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THE INDIE WRITERS' DIGEST

Happy
New Year



Edited by Bryony Petersen

FOREWORD BY THE EDITOR

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



It's that time of year again! Is everyone in your world busy making New Year's Resolutions, and claiming they'll lose the "few pounds", they "acquired" over the Christmas festive holiday? It was almost a National obsession a few years ago here in the UK.

Now, maybe not so much – times and attitudes change, and of course, we're now no longer allowed an opinion on a lot of things, in case it offends someone!

Later in this issue of the Indie Writers' Digest, I'm going to be discussing the different approaches to factual versus fiction writing.

In this issue, I am also including a short story of my own, Caught in the Cross Hairs, from my short story anthology, Kill Plan. I hope you like it.

For this issue of the Digest, I want to introduce a couple of new things. First, I'm going to include a column where I (or indeed any of the other Indie Writers featured here, past or present; you have been invited!) to discuss aspects of writing or the writing process. It's a chance to air an opinion or experience and maybe useful tips for other Indies to consider using in their own writing.

The second feature I will introduce in this issue is an introduction to a couple of like-minded individuals I have been lucky to connect with over social media. Like me, they are doing their bit to help indie writers get a better deal, a better start and hopefully greater success with their writing and author careers. I am of course talking about BadMan Publishing, comprising Keith Lawson (himself a fellow indie writer) and Dan Carey, who is the technical wizard. BADMAN are based on the South Coast of England in the United Kingdom.

Aspiring and published authors can join the BadMan Publishing community free of charge and access our free resources without any cost or commitment.

The gradually expanding resources consist of checklists, fact sheets, articles, e-books, guides and templates, all freely available (see <https://badmanpublishing.com/resources-and-services/>)

In this issue, the Digest features two new Indie authors, Wendy Boynton and James Sherwood Metts, as well and a couple of regular supportive contributing authors, James Gordon Yeo and Martin Dixon.

Regular readers of the Indie Writers' Digest will already know the wonderful breadth and depth of Martin Dixon's creativity, and 'When I Fly' does not disappoint.

James Gordon Yeo has supplied another of his beautiful essays. 'Passion' is achingly honest and brought tears to my eyes with its relatability.

In relation to newcomer contributors, I am proud to present Wendy Boynton and James Sherwood Metts. As with so many of the indie authors I have been privileged to feature, I read with interest the biographies and studied the photographs. I think each of us like to imagine we 'know' another person when we see their face, or is that just my own idiosyncrasy? Whatever the truth of that, I was pleasantly and abundantly surprised to read their submissions, and I am bound to say, I could never have predicted either!

It only remains for me to wish you 'happy reading'. I hope you thoroughly enjoy this issue. Take care of yourselves, and always remember a smile and a kind word, or gesture, go a long way, and who knows, may brighten someone else's day.

BRYONY PETERSEN

Editor

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| FOREWORD BY THE EDITOR..... | 2 |
| CONTENTS..... | 4 |
| BADMAN PUBLISHING..... | 5 |
| INTRODUCING WENDY BOYNTON | 7 |
| THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING BEQUEST | 9 |
| FACTUAL VERSUS FICTION WRITING | 12 |
| INTRODUCING JAMES SHERWOOD METTS | 14 |
| PLANET STORYLAND..... | 15 |
| CAUGHT IN THE CROSS HARES..... | 24 |
| PASSION..... | 27 |
| WHEN I FLY..... | 29 |
| THE FINAL WORD | 31 |

BADMAN PUBLISHING

Badman Publishing is an independent publishing community created specifically for self-reliant and aspiring authors of novels, non-fiction and screenplays. They position themselves as a practical, author-centric alternative to expensive, heavily commercial publishing and “done for you” service agencies.

ABOUT BADMAN PUBLISHING

Badman Publishing describes itself as a publishing home and community for independent authors, rather than a conventional publisher or vanity press. They operate as a consortium of experienced authors and web/graphic designers who pool their skills to support others on the same path. Their ethos is collaborative and low-pressure: writers can join, access resources and participate without any obligation to purchase premium services.

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- Formatting support and guides for print, e-book, and digital/flipbook editions, aligning layout with your chosen platforms.
- Publishing help so you can either self-publish using their step-by-step guides and checklists or ask them to handle set-up and publication on platforms such as Amazon KDP, Kindle, IngramSpark, Barnes & Noble, Lulu and others.
- Showcasing opportunities, including featuring your titles on their website, creating an author page, or even building a personalised author site and store.
- Marketing and merchandising guidance, including promotion via their own blogs and social media, advice on optimised online content, social media strategy, offline marketing ideas and merchandise like mugs, bookmarks, posters, clothing and more.

They also run an articles section, where they share insights learned from real indie careers, including case studies, reviews, sales estimation tips and practical advice on writing and promotion.

WHY AUTHORS SHOULD BECOME FREE MEMBERS

For independent authors who want control without feeling isolated, Badman Publishing offers a blend of community, expertise and low-cost, optional support. Instead of locking writers into expensive packages, they help you learn to publish well, step by step, and step in only where you need them – from cover design to formatting, from Amazon set-up to merchandising. The free membership, practical tools and willingness to showcase and promote members' work make them particularly attractive if you want both guidance and visibility while still retaining the independence of a true indie author.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Simply email team@badmanpublishing.com and they will happily answer any questions.

INTRODUCING WENDY BOYNTON



Wendy Boynton writes cosy murder-mysteries set in and around Salisbury.

Wendy was born in Swindon and lived in various locations in the south of England, including twenty-six years in the Salisbury area. She worked in nursing, midwifery, teaching and youth work before relocating to France to run a B&B! Throughout her life, she has dabbled in writing short stories, attempted some poetry and even written and directed pantomimes for an Am Dram group; but writing a novel was always her ultimate goal.

It was the COVID pandemic in 2020 that finally gave her the time to sit down and start writing in earnest. Now retired, and living in the North-East of England with her husband and two cats, she is happy to be able to write whenever she wants!

The Mystery of the Missing Brooch (The Salisbury Murders book 1) was eventually self-published in October 2024. It introduces an unlikely duo of amateur sleuths in Meg Thornton, an 81-year-old resident living in a care home, and Lauren Peachy, a 19-year-old starting her first full time job there. This unique pairing brings an unexpectedly warm dynamic to her books. Meg is a retired teacher and widow of the late DCI Thornton. She brings years of wisdom and experience to the partnership, whilst Lauren brings youth and enthusiasm and finds a willing mentor in Meg. The pair team up to investigate the seemingly trivial case of a missing family heirloom but are soon caught up in a web of lies, betrayal and murder!

Books two and three in the series were published in April and October 2025. In The Mystery of the Missing Wallet, Meg and Lauren must identify the accomplice in their care home who is assisting a dangerous criminal out for revenge. And in The Mystery of the Missing Child, the abduction of baby Noah and the wrongful arrest of his mother's boyfriend Vikram, lead the pair into the dark world of an extreme racist group led by none other than Noah's biological father!

The Mystery of the Missing Bequest (The Salisbury Murders book 4) is due out in spring 2026. Care home resident Patrick Faulkston bequeaths a set of three, very valuable, leather-bound stamp albums to his longtime friend Sophie and asks his fellow resident and close friend Jack Harris to ensure the albums are kept safe for her after his death. But when they cannot be found, he turns to Meg and Lauren to investigate.

Find out more about her books at www.wendyboynton.co.uk

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING BEQUEST

(The Salisbury Murders book 4)

CHAPTER ONE

Friday 8th September 2023

Jack Harris was both sad and perplexed.

He was sad because his friend Patrick had passed away yesterday afternoon. He was perplexed because he was standing in front of Patrick's open wardrobe, staring at the place where the stamp albums should be. He scratched his head and turned to the solicitor standing patiently by his side.

'This is where he kept them,' he confirmed.

'Well, they're not there now!' the solicitor stated the obvious.

'And you say you've already looked for them?'

'I've searched the room from top to bottom,' the solicitor nodded solemnly. 'I can assure you; they are not here.'

'But that's impossible!'

'Why do you say that?' the solicitor raised an eyebrow.

'Because I would've seen if anyone had taken them!'

'Really?' the solicitor didn't sound convinced.

'They were there before Patrick died,' Jack insisted. 'I saw them with my own eyes, only a few days ago.'

'Perhaps he gave them to someone in the intervening period,' the solicitor suggested.

'He couldn't have!'

'How can you be sure?'

'Because he asked me to make sure that no-one took them between his death and your arrival. And here you are! And here they are not! It doesn't make any sense!'

The solicitor shook his head mournfully, thinking privately that Patrick's neighbour was perhaps a sandwich short of a picnic. 'I'm sure there will be a perfectly logical explanation. I will speak to David Faulkston, who is co-executor with me, to see if he knows what his father might have done with his stamp collection. And I will speak to the intended beneficiary as well, in case he or she has already received the items in question.'

'I'm telling you; there's something off about this. Way off! I think those stamp albums have been stolen, you know.'

'It's far too soon to be making allegations like that,' tutted the solicitor. 'I promise you; I'll look into it. I'm sure there's absolutely nothing for you to worry about.' He tipped his hat politely and abruptly left the room.

Jack returned to his own room opposite and sat in his armchair, staring across the corridor at Patrick's door. He turned the events of the last week over and over in his head before reaching an inescapable conclusion. Somehow, against all reason and regardless of the solicitor's opinion, Patrick's stamp albums must have been stolen.

Much later that evening, a figure stood waiting, all but concealed in the deep shadows beneath an untamed hedge lining the narrow lane that runs along the northern edge of Victoria Park. Barely discernible, only the flash of light from a watch checked impatiently every few minutes gave away their position.

Eventually a second person scurried along the lane, glancing left and right, a hoodies pulled up leaving nothing but the hint of a nose and mouth visible.

'Where the hell have you been?' the first person spoke in an irritated whisper.

'I came as soon as I could,' the newcomer grumbled.

'Well, hurry up and hand them over. We mustn't be seen together.'

'I've changed my mind.'

'What the heck does that mean?' snarled the first.

'Fifty quid isn't enough.'

'It's what we agreed.'

'That was before I found out the value of those things. You didn't mention that before, did you? You expect me to hand over half a million pounds worth of goods for a measly fifty quid? You're taking the piss.'

‘You know I won’t get their full value fencing them.’

‘You’ll still get a hell of a lot more than fifty quid. I want five hundred.’

‘I haven’t got that much on me!’ exclaimed the first person, their voice rising in exasperation.’

‘I’ll give you twenty-four hours.’

There was an uncomfortable pause while the demand was considered. ‘Okay, be here, same time tomorrow, with the goods.’

‘Not here again, it’s too close to Victoria House. Someone might see me.’

‘Where then?’

A location was agreed and the two quickly went their separate ways.

Their second meeting the following evening was no less fractious. To be sure, the albums were duly handed over and the five hundred pounds paid, as agreed. But just as the delighted new owner of the stolen goods was about to walk away, the shadowy figure in the hoodie spoke determinedly. ‘Now I want five thousand. Or I’ll send an anonymous letter to the filth.’

‘Pardon?’

‘You heard. Five thousand to keep my mouth shut.’

‘I can’t get my hands on that much!’

‘I’ll give you forty-eight hours this time. Be here with the money. Or else.’

By WENDY BOYNTON

FACTUAL VERSUS FICTION WRITING

I began my writing journey many years ago. My first book, unfinished of course, was a recipe book containing personal recipes in my family. I was inspired by my grandmother, who also compiled her own personal books: recipes in one notebook, poetry in another, and quotes she enjoyed in another.

Later, I learned different techniques and methods of writing as I worked in a wide variety of offices and industries.

Most offices wanted reports; dry, informational tranches, displayed in various ways. Sometimes it had to be in charts or graphs, or with illustrated percentages. At other times, it was accompanied with objective description. I learned to write and to adapt.

One of the things I learned to do well was to write in the passive voice. Objective (passive voice) writing is a particular skill peculiar to factual writing. It's in memoirs, hobby or crafting books, biographies, journalism articles. Properly executed, a factual book can make an interesting read.

When I decided to write my first book, the idea for the story was swirling around in my head. I had no idea if I could convey the ideas inside my head in written form. I just knew I had to try.

The biggest challenge with anything you try for the first time is within yourself. I took the view if I wrote something every day, eventually it would become a book, and in a nutshell, that is how you get to the end.

Through writing that first book, I learned by doing, and truthfully, I am still learning. I always will be. There's always more to learn.

One of the things I learned from starting to write fiction is that it's a completely different animal to factual reporting.

For factual reporting, I adopted an objective, distant approach.

For my fictional story, it had to become personal, subjective, or the reader can't become invested in the story.

With fiction, you need to hook the reader from the first sentence. The reader must be intrigued, taken in and feel connected with the story, character and the opening scene. Your first sentence, paragraph and page must interest the reader enough that they turn the page. You then need to sustain that level of interest for the remainder of the story.

One way (possibly the best way) of doing this is short, active sentences. Every sentence must do one of two things (major bonus if it does both): either advance the story or build the character or character's arc.

The best piece of editing advice I've ever received is that if a sentence doesn't advance the story or add to character or a character's arc, cut it out of the story. The best piece of fiction-writing advice was to completely eradicate any use of the passive voice.

BRYONY PETERSEN

INTRODUCING JAMES SHERWOOD METTS

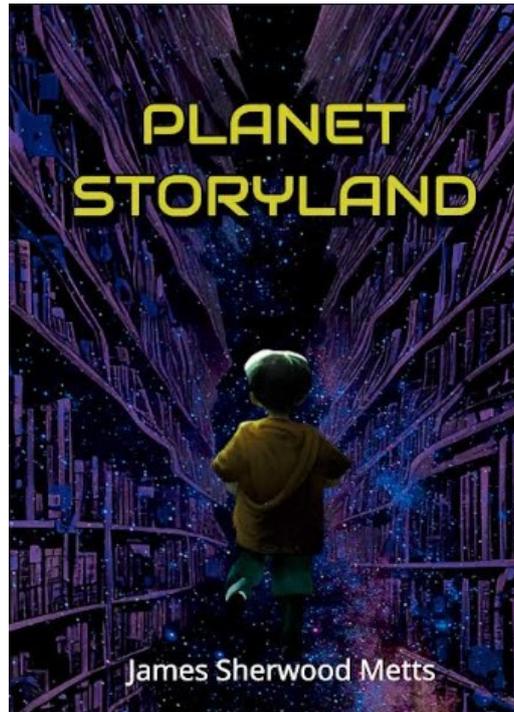


James Sherwood Metts is a storyteller who brings the often-ignored aspects of everyday life into the spotlight.

He believes there is nothing better than being alive and that people should let their questions be their guide.

His book, Planet Storyland, was recognized as one of the Top Ten Self-Published books of 2024.

He is an active member of Toastmasters International. He spends time in nature feeding the birds and landscaping.



PLANET STORYLAND

CHAPTER 1

It was in the morning on April 24, 2007 that a young man named Quentin Augustine walked into the La Silla Observatory in Chile and introduced himself to the astronomers working there. He told them he came from the planet called Gliese where he lived with his mother, his father and his younger sister, Carmen. He also showed them a sky chart that revealed the location of Gliese, a photograph of the planet from outer space, and a video of some of the urban areas there. After the astronomers examined the materials he provided as evidence, Quentin proceeded to give them an account of what led up to his coming to Earth.

He said, at a young age he was very inquisitive, and asked a lot of questions. As he grew older though, he became aware that his questions were clues to guide him like those on a treasure map so, he made it a point to find the answers to his questions. That near his home was a huge library stocked with thousands of books where he spent a great deal of time. He would routinely scan the titles of books from one shelf to the next and check out the books that captured his attention. One day when he was at the library, he came across a dark blue coloured book with a gold border that had a picture of a planet on the cover and the title **EARTHLINGS** in bold silver letters. He picked the book up, opened

it to the first page and read, “Each and every one of them has a lot of questions, but they do not look for the answers. Instead, they place their confidence in ‘the words of the few’ and watch the rise and fall of their civilization like the others do.”

He wondered what that meant, and he reread the phrase: “They place their confidence in ‘the words of the few’ and watch the rise and fall of their civilization like the others do.”

Then he flipped through some of the pages, studied the pictures, and read the captions below them. He thought the book to be rather interesting, so he took it up to the front counter and greeted the librarian.

"Hi, Mrs. Anderson".

“Well hello Quentin. How can I help you?”

Quentin set the book on the counter and replied, “I’d like to check this book out.”

“Okay.”

He opened the book to remove the checkout card from its sleeve. He saw several names on the card, but he did not recognize any of them. He retrieved a pencil from the tin cup, printed his name on the card and pushed the book close to Mrs. Anderson. She eyed the book for a moment, then turned to type the title into the computer. She hit enter and inputted his name as the person who checked out the book. She stamped the return date on the card and placed it back in the sleeve. As she handed the book to Quentin, she wondered what he could possibly gain from reading that book.

She asked, “How did you happen to find that book, Quentin?”

Quentin put the pencil back in the cup, turned, and pointed in the direction where he got the book from. Then he said, “I was walking down one of the aisles over there, and that’s where I found it.”

Mrs. Anderson looked in the direction where Quentin pointed, but she did not say anything right away because she was thinking about the contents of the book. Then she looked at Quentin and said, “What you will read in that book is a world of difference from all the other books you have read in our library.”

Quentin didn't know what to make of what she said, but he replied, "Oh, okay, Mrs. Anderson. I'll see you next time. Thanks, though. Bye."

"Bye, Quentin."

As Quentin left the library, he thought about what Mrs. Anderson said about the book, the look on her face and what was written on the first page. He felt eager to begin reading the book, so he hurried home. When he got home, he went to the kitchen first and set the book down on the table. He got out a knife, the peanut butter, jelly and bread, and made a sandwich. He got a glass, went to the refrigerator and poured some milk. Then he took his sandwich and milk to the table and sat down to eat. Just as he was taking a bite of the sandwich, his father walked in.

"Hi, Quentin."

Quentin looked up, chewed quickly, gulped and answered, "Hi, Dad."

His father saw the book, walked over to the table and just stood there staring at it. He was thinking about the contents of the book. Then he looked at Quentin and asked, "Where did you get this book?"

"From the library."

Quentin took another bite of his sandwich. His father picked the book up and opened it to the first page. Quentin watched his father and after he finished chewing, he said, "Mrs. Anderson, the librarian, she asked me how I found that book."

Quentin's father looked at him, nodded and replied, "I'm not surprised, because what you will read in this book is quite different than the other books you've read, Son."

"Dad, Mrs. Anderson said the same thing."

His father just nodded, then he set the book down, walked out of the kitchen into the backyard and stood there with his hands in his pockets, looking up at the sky, wondering what Quentin could possibly gain from reading that book.

Back in the kitchen, Quentin thought about his father and Mrs. Anderson's strange reaction to his having the book EARTHLINGS. And he thought he should have asked them what they thought about the book. But, he also thought it was time to find out what the book is all about. So, he quickly finished eating his sandwich, drank the milk, grabbed the book, he went straight to his room and started reading.

The more he read, the more he found himself drawn into a world difficult to imagine, yet extremely interesting. Over the next several days he stayed around the house to spend reading the book. He didn't visit with any of his friends, or go to the library, or look for new plants to add to his greenhouse collection. But he did continue to go outside to feed a blue jay he befriended with raw cashews every day. When he finished reading the book he looked at the title again and headed back to the library to return it. When he got there, he walked up to the front counter, set the book down and greeted the librarian. "Hello, Mrs. Anderson."

"Well, hello Quentin."

"Mrs. Anderson, you said this book was different from all the other books I've read in the library, and you were right, but I'm thinking I got it from the wrong section, though."

Mrs. Anderson picked the book up and asked, "Why do you say that?"

"Well, I found the book in the nonfiction section, and I know what I read isn't true, so it should be put in the fiction section where it belongs."

Mrs. Anderson set the book on the cart behind her, updated the computer to show that the book had been returned and then asked, "What makes you think what you read in that book is not true?"

"Mrs. Anderson, the Earthlings look just like us, and in the book it says they sell the land, food, the water, and anything else they can think of—even each other. They have identification cards, they worship a lot of gods, they also get mad enough to kill each other, they—"

Mrs. Anderson held up her hand and said, "They kill themselves and engage in war. I know, Quentin. But believe it or not, what you read about them is true."

She paused to adjust her glasses and then she continued. "That book is about a people who live on a planet called Earth and we call them Earthlings. So, that book belongs in the nonfiction section where you found it."

"Really, Mrs. Anderson? Are you sure?"

"Why, yes, of course, I'm sure. Without a doubt."

"It just doesn't make sense though."

"Well, Quentin, I understand what you're saying because many who have read the book expressed similar feelings as you, but it's all true."

"But it's, like, unbelievable."

Mrs. Anderson stood there looking at Quentin, not saying another word, but hoping he would accept her answer. Quentin, on the other hand, was preoccupied with the thought of trying to imagine what it would be like to live the way the Earthlings do. He turned away slowly, still caught up in his thoughts and walked toward the door. Mrs. Anderson, seeing that Quentin was leaving, said, "Bye, Quentin. I'll see you next time."

Quentin snapped out of it, turned around and replied, "Oh. Right, Mrs. Anderson. Bye."

Then Quentin walked out of the library headed for home. He was still trying to imagine how the Earthlings can live the way they do. As he continued to think about how they live, he wondered if maybe there were more books in the library about the Earthlings, so he turned around and headed back to the library. He walked up to the front counter and said, "Mrs. Anderson?"

"Quentin, you're back already?"

"Yes. What is the location number on the book I just turned in?"

Mrs. Anderson turned, looked at the tail of the book and replied, "The location number is NF71041."

“Okay, thank you.”

Quentin quickly turned and started walking away when Mrs. Anderson called after him, “Quentin!”

He turned back around, “Yes, Mrs. Anderson?”

“Since you’re going that way, will you please put this book back on the shelf where it belongs?”

Quentin smiled and replied, “Oh, okay.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, Mrs. Anderson.”

Quentin took the book *Earthlings* and headed toward the aisle where he found it and placed it back on the shelf. He looked at the books on both sides of it, and the books above it and below it, but he did not see any more books about the *Earthlings*. He went back to the front counter and said, “Excuse me, Mrs. Anderson.”

“Yes, Quentin?”

“Will you check in the computer to see if there’s anything else written about the *Earthlings*, please?”

“Sure.”

Mrs. Anderson typed the word “*Earthlings*” on the computer and hit enter. Only the book *EARTHLINGS* appeared, and she replied, “There is nothing else written about the *Earthlings* in our library system.”

But she had a second thought and said, “Hold on for a moment, Quentin.”

A few more clicks on the computer and then she said, “There is a book about the planet Earth. Would you be interested in that book?”

“No, because it probably only has information about the composition of the planet and says nothing about the Earthlings.”

Mrs. Anderson smiled, looked at the computer screen to read the summary about the book, and replied, “You would be correct.”

“Well, thank you anyway, Mrs. Anderson.”

“You’re welcome, Quentin. Is there anything else I can help you with?”

“No, but thanks, though. Bye.”

“Okay, bye-bye now.”

Quentin left the library headed for home in a hurry, and when he got there, he went straight to his room. He sat down at his desk, typed the word “Earthlings” on his computer, and hit enter. Only the book EARTHLINGS appeared on the screen.

“Dang!”

He sat there and stared at the screen, wondering why there wasn’t more information about the Earthlings. He thought there should be, but he wondered where to look. He decided to click on EARTHLINGS anyway. A picture of the author Randolph Reed Stewart popped up with his biography. He read that Randolph Reed Stewart’s fascination with outer space began at the age of seven. That he would sit outside at night for hours looking at the stars, and he read every book he could find about space. He told his parents he wanted to explore outer space to look for people who might live on another planet.

His parents provided encouragement by getting him a digital sky chart and a telescope. Young Randolph would carefully examine outer space through his telescope, compare the stars to the ones on the sky chart and write down in a notepad what he thought about the way the stars were arranged. His parents also took him to an observatory to get a better view of outer space through the large ground-based telescope. Randolph was amazed by how many more stars there are and the colours in outer space. He asked the operational managers, if people live on other planets? And, if they do, do they look like

us? The answers to those questions, fortunately, were not known at the time, but his desire to find out fostered in him a strong “sense of purpose.”

He asked the operational managers if the observatory had a library. They answered, “Yes.” He asked to read those books and any other information they had available. He also asked if someone would teach him about astronomy and how to operate the ground-based telescope. Young Randolph Reed Stewart’s requests were granted. He would then visit the observatory almost every day for a few years, searching the night sky with the ground-based telescope, asking questions, studying the reading materials and taking notes. He tried to learn as much as he could, but he did not find the answers to his questions there.

Next, he visited an aeronautics facility since he would eventually need a spacecraft to explore outer space. He introduced himself and asked the same questions about the possibility of people living on another planet, but just like before, no one knew the answers. He then asked if they would teach him about radar and satellites. They welcomed him, of course, and he was handed a couple of books to begin reading. Over time as his knowledge and understanding of radar and satellites increased, he came up with a brilliant idea. He wanted a radar-satellite built that would detect the light and heat energy of a planet that matches the light and heat energy of Gliese because he believed it is the best way to find people who live on other planets.

His idea captured the attention and imagination of everyone at the facility. They began right away working on a design for the radar-satellite with an infrared laser sensor, a propulsion system and a mission control centre. These three projects took several years to complete, but it took just a couple of years for the radar-satellite, after it was launched, to detect and pinpoint the location of a planet with the same magnetosphere as Gliese. This extraordinary discovery created a lot of excitement. And everyone clearly understood the significance of moving forward to find out if there are people living on that planet—especially Randolph Reed Stewart now that he believed he was on a valid path to having his questions answered.

This amazing adventure they were to embark on required a spacecraft capable of travelling trillions of miles in a short period of time. They decided that an electromagnetic propulsion system would be needed to pull the spacecraft toward its destination, along with an inertial dampening device to counter the effects of its rapid acceleration and deceleration. The spacecraft would also need star tracking cameras,

various scanning and recording instruments and the cabin had to be made large enough to accommodate a crew of fourteen comfortably. With this enormous undertaking in mind, everyone worked knowledgeably and enthusiastically to create the first interstellar space shuttle for a mission which was expected to last three years and cover 254 trillion miles. Once the space shuttle was ready and the details of the flight plan was plotted, the moment of truth finally arrived. Randolph Reed Stewart and his crew boarded the Space Shuttle Legate and headed for the planet they hoped would be inhabited by people.

It was approximately eleven months into their flight when they got their first glimpse of the planet. It looked very much like Gliese from space. They stopped for a moment and turned on the refractor telescope. As they zoomed in the first thing they saw was a lot of satellites zipping by. Then they zoomed in some more and saw oceans, land masses, then aircraft, boats, buildings, highways and vehicles. Finally, they saw what they had come so far to find, people walking around; and these people looked just like them. They cheered and performed a flyby around the planet just outside of its exosphere. After a couple of flybys, they estimated the population to be several billion. They also noticed that some of the people there lived poorly.

Then, as part of their mission, they began to scan the people's written records from libraries electromagnetically. They took photographs and video of things they observed, and recorded some of their news signals. Gathering the information Randolph Reed Stewart wanted to satisfy his curiosity took about a year. When they returned to Gliese, he wrote a book about the people on that planet called EARTHLINGS. As a side note, many who read his book were inspired to make the long journey to Earth to see these people for themselves.

“A trip to planet Earth, that would be cool!”

By JAMES SHERWOOD METTS

CAUGHT IN THE CROSS HARES

Millicent stretched onto her haunches and sniffed. Arthur was late, but there was a faint scent on the breeze: he would not be long now.

Puff! Soil sprayed in a wide arc. Millicent brushed off the excess. He nodded. One eye winked. It was a sure sign he begrudgingly acknowledged she was right! She stamped one foot several times. The vibration drew several to the field. When she was sure enough had answered the call, she drew them in close to see what she had to tell them.

Three fields' distant, two farm hands wrested with long-planted fence posts.

“What’s the point, I want te know?”

“We’s ‘ere te do what ‘im tell us, that’s why!”

Still grumbling, the two lifted a post each over to the newly dug holes, setting the one in place while the other back-filled. While he supported the weight, he scanned across the land and it filled him with satisfaction at a job well-done.

The village hall, packed as they say to the rafters, buzzed with chatter.

Amid the din, the tinny clatter of a tobacco tin against the church collection plate beat a dull rhythm, slowed the general chit-chat to a tentative stop.

“Come everyone! Let’s bring ourselves to order!”

From the hall doorway, a suitably suited graying individual strolled purposefully to front the crowd. He waved a sheet aloft:

“Going by popular demand, we have our victory! The village school is staying and we’re keeping our common grazing land too! The new by-pass will go round the other side of the hills – no impact on our farms!”

Still clutching the paper, he strode back the way he came, at double pace, giving no time for questions!

In a nearby town, the planning committee convened for their monthly moan. Stymied by every local parish was not where they wanted to be! It was outrageous! The moan turned to miserable discontent.

At a shout from the back (no-one later would admit who), they piled from conference room to The Pig and Whistle in a steady stream.

At the main sorting office, several Postal Executives (their favoured title) clustered around a vending machine.

One thumped first one side of the machine, then the wall beside and a cup juddered into the holder as steaming water filled it to overflow.

“It’s a darn cheek: expecting morning deliveries!”

“Back when I did a round

“Oh, yeah – back in Dick’s days!”

At the bus terminal, drivers bunched and chuckled as the bosses appeared white-faced and tight-lipped.

Millicent glanced back to the form. It was in a comforting crevice, lined with leaves and some of the softer meadow grasses. She sniffed the air. Her latest offspring, Jonty and Jemima would return soon. She sniffed again and detected Arthur’s distinctive scent. Maybe he would have more news. She gave the usual drum roll with one foot to summon whoever was about.

Puff! As Millicent brushed herself carefully, she considered a reprimand, but the desire to know what he had to report was stronger.

Several scratching, turns and eye-winks later, she addressed her audience with the report.

As she finished, another, older hare stretched to full height:

“Relocating the species you chose made all the difference – the status quo remains undisturbed! Victory is ours!”

In the distance, a Natter-jack toad shivered, half-afraid as a hawk carefully closed a claw round its belly. In another field, a long-eared bat dipped its wings as it disappeared in another direction. A family of red squirrels bid a fond farewell before taking to the trees to find their favourite for the night.

As each of the several species prepared to return to their real habitats, Arthur turned to Millicent:

“Got to give it to you – I thought the idea would flop. Looks like you were right!”

“You never give me credit for anything do you Arthur? Never for one minute! Well, I’d like to know what you’d have done to save us?”

And the two lopped together bickering into the sunset.

By BRYONY PETERSEN

PASSION

A tear from the eyes of an angel as the day begins. With the blessing of a new day is not given to all. Only the life that we are allowed to live and it is only this one that means anything. Passion is something that most people try to understand and for me it is what I do love. The one thing is that we can all enjoy it during any day of the year. The hard part is finding it in your soul as you move forward in this life.

For some it is easy, and they live it every day without shame. There are many things that require passion but nothing more than love. It is something that can bring couples together or take them apart. In my experience, I have only known it in my work in the kitchen where my first true love was until it was taken from me. Now my passion is in my writing because it is something that no one can tell me that I cannot do anymore because of my schizophrenia. I have never known that kind of love with someone else. The reason for this is the hurt that I suffered when I was young from the town that I moved to and for ten years of physical and mental abuse from the community.

People have told me to let it go, but they are not at war with people who do not know what they did to me years later. That trauma that I suffered haunts me to this very day because I think that I am dreaming and I am going to wake up in that town back in 1996 again before we moved. Every night I am afraid to sleep because of that horror and getting close to someone scares me. When I do fall asleep, I am scared to open my eyes when I hear my alarm. My body knows that I am not there, but my mind does not.

I have passion but it is rooted in my writing where I can make a world where I am in control. People say it is in your past and that is where it should stay, to what I say to them is live my life and tell me that after they have taken a walk in my boots. Only in my writing, do I find peace and love as I can write it. I am not saying that my life is any worse than someone else's because we all have battles. My battle is different where I suffer from my illness and emotional scars.

I have searched for answers to why this happened to me and still I am not sure what the reason was for it. Over the years after I left that town I have done well for myself, though I do not know how to show feelings or much less know how to feel. I sit here and wonder what my life would be like if it did not happen to me. Would I have had suicidal thoughts; would I have been driven to outdo everyone in everything I do? Would I be someone that does not take no for an answer? Would I have taken the chances that I have

throughout my adult life? Would I have written and published my books? These are the things that run through my mind daily.

Picture yourself at the age of seven. Young and with hope and dreams. Then watch as your innocence and childhood are torn away from you for ten years. Being called stupid all the time, being put down day by day for ten years. Being called a woman because you work in a kitchen because you want to save money to further your education. Imagine being beaten down by five or six guys because you walked passed them in the hallway and the teachers stand there and laugh. Picture it.

They had passion and it was to destroy me, but as I look back at what I have done since I was seventeen, I have accomplished more in my adult life than any of them could imagine. I have finished college three separate times, one for cooking and the other two were for business and office administration. I have written and published books and my first being in 2016. The passion that I had was greater than they could have ever understood.

The days of that town are behind me and as I write this, I am closing that chapter of my life, and I am starting a new one now at the age of forty-one. This day is the beginning for the new me with new hopes and dreams that will come to be reality. The emotional scar will remain but just as a scar that will remind me of the true strength that I have.

Passion, what is it for you?

Stay safe.

This essay is part of the Echoes of Yesterday book which is available on Amazon. As well, I have a website which is www.jamesgyeo.ca where you can learn more about me and my work.

By JAMES GORDON YEO

WHEN I FLY

About ten seconds, that's roughly how long it takes to hit the ground from one thousand feet. Anyway, that's what I told the man, the one hanging out from the wrong side of the rail on The Royal Gorge Bridge with a look of death in his eyes. Flashing and flicking like they were. Staring at the sparkling water below. Ten seconds, one thousand feet. What I didn't say was I'd rounded it up. The bridge was actually fifty feet short of the thousand. If he counted, he would get to nine point nine-five then he'd unexpectedly stop. I thought that would save him some worry.

I came across him while I was out strolling, making the most of the bright sunny day. I got to within a few feet and, as I didn't want to spook him, casually said, "Hey matey, what's the story?"

It turned out to be the same old story. Well, as it happens, two stories, "I'm broke and she's gone," he mumbled then snatched a glance my way then back to the water. No tears, they never have tears, just the look, the eyes and the shaking. For some reason they all shake. Kind of vibrate, I suppose.

I watched him closely as I said, "Don't do that," adding some authority. I wanted to make him look at me.

And it worked, "What?" he said.

"Don't look down the way you are, it makes you shake and gets me all on edge. Talking of edges, why don't you take a step back." Surprisingly he did just that so I continued, "You know, I've always thought what it would be like to fly but I've not had the chance. Not like you. You've got ten seconds to find out."

That's when he looked at me with a sudden realisation, "Ten seconds, that long, are you sure? I thought it would be much shorter."

"Nope, ten'll do it. Plenty of time to reflect," and I counted it down. Extra slowly. Ended with, *ten and... splat.*"

Now he was really shaking. I could hear his mind repeating out of his mouth, "A long time, ten seconds."

“It sure is, unless you find you can fly, of course. Tell me, what’ll you think about? When I fly I think I’ll feel first the wind then hear the whir.”

“The whir?”

“Yeah, the whir of the videotape. You’ll hear it. One second after you let go. Your life whizzes by and depending on a few things you might make the end but only the real boring bastards manage that.”

“Would you get to the end?”

“No way, do I look that sad? My life’s that full. Sure, I’ve had all the crap. Like you, my wife skedaddled. Cleared out everything. Left me just two maxed out cards and a broken fridge. But, what the hell, life’s too short. In your case just ten seconds the moment...”

“I let go. So, what did you do?”

“Easy, I stuck my boots on the dirt, dusted down the suit and started afresh. That sure beats trying to fly. What about you, would you finish the tape?”

“Halfway I reckon I’d get.”

“And there’s much more to add... How about a beer and we can talk it over, what you’re going to do.”

It didn’t take much talking about. One beer’s worth to be exact. It turned out the guy wanted to finish the tape especially after I suggested all he needed to do was a quick edit then start over just like a director starting a new scene.

By MARTIN DIXON

You can find out about Martin Dixon and his writing on his blog at

<https://www.shortstoriestoentertain.com/>

THE FINAL WORD

In this issue's editorial, I discuss New Year's resolutions and how difficult it can be to keep to a chosen course or goal. I also talk about multi-tasking, and make no secret of my dislike for dividing attention between several tasks.

Is multi-tasking still a thing? Back in my office days, most workplaces revered multi-tasking as some sacred holy grail that mere mortals struggled to accomplish. A way to get ahead, push yourself for promotion, was to trumpet your expertise in multi-tasking.

Never one to follow blindly, I have never been a fan. It's always seemed to me the easiest way to give yourself an ulcer, tie yourself into too many deadlines and not get anything finished, but that's just me and my opinion.

My preference is and always will be to make a list. Prioritise the list, then work through it, always devoting your full attention to each item. Result: nothing is missed, you finish every job you start, and you can give a detailed progress report at any point.

The same thing applies in a roundabout way to writing. At least, that's my approach. We're all individuals and it's only my opinion and methodology. I don't advocate anyone should necessarily follow me or what I do. I just offer it as an option.

I don't say this to be divisive or disrespectful to anyone who finds multi-tasking a useful tool. I just mean it doesn't work for me.

This year, I want to concentrate on just two goals: publishing this free online magazine for my indie writer friends because supporting them is very important to me, and republishing my currently published books through BadMan Publishing.

If it means having to scale back on future projects, it has to be. I'm a person, not a machine; creative writing cannot be forced. Sometimes the writing process means doing the best for the reader, audience or listener.

In another new innovation for the Digest, I will be taking a moment to formally thank everyone who has contributed to this and previous issues of the Indie Writers' Digest.

Without their support, their trust and commitment and above all, their supreme leap of faith in the magazine and in me, there would be no magazine and I wouldn't have had the wonderful opportunity to meet, connect and collaborate with such brilliant and talented writers.

So, without further ado, thank you to:

Wendy Boynton

Keith Lawson and Dan Carey, collectively BadMan Publishing

James Sherwood Metts

I want especially to give gratitude and appreciation to Martin Dixon and James Gordon Yeo, who have both been outstandingly supportive of me and what I am trying to accomplish through the magazine.

I will be appending a complete list of contributors at the end of the fourth quarter issue in December.

AND FINALLY!!



I am ever optimistic of starting Write Bite! It's my new video short series, or podcast, which I am hoping to feature on my YouTube channel. You may have seen some of my earlier social media posts describing what I am hoping to do to generate even more interest and exposure for the wealth of talented independent writers struggling for recognition and book-sales: Watch this space!

BRYONY PETERSEN