



WINTER 2022

Welcome to the Speculative Fiction Writers' Winter Newsletter. Follow along with our members who publish in many of the speculative fiction sub-genres including: science fiction, fantasy, horror, dystopian, weird west, fairy tales and more. Get to know our writers and our works. We also share our favorite tips, sites and info in the speculative fiction genre and more...

MEET OUR MEMBERS



A FEW WORDS WITH LYNDE IOZZO

After teaching two miles above sea level in "The Real South Park," Lynde Iozzo is experiencing culture shock in the place where she grew up, Morrison. Deliveries at a house, a mailbox, a lawn, four seasons that don't include "mud season" are modern marvels to her.

She has ties to the area where the Columbine High School tragedy occurred. This event sent many running from the burning building of public school teaching, but Lynde chose that as her day job and teaches at-risk youth in an alternative high school. Lynde has won several writing awards and hopes to gain an audience for YA and adult genre novels.

She's been a teacher 17 years but a writer since childhood. Reading and writing were escapes from troubles at school, where she was bullied, and a "messed up" home life. "In your head, you know there's a better world" where she could envision that improvement. Now she wants to share the better world with others. "A certain amount of rage," well disguised, also colors her writing.

Awards from the Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers and Denver Woman's Press Club, plays written and performed for children's theater, have been career highlights so far. Despite having an agent and cycling through the submission process, she appears to have some frustration with the slow route of gaining her credentials and says, "I'm tired of writing just for myself."

Here are insights into Lynde's background and writing process:

How would you describe yourself/life in seven words?

Energetic, tragic, comedic, survivor, actor, singer, fencer

What is your guilty pleasure?

I have a playlist of guilty musical pleasures that I can neither confirm nor deny, a shocking amount of George Clinton and Parliament Funkadelic for such a pasty-faced girl.

What are your passions in regard to giving back to the community and/or world?

Much of my passions involve my day job working with at-risk teenagers at an alternative high school. A little can go far in lives that just need a little hope.

What authors or novels do you secretly love?

Joe Abercrombie, a British fantasy writer and film editor is one. He is the author of The First Law trilogy, as well as other fantasy books in the same setting and a trilogy of young adult novels.

You’ve written short stories and several novels. The most recent is My So-Called Unlife. How did the idea for your book come to you?

After teaching teenagers for so many years, it’s all the things I wish I could tell them and save them anguish, but I know they will have to put their theoretical hand on the hot stove burner to truly understand.

What are three words that describe your novel?

Funny, poignant, thoughtful. What influences and inspirations did you draw from while writing this book? Spoon River Anthology, Buckskin Cemetery in Alma, Colorado, dissatisfaction with Neil Gaiman’s The Graveyard Book, and Freaky Friday.

Tell us more about the book and the storyline that drives it.

Alma Bonoan drags herself out of her grave to discover that the childhood crush who bullied her in high school controls the right side of her body. Alma must choose between justice and redemption.

Share a few of your favorite lines from your books with us.

- Death runs his artist’s fingers along the top of my headstone. “That’s what matters. Not the beginning- and not necessarily the end. It’s not the numbers, but the dash, and all it represents that can, if well lived, extend beyond the grave.”
- I finger yet another broomstick skirt hanging in the closet. “See, it looks like a million groupies from the Grateful Dead dumped their laundry in here.”
- Man, if I can get through this night without going to prom, it will be a victory, but it looks like it is, in fact going to happen over my dead body and involving my dead body.

Do you have advice for wanna-be writers?

- Inspiration comes from working every day. It waxes and wanes.
- Just write. Even when it’s hard.
- Every artist’s path is different.
- There’s something beautiful about the process and results.

See more about Lynde at her website: [Writers Work | Write Your Way to the Life You Want](#)

ACCOLADES AND CREDITS



- **MATTHEW CUSHING WINS TOP PRIZE:** At the 2022 Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers’ Colorado Gold Writers Conference, Matthew Cushing’s sci-fi mystery *The Osect Indiscretion* won the Gold Rush Literary Award for science fiction. The story follows Deg Sulstorm and his A.I. dog Mads as they provide customer service to aliens vacationing on Earth incognito. While investigating the burglary of a prominent customer, Deg is ambushed by an alien beast looking for one of the missing items – a revolutionary processor that could shift the balance of power in the galaxy. When Mads is kidnapped by the beast, Deg must enlist the help of a sultry cat burglar, thwart an alien military invasion, and race to find dog and processor before both are whisked off Earth. This is the second consecutive year a member of Speculative Fiction Writers has won this

award as Cheryl Fallin's *Seraph* took home top honors in 2021. Learn more about Matthew at his website. www.matthewcushing.com

- **WINDSOR ART EVENT FEATURES BONNIE McCUNE:** Member Bonnie McCune won first prize in town of Windsor's Art event with a poem "*HERE Is a Line.*" The work and other entries are on exhibition at the Windsor Art & Heritage Center through January 15. <https://www.recreationliveshere.com/calendar.aspx?eid=678>
- **LYNDE IOZZO WINS AN HONORABLE MENTION** in the First Quarter 2022 Writers of the Future Contest, for her short story "*Ghost Riders.*" It is based on a real historical incident of the massacre of Navajo at Fort Wingate after the Navajo protested a crooked horse race. She toned down eyewitness records of violence reported in U.S. Army records. The Writers of the Future contest is one of a few without an entry fee, and it has lots of fun workshops and helpful free lessons to prepare for the contest. The finalists get to have a lot of fun. They fly out to California and have a Hollywood premiere-style awards ceremony. <https://www.writersofthefuture.com/enter-writer-contest>

MEMBER ESSAY



FOUR STEPS TO REVISING MY OPENING WITH A CRITIKI BAR HANGOVER By Paul Martz

Ugh. I just woke up with a wicked headache, and my tongue feels like it's taped to the roof of my mouth. That's what I get for drinking at the Critiki Bar, my pick for best workshop of the 2022 RMFW Gold Conference.

The bartenders (er, moderators) were Katharine Sands, an established New York literary agent, and David L. Robbins, a best-selling author and creative writing professor. Prior to the conference, Critiki Bar workshop attendees uploaded 500 words of their work in progress. During the workshop, David and Katharine displayed the submissions anonymously while they poured generous shots of their criticism and advice. It was an intoxicating cocktail of writing craft and writing business.

This workshop wasn't for wimps. Their criticisms were direct and unfiltered. Every fault they pointed out was like a cheap scotch that burned on the way down. The only thing that hurts worse than my head is my ego.

In this blog, I'll share the feedback they gave me. And despite my Critiki Bar hangover, I'll walk you through how their feedback guides revising my opening paragraph. [Read more.](#)

This is the introduction to a blog post by Paul Martz. To see the rest of the post, and the advice he garnered from the RMFW presentation, visit the SpecFic Writers' website. <https://specificwriters.com/four-steps-to-revising-my-opening-with-a-critiki-bar-hangover/#more-2402>



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RINGS OF POWER

By Kayelle Allen



There are times when movies and television programs feature a villain more fascinating than the hero. Loki immediately comes to mind (Marvel's Thor, Avengers, etc.), Prince Nuada (Hellboy II: the Golden Army), and now Adar (Amazon's The Rings of Power). For The Rings of Power, the anti-hero is Adar - soft spoken, disturbing, sympathetic - and the villain.

There's a difference between anti-hero and villain, however, and in the case of Adar, played by Joseph Mawle, it's hard to tell where the lines exist. The first time we see Adar, in episode two, he's the leader of a group of Orcs, a race of monsters. Unlike the Orcs, who shuffle and crouch, Adar walks with dignity and grace. The Orcs had captured Arondir, one of the major characters in the Rings series, and we see Adar through Arondir's point of view.

There is no doubt that Adar is the Orc's commander, and therefore, the villain. He is the one who sent the Orcs to capture the elven prisoners. As Adar emerges from the darkness, the Orcs chant his name with quiet reverence. In the elven language Quenya, "Adar" means "Father."

Once Adar comes into view, he kneels beside a gravely injured Orc and lays one hand on the Orc's head. The Orc smiles up at him through pain, saying only, "Adar." After a moment of comforting the Orc, Adar withdraws a dagger. The expression on the Orc's face changes to relief. His pain is about to end. But for Adar, there is no comfort or peace. Instead, a flurry of emotions flicker across his face, reflecting sadness, melancholy, mercy, and regret. He plunges the dagger into the Orc, and remains at his side, one hand still resting on the creature's head, the other on the weapon, until the Orc is dead.

The subtlety of the actor's emotional portrayal of Adar throughout the entire series transforms Adar from villain to anti-hero. We sense something noble, some aspect beyond what drove him to command a host of sinister monsters. Mawle makes us care, and we want to know more.

Fans adore Adar so much that on Twitter, he's even been lauded with a request for prayer that he survives all upcoming seasons, with a hashtag that reads, "please don't hurt him." Whether it is his sorrowful wisdom, quiet anger, or painful nobility, Adar shines through Joseph Mawle's brilliant portrayal.

The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power, produced by Amazon Studios teased trailers and sneak peeks for months prior to release on September 2, 2022. Season one (eight episodes) is now complete and available for streaming.

Image credit - The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power - 106
Courtesy of Prime Video | Copyright: Amazon Studios
Description: Joseph Mawle (Adar)
Filename: RPAZ_S1_FG_106_00040617_Still028_R1_700.jpg
<https://press.amazonstudios.com/us/en/photos>



THE WRITING LIFE

- In novels (if not in life), there is something very pleasurable about being taken for a ride. You might argue that all fiction does this by luring the reader into a temporary belief that made-up people and events are entitled to their time, energy and emotions—but the effect is definitely heightened when an unreliable narrator is part of the mix. The lack of reliability may be innocent: a result of the narrator's own limited perspective. It may be knowing, but well-meant, if they have a particular agenda to push. On the other hand, the unreliable narrator may be a deliberate manipulator, wanting nothing more—or less—than to mess with the reader's mind. The unreliable narrators in this list range from guardians of moral virtue, to enchanting spinners-of-yarns, to out-and-out psychopaths. <https://crimereads.com/10-great-novels-with-unreliable-narrators/>
- The Ultimate Guide to Writing a Science Fiction Novel That Will Sell, by William Opar. Sci-fi is one of the fastest-growing genres in publishing today. That's because readers love it! Based on statistics from Google and <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244018780946> sci-fi books are becoming more and more popular. While there are numerous sci-fi authors out there, you can still stand out in the crowd; set your work apart from the rest. How? It's simple! By making sure that your book is top-notch. See <https://writersweekly.com/this-weeks-article/the-ultimate-guide-to-writing-a-science-fiction-novel-that-will-sell-by-william-opar>
- LEADING EDGE is a semi-professional speculative fiction magazine produced at Brigham Young University. Dedicated to the presentation of new and upcoming talent it accepts science fiction and fantasy short stories, novelettes, novellas, and poetry, as well as scholarly articles, book reviews, and interviews that deal with current popular authors. Fiction payment is \$0.01 per word, \$10 minimum, \$50 maximum. Payment for poetry and non-fiction will be discussed upon acceptance. <https://www.leadingedgemagazine.com/submit-now/>
- 7 DAY STORY WRITING CHALLENGES: NO ENTRY FEE. Ongoing deadlines. Globe Soup is sponsoring a series of 7 Day Writing Challenges. Before a new challenge begins, all those who have registered will be randomly divided into 12 GROUPS. Each group corresponds to a different GENRE. When the challenge begins you will receive an email with your randomly assigned genre and the SECRET CHALLENGE THEME. All participants receive the same theme and must write a short story of no more than 2,000 words, inspired by the theme, written in the genre assigned to them. You have exactly seven days to write and submit your story. Globe Soup will choose 12 finalists, one from each genre and an overall winner. The winner of the challenge will receive £500. <https://www.globesoup.net/7-day-story-writing-challenges>



"A DIABOLICAL MEMORY"
(SPECIAL HOLIDAY GIFT FOR SPEC FIC
ENTHUSIASTS)

By Fred Lanigan

"Subject is stable. Probes are optimal. Neural connection online. Brain wave is good. Time calibration is ready for final adjustment."

"Excellent. Recorder: Interrogation 5347.46. We are going back farther today to locate the source. We are accessing the precise frequency of the brain clock and opening a new vista of forensic discovery. This conspiracy has a deep root. We are going to find the birthplace of the rebellion, then track and crush wherever it takes us. Calibrate to December 1960 and we'll see how the infiltration begins."

I'm cold.

I don't feel wind inside the car, but the seats are ice, and the temperature inside never gets above freezing. I can see a bit because we have headlights.

Too cold to talk.

It's a short, little trip, and when we get there, my dad climbs out and does something I've never seen anyone do before or since. He goes to a white wooden post and moves the adjustable arm to a horizontal position.

We all wait.

I'm drifting back to sleep, but my shivering keeps me alert enough to feel the vibration, then the whistle—it's so loud; then the low rumbling of a train engine passing close by the car. I look down out the window to make sure we are not parked on the tracks. The train stops. Aunt Kate and I get out of the car and climb into the train. Really big steps. We find seats and settle in. It's so toasty and warm. I wave to my dad.

I'm not scared. I'm five years old and we are on our way to TOYLAND!

Aunt Kate and I have rehearsed this trip many times during the previous year. She promised her nieces and nephews a trip to Toyland when they turned five. This is my year.

I know exactly where we are going, what we are going to do, and how polite I need to be. We board in our little village of Fenwick where the TH&B tracks cross Church Street. I've walked by there, many times. There's no station—just a white post with a moveable arm. But it works! Good ole' TH&B. Toronto,

Hamilton and Buffalo. I've read that a million times watching freight trains go by near our house. I guess we are halfway between Buffalo and Toronto. Union Station in Toronto is our destination.

The sun is waking the big city when we arrive, and we bundle up and head straight across the busy street to Murray's Restaurant for breakfast—all according to plan.

The restaurant is really big! I like my eggs and bacon. I'm so excited.

Toyland exists on the fifth floor of Eaton's every Christmas. Aunt Kate and I walk hand-in-hand through the snowy sidewalks while cars honk and spin wheels.

They have taxis here.

The buildings are so tall! Snowflakes land in my eyes when I look up. We go in through huge spinning doors which push you if you don't go fast enough. We take the elevator up—I get to press the buttons—then the doors open.

I'm in Toyland. You wouldn't believe it!

There's music playing and decorations and flashing lights, and it even smells Christmassy. There are so many toys. Big red cars that rev the engine when you move them and blue trucks and yellow diggers that really work and crokinole games and Chinese checkers and puzzles and balls—a billion balls in a billion colours and tricycles that go really fast, and crayons and paint and Meccano sets and lions with sharp teeth and soft grizzly bears and chess and dominoes and so many Matchbox cars!

So much fun!

We spend glorious hours there until it's time to go to the Green Room. This is a fancy restaurant on a separate floor where I have to be on my best behaviour. Waiters, cloth serviettes, silverware. I am very nervous. By mid-afternoon we head back through the snow to Union Station. We board our train.

Best day ever. I fall asleep. I wake up the following day.

"I want a full mock-up on this Aunt Kate with all metadata. She's calculating. Manipulated and bent his mind to her will. He has no idea of what she's doing. He loves her. She transformed innocence into insurgence. She's a monster and she's done this to more than one. Insidious. Get on it—now!"

LET'S MAKE THINGS OFFICIAL

Our official name is Speculative Fiction Writers, or informally Spec Fic Writers. The group holds weekly critique sessions and sponsors anthologies, and our website is specficwriters.com. Our members are at all skill levels and come from across the U.S and Canada. You're invited to sign up for our free newsletter or join the group if you're a writer of speculative fiction.

Thanks For Reading!

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