

THE MAGAZINE OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF AUSTRALIAN WRITERS QUEENSLAND (FAWQ)

This edition of SCOPE magazine is volume 72 No. 1

SCOPE

February/March Edition

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Fellowship of Australian Writers
Queensland

Supporting emerging writers since 1921

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FAWQ

Fellowship of Australian Writers
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SCOPE is a bi-monthly magazine, depicting all things literary, from Members' writings to articles and information for writers and readers.

Featuring stories, poetry and articles submitted by FAWQ members.

SCOPE is published by the Fellowship of Australian Writers - Qld.

The Fellowship is dedicated to the nurturing and support of writers of all ages and levels, bringing them together in a connected community since 1921.

Join Our Fellowship



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Join the Fellowship to immerse yourself in the Queensland writing community and become eligible to submit your work for the chance of publication.

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Editor's Notes.

MEMBERS:

Please feel free to submit your recent achievements or milestones, as well as letters to the editor regarding points of interest, events or suggestions. We will attempt to fit them in. Please insure that these are submitted by the 15th of the month before each issue. That is:

February/March -15th January

April/May — 15th March

June/July —15th May

August/September—15th July

October/November—15th September

December/January—15th November.

Short stories, flash fiction, poetry and articles can be submitted at any time, as, if they miss an issue, they can be considered for the next.

[Click Here for Submission Guidelines](#)



**JOIN WITH US AT FAWQ
 AND HAVE YOUR WORK PUBLISHED**

CLICK HERE

Winning submissions for the 'New Beginnings' Competition.

Congratulations to All!!

Short Story - 'Freedom' - Russell Perry

Flash Fiction - 'The New Boyfriend' - Sally Eberhardt

Poetry - 'Calliope Dawn' - Susan Skowronski

PROMOTE YOUR BOOKS.

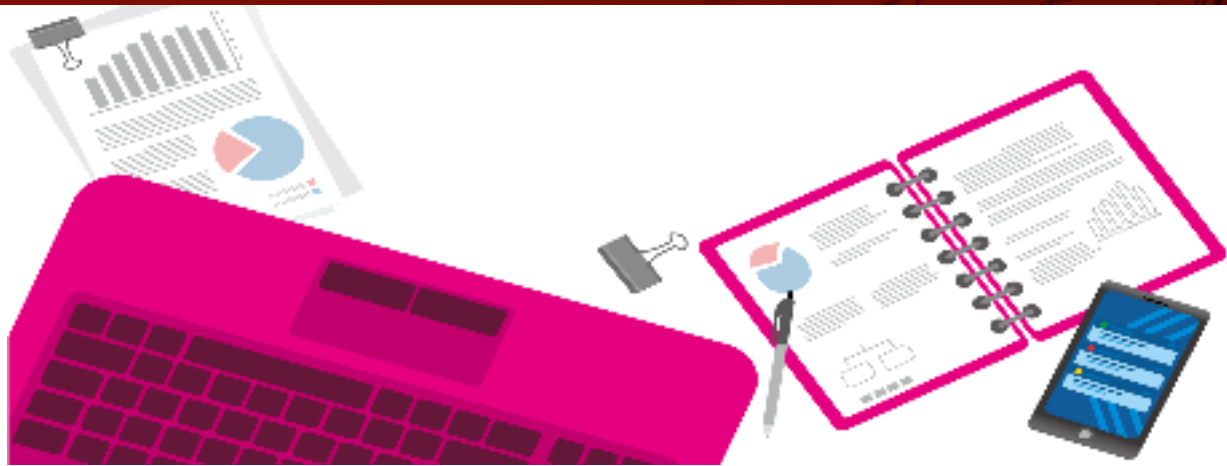
MEMBERS:

Submit your books for promotion in the '[Member Featured Books](#)' area on the final page of this publication.

Simply email your request to editor@fawq.com.au

with your book title and purchase link (and a cover image if you can).

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From the President's Desk.

President's Report for Scope Magazine

Welcome to the first edition of Scope Magazine for 2026.

Over the past year, the attention of the world has been on tragic and violent events unfolding in Ukraine, Gaza and the Middle East, and parts of Africa. And, on 14 December 2025, the violence reached Australia.

This raises the perennial issue of how we should approach writing about violence, be this in nonfiction or fiction form. I say this knowing that many FAWQ members work within the genres of crime fiction and true crime - or at least are interested in this.

Lest we be too moralistic about this, it's useful to remember that the works of William Shakespeare are often very violent. Corpses abound. Shakespeare typically resolves a dramatic impasse (the dénouement) through a duel or battle, often in the last scene of a play.

I don't have any real answers here. I would be interested, however, to hear what members think about this issue.

On a lighter note, I'd like to thank the brilliant FAWQ Management Committee for their work over the past year. Russell Perry and Sally Eberhardt have worked tirelessly with Scope Magazine; Verity Croker and Rosalie Webb have worked tirelessly with events; Lexcia Dalton and Virginia Miranda have worked tirelessly as Secretary and Treasurer; and in addition, Russell has also worked tirelessly as web manager.

Two upcoming events I'd like to flag are an Author Event with historian (and FAWQ member) Jane Smith at Redcliffe Library on Saturday 28 February 2026 at 2pm and our AGM at Full Moon Hotel, Sandgate, on Saturday 7 March 2026 at 10.30am, which we aim to keep as informal as possible. All are welcome.

I look forward to ongoing fellowship with members in 2026.

Regards,

(Dr) Jim Page,
President FAWQ.

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Members Achievements.

Susan Skowronski - Member Credits
August 2025 -Jan 2026

Mia Mia Magazine Spring 25 Issue

Article: Every Little Bit Counts
Poem: Campfire
Poem: Full Moon

Mia Mia Magazine Summer 25 Issue

Article: Fill us with your love
Short Story: A Special Gift
Flash Fiction: Mission Impossible

Free Xpression Magazine August 25 Issue

Article: Jacaranda
Poem: Magpies in the Jacaranda
Poem: Jacaranda Dreaming

Free Xpression Magazine April September 25 Issue

Article: International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies
Poem: Woodlands in Spring

Free Xpression Magazine October 2025 Issue

Article: My Garden in Spring
Poem: Fairy Wren

Free Xpression Magazine November 2025 Issue

Article: Loneliness
Poem: Finding Peace

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Members Achievements.

Congratulations SUSAN SKOWRONSKI - Member Credits August 2025 -Jan 2026 (Continued)

Free Xpression Magazine December 2025 Issue

Article: Reach Out

Poem: Going Home

Free Xpression Magazine January 26 Issue

Article: International Day for Clean Energy

Poem: Brisbane Valley Sunrise

Namalata Magazine Winter 25

Poem: Drover's Dawn

Namalata Spring 25

Article: My Garden in Spring

Poem: Woodlands in Spring

Namalata Summer 25

Article: Reach Out

Poem: Christmas Bell

Congratulations to MOCCO WOLLERT for her December writing Achievements

Achievements – Milestones –December 2025

Your Time Magazine:

Column – Away from home Christmas December 2025

Senior Digest USA

Column – Anxiety December 2025

Poem – Celebration December 2025

Longreach Leader

150 Words Christmas Story December 2025

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Have you booked for this FAWQ Special Event yet?

Historical Writing – Fiction or Non-Fiction?



If you ever wondered what it takes to research and write an historical story, then you will be thrilled by our next FAWQ Special Event with writing presenter Jane Smith.

Jane Smith is an Australian author, editor and librarian/archivist. She loves bringing history to life through fiction and non-fiction for all ages. Her books include *The Killer's Game: Murder, Lies and Stolen Lives* (about Captain Starlight); *Ship of Death: The Tragedy of the 'Emigrant'*; *Three Times Buried*; and her latest book *One Free Woman: The True Story of Convict Hannah Rigby*.

Four of her books have been shortlisted or longlisted for literary awards. In 2024 she was honoured to be a Visiting Fellow of the Harry Gentle Resource Centre (Griffith University), awarded to support the research and writing of her book *One Free Woman: The True Story of Convict Hannah*

Rigby.

Suffice to say, when it comes to researching and writing historical stories Jane has gained much experience which she has kindly agreed to share with us.

In this session, Jane will give advice on writing historical stories, whether they are fiction or non-fiction. She will provide a brief introduction to the research process, including tips on sources and how to organise your research findings.

You will learn how to approach research and writing and discover how the approach might differ depending on whether your work is fiction or non-fiction. You will also learn how to bring your historical setting and characters to life while avoiding some of the more common traps historical writers face.

This stellar presentation will be at Redcliffe Library on Saturday 28 February, 2pm-4pm.

Jane's presentation runs for the first hour, then stay for afternoon tea and networking with other writers and readers for a while.

Tickets are \$10 for FAWQ Members, \$15 for non-members.

Don't miss out - book now at fawq.com.au/events/



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FAWQ

**EVENTS
CALENDAR**
[CLICK TO VIEW](#)

Fellowship of Australian Writers
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From the Winning Writers website –

One funny poem. No fee. Win up to \$2000. Free Competition:

The 25th annual [Wergle Flomp Humor Poetry Contest](#) offers \$3,750 in cash prizes plus benefits from Chill Subs (new!) and Duotrope.

First Prize: \$2,000 plus a two-year gift certificate from [Duotrope](#) (a \$100 value) and five years of [Chill Subs'](#) Best plan (a \$1,000 value)

Second Prize: \$500 plus two years of Chill Subs' Best plan (a \$400 value)

Third Prize: \$250 plus two years of Chill Subs' Best plan (a \$400 value)

Honorable Mentions: 10 awards of \$100 each plus one year of Chill Subs' Best plan (a \$200 value)

Top 13 entries published online

There's no fee to enter. [Jendi Reiter](#) will judge, assisted by [Lauren Singer](#). This contest welcomes published and unpublished work. Your poem may have up to 250 lines. One poem only, please. [Submit online by April 1, 2026.](#)

N.B. All prize values in USD.



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Read Sally Eberhardt's Article on the next page

'What Makes Something Funny'

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What makes something funny?

Article by Sally Eberhardt

Contemplating entering the Wergle Flomp Humor Poetry Contest had me questioning the very nature of humour.

What gives you a good belly laugh or at least a chuckle?

When I asked myself this question, my first thought is ‘the unexpected’, followed by ‘the clever’ and ‘the naughty’.

It seems I am not far off the mark but research shows a slightly different take and of course uses far fancier terms. Three major theories in academic literature attempt to explain humour –

- **Incongruity Theory:** This is the most predominant theory today. It suggests humour is derived from a sudden recognition of a mismatch between our expectations and reality. A joke's setup creates a certain expectation, which the punchline then violates in an unexpected way. Laughter results from the brain resolving this incongruity (e.g. *“I have an Epi-Pen. My friend gave it to me as he was dying. It seemed very important to him that I have it.”*)

- **Superiority Theory:** Dating back to Plato, this theory suggests we find the misfortunes of others funny because it makes us feel a sudden sense of "glory" or superiority by comparison. Laughing at someone being pooped on by a pigeon flying overhead is a classic example.

Relief Theory: Championed by thinkers like Sigmund Freud, this theory suggests humour is a mechanism for releasing pent-up nervous energy or tension, often related to repressed emotions or taboo subjects like sex. Laughter serves as a way to "let off steam".



Image by [micahsimpson760](#) from [Pixabay](#)

And then we have **The Benign Violation Theory (BVT)**

The BVT attempts to unify the traditional theories, proposing that for something to be funny, three conditions must be met simultaneously:

1. A situation involves a **violation** of some norm (moral, social, or physical).
2. The violation is perceived as **benign** or harmless.

Both perceptions occur simultaneously.

Examples include –

- **Practical Jokes:** Pranks, such as covering someone's workspace entirely with Post-it notes, violate workplace norms but are harmless and reversible, providing shared laughter that can strengthen social bonds.

- **Puns and Wordplay:** Puns, a common form of humour, violate linguistic norms by juggling multiple, often incompatible, meanings simultaneously. The violation is safe because one meaning is nonsensical, while the other provides an alternative, acceptable interpretation.

- **Self-Deprecating Humour:** This form of humour involves making oneself the target of jokes. It's a violation of the social norm of self-promotion, but it is benign because the power imbalance is low and the joke-teller controls the narrative, making it feel safe for listeners.

- **Bloopers and Mishaps:** Bloopers from TV shows, news programs, or movies are funny because an actor or presenter violating the norm of a flawless performance is unexpected (a violation), but clearly non-threatening and can be easily fixed (benign).

Yet ultimately, what one person finds funny is highly subjective and depends on individual factors like culture, maturity, and personal experiences.

Sally's Tips on Writing Funny Stuff

Back to the Wergle Flomp Comp – now we have a better understanding of what raises a laugh, there are a few more things we can do to increase our chances of creating a winning entry –

Peruse winners of this competition in previous years. Glean an idea of what styles, themes or devices were held in high regard by the judges. One recurring theme I noticed was the bastardization of popular songs or even nursery rhymes into something fresh and new while retaining recognition of the original e.g. *A Sex Therapist's 50 Ways to Please Your Lover* (Paul Simon) by Josh Baumgart (don't read if prudish) received third prize in 2023, and *There Was an Old Woman* by Jeff Carter which won first prize in 2025.

Check out the judges and their work. What style do they write? What works have they awarded prizes to in recent years?

Study the Greats of this genre. Do you love Spike Milligan's perverse verse? Get a giggle from the clever musings of Bill Bilston? Fancy a little situational comedy a la Pam Ayers? Some reading of the styles of humour that amuse you will no doubt inspire you as well.

Draw on your own knowledge and experience. Have you been in a situation or seen someone do something or say something that cracked you up with laughter? Try translating that into a poem.

Rhythm and rhyme. Much humour is derived from the sound and patterns of words – rhyming poems seem funnier than free verse.

And finally – GOOD LUCK! We hope you will share your entry in SCOPE after the judging is finished.

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Get Publishing

Make Your Own eBooks

An Article *by* Russell Perry

IN the June/July edition of Scope, I published an article on the burgeoning publishing sector of 'Kindle Short Reads'

This sector continues to grow exponentially in all major markets globally, with genres such as romance, crime fiction, science fiction and non-fiction proving popular, although all of the popular genres enjoy success.

The now generation are looking for quick reads for limited time availability. Whether we are travelling, commuting, taking a break or simply as an addition to our screen convenience.

Short Reads are usually marketed by the length of time it takes an average reader to read them i.e. 30 minutes, 90 minutes, two hours etc.

I actually display the time on the cover of each story, also including it in the blurb of the story. If you google 'How long does it take to read the number of words your book has, it will give you an average time.

It is relatively easy to create an eBook on Amazon (KDP). Amazon provides step by step instructions or there are many YouTube videos you can follow.

The first thing to do is sign up for an Amazon KDP account.

When you have written you manuscript, mine are between 5000 and 25000 words, get an attractive cover made (Or make it yourself. The same rules apply to eBooks as with print books, make sure they are edited properly, formatted and look professional. You can do all of these things yourself (I do) or pay someone to do it.

The best practice is to load it to KDP for publishing on Amazon and enter it into their 'Kindle Unlimited' program (This is where member readers can read registered books for free and you get paid for each page of your book that's read. Membership to them is \$13.99/month AU) If they are not members, they can buy the book. Depending on the length of the book, I usually set prices between \$1.99c and \$3.99.

You will be asked which market you wish to be sold in. I choose the US (Amazon.com) as it is huge, and because an eBook is a download without shipping, Australian readers and indeed readers from all countries, can download in seconds.

You can also make your own eBooks; there are many programs these days to facilitate this. I use a program call '[Calibre](#)'. You can save the eBook in different file types, the most versatile being 'epub', Kindle uses this. (You can add your cover during the process.)

If you have a Kindle or the Kindle app downloaded to your phone or tablet. (If not, do it, it's free). Then if you go to the Kindle settings, you will see your Kindle email address. Now if you email your 'epub' file to that email address, the book will appear in your Kindle library. In a few seconds.

It's possible to sell your 'epub' books as downloads from your website, then your readers can purchase and send the file to their Kindle or kindle app.

I haven't set this up yet but it's on my to-do list. Meanwhile just do it through KDP/Amazon. Some writers are making a motso.

A big plus is that you can build a library of titles quickly, which is one of the secrets of marketing.

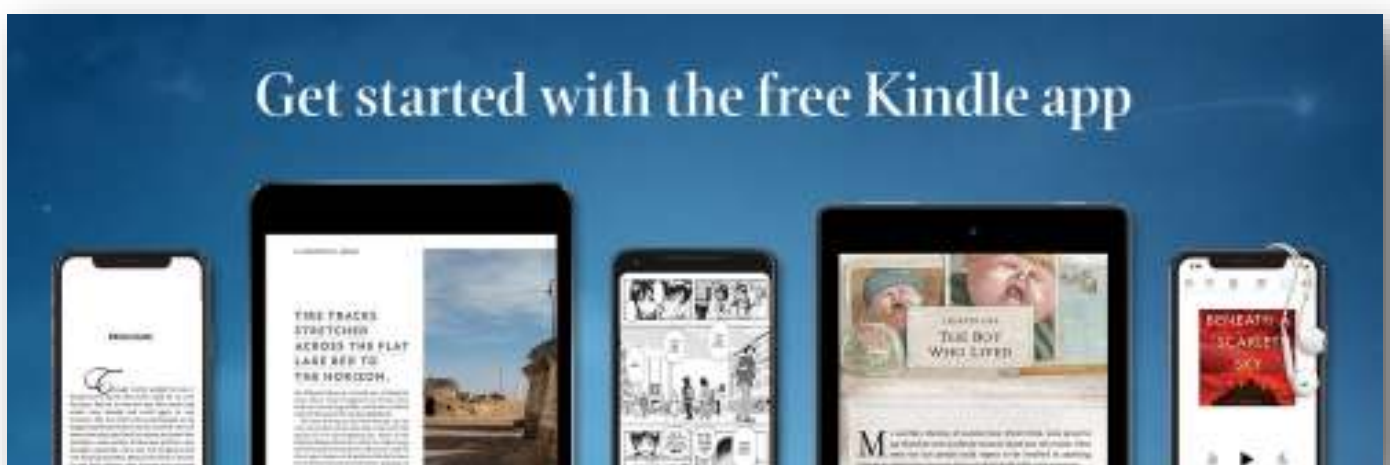
Give it a go. If you are not good with tech and need help, I can do that for a small fee. I do all, except edit. I'm not an editor and don't edit other people's work.

You can reach me at russell@russellperry.com.au

My 'Short Read' books so far are [here](#) There are more to come in the Rural Crime genre with my new protagonist 'Jackson Crafter'. Keep an eye out.

Get Started - Load the Kindle app to your phone or tablet. A great way to carry a library with you.

CLICK THE IMAGE



A summary on ‘Short Reads’.

I choose to publish my eBooks with KDP because it is the most popular online bookstore by far, with the larger range of books and promotions, and all eBook distributors cater to it.

Simply go to your app store on your android (Play Store) or apple device (iTunes), or your PC. Type in Kindle and download the app for free. open an account to allow you to buy books, or load books from the many sources on the internet, they all allow a direct load into Kindle.

Writers:

Some great advantages exist for writers publishing in eBook.

- Shorter stories are surging in popularity currently, particularly in eBook version. Readers are seeking ‘Short Reads’ for many reasons in this fast moving age. Among them Time efficiency and instant gratification. Amazon has a new category of publications now called ‘Kindle Short Reads’ - Word counts between 5,000 and 20,000 are popular.
- Readers are more inclined to try new authors at low cost.
- A writer can develop a body of work quickly with low word count publications.
- These short publications cost little to give away for promotional purposes, say for collecting emails for email marketing.
- You can sell these eBooks from your website without holding stock.

Click for more on ‘short reads’



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FCB

A Short Story

By

Barry O'Farrell



Image by [Martin](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Police banged on the front door. Travis stalled. He was deliberately slow to respond. He yelled through the door, "I'm getting the key." They continued to yell "Open Up, police. Open Up".

Dave knew what to do. He quietly asked, "Anyone got any warrants?" The group of online poker players looked up from their machines and shook their heads unanimously.

"Abe, you sure?"

"Sure, I'm sure.

"Anyone got any computer chips? Gimmicked chips? Counterfeit chips?" Again, a round of negative head shaking.

"Georgie, guns?"

"Stashed. Safe deposit box. Bank," whispered the ever quiet George.

"Jay, are you stashing anything?"

"Nope," from Jay.

"Maria, identity stuff from the Dark Web?"

"Not this time."

"Or fake passports. Maria, someone else's credit cards? Fake passports?"

"Not today."

Dave remembered something. "Jay, are you stashing for someone else?"

"Hell no."

Travis reluctantly unlocked and opened the door. Police entered: two in uniform, two plain clothes. Senior detective led the way. The second detective, young and scrawny, clutched a tablet to his chest. Looked too young to be a detective.

“No-one ain’t got no warrants,” Dave stated.

The detective asked, “Who is Abraham Powell?”

“Me,” acknowledged Abe confident of his innocence.

“Arrest him,” directed the detective. The uniform cops seized an arm each.

“For what? I haven’t done nothin’,” pleaded Abe, “Your name and shield number copper.”

“Detective Strong. Shield 712, this is Detective Bartlett 5229.” Bartlett raised his tablet in acknowledgement. “We are from the FCB, Future Crime Bureau. We are arresting you for your next crime.”

“Say what?”

“It’s what we do. Prevent. Detective Bartlett will explain.”

“My model,” began the nerdy Bartlett addressing the room, “predicts 12 months in advance. It shows your next crime. Or crimes.”

“Oh yeah. What’s my future crime anything?” dared Abe, head up, chin out.

Image by [Gerd Altmann](#) from [Pixabay](#)



Bartlett ignored Abe’s question. “Applies to everyone in this room. We have a RNM program, Relationship Network Monitoring. The program monitors your network. It knows who knows who, introductions, changes and so forth.

“Combine this with each individuals criminal skills,” continued Bartlett,” plus preferences derived from previous behaviour, plus likely behaviour...plus thoughts, yes thoughts, leads us to all the people in this room.”

Stunned silence from the group.



Image by [jp](#) from [Pixabay](#)

“Cuff him,” directed Strong with a snap of his fingers.

“Look at the old style handcuffs. Hi-tech crap but low tech handcuffs. Where’s your electro cuffs. No budget?” drawled Travis sarcastically.

“Sounds like crap to me,” uttered Dave waving a hand in a wave it off motion.

“Sounds like crap to me too,” echoed Maria, “and I know computers. Where do you get this stuff from?”

“SoC,” snapped Bartlett.

“Say again?” asked Maria cocking her head to the left.

“SoC, System on a Chip,” Bartlett replied, “lots of them.”

“Never heard of it.”

“Not as computer smart as you thought you were, Miss Computer Einstein,” jibed Strong, enjoying her comeuppance. “Maria Delvecchio, much travelled, self-styled fashionista. Unfortunate tattoos in unfortunate places. Regret them now don’t cha? We know the ones.” Maria looked away and pulled her jacket closed.

“Program includes Failure Prediction. AI identifies probability for fail,” resumed Bartlett warming to his speciality, “I mean it looks for human behaviour failure. Your behaviour,” turning to face Dave, “David Brooks, you started changing early. You became a crook, young.”

“Prevention,” from detective Strong, “Prevention is better than investigate after the crime has been committed.”

Bartlett chimed in with, “Investigation after the fact. Expensive. Time consuming. Messy.”

“Prevention is now. Get him into the Transport Bubble. Get him out of here.”

“You’ll be hearing from lawyer,” yelled Abe angrily, “you haven’t heard the last of this future bullshit.”

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“Everyone else sit still,” commanded Bartlett, “I’ll take your facial recognition and image recognition both.”

“You’ll be hearing from lawyer,” yelled Abe angrily, “you haven’t heard the last of this future bullshit.”
“Everyone else sit still,” commanded Bartlett, “I’ll take your facial recognition and image recognition both.”

“For what?” from Maria.

“For Infra Data and Cloud.”

“Gets you what?”

“Ah... yes...the combination produces all sorts of things. Your preferred Sunday lunch. Your next tattoo. Sound recognition too: Omniverse audio2Face AI, matches voices with images you filmed for social media.”

“You’re kidding,” blurted Travis in disbelief.

“Anomaly Detection,” continued Bartlett, “Anomaly Detection is constantly comparing anomalies to a person’s usual behaviour, changes to personal schedules and common contacts. Useful in pre-detecting planned crimes. Central computer will run the data we have on you against my model. Never know what you might be up to in the next 12 months. Sit still.”

Strong stroked his chin but remained silent. He wished the geek-speak would stop.

“SoC,” muttered Maria to herself.

The usually quiet Georgie glanced at her and whispered, “Homework. Where are you going to research SoC?”

#

Detective Strong was quiet for the early part of the drive to Bureau headquarters. There was a lot to take in with this new technology. He wondered where it would lead in time. How to manage it? Where did old fashion detective work fit in? Where did he fit in?

Detective Bartlett worked on his tablet in silence.

Finally Strong spoke. “This program of yours, predictions work all the time?”

“Yes...well, but with a couple of exceptions. Crimes of passion. Spontaneous. No lead up anything. Someone snaps. Stuff like that.”

“Weapons of Mass Destruction. Who’s got the bomb?” asked Strong changing subject.

“Good question. Well...with your experience or intuition, I thought you might have identified the most likely suspect today.”

“Didn’t. No fanatic. What does your program say now we have seen them?”

“No bomb. Let me check a couple of things.” The screen of Bartlett’s tablet rolled over. “Jay T. Gardner the Third. Most probably has componentry. Or can supply componentry. No bomb thrower there.”

“Have we frightened off the bomber?” posed Strong hopefully, thinking out loud.

“Doubt it.”

“What about the quiet one, Georgie? The quiet ones worry me.”

“Yeh. Don’t worry. Looks like George will be taken out,” predicted Bartlett.

“Really? Anyone we know?”

Bartlett double checked his tablet. “Uhm...well...hmm, interesting. Program reads; Probability car crash. Probability fleeing a shootout.”

“Plausible.”

“Uhm, it’s a pity about Maria’s next overseas trip too. Third world prison conditions and all.”

END

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Publisher: Flash Digest (USA)

Publication date: January 2025

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The Lady of Ironbark Ridge

A Short Story by Russell Perry.

I will never forget the Christmas school holidays of 1962. I was in my 10th year and excited about the prospect of no school for weeks, stretching out into the distance.

I would spend the long summer days in the bush up behind our property and by the creek at the bottom of Ironbark Ridge. This was in the days when a boy made his own fun in the company of mates, fishing, swimming and exploring the bush tracks around the edge of town, pretending to be bush rangers and the policemen who chased them.

On a warm day during the first week of our school break, I had arranged to meet Billy Saunders, my best friend, up on the town-side slope of Ironbark Ridge, we had begun to build a lean-to in the trees to stand as our bushranger hideaway, from which we could crest the ridge and raid the old shack just on the other side.

There had been stories dating back years, of an old woman in the shack, a recluse who would grab children and make them her slaves. Some said she had been known to roast them alive. Ridiculous stories told around campfires at night, created to keep children away from the old decaying shack would be my guess, but Billy and I would raid the shack that day and create our own story.

As I waited for Billy, I decided to go over the ridge and take a sneak peek at the shack. As I approached, I noticed that it was indeed in need of repair. Still standing but a bit shaky.

It was then I noticed there was smoke coming from the single chimney, rising from the rear of dwelling. With trepidation and curiosity, I crept up onto the front porch and peered in through one of the windows.

Then a voice, from behind me, “what are you looking for young man?”

I spun around and saw that the door had opened and standing there was the grandmotherly figure of the ‘Woman of Ironbark Ridge’. She was dressed in the style of a bygone era and wearing an apron.

I stammered, “s...sorry lady, I thought the house was empty.”

“No, no, I still live here, been here forever. Would you like something to drink? We could sit out here on the porch for a while and talk; I don’t get many visitors.”

I looked her up and down and decided that she didn’t look scary at all, and I was thirsty from the climb up the ridge, so. I replied, “Yes please, I would like that.”

She returned from inside with two large glasses of home-made lemonade and we sat and talked for an hour or more, she told me her name was Elna Tolly and expounded on her life on ‘The Ridge’ with her now deceased husband as I told her of my family, school and my friends.

Billy didn’t make it up there that day, his mum had jobs she wanted him to do. So, after my interlude with the old lady, I made my way back down the ridge to make it home by dark.

The strangest thing happened that night. When I relayed my story of my meeting with Elna. My parents were surprised. They looked at each other for a moment, then my mother went to the bookcase and produced an old history book of the area. She searched through the pages and found the segment she was looking for. There was the story of Elna and Her husband James Tolly. The chapter told of the couple having been killed in a raid by bushrangers in 1895. There was a grainy picture of them sitting together on the porch where we had our lemonade. There was no mistake, it was Elna. She had been murdered 67 years ago.

Russell Perry 2026

Information:

[Writing Paranormal Fiction](#)



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SAFE JOURNEY (Prompt: Malice)

Flash Fiction by Susan Skowronski

Chloe just made it! She dived into the carriage just before the doors slid shut and the train moved gently away from the station. She grabbed a hand strap and swayed with the crowd.

The nightmare, the terrifying sound, the fear that gripped her, had robbed her of sleep until the early hours. She'd finally fallen into a deep sleep, only to be rudely awakened by the alarm. Seven o'clock already?

She was thankful now that she'd made everything ready last night with strong determination and a certain degree of malice. Time to fight back. She would be safe today. She sprayed perfume liberally, popped on her hat, picked up her weapon and rushed to the train station.

She looked around. The other passengers were backing away from her. Even the nice young man she'd been exchanging greetings with for a couple of weeks looked askance and turned away without the customary smile.

She laughed. She took off her hat, resplendent with flashing lights and a couple of plastic spinning rainbow windmills. 'Don't be afraid. I promise you I'm not dangerous,' she told them.

'What's going on?' the young man asked. 'You smell terrible and look a fright. Where did you get the plastic trumpet?'

'My vuvuzela? A souvenir from the World Cup... my brother gave it to me.'

'The odd smell and crazy hat?'

'Yes, I guess it looks a bit silly, and ... I don't usually splash peppermint all over myself. But I'm safe. It worked,' she said. 'I made it to the station without the terrifying sounds.'

'Sounds?'

'Furious wingbeats and snapping beaks! Those damn magpies are swooping again!'



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Watching the Cricket (Prompt: Exultation)

Flash Fiction by Susan Skowronski

Frank pulled out the annex, set up a couple of chairs and clamped the external antenna to the side of the van. They'd need it later to watch the Ashes test. It was a pleasant spot here by the lake, but he knew from past experience the reception wasn't great.

'Feel like a cuppa?' Linda called.

'Reckon we could wait till Bob and Judy arrive,' Frank suggested. 'They should be here fairly soon. We want to watch the cricket and it should start in less than an hour. He won't be able to pick it up with his set-up. I'm glad we brought that the external antenna.'

'It was very handy out at Mitchell, wasn't it?'

'Only TV in the whole camp that had reception on grand final night... Yes, very handy.'

'I'll prepare some cricket snacks,' Linda said cheerfully.

'And I'll set up the TV.'

Linda sliced some cheese, retrieved some pesto and tomatoes from the fridge and arranged some cracker biscuits on a tray. She heard Frank muttering, and realised he didn't sound happy.

'What's wrong, Frank? Not working?'

'Signal's terrible... can't watch anything.'

'Should we move? It might be better at the other end of the camp.'

'No. That won't help. We need to be higher up the hill, but I don't think the farmer would be too keen if we cut the fence and camp in his corn field.'



Image by [Klaus Hausmann](#) from [Pixabay](#)

'Probably not. That's it then, you'll just have to listen to it on the radio.'

'But I told Bob we'd be able to watch it ...'

'How much higher would you need to go?' Linda asked, seeing the look of despair on Frank's face.

'Wait a minute! We can make the antenna higher,' Frank declared. 'Of course! I've been meaning to shorten the lead for ages... always tripping over it. But just as well I didn't. Could you pass me the broom please? And the mop?'

With spanners, zip ties, duct tape and wooden handles, the antenna rose higher and higher. With a shout of exultation, Frank tuned to the cricket as Bob and Judy pulled in next door.

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Christmas Bells

A Poem by Susan Shoeronski



clusters of Christmas bells
vibrant red
trimmed with gold
standing tall
beside the track
bringing joy
to all who pass by
offering nectar to birds
bees and butterflies
a sweet gift from Nature
on a bright summer day

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Kununurra Moon

A Poem by Susan Skowronski

Poem inspired by the photo below,
moonlight in Kununurra



photo by Chantel Rollings

late night revellers stagger home
bush stone curlews cry
in the empty street
homeless man seeking shelter
in a dark secluded space
disturbs a flock of finches
they rise and wheel
settle in an ancient boab tree
standing tall
beneath the Southern Cross

the town settles down to sleep
as night breezes bring relief
from scorching summer days
the peace and stillness of the night
broken only by the sound of wingbeats
a frogmouth hunting in the moonlight

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Image by [Markus Spiske](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Night rain

A Poem by Mocco Wollet

The rain sings in the night,
whispers secrets in the dark.
Thoughts of sacred worlds
hang in the wet air like ghosts;
rain drops fall in steady rhythm,
shimmer darkly on the ground.

Quietude spreads over the land,
the sky a far-flung baldachin
of heavy, soaked cloud-patterns.

Such a night makes you think
of divine existence, barely glimpsed;
all early doubts losing their power.

Leaves hang sodden from branches,
their vague contours lost in the night.

The steady drip of falling drops
lulls man and creature to peaceful sleep,
praising the safety of shelter,
giving in to the all-dissolving rain,



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The loneliest place on earth

A Poem by Mocco Wollert

They say a big city
is the loneliest place on earth
but it wasn't as long as you were there.

The big city suited us
engulfed in a cocoon of noise and crowds
we had our own life.

When you left
I was still surrounded by people and noise
but I had become deaf.

I still walk the big city
the most lonesome, pathetic person
in the loneliest place.

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The secret

A Poem by Mocco Wollert

Sometimes I am part
of a life force I cannot see.
Submerged in opaque waters
I move like driftwood
in a lazy tide.
I feel I am growing,
become larger than myself.
Restlessly I wait,
I cannot grasp it,
cannot follow the command
I know is there.
I am in the light, the shadows,
the clouds, the rain
and earth pulse,
still unable to find my place.



Image by [Alan Frijns](#) from [Pixabay](#)

The plan

A Poem by Mocco Wollert

They had a plan
but plans have the habit
of not working out.
In the cave
the small fire still burned
but the hunt had failed.
Her hungry eyes searched
his face
he looked past her,
before he left again.

4 Haiku Verses

By Mocco Wollert

red balloon
oceans wait
turtle dies first

rain black stones
heels raise water sprouts
he never came

the scent of lemon
frees my fingers
from garlic attack

water dragon
flees from footsteps
tail left behind



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Image by [Monika](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Writing Haiku in English

Click the image below



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BEFORE...AND THEN...AFTER was awarded
Highly Commended
in the *Shortstories Unlimited Fresh Water Theme*
poetry competition 2025.

BEFORE...AND THEN...AFTER...

Poetry by Elizabeth g Authur

Moonshine white trunks plunge deep,
Gossamer clouds swim across an ephemeral sky.
Eucalyptus green plays in the shallows,
And the sun dazzles lily pads.

Ripples breathe across the mirror,
Smudging, distorting,
A pastel transformation,
As though Monet's brush strokes the surface.

Air thick like a cornflour soup,
Apricot sun lost in veils of mist.
Fractured birdsong gasps and stills,
Silence loud as an empty town.

Brooding tempest, heavy and charged,
Indigo palette, pushing down, rolling out.
Reeds slap a Bartok percussion,
And the atmosphere vents its frustration.

Bloated drops tumble,
A syncopated steel band,
Burst and shatter
Like explosive debris.

Sheer curtains charge across and through,
Conductors of blinding arcs.
The deluge drives on,
A rush hour confusion.

Splashing, colliding,
Rocks bounce and plummet,
Gullies to canyons,
The torrent, like a bore tide races on.

Fog hangs like bed sheets,
Steamy, dripping.
Bird racket erupts
Through radiant shafts of light.

Party bubbles chase and pop,
Sparkling chatter, secrets passed.
Waterfall ribbons slide and plunge,
A stream to a creek to a river.

Lemon scented infusion,
Pungent earth inhales.
Looking down, seeing up,
Deep in the morning calm...



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Image by [Jaesung An](#) from [Pixabay](#)

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“A WINDY DAY”

A Poem by Yo-Merry Todd-Birch

Blow wind blow-
Rustle the leaves-
Tousle my hair-
Have your say-
Windy day.

Blow wind blow.

Shake the branches-
Rock the waves-
Pounding the shore.

Blow wind blow.

Clouds scurry-
Dance, play.
I'll take my chances-
This windy day-
No hurry.

Blow wind blow.

Eye of the storm-
I meet your gaze.
Waves pound the shore-
I'm unfazed.

Blow wind blow.

Oh! how I love-
A windy day.

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“AS ONE”

A Poem by Yo-Merry Todd-Birch

From the saddle-
He did slide-
Lighten the load-
Of his trusty steed-
His faithful friend.
Side by side-
They strode-
Over the mountain-
Man, and horse—as one.

Astride the saddle-
Across the plains-
Many miles they ride-
Many years together.
Night descends-
Howls from afar.
Off with the saddle-
No need to tether-
His faithful friend.

Beside the river-
Under a willow-
Set up camp.
Light a fire-
Cook the fish-
Play a tune.
Off to sleep-
His trusty friend-
A pillow.

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Thrill Me

A Poem by Yo-Merry Todd-Birch



Image by [Stephen Cruickshank](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Twirl me, twirl me-
Spin me around.
Thrill me, thrill me-
Lift me, lift me-
Off the ground.
Hold me, hold me-
High in the air.
Oh!
Don't we make-
A delightful pair!!!

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“UNSUSTAINABLE”

A Poem by Yo-Merry Todd-Birch

No celebrations-
For Planet Earth.

Wrapping paper-
Tinsel-
Baubles-

Unsustainable.

Cardboard-
Plastic-

Unsustainable.

Wholesale slaughter-
Of animals.

Unsustainable.

Food-
By the tonne-

Unsustainable.

Waste-
By the tonne-

Unsustainable.

Fireworks-
By the tonne-

Unsustainable.

Human footprint.....

No celebrations-
For Planet Earth



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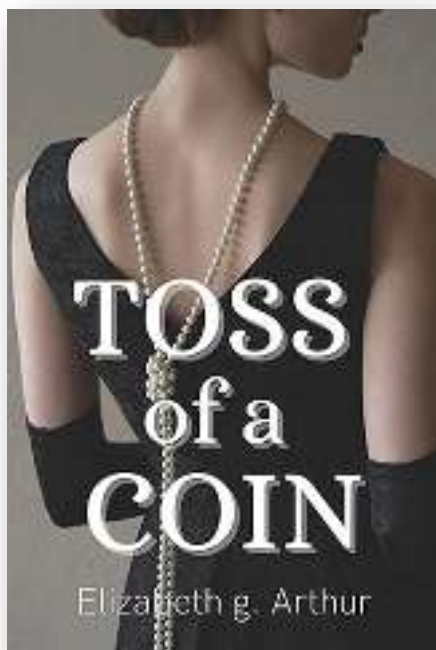
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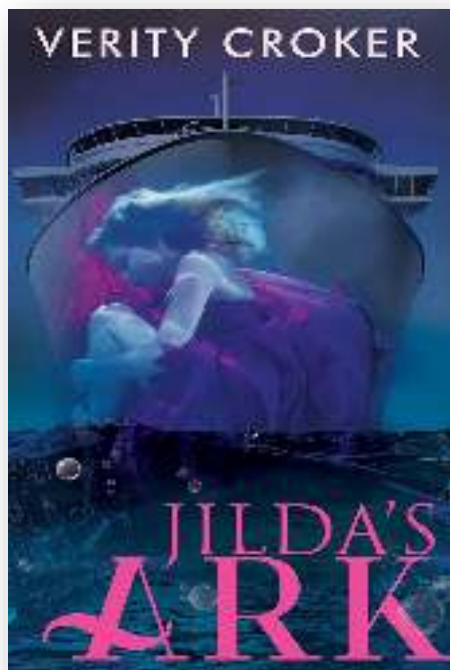
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Women's Fiction



Young Adult Fiction



Short Read - Time Travel



Memoir



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