



Newsletter 016, 2025Q2

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Hello everyone -

There's a lot to cover in this edition of my quarterly newsletter, first and foremost being that one of my stories will be appearing in an anthology that is about to release. In fact, this second quarter has yielded some writing success. I've also had a short story accepted for production by Creepy Podcast, a well-known horror podcast, and I've received some minor recognition for another short story.

The acceptance of my short story by Creepy is a bit of a milestone as it represents my first sale to a mid-level market. I've had stories accepted for little (very little) or no payment previously, but this is a definite step up even though it's not a lot. And the next step will hopefully be to have a story published by a professional market, with professional payment rates. Something to aim for!

Though I mentioned in the opening of my last newsletter that I would write an article about speculative fiction authors and their warnings about society, I have not done so. I still want to but just haven't had time. I've run into a problem this quarter where I've had difficulty saying "no" to various requests, so I've spent a lot of time writing articles for Spec Fic Writers (my online critique group), judging for both the RMFW Gold Rush Awards and the new, internal Spec Fic Writers Speculator Awards, beta reading a 163k-word science fiction epic, and writing a short story for the upcoming RMFW anthology!

I hope things will calm down a bit when many of the deadlines for these items pass in mid-July, but in another piece of good news, I was invited by Splinter Press to write a short story for their upcoming Splinterverse anthology. The story is not due until September, but I want it to be good, so I'm already thinking about plots and characters. And, it's nice to be asked to be included. More on that in future editions.

I've still made time to keep up with my blog (I don't know how), so you'll find the latest few postings below. And, as usual, I've included some book recommendations that I hope you enjoy. No writing excerpt this edition, but I did find a humorous nugget to end the newsletter.

Enjoy!

Glorious News



"D.U.P.E.S." Is Getting Published

I'm thrilled to announce that my short story "D.U.P.E.S." has been accepted for the Deadfish Books' anthology *Madam, Don't Forget Your Sword*. Included in the anthology are twenty-eight innovative and remarkable speculative fiction tales that reveal how the companions, sidekicks, and minions make their hero—or villain—super. "D.U.P.E.S." follows the proceedings of a union meeting of the Diabolical Underlings, Property, Equipment, and Supply, and believe me, there's a lot to cover.

This has been a long time coming. I initially submitted the story last July and didn't hear whether it had been accepted until December. Contracting occurred in January, and I've been patiently awaiting the production of the book to come together. That time has finally arrived.

Madam, Don't Forget Your Sword releases on July 1, 2025 and is available on Amazon in both paperback (for \$15.99) and Kindle (for \$4.99) formats. Pick up a copy or two and support us starving artists.

Amazon product page: <https://www.amazon.com/Madam-Dont-Forget-Your-Sword-ebook/dp/B0FF3QJX3D>



"Body, Blood, and Bone" on Creepy Podcast

My horror short story "Body, Blood, and Bone" has been accepted for production and presentation on the Creepy Podcast, a popular podcast for horror aficionados. The story follows Nelson Blankman and his special birthday wish—which doesn't turn out quite as planned. Inspiration for the story came from the above image.

Once I hear more about when the story will be produced and presented, I'll be sure to share. In the meantime, check out the other stories on Creepy.

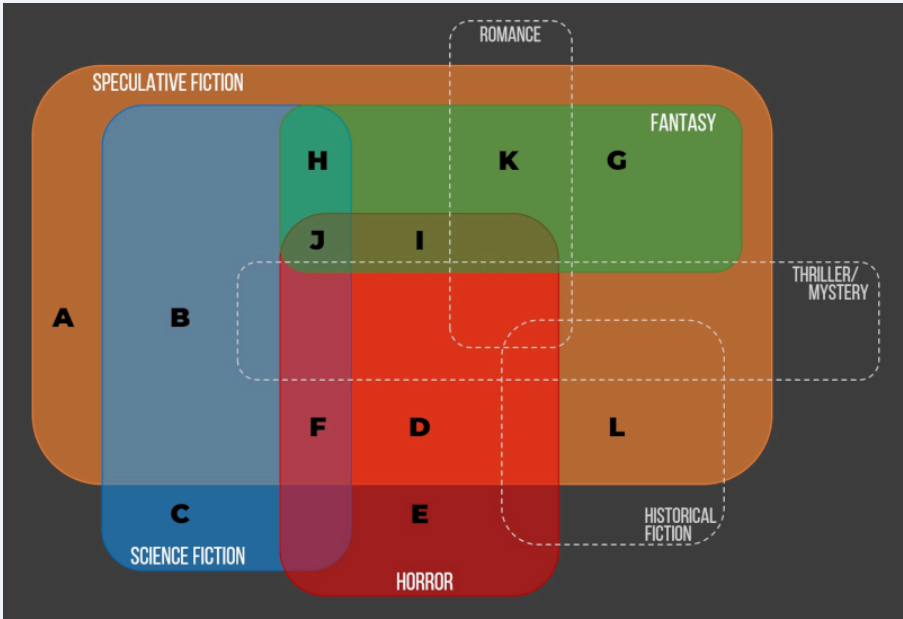
Creepy Podcast: www.creepypod.com



"Ergo" Earns 'Honorable Mention' From Writers of the Future

My short story "Ergo" has earned an Honorable Mention from the second quarter contest of Writers of the Future. "Ergo" is the tale of sentient robot Ergo as he comes on line and learns about life and the man who built him. I am still looking for a market to publish "Ergo" and will let everyone know when that happens.

In the meantime, this recognition by Writers of the Future, though not a win, still suggests I'm on the right path.



Speculative Fiction Defined... Again

As a writer of speculative fiction—and a reader of even more—I'm regularly rethinking about what defines this genre (or super-genre, if you will) that I enjoy so much. A couple of years ago, I posted what I believed made up the genre. (You're welcome to revisit that blog article [here](#), but please finish this one first—and don't hold that old one against me!)

I still agree with my original thought that speculative fiction is generally recognized as an “umbrella genre” that encompasses several others, most notably science fiction, fantasy, and horror. But there is also so much more that fits under this umbrella. There are also aspects of some of those genres that are *not* speculative and shouldn't be considered speculative fiction.

As illustrated in the accompanying graphic, I've tried to organize my thoughts into something visual. Others have engaged in similar exercises, and I applaud the efforts of Annie Neugebauer and Adam Heine who influenced my own. It is a difficult concept to cleanly define, and of course, writers are continuing to increasingly blend genres with reckless abandon (as they should), making categorization of works into a single genre all the more difficult.

Read more about what defines speculative fiction at:

<https://www.matthewcushing.com/post/speculative-fiction-defined-again>



Beta Reading Readiness

You've finished your novel and think you're ready for a beta read. Are you sure? Like all steps along the planning-writing-editing path of novel creation, beta reading has a specific purpose. And the manuscript has to be ready to achieve that purpose.

Additionally, the Beta Reader needs to be ready and understand what their role is, i.e. what they should be looking for. Feedback that is out of the beta reader lane, though well-intended, can set the author back dramatically.

What is a Beta Read?

In short, a beta read is a trial run of the book, putting it out in front of a trusted but fair audience for final feedback before public distribution. And by public distribution, I mean out to agents and publishers, though they may necessitate their own editors' review, but that is another animal.

More on beta reading at: <https://www.matthewcushing.com/post/beta-reading-readiness>



I Need a Break... in the Story

There are many rules of writing, both written and unwritten, that provide structure for both authors and readers. These rules ensure that important story beats occur in the order expected, that characters learn and develop along the way, and that the reader can logically follow the story.

Apart from the actual flow of the story, authors can insert breaks to help organize information, to distinguish locations, or to change character perspectives. We generally know these interruptions as chapters and scenes, but there are additional tools at the author's fingertips: paragraphs and sentences! And, for some experimental authors, the answer is to have no breaks at all.

Let's look at the types of breaks, from biggest to smallest.

Read on about story organization: <https://www.matthewcushing.com/post/i-need-a-break-in-the-story>

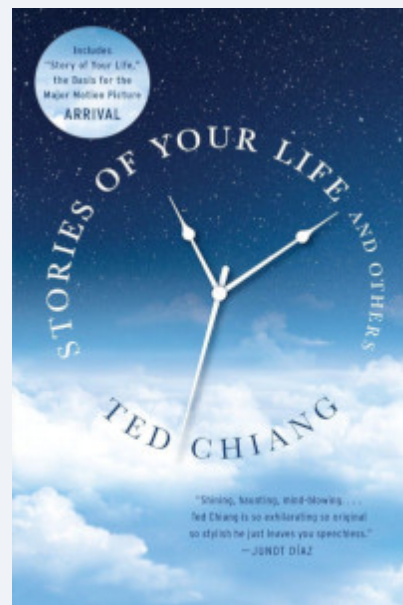
Book Recommendations

Read reviews for other titles on my website at:
<https://www.matthewcushing.com/blog/categories/review>



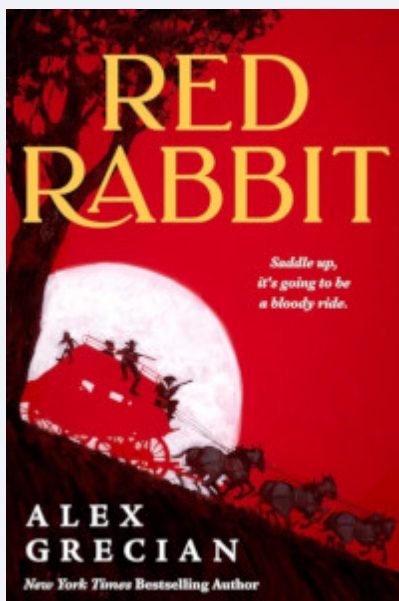
***The September House*
by Carissa Orlando**

Not your conventional haunted house story, it poignantly deals with issues of rationalization and survival. It's also pretty creepy.



***Stories of Your Life*
by Ted Chiang**

Nobody writes short stories like Ted Chiang - a true master. This collection features the story for the movie *Arrival*, plus several others just as good.



***Red Rabbit*
by Alex Grecian**

A fun venture into the "weird west" subgenre where witches and magic play alongside gunslingers and stage coaches. Not for the faint of heart.



***The Dead Take the 'A' Train*
by Khaw & Kadrey**

Living life in New York City with zombies, monsters, and ancient dark ones lurking around the corner - like who could tell the difference? A violent but fun read.

Writing Humor

I always wondered about the difference between Grey and Gray.

It's simple. Grey is a colour, while Gray is a color.

Thanks for Reading

A heartfelt **Thank You** to everyone who has subscribed to this newsletter. Your support of my writing is both invaluable and motivating. If you want more up-to-date information on what I'm doing--from what I'm reading to what I'm working on--please visit my website at www.matthewcushing.com. Or, you can follow me on Threads at [@mhcushing](https://www.threads.net/@mhcushing) or Bluesky at [@mcushing.bksy.social](https://bsky.app/profile/mcushing.bksy.social).

If you know anyone who loves speculative fiction (science fiction, fantasy, horror, time travel, dystopian, utopian, steampunk, solarpunk, climate fiction, space opera, urban fantasy, supernatural, etc.), please forward them a copy of this newsletter and encourage them to sign up!

Klaatu Barada Nikto, Live Long and Prosper, and Nanoo Nanoo!

Matthew Cushing

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