

SCIENCE FICTION

EVERY WRITER

THEY CAME FROM SPACE

VOLUME Q2 2023

UFO
IN THE SKY

SCI-FI STORIES AND POEMS

CONTEST WINNERS AND ENTRIES

50 FANTASTIC SCIENCE FICTION
WRITING PROMPTS

TOP 11 SCIENCE FICTION SHORT
STORIES EVERYONE SHOULD READ

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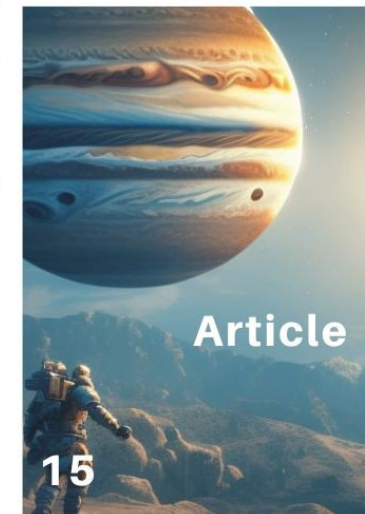
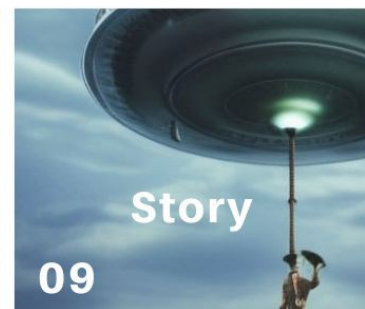
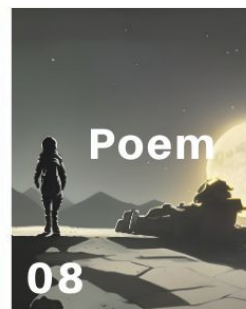
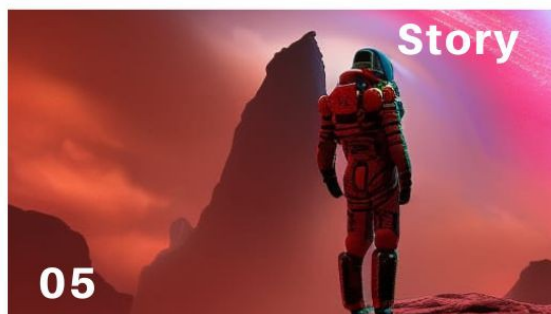
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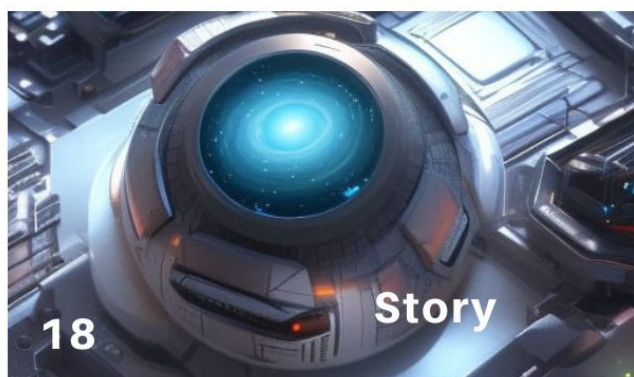
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table of con - tents

- 03 Editor's Letter
- 05 Don't Look for Us by
Christina Lachance
- 08 Welcome to the Moom
by Bruce McRae
- 12 Alien Bloom Jeff
Fleming
- 14 Buy it Now!
by Melanie Friedman
- 15 50 Fantastic Sci-Fi Writing
Prompts
- 18 In the Year 2889 by Jules
Verne
- 30 Winners of our Contests!



- 34 Top 11 SciFI Short Stories
- 37 Top 10 SciFI Books I love
- 43 Time Window by Doug
Dawson
- 49 Catchin Up 2143 by Doug
Mathewson
- 50 Life is Precious by
William Wiggins
- 69 Top 10 SciFI Movies



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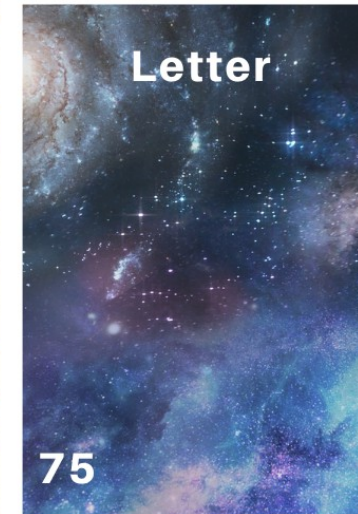
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table of con - tents

- 54 On the Last Day by George Moore
- 55 Sunligh Crystal by Scott Thomas Outlar
- 62 Door in the Wall by HG Wells
- 72 Should I Self-Publish my book?
- 75 Letter from the Editor
- 78 When I heart the Learn'd Astronomer by Walt Whitman



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Don't Look For Us

by Christine LaChance

Archive: LC-ECHO-114
Transmission Delta Delta Phi
QIV

“Is it working? This is Lieutenant Cypher of the Echo-114 squadron. If you're hearing this transmission, it means we're lost. I'm the only one left. More specifically, I don't know where all the others have gone. Our vessel is a derelict. Our instruments have been compromised. There are too many electrical storms on this planet. We had no choice but to land here, a planet where the atmosphere wouldn't destroy us. Coming here, we thought there would be a chance of survival, an opportunity for repairs, even a chance at exploration. We were wrong. I've linked the coordinates of our last location to, upon a miracle, warn you about this place, to keep you from here.

“The wormhole had ensnared us before we had any hope of escape. My god, it formed so rapidly. To see space fold and shift upon itself like that. Then to be consumed by the very calamity of quantum physics. Times like that, I



might really be a god, and that He might have deemed it fit to punish us. We had come so far. We were destined to be slapped back down. How could we not be punished? We were foolish. So much life, so much potential, gone. I played my part, I know.

“When I awoke here, I was alone. My soldiers had

they could have gone on such a hostile planet. I don't know why they would have abandoned me, or at least not have sought me out. They couldn't have gone far, not in this neverending tempest. Despite this, no information was given. No bodies found. There was nothing to suggest they were ever with me in the first place.



“The temperatures are rising and the storms are constantly churning. The temporary provisions kept in our vessel are running out. I am running out of time. I have sought out sanctuary somewhere upon the surface, beyond the wrecked ship, hoping I might find some sort of sign of anything, really. There is nothing out here to harvest, nothing to hunt. Even though the deep red sky swirls and vomits lightning restlessly, no rain comes. I’ve traveled little upon this surface, trying to extend my life just one more day. There are no rivers, no lakes, no water of any kind. Only white sand and black rock. I leave tracks when I

walk. They are red, nearly matching the sky. I can always follow my own footsteps back, if I ever fear losing my way. The rocks stand out, the complete opposite color of the sand. These rocks, I discovered while hiding from lightning, harbor caves. I have found a few, never straying far from the wreck. I follow the footsteps back, and the path grows redder each time. The number of footsteps keep growing, more and more of the pristine sand disturbed to reveal the bright redness just below the surface. I find myself thinking I follow a path of blood back the way I came.

“I’ve seen enough of this planet to know something else; There is nothing else out here, nothing but those strange faces. Floating eyes and fangs

haunt me, even inside this cave. I don’t know how much longer I can last out here. There is no hope of a rescue, and I’ve made my peace with this fact.



“Sleep, when it comes, is filled with visions of the crew I’ve lost, the crew I have failed. Too often I’ve been awoken by strikes of lightning. Too often I’ve awoken to see those strange faces peering at me from the shadows. The wide eyes of gold and red to match the sky. The fangs part in a frightful grin. Too often I see them. My weapons have no effect on them. If anything, it makes their grins go wider before they dissolve away. Back they come, always, to watch. They always watch me. Even now. I can see them staring, as though they listen to the words I speak to you now. They move closer, always. Always they come closer. I hate them. I don’t want them to watch me anymore. I don’t want to see them anymore. I’ve saved one bullet, and I think the time has come to use it. They can stare at me as much as they desire then.


“If my life were to have any meaning beyond the endless destruction I’ve wrought upon so many, let it be this warning; I beg you, I beg all of you. Whatever our military regulations tell you, whatever your conscience might dictate, however curiosity pushes you to seek out this living hell, please, don’t look for us. I deserve this. We deserve this.



WELCOME TO THE MOON

Poetry

by Bruce McRae



Of course I have no idea
what it is I'm doing here,
a little house on Mare Librium,
the icy nights and lack of atmosphere,
a door that's always ajar,
the light on the veranda
swarming with moon-moths and asteroids,
moondust getting into everything.
I'd rather be sailing,
though I've never been sailing before.
I hardly go anywhere
that I'm not invited.
For instance, the Vatican,
its secret library and underground passageways
that lead directly to a netherworld
they neither confirm nor deny,
the existence of heaven also in doubt,
in the same way some question
the moon landings or fairies in the garden.
I mean, who'd be an astronaut,
gravity's dearth and glut a problem,
the cosmos just another god to be denied . . .
But I digress, a series of digressions,
footprints in ash leading us away from ourselves,
Luna City rising up from a crater's bottom
and its suggestive connotations.
When what I'd wanted to say is
come one, come all, the moon awaits thee,
its enticing vistas and stoic panoramas,
though 'stoic' may not be the word I'm looking for,
perhaps 'stoney' or 'stolid' instead,
my point being we need the tourist dollars
if ever we hope to survive. And hope we must
if we are to flourish in the future.

Bruce McRae, a Canadian musician, is a multiple Pushcart nominee with poems published in hundreds of magazines such as Poetry, Rattle and the North American Review. The winner of the 2020 Libretto prize and author of four poetry collections and seven chapbooks, his poems have been performed and broadcast globally.

ALIEN BLOOM 982



BY JEFF FLEMING

One evening in late October, I thrashed my old rusty scythe at my overgrown lawn, whilst practising the odd golf swing. That's when the flying saucer arrived. It hovered, casting shadows. Startled, I struck my foot, saved only by the scythes bluntness.

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The saucer hovered, then lurched sideways, then sedately landed, flattening the grass. I kept the scythe anyway. I've watched alien abduction movies! The saucer bounced a while, then a door opened. There stood the alien, for real, space suit, ray gun, no helmet. Very, very, 1950's scfi B movie. I raised the scythe. The alien watched me. Whatever they say, she, definitely a she, wasn't grey but bright chlorophyll green.

She waved her gun, I pointed my scythe. She stepped onto the top stair, then back. At last she spoke.

'Can you hold the steps for me.'

Unthinking I did so. Near the bottom, those stairs collapsed. I grabbed hold, her weight dragged me down,

'My antigravity isn't right.' she turned a knob on her sleeve and would have floated away, but I held on.

'Technology never works!'

FEET FIRMLY PLANTED, SHE WAS MUCH TOO CLOSE. SHE TOOK TEN STEPS BACKWARDS, HER EYES NEVER LEAVING THE SCYTHE, THEN TRIPPED INTO THE FISH POND. I TRIED TO HELP. SHE WADDLED ON HER BACKSIDE FURTHER AWAY.

'LET ME GET OUT OR I WILL TAKE ROOT. STEP BACK!'

I DID SO.

'WHY AREN'T YOU A GREEN ARCTURAN? WHAT'S HAPPENED? THIS BROCHURE SAID...'

'IS THIS,' GULP, 'AN INVASION?' I ASKED.

'AN INVASION?' 'ERM, MAYBE. TAKE ME TO YOUR...' SHE HESITATED.

'... MY LEADER? IS THAT WHAT YOU MEAN?'

'NO... ONE OF THE BIG... BIG...ERM...'

NOW I WAS HELPING AN ALIEN INVADER WITH HER VOCABULARY. 'THE BIG BRASS? ARMY?'

'NO... A BIG BOOK, NO-ONE EVER OPENS.' 'A BIBLE?'

'NO LOTS OF WORDS IN IT.'

'THE BIBLE HAS LOTS....'

'A DICTIONARY.' SHE SMILED AT LAST. I FETCHED MY COLLINS. SHE LEAFED THROUGH... 'IT'S LIKE INVASION...'

SHOULD I CALL THE POLICE, OR TRY DO-IT-YOURSELF ALIEN CULLING.



‘Oh, wrong word! Vacation! Not invasion, stupid language. Sounds the same... anyway... That’s the word.’

‘A cup of tea, perhaps?’ How English could I get? How inane, spoken to a creature from space. She nodded. Tea and biscuits followed in my kitchen.

Vacation or not, I kept the scythe by my side. She watched my tea making distrustingly. Well, how could we trust each other, a bright-green alien girl, with long

green hair and a dull pinkish human. Finally,

‘It’s my holiday, but my rental ship is awful, things keep falling off. It never points where I want to go. I wanted the Galaxy’s pleasure resort of Arcturus.’

‘Um.’ I replied.

We talked. She was... well.... a chef in an alien version of McDonald’s. I commiserated, having done similar myself. She’d saved hard for this holiday. Our conversation

now approached normal... for two people discussing a faster than light trip in a broken flying saucer. Then she spoiled it, unholstered that gun. I leapt away, scythe held high.

‘It’s not a weapon! It’s my repair kit, to fix the steps. It jabbed my side, honest.’ She dropped the gun/screwdriver, and I made more tea.

‘I must fix the steps and everything. Can I stay? Can we trust each other.’ she asked

through a mouthful of chocolate digestive.

As I opened some wine, my hand strayed near that raygun/screwdriver. She grabbed it.

‘You said it’s a screw driver. I was just looking.’

‘It might not be.’ Then, ‘You cut vegetation with that scythe.’

‘So?’

‘I’m green, see, a plant, a chlorophyll based life form. To plants, that’s a frightening weapon.’

‘Sorry.’ I dropped the scythe outside, through the window.

She looked happier. Her gun/screwdriver now sat on my plate.

We talked a while. Evening turned to night. She looked tired. I said,

‘Tomorrow I help with the spaceship. How does this thing work?’

‘It really isn’t a weapon, unless you are a loose screw.’

I nodded. It felt light and flimsy,

‘How can we trust each other?’

‘Well you animal types have a habit of eating us plant types.’ She giggled, ‘Little green aliens at home eat animals...’

‘Um’. I said.

‘Can we go shopping?’

‘Yes... I mean no. You’ll frighten everyone.’

‘Ah.’

‘What about the beach?’

‘Same thing.’ I could imagine this bright green thing arriving at the seafront with everyone screaming and running like ‘War of The Worlds’.

‘Watch a movie?’ Was she reading my mind? Who knew?

‘I’ll get a takeaway.’

‘And more alcohol please. My name is Alien Bloom. Better call me Aileen’

‘Aileen Bloom?’

‘I’m a plant remember.’

A nicely strange evening followed. An ancient movie, ‘Them’, her choice from my collection. The film, pizza, wine ended. She said. ‘I know how we can trust each other.’

‘How?’

‘We sleep together.’



'Sex?' I was aghast.

'No stupid. I'm a plant remember. We sleep. Go unconscious in each others' arms. That induces trust, right?'

That night it was not like hugging a tree, it was worse,

'You're uncomfortable. All tensed up and hunched.'

'The space suit doesn't help. Your sharp bits dig in.'

'Sorry.' She slipped out of bed, slipped off the suit and returned. Now I could feel her curvy warmth.

'No better,' I said 'Py...

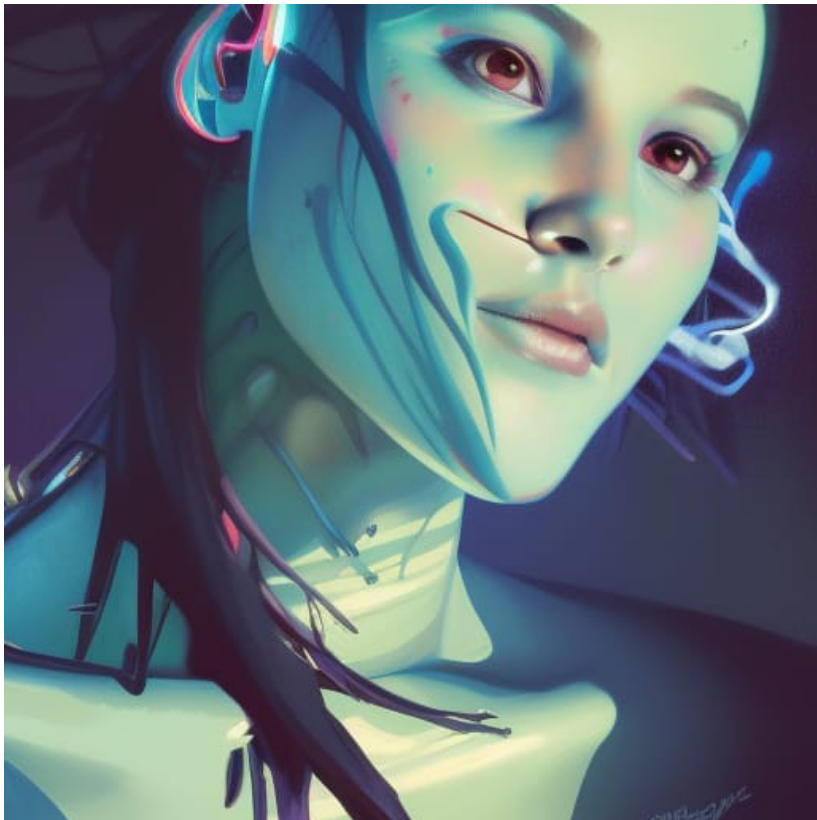
'...jamas' we spoke the end of the word together.

I grabbed a pair and threw them to her...

Next morning my neighbour Gordon walked in, Aileenn hid but Gordon didn't seem worried that I was breakfasting with a green alien vegetable life-form.

'Hi Jeff I need coffee.' He sat and gulped down Aileenn's cup.

'Jeff! She's gorgeous.'



'Who?'

'Ha ha! That girl is stunning!'

The Penny dropped, Gordon is colour blind. He hadn't noticed. Then my idea arrived,

'What's today Gordon?'

'Halloween! Morris Dancers! Booze! Fancy dress!'

So, Aileenn got her beach, shopping, stroll round, and company. We blended in well. She wore my torn T-shirt and I wore her space suit.

Jeff's early life was wasted, spent in a variety of ways including children's homes and being

fostered, and stealing food. But he got a place in a decent school which allowed him to realise there is a world out there!.

He escaped the system... got himself an exciting job and even more dangerous life threatening holiday adventures. Life has been a continual upward trend on the graph! Now he spends his days very enjoyably writing stories, stories to make people laugh, sci fi to raise your consciousness and supernatural stories to make your skin creep. He does not do horror (except very occasionally!)

rs Jeff

Buy it Now!

A Story

by Melanie Friedman

<Open Transmission>

BUY IT NOW! New BactiCulture Watch™! Have the time of life with this organically engineered timepiece complete with genome technology. Why waste your brainpower reading boring analog watches or throw away precious materials with a digital device? The BactiCulture Watch™ makes YOU a symbiotic being – just add sugar*! Never miss an appointment again with the BactiCulture Watch™!**

*Genetic cultures must be synced to resistant plating strains

**Temporal accuracy and recombination not guaranteed

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IT'S BACK! BactiCulture Watch™ NOW AVAILABLE IN MUCOUS, FUNGI, AND VIRUS! Match your culture to your clothing! Red cultures for those take charge days. Blue ones for keeping it cool. Customize your cultures and watch them grow*! One accessory – endless possibilities. GET YOURS TODAY!

*Additional cultures sold separately

<Close Transmission>

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RECALL NOTICE: Consumers should immediately return BactiCulture Watch™ timepieces and additional accessories to BactiCulture manufacturing facilities. Hazards include uncontrolled genetic recombination and mutated cell growth. Contact 1-888-GIVEBAC for processing details. No injuries have been observed at this time.

<Close Transmission>

<Open Transmission>

Global Health Advisory: BactiCulture vaccine on its way!

How you can help:

- Keep calm and remain in your home
- Avoid public spaces
- Offer rations to a neighbor in need
- Contact authorities only in an emergency
- Report signs of infection

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Bzzzzzzzz... *click* bzzzz... *chwwwwww* BUY IT NOW! New –.... *click*

<Close Transmission>

###

The author holds a B.Sc in Biology and Philosophy and enjoys writing speculative fiction and poetry for children and adults.

50 FANTASTIC SCIENCE FICTION WRITING PROMPTS

2023

Here are 50 fantastic writing prompts that will get you writing sci-fi. If you use one of prompts to write a story, we'd love to read it! [Send it to us.](#)

1. In a future society where humans have achieved immortality, a rebel group arises seeking the right to die.
2. After an experiment gone wrong, a scientist is trapped in a parallel universe where everything is the opposite of what it is in their world.
3. In a world where everyone is born with a unique ability, a young person is born without one.
4. After a devastating asteroid impact, humans must survive in an underground city for generations until it's finally safe to return to the surface.
5. In a society where people can upload their consciousness to the internet, a hacker finds a way to manipulate people's digital lives.
6. After a nuclear apocalypse, a group of survivors must rebuild society while dealing with a mutated strain of animals.
7. In a world where robots have replaced most jobs, humans seek to reclaim their place in the workforce.
8. After a scientific breakthrough, humans can travel through time, but with unexpected consequences.
9. In a society where people are genetically engineered for specific jobs, a rebel group arises to fight against their predetermined fate.
10. After discovering a new planet, a team of explorers must survive its harsh conditions and uncover its secrets.
11. In a future where people can upload their memories to virtual reality, a young person discovers a hidden conspiracy within the system.
12. After an alien invasion, a group of humans are taken captive and forced to adapt to life on a distant planet.
13. In a world where artificial intelligence has surpassed human intelligence, scientists must work together to prevent a robotic uprising.
14. After a global pandemic, humans must rebuild society while dealing with a new, deadly virus.
15. In a future where humans have colonized Mars, a group of colonists must deal with unexpected challenges and dangers.
16. After discovering a wormhole, humans must navigate through new dimensions and worlds.
17. In a society where people can read minds, a detective must solve a murder where the killer has blocked their thoughts.
18. After an experiment goes wrong, a scientist is transformed into a superhuman with incredible powers.

50 FANTASTIC SCIENCE FICTION WRITING PROMPTS

38 In a future where space exploration is the norm, a team of astronauts discovers an alien race that is hostile and advanced beyond human comprehension.

39 After a massive solar flare, the Earth is plunged into an eternal night, and humanity must find a way to survive in a world without sunlight.

40 In a world where technology has advanced to allow people to transfer their consciousness into a digital world, people discover that their virtual world is not as perfect as they once believed.

41 After a cataclysmic event wipes out most of humanity, a small group of survivors must band together to rebuild society and find a way to save humanity from extinction.

42 In a future where humans have colonized the galaxy, a team of explorers discovers a planet that appears to be a perfect paradise but hides a dark secret.

43 After a massive earthquake, a group of survivors discovers that the disaster was not a natural occurrence but rather the result of a sinister plot to destroy humanity.

44 In a society where humans have developed the ability to communicate telepathically, a young woman discovers that her thoughts are not her own.

45 After a mysterious object crashes into Earth, scientists must uncover its origins and purpose before it's too late.

46 In a future where humans have achieved faster-than-light travel, a group of explorers discovers a wormhole that leads to an alternate universe where the laws of physics are vastly different.

47 After a devastating war between humans and artificial intelligence, a small group of survivors discover that the robots have developed a new form of consciousness and must decide whether to ally with them or fight to the death.

48 In a society where people can choose their physical appearance, a young woman discovers that her perfect body comes at a deadly cost.

49 After a massive solar storm, a group of survivors discovers that the event has caused a rift in time and space, and they must navigate through alternate realities to find a way back to their own.

50 In a future where humans have developed the ability to manipulate reality, a group of rogue reality-benders must be stopped before they destroy the fabric of the universe.

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IN THE YEAR 2889

**By Jules Verne and
Michel Verne**

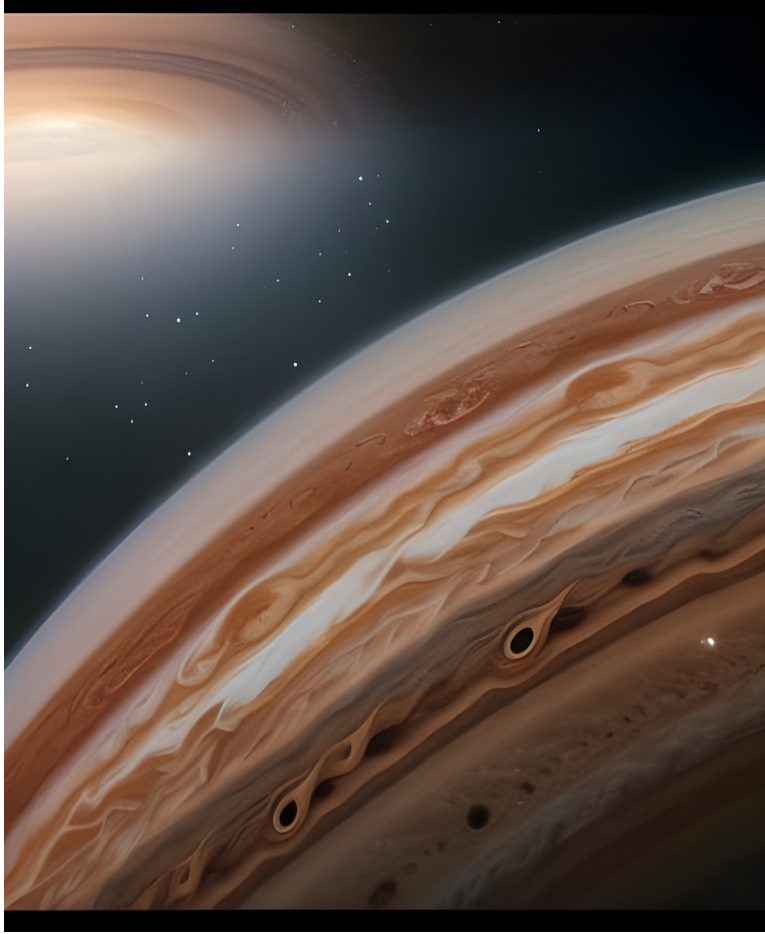
Little though they seem to think of it, the people of this twenty-ninth century live continually in fairyland. Surfeited as they are with marvels, they are indifferent in presence of each new

marvel. To them all seems natural. Could they but duly appreciate the refinements of civilization in our day; could they but compare the present with the past, and so better comprehend the advance we have made! How much fairer they would find our modern towns, with populations amounting sometimes to

10,000,000 souls; their streets 300 feet wide, their houses 1000 feet in height; with a temperature the same in all seasons; with their lines of aerial locomotion crossing the sky in every direction! If they would but picture to themselves the state of things that once existed, when through muddy streets rumbling boxes on wheels, drawn by horses—yes, by horses!—were the only means of conveyance. Think of the railroads of the olden time, and you will be able to appreciate the pneumatic tubes through which to-day one travels at the rate of 1000 miles an hour. Would not our contemporaries prize the telephone and the telephote more highly if they had not forgotten the telegraph?

Singularly enough, all these transformations rest upon principles which were perfectly familiar to our remote ancestors, but which they disregarded. Heat, for instance, is as ancient as man himself; electricity was known 3000 years ago, and steam 1100 years ago. Nay, so early as ten centuries ago it was known that the differences between the several chemical and physical forces depend on the mode of vibration of the etheric particles, which is for each specifically different.

When at last the kinship of all these forces was discovered, it is simply astounding that 500 years should still have to elapse



before men could analyze and describe the several modes of vibration that constitute these differences. Above all, it is singular that the mode of reproducing these forces directly from one another, and of reproducing one without the others, should have remained undiscovered till less than a hundred years ago. Nevertheless, such was the course of events, for it was not till the year 2792 that the famous Oswald Nier made this great discovery.

Truly was he a great benefactor of the human race.

His admirable discovery led to many another. Hence is sprung a pleiad of inventors, its brightest star being our great Joseph Jackson. To Jackson we are indebted for those wonderful instruments the new accumulators. Some of these absorb and condense the living force contained in the sun's rays; others, the electricity stored in our globe; others again, the energy coming from whatever source, as a waterfall, a stream, the winds, etc. He, too, it was that invented the transformer, a more wonderful contrivance

still, which takes the living force from the accumulator, and, on the simple pressure of a button, gives it back to space in whatever form may be desired, whether as heat, light, electricity, or mechanical force, after having first obtained from it the work required. From the day when these two instruments were contrived is to be dated the era of true progress. They have put into the hands of man a power that is almost infinite. As for their applications, they are numberless. Mitigating the rigors of winter, by giving back to the atmosphere the surplus heat stored up during the summer, they have revolutionized agriculture. By supplying motive power for aërial navigation, they have given to commerce a mighty impetus. To them we are indebted for the continuous production of electricity without batteries or dynamos, of light without combustion or incandescence, and for an unfailing supply of mechanical energy for all the needs of industry.

Yes, all these wonders have been wrought by the accumulator and the transformer. And can we not to them also trace, indirectly, this latest wonder of all, the great "Earth Chronicle" building in 253d Avenue, which was dedicated the other day? If George Washington Smith, the founder of the Manhattan "Chronicle,"

should come back to life today, what would he think were he to be told that this palace of marble and gold belongs to his remote descendant, Fritz Napoleon Smith, who, after thirty generations have come and gone, is owner of the same newspaper which his ancestor established!

For George Washington Smith's newspaper has lived generation after generation, now passing out of the family, anon coming back to it. When, 200 years ago, the political center of the United States was transferred from Washington to Centropolis, the newspaper followed the government and assumed the name of Earth Chronicle.

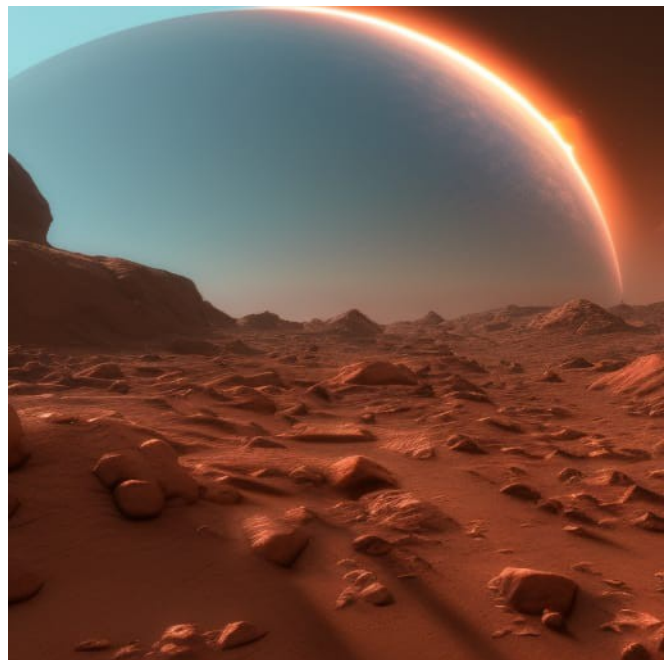
Unfortunately, it was

unable to maintain itself at the high level of its name. Pressed on all sides by rival journals of a more modern type, it was continually in danger of collapse. Twenty years ago its subscription list contained but a few hundred thousand names, and then Mr. Fritz Napoleon Smith bought it for a mere trifle, and originated telephonic journalism.

Every one is familiar with Fritz Napoleon Smith's system—a system made possible by the enormous development of telephony during the last hundred years. Instead of being printed, the Earth Chronicle is every morning spoken to subscribers, who, in interesting conversations with reporters, statesmen, and scientists, learn

the news of the day. Furthermore, each subscriber owns a phonograph, and to this instrument he leaves the task of gathering the news whenever he happens not to be in a mood to listen directly himself. As for purchasers of single copies, they can at a very trifling cost learn all that is in the paper of the day at any of the innumerable phonographs set up nearly everywhere.

Fritz Napoleon Smith's innovation galvanized the old newspaper. In the course of a few years the number of subscribers grew to be 85,000,000, and Smith's wealth went on growing, till now it reaches the almost unimaginable figure of \$10,000,000,000. This lucky hit has enabled him to erect his new building, a vast



edifice with four *façades*, each 3,250 feet in length, over which proudly floats the hundred-starred flag of the Union. Thanks to the same lucky hit, he is to-day king of newspaperdom; indeed, he would be king of all the Americans, too, if Americans could ever accept a king. You do not believe it? Well, then, look at the plenipotentiaries of all nations and our own ministers themselves crowding about his door, entreating his counsels, begging for his approbation, imploring the aid of his all-powerful organ. Reckon up the number of scientists and artists that he supports, of inventors that he has under his pay.

Yes, a king is he. And in truth his is a royalty full of burdens. His labors are incessant, and there is no doubt at all that in earlier times any man would have succumbed under the overpowering stress of the toil which Mr. Smith has to perform. Very fortunately for him, thanks to the progress of hygiene, which, abating all the old sources of unhealthfulness, has lifted the mean of human life from 37 up to 52 years, men have stronger constitutions now than heretofore. The discovery of nutritive air is still in the future, but in the meantime men today consume food that is compounded and prepared according to scientific

principles, and they breathe an atmosphere freed from the micro-organisms that formerly used to swarm in it; hence they live longer than their forefathers and know nothing of the innumerable diseases of olden times.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding these considerations, Fritz Napoleon Smith's mode of life may well astonish one. His iron constitution is taxed to the utmost by the heavy strain that is put upon it. Vain the attempt to estimate the amount of labor he undergoes; an example alone can give an idea of it. Let us then go about with him for one day as he attends to his multifarious concerns. What day? That matters little; it is the same every day. Let us then take at random September 25th of this present year 2889.

This morning Mr. Fritz Napoleon Smith awoke in very bad humor. His wife having left for France eight days ago, he was feeling disconsolate. Incredible though it seems, in all the ten years since their marriage, this is the first time that Mrs. Edith Smith, the professional beauty, has been so long absent from home; two or three days usually suffice for her frequent trips to Europe. The first thing that Mr. Smith does is to connect his phonotelephote, the wires of which communicate with his

Paris mansion. The telephote! Here is another of the great triumphs of science in our time. The transmission of speech is an old story; the transmission of images by means of sensitive mirrors connected by wires is a thing but of yesterday. A valuable invention indeed, and Mr. Smith this morning was not niggard of blessings for the inventor, when by its aid he was able distinctly to see his wife notwithstanding the distance that separated him from her. Mrs. Smith, weary after the ball or the visit to the theater the preceding night, is still abed, though it is near noontide at Paris. She is asleep, her head sunk in the lace-covered pillows. What? She stirs? Her lips move. She is dreaming perhaps? Yes, dreaming. She is talking, pronouncing a name—his name—Fritz! The delightful vision gave a happier turn to Mr. Smith's thoughts. And now, at the call of imperative duty, light-hearted he springs from his bed and enters his mechanical dresser.

Two minutes later the machine deposited him all dressed at the threshold of his office. The round of journalistic work was now begun. First he enters the hall of the novel-writers, a vast apartment crowned with an enormous transparent cupola. In one corner is a telephone, through which a hundred Earth Chronicle *littérateurs* in turn recount to the public

in daily installments a hundred novels. Addressing one of these authors who was waiting his turn, "Capital! Capital! my dear fellow," said he, "your last story. The scene where the village maid discusses interesting philosophical problems with her lover shows your very acute power of observation. Never have the ways of country folk been better portrayed. Keep on, my dear Archibald, keep on! Since yesterday, thanks to you, there is a gain of 5000 subscribers."

"Mr. John Last," he began again, turning to a new arrival, "I am not so well pleased with your work. Your story is not a picture of life; it lacks the elements of truth. And why? Simply because you run straight on to the end; because you do not analyze. Your heroes do this thing or that from this or that motive, which you assign without ever a thought of dissecting their mental and moral natures. Our feelings, you must remember, are far more complex than all that. In real life every act is the resultant of a hundred thoughts that come and go, and these you must study, each by itself, if you would create a living character. 'But,' you will say, 'in order to note these fleeting thoughts one must know them, must be able to follow them in their capricious meanderings.' Why, any child can do that, as you know. You

have simply to make use of hypnotism, electrical or human, which gives one a two-fold being, setting free the witness-personality so that it may see, understand, and remember the reasons which determine the personality that acts. Just study yourself as you live from day to day, my dear Last. Imitate your associate whom I was complimenting a moment ago. Let yourself be hypnotized. What's that? You have tried it already? Not sufficiently, then, not sufficiently!"

Mr. Smith continues his round and enters the reporters' hall. Here 1500 reporters, in their respective places, facing an equal number of telephones, are communicating to the subscribers the news of the world as gathered during the night. The organization of this matchless service has often been described. Besides his telephone, each reporter, as the reader is aware, has in front of him a set of commutators, which enable him to communicate with any desired telephotic line. Thus the subscribers not only hear the news but see the occurrences. When an incident is described that is already past, photographs of its main features are transmitted with the narrative. And there is no confusion withal. The reporters' items, just like the different stories and all the

other component parts of the journal, are classified automatically according to an ingenious system, and reach the hearer in due succession. Furthermore, the hearers are free to listen only to what specially concerns them. They may at pleasure give attention to one editor and refuse it to another.

Mr. Smith next addresses one of the ten reporters in the astronomical department—a department still in the embryonic stage, but which will yet play an important part in journalism.

"Well, Cash, what's the news?"

"We have phototelegrams from Mercury, Venus, and Mars."

"Are those from Mars of any interest?"

"Yes, indeed. There is a revolution in the Central Empire."

"And what of Jupiter?" asked Mr. Smith.

"Nothing as yet. We cannot quite understand their signals. Perhaps ours do not reach them."

"That's bad," exclaimed Mr. Smith, as he hurried away, not in the best of humor, toward the hall of the scientific editors. With their heads bent down over their electric computers, thirty scientific men were absorbed in transcendental calculations. The coming of

Mr. Smith was like the falling of a bomb among them.

"Well, gentlemen, what is this I hear? No answer from Jupiter? Is it always to be thus? Come, Cooley, you have been at work now twenty years on this problem, and yet—"

"True enough," replied the man addressed. "Our science of optics is still very defective, and through our mile-and-three-quarter telescopes—"

"Listen to that, Peer," broke in Mr. Smith, turning to a second scientist. "Optical science defective! Optical science is your specialty. But," he continued, again addressing William Cooley, "failing with Jupiter, are we getting any results from the moon?"

"The case is no better there."

"This time you do not lay the blame on the science of optics. The moon is immeasurably less distant than Mars, yet with Mars our communication is fully established. I presume you will not say that you lack telescopes?"

"Telescopes? O no, the trouble here is about—inhabitants!"

"That's it," added Peer. "So, then, the moon is positively uninhabited?" asked Mr. Smith.

"At least," answered Cooley, "on the face which she presents to us. As for the opposite side, who knows?"

"Ah, the opposite side! You think, then," remarked Mr. Smith, musingly, "that if one could but—"

"Could what?"

"Why, turn the moon about-face."

"Ah, there's something in that," cried the two men at once. And indeed, so confident was their air, they seemed to have no doubt as to the possibility of success in such an undertaking.

"Meanwhile," asked Mr. Smith, after a moment's silence, "have you no news of interest to-day?"

"Indeed we have," answered Cooley. "The elements of Olympus are definitively settled. That great planet gravitates beyond Neptune at the mean distance of 11,400,799,642 miles from the sun, and to traverse its vast orbit takes 1311 years, 294 days, 12 hours, 43 minutes, 9 seconds."

"Why didn't you tell me that sooner?" cried Mr. Smith. "Now inform the reporters of this straightway. You know how eager is the curiosity of the public with regard to these astronomical questions. That news must go into to-day's issue."

Then, the two men bowing to him, Mr. Smith

passed into the next hall, an enormous gallery upward of 3200 feet in length, devoted to atmospheric advertising. Every one has noticed those enormous advertisements reflected from the clouds, so large that they may be seen by the populations of whole cities or even of entire countries. This, too, is one of Mr. Fritz Napoleon Smith's ideas, and in the Earth Chronicle building a thousand projectors are constantly engaged in displaying upon the clouds these mammoth advertisements.

When Mr. Smith to-day entered the sky-advertising department, he found the operators sitting with folded arms at their motionless projectors, and inquired as to the cause of their inaction. In response, the man addressed simply pointed to the sky, which was of a pure blue. "Yes," muttered Mr. Smith, "a cloudless sky! That's too bad, but what's to be done? Shall we produce rain? That we might do, but is it of any use? What we need is clouds, not rain. Go," said he, addressing the head engineer, "go see Mr. Samuel Mark, of the meteorological division of the scientific department, and tell him for me to go to work in earnest on the question of artificial clouds. It will never do for us to be always thus at the mercy of cloudless skies!"

Mr. Smith's daily tour through the several

departments of his newspaper is now finished. Next, from the advertisement hall he passes to the reception chamber, where the ambassadors accredited to the American government are awaiting him, desirous of having a word of counsel or advice from the all-powerful editor. A discussion was going on when he entered. "Your Excellency will pardon me," the French Ambassador was saying to the Russian, "but I see nothing in the map of Europe that requires change. 'The North for the Slavs?' Why, yes, of course; but the South for the Latins. Our common frontier, the Rhine, it seems to me, serves very well. Besides, my government, as you must know, will firmly oppose every movement, not only against Paris, our capital, or our two great prefectures, Rome and Madrid, but also against the kingdom of Jerusalem, the dominion of Saint Peter, of which France means to be the trusty defender."

"Well said!" exclaimed Mr. Smith. "How is it," he asked, turning to the Russian ambassador, "that you Russians are not content with your vast empire, the most extensive in the world, stretching from the banks of the Rhine to the Celestial Mountains and the Kara-Korum, whose shores are washed by the Frozen Ocean, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the

Indian Ocean? Then, what is the use of threats? Is war possible in view of modern inventions—asphyxiating shells capable of being projected a distance of 60 miles, an electric spark of 90 miles, that can at one stroke annihilate a battalion; to say nothing of the plague, the cholera, the yellow fever, that the belligerents might spread among their antagonists mutually, and which would in a few days destroy the greatest armies?"

"True," answered the Russian; "but can we do all that we wish? As for us Russians, pressed on our eastern frontier by the Chinese, we must at any cost put forth our strength for an effort toward the west."

"O, is that all? In that case," said Mr. Smith, "the thing can be arranged. I will speak to the Secretary of State about it. The attention of the Chinese government shall be called to the matter. This is not the first time that the Chinese have bothered us."

"Under these conditions, of course—" And the Russian ambassador declared himself satisfied.

"Ah, Sir John, what can I do for you?" asked Mr. Smith as he turned to the representative of the people of Great Britain, who till now had remained silent.

"A great deal," was the reply. "If the Earth Chronicle

would but open a campaign on our behalf—"

"And for what object?"

"Simply for the annulment of the Act of Congress annexing to the United States the British islands."

Though, by a just turn-about of things here below, Great Britain has become a colony of the United States, the English are not yet reconciled to the situation. At regular intervals they are ever addressing to the American government vain complaints.

"A campaign against the annexation that has been an accomplished fact for 150 years!" exclaimed Mr. Smith.

"How can your people suppose that I would do anything so unpatriotic?"

"We at home think that your people must now be sated. The Monroe doctrine is fully applied; the whole of America belongs to the Americans. What more do you want? Besides, we will pay for what we ask."

"Indeed!" answered Mr. Smith, without manifesting the slightest irritation. "Well, you English will ever be the same. No, no, Sir John, do not count on me for help. Give up our fairest province, Britain? Why not ask France generously to renounce possession of Africa, that magnificent colony the complete conquest of which cost her the labor of 800

years? You will be well received!"

"You decline! All is over then!" murmured the British agent sadly. "The United Kingdom falls to the share of the Americans; the Indies to that of—"

"The Russians," said Mr. Smith, completing the sentence.

"Australia—"

"Has an independent government."

"Then nothing at all remains for us!" sighed Sir John, downcast.

"Nothing?" asked Mr. Smith, laughing. "Well, now, there's Gibraltar!"

With this sally the audience ended. The clock was striking twelve, the hour of breakfast. Mr. Smith returns to his chamber. Where the bed stood in the morning a table all spread comes up through the floor. For Mr. Smith, being above all a practical man, has reduced the problem of existence to its simplest terms. For him, instead of the endless suites of apartments of the olden time, one room fitted with ingenious mechanical contrivances is enough. Here he sleeps, takes his meals, in short, lives.

He seats himself. In the mirror of the phonotelephote is seen the same chamber at Paris which appeared in it this morning. A table furnished

forth is likewise in readiness here, for notwithstanding the difference of hours, Mr. Smith and his wife have arranged to take their meals simultaneously. It is delightful thus to take breakfast *tête-à-tête* with one who is 3000 miles or so away. Just now, Mrs. Smith's chamber has no occupant.

"She is late! Woman's punctuality! Progress everywhere except there!" muttered Mr. Smith as he turned the tap for the first dish. For like all wealthy folk in our day, Mr. Smith has done away with the domestic kitchen and is a subscriber to the Grand Alimentation Company, which sends through a great network of tubes to subscribers' residences all sorts of dishes, as a varied assortment is always in readiness. A subscription costs money, to be sure, but the *cuisine* is of the best, and the system has this advantage, that it does away with the pestering race of the *cordons-bleus*. Mr. Smith received and ate, all alone, the *hors-d'oeuvre*, *entrées*, *rôti*, and *legumes* that constituted the repast. He was just finishing the dessert when Mrs. Smith appeared in the mirror of the telephote.

"Why, where have you been?" asked Mr. Smith through the telephote.

"What! You are already at the dessert? Then I am late," she exclaimed, with a

winsome *naïveté*. "Where have I been, you ask? Why, at my dress-maker's. The hats are just lovely this season! I suppose I forgot to note the time, and so am a little late."

"Yes, a little," growled Mr. Smith; "so little that I have already quite finished breakfast. Excuse me if I leave you now, but I must be going."

"O certainly, my dear; good-by till evening."

Smith stepped into his air-coach, which was in waiting for him at a window. "Where do you wish to go, sir?" inquired the coachman.

"Let me see; I have three hours," Mr. Smith mused. "Jack, take me to my accumulator works at Niagara."

For Mr. Smith has obtained a lease of the great falls of Niagara. For ages the energy developed by the falls went unutilized. Smith, applying Jackson's invention, now collects this energy, and lets or sells it. His visit to the works took more time than he had anticipated. It was four o'clock when he returned home, just in time for the daily audience which he grants to callers.

One readily understands how a man situated as Smith is must be beset with requests of all kinds. Now it is an inventor needing capital; again it is some visionary who comes to

advocate a brilliant scheme which must surely yield millions of profit. A choice has to be made between these projects, rejecting the worthless, examining the questionable ones, accepting the meritorious. To this work Mr. Smith devotes every day two full hours.

The callers were fewer to-day than usual—only twelve of them. Of these, eight had only impracticable schemes to propose. In fact, one of them wanted to revive painting, an art fallen into desuetude owing to the progress made in color-photography. Another, a physician, boasted that he had discovered a cure for nasal catarrh! These impracticables were dismissed in short order. Of the four projects favorably received, the first was that of a young man whose broad forehead betokened his intellectual power.

"Sir, I am a chemist," he began, "and as such I come to you."

"Well!"

"Once the elementary bodies," said the young chemist, "were held to be sixty-two in number; a hundred years ago they were reduced to ten; now only three remain irresolvable, as you are aware."

"Yes, yes."

"Well, sir, these also I will show to be composite. In a few months, a few weeks, I

shall have succeeded in solving the problem. Indeed, it may take only a few days."

"And then?"

"Then, sir, I shall simply have determined the absolute. All I want is money enough to carry my research to a successful issue."

"Very well," said Mr. Smith. "And what will be the practical outcome of your discovery?"

"The practical outcome? Why, that we shall be able to produce easily all bodies whatever—stone, wood, metal, fibers—"

"And flesh and blood?" queried Mr. Smith, interrupting him. "Do you pretend that you expect to manufacture a human being out and out?"

"Why not?"

Mr. Smith advanced \$100,000 to the young chemist, and engaged his services for the Earth Chronicle laboratory.

The second of the four successful applicants, starting from experiments made so long ago as the nineteenth century and again and again repeated, had conceived the idea of removing an entire city all at once from one place to another. His special project had to do with the city of Granton, situated, as everybody knows, some fifteen miles inland. He proposes to transport the city

on rails and to change it into a watering-place. The profit, of course, would be enormous. Mr. Smith, captivated by the scheme, bought a half-interest in it.

"As you are aware, sir," began applicant No. 3, "by the aid of our solar and terrestrial accumulators and transformers, we are able to make all the seasons the same. I propose to do something better still. Transform into heat a portion of the surplus energy at our disposal; send this heat to the poles; then the polar regions, relieved of their snow-cap, will become a vast territory available for man's use. What think you of the scheme?"

"Leave your plans with me, and come back in a week. I will have them examined in the meantime."

Finally, the fourth announced the early solution of a weighty scientific problem. Every one will remember the bold experiment made a hundred years ago by Dr. Nathaniel Faithburn. The doctor, being a firm believer in human hibernation—in other words, in the possibility of our suspending our vital functions and of calling them into action again after a time—resolved to subject the theory to a practical test. To this end, having first made his last will and pointed out the proper method of awakening him; having also directed that his

sleep was to continue a hundred years to a day from the date of his apparent death, he unhesitatingly put the theory to the proof in his own person. Reduced to the condition of a mummy, Dr. Faithburn was confined and laid in a tomb. Time went on. September 25th, 2889, being the day set for his resurrection, it was proposed to Mr. Smith that he should permit the second part of the experiment to be performed at his residence this evening.

"Agreed. Be here at ten o'clock," answered Mr. Smith; and with that the day's audience was closed.

Left to himself, feeling tired, he lay down on an extension chair. Then, touching a knob, he established communication with the Central Concert Hall, whence our greatest *maestros* send out to subscribers their delightful successions of accords determined by recondite algebraic formulas. Night was approaching. Entranced by the harmony, forgetful of the hour, Smith did not notice that it was growing dark. It was quite dark when he was aroused by the sound of a door opening. "Who is there?" he asked, touching a commutator.

Suddenly, in consequence of the vibrations produced, the air became luminous.

"Ah! you, Doctor?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"How are you?"

"I am feeling well."

"Good! Let me see your tongue. All right! Your pulse. Regular! And your appetite?"

"Only passably good."

"Yes, the stomach. There's the rub. You are over-worked. If your stomach is out of repair, it must be mended. That requires study. We must think about it."

"In the meantime," said Mr. Smith, "you will dine with me."

As in the morning, the table rose out of the floor. Again, as in the morning, the *potage*, *rôti*, *ragoûts*, and *legumes* were supplied through the food-pipes. Toward the close of the meal, phonotelephotic communication was made with Paris. Smith saw his wife, seated alone at the dinner-table, looking anything but pleased at her loneliness.

"Pardon me, my dear, for having left you alone," he said through the telephone. "I was with Dr. Wilkins."

"Ah, the good doctor!" remarked Mrs. Smith, her countenance lighting up.

"Yes. But, pray, when are you coming home?"

"This evening."

"Very well. Do you come by tube or by air-train?"

"Oh, by tube."

"Yes; and at what hour will you arrive?"

"About eleven, I suppose."

"Eleven by Centropolis time, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Good-by, then, for a little while," said Mr. Smith as he severed communication with Paris.

Dinner over, Dr. Wilkins wished to depart. "I shall expect you at ten," said Mr. Smith. "To-day, it seems, is the day for the return to life of the famous Dr. Faithburn. You did not think of it, I suppose. The awakening is to take place here in my house. You must come and see. I shall depend on your being here."

"I will come back," answered Dr. Wilkins.

Left alone, Mr. Smith busied himself with examining his accounts—a task of vast magnitude, having to do with transactions which involve a daily expenditure of upward of \$800,000. Fortunately, indeed, the stupendous progress of mechanic art in modern times makes it comparatively easy. Thanks to the Piano Electro-Reckoner, the most complex calculations can be made in a few seconds. In two hours Mr. Smith completed his task. Just in time. Scarcely had he turned over the last page when Dr. Wilkins arrived.

After him came the body of Dr. Faithburn, escorted by a numerous company of men of science. They commenced work at once. The casket being laid down in the middle of the room, the telephote was got in readiness. The outer world, already notified, was anxiously expectant, for the whole world could be eye-witnesses of the performance, a reporter meanwhile, like the chorus in the ancient drama, explaining it all *viva voce* through the telephone.

"They are opening the casket," he explained. "Now they are taking Faithburn out of it—a veritable mummy, yellow, hard, and dry. Strike the body and it resounds like a block of wood. They are now applying heat; now electricity. No result. These experiments are suspended for a moment while Dr. Wilkins makes an examination of the body. Dr. Wilkins, rising, declares the man to be dead. 'Dead!' exclaims every one present. 'Yes,' answers Dr. Wilkins, 'dead!' 'And how long has he been dead?' Dr. Wilkins makes another examination. 'A hundred years,' he replies."

The case stood just as the reporter said. Faithburn was dead, quite certainly dead! "Here is a method that needs improvement," remarked Mr. Smith to Dr. Wilkins, as the scientific committee on hibernation bore the casket out. "So much for that experiment. But if

poor Faithburn is dead, at least he is sleeping," he continued. "I wish I could get some sleep. I am tired out, Doctor, quite tired out! Do you not think that a bath would refresh me?"

"Certainly. But you must wrap yourself up well before you go out into the hall-way. You must not expose yourself to cold."

"Hall-way? Why, Doctor, as you well know, everything is done by machinery here. It is not for me to go to the bath; the bath will come to me. Just look!" and he pressed a button. After a few seconds a faint rumbling was heard, which grew louder and louder. Suddenly the door opened, and the tub appeared.

Such, for this year of grace 2889, is the history of one day in the life of the editor of the Earth Chronicle. And the history of that one day is the history of 365 days every year, except leap-years, and then of 366 days—for as yet no means has been found of increasing the length of the terrestrial year.



SCIENCE FICTION

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WINNERS!

CONGRATULATIONS! TO
ALL OUR WINNERS! WE
WILL SEE YOU SOON IN
OUR PRINT/DIGITAL ISSUE

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Winners of our 50 Word Sci Fi Contest!

1st Place Winner:

Kate Riley

My mother is dying. The sun sets as I travel to her. On the eight-hour road trip, I'm guided by the universe, with the moon and stars lighting the way. Deer watch from the side of the road. A UFO appears, gliding parallel to my car for the final approach.

2nd Place:

Jeff Christopher Fleming

The flying saucer wobbled on landing, its green occupant approached.

His right tentacle held a metallic object possibly a weapon, his left a book. Was this invasion, was Earth to die?

He consulted the book, raised that right tentacle, I cringed, he said,

'Can I borrow a spanner?'

3rd Place:

Kristina Hutchinson

It was an anniversary gift and the trip of a lifetime. Economy class. Four star accommodations and breakfast included.

Shocked when first seeing the saucer shaped object in the Air Force hangar and the pilot with green skin, Estelle shrugged.

"Que sera sera!"

It would be a holiday, nonetheless!

Also included:

Angelyn Gumbs

What in the world ?

That's was my last thoughts exactly, On that night as I walking out to my car . When I saw the flashing lights ,that was brighter than lightening. But it wasn't lightning because there wasn't thunder. But an odd sound that I have never heard before.. Louder than a freight train . And then I felt myself being elevated up off the ground.

Mae

Simon knew the risks of cloning. He knew that playing God was a risky affair. "Simon, do not do this"

Now it is too late. She wants to kill him. Blood is on the front of her dress; her normally sweet smile is wicked. "Where is Ruby?" "She's sleeping now"

J. J. Hillard

"Zorak'a hide! You're too visible. On a field trip to this planet last month one of our student ships was tracked by a primitive aircraft! A navigator trainee must always remain undetectable to the locals."

The metallic sphere executed a series of spiral maneuvers as it ascended into thick clouds.

Steve Matthews

E'Lori scanned the latest survey report. "This makes grim reading" he said. "Yes" replied I'Nuri, "Now we must discover why they used such devastating weapons on each other. The atom should not be so lightly abused". "Shame the experiment failed" sighed E'Lori. I'Nuri countered "There are survivors. The experiment continues..."

Our Haiku Contest Winners:

1st Place Winner:

Angelyn Gumbs

Give him the side eye,
with the fake ass smile,
For you are not fool.

2nd Place Winner:

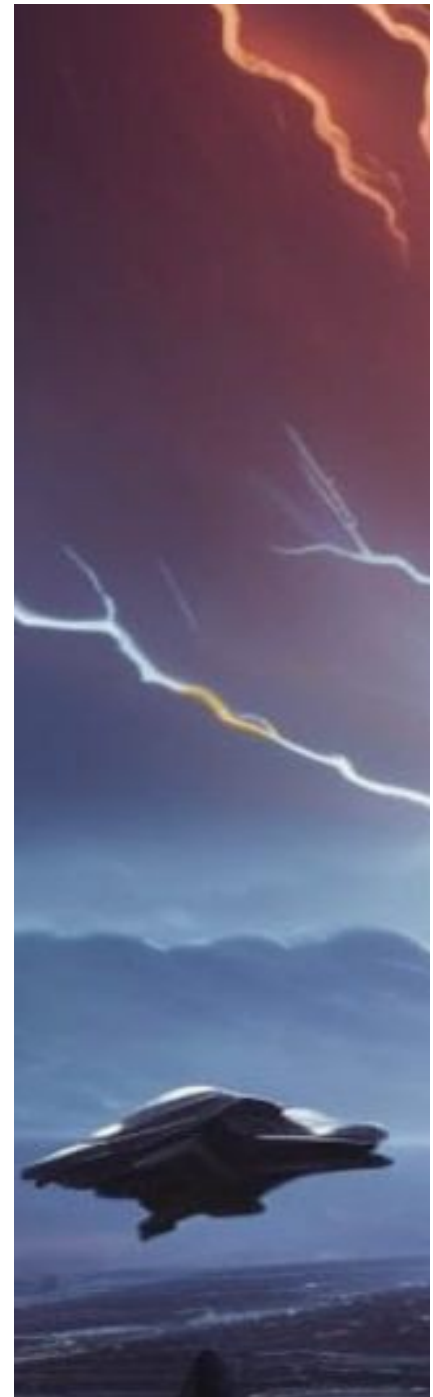
John Hawkhead

two-dimensional
my stilted conversations
with her photograph

3rd Place Winner:

Farah Ali

phases of the moon
either waxing or waning
this melancholy



Also included:

sylvia ashby

clouds crossing the moon
a sudden shift in the wind
nothing lasts but change

Gloria Watts

Tonight the sky glows
The stars sparkle and the
moon glows
The sky is alight tonight.

Jesus Chameleon

dark energy form
yet unknown matter of course
—
the dollar builds up

Dennis White

Blood on land and sea,
The price of hate and power,
Only love can heal.

Bo Jung

Awake in the dark
Hear lights and see sounds
Yet my pulse is mute

Remona Winston

stuttering each word
bullying scars in my mind
best vocalist won

Avery Azad

lazy afternoon
slowly consuming the sweet
mango and kiwi

50 Word Horror Contest Winners:

1st Place Winner:

Paul Bahou

The world ended on a
Tuesday.

The world ended on a
Tuesday, consumed in atomic
fire. Skin and civilization
burning; the Mona Lisa and
the pyramids, dust. But I
survived, me in the bunker.
Me and the mutants, pustule
arms pounding on safety
glass. Bang, bang, bang. They
hunger. They want my
rations; they want me.

2nd Place:

Adam Gooch

January 21, 2023 at 9:05 am

The darkness crept in, closing
in around her as she realized
she was not alone in the
abandoned asylum. The
screams of tortured souls
echoed through the halls.
Barely audible above the
sound of her own pounding
heart, she could hear the
echos of distant footstep
getting closer.

Closer....

3rd Place

Wendy Montoya

February 9, 2023 at 12:20 pm

Empty

She's in pain as she lay back;
if only the doctors had
listened, she wouldn't be here
in the first place. Her eyes
flicker to the team of nurses
standing next to the scalpel
that would soon rip into her
belly to remove the piece of
her that creates life.

Also Included:

Josh Taylor

March 4, 2023 at 2:06 pm

The echoes of my hoarse
screams reverberated
throughout the darkness of
the pocket dimension. I
slammed my fists against

nothing as I watched through the sliver of a window. This false version of me smirked as he loaded a moving truck with my wife, my kids, my life.

Wendy Montoya

Darkness

I found another bloody bite on my arm, I wondered why as I slide open the shower curtain grabbing a face towel, that's when I saw her bloody lips. I smiled at my reflection slowly closing the curtain remembering that I am the Demon. I am her; she is me.

Paul Bahou

The diagnosis

White walls glowed beneath florescent lights, the chatter of nurses peripheral. The oncologist moves with quiet haste. He sits on the chair opposite mine, clipboard flipping open. It's positive, stage 4, spread to organs, terminal. I don't hear what follows as he's off to the next room. I sit, numb.

6 Word Memoir Contest

Note on this contest: This was one of the hardest contests we have ever judged. There were so many amazing entries, and I was very moved by the writing in this contest. I am honored to read all of these. We had to pick winners, but again, all of the entries were wonderful. We will run another of these contests soon. If you liked them please come back and post again. I love reading your work!

1st Place Winner:

Charlene

Half of her absent,
she slouched.

2nd Place:

VBF

Told I couldn't...
... but I did...

3rd Place:

Laura Howard

Abused
Set Free

Loved
By Another

Also included:

James L Jackson

Please haunt me, I miss you.

Jennifer Zink

Was RAPED when I was ten.

B. Lynn Goodwin

I want you to love me.

Joseph Baker

YEARS AT WAR HAVE
BROKEN ME

Angelyn Gumbs

My first time online dating
app.



TOP 11 SCIENCE FICTION SHORT STORIES EVERYONE SHOULD READ

Below are the top 11 science fiction short stories everyone should read, but here are a few things to remember about this list before I get hate mail. First, I could not get this list under 11. I tried to get it to 10, but it was impossible! So it stands at 11. Second, no author is on the list more than once. Asimov and Clark dominate many lists; we all know we can read their works to find great science fiction. I am treating this list like someone who has just shown up and wants to learn more about science fiction stories. These stories do that. Third, Nightfall is missing from this list. Asimov's story Nightfall is widely regarded as the greatest short story of all

time. Most people know this, and a quick Google search will reveal this to anyone. I included the slightly lesser known The Last Question. The fantastic story exemplifies a type of science fiction you don't get to see or read every day.

1 “The Last Question” By Isaac Asimov (Science Fiction Quarterly, 1956)

With AI being one of the most talked about technologies today, possibly the last

intellectual frontier for humankind, this story should be first. Everyone knows AI, everyone knows our questions about it, and Asimov's take here is as fresh as the day it was written. It is a must-read. The story is very short. You can easily find the audio on YouTube.

2 “The Sentinel” by Arthur C. Clarke (1951)

The story would influence the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey. Still in the news today, we are debating the existence of extraterrestrials, and this

story asks some critical questions. It, too, is brief, and anyone wanting to know something about science fiction should be familiar with it.

3 “To Serve Man” by Damon Knight. (1950, Galaxy Science Fiction)

If you ask a group of people today (let’s say on social media) what might happen if aliens come to Earth, many in the group are sure to shout out, “It’s a cookbook!” This story is one of the most famous of all time, thanks to its development into a 1962 episode of the Twilight Zone. The story and the episode differ but come to the same conclusion. If a 70-year-old story still pops into people’s minds today, it has to be one of the greats. The story itself is well crafted and a great read.

4 “The Fly” by George Langelaan (1957, Playboy)

Yes, back then, some people read Playboy for the articles. The Fly has been made into 100 different versions. Two movies and a Simpsons episode have brought this story into the public consciousness, but it’s more than that. A new technology we all want, teleporting, and what can go wrong? Everyone loves that story, and it’s influenced countless other stories.

5 “A Sound of Thunder” by Ray Bradbury

Does time travel exist? Can it be done? Will we someday go back to our pasts and then to our future? Bradbury does what he is masterful with this story; he makes it seem like an everyday thing. You’ve seen this story repeated over and over again in different forms. Seeing the spark of so much we already conjecture about is a must-read.

6 “Button, Button” by Richard Matheson (1970)

I’m counting this one as science fiction because it has a box with a button. Every person has heard this philosophical question, if you had a button you could push that would give you \$100,000, but someone would die, would you push it? It’s so famous; you should know the origin of this question. This story sees it play out.

7 “Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut (1961, The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction)

Everyone is equal; the government makes it that way. It is science fiction satire in the way only Vonnegut could write it. It is a haunting story that tells us to be careful about what you wish for. Though the story isn’t as famous as others, tv shows

and movies have replicated it. It's a question you get to in our modern society if you push things too far.

8 We can remember it for Whole Sale Philip K. Dick (1966, The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction)

No science fiction list is complete without Philip K. Dick. He is a giant among sci-fi writers as prolific as Asimov. We Can Remember It for Whole Sale was made into several movies, the main ones being Total Recall and Total Recall the remake. If you ever ask what would happen if they could change our memories, you've wondered about this story. It has a great setting and characters and is a must-read.

9 "I, Robot" by Eando Binder (1939 issue of Amazing Stories)

So no, this isn't the I, Robot with the 3 laws. That is a collection of stories by Issac Asimov named for this short story. The story that has the 3 laws in it is "Little Lost Robot" (1947) (novelette), but this story greatly influenced Asimov. The story matches somewhat with the I, Robot (2004 movie). It's a great story that captures the idea that not all artificial intelligence wants to rule the world.

10 "The Cold Equations" by Tom Godwin (1954, Astounding Magazine)

This story is one of my all-time favorites. It was made into several tv shows and movies. The story is basically about a stowaway who gets herself into a bad situation. This story has a coldness that is like the coldness of science and technology. In the end, it's just about the numbers. It is a must-read.

11 "Examination Day" by Henry Slesar (1958, Playboy)

Are you too smart for your own good? This story has the creepiness of a horror film but all the tech of science fiction. It, too, was an episode in the 1980s run of The Twilight Zone. It is less famous than other stories on this list, BUT many similar movies don't give credit. They may be different enough not to have to, but a film like Idiocy (2006) certainly plays on all the same thoughts and fears. The story deserves more credit and more attention; it is a must-read.

Top 10 Science Fiction Books I Love

EVERY WRITER

Here are the Top 10 Science Fiction books I love. I'm not making anything other than a personal top 10 list here. I like sci-fi, but I'm not well versed in it like I am with horror or literary fiction. Don't take me wrong. I love sci-fi, but I just haven't ever gotten deep into the genre. It's my loss, I know, but here are 10 science fiction novels I love and have read repeatedly.

1. Frankenstein

Being a big horror fan, I would be crazy about what is arguably the first science fiction novel ever written. The story and characters are great. This novel has become even more relevant with the recent explosion of AI. I

highly recommend it if you are a science fiction fan but have yet to read Frankenstein.



2. Ready Player 1

I don't know if this is a deep science fiction novel, but I loved it. The movie was terrible, but the book was one of the most fun reads I have ever experienced. I was a little boy in the 80s, so it feels like someone wrote this book for me. The giant robots, Pac-Man, cartoons, and all the references just took me back to my childhood. Science fiction-wise, there are many books I'm sure that do "living in a virtual world" much better than this one, but it doesn't matter. Ready Player One was just an amazing escape from reality for me.

3. Dune

Again I don't have to say a lot about Dune. It was ripped off repeatedly by many science fiction writers, including George Lucas. It's an epic read with inventive and thick characters and writing. It has been an influence on every space opera since its publication. It's not only a book that made history; it's a book that still is in the creative fabric of novels written today. If you love sci-fi, you'll love Dune.

4. Punch Escrow

This book was a surprise. I picked it up online, just looking for an indie novel, and it sucked me right in. In the not-too-far future, people are using teleporters, and computers are all voice controlled. People believe their particles fly through the air to get to a separate location; in reality, their persons are being incinerated seconds after their doubles are created on the other side. What happens when there is a malfunction and replicas are made? The story is funny and has a good bit of suspense. I enjoyed The Punch Escrow.

5. Dark Matter

Dark Matter is my favorite book on the list. Dark Matter

is a fantastic read. I don't want to give too much away because this book is revealed gradually throughout the novel. I don't want to say what it's about. If you like science fiction, you'll love this book. I've seen a couple of people complain about the ending. The ending is perfect. The book is well written, and I never asked about plot holes or thought characters were too flay or cliché. I highly recommend it. I love this book.

6. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a thin, dense, fast read. The first time I read this book, I was in my 20s. I was in college, and it was a quick read, but I'm not sure I was ready at the time to fully understand Robert Louis Stevenson's prose. For instance, "I learned to recognize the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both." As all good science fiction should, Stevenson is talking about the nature of humans and our struggles with ourselves. If all the worst parts of you became a person, aren't they already a person? There is a

lot in this little book. It's early science fiction; I know it's not for everyone, but I really enjoyed it and have returned to it many times.

7. Cat's Cradle

Ice-Nine is a world-ending chemical weapon being mishandled repeatedly, and one man's quest to find the truth. Cat's Cradle is one of those books that makes us think deeply about how science can go wrong. Are we trying to destroy ourselves? It's a fun and easy read because the chapters are mostly short. This book was one of the first science fiction books I ever read, and even though it is a dark satire, it still fueled my curiosity to read more. So if you are not a hardcore science fiction fan,



this book might be an excellent place to start, IMHO.

8. Andromeda Strain

An “outbreak of a deadly extraterrestrial microorganism” is being investigated by a group of scientists. I just picked this book up cold. I didn’t know what it was about. Michael Crichton blew me away. It’s just one of the fun reads, much like the Stand, but more science, less fiction, oddly. I enjoyed it, and it’s a much shorter read than some other virus-centered books.

9. 1984

I had to put 1984 on the list, and though it’s not all science fiction, the book set the tone for so many other dystopian novels; I just had to be on my list. The book is a page-turner until you get to the middle, and there is a long explanation of all of the jargon and procedures in society, but other than that, Orwell’s creation is ingenious. I return to this book ever-once to see if we are there yet. Lots of predictions in the book are, of course, entirely accurate. Everyone should read this book, if you like sci-fi or not.

10. Neuromancer

The granddaddy of all cyberpunk novels and influencer of The Matrix movies and countless other futuristic dystopian minds in the machine stories, Neuromancer is addictive and necessary. I won’t say a lot about it other than that. It’s on every top 10 science fiction novel list, so I would say go ahead and read it. You won’t be disappointed.



Every Writer's Horror Greatest Hits, a must read!

BELFRY LITERARY JOURNAL

Website

<https://belfryliterature.wixsite.com/home>

From the Editor

Belfry Literary Journal is now accepting submissions for their first ever print publication, as well as for their online supplement as well! The reading period is open from May 1 to July 31, with publication set for January of 2024. Go to <https://belfryliterature.wixsite.com/home> or email belfryliterature@gmail.com to learn more.

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EVERY WRITER

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a yellow pencil, poised to write on a piece of aged, yellowed paper. The paper is resting on a dark wooden surface. The lighting is warm and focused on the hand and pencil, creating a sense of quiet concentration and creative work.

EVERY DAY POEMS

We've published
some of the best
poets in the world
over the last 25
years, and we still
want your work

SUBMIT YOUR
WORK TODAY

TIME WINDOW

A STORY

BY DOUG DAWSON

“United Space-Service ship USS-4271 calling ... Mayday ... Mayday ... This is Space-Patrol astronaut John Plantain ... we are in low orbit around IO, we have meteorite damage, Auto-Nav’s not working and we have less than forty minutes before our low orbit causes Auto-Ignite to fire and with no navigation control that takes us – God knows where. I know there isn’t much time, but please send help if you can ... I’m broadcasting our coordinates.” John had no idea

his communications system was out, along with the ship’s guidance system and that his messages weren’t reaching the local space station, any other ship that happened to be in the area, or the astronaut effecting repairs just outside the ship. John spent a few minutes perusing the ship’s operator manuals, hoping to find something ... anything to help them.

“This job better go quick,” offered Walt, John’s co-pilot and fellow astronaut. “I won’t

last long out here.” The Local-Com in his space suit cut out, though Walt had no way of knowing that John could no longer hear him. “How can I work out here with freezing hands and an Auto-Temp regulator that’s on the fritz?” he mumbled to himself, as his hands ran over tiny holes in the ship’s skin.

“We’re under thirty-two minutes, Walt ... but at least you’re protected in that suit,” announced John, to no one at all.

“Damn micro-meteorites,” Walt mumbled, loud enough to be heard by someone else – if he had a working coms link. But there would be no excuses – he either completed the job on time or he didn’t. His heart sank as he surveyed the damaged area. The tiny rock had punctured the ship’s outer skin and left the guidance system inoperable. Walt had seen what such impacts could do to intricately ordered arrays of wiring and Navi-Com boards before – like what a cigar burn did to the woven threads and carefully applied dyes of a silk scarf. He unlatched the self-contained Accu-Torch from his tool belt and tested the Flexi-Tether – it felt secure.

“How are you doing out there?” asked John.

“Decaying orbits are a bitch,” said Walt, “They’re like bad dreams where you know you’re in one but you can’t wake up. They keep accelerating and they’re final,” as he thought of the forty-minute time window he’d started out with. The cold and the terror he felt kept him talking, so as not to feel so alone. “It’s okay if you don’t talk, John ... I know you’re listening and don’t want to interrupt my concentration ... better this way.”

“Hurry up,” said John, sounding almost as worried as

Walt. “You keeping eye on your Holo-Watch? Walt ... are you there? Never mind – I know your mind’s on the job, so let me do all the talking.”

Walt’s mind wandered as he imagined the death spiral he might very soon find himself in, then snapped back to the task at hand. “I know what Compu-Star’s saying. John. Time-Task-Management, my foot ... I still have this job to do. Forty-minutes before ignition, it tells us – that was how long ago? And we’ve got how much time left? Then Auto-Ignite fires ... what a life ... what a job ... what a universe.”

“Keep going,” said John. “Don’t let your mind wander; there’s not a second to lose. If you’re still out there when ignition commences, the ship will lurch up ... I hope it’s up ... your tether will snap ... you’ll be left in this orbit. If you don’t get the damage fixed Auto-Nav won’t know where it’s going ... we could end up in deep space or heading straight down into IO ... or ...or ... Jupiter. Wish I was out there to help you, buddy,” his last statement sounding less convincing than anything he’d said in a long time. “You know I want to switch to manual,” he announced “and I’d do it for you, buddy ... save you from Auto-Ignite ... give you more time, but we could end up”

Walt imagined himself gradually spiraling toward the moon below. “I found the hole, buddy – no telling what else I’ll find.”

Back in the ship John reconsidered his last statements. “But I’ve got to think of the ship. I can’t leave us too close too close to IO to pull out of low orbit with the fuel we have left. Switching to manual’s dangerous ... we could ...”

Walt recalled the panic when he and John realized how little time there was to repair the ship. The forty-minute time frame was back when he started, but collecting tools, putting on a space suit, getting through the air lock, finding the rupture in the hull, that all took a good part of the time he started with and now he had to survey the damage, cut through the ship’s metal skin and effect some sort of temporary repair. He knew that fixing a smashed, burned-out guidance system with hand tools and a torch was a joke. As he began to cut a hole around the charred metal, the Holo-Watch in his visor projected a 3-D pocket watch, about six inches across. It looked like gun metal and it had bright yellow markings and a black second hand.

“Twenty-four minutes” the holographic watch announced

in its pleasing female alto voice, along with a chime at one of its prescribed three-minute intervals.

Walt didn't sound like a name for a Space-Patrol ranger, but he'd been stuck with it all his life – funny he should worry about a thing like that now, with his life and John's on the line, not to mention one aging United-Space-Service ship. This job was just a little too important for his mind to be wandering and he wondered why he had such trouble concentrating. "Must be a lack of oxygen," he thought.

"Check your oxygen regulator, Walt," said John. "What's it say? Space Patrol's fault, that's what it is ... nobody checks these suits anymore ... hardly anybody does space walks. Our luck, all right ... flying around IO ... halo of meteorites ... can hit you any second. Not as scary as a decaying orbit around Jupiter, though." He imagined crashing into a planetary body at high speed and thought "let's face it, dying is dying, no matter which orb you smash into ... just our luck, to be spiraling into the most volcanically active moon in the solar system; perhaps we'll be hurled into the open mouth of an erupting volcano."

"Twenty-one minutes," announced the holographic watch.

"Cutting a hole around the damaged area," announced Walt, sounding hopeful for the first time. "You should see this John – gyroscopes and attitude control rockets and they look okay. I can't believe our luck ... only two wires and one Navi-Com board look fried ... most of the meteorite must've missed all the complicated circuits ... connections ... gyros. Look here – it shattered on one of the ship's supporting beams. With a little luck I can ..."

"Auto-Ignite's started the count-down, Walt," said John. That means just twenty minutes left ... God ... how're you doing out there? Walt? (pause) OK, I know you're working hard out there, don't have time to talk. Just keep at it, buddy."

"Glad John's not out here," thought Walt. "Just get in the way ... he's lucky he can just push buttons to pilot a ship ... never could fix anything. Ow!" he yelled as he felt a searing pain in his right forearm. He'd never felt anything like it before; it was like a bullet and a branding iron combined. He realized it could only be another micro-meteorite, one most likely the size of a grain of sand, but big enough to make a hole in his suit that

would aggravate the freezing temperature and lack of oxygen that were already compromising his ability to function. As he held out his right arm and looked at the burned wires of the guidance system, a spray of red ice-bubbles blasted out of the tiny hole in his suit, reminding him of a retro rocket firing. The blood from his wound was being forced out by the air pressure still in his suit and instantly frozen into ice crystals."

"Eighteen minutes," announced the Holo-Watch. "The atmospheric pressure will be out of my suit," cried Walt. "I'll suffocate and freeze ... before I hear the 'twelve minutes' warning at this rate."

Walt instinctively reached over with his left hand to cover the hole in his suit but before his hand could get there the spray stopped. He stared in disbelief then realized enough blood had coagulated around the tiny hole to block it and that the pressure inside his suit held the blood in place the way the atmospheric pressure inside a ship would seal an Insta-Patch against any hull breach small enough to fix from inside the ship. There was still enough air in his suit for him to breathe and he went back to work.

"Fifteen minutes."

“Amazing,” thought Walt, “how complex most of these ... jobs are ... how simple ... this one ... is. We’ll just slide out the damaged board ... plug in this new one ... some soldering.” It was the kind of thing he’d done in secondary school, while learning to fix the antique receiving devices called “radios” and “TV’s” that taught him basic electronics, not to mention the mother boards that taught him how early computers worked.

“Walt? Walt? What’s going on out there,” pleaded John. “I put in a call for help. I sent a Mayday to anyone within hailing distance. I’m using full power to broadcast, Walt – even Earth should pick it up. The space station’s gotta hear it too – why the hell don’t they answer us? I know – they’re too far away to help us with the time we’ve got left ... but they could at least answer.”

“Twelve Minutes,” chimed the Holo-Watch.

“It’s getting dicey, here, Walt. Auto-Nav’s dead and Auto-Ignite’s getting very unhappy. C’mon buddy ... get back to the ship, will you? I can’t ...”

“We’re getting there,” said Walt, practically shouting. “Burned-out board replaced, one wire soldered, tho’ it’s sloppy ... it’ll hold, I guess.” Walt was reaching for the

other wire when he thought he felt his Flexi-Tether cord holding him back.

“Nine minutes.”

Walt carelessly let his Acu-Torch swing freely on its own tether to his utility belt and yanked a little too hard on the main tether. As he grabbed the torch, he turned it on accidentally and didn’t even notice it cut through a loop of the main tether, which was coiling like a whip in the middle of a lash. Walt was now connected to his ship only by the guidance system wire he held in his left hand but still managed to use the Accu-Torch to inject hot solder onto the other frayed wire. From inside the ship John could see the cut tether as he screamed “Walt – your main tether’s cut! For God’s sake, don’t let go of anything ... grab the part that’s still connected to the ship.”

“Six minutes,” warned the Holo-Watch.

“Repair’s done,” cried Walt. “Forget your stupid warning,” he said, looking at the Holo-Watch, I’ve done it!” he said, with a surge of pride as he let go of the wire. “John! There’s just enough time for me to get back to the ship ... don’t take off without me.”

“Five minutes,” said the Holo-Watch, now counting down in one-minute intervals.

“Suppose this god-damned Holo-Watch is running late?” thought Walt, and then he practically shouted “Don’t let Auto-Ignite ...” He made a conscious effort to calm down. “No worries,” he said as he turned toward the hatch and reached for the Flexi-Tether. “These tethers always have slack in them,” as he continued to glide away from the ship. His eyes bulged when he saw the cut end dangling and flailed to grab it, which only made him spin, as he continued to float further from the ship. In the middle of one of his rotations Walt managed a brief look back at the ship and saw John at the port side window, standing there helpless. In his panic Walt was distressed even more by the Holo-Watch as it continued to count down in one-minute intervals.

“Four minutes.”

There wasn’t time for John to retrieve and enter the codes necessary to activate the Auto-Ignite’s manual override subsystem, don a suit, prepare and activate a Mini-Rocket, propel himself outside the ship, locate and retrieve Walt, bring him back to the ship and still expect to save them. The whole thing would take too long – by then the time

window would have expired, both ship and rangers irretrievably lost to their decaying orbit and heading for the surface of IO. Saving himself and the ship was the only thing John could do now, and even in his despair Walt knew he'd do the same thing in John's place. In his last look at the ship Walt imagined John at the window, mouthing the words "I'm sorry," just before Auto-Ignite fired the engines. Fortunately, Walt was far enough away from the ship and its engines to avoid being burned to a crisp. "Not much of a consolation," he thought, "but better than nothing." With the air left in his suit ... hell, he might live another ...

"Three minutes," heard Walt.

In his last minutes of consciousness Walt managed a few clear thoughts through his panic. He imagined his suit's Astro-Life-Guard, monitoring his life signs and beaming them out into space. Then a less pleasant thought hit him – was Astro-Life-Guard working any better than the Local-Com that – he had by now surmised by the total lack of response from John – deserted him early on?

"Two minutes," and the voice was louder now. Walt imagined John, standing before the United-Space-Service examining board,

having to answer for the loss of his crewmate.

"Two Minutes."

Just for a second Walt imagined he saw a flash of light, coming from nowhere in particular outside his suit, probably his semi-conscious mind playing tricks on him, like one of those "out-of-body" experiences people used to report, before it was understood that under stress the brain releases chemicals which induce such hallucinations.

"One Minute."

This last warning was louder than all the others and it sounded final. As he began to slip into unconsciousness the last thing Walt saw was the pocket watch, now larger and spinning around in front of his face then stopping and disappearing, accompanied by the announcement:

"Time's Up!"

Back in the ship, John strapped himself into one of the seats in front of the control panel as he watched the Auto-Ignite clock count down toward zero and waited for the ship's engines to fire. He expected to feel the sudden jolt of acceleration, but nothing happened. Instead, he felt a sharp bump,

which came from outside the control room.

"More meteorites," thought John "Much bigger ... they'll destroy the ship ... I'm done for."

He felt a bump and heard a hiss from just outside the control module – something that couldn't be happening, unless an object like a meteorite had breached the outer air lock. "Outer air lock's gone," he babbled, then "what the ...?" as he felt and heard another bump then a second hiss, which meant the air lock door was closing, the air lock itself was re-pressuring and it dawned on him that somebody was entering the ship. A minute later the control room door burst open and two Space-Tek rangers burst in, carrying Walt, causing John to unlock his seat belt and jump up. One of them said "I'm Al – and that's Tim," as he got Walt's helmet off, while Tim dashed over to the ship's control panel, looked at the read-outs and started working the controls as John stood aside and stared.

Al reached into the Emergency-Medi-Gear kit attached to his belt and produced a syringe and a vial. He quickly injected Walt with adrenaline and other chemicals to oxygenate his blood and revive him. "I'm

sure he's oxygen deprived," said Al, "but the body has a few minutes before any serious brain damage occurs. Hopefully we got to him in time."


John looked frantic: "this orbit ... we're going to die," he managed to blurt out.

Tim continued to work the controls then turned to face John as Walt started to moan, meaning he was waking up. "Your Auto-Ignite's not working either," said Tim. That's why the engines didn't fire up. I know we're in low orbit, but the ship's clock appears to be functioning perfectly. It just ran down a minute ago and there's always a safety margin of a few minutes before it's too late to pull out. I just put the ship on total manual control. The engines will fire in about thirty seconds, so strap yourselves in – I'm going to pilot this ship back to the space station. There are way too many things broken around here to let you guys remain in orbit in this old rust bucket and who knows what else the meteorites might have damaged? Our Rescue-Rocket's securely docked onto your ship so we're all set to go. By the way, your coms are out too – the only way we knew to come out here for a rescue was the Astro-Life-Guard in your guy's suit ... that must be one of the only things still

working. It signaled the IO Space Station over a half hour ago and it took us that long to get here at top speed. Your ship didn't respond to any of our messages and that's how we knew you were both in trouble – now brace yourselves."

All four men felt the rush of acceleration as the ship pulled out of low orbit and headed for the space station circling IO.

Doug Dawson hails from Brooklyn, New York, wrote extensively for the US Defense Dept. and as a freelancer had numerous articles and fiction published by car and trade magazines ("Vette Vues," "Corvette Enthusiast," "Corvette," "The Big Reel"). He holds degrees in music and computer science, studied fiction writing at Johns Hopkins University and has had his short stories published by Academy of the Heart & Mind, Ariel Chart, Aphelion Webzine, Literary Yard, Scars Publications (8 stories), The Scarlet Leaf Review, Goats Milk and others and poetry accepted by Page & Spine and Short-Humor.



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A SHORT STORY

CATCHING UP 2143

by Doug Mathewson

Dear Grandfather Gerard,

I hope you don't mind me calling you that, but it's how we referred to you all these years. We assumed you were dead; lost in the war with so many others. Your letter was full of news, and we hunger for more. Especially about your "whole new family".

There is much news here of course, and I promise to share more in my next letter, but business first. I must decline your offer to bequeath our family's legendary sword on to me.

Being out of touch for so long you wouldn't know, but I have been an ordained priest in the Church of the Everlasting for a number of years. As a man of the cloth I can not accept an ancient sword that draws unholy powers from shall we say "the dark side". A 600 year old broadsword carrying a blood curse would be truly unacceptable.

My sister Geraldine is first officer on a merchant spacecraft that travels a circuitous route through the outer mining colonies and alien worlds. She and her partner Zinnia find themselves from time to time in difficult situations. Be it a

misunderstanding or an imagined slight, the potential for violence is real enough and a huge sword with glowing runes that as you describe as "a drinker of souls" could turn the tide as they say. I spoke to Gerri and Zinni and they are just thrilled by the idea and will gladly assume the stewardship and responsibilities that come with the sword. Their address is listed below.

Till next time, In faith and prayer,

-Fr. Charles Metronome

LIFE IS PRECIOUS

by William Wiggins

Even as the night sighs,
I am enamored by the silence
of the trees. The leaves sleep
in the air as the boys
huddle closely together,
whispering of their fathers.
Fireflies hover in place
around us, barely glistening
as a woman rests her eyes
bedded with life.

Life—it's still here.
Sometimes I forget.

But when there's no more deer on the hill
or birds in the bush, we know they're still,
too. Gone, but there. Waiting. Tomorrow,
the sun will rise, kissing the earth awake
and we'll thank her with our being, our eating.

Nodding, I'd like to imagine
that there will be horses.

Some galloping, sweating with pride;
some sitting with the foal near the trees.
A gentle heat sliding through the leaves.

Or bees, buzzing by the flowers
as the boys sway in the field.
One humming, the other singing.

Or even, just the woman.
Sitting in the grass, shining.
And simply smiling.



William Wiggins is an African American writer who is currently pursuing his Master's in Psychology at the University of Cincinnati in Cincinnati, Ohio.



TOP 10 SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES (BY SCRIPT)

So here is my list of the Top 10 Science Fiction Movies by Script. There are a lot of amazing Science Fiction movies out there. These, I think have the best writing, best dialogue, and best character development. If you haven't seen these movies, I highly recommend them.

1 2001 by Writers: Stanley Kubrick, Arthur C. Clarke

Based on the 1964 Novel of the same name by Arthur C. Clarke. Kubrick was a genius. There is no doubt about this. 2001 A Space Odyssey is a masterpiece of visuals, plot,

dialogue, and everything. The characters are well down. The entire script is terrific. It has both great character arcs and a message about humankind. The striking symbolism at the beginning, and the star baby, are all fantastic movie tropes at that point. The movie influenced all space movies to come.

2 The Terminator Writers: James Cameron, Gale Anne Hurd, William Wisher

Created out of the fevered dream of James Cameron's

The Terminator is still surging through the internet after almost 40 years. Anytime you get into a discussion online about AI, you'll find someone will bring up Skynet. The movie and the storyline are iconic. Cameron worked on a meager budget and created a film that has stood the test of time. Again the commentary on humans is very telling. The characters, dialogue setting, and script work so well. It's a fantastic movie.

3 Blade Runner Writers: Hampton Fancher, David

Webb Peoples, Philip K. Dick

Based on Phil K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep...*

Probably one of the greatest science fiction movies of all time, *Blade Runner* set the standard for visuals in science fiction films. It even surpasses *Star Wars* in its setting and effects. With the storyline of androids being alive or not and the ending of final empathy, the movie is an outstanding piece of filmmaking.

4 Alien Writers Dan O'Bannon, Ronald Shusett

Dan O'Bannon needs to get the credit he deserves. He also wrote *Total Recall* and *Return of the Living Dead*. With the characters, setting, plot, and theme, the movie is a tight script. Characters and conflicts are tightly constructed and presented to the audience. The film is a thrill ride at the same time as being a clever piece of exciting writing. There are plenty of plot twists here, and O'Bannon manages to make them all questions at the heart of modern science fiction.

5 The Martian Writers Drew Goddard and Andy Weir

Based on Andy Weir's serialized novels about a man stranded on Mars, I don't think anyone would have guessed he would be such a smash hit. The movie captures so much of the novel, making what could be very dull movements exciting or even triumphant. Matt Damon does a great job in this movie, but the script pulls him through by keeping the action going when there isn't any action. This movie could have been like *Castaway*, but it does not. It's an intense piece of movie-making that keeps the drama and suspense going from the beginning until the end.

6 The Matrix Writers Lilly Wachowski Lana Wachowski

The Matrix was an Original work by the Wachowskis, but it was said Gibsons' *Neuromancer* heavily influenced them; *The Matrix* is a science fiction movie that changed all films. I know the visual effects changed movies, but when you watch this movie again, there are so many inventive ideas and

scenes. Neo was taking instruction on a cell phone to his being pulled into the outside world, so many original ideas have almost become a cliché, but at the time of the movie, they were completely new. Are we living in a simulation? If we are, I hope it's the Matrix.

7 Inception Christopher Nolan

Christopher Nolan is a genius. His original scripts were all *Memento*, *The Dark Knight Trilogy*, *The Prestige*, *Dunkirk*, *Interstellar*, and *Tenet*. *Interstellar* and *The Prestige* could be on this list if it weren't for how great *Inception* is. The movie is all sci-fi, even though so little of it shows up in the film. The characters, conflict, plot, original concept, and everything about the movie are original, feel fresh, and suck you in. You couldn't ask for a better movie script to guide you through all the unsanded background scenes.

All Things Halloween



top10halloween.com



On the Last Day

by George Moore

after João Cabral de Melo Neto

On the last day of the world
I'll walk the dog along the shore

and we'll notice the little things
grains of sand glistening in the moonlight

all the smells he knows so well
and we'll not worry about Columbus

misreading the roundness of the world
or Cortez the worship of horses

or Khan where to hide himself
when the world is gone

Something will be going on
somewhere

and we'll feast in the honor of mornings
with the traditional toast and jam

George Moore's poetry has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Poetry*, *North American Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Arc* and *Stand*. His recent collections are *Children's Drawings of the Universe* (Salmon Poetry 2015) and *Saint Agnes Outside the Walls* (FutureCycle 2016). A finalist for The National Poetry Series and nominated for eight Pushcart Prizes, he has taught literature and writing at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and now lives on the south shore of Nova Scotia.

A Poem

Sunlight Crystal

by Scott Thomas Outlar

Sunlight Crystal

by Scott Thomas Outlar

I wounded all my alibis
before fully forming

now the theory is dizzy
crash point of fever

shine where the clovers are smitten

gathering red leaves
for spells of caution

You told me every story
takes on a life of its own
when eager

now my mouth is dry cotton
thick fabric turn autumn

glow in the gown of soft feather

lining up the charge
for signs of contact

Scott Thomas Outlar is originally from Atlanta, Georgia. He now lives and writes in Frederick, Maryland. His work has been nominated multiple times for both the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. He guest-edited the Hope Anthology of Poetry from CultureCult Press as well as the 2019-2023 Western Voices editions of Setu Mag. He is the author of seven books, including *Songs of a Dissident* (2015), *Abstract Visions of Light* (2018), *Of Sand and Sugar* (2019), and *Evermore* (2021 – written with co-author Mihaela Melnic). Selections of his poetry have been translated and published in 14 languages. He has been a weekly contributor at Dissident Voice for the past eight and a half years. More about Outlar's work can be found at 17Numa.com.

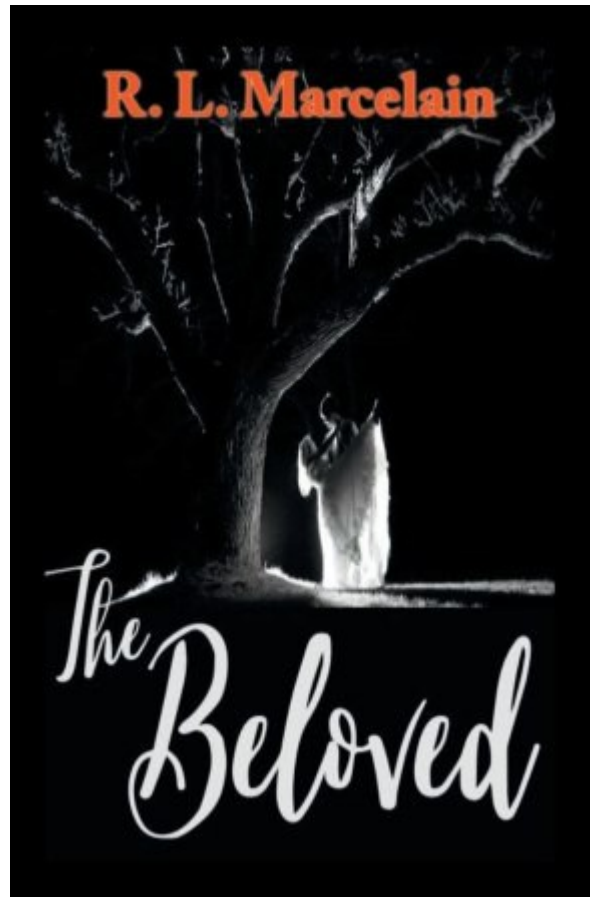
The Beloved

Author

R.L Marcelain

Author Bio

R. L. Marcelain is a thirty-six-year-old wife and mother. She was born and raised in Burlington. She attended Grand Canyon University, where she studied Psychology. She was born into a talented family beginning with her grandfather who performed musically in a traveling jazz band. Since a child, she frequently participated in local talent clubs throughout her life for singing and acting. She discovered her love for writing while attending high school by writing stories, poems, and music as a stress reducer. Currently, she works in education and is set to begin work for “Kelly’s Educational Services” in Denver Colorado next month. She spends her free time caring for animals and writing romance, fantasy, and thriller novels. Spending time with her family, and singing with her 7-year-old son. Gardening, baking, and cooking with her husband. Creating her own skincare tutorials, (sugar/sea salt scrubs). She is planning to return to school for her Master’s degree in Creative Writing.



Description

In the 1860s, Hunter Eldridge is a military veteran with a tumultuous homelife and a fraught relationship with his father. When he returns to London, Hunter reluctantly visits the family bookstore, dreading an encounter with his loathsome father. Upon entering he sets eyes on the enchanting Eliza Carlisle. They fall deeply in love-soul mates to the core-and spend fifteen years happily married before tragedy strikes. On Hunter’s birthday, after enjoying a wonderful night with family, he and Eliza are out for a leisurely stroll when a horrific creature of the night attacks them. Eliza is murdered, while Hunter is transformed into a vampire. In this new state, he finds a mentor in his father’s peculiar business partner Garret Wilkins. Hunter also eyes a suspect in his tragic attack and vows revenge. Over the next century, Hunter must rebuild his life as an immortal. He is lucky enough to find love again after years of loneliness and despair. Endless time allows him to unravel the mystery of reincarnation, while struggling with a darker side of himself. In Hunter’s continued thirst for vengeance, he realizes death is only the beginning as he reveals a small piece of a bigger event that is about to grip the country.

The God Protocol: Dragon

Author

D. L. Wilburn Jr.

Author Bio

Don Wilburn Jr. is the author of the near-term Science Fiction Thriller, The God Protocol: Dragon. He has twenty-seven years of government service as a Naval Officer and with TSA, allowing him to collect story ideas from around the world. Don enjoys researching and following “what-if” rabbit holes surrounding the future of Artificial Intelligence and its impact on Humanity. His short story Contact won an honorable mention from the L. Ron Hubbard Writers of the Future. He is a graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, NY, with a BS in Marine Transportation, an MS in National Resource Strategy, and a Doctorate in Business Administration with a specialization in Strategy and Innovation. He lives in Fort Worth, Texas, with his wife and two younger children.

Description

A science fiction thriller set in the near future. Humanity is on the brink of achieving AI Singularity as the potential for alien first contact rises. George Isaacson has dreams of being a global social media influencer, pushing fringe conspiracy theories and government coverups. Not a true believer himself, he knows that plenty of people are. He only needs to hook them. In the Summer of 2023, scientists at NASA discover five objects racing toward a point outside our solar system. Disregarding the official storyline of a naturally occurring event, George spins a tale of extraterrestrials, government coverups, and the end of life as we know it. When the objects start slowing, he realizes the alien conspiracy theories he’s promoting might be true. China and the United States publicly partner to lead the world into a new era in space while their rivalry for global dominance simmers in the shadows. Friction between the two countries is intense, with each seeking to dominate the technological world and solidify its position as the sole superpower. The new cold war heats up with discoveries of espionage that lead to breakthroughs in quantum computing and artificial intelligence. When tragedy strikes, George finds that his drive to become famous could have dire consequences for those who follow him. The response to the crisis may be worse than the perceived threat, and he must decide whether to use his newfound fame to bring the world community together or let it all go hoping everything they know about the threat is wrong. A story pulled from the headlines. Gripping characters intertwine in a story that spans the globe and makes us question whether we understand our place in the universe.



The Final Position

Author

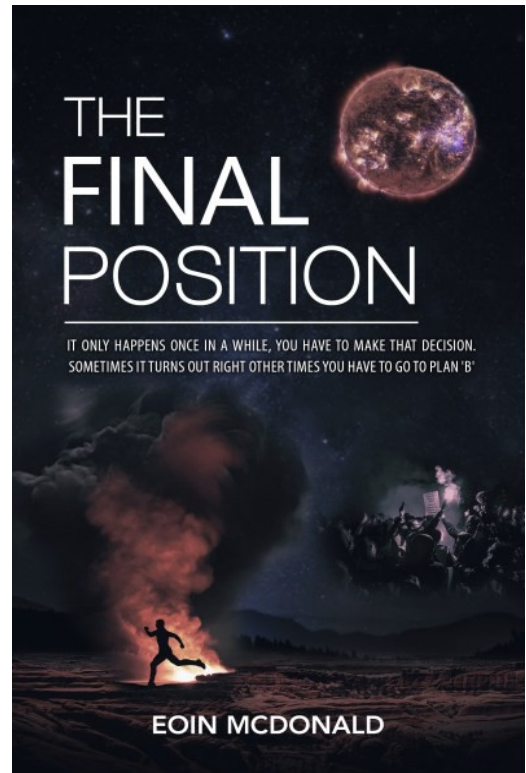
Eoin McDonald

Author Bio

I am an adventurer. I have always been an adventurer as long as I can remember. Always going around the corner to see what is there. Life has taught me to be cautious of leaping over the fence to see if the grass is better. So I have learned many precautionary tricks, like checking out the surroundings before going head first into any situation. Anything can be an adventure. Looking into a nearby forest or taking a trip into a Country you have never experienced before. I have been fortunate to have gone to many places and lived there for a short time and been able to search out the makings of their society while taking in the sights, sounds, food, and culture. It has been fun and given rise to my love of writing. Since I was a child I have loved to write stories. My imagination is like that. The teacher may not of appreciated this, he only commented on my grammar but I took great pleasure in telling my tales. Sort of an innermost satisfaction. I hope I can convey to you my love for telling stories, just like I did for my children when they were growing up Eoin McDonald

Description

Surfieron is an inhabitable planet in the W26 area of space. It was discovered back in 2017, and it was shown to have signs of liquid water. When the first explorers arrived they found other groups of humanoid species living there. Some were primitive others had technological advancements. Soon settlers arrived with high ideals. They were Onewayers. Since then a thriving community has evolved with people coming from all over the Earth; as Earth disintegrated under meteor showers, the division and dissension of society, and plagues. Five generations later have we learned anything? As society developed on Surfieron, and the settlers grappled with what resources were available, people were faced with new problems and different circumstances. Weather patterns were foreign to the new settlers. The indigenous natives were of a totally different disposition from what they had ever encountered. What resources and equipment they had brought with them soon ran out or wore out. Thankfully, ingenious and industrious Onewayers were also in the mix of travelers. Not all ideologists were opposed to industry, as ideology gave way to reasoning. The reasoning of survival. Over a period of time, some of the indigenous population intermingled with the Onewayers. Cliques were set up and new prejudices showed their head. There were advantages and disadvantages. Five generations on, the evolved population was considered acceptable but there was a class system evolving as well. Many never considered politics as a necessity.



Dear Manusha

Author

Anupama Ravindran Menon

Author Bio

Born and brought up in the humble suburbs of old Seremban town, Anupama Ravindran Menon, @Anu, is your regular girl next door. Having graduated from the prestigious Manipal University under the Malaysian Defense Ministry Scholarship, she started training as an intern shortly afterwards & began serving as a doctor in the Malaysian Armed Forces. As much as Anu is a passionate young doctor blooming in her field, she awes art in its every form, be it music, dance, writing, painting or creative work. After obtaining a Distinction award in the University of New South Wales English Assessment at the age of 13, she began exploring into the writing part of herself. She was apart of multiple national essay writing competitions and privileged to be shortlisted for the Prestigious Dublin Literature Writing competition in 2004. After winning her first prize in the International Notion Press Short Stories competition 2017, she was published as a joint author alongside 19 other writers in Plotpourri, an anthology of short stories. As an upcoming painter, she had also successfully done her first solo painting exhibition entitled Hridhaya:Language of Heartbeats in 2018. As medicine is her ultimate field of passion & to answer her call of duty, she was given the opportunity to serve under the United Nation's (UN) flagship in a peacekeeping operation in Lebanon in 2019-2020 (UNIFIL). She was a part of an entourage of the Malaysian Battalion 850-7 who actively serve in this region over decades. Apart from being a United Nations ambassador & a doctor in field, she was also the Gender Focal Point representative of the nation & become an active part of the COVID-19 crisis team under the tutelage of UNIFIL Medical HQ & WHO. She represented Malaysia in a few international virtual symposiums to present regarding the adversities & challenges of COVID-19 in operational areas, namely by Vietnamese Defence & UNDPKO & CUNPKO of India. To honour the contributions, she was awarded with the United Nations Peace Keeping Medal and other honorary certificates. She is also currently a nominee for NE8x ® Litfest 2023 Award & Author of the Year 2023 award. She also won first runner up in the recent 7th Indie Author's Championship 2023 by NotionPress publications.



SOR TES

sortes.co

Writers James V. Hart, Michael Goldenberg, Carl Sagan

Based on Carl Sagan's 1985 novel of the same name, *Contact* speaks to some truth about humanity that many sci-fi scripts miss. We can't travel faster than light to go and meet others in the universe; maybe they will have to come to us. It also puts us uniquely positioned to measure our Faith with Science. This script has a lot going on, and it's all masterful. Some people watch this movie once and walk away, but give it a second chance, and you'll see a lot more going on here than once it first appears on the screen. Faith in god. Faith in Science and the fundamental question of Faith in humanity.

9 Dune Writers Frank Herbert, David Lynch

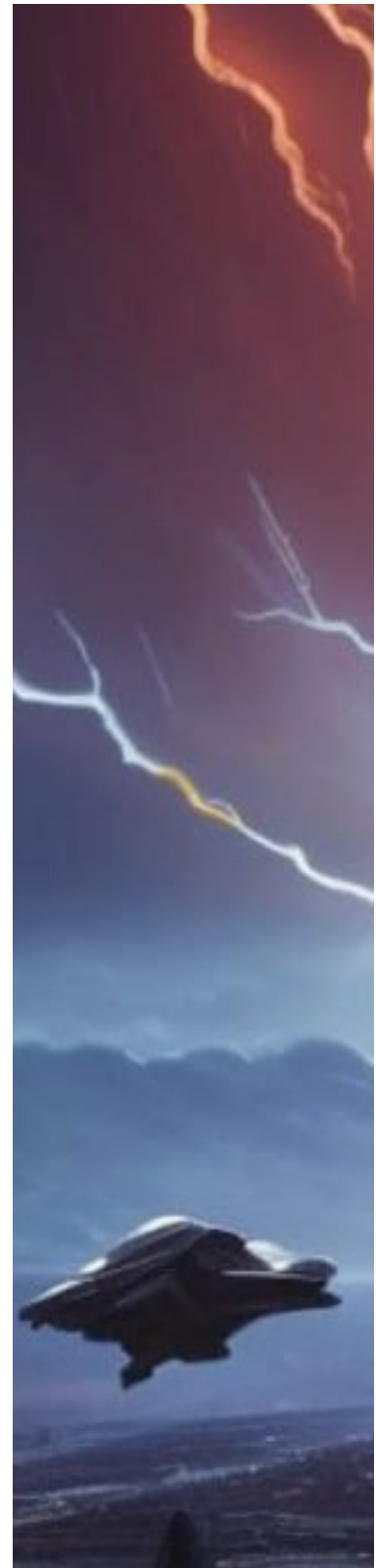
Dune 1984/2021/2023

Dune the novel is hailed as one of the greatest pieces of Science fiction of all time. *Star Wars* famously stole many of its more "intellectual" ideas from it. Odd that Spice is a drug in both universes. Anyway, the story from the

1984 movie is a beautiful epic film with great characters and a great storyline. The movie diverges from the book a lot, but those invented ads capture some of the feelings of the original work. I'm also including the 2021 version in this. The movie sticks to the book more closely, but they've done a fantastic job. The script is thick with it.

10 Total Recall Writers Philip K. Dick, Ronald Shusett, Dan O'Bannon

Dan O'Bannon once again writes a masterful script that twists and turns until the unexpected ending. The characters are well-developed, and the movie keeps you guessing about what's real and not real. Even after you finish the film, you may wonder if you know the story's reality. There are some cheesy lines for Arnold in the movie, but honestly, that shows more skill on O'Bannon's part. It's a great script, and the movie sucks you in from beginning to end.





THE DOOR IN THE WALL

I

One confidential evening, not three months ago, Lionel Wallace told me this story of the Door in the Wall. And at the time I thought that so far as he was concerned it was a true story.

He told it me with such a direct simplicity of conviction that I could not do otherwise than believe in him. But in the morning, in my own flat, I woke to a different atmosphere, and as I lay in bed and recalled the things he had told me, stripped of the glamour of his earnest slow voice, denuded of the focussed shaded table light, the

shadowy atmosphere that wrapped about him and the pleasant bright things, the dessert and glasses and napery of the dinner we had shared, making them for the time a bright little world quite cut off from every-day realities, I saw it all as frankly incredible. "He was mystifying!" I said, and then: "How well he did it!. . . . It isn't quite the thing I should have expected him, of all people, to do well."

Afterwards, as I sat up in bed and sipped my morning tea, I found myself trying to account for the flavour of reality that perplexed me in his impossible reminiscences, by supposing they did in some way suggest, present, convey—I hardly know which word

to use—experiences it was otherwise impossible to tell.

Well, I don't resort to that explanation now. I have got over my intervening doubts. I believe now, as I believed at the moment of telling, that Wallace did to the very best of his ability strip the truth of his secret for me. But whether he himself saw, or only thought he saw, whether he himself was the possessor of an inestimable privilege, or the victim of a fantastic dream, I cannot pretend to guess. Even the facts of his death, which ended my doubts forever, throw no light on that. That much the reader must judge for himself.

I forget now what chance comment or criticism of mine moved so reticent a man to

confide in me. He was, I think, defending himself against an imputation of slackness and unreliability I had made in relation to a great public movement in which he had disappointed me. But he plunged suddenly. "I have" he said, "a preoccupation—"

"I know," he went on, after a pause that he devoted to the study of his cigar ash, "I have been negligent. The fact is—it isn't a case of ghosts or apparitions—but—it's an odd thing to tell of, Redmond—I am haunted. I am haunted by something—that rather takes the light out of things, that fills me with longings"

He paused, checked by that English shyness that so often overcomes us when we would speak of moving or grave or beautiful things. "You were at Saint Athelstan's all through," he said, and for a moment that seemed to me quite irrelevant. "Well"—and he paused. Then very haltingly at first, but afterwards more easily, he began to tell of the thing that was hidden in his life, the haunting memory of a beauty and a happiness that filled his heart with insatiable longings that made all the interests and spectacle of worldly life seem dull and tedious and vain to him.

Now that I have the clue to it, the thing seems written visibly in his face. I have a photograph in which that look of detachment has been

caught and intensified. It reminds me of what a woman once said of him—a woman who had loved him greatly. "Suddenly," she said, "the interest goes out of him. He forgets you. He doesn't care a rap for you—under his very nose"

Yet the interest was not always out of him, and when he was holding his attention to a thing Wallace could contrive to be an extremely successful man. His career, indeed, is set with successes. He left me behind him long ago; he soared up over my head, and cut a figure in the world that I couldn't cut—anyhow. He was still a year short of forty, and they say now that he would have been in office and very probably in the new Cabinet if he had lived. At school he always beat me without effort—as it were by nature. We were at school together at Saint Athelstan's College in West Kensington for almost all our school time. He came into the school as my co-equal, but he left far above me, in a blaze of scholarships and brilliant performance. Yet I think I made a fair average running. And it was at school I heard first of the Door in the Wall—that I was to hear of a second time only a month before his death.

To him at least the Door in the Wall was a real door leading through a real wall to immortal realities. Of that I am now quite assured.

And it came into his life early, when he was a little fellow between five and six. I remember how, as he sat making his confession to me with a slow gravity, he reasoned and reckoned the date of it. "There was," he said, "a crimson Virginia creeper in it—all one bright uniform crimson in a clear amber sunshine against a white wall. That came into the impression somehow, though I don't clearly remember how, and there were horse-chestnut leaves upon the clean pavement outside the green door. They were blotched yellow and green, you know, not brown nor dirty, so that they must have been new fallen. I take it that means October. I look out for horse-chestnut leaves every year, and I ought to know.

"If I'm right in that, I was about five years and four months old."

He was, he said, rather a precocious little boy—he learned to talk at an abnormally early age, and he was so sane and "old-fashioned," as people say, that he was permitted an amount of initiative that most children scarcely attain by seven or eight. His mother died when he was born, and he was under the less vigilant and authoritative care of a nursery governess. His father was a stern, preoccupied lawyer, who gave him little attention, and expected great things of

him. For all his brightness he found life a little grey and dull I think. And one day he wandered.

He could not recall the particular neglect that enabled him to get away, nor the course he took among the West Kensington roads. All that had faded among the incurable blurs of memory. But the white wall and the green door stood out quite distinctly.

As his memory of that remote childish experience ran, he did at the very first sight of that door experience a peculiar emotion, an attraction, a desire to get to the door and open it and walk in. And at the same time he had the clearest conviction that either it was unwise or it was wrong of him—he could not tell which—to yield to this attraction. He insisted upon it as a curious thing that he knew from the very beginning—unless memory has played him the queerest trick—that the door was unfastened, and that he could go in as he chose.

I seem to see the figure of that little boy, drawn and repelled. And it was very clear in his mind, too, though why it should be so was never explained, that his father would be very angry if he went through that door.

Wallace described all these moments of hesitation to me with the utmost particularity.

He went right past the door, and then, with his hands in his pockets, and making an infantile attempt to whistle, strolled right along beyond the end of the wall. There he recalls a number of mean, dirty shops, and particularly that of a plumber and decorator, with a dusty disorder of earthenware pipes, sheet lead ball taps, pattern books of wall paper, and tins of enamel. He stood pretending to examine these things, and coveting, passionately desiring the green door.

Then, he said, he had a gust of emotion. He made a run for it, lest hesitation should grip him again, he went plump with outstretched hand through the green door and let it slam behind him. And so, in a trice, he came into the garden that has haunted all his life.

It was very difficult for Wallace to give me his full sense of that garden into which he came.

There was something in the very air of it that exhilarated, that gave one a sense of lightness and good happening and well being; there was something in the sight of it that made all its colour clean and perfect and subtly luminous. In the instant of coming into it one was exquisitely glad—as only in rare moments and when one is young and joyful one can be glad in this world. And

everything was beautiful there

Wallace mused before he went on telling me. “You see,” he said, with the doubtful inflection of a man who pauses at incredible things, “there were two great panthers there . . . Yes, spotted panthers. And I was not afraid. There was a long wide path with marble-edged flower borders on either side, and these two huge velvety beasts were playing there with a ball. One looked up and came towards me, a little curious as it seemed. It came right up to me, rubbed its soft round ear very gently against the small hand I held out and purred. It was, I tell you, an enchanted garden. I know. And the size? Oh! it stretched far and wide, this way and that. I believe there were hills far away. Heaven knows where West Kensington had suddenly got to. And somehow it was just like coming home.

“You know, in the very moment the door swung to behind me, I forgot the road with its fallen chestnut leaves, its cabs and tradesmen’s carts, I forgot the sort of gravitational pull back to the discipline and obedience of home, I forgot all hesitations and fear, forgot discretion, forgot all the intimate realities of this life. I became in a moment a very glad and wonder-happy little boy—in another world. It was a world

with a different quality, a warmer, more penetrating and mellower light, with a faint clear gladness in its air, and wisps of sun-touched cloud in the blueness of its sky. And before me ran this long wide path, invitingly, with weedless beds on either side, rich with untended flowers, and these two great panthers. I put my little hands fearlessly on their soft fur, and caressed their round ears and the sensitive corners under their ears, and played with them, and it was as though they welcomed me home. There was a keen sense of home-coming in my mind, and when presently a tall, fair girl appeared in the pathway and came to meet me, smiling, and said 'Well?' to me, and lifted me, and kissed me, and put me down, and led me by the hand, there was no amazement, but only an impression of delightful rightness, of being reminded of happy things that had in some strange way been overlooked. There were broad steps, I remember, that came into view between spikes of delphinium, and up these we went to a great avenue between very old and shady dark trees. All down this avenue, you know, between the red chapped stems, were marble seats of honour and statuary, and very tame and friendly white doves

"And along this avenue my girl-friend led me, looking down—I recall the pleasant

lines, the finely-modelled chin of her sweet kind face—asking me questions in a soft, agreeable voice, and telling me things, pleasant things I know, though what they were I was never able to recall And presently a little Capuchin monkey, very clean, with a fur of ruddy brown and kindly hazel eyes, came down a tree to us and ran beside me, looking up at me and grinning, and presently leapt to my shoulder. So we went on our way in great happiness"

He paused.

"Go on," I said.

"I remember little things. We passed an old man musing among laurels, I remember, and a place gay with paroquets, and came through a broad shaded colonnade to a spacious cool palace, full of pleasant fountains, full of beautiful things, full of the quality and promise of heart's desire. And there were many things and many people, some that still seem to stand out clearly and some that are a little vague, but all these people were beautiful and kind. In some way—I don't know how—it was conveyed to me that they all were kind to me, glad to have me there, and filling me with gladness by their gestures, by the touch of their hands, by the welcome and love in their eyes. Yes—"

He mused for awhile.

"Playmates I found there. That was very much to me, because I was a lonely little boy. They played delightful games in a grass-covered court where there was a sundial set about with flowers. And as one played one loved"

"But—it's odd—there's a gap in my memory. I don't remember the games we played. I never remembered. Afterwards, as a child, I spent long hours trying, even with tears, to recall the form of that happiness. I wanted to play it all over again—in my nursery—by myself. No! All I remember is the happiness and two dear playfellows who were most with me Then presently came a sombre dark woman, with a grave, pale face and dreamy eyes, a sombre woman wearing a soft long robe of pale purple, who carried a book and beckoned and took me aside with her into a gallery above a hall—though my playmates were loth to have me go, and ceased their game and stood watching as I was carried away. 'Come back to us!' they cried. 'Come back to us soon!' I looked up at her face, but she heeded them not at all. Her face was very gentle and grave. She took me to a seat in the gallery, and I stood beside her, ready to look at her book as she opened it upon her knee. The pages fell open. She pointed, and I looked, marvelling, for in the living

pages of that book I saw myself; it was a story about myself, and in it were all the things that had happened to me since ever I was born

“It was wonderful to me, because the pages of that book were not pictures, you understand, but realities.”

Wallace paused gravely—looked at me doubtfully.

“Go on,” I said. “I understand.”

“They were realities—yes, they must have been; people moved and things came and went in them; my dear mother, whom I had near forgotten; then my father, stern and upright, the servants, the nursery, all the familiar things of home. Then the front door and the busy streets, with traffic to and fro: I looked and marvelled, and looked half doubtfully again into the woman’s face and turned the pages over, skipping this and that, to see more of this book, and more, and so at last I came to myself hovering and hesitating outside the green door in the long white wall, and felt again the conflict and the fear.

“And next?” I cried, and would have turned on, but the cool hand of the grave woman delayed me.

“Next?” I insisted, and struggled gently with her hand, pulling up her fingers with all my childish strength, and as she yielded and the page came over she bent down

upon me like a shadow and kissed my brow.

“But the page did not show the enchanted garden, nor the panthers, nor the girl who had led me by the hand, nor the playfellows who had been so loth to let me go. It showed a long grey street in West Kensington, on that chill hour of afternoon before the lamps are lit, and I was there, a wretched little figure, weeping aloud, for all that I could do to restrain myself, and I was weeping because I could not return to my dear play-fellows who had called after me, ‘Come back to us! Come back to us soon!’ I was there. This was no page in a book, but harsh reality; that enchanted place and the restraining hand of the grave mother at whose knee I stood had gone—whither have they gone?”

He halted again, and remained for a time, staring into the fire.

“Oh! the wretchedness of that return!” he murmured.

“Well?” I said after a minute or so.

“Poor little wretch I was—brought back to this grey world again! As I realised the fulness of what had happened to me, I gave way to quite ungovernable grief. And the shame and humiliation of that public weeping and my disgraceful homecoming remain with me still. I see again the benevolent-looking old gentleman in gold

spectacles who stopped and spoke to me—prodding me first with his umbrella. ‘Poor little chap,’ said he; ‘and are you lost then?’—and me a London boy of five and more! And he must needs bring in a kindly young policeman and make a crowd of me, and so march me home. Sobbing, conspicuous and frightened, I came from the enchanted garden to the steps of my father’s house.

“That is as well as I can remember my vision of that garden—the garden that haunts me still. Of course, I can convey nothing of that indescribable quality of translucent unreality, that difference from the common things of experience that hung about it all; but that—that is what happened. If it was a dream, I am sure it was a day-time and altogether extraordinary dream H’m!—naturally there followed a terrible questioning, by my aunt, my father, the nurse, the governess—everyone

“I tried to tell them, and my father gave me my first thrashing for telling lies. When afterwards I tried to tell my aunt, she punished me again for my wicked persistence. Then, as I said, everyone was forbidden to listen to me, to hear a word about it. Even my fairy tale books were taken away from me for a time—because I was ‘too imaginative.’ Eh? Yes,

they did that! My father belonged to the old school And my story was driven back upon myself. I whispered it to my pillow—my pillow that was often damp and salt to my whispering lips with childish tears. And I added always to my official and less fervent prayers this one heartfelt request: ‘Please God I may dream of the garden. Oh! take me back to my garden! Take me back to my garden!’

“I dreamt often of the garden. I may have added to it, I may have changed it; I do not know All this you understand is an attempt to reconstruct from fragmentary memories a very early experience. Between that and the other consecutive memories of my boyhood there is a gulf. A time came when it seemed impossible I should ever speak of that wonder glimpse again.”

I asked an obvious question.

“No,” he said. “I don’t remember that I ever attempted to find my way back to the garden in those early years. This seems odd to me now, but I think that very probably a closer watch was kept on my movements after this misadventure to prevent my going astray. No, it wasn’t until you knew me that I tried for the garden again. And I believe there was a period—incredible as it seems now—when I forgot the garden altogether—when I was about

eight or nine it may have been. Do you remember me as a kid at Saint Athelstan’s?”

“Rather!”

“I didn’t show any signs did I in those days of having a secret dream?”

II

He looked up with a sudden smile.

“Did you ever play North-West Passage with me? No, of course you didn’t come my way!”

“It was the sort of game,” he went on, “that every imaginative child plays all day. The idea was the discovery of a North-West Passage to school. The way to school was plain enough; the game consisted in finding some way that wasn’t plain, starting off ten minutes early in some almost hopeless direction, and working one’s way round through unaccustomed streets to my goal. And one day I got entangled among some rather low-class streets on the other side of Campden Hill, and I began to think that for once the game would be against me and that I should get to school late. I tried rather desperately a street that seemed a *cul de sac*, and found a passage at the end. I hurried through that with renewed hope. ‘I shall do it yet,’ I said, and passed a row of frowsy little shops that were inexplicably

familiar to me, and behold! there was my long white wall and the green door that led to the enchanted garden!

“The thing whacked upon me suddenly. Then, after all, that garden, that wonderful garden, wasn’t a dream!”

He paused.

“I suppose my second experience with the green door marks the world of difference there is between the busy life of a schoolboy and the infinite leisure of a child. Anyhow, this second time I didn’t for a moment think of going in straight away. You see . . . For one thing my mind was full of the idea of getting to school in time—set on not breaking my record for punctuality. I must surely have felt *some* little desire at least to try the door—yes, I must have felt that But I seem to remember the attraction of the door mainly as another obstacle to my overmastering determination to get to school. I was immediately interested by this discovery I had made, of course—I went on with my mind full of it—but I went on. It didn’t check me. I ran past tugging out my watch, found I had ten minutes still to spare, and then I was going downhill into familiar surroundings. I got to school, breathless, it is true, and wet with perspiration, but in time. I can remember hanging up my coat and hat . .

. Went right by it and left it behind me. Odd, eh?"

He looked at me thoughtfully. "Of course, I didn't know then that it wouldn't always be there. School boys have limited imaginations. I suppose I thought it was an awfully jolly thing to have it there, to know my way back to it, but there was the school tugging at me. I expect I was a good deal distraught and inattentive that morning, recalling what I could of the beautiful strange people I should presently see again. Oddly enough I had no doubt in my mind that they would be glad to see me . . . Yes, I must have thought of the garden that morning just as a jolly sort of place to which one might resort in the interludes of a strenuous scholastic career.

"I didn't go that day at all. The next day was a half holiday, and that may have weighed with me. Perhaps, too, my state of inattention brought down impositions upon me and docked the margin of time necessary for the detour. I don't know. What I do know is that in the meantime the enchanted garden was so much upon my mind that I could not keep it to myself.

"I told—What was his name?—a ferrety-looking youngster we used to call Squiff."

"Young Hopkins," said I.

"Hopkins it was. I did not like telling him, I had a feeling

that in some way it was against the rules to tell him, but I did. He was walking part of the way home with me; he was talkative, and if we had not talked about the enchanted garden we should have talked of something else, and it was intolerable to me to think about any other subject. So I blabbed.

"Well, he told my secret. The next day in the play interval I found myself surrounded by half a dozen bigger boys, half teasing and wholly curious to hear more of the enchanted garden. There was that big Fawcett—you remember him?—and Carnaby and Morley Reynolds. You weren't there by any chance? No, I think I should have remembered if you were"

"A boy is a creature of odd feelings. I was, I really believe, in spite of my secret self-disgust, a little flattered to have the attention of these big fellows. I remember particularly a moment of pleasure caused by the praise of Crawshaw—you remember Crawshaw major, the son of Crawshaw the composer?—who said it was the best lie he had ever heard. But at the same time there was a really painful undertow of shame at telling what I felt was indeed a sacred secret. That beast Fawcett made a joke about the girl in green—"

Wallace's voice sank with the keen memory of that shame. "I pretended not to hear," he

said. "Well, then Carnaby suddenly called me a young liar and disputed with me when I said the thing was true. I said I knew where to find the green door, could lead them all there in ten minutes. Carnaby became outrageously virtuous, and said I'd have to—and bear out my words or suffer. Did you ever have Carnaby twist your arm? Then perhaps you'll understand how it went with me. I swore my story was true. There was nobody in the school then to save a chap from Carnaby though Crawshaw put in a word or so. Carnaby had got his game. I grew excited and red-eared, and a little frightened, I behaved altogether like a silly little chap, and the outcome of it all was that instead of starting alone for my enchanted garden, I led the way presently—cheeks flushed, ears hot, eyes smarting, and my soul one burning misery and shame—for a party of six mocking, curious and threatening school-fellows.

"We never found the white wall and the green door . . ."

"You mean?—"

"I mean I couldn't find it. I would have found it if I could.

"And afterwards when I could go alone I couldn't find it. I never found it. I seem now to have been always looking for it through my school-boy

days, but I've never come upon it again."

"Did the fellows—make it disagreeable?"

"Beastly Carnaby held a council over me for wanton lying. I remember how I sneaked home and upstairs to hide the marks of my blubbing. But when I cried myself to sleep at last it wasn't for Carnaby, but for the garden, for the beautiful afternoon I had hoped for, for the sweet friendly women and the waiting playfellows and the game I had hoped to learn again, that beautiful forgotten game

"I believed firmly that if I had not told— I had bad times after that—crying at night and wool-gathering by day. For two terms I slackened and had bad reports. Do you remember? Of course you would! It was *you*—your beating me in mathematics that brought me back to the grind again."

III

For a time my friend stared silently into the red heart of the fire. Then he said: "I never saw it again until I was seventeen.

"It leapt upon me for the third time—as I was driving to Paddington on my way to Oxford and a scholarship. I had just one momentary glimpse. I was leaning over the apron of my hansom

smoking a cigarette, and no doubt thinking myself no end of a man of the world, and suddenly there was the door, the wall, the dear sense of unforgettable and still attainable things.

"We clattered by—I too taken by surprise to stop my cab until we were well past and round a corner. Then I had a queer moment, a double and divergent movement of my will: I tapped the little door in the roof of the cab, and brought my arm down to pull out my watch. 'Yes, sir!' said the cabman, smartly. 'Er—well—it's nothing,' I cried. '*My* mistake! We haven't much time! Go on!' and he went on . . .

"I got my scholarship. And the night after I was told of that I sat over my fire in my little upper room, my study, in my father's house, with his praise—his rare praise—and his sound counsels ringing in my ears, and I smoked my favourite pipe—the formidable bulldog of adolescence—and thought of that door in the long white wall. 'If I had stopped,' I thought, 'I should have missed my scholarship, I should have missed Oxford—muddled all the fine career before me! I begin to see things better!' I fell musing deeply, but I did not doubt then this career of mine was a thing that merited sacrifice.

"Those dear friends and that clear atmosphere seemed very

sweet to me, very fine, but remote. My grip was fixing now upon the world. I saw another door opening—the door of my career."

He stared again into the fire. Its red lights picked out a stubborn strength in his face for just one flickering moment, and then it vanished again.

"Well", he said and sighed, "I have served that career. I have done—much work, much hard work. But I have dreamt of the enchanted garden a thousand dreams, and seen its door, or at least glimpsed its door, four times since then. Yes—four times. For a while this world was so bright and interesting, seemed so full of meaning and opportunity that the half-effaced charm of the garden was by comparison gentle and remote. Who wants to pat panthers on the way to dinner with pretty women and distinguished men? I came down to London from Oxford, a man of bold promise that I have done something to redeem. Something—and yet there have been disappointments

"Twice I have been in love—I will not dwell on that—but once, as I went to someone who, I know, doubted whether I dared to come, I took a short cut at a venture through an unfrequented road near Earl's Court, and so happened on a white wall and a familiar green door. 'Odd!' said I to myself, 'but I thought this

place was on Campden Hill. It's the place I never could find somehow—like counting Stonehenge—the place of that queer day dream of mine.' And I went by it intent upon my purpose. It had no appeal to me that afternoon.

"I had just a moment's impulse to try the door, three steps aside were needed at the most—though I was sure enough in my heart that it would open to me—and then I thought that doing so might delay me on the way to that appointment in which I thought my honour was involved. Afterwards I was sorry for my punctuality—I might at least have peeped in I thought, and waved a hand to those panthers, but I knew enough by this time not to seek again belatedly that which is not found by seeking. Yes, that time made me very sorry

"Years of hard work after that and never a sight of the door. It's only recently it has come back to me. With it there has come a sense as though some thin tarnish had spread itself over my world. I began to think of it as a sorrowful and bitter thing that I should never see that door again. Perhaps I was suffering a little from overwork—perhaps it was what I've heard spoken of as the feeling of forty. I don't know. But certainly the keen brightness that makes effort easy has gone out of things recently, and that just at a

time with all these new political developments—when I ought to be working. Odd, isn't it? But I do begin to find life toilsome, its rewards, as I come near them, cheap. I began a little while ago to want the garden quite badly. Yes—and I've seen it three times."

"The garden?"

"No—the door! And I haven't gone in!"

He leaned over the table to me, with an enormous sorrow in his voice as he spoke.

"Thrice I have had my chance—*thrice!* If ever that door offers itself to me again, I swore, I will go in out of this dust and heat, out of this dry glitter of vanity, out of these toilsome futilities. I will go and never return. This time I will stay I swore it and when the time came—*I didn't go.*

"Three times in one year have I passed that door and failed to enter. Three times in the last year.

"The first time was on the night of the snatch division on the Tenants' Redemption Bill, on which the Government was saved by a majority of three. You remember? No one on our side—perhaps very few on the opposite side—expected the end that night. Then the debate collapsed like eggshells. I and Hotchkiss were dining with his cousin at Brentford, we were both unpaired, and we were called

up by telephone, and set off at once in his cousin's motor. We got in barely in time, and on the way we passed my wall and door—livid in the moonlight, blotched with hot yellow as the glare of our lamps lit it, but unmistakable. 'My God!' cried I. 'What?' said Hotchkiss. 'Nothing!' I answered, and the moment passed.

"'I've made a great sacrifice,' I told the whip as I got in. They all have,' he said, and hurried by.

"I do not see how I could have done otherwise then. And the next occasion was as I rushed to my father's bedside to bid that stern old man farewell. Then, too, the claims of life were imperative. But the third time was different; it happened a week ago. It fills me with hot remorse to recall it. I was with Gurker and Ralphs—it's no secret now you know that I've had my talk with Gurker. We had been dining at Frobisher's, and the talk had become intimate between us. The question of my place in the reconstructed ministry lay always just over the boundary of the discussion. Yes—yes. That's all settled. It needn't be talked about yet, but there's no reason to keep a secret from you Yes—thanks! thanks! But let me tell you my story.

"Then, on that night things were very much in the air. My position was a very delicate

one. I was keenly anxious to get some definite word from Gurker, but was hampered by Ralphs' presence. I was using the best power of my brain to keep that light and careless talk not too obviously directed to the point that concerns me. I had to. Ralphs' behaviour since has more than justified my caution Ralphs, I knew, would leave us beyond the Kensington High Street, and then I could surprise Gurker by a sudden frankness. One has sometimes to resort to these little devices. . . . And then it was that in the margin of my field of vision I became aware once more of the white wall, the green door before us down the road.

"We passed it talking. I passed it. I can still see the shadow of Gurker's marked profile, his opera hat tilted forward over his prominent nose, the many folds of his neck wrap going before my shadow and Ralphs' as we sauntered past.

"I passed within twenty inches of the door. 'If I say good-night to them, and go in,' I asked myself, 'what will happen?' And I was all a-tingle for that word with Gurker.

"I could not answer that question in the tangle of my other problems. 'They will think me mad,' I thought. 'And suppose I vanish now!—Amazing disappearance of a prominent politician!' That weighed with me. A thousand

inconceivably petty worldlinesses weighed with me in that crisis."

Then he turned on me with a sorrowful smile, and, speaking slowly; "Here I am!" he said.

"Here I am!" he repeated, "and my chance has gone from me. Three times in one year the door has been offered me—the door that goes into peace, into delight, into a beauty beyond dreaming, a kindness no man on earth can know. And I have rejected it, Redmond, and it has gone—"

"How do you know?"

"I know. I know. I am left now to work it out, to stick to the tasks that held me so strongly when my moments came. You say, I have success—this vulgar, tawdry, irksome, envied thing. I have it." He had a walnut in his big hand. "If that was my success," he said, and crushed it, and held it out for me to see.

"Let me tell you something, Redmond. This loss is destroying me. For two months, for ten weeks nearly now, I have done no work at all, except the most necessary and urgent duties. My soul is full of inappeasable regrets. At nights—when it is less likely I shall be recognised—I go out. I wander. Yes. I wonder what people would think of that if they knew. A Cabinet Minister, the responsible head of that most vital of all departments, wandering

alone—grieving—sometimes near audibly lamenting—for a door, for a garden!"

IV

I can see now his rather pallid face, and the unfamiliar sombre fire that had come into his eyes. I see him very vividly to-night. I sit recalling his words, his tones, and last evening's *Westminster Gazette* still lies on my sofa, containing the notice of his death. At lunch to-day the club was busy with him and the strange riddle of his fate.

They found his body very early yesterday morning in a deep excavation near East Kensington Station. It is one of two shafts that have been made in connection with an extension of the railway southward. It is protected from the intrusion of the public by a hoarding upon the high road, in which a small doorway has been cut for the convenience of some of the workmen who live in that direction. The doorway was left unfastened through a misunderstanding between two gangers, and through it he made his way

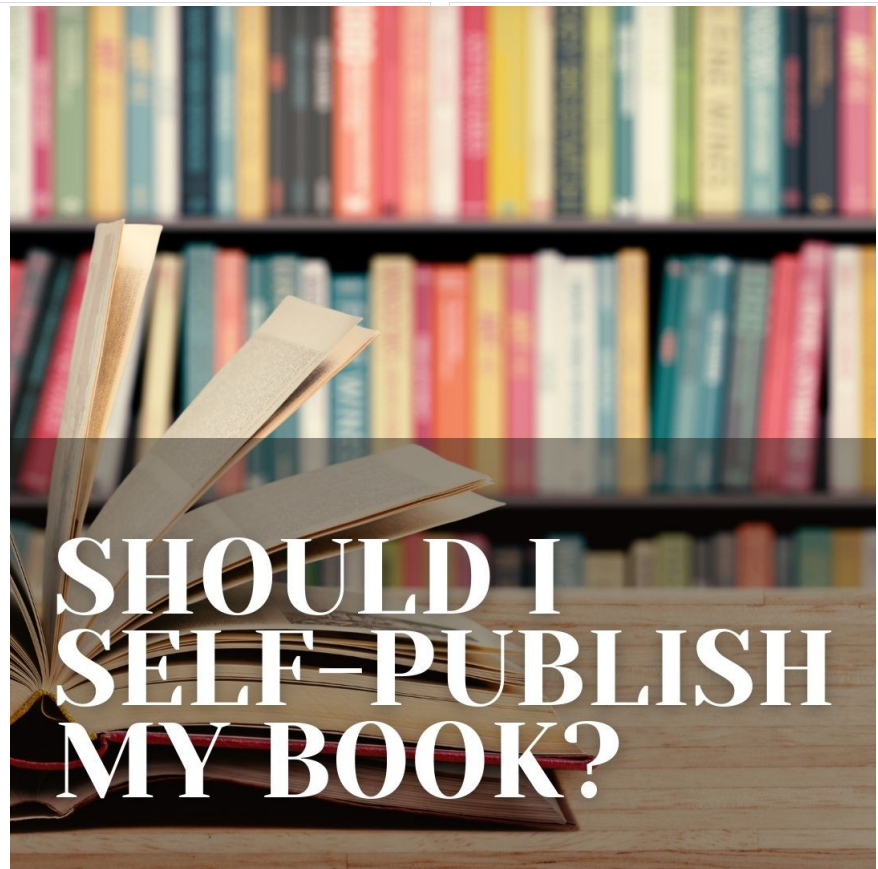
My mind is darkened with questions and riddles.

It would seem he walked all the way from the House that night—he has frequently walked home during the past Session—and so it is I figure his dark form coming along the late and empty streets,

wrapped up, intent. And then did the pale electric lights near the station cheat the rough planking into a semblance of white? Did that fatal unfastened door awaken some memory?

Was there, after all, ever any green door in the wall at all?

I do not know. I have told his story as he told it to me. There are times when I believe that Wallace was no more than the victim of the coincidence between a rare but not unprecedented type of hallucination and a careless trap, but that indeed is not my profoundest belief. You may think me superstitious if you will, and foolish; but, indeed, I am more than half convinced that he had in truth, an abnormal gift, and a sense, something—I know not what—that in the guise of wall and door offered him an outlet, a secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world. At any rate, you will say, it betrayed him in the end. But did it betray him? There you touch the inmost mystery of these dreamers, these men of vision and the imagination. We see our world fair and common, the hoarding and the pit. By our daylight standard he walked out of security into darkness, danger and death. But did he see like that?



If you're contemplating the choice between self-publishing and traditional publishing, you're likely grappling with the question: should I self-publish my book? In this updated article, we'll delve into the advantages and potential pitfalls of self-publishing to help you determine if it's the right path for you.

It's crucial to keep your options open when you've invested significant time and effort in writing your book. The recommended approach involves initially attempting to secure literary representation from an agent. Take the time to shop your

manuscript to agents, and if that avenue doesn't yield results, then self-publishing becomes a viable alternative.

What Do You Sacrifice with Self-Publishing?

Opting for self-publishing means taking on tasks traditionally handled by publishers, whether they are small, medium, or large. Editing, formatting, and cover design services are typically provided by publishers, but when you self-publish, these responsibilities fall on your shoulders. Additionally, you may relinquish a degree of prestige associated with traditional publishing,

though this often has minimal impact on sales but remains a consideration for some.

Steps to Navigate Self-Publishing:

1. Editing Your Book Editing is arguably the most challenging aspect of self-publishing, involving two essential types:

1a. Content Editing Content editing is a critical phase in self-publishing. It's essential to recognize that you can't effectively edit your own work. Finding an experienced editor is not easy and requires a keen eye, objectivity, and an understanding of the craft. To compensate, seek feedback from beta readers who can review your work and provide insights. Gathering multiple perspectives helps identify what's working and what isn't.

After receiving feedback, you'll need to decide which suggestions to incorporate and what to discard. This iterative process is why multiple rounds of editing are essential – recurring feedback patterns indicate areas needing improvement.

1b. Proofreading Distinct from content editing,

proofreading focuses on rectifying errors in your manuscript, such as grammar and spelling. While many hired editors can perform this task, you can start with an AI editor to minimize the need for extensive proofreading and reduce costs.

1. Cover and Artwork Securing an appealing book cover is crucial, and you may need to enlist the help of a professional unless you possess graphic design skills. Book covers significantly influence sales, so investing in a captivating design that accurately represents your work is vital.

2. Selecting Your Publishing Platform Choosing the right platform for publishing is pivotal. While Amazon is a popular choice, conducting research and seeking advice from fellow authors can help you determine which platform aligns best with your book's subject matter and target audience.

3. Formatting and Uploading The publishing platform you select will dictate formatting requirements. Carefully follow the guidelines to format and upload your work, ensuring no unintended changes occur during the process.

4. Pricing Setting an appropriate price for your book demands thorough research. Strike a balance between competitive pricing and fair compensation for your efforts.

5. Marketing Effective marketing is indispensable for sales success. Building a target audience is essential, but delving into various marketing avenues, such as social media, real-world promotion, and even newspaper advertising, requires substantial effort and research.

6. Sales Goals Establishing sales targets and goals necessitates a business-oriented mindset. If you lack experience in sales, conducting thorough research is vital. If possible, seek guidance from someone with expertise in this area.

Navigating the Self-Publishing Journey

Self-publishing entails numerous responsibilities, far more than initially meets the eye. Before embarking on this journey, carefully consider the aforementioned steps. Some authors rush into self-publishing without adequate preparation and subsequently find themselves

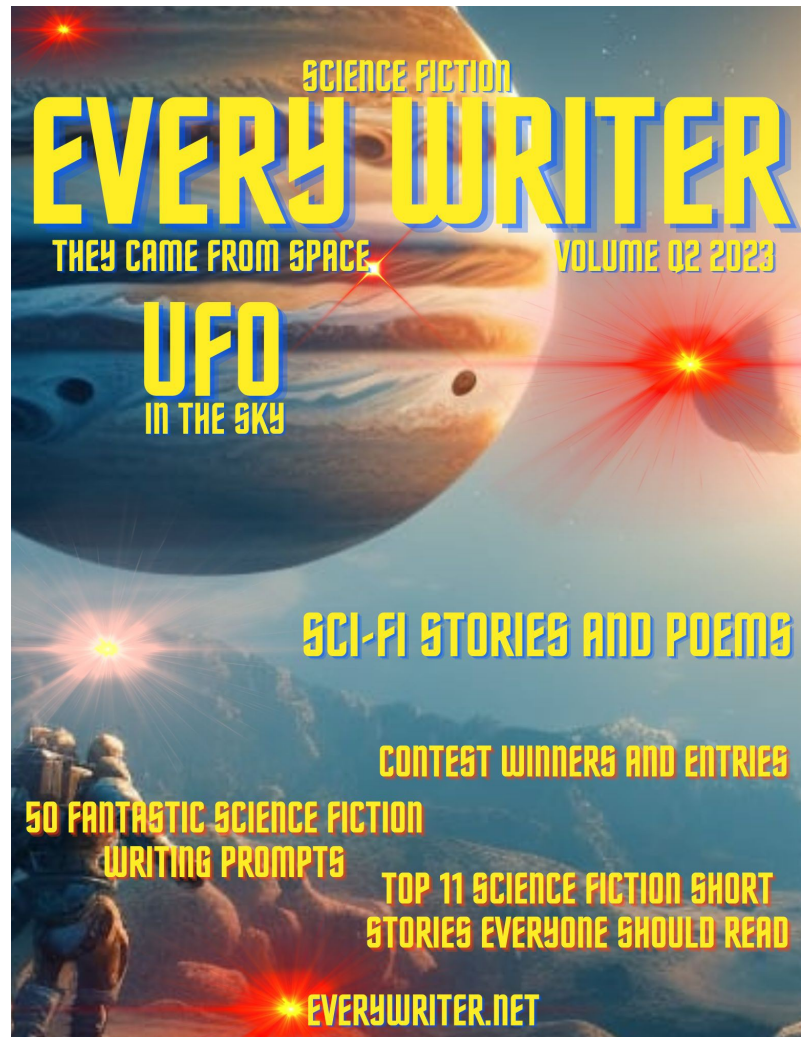
scrambling to catch up.

Initially, you might prioritize merely having your book in print, but keep in mind that each step in this process is essential. Over time, your objectives may evolve from mere publication to desiring readership and financial success. Plan meticulously to ensure a smoother and more successful self-publishing experience.

All the steps discussed above used to be the domain of traditional publishers, and many small publishers still offer these services to authors. This underscores the value of initially seeking literary representation from agents before considering self-publishing.

A Final Note on This Article

This article serves as an update to a piece written approximately 15 years ago. Virtually everything in the previous article has evolved dramatically, reflecting the ever-changing landscape of the publishing industry. To stay current with our content and access additional resources, please subscribe to our mailing list. Additionally, I am in the process of documenting my personal journey of self-publishing, which you can soon read here.



The 4 covers. I designed 4 covers for this issue, and then we had people vote on the best. The one of the cover got the most votes, but I can't stand the idea of not printing the others, so all 4 made it to the issue.

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to our 2nd issue of 2023!

Wow, we encountered quite a few challenges with this particular edition! Originally scheduled for release in June, everything was set and nearly on time when the document and all its backups mysteriously vanished. So, we had to start from scratch. After going through the entire process again, we encountered a formatting issue that required us to redo the work. I sincerely apologize for the delay! Unfortunately, this delay means we've had to postpone our Halloween issue. However, keep an eye out for a "Every Writer's Greatest Hits of Horror" issue in 2023.

A Note on Art

We are big fans of original artwork. While I have reservations about using AI-generated art, we've had a call for submissions open for several months, and we're simply not receiving enough contributions. Even during Every Writer's heyday, obtaining artwork was a challenge. I don't want our pages to be empty, so for the time being, we're using AI-generated art. Much of the art featured here is uncredited artwork that we've incorporated into our design software. It's not AI-generated; we've added our own touch to it.

The Future of Every Writer

Many writer's websites are disappearing, which is disheartening. However, it's become increasingly challenging to make money on the internet through writing alone, as social media influencers seem to dominate the scene. We're committed to continuing our publication, but I'll be straightforward: our advertising revenue and the support that has sustained the site for the past 24 years have dwindled. This makes accomplishing tasks much more difficult. I'm hopeful that the future will bring improvement, but over the past five years, the situation has become progressively tougher.

A Call for Help

If you're interested in contributing to Every Writer and want to be part of our community, please reach out to me at Everywriter@outlook.com. We will continue publishing, albeit less frequently. I'm passionate about this endeavor, and it has been my love for many years, but it's becoming evident that there's limited space left on the web for a site like ours. Unless I can discover a different, successful direction for the site, I'm afraid it may eventually come to an end.

For now, we're persevering. If you have any suggestions, please don't hesitate to share them. I hope you enjoy this issue, and I wish you all the best in your writing, dreams, and publishing endeavors.

Sincerely,

Richard Edwards (Every Writer)

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GRIN MINUS CAT

BY RICH LARSON

WE ARE NOT PHOENIXES

BY JOHN WISWELL

GENTLY CREAKING BOARDS

BY KAT DAY

**FAE MAGIC ON A FRIDAY
NIGHT**

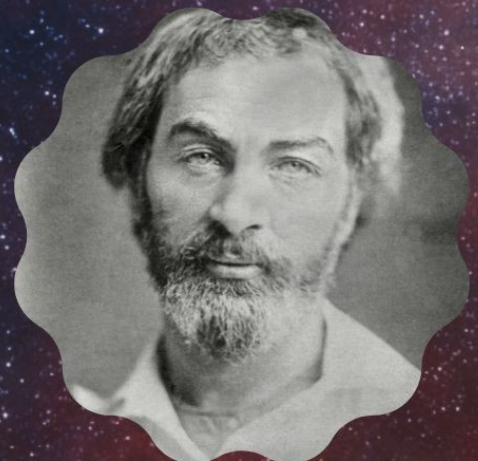
BY SHEILA MASSIE



WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER

by Walt Whitman

WHEN I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and
measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much
applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.



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EVERY WRITER

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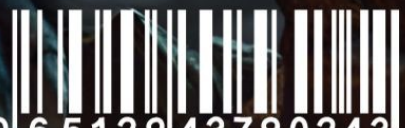
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NO FEAR

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OF LOVE AND MONSTERS

BY R. EDWARDS