5-12) - \$25

Rates valid through 1/16/24

Author Guest of Honor



RYKA AOKI


I first met Ryka Aoki, as so many did, through her book *Light From Uncommon Stars*—although I can say I met her slightly before most, since I was asked to blurb the book before it came out. I almost passed on it, strictly for issues of time, until I saw that it took place in the Eastern San Gabriel Valley of Los Angeles County—the unfashionable LA valley, and the one I grew up in as a kid. Almost entirely for this reason, I went ahead and read it.

The book was, I hopefully do not need to tell you, a joy. It has donuts and spacecraft and aliens and devils and music and people longing to be known for who they really are. I was happy to give it a blurb, and then later, when the book came out, I did an event with her at Loyalty Bookstore. At that point I got to meet the person behind the book. She was as delightful as her book, equally smart and equally real at heart. The hour conversation zoomed by.

In addition to everything else I do, I am also the head of the literary track for the JoCo Cruise, a nerd gathering that sails the seas. Based on her book and our earlier conversation, I was convinced she would be perfect as a featured author on the cruise. And I was right: The connection she made with the cruise goers and other authors and performers was immediate and visceral, as she shared her experiences as a writer, as a creative person of color, and as a trans woman in the 21st century. Her honesty and openness and willingness to connect created fans and friends wherever she went.

It is no surprise to me that Ryka has risen as fast and as far as she has, being a finalist for the Hugo and winning the coveted Otherwise Award for *Light From Uncommon Stars*. It's also no surprise to me that she's Arisia's Guest of Honor. Here is a wonderfully creative person, a deeply impressive intellect, and one of the nicest people that I've met in the genre. I'm so glad I've met her. I'm glad you get to meet her too.

— John Scalzi



Light From Uncommon Stars (Excerpt)

Ryka Aoki

CHAPTER 3

Lan Tran loved her donut. Her giant concrete and plaster donut.

Once common in LA's Eisenhower years, just a few of these giant donuts remained in greater Los Angeles. There was Kindle's Do-nuts, Dale's Donuts, and Randy's Donuts, of course. Donut King II was in Gardena. In La Puente, there was the drive-through Donut Hole.

And here, above El Monte, rose Starrgate Donut.

Lan's donut meant a future. Her donut meant family.

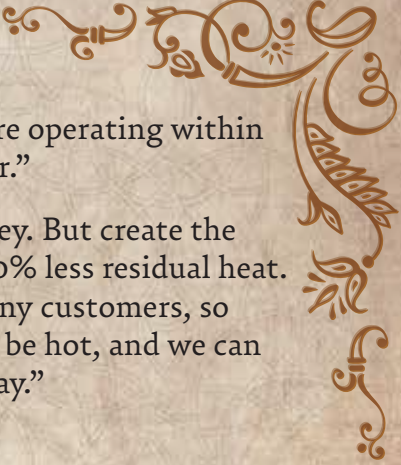
In the night quiet, Starrgate Donut hummed, almost like a starship. Stationed in the front, her twins Windee and Edwin navigated the donut case, stocking it with galaxies of sweet, colorful lemon creams, apple fritters, double chocolates, Boston crèmes, twists. At her back, Shirley and Auntie Floresta maintained operations, while below Markus was busy planning their next expansion.

"Hello, Captain!" the twins saluted.

Lan returned their salute.

"Carry on," she said, with a satisfied smile.

Shirley emerged from the back with a tray of chocolate éclairs.




"The replicators are operating within tolerances, Mother."

"Thank you, Shirley. But create the next batch with 30% less residual heat. We won't have many customers, so they don't need to be hot, and we can save power that way."

"Yes Mother."

Lan Tran stared out the window. The stars beckoned as they had always had.

One did not have to be a rocket scientist to make a donut. But that didn't mean it didn't help.



A picture of Mr. and Mrs. Thamavuong still hung on the wall. They had acquired Starrgate in 1979. At the time, it was known as El Monte Donuts. The Thamavungs sold classic, American-style donuts, made with happiness and care. And, in the 80s, video games became popular, so the Thamavungs brought them into their store.

El Monte Donuts became known not only for apple fritters, but for *Pac-Man*, *Asteroids*, and *Defender*. Their most popular game, by far, was *Stargate*. Dedicated video game players would spend hour after hour, quarter after quarter, rescuing people from an alien invasion that would never, ever cease. Eventually, Thamavungs decided to buy, rather than rent, first one, then two, and finally three *Stargate* machines. Since they kept them in good playing condition, their shop became known informally as *Stargate Donuts*.

Eventually, Mr. Thamavuong changed the name of El Monte Donuts officially to *Stargate Donut* (with the double "r" to avoid any trademark trouble).

Even after the video game craze passed, the name stuck over the years, and up until when the Thamavuongns were ready to retire.

By then they had realized that they had put so much love into the shop, they had forgotten about having children to take over the business. Developers began to inquire. Some even offered a fair price. But Mrs. Thamavuong would look at their big donut and cry. Their entire lives were in that donut.

Then one night, the Thamavuongns received an email from a woman named Lan Tran. Ms. Tran said that she wanted Starrgate Donut because of their big donut.

The sale was completed almost immediately. There was no bargaining—they named a price, and this woman agreed. Even better, she promised that Starrgate Donut would keep selling donuts and shine like a beacon into the night.

The Thamavuongns spent three weeks with Lan and her family to teach them their basic operations and how to run their equipment. Then, they handed their treasured recipe book and keys to Ms. Tran, and retired, full of good memories and good American currency, to Laos and their beloved Vientiane.

Once they left, Lan put the recipe book away. Instead of cooking, she had her crew digitally convert and store two-dozen of each type of donut the Thamavuongns had made. These reference donuts would be then quickly and virtually perfectly reproduced by the ship's replicators. The result? Cake donuts would always be colorful and pretty. Yeast donuts would be invariably golden and soft. No surprises, no worries.

Eventually, her crew might learn to make donuts as the Thamavuongns did, but for

now, Lan's job was to safeguard their safety and mission.

Because donuts were not the sole reason why Lan Tran and her crew were on this planet.

Lan strode past the kitchen and opened what had been the door to the cleaning closet. But instead of mops and buckets, behind it was a new shiny elevator leading down to the recently-completed lower level, which now housed the control center, research laboratory, sickbay, and living compound, as well as an underground hangar for their starship.

Here, at Starrgate Donut, Lan and her family would safely wait out the fall of the Galactic Empire, continue their work, and live undisturbed, as long as—as Mr. Thamavuong stressed—they gave donuts to the police officers for free.

“Captain,” Markus Tran saluted as she entered the research lab.

“Lieutenant. How are the modifications coming?”

“The donut is smaller than ideal—but it is nothing we can't address. Also, note the modifications I've made. With your approval, I will begin implementing them immediately.”

Lan looked over the plans and nodded. Her son had become quite the engineer, hadn't he?

“What about power?”

“As predicted, preparing this complex depleted over 62% of our power reserves. It will be at least three months before they return to normal levels, but our day-to-day operations should not be affected. However, there is a greater concern.”

“The stargate?”

“Yes, Captain. Even at 100%, our ship’s main reactor would be far from adequate. We need to find an external power source, but this civilization’s energy production falls short by several orders of magnitude.”

This was no surprise. After all, this planet hadn’t yet harnessed fusion, let alone point singularities or antimatter.

“I’ve been working on a solution to that,” Lan said. “For now, continue fabrication and low-power tests. You may also divert ten percent of ship’s power when we are not running the replicator.”

“Understood, Ma’am.”

“That will be all.”



“See! He called her mom!”

“No, he said Ma’am.”

“He said Mom!”

The twins rushed toward her as the elevator closed behind them.

“Edwin! Windee! Didn’t I tell you not to run in the halls? Your brother is tuning the warp field. And why aren’t you at your posts?”

“Sorry!” they said in unison.

“So, you two, what is all this about?”

“We wanted to know—” Edwin started.

“—that now that we’re off ship, should we call you Mom or Captain? I wanna call you Captain,” said Windee, saluting.

Lan saluted back. She tried not to smile.

“Very well, Ensign Windee.”

“But sometimes can I call you Mom?” Edwin said. He grabbed her waist and held on tight.


“Oh, Edwin... Settling on one name will be difficult, won’t it? What matters is that we’re together, and safe. And that means no more running through the halls. We don’t want anyone to get hurt, right?”

“Yes, Mom.”

“Aye-aye, Captain!”

“Good. Now, back up to the store, you two. Don’t you have jobs to do?”

Lan watched them running back to their posts. She shook her head and smiled. Family. She would cross a universe for her family.

In fact, she already had. 

Excerpted from **Light From Uncommon Stars**, by Ryka Aoki (Tor Books 2021). This excerpt is published here courtesy of the author and Tor Books and should not be reprinted without their permission.



Courage Tiger, Winona Nelson

Winona Nelson

Artist Guest of Honor



WINONA NELSON

I have a deep admiration and respect for Winona Nelson and her work; so much so, that I find the task of summarizing her personal qualities and professional contributions to the field an enormous undertaking. Yet, I'll endeavor to do so, because Winona Nelson deserves this moment in the light and to be celebrated.

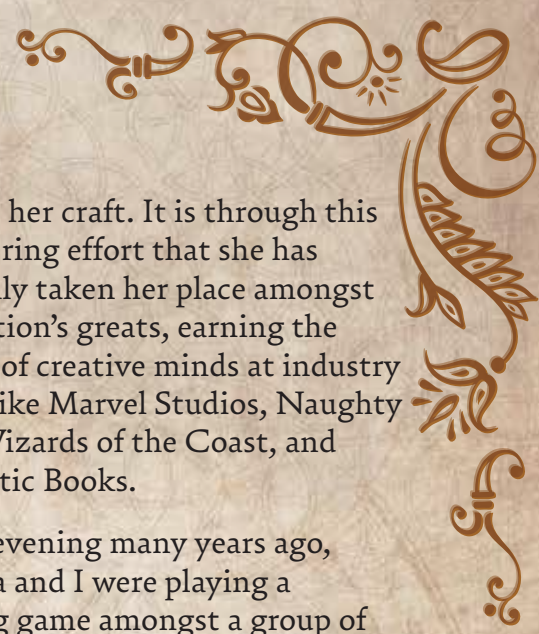
In all of Winona's domains—as a person, in her work, and through her tutelage—there is a continuous, woven thread of gentle strength: the kind of strength that comes from having endured and persevered through true hardships and then using those experiences to fuel a profound sense of introspection. She leads with empathy and bravely refuses to hide her vulnerabilities from those around her and within her work. Instead, she has forged an extraordinary armor from them: one that is simultaneously awe-inspiring and highly formidable. She uses these tools to act openly as a voice for marginalized people, while never straying from the warmth, kindness, and thoughtfulness that is at her core.

If you look closely at Winona's work, you'll find glimpses of her story: in the foliage that's from the places she has lived, in her clothing designs that clearly connote a supreme appreciation for fashion, in the hints she leaves of nostalgia for eighties counterculture, and in the care and detailed attention paid to a horse's every muscle and strand of tufted mane. If you keep looking, you will also see the bold adventurer that she is at heart, with flashes of the erotic, splashes of her humor, and the many experimental techniques that she employs almost effortlessly.

People often attribute great artists as having a gift, but this notion could not be further from the truth. The artist's vocation is extremely challenging, requiring countless hours of study, practice, experimentation, and brushes with failure to achieve any modicum of greatness. Winona Nelson is a great artist, not because she has been given a gift, but because she is one of the most passionate and dedicated artists that I have known, working endlessly



W. Nelson



to hone her craft. It is through this unwavering effort that she has rightfully taken her place amongst illustration's greats, earning the respect of creative minds at industry giants like Marvel Studios, Naughty Dog, Wizards of the Coast, and Scholastic Books.

On an evening many years ago, Winona and I were playing a drawing game amongst a group of artists. The prompt was to draw a self-portrait with nothing, but our single, greatest weapon. Naturally, the images were filled with intricate blasters, filigreed rapiers, and bombastic canons. However, among these pieces, one stood out prominently; Winona had drawn herself, arms raised to the sky, atop a majestic unicorn.

In this simple image, there was some profound clarity: Winona's greatest weapon is simply herself. Much like her work, she is unabashed yet disarming, outspoken yet enchanting. And much like her work, she speaks for herself.

- Daneen Wilkerson



Fan Guest of Honor



TANYA DEPASS

Have you ever had a friend that once you got to know them, you just felt like they've always been there? The kind of friend that feels like you've known each other forever, knowing full well you haven't? The friend that you'd do just about anything for the asking, but you know that if they even formed their lips to ask you, you should feel honored because of how capable they are in their own right?

That's what it's like being friends with Tanya.

Maybe it's because we're both from Chicagoland, because if you asked me the date or the month that we crossed paths, I'd be hard pressed to give you one. That doesn't change the fact that it feels like she's always been there, coming up with new TTRPGs and the universes surrounding them, painting minis, speaking out about the injustices of the world for herself and people like her, playing through Dragon Age again, enjoying the interplay between the characters in Baldur's Gate, going far above and beyond to support a friend or simply swapping and laughing at random memes.

She is a powerhouse, of that there's no question. She's also the kind of friend we all need in our lives. The kind of friend that will call you out when you're doing a little too much, shout your name from the highest of rooftops when you're doing something amazing, and take you along for the ride if she's doing something big. I know this personally, because I've experienced each of those from her.

If there was a formula or blueprint to become anywhere near as amazing of a person as she is, the world would be a better place if everyone learned it.

Considering I still don't know how to repay the kindness that she's shown me in the forever I feel like I've known her and how much I've grown as a person by trying to be more like the character I was allowed to become in a world that she's created? I'd be the first in line.

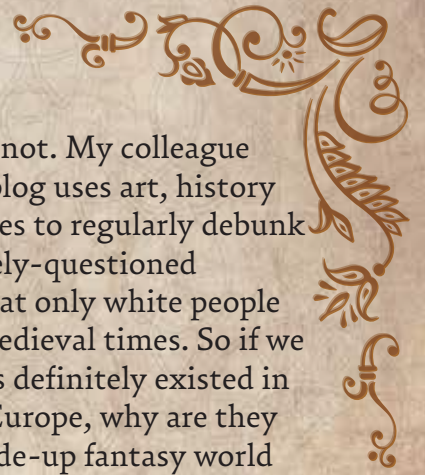
- DeeJay Knight



Starstuff, Winona Nelson

www.winonanelsonart.com

Winona



In Fantasy Worlds, Historical Accuracy Is a Lie

Tanya DePass

[Editor's note: We were not able to reprint the screenshots and hyperlinks to other websites that accompanied this article when it was published, but you can read it online [here](#).]

The mythical realms of Dragon Age grow beautifully with the telling, including their representation of Earthly minorities. Even so, something's missing...

I'd like to welcome you to Thedas, a fantastical place lots of us have lived in since BioWare's Dragon Age: Origins launched in 2009. The borders of this lush fantasy world have sprawled ever outward through the release of Dragon Age II, and welcomed ever more players. With the most recent game, Dragon Age: Inquisition we can end up a leader, whether we're a human, an elf or a dwarf.

But though almost anything's possible within Dragon Age's beloved world of Thedas, something feels off. Although Dragon Age is a fantasy roleplaying game, Thedas is overlaid with a faux-European sociopolitical landscape—and that means there are few people of color among its citizenry. Why do the sinister old arguments of “historical accuracy” still apply to this fantasy world?

Elves, magic, dragons, shapeshifting and ancient powers of world destruction are somehow totally believable, but the idea that brown people might

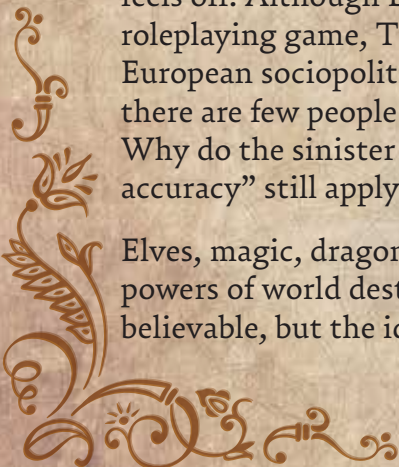
exist is somehow not. My colleague MedievalPOC's blog uses art, history and other resources to regularly debunk the broad but rarely-questioned misconception that only white people were around in medieval times. So if we know brown folks definitely existed in actual Medieval Europe, why are they absent from a made-up fantasy world only loosely inspired by Medieval Europe? Where are the brown folks in Dragon Age's Thedas?

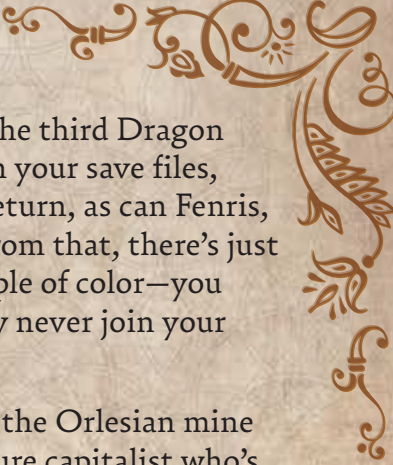
Let's have a look at the history of representation in my favorite game series.

Across the series' first two games, it seems that except for a handful of NPCs (non-player characters), Thedas is overwhelmingly white. Except these NPCs and a few incredibly minor encounters (blink and you'll miss 'em) on the map, there aren't many characters easily identifiable as people of color, like Zevran Arainai, the Antivan assassin who you encounter after he's been hired to kill you. There's also Isabela, the Rivaini pirate who can teach you the Duelist specialization. There's Duncan, who initially recruits you to the Wardens, whose heritage is mixed with Rivaini. We also can't forget about the Qunari warrior Sten, who you can encounter in Lothering and rescue, or leave for the Darkspawn to kill.

Aside from these characters, we do encounter a few minor NPCs — but oddly enough, I've noticed a pattern: The majority of them just happen to live in the town that gets destroyed first in the game. You don't have the option to help them.

Count exceptions to the rule all you like, but one has to notice there's not





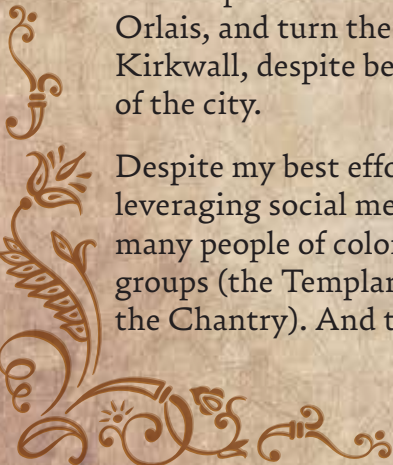
a lot of color in these games. Tumblr user flutiebear compiled a full accounting of just how many POC characters are in the DA world. The percentages are not heartening.

In the first game, *Dragon Age: Origins*, you could create a non-white Warden – yet it wasn't really possible to make a non-white Warden that looked right, because of the limitations of the character creator. For one thing, there was something amiss when you had cutscenes with your family.

It got better in *Dragon Age II*, where your choices from the character creator would influence the appearance of your siblings Bethany and Carver, as well as your mother Leandra and her sibling, Gamlen.

Dragon Age II introduced “genetics” that were passed among the Hawke family (your family, as the protagonist Hawke) as a way to see family relationships. The improved graphics also allowed you to make a POC Hawke. Though there were still few dark skin tones to choose from in the character creator, it was a step up from the first game's character creator, as you can see.

That's great for players who want to have a Hawke who resembles them. But what about the city they save? If you look around, you'll find most areas of *Dragon Age II*'s Kirkwall were populated with mostly-white background characters. The city is divided into multiple areas, and the Hightown sector is the “upper class area,” where inhabitants are coded as white and affluent. Many seem to be expats from the even more-haute Orlais, and turn their nose up at being in Kirkwall, despite being in the “better” part of the city.



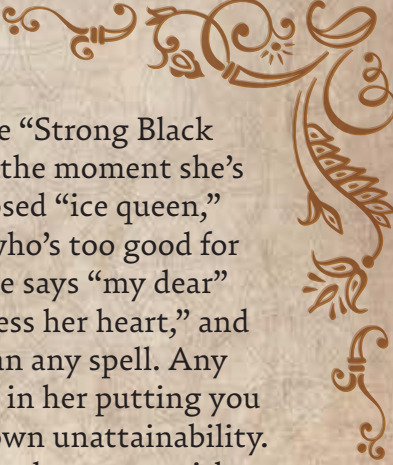
Despite my best efforts trawling and leveraging social media, I couldn't find many people of color in the game's religious groups (the Templars and the sisters of the Chantry). And the situation doesn't

improve when we reach the third *Dragon Age* game: Depending on your save files, Isabela and Zevran can return, as can Fenris, an escaped slave. Aside from that, there's just a few NPCs who are people of color—you encounter them, but they never join your party.

There's Hubert Bartiere, the Orlesian mine owner—he's a slimy venture capitalist who's only concerned with the bottom line and disregards his employees. There's Ella, the Circle mage that is being harassed by Ser Alrik; Alain the runaway Starkhaven mage, and Guardsman Maecon, who you encounter when entering the Blackpowder Treason mission. Within the fandom, lots of us argue about whether Sebastian Vael could be considered a person of color—I say no, personally.

We further see this imbalance in the characters that hold power in Kirkwall; Knight-Commander Meredith Stannard is in charge of the city from Act III through the game's end – and she's a blonde, blue-eyed Templar. Viscount Marlowe Dumar, in charge of Kirkwall for two out of three of the game's acts? Also white and blue-eyed. Knight-Captain Cullen Rutherford is another white blond guy, while ruddy-complected Seneschal Bran likely runs the city for Viscount Dumar. Aveline Vallen is Captain of the Guard – another white blonde.

While he's white-skinned, First Enchanter Orsino, elven leader of the mages, faces a situation where his authority is crippled by the fact he's an elf – and a mage. in a city where Templars rule. Elves are often treated as second and third-class citizens in *Dragon Age* lore – a lot of people compare their status to the experience of POC by many, but their appearance has changed. Where they once had a variety of skin tones, elves in *Dragon Age II* are mostly fair-complected.



So while Dragon Age II was a step back for the universe's NPC diversity, the latest game, Dragon Age Inquisition, has thankfully taken a leap forward in visual representation. We finally get a black party member—a character no one can claim might not be black. Meet Vivienne De Fer, the Official Enchanter to the Court of Orlais.

We also get a far more diverse cast of characters in the recent Dragon Age: Inquisition. We have Mother Giselle, a Chantry mother you encounter early in the game, Dorian Pavus, a mage from Tevinter, Josephine Montilyet, your Ambassador from Antiva, and if you choose the Templars, you can recruit Ser Delrin Barris to the cause. There's also Master Dennet, the horsemaster from Redcliffe, his daughter Seanna and his weapons master Bron, whom you encounter during a quest.

So there are many more people of color, both non-player characters and recruitable ones, in Dragon Age: Inquisition. Great, right? Well, while Thedas certainly got more colorful between DA II and the Inquisition, it still sees some representation problems when it comes to character development and how they interact with the world and your Inquisitor.

For example, Chantry Mother Giselle seems like a great character when you first meet her. She doesn't appear to care whether the Inquisitor is dwarven, human, elven or Qunari. But once the player acquires Skyhold, we rapidly see her character degenerate into a collection of tropes: The excessively-religious, homophobic black lady. The "magical negro" who helps everyone launch into the "Dawn Will Come" musical sequence (for more on this, see my piece "My problem with Mother Giselle").

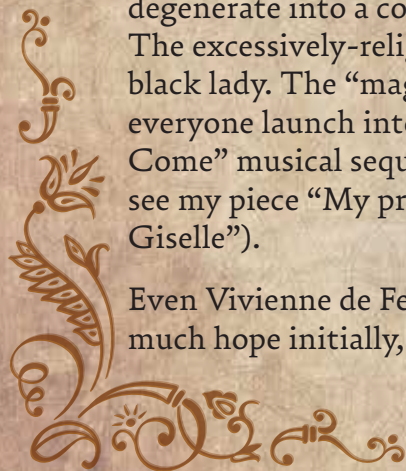
Even Vivienne de Fer, who gave me so much hope initially, disappoints. She falls

head over hennin into the "Strong Black Woman" archetype from the moment she's introduced. She's a supposed "ice queen," an untouchable woman who's too good for the plebes around her. She says "my dear" like some women say "bless her heart," and her words cut sharper than any spell. Any flirtation attempts result in her putting you down, emphasizing her own unattainability. Why can't she just be a black woman with the romantic and relationship quirks we all have?

It disappoints me greatly that the first undeniably black party member this franchise gave us is a walking trope. Although lots of my fellow players love Vivienne, I can't — she seems to me another flat, dull reflection of how women like me are seen by the media (sassy, bossy). There are also incredibly gross sequences between her and Cole, when you have them in the same party — if you're interested in delving further into this, you can read this thread on GameFAQs (content warning: racism).


But there's still some hope. Dragon Age: Inquisition's Ser Barris is a Templar you can rescue and recruit to the Inquisition, and his blackness is never an issue in how you recruit him or interact with him. In fact, you can send him on missions and ultimately see him promoted to Knight-Commander in a wonderful scene. Actually, many non-player characters in Dragon Age: Inquisition aren't othered or reduced to one-dimensional tropes. They're just characters going about their lives, and the sight gives me hope for future installations of Dragon Age.

I hope the tropes that govern characters like Vivienne de Fer or Mother Giselle are the last we see of these types of things. I hope these missteps simply happen because there aren't many people of color working in the games industry. It's not that anyone on the Dragon Age team is willfully



racist or malicious to players; it's simply that someone who doesn't have the lived experience of dealing with racism as a person of color would simply not think about these things.

I want these things to end; I want more people of color working in the games industry. I want more people on the team who can go, "whoa, wait, this isn't okay." I want more people sitting in the room who can bring things like these up when scripts are being written — or better yet, while characters are still being conceived. These painful jabs hurt people like me as we traverse the fantasy worlds that are supposed to represent the ultimate escape from the real.

I hope the next invitation to Thedas brings me a more inclusive journey. 

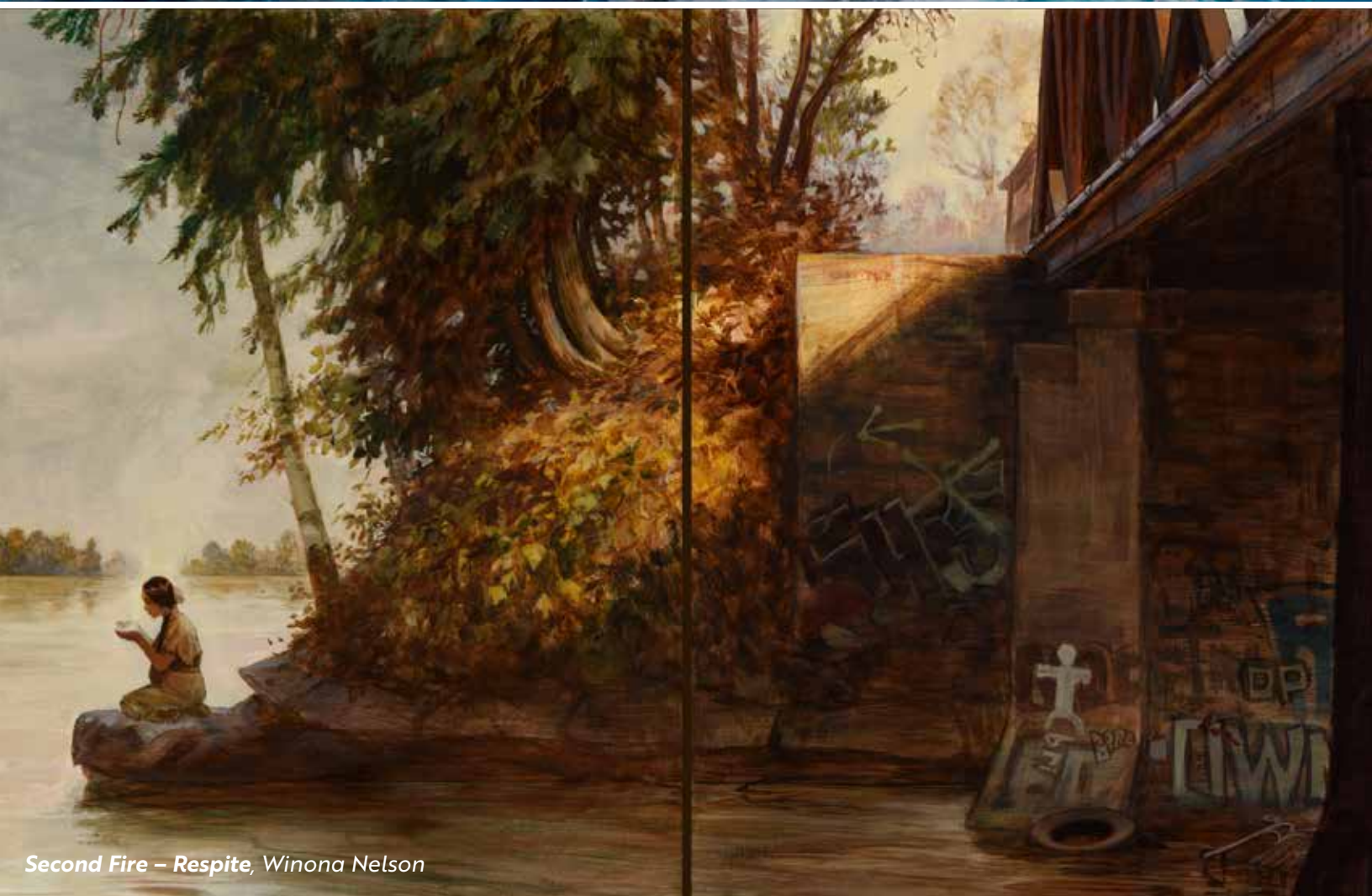


Star Chasing, Winona Nelson





Guardian of the Eastern Door, Winona Nelson



Second Fire - Respite, Winona Nelson



Featured Guests



Featured Music Guest

WINDBORNE SINGERS

“The most exciting vocal group in a generation,” Windborne’s captivating show draws on the singers’ deep roots in traditions of vocal harmony, while the absolute uniqueness of their artistic approach brings old songs into the present. Known for the innovation of their arrangements, their harmonies are bold and anything but predictable.

With a 20-year background studying polyphonic music around the world, Lauren Breunig, Jeremy Carter-Gordon, Lynn Rowan, and Will Rowan share a vibrant energy onstage with a blending of voices that can only come from decades of friendship alongside dedicated practice. The ensemble shifts effortlessly between drastically different styles of music, drawing their audience along on a journey that spans continents and centuries, illuminating and expanding on the profound power and variation of the human voice.



Featured Gamer Guest

EUGENIO VARGAS

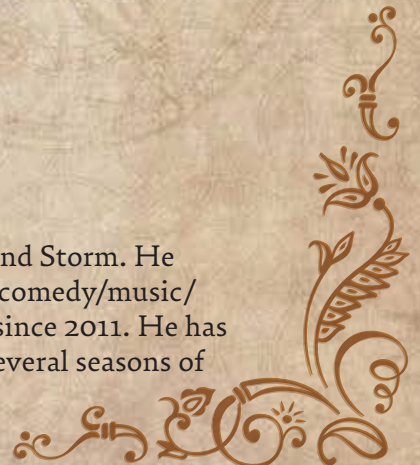
Eugenio Vargas is a TTRPG designer, writer, and professional GM, as well as a streamer and podcaster. He’s been featured as both a GM and player in various actual play shows, including *The Last Refuge: A D&D Podcast*, *Into the Mother Lands*, *Idle Champions Presents: Hunger of the Far Realms*, and *Rivals of Waterdeep*. As a writer and designer, Eugenio has design credits in books published by MCDM Productions (*Flee, Mortals!* and *Where Evil Lives*), *Green Ronin* (*The Fifth Season Roleplaying Game*), *Wizards of the Coast* (*Fizban’s Treasury of Dragons*), and a few others coming soon. When he’s not writing or GMing, Eugenio streams games on his Twitch channel as *DMJazzyHands*. In the beforetimes, Eugenio was also a musical theater actor and music director, performing in musical productions around the world.



Featured Guest

PAUL SABOURIN

Paul Sabourin is one half of comedy/music duo Paul and Storm. He is a co-founder of JoCo Cruise, an annual week-long comedy/music/creativity-themed event cruise that has been sailing since 2011. He has also been a staff writer and co-producer on the past several seasons of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*.



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