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Hello all! Life has been quite busy for the last few months. I've been doing a lot of editing on my novel, and managing the Speculative Fiction Writers Association takes a chunk of time - even if it is fun and rewarding. Additionally, I managed to fit in my annual trip to the Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers conference in Denver. (See below for a brief recap.) With everything going on, this newsletter is going out later than I wanted, but the timing gives me a great opportunity to celebrate the spooky season currently underway. I hope you enjoy this edition. Be safe on Friday the 13th and Happy Halloween!

News & Notes



Recap of the RMFW Writers Conference

For the third straight year, I headed out to Denver in early September to attend the RMFW Writers Conference. Like last year, I took advantage of the opportunity to start my conference experience early with a MasterClass on Friday morning before the main conference started at noon. Taught by Angie Hodapp, it was an outstanding class on voice and tone, including several interactive exercises and new ideas. (For an example, check out my blog post on id lists.)

Many of the other workshops were hit-and-miss though I appreciate the effort people made to provide interesting classes. The evening speakers were good, particularly David Heska Wanbli Weiden, a Native American author who discussed how the commercial success of indigenous authors brings attention to the difficulties and injustices faced by reservation life. It was an eye-opening presentation.

It was also great to catch up many friends and other members of the Speculative Fiction Writers Association - my "home" online critique group. We had about fifteen people in attendance.

At the final conference brunch, I was asked to read aloud the winning speculative fiction entry for the Colorado Gold Rush Literary Awards - the award I won last year - as the winning author was not in attendance. It was fun to get up in front of everyone to read, and an honor that they asked.

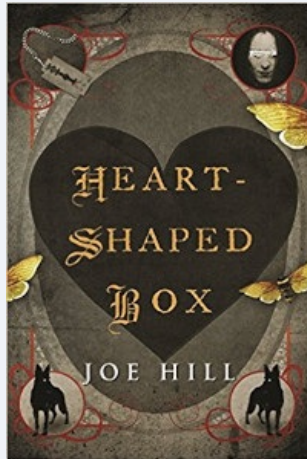
Overall, it was another fun conference, and I look forward to next year!

Recent Blog Posts

- Looking for a fun or scary movie to watch this Halloween season? Here are a few of my favorites that I watch every year:

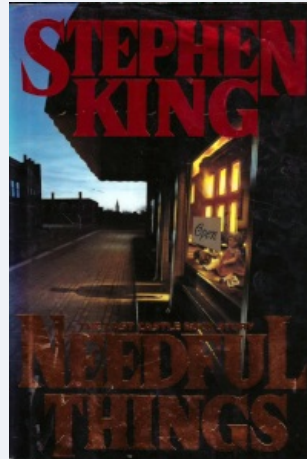
- <https://www.matthewcushing.com/post/top-halloween-movies>
- Ever wonder what Speculative Fiction means? There are a couple of competing ideas, but I explain my understanding: <https://www.matthewcushing.com/post/speculative-fiction-is>
- When authors suffer writer's block, there are a few approaches to getting ideas flowing again. My favorite is using an id list: <https://www.matthewcushing.com/post/id-lists-write-what-you-love>
- What's the difference between a novelette and a novella? A short story and a short-short? Here are the definitions of common works: <https://www.matthewcushing.com/post/i-m-writing-a>

Book Recommendations



Heart-Shaped Box
by Joe Hill

His debut effort which takes inspiration from the Nirvana song. Don't ever wear what comes in a heart-shaped box.



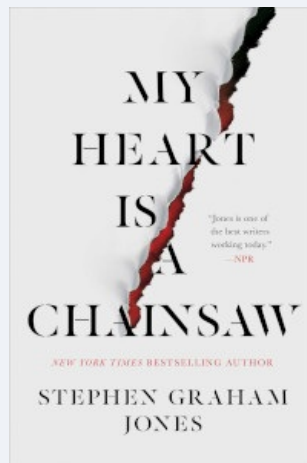
Needful Things
by Stephen King

An early but lesser celebrated work that I find horrifyingly delightful. People are certainly our own worst enemies.



Kill Creek
by Scott Thomas

Four authors spend the night in a haunted house as a publicity stunt. The house has other plans.



My Heart Is a Chainsaw
by Stephen Graham Jones

Love slasher movies? So does the main character, and she can see one breaking out in her sleepy hometown.

Writing Excerpt - *The Rite to Vote*

This short story was a Finalist for the 2021 Roswell Award.

Kendra strode down the busy city street breathing in the morning air. Not even the fumes of car exhaust could dampen her spirits. Not today. This glorious Tuesday morning Kendra would experience a patriotic rite of passage, having turned eighteen in time to vote and help change the world.

A robotic dog walker with its pack of barking charges crowded Kendra off the sidewalk. She skipped around them, rubbing the head of a slobbering St. Bernard as she passed. She saluted a pair of android movers before ducking under the couch they carried. Their sensors triggered a few proximity warning beeps, but to her they were notes of encouragement.

Kendra's skin tingled with anticipation as she hurried into the city center

bustling with office workers and street vendors, wondering where to start. This was all new to her, yet the friends and family she asked in preparation had been curiously tight-lipped.

She approached a uniformed police officer leaning against a tree outside City Hall.

"Good morning, sir. I'm here to vote." Kendra bounced on her toes, unable to control herself.

As if awakened from a nap, the cop yawned and his head lolled in her direction. He lowered his mirrored sunglasses and aimed a fat, pickle finger at the row of empty voting machines along the exterior wall of City Hall.

"Plenty stations to choose from." He slid his sunglasses back up the bridge of his nose and focused his attention on the contents of his foam coffee cup.

"Oh, okay. Thanks." Kendra's cheeks burned as she stepped around him and headed toward the thirty burnished machines standing at attention, draped flags between stations providing a modicum of privacy. The machines reminded her of old cash dispensing terminals she had seen in history class.

A digital fanfare played as she strode up to a machine in the middle of the row. Her heart swelled.

A Note of Humor

Since I've become a full-time writer, I've made a few sales. My car, my house, my clothes...

What's it like to be an aspiring author? It's difficult to put into words.

What do you call a writer with health insurance? Married.

Thank You

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 X or Threads at [@mhcushing](https://twitter.com/mhcushing)

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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