

*PICOCON 41:*



*THE MENAGERIE*

Cover page by Hazel Wright & Michelle Lo

# A WORD FROM OUR OVERLORD

Greetings, and on behalf of Imperial College Science Fiction and Fantasy Society, welcome to **Picocon 41: The Menagerie!**

First and foremost, I would like to thank our dedicated Picocon Sofa and Beanbag, Riyah and Kai, who have done an incredible job organising and running our 41st Picocon. With her knowledge from being Beanbag last year, Riyah has done a spectacular job spearheading the organisation of Picocon, with the assistance of Kai, who was elected to their position in November.

I'd also like to thank the rest of ICSF Committee for their efforts and dedication in bringing Picocon 41 to life. As a first-time member of the committee, I've had an incredible time getting to know everyone this year, and helping keep the society running, and I'm so grateful for the dedication and enthusiasm of our members, without whom events like Picocon wouldn't be possible.

And finally, thank you for coming and being a part of our Picocon community! Your presence and enthusiasm makes all the difference, and without you, we wouldn't be able to make Picocon happen. We're thrilled to have you join us for this celebration of science fiction and fantasy!

Now, let's dive into the fantastical world of Picocon 41: The Menagerie! Embrace the adventure, the creativity, and the camaraderie that make our community so special.

Enjoy!  $\Psi\Phi$

**HAZEL WRIGHT**

ICSF Entity of Chairs



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[facebook.com/groups/ICSF.imperial](https://facebook.com/groups/ICSF.imperial)  
Sci-fi talk, news and events, entertaining links.



[@picocon](https://twitter.com/picocon)  
Announcements and hype for our annual convention.



[@Imperial\\_SciFi](https://twitter.com/Imperial_SciFi)  
Our official Blue bird app account thing.



[@imperial\\_scifi](https://www.instagram.com/imperial_scifi)  
Visions from the library.

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# THE SOFA'S RAMBLINGS

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Welcome all, to **Picocon 41!**

For this year's event, we're bringing it all back to the beginning. When you were just a wee toddler (fine, a medium-sized teenager), what was it that drew you to the fold of science fiction and fantasy? Was it the thrill of what could be, if the world matched up to one's imagination? The dread of what could be, if today's world was tweaked just a little? Honestly, yeah, but that's beside the point. The biggest attraction by far to the uninitiated will always be the beasts, whether they're monstrous horrors or cute-n-cuddlies (or both, in the case of Sophie Number Five).

A magical menagerie deserves the finest presenters, and I'm proud to announce this year's Guests of Honour: four incredible authors talking about their own creatures, and how they set them loose on the page. Whether you're interested in spinecrawling monsters or mechanical elephants, diving dragons or crimson cranes, you're sure to be entertained.

If you can make it through the day without being devoured by Kraky, you'll be sure to enjoy our wholesome traditions of death and destruction (of Dodgy Merch) and horrors beyond comprehension (Turkey Talks). We'll also be carrying out a more recent tradition of Baguette Battles, out of sensitivity to our resident mermaids, and out of love for the local pigeons. Finally, our all-day Scavenger Hunt and Picocon Quiz at the end of the evening will give you the chance to make your chosen mascot proud.

Thank you for attending this year's Picocon, and enjoy The Menagerie; ask yourself what the best mythical creature is, and why it's the Loch Ness Monster. **ΨΦ**

**JUAIRIYAH RAQIB**

Picocon Sofa

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## A WORD FROM THE BEANBAG

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Menagerie — an umbrella term for all the wonderful and horrifying creatures trapped between the pages of fiction. Who knows why we, in turn, are ensnared by these fantastical beasts? Between univeristy and organising this convention, this has been a hectic term, but I had so much fun inviting our incredible speakers this year, and wrangling the rest of the committee for our many preparations, which I hope you will enjoy.

Have a wonderful day :) **ΨΦ**

**KAI LAM**

Picocon Beanbag

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# WHAT'S ON

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Ah. Once again you find yourself trapped in one of the machinations devised by the Imperial Science Fiction Society – Picocon. A newcomer, you say? Fear not, for this handbook shall guide you through the perils of the day...

Through the powers of divination and meticulous planning, we shall be graced with the presence of not one, but four, **Guests of Honour**. After lecturing us on the wonders and horrors of these creatures of our design, there shall be a **Guest Panel** where all your questions shall be answered, followed by some book signings.

After lunch, there shall be righteous **Destruction of Dodgy Merchandise**. The audience (You) shall be given a choice: to save one of these pitiful creations from a fate of total annihilation; or, to bring the hammer of justice (and the cold death of -196 C) down on their stupid little faces. The choice is yours.

In conjunction with this, one shall bear witness to the height of modern chivalry – **Baguette Bash**. Engage in duels of honour, and destroy your enemies with sticks of rolled bread, or sit on the sidelines and enjoy the show, but only if you are a coward.

The dreaded **Turkey Talks** shall once again be held. Introverts will, for some ineffable reason, willingly choose to speak on stage. The audience shall be given the power to prolong the fool's suffering, in form of charitable donations.

**Imperial Tabletop & Gaming** will return once more in **Femtocon**. They are cool too, so definitely check out their society as well. As always, those who brave the depths of science fiction and fantasy are always welcome to visit the **Sci-Fi Library**, open lunchtimes throughout the week in Beit's West Basement.

As written. **ΨΦ**

**CLIFFORD CHAN**

ICSF Editor

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# SCHEDULE

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09:00      Front Desk / registration opens

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10:00      **Guest Talk: Gita Ralleigh**  
Blackett Bulding LT1

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10:55

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11:00      **Guest Talk: Jonathan Sims**  
Blackett Building LT1

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11:55

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12:00      **Guest Talk: Christopher Paolini**  
Blackett Building LT1

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12:55

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13:00      **LUNCH**  
CONSUME THINE VEGETABLES

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13:55

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14:00      **Destruction of dodgy merchandise**  
Queen's Lawn  
**Baguette Bash**  
Queen's Lawn

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14:55

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15:00      **Author Guest Panel**  
Blackett Building LT1

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15:55

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16:00      **Turkey Talks**  
Blackett Building LT1

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17:55

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18:00      **The Picocon Quiz**  
Blackett Building LT1

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19:00

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## GUESTS OF HONOUR

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Christopher Paolini is the author of the international bestsellers **Eragon**, **Eldest**, **Brisingsr**, and **Inheritance**, as well as **The Fork, the Witch, and the Worm. Murtagh**, the fifth book in The Inheritance Cycle, was published in November last year, and marks the highly anticipated return to the World of Eragon. His debut science fiction novel, **To Sleep in a Sea of Stars**, came out in September 2020 and its prequel, **Fractal Noise**, was released in May 2023. He resides in Paradise Valley, Montana, USA.



**CHRISTOPHER  
PAOLINI**

Elizabeth Lim is the New York Times, Sunday Times, USA TODAY, and indie bestselling author of the **Six Crimson Cranes** duology, **The Blood of Stars** duology, as well as the **Disney Twisted Tales**. She is a graduate of Harvard College with an A.B. in music and a secondary in East Asian Studies, and she completed her graduate degrees at The Juilliard School. Over the years, Elizabeth became a film and video game composer, and even went so far as to get a doctorate in music composition. Eventually, she returned to writing – and she hasn't looked back since.



**ELIZABETH  
LIM**

Gita Ralleigh is a writer, poet and doctor born to Indian immigrant parents in London. She has an MA in Creative Writing with Distinction from Birkbeck, University of London and an MSc with Distinction in Medical Humanities from King's College London. She has written poetry books (**A Terrible Thing (2020)**, **Siren (2022)**), and her debut novel for young readers, **The Destiny of Minou Moonshine (2023)**, is a story of a Queendom set in an alternate India. Currently, she is a lecturer for the undergraduate Creative Writing module at Imperial College London!



**GITA  
RALLEIGH**

Jonathan Sims is an award-winning writer, performer and game designer who is most well known for his fiction podcast **The Magnus Archives**, which won the 2021 British Fantasy Award for Best Audio among many others (its sequel **The Magnus Protocol** is in the works). He has also published two novels, **Thirteen Storeys** and **Family Business**. He also runs the story-game and TTRPG company MacGuffin & Co. with his partner Sasha Sienna, and does various voice artist, streaming and design work. He lives with two cats.



**JONATHAN  
SIMS**



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# QUEST OBJECTIVES

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The beasts of the menagerie grow hungry and bored...

On your way in, you should have been assigned to one of the following teams: **Team Red**, **Team Magic Horse**, or **Team Cerberus**. If you have not been allocated a team (and want to be. Why wouldn't you though), then please go back to the desk you obtained this handbook from and kindly berate the receptionists until they give you one.

On the next page, you will discover a list of potentially dangerous, maybe evil, and definitely surprising items. Find any of these things, bring evidence to the front desk and win fabulous prizes... such as points for your team (and uh...nothing else...)! Whoever earns the most points gets to go home proud knowing they managed to satisfy their glorious mascots (and not in their stomachs).

Enjoy scavenging, and remember – the menagerie does not like waiting...

This year's teams are (drumroll):



**BLUE**

Team Red.



**RASPBERRY**

Team Magic Horse.



**JOHNNY**

Team Cerberus (pettable).

- Items can be submitted to the Front Desk for Fun Points™ after 11am.
- Pictures are (usually) not admissible.
- Objectives involving people must only be undertaken with the person's permission.
- The front desk reserves the right to keep the submitted items.
- Unless otherwise noted, each faction may claim an item on the list only once.

## LIST OF DANGEROUS, POTENTIALLY IMPOSSIBLE ITEMS

15	A Good Cow	51	An alien
1	Hugs (per person)	10	Ten good reasons why Afterlife was awful
10	A terrible cosplay <sup>FD E</sup>	15	2 greek letters
30	A good cosplay <sup>FD E</sup>	50	A comically large spoon <sup>FD</sup>
50	A Menagerie-themed cosplay <sup>FD E</sup>	20	The answers to the quiz – cannot be submitted after half 6
30	Picocon	200	A freaking dragon
20	A non-ICSF fresher at Picocon	333	A three-headed dog (pettable)
Age+5	Ex-ICSF Chair <sup>M</sup>	10	A UFO
Age+5	Ex-ICSF Librarian <sup>M</sup>	-20	A very awkward moment <sup>FD</sup>
Age+5	Ex-ICSF Treasurer <sup>M</sup>	5	A book ICSF lacks (and wants)
Age+5	Ex-ICSF Editor <sup>M</sup>	-5	A book ICSF lacks (and does not want)
Age+5	Ex-ICSF Chair of Vice <sup>M</sup>	-10	A book ICSF owns (and does not want)
Age+5	Ex-ICSF Secretary <sup>M</sup>	100	A menagerie
Age+5	T-shirts from Picocon's past <sup>M</sup>	-10	A zombie
10	Previous Guest of Honour <sup>E</sup>	-20	A ghost
20	Snacks/chocolate for the committee <sup>FD E</sup>	2	Famous first words.
-15	Snacks/chocolate for yourself <sup>FD E</sup>	3	Famous last words (subject to checking)
10	tbh, just any food for the committee <sup>E</sup>	20	Spite
100	The Picocon Sofa, frantic	1	Had no sleep last night
50	The Picocon Beanbag, calm	10	A healthy obsession
3	A good hat <sup>FD</sup>	-10	An unhealthy obsession
-2	A hat with holes	5	A Worm reference
10	A portrait of your team mascot.	50	A thorough, and comprehensible explanation of vorticity to a non-physics/maths student
15	A wizard's pointy hat	15	Dune popcorn bucket
4	A d20 dice.	70	A lost Doctor Who episode
15	A bowler hat	3	An understood reference <sup>E</sup>
45	A barbershop quartet (+20 points if Menagerie-themed).	-3	A misunderstood reference <sup>E</sup>
1000	£100 <sup>E</sup>	-10	A misunderstood scientific reference <sup>E</sup>
2	A funny joke <sup>FD E</sup>	30	A fairy
-2	A bad pun <sup>FD E</sup>	15	A sleeping editor (wake him up(violently))
30	A fairy wand		
15	An actual Pokémon		
10	Bagpipes		

25	A Master Ball.	5	A missing board game piece <sup>E</sup>
5	Someone who has watched Pantheon.	500	Dead committee member <sup>E</sup>
50	A sandworm	-70	Insanity from exposure to cosmic horror
20	Spice Melange	60	Shrek
900	The current Tech Priest (in person)	40	Map to Shrek's swamp
-5	A fan of a certain "subgenre" in the Omegaverse.	0	Proof for Euler's identity
40	The tentacle of a Kraken	3	Fear
15	At least three creme eggs.	50	Name ten dragon types from HTTYD <sup>FD M</sup>
150	At least three phoenix eggs.	125	A unicorn
10	A doomed time clone	-30	A horse
±20	A justified/unjustified financially irresponsible action <sup>FD</sup>	5	Read a story in the fanzine <sup>FD E</sup>
20	A bear	5	A red Poké Ball
-10	Complaints about Worm references <sup>E</sup>	2	Drinking coffee
223	A reincarnated Archimedes	5	A mythological creature the Editor does not know.
15	A full reenactment of Duel of the Fates	25	The true timeline
5	The high ground	35	A fishsword
-5	Sand	35	A lightsaber
15	A sphinx	10	A copy of Gideon the Ninth for the library.
5	A pyramid	5	An Ed <sup>E</sup>
10	Rupert's drop	10	A wild Ed <sup>E FD</sup>
		10	A completed nonogram

<sup>FD</sup> Front Desk Person's Discretion<sup>†</sup>

<sup>E</sup> This item may be claimed multiple times per faction ("each")

<sup>M</sup> For each faction, the highest of their scores will be used

<sup>†</sup>This actually applies to everything; where it is noted, it indicates that you're unlikely to change anyone's mind with your cunning arguments.

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## **NOTES AND STUFF**

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