



# Space Cowboy Books Presents: Simultaneous Times Newsletter

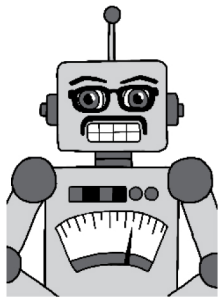
#17 September 2021

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## Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Simultaneous Times Newsletter issue 17. In this issue we bring you an interview with Sean Clancy, editor-in-chief of the fantastic Planet Scumm Magazine, as well as some great new releases from small presses. We've been busy rebuilding our website, which will feature a section of free downloads, reviews, and more – keep an eye out for this drastic improvement to our currently dated-looking website. We'll also be rolling out an awesome free gift soon, we'll keep you posted. As always we'd love to hear from you, so get in touch at [spacecowboybooks@gmail.com](mailto:spacecowboybooks@gmail.com)

Jean-Paul L. Garnier



*What was the motivation for starting Planet Scumm Magazine, and how has it changed over the ten issues you've released?*

*Planet Scumm* sprang out of "Attention Scum," a sci-fi zine retrospective by one of our founding members, Eric Loucks. Tyler Berd, our Managing Editor, illustrated this little slimy fella with a megaphone for the column, and when the three of us started planning our

own sci-fi magazine, we landed on that "Scummy" dude as our mascot.

Those classic roots informed our mission. We wanted to be as scrappy and weird as the sci-fi mags of old, but without all the racism, sexism, and xenophobia that plagued the hard SF and pulp SF of the period.

*As an editor, what elements do you look for most in a story?*

A clear voice, a unique premise, good pacing, natural-sounding dialogue, a sense of place, and the ineffable quality of "flow" are just a few things our slush team and core staff might consider. The elements that can make or break a story in our slush pile vary from submission to submission, and from call to call.

Most stories in our "maybe" pile have strong hooks and interesting premises, but weak endings. (Which makes sense! Endings are *hard*.) The stand-out stories have satisfying conclusions that feel earned.

*Planet Scumm is filled with wonderful illustrations and artwork, tell us about your art department, and how you go about selecting the visual aspects of the magazine?*

Alyssa Alarcón Santo is our Creative Director, and her commitment to strong, clear design is why *Planet Scumm* looks so damn good. Sam Rheame, our Marketing Director, also takes on spot illustrations, and if we have anything approaching an "in-house style" when it comes to art (Shel Silverstein meets... Moebius), he's defined it.

We start discussing art right after we've finalized our story selection for an issue. (It'd probably be more prudent of us to start that discussion after we contract all stories, but we invariably get excited about an image or a concept for the cover.) Once we've settled on a cover story, Alyssa identifies the right artist for the job and works with them to shape the cover art. The interior art process is similar, with 1-2 artists illustrating a collection of spots for each story in the issue.

Our growing art team includes stellar independent artists with diverse styles and tastes, such as Maura McGonagle, Erika Schnatz, Camille Villanueva, Jordan Alarcón, and Clare Fuller (with more to come!). For our most recent issue, "Snake Eyes," Maura created a fantastic illustration of a vaguely serpentine entity that, in their own words, captures "*the idea that gender is something to contemplate*."

*What advice would you give writers submitting to Planet Scumm?*

Don't self-reject. If you think there's a chance your story would fit at *Planet Scumm*, send it to us when we're open for submissions. (And no, this isn't us drumming up submissions only to reject them, thereby getting our acceptance rate down to 2%. I mean, it *is* that, but it's not *only* that.)

Also: send us flash fiction! This is less "advice" and more "request," but I want to publish more flash collections.

*What's the most difficult aspect of running a science fiction magazine?*

The struggle is showing up for ourselves, our friends, our families, and our day jobs while still doing our best work with *Planet Scumm*. We try to think about that balance for our own sake, as well as for the longevity of the magazine. Breaking even as a young magazine in a pandemic is its own challenge, but if we were just doing this for money, we... probably wouldn't have done it in the first place!

We publish *Planet Scumm* because we enjoy working on it. I'm thankful for this project, and to be a part of the *Planet Scumm* team.

We're trying to do better with keeping up constant chatter between issue releases. It's one thing to have blog content and social media noise going when we have a new issue coming out, but it'd be something else entirely to turn [planetscumm.space](http://planetscumm.space) into a website people visit just because we might have something new posted there.

Tor.com is our gold standard for this sort of steady content. They host new original fiction, retrospective columns, and reviews, all alongside publishing announcements, and we have no qualms with shamelessly copying their mix of fiction, non-fiction, and advertising. (Which is a long way of saying: if you're reading this



and have a SF-adjacent pitch for a non-fiction series or ongoing column, maybe drop us a line?)

*What directions do you think science fiction is heading, and what would you like to see more / less of?*

I don't think sci-fi (or any genre, for that matter) really has a singular direction, or even a handful of directions. I subscribe to the truism that science fiction is ultimately always about the now, even when it's dealing with far-future societies and strange new technologies.

Science fiction can easily lend itself to pessimism and conservative attitudes towards progress and technology. So, after the past year-plus of pandemic, what I'd like to see more of is science fiction that dares to be hopeful. Not in a way that ignores the problems facing our planet, or that trades entirely on positive thinking, but SF that really puts the work in to *earn* our hope. We welcome science fiction that deals with climate justice, the rights of indigenous peoples, wealth inequality, and other real-world concerns.

*What's next for Planet Scumm, and what are you currently working on?*

Our most recent issue—*Planet Scumm* #11, "Snake Eyes," features a wonderful collection of stories curated by Guest Editor-In-Chief Hailey Piper and Guest Editors Maura McGonagall and Clare Fuller. We were delighted to spotlight femme, genderqueer, and trans voices with "Snake Eyes," and we'll continue to center those voices in future issues of *Planet Scumm*.

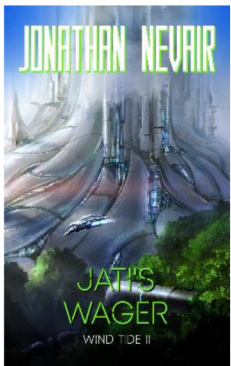
*Planet Scumm* #12 is currently in production, slated for an October release, and in January 2022 we'll release our next "Winter Horror" collection for *Planet Scumm* #13. (Did we intentionally plan for our Winter Horror special to hit the oh-so-spooky issue number "13"? I'm happy to let people assume we did!)

<https://www.planetscumm.space/>

## New From the Small Press

### Jati's Wager

By Jonathan Nevair



A space opera heist brimming with action, twists, and turns that doubles as a story of personal growth, mentorship, and sacrifice.

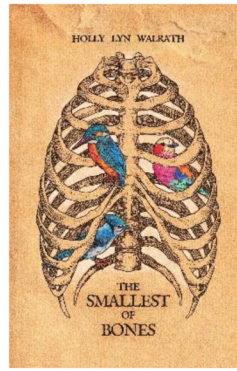
Ailo is a streetwise teen surviving alone on the remote moonbase, Tarkassi 9. She wants nothing more than to flee into the wider world of the Arm. When her chance arrives, she makes it no farther than the first ship out of the system. That's where Jati, the Patent War veteran and general fighting the Monopolies gives her a second chance. It's an unlikely partnership, but Ailo's rogue status

is just what Jati's People's Army needs to drive the final spike of victory into a weakening Garissian Council.

A team of experts assembles and hope rests on Ailo's skill, stealth, and tenacity to pull off the impossible. It's a wild gambit, and a moral code may need to be bent, or broken, to achieve success. When an internal shadow rises, casting doubt on their plans, Ailo and Jati are forced to weigh the cost of revenge against honor and justice.

*Jati's Wager*, a space opera inspired by the myths of the Trojan War.  
<https://www.jonathannevair.com/>

## New From the Small Press Cont.



### The Smallest of Bones

By Holly Lyn Walrath

Expanding on the success of her award-winning chapbook *Glimmerglass Girl*, Houston poet Holly Walrath's first full-length collection *The Smallest of Bones* uses the language of classical anatomy to reveal short, concentrated meditations on the body and its many ghosts.

Throughout these poems, Walrath confronts neurosexism, or the practice of claiming that there are fixed differences between female and male bodies which can explain women's inferiority. "I started reading old anatomy books and studying the so-called biological differences in the bones of men and women," Walrath says, "which led to the 'spine' of the book, titled after different bones in the body and how those bones differ between the sexes, according to science and pseudoscience."

Threaded throughout are fantastical ghosts, demons, and other haunting images of body horror that pull the reader's focus onto the subjects of grief, lust, gender, and sexuality. Poet Stephanie Wytovich has called it "a blossoming of bones and the trauma we hold inside, a gorgeous homage to the fever dreams and nightmares we collect, break, and survive with each and every day."

<http://www.hlwalrath.com/>

### It Gets Even Better: Stories of Queer Possibility

These stories are about identity, relationships, and community. They're about hope, acceptance, affirmation, and joy. And most of all, in a time when uncertainty feels inescapable and overwhelming, they're about taking one another by the hand and choosing together to embrace the unknown.

*The possibilities are endless.*

This anthology is full of uplifting, affirming short stories about queer possibility by an outstanding lineup of speculative fiction authors including Charlie Jane Anders, Zen Cho, Amy Griswold, Nibedita Sen, Merc Fenn Wolfmoor, and S.L. Huang. <https://www.speculativelyqueer.com>



### APEX

By Michael Esola



Two young and determined entrepreneurs set out to create an annual convention called Prehistoric Con. What was supposed to be a glorious evening in celebration of all things prehistoric—showcasing bestselling authors, movie directors, executive producers, screenwriters, and a host of others from the industry—takes a sudden turn for the worst with the reality that they have been locked inside the building with no way out. It isn't long before the entire convention comes to

the horrifying realization that they are being hunted, and that from the dark places within the building, things are starting to stir to life.  
<http://www.primalpublishing.com/>