



Newsletter 006, 2022Q3

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Of course, as my last newsletter went out a bit early, this one had to go out a bit late! At least there is plenty of new content in this issue. I hope you enjoy it! And as always, **thank you** to everyone who takes the time to read this newsletter and support my writing!

## News & Notes



### **Colorado Gold Rush Writers Conference Denver, CO - September 9-11**

Next weekend, I'll be attending the Colorado Gold Writers Conference sponsored by Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers. Held at the Hyatt Regency in Aurora, the conference provides writing workshops, agent pitch sessions, networking opportunities, and an awards banquet.

If anyone else is attending the conference - I know there are a few writers out there - let me know. It would be great to connect.



## 2021 Self-Published Science Fiction Competition

In July, the inaugural Self-Published Science Fiction Competition (SPSFC) announced its first winner: *Iron Truth* by S.A. Tholin. With 300 books entered, 30 semi-finalists, and 7 finalists, it was quite a competition!

As a judge on one of the 10 judging teams, I read about 40 of the entrants, some of which were completely enthralling while others were... not. Over 60 judges in total participated, and it was clear that tastes and important qualities varied widely – as they do in any creative competition.

Overall, participating in the SPSFC as a judge was both a fun and challenging experience. I'm still processing all that I've learned about both running a competition and writing a book. If I could pass any one piece of advice on to authors out there, it's this: hire an editor. So many books had promising stories that, to me, were waylaid by poor writing. The craft is as important as the story.

I'll be posting a much more in-depth review of my experience with the SPSFC to my blog in the coming weeks, so stay tuned!

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### Finalist - Gold Rush Literary Awards

My debut science fiction mystery novel, *The Osect Indiscretion*, was named a Finalist for the Gold Rush Literary Award in speculative fiction for the second year in a row.

I'm incredibly thrilled with the honor. A winner will be selected from the three finalists during this weekend's RMFW conference.



### Interview Replay

In case anyone missed my interview with the book lovers at White Tale Coffee, check out the replay [here](#). Not only do I talk about becoming a writer, but also I give a reading of my opening chapter of *The Osect Indiscretion*. Yep, the award-winning work mentioned above.

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## Recent Blog Posts

- The Star Trek universe is enjoying a new golden age of programming with new series and characters. Check out my [Top Ten Star Trek Series](#) to see how I think they stack up with previous series.
- Here's the book that won the first ever SPSFC. A military sci-fi epic by S.A. Tholin, read [my review](#) of *Iron Truth*.
- An effective writing tool used by authors is to match the length of their sentences and paragraphs to the pacing of the story. Read [Pacing & Paragraphs](#) to see how they do it.
- Interested in an endearing story about a hotel service bot that finds itself in extraordinary circumstances: caring for a human baby? Steel Guardian is another SPSFC Finalist and one of my top two favorites in the competition. Read [my review](#) to find out why.

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## Spec Fic Friends

- L.V. Ditchkus sits down with Laurel McHargue in a [YouTube interview](#) to discuss her Sasquatch Series of novels and being a judge for the SPSFC.
- Paul Martz's masterpiece short story "Dr. Harriet Hartfeld's Home

- for Aging Als” won Second Place in the 2022 Roswell Awards.
- The online critique group Speculative Fiction Writers just posted their [Fall 2022 Newsletter](#).
- Kayelle Allen has a new [Bringer of Chaos](#) bundle on Amazon.
- Andrew Abarca's [Kickstarter](#) for his sci-fantasy comic book *Our Starry Universe* launches soon.

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## Writing Excerpt - *Civic Duty*

While Silje inspected the growth and spacing of the abalone, she glanced up to check on Nawai and his progress at harvesting the nearby urchins. And to make sure his side hadn't flared up.

But he wasn't there.

She turned in a circle, scanning the reef for the telltale bubbles of his equipment.

Past the edge of the reef, she found him floating above the inky blackness and staring into the abyss that extended down for miles.

Silje swam up next to him and touched his tank. "What is it? You okay?"

Without turning his head, he nodded toward the depths. "Do you see that?"

She squinted at the darkness but saw nothing.

*Oh no, he's hallucinating.*

"Come on, Mano, let's go up." She gave the thumbs up sign.

He brushed her hand away. "There!" He pointed. "Right there."

Silje followed his hand and stared into the universe of water. A large shadow moved. She accessed a biologics overlay for her AR display but only located a few fish. "Maybe I saw something, but nothing is registering on the system, and I don't see it anymore."

"That's because it's over there now." He pointed off to their right, hundreds of meters away.

Silje twisted and looked, catching the faintest of movements.

"Nothing can swim that fast."

"Maybe there's more than one."

A flash of white farther to the right caught Silje's eye, but it quickly disappeared. "Maybe it's a pod of dolphins!" Her voice rose an octave as she excitedly tugged on Nawai's harness. "Wouldn't that be amazing? They haven't been through here in years!"

"Uh, I don't think it's a pod of dolphins." Nawai's voice quivered over the comm channel.

"Why not?"

"Because it's coming right at us!" He grabbed Silje's arm, turning her toward the reef and pulling her as fast as he could swim.

From behind an outcropping at the edge of the reef, Silje peered around to see a rounded grayish cylinder, twice the size of the old shipping containers their town used for housing, glide past. The shape stirred memories of fantastic stories from her grandmother, whose own mother was a Norwegian oceanographer before the world changed.

"It's a metal whale!" Nawai exclaimed.

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## Writers on Writing

"When it comes to the past, everyone writes fiction." - Douglas Adams

"People think that I must be a very strange person. This is not correct. I have the heart of a small boy. It is in a glass jar on my desk." - Stephen King

"The profession of book-writing makes horse-racing seem like a solid, stable business." - John Steinbeck

"A person who publishes a book appears willfully in the public eye with his pants down. If it is a good book nothing can hurt him. If it is a bad book nothing can help him." - Edna St. Vincent Millay

"Writing is easy. All you do is stare at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead." - Gene Fowler

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Please check out my website at [www.matthewcushing.com](http://www.matthewcushing.com) for the latest and greatest information on my stories and novels, in-person events, my reading list, and blog posts on any and all topics concerning science fiction, fantasy, horror, or the supernatural.

Follow me on Twitter at [@mhcushing](#). Comments and retweets are always welcome! And if you know someone who loves speculative fiction, 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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