

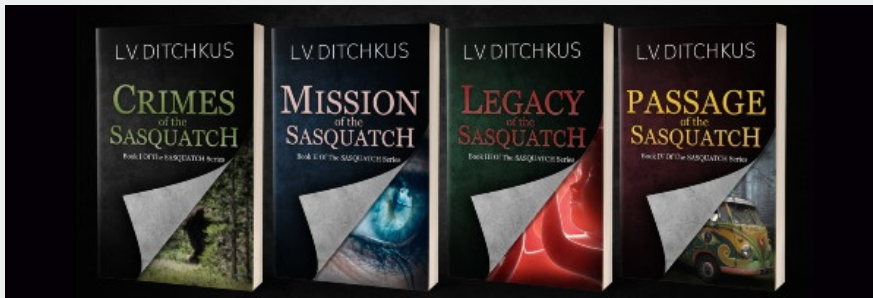


SPRING 2023 EDITION

Welcome to the Speculative Fiction Writers' 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 Linda Ditchkus



I've written my whole life. But until eight years ago, my writing was either technical, scholarly, or in travel magazines. In 2015, I jumped into novel writing with both feet. After drafting my first chapter, which only amounted to a few hundred words, I realized I had plenty to learn.

So I found a network of writing friends who gave me writing tips and pointed me toward writing resources like how-to books and classes. I'm grateful for my amazing writing pals, incredible fellow critique group members, and strong liaisons/mentors from my board position on the Chaffee County Writers Exchange and memberships with the Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers and the Colorado Authors League. All these people help me hone my craft—a forever journey to become the best writer I can be.

A neighbor and Sasquatch believer inspired my Sasquatch Series in June 2015, and I worked tirelessly on these four published books. Since the series won First Place in the Colorado Authors League 2021 Book Awards for Sci-Fi, I guess I'll stop calling myself a debut author.

In addition to marketing the Sasquatch Series, I'm working on a new series about two time-traveling women from the distant future working desperately to repopulate the world with men—both are determined to succeed. But various groups, including

terrorist factions and their government, build barriers against their success.

You might wonder why I picked sci-fi as my writing genre. Gene Roddenberry said it better than I could. He said, "For me, science fiction is a way of thinking, a way of logic that bypasses a lot of nonsense. It allows people to look directly at important subjects." Like him, I appreciate that the sci-fi genre allows authors and readers to explore sensitive topics without the stigma, politics, and bias that normally dominate discussions. When issues like gender equality, euthanasia, education, and religion take place on another planet, people feel comfortable exploring these challenging issues. Maybe it's a cop-out to world-build a place to air my views. Or perhaps, I'm simply following in the footsteps of others who wanted their opinions heard.

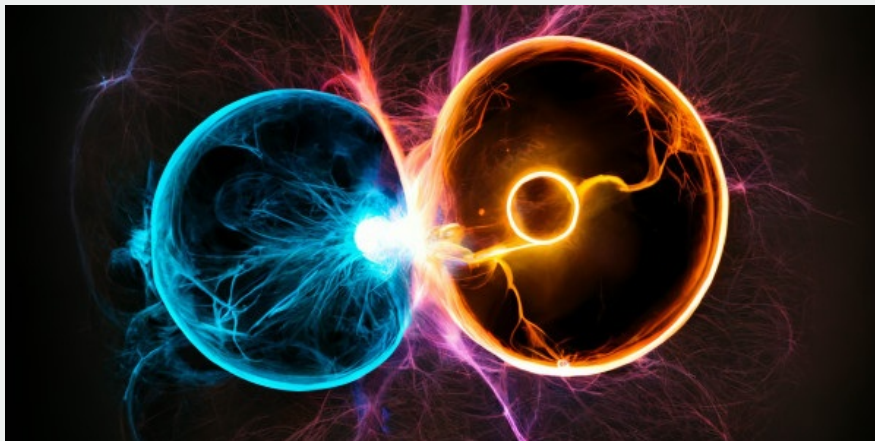
Travel and outdoor adventures are also my passions. Between leading international adventure travel trips for the Colorado Mountain Club, personal travel, and my other career (i.e., banking supervision and accounting), I've been to about 100 countries and hiked or climbed in many of those. Some of my favorite through-hikes include the Tour du Mont Blanc, Scotland's West Highland Way, and England's Hadrian's Wall Path Coast-to-Coast hike.

My husband and I live selfish lives (without plants or pets) above 7,000 feet in the Colorado Rockies.

For more about Linda, who writes under L.V. Ditchkus, visit her website at <https://www.lvditchkus.com/>. She's the author of five novels, including 2023's Chrom Y Returns, and short stories in anthologies.

SPECIFIC IN THE NEWS

Nuclear Fusion Takes a Big Step



The US Department of Energy announced a major breakthrough in nuclear fusion technology. Scientists at the California-based Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory's National Ignition Facility (NIF) successfully generated a "net energy gain" using nuclear fusion in a lab for the first time. For decades, scientists have pumped more energy into experimental fusion reactors than the total new energy created in the process. In December 2022, NIF scientists conducted the first controlled fusion experiment in history in which more energy was produced from fusion than the laser energy used to drive it.

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfP-eFbdrjM>

Editorial Comment: It's about time that reality catches up to speculative fiction. Our spaceships have had fusion drives for decades!

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS: Writers, Take Note



Baen Tenth Fantasy Adventure Award: To recognize the best original adventure fantasy short story in the style of fantasy greats like Mercedes Lackey, Larry Correia, Jim Butcher, Charlaine Harris, Elizabeth Moon, Andre Norton, Brandon Sanderson, J.R.R. Tolkien, and David Weber. Write and submit a short story of no more than 8,000 words. Contest closes for submissions April 30th, 2023 at 11:59pm EDT. <https://www.baen.com/contest-faa>

Parsec Short Story Contest: Theme is Preserve or Purge. They ask that authors try and incorporate both concepts into their speculative work. This can be conveyed in the setting, plot, characters, dialogue; the only limit is your imagination. The theme must be integral to the story in some way and not just mentioned in passing. 3500 words max. Deadline is May 1, 2023. <https://parsec-sff.org/short-story-contest/>

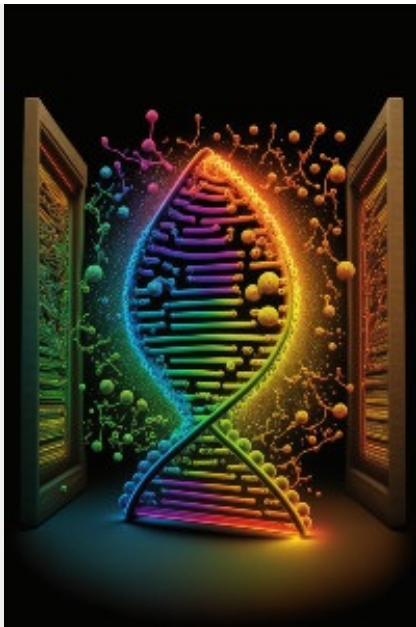
Grumpy Old Gods Anthology: Know of an old god having problems in modern society? Write a story of 3000-4000 words and submit for consideration for this anthology by May 1, 2023. No fee to submit, and if selected you may get a slice of the profit (but no outright payment for your story.) <https://stormdancebooks.junetakey.com/posts/grumpy-old-gods-volume-10-call-for-submissions-deadline-may-1st-2023/>

LIVE WELL AND PROSPER

Shorts About Achievements

An Artificial Intelligence Writing Aid

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has made great strides in recent years. A free tool, ChatGPT, can write short essays and stories well enough to pass as a human. Many educators



fear its potential use for plagiarism. Will an AI write your next science fiction or horror novel for you? Probably not, (not yet, at least).

Still, with its powerful capabilities, ChatGPT has the potential to become your new favorite writing tool.

Spec Fic member Paul Martz explores some possible uses for ChatGPT in his latest blog, *A Computer Wrote My Story*. See <https://specificwriters.com/a-computer-wrote-my-story/>

Kayelle Allen Commissions Original Logos



Now Kayelle's readers can more easily identify series among the many books in her story universe. First completed is *Fallen Empires: Bringer of Chaos*, consisting of two books and a free novella. She's hard at work writing more books for the series.

Symbol created by Nano-Core, logo by GermanCreative. See <https://kayelleallen.com/chaos-series/>

Paul Martz Speaks in Erie, Colorado



On January 25, Spec Fic member Paul Martz was the guest speaker at the Brennan by the Lake book club in Erie, Colorado. Paul came to the club's attention after his story, *Dr. Harriet Hartfeld's Home for Aging Als*, took second place in the 2022 Roswell Awards.

"Everyone in the club recently read *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro," Paul said. "Coincidentally, I drew on Klara as a source of inspiration, so the group was already familiar with many of my story's concepts and themes."

Paul was impressed with the club's broad knowledge. "This group reads many fiction genres, not just science fiction," Paul said. "We had a fun evening talking about the books and authors we love."

Follow Paul at PaulMartz.com



Andrew Abarca's First Comic Book

Spec Fic writer's member **Andrew Abarca** is bringing his first comic book, "Our Starry Universe," back to IndieGoGo for a limited time.

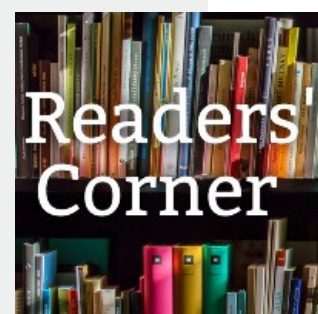
Jesika Darkoni, labeled a space pirate, is on the run from the Preeminence after her theft of a powerful alien egg. Join her adventure in this full color 24 page comic book by renowned artists Ale Garza, Pow Rodrix, Mostafa Moussa, and Nei Ruffino.

"Our Starry Universe" will be available to pre-order at the end of Feb. Click the link to be notified.

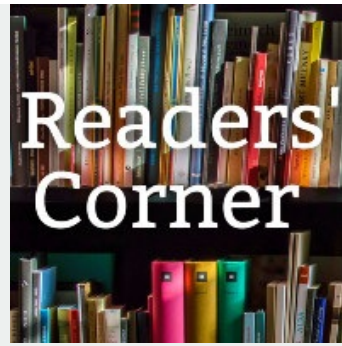
https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/our-starry-universe-redux/coming_soon/x/8722011

Bonnie McCune Writes About Books

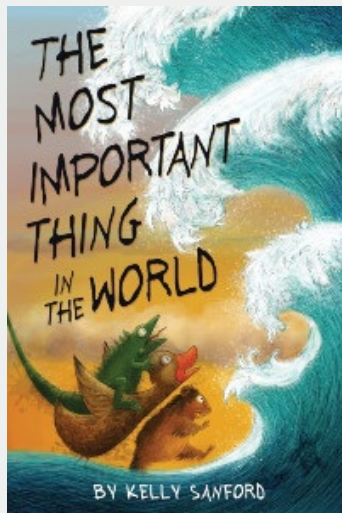
A book lover is a book lover, including authors. Bonnie McCune, who's been working on a political scifi for her entire adult life, continues co-authoring a monthly book appraisal column for Prime Time for Seniors, "Readers' Favorites." She and coauthor



Kathleen Duhamel, who specializes in mature romances, include three favorites in each issue.



See PrimeTime News, <https://www.myprimetimenews.com/category/books/> Find new and old favorites there and get ideas and insights into especially interesting books.



Kelly Sanford Publishes MG Novel

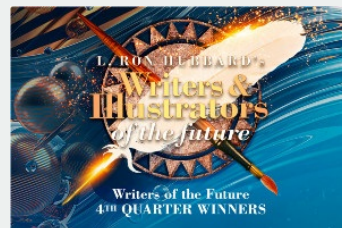
A duck with PTSD, a scaly invasive species, and a furry optimist set out on the quest of their lives. The novel, *The Most Important Thing in the World*, was the featured MG selection on Reedsy, a service for authors and publishers along with professionals to market books.

This episodic folktale will resonate with the young and young at heart as you join Emma and her steadfast friends on a wild and exhilarating journey to the point where clarity is derived from chaos.

See <https://reedsy.com/discovery/book/the-most-important-thing-in-the-world-kelly-sanford#review>
Reach Kelly at Kelly@kellysanfordwrites.com

Honorable Mention for Oliver Blakemore

Oliver's short story received an Honorable Mention in the 2022 fourth quarter Writers of the Future competition.

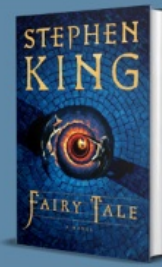


Reach Oliver at:
<https://www.oliverblakemore.com/>

BOOK REVIEW

Author Perspectives of
Stephen King's

FAIRY TALE



Genre Gems: The Benefit and Beauty of Varying Perspectives

Give a group of authors the same writing prompt, and they will write unique stories with diverse characters and emotional journeys, differing plots, and singular plot twists. Such is the power and joy of writing speculative fiction. Even the incredible is interpreted differently, yet each is equally valid.

Differences in approach and thought influence critiques given by authors in Speculative Fiction Writers. Each has experiences and biases and brings to bear individual expertise and knowledge. Views and feedback on the same work can bring a variety of thoughts, all of it useful to the submitting author.

To illustrate these varying interpretations with a widely read work, three group authors read and reviewed Stephen King's Fairy Tale, with their own analyses of the novel with commonalities and divergences of thought.

Spoilers Ahead

Kelly Sanford, Horror author:

The King of contemporary horror has never been shy about meandering in and out of his genre. He has done so successfully in the past with out-of-the-box fiction like *The Stand*, *The Dark Tower*, and *The Green Mile*, and let's not forget his masterful foray into non-fiction, *On Writing*. With his latest novel, *Fairy Tale*, King merges into the magical realism lane with his foot to the floor.

Avid readers of King lament that his story conclusions in long fiction seldom rival his riveting hooks at the onset. Regrettably, that cycle repeats itself with *Fairy Tale*. A tragic set of events set the story in motion, and in my opinion, the opening premise is the most enjoyable and absorbing part of the book.

Fairy Tale begins with a gruesome accident, a father in crisis, and a boy on the brink of manhood who brokers a deal with God. When God calls in the favor, young Charlie Reade befriends an aging recluse who is guarding a miraculous secret. Around page 200 of a 600-page story, the plot shifts gears and goes all-in as a textbook portal fantasy replete with all the tropes and clichés one would expect—which is the story's downfall.

Once in the mythical world of Empis, it's like Stephen King is cleaning out an old junk drawer of ideas from his own stories and those of his favorite writers, at times going so far as to mention *Grimm's Tales*, Ray Bradbury, and HP Lovecraft by name. For all the character development in the first portion of the story, the characters of Empis are little more than stepping stones on a long journey to a predictable end. Nothing that occurs from Charlie's arrival in Empis through his triumphant return felt original or unexpected. Always a glutton for Stephen King's kind of punishment, I held on to the end

and closed the book with a “Meh.”

Fairy Tale has its moments—I’ve already gone back and read the first 200 pages a second time. I do not regret reading it, but I had hoped for more.

John Bradford, Sci-Fi author:

Fairy Tale is a Valentine Day’s card from Stephen King to all bibliophiles. Not only does 17-year-old protagonist Charlie use his athletic prowess to assist him through a magical world of fairies and other mythical creatures, but he must also draw upon his literary expertise. Charlie, whose last name is Reade (get it?), takes care of a dying man, deals with the death of his mother, and copes with his alcoholic father in the first third of the book, a beautiful setup that takes King 200 pages to do.

After we delve into Charlie’s dysfunctional, normal world, the remainder of the book finds the teenager traversing through a magical fairy land in hopes of making his beloved pet younger. Charlie weaponizes his literary acumen in this world of monsters and elves and dwarfs, oh my, to survive. Only the long-winded King could pull this off. The most obvious allusion is *The Wizard of Oz*, but there are others aplenty as Charlie slugs his way through his quest and soon becomes a prince to the disenfranchised.

At over 600 pages, it drags in a couple of places. Interestingly it is more engaging when Charlie is in the ‘real world’. But I don’t mean to sell it short. King’s *Fairy Tale* is highly imaginative and entertaining, but it would not suffer if he had excised a few words, especially from the fairy land. However, we are with Charlie in heart and spirit as he ‘grows up’.

I do not count it among King’s best – which for me are *The Stand* and *11/22/63* – but it is one of his better, recent works. And while we are ensconced in this fantasy world with Charlie, we are never far from the real world that he attempts to return to, warts and all, which is more inviting. Ah, there’s no place like home. I recommend this book more than most of his other books, especially his later ones. In this novel we experience why King is one of our most beloved storytellers. And it’s a wonderful gift to people who love to read and would appreciate the weaponization of literary allusions.

Matthew Cushing, Sci-Fi author:

This book is exactly what the cover says: a fairy tale by Stephen King. The story is both familiar with elements integrated from a pantheon of fairy tales and new with supernatural oddities and twists that only Stephen King’s odd imagination can provide.

All elements of a classic fairy tale exist, including a common person who, through a positive character trait, learns of a great secret, explores that secret, finds an evil enchantment, and becomes the hero by chasing the evil away. And though there are some King-esque twists—replete with a supernatural darkness that any fan might expect—the story still includes the ultimate criteria of a fairy tale: a happy ending.

But what makes this book stand out, as is the case with the majority of King’s works, is the quality of the character development and storytelling. Charlie Reade is a relatable hero, and his relationship with the cantankerous Mr. Bowditch and his loyal dog Radar, is poignant and touching. The first third of this book is a moving, emotional read that in itself is worthwhile, and this is before we even reach the fairy tale

world.

King effortlessly weaves in the backstories of these two main characters such that we understand their motivations and actions - and the reason for Charlie's quest into the fairy tale land of Empis. Charlie must face dwarves and giants, solve mazes and puzzles, and even survive a tournament to the death, all the while encountering charming friends and hideous foes. But where the real-world characters have a history that makes them compelling, the characters of Empis lack that depth. Once in Empis the stakes, though higher, seem less important than Charlie's family and relationships in the real world. And maybe that's how it should be.

At just over 600 pages, this is an epic story, but with King's immersive storytelling, it is a fast-paced, engaging read.

Thanks For Reading!

Newsletter Editors

Bonnie McCune

BonnieMcCune.com

bfmccune@gmail.com

Kayelle Allen

www.kayelleallen.com

author@kayelleallen.com

Oliver Blakemore

oliverblakemore.com

To email SpecFic Writers

specficwriters@gmail.com



Facebook Twitter Website

Speculative Fiction Writers

This email was sent to {{contact.EMAIL}}

You've received this email because you've subscribed to our newsletter.

[Unsubscribe](#)

