



## Sex in Fiction

By

Michael McCollum



When last month's article on Male/Female relations was first published at Sci Fi – Arizona, it generated more email responses than any article had in a long time. At least one reader joined the fray by stating that since I had climbed so far out on the limb of political incorrectness, he would help by throwing me an anvil (ala, Wiley Coyote in the *Roadrunner* cartoons). He then went on to add another interesting fact to my storehouse of knowledge. Personally, I have no way to check the accuracy of his assertion, but it sounded good enough to pass on to the readership.

One of the things that brings more heat than light to the subject of inherent differences between the sexes is the fact that when you study people with high intelligence, there tend to be more males in the group than females. Some cruder persons use this fact to “prove” that men are smarter than women. To others, namely that portion of the population to whom any disagreement with their own particular orthodoxy is considered sexism, “them's fightin' words.” Actually, both groups are wrong. The difference is due to a minor statistical anomaly and has nothing whatever to do with the relative intelligence ratings of the two sexes.

As in most statistical phenomena, if you plot I.Q. level (something that is nearly impossible to measure) against the percentage of the population that possesses that I.Q., you find that you have a bell-shaped curve. That is, there are just a few geniuses, somewhat more “very smart people,” a great many “smart people,” a whole lot of “people of average intelligence,” some “dumb people,” and just a very few “really dumb people.” This is known in science as a natural, or Gaussian, distribution. Virtually all physical phenomena are distributed in bell-shaped curves.

Interestingly, if you plot the “intelligence” distribution of men separate from that of women, the two curves are not quite the same. The curve distribution of intelligence among males produces a curve that is broader, with a lower peak, than the curve for females. In other words, while the mean point of both curves is essentially the same, there tend to be more males at the extreme ends of the curves while females tend to predominate in the middle. Thus, (as my correspondent went on to explain), the slight preponderance of males in the “high intelligence” study groups is offset by an equal preponderance of males in the “low intelligence” group. Women predominate in the middle of the curve.

As usual, it is important to remember that these statistical probabilities have nothing to do with you as an individual. You are what you are and nothing can change

that. Some people will find these assertions threatening to their worldview. However, I find them to be merely one more interesting aspect of belonging to a species with two sexes.

Of course, not all comments regarding “Male/Female Relations” were kind. Using Deja News to search the Usenet Newsgroups, I found several snide comments regarding the announcements I had posted to alert people that the article was online. Apparently, there are those who’s thinking is so rigid on this subject that they react violently to the slightest mention of it.

Being obstinate (a major component of any writer’s personality), I will now chain that anvil to my back and climb even farther out on the wobbly limb of political incorrectness. The subject of this article is SEX, something *everyone* feels strongly about.

### Sex in Fiction

In the vast history of the Planet Earth, sex is probably the greatest invention of all time. And no, I’m not talking about the *act* of sex so much as the *fact* of sex. Virtually everything alive more complex than amoebae comes in two different varieties: male and female. The advantage of this dichotomy to living things is obvious. In a world of changing environments, the best way for a population of plants or animals to avoid extinction is to maintain their adaptability. By essentially mixing all of the genes in the gene pool randomly every generation, no matter what changes occur in the environment, a few individual members of a species will likely survive the change. And having survived, those individuals will breed and pass on their fortuitous combination of genetic material to their offspring. This is the process of natural selection, the driving force behind evolution.

One day, my daughter (the vegetarian communist) and I were having a discussion about the meaning of life. Attempting to get a rise out of her, I quoted an article I’d read in a science fiction magazine. The article postulated that human life span is artificially limited to the proverbial “three-score-and-ten.” We grow old and die, not because our protoplasmic building blocks wear out (the author thought a life span of a thousand years was theoretically possible), but rather because our particular model of protoplasmic machine is preprogrammed to shut down at 70 years of age. To support his claim, he cited the example of dogs. Their biochemistry is essentially the same as our own, yet canines show all of the symptoms of old age at 10 years, even before a human being reaches puberty. The reason for this is that organisms past child-rearing age have no evolutionary value and are therefore programmed to exit the scene and leave the resources to the young. “The meaning of life is much less important,” the author wrote, “once you realize that it’s all just a scheme by our chromosomes to maximize the chance that they will be reproduced in perpetuity!”

Whether life is in accordance with God’s plan, or merely the striving of a few billion different kinds of long-chain molecules, there can be no doubt that the desire to reproduce is a major part of our psyches. Since reproduction requires sexual intercourse, the instinct to reproduce results in a powerful sex drive in human beings; and indeed, in virtually all other living things. The sex drive is our second most powerful instinct,

subordinate only to our instinct for survival. This is the reason that we react so strongly to virtually any mention of the word “S ... E ... X”.

What has all of this biology to do with being a writer?

As we have discussed before in this series, professional writing is basically brainwashing for fun and profit! Good writing bypasses the reader’s cerebral cortex and operates directly on their central nervous system. Thus, the human race’s preoccupation with sex gives writers a very powerful weapon in their arsenal of brainwashing instruments. As is the case with any powerful weapon, however, one must exercise care when wielding it. Remember the story of the sorcerer’s apprentice who, having figured out how to activate the spell, could not turn it off again. Unless you wish to be awash in unexpected consequences, you will be extremely careful when writing any scene that contains sex.

There is a literature that is solely concerned with writing about sex. It is called “pornography.” The definition of pornography, as drafted by the U.S. Supreme Court, is “writing that appeals solely to the reader’s prurient interest, with no redeeming social value.” Or as Justice Potter Stewart explained, “I can’t define it, but I know it when I see it.” Now most writers don’t strive to be pornographers. For one thing, the pay scale is abysmally low. However, if we are to be effective in writing sex scenes, we must nevertheless strive to appeal to our readers’ “prurient” interest. For if we fail to arouse the readers of our sex scenes (in the clinical, medical sense), we have failed to evoke the emotion for which we were aiming. As in all aspects of writing, evoking a prurient response is a matter of careful technique and a certain degree of skill. It is the development of this skill that we will be concerned about for the rest of this article.

### Sex and Society

Once upon a time, there were certain things you couldn’t say in books or portray in the movies. Among these were certain words, all of which had to do with bodily functions or sexual acts of one sort or another. And the one thing that was absolutely taboo was any realistic portrayal of the human sex act.

Which, of course, didn’t mean that it didn’t get portrayed, both in print and on celluloid. It only meant that such portrayals were confined to certain distribution channels that were devoted to “adults only” content. Lord knows that there have been “dirty books” ever since the invention of writing, although that which is considered “dirty” varies from culture to culture. As an example, pornographic pictures and “stag movies” have been around since the invention of the still and motion picture cameras. One of the most popular subjects for such movies in predominately Catholic countries like Spain and Mexico is the portrayal of sex acts between priests and nuns. Yet in a secular/Protestant country like the United States, Catholic-based pornography is rare. Why? Because Protestants, whose ministers have not taken a vow of celibacy, have not been raised to view sex among the clergy as being either unusual or immoral. Thus, the sight of priests and nuns copulating doesn’t arouse their feeling of “dirtiness” to the same degree as for Catholics. And pornography that fails to arouse prurient interest is pornography that doesn’t sell.

Other cultures have different “interests.” Movies about rape tend to be more popular in Japan than in Europe or North America, a preoccupation that has given the

world such classics as *Rashomon*. The few German “dirty movies” I have seen left me with the impression that Germans like their porn with a touch of humor, although this could merely be due to my limited experience rather than a true cultural phenomenon.

This acknowledgement that different societies have their prurient interest aroused by different acts, leads us to the first rule for writers of sex scenes:

**Rule 1: If you are going to write a “dirty” scene, first you need to figure out what it is that your readers consider to be “dirty.”**

Satisfying the requirements of Rule 1 may not be as easy as it appears. That is because taboos change over time and differ between societies. When I was growing up, the most scandalous book of all was *Peyton Place*. Recently, I had an opportunity to view the movie they made from the book amid considerable controversy. My only reaction was to shake my head in wonder at how tame it seemed. Our mores have changed dramatically in the last thirty years, and not necessarily for the better. *Peyton Place* can now be shown on Sunday mornings without editing and the television station will not receive a single call of protest. The things that appear on primetime network television today are more salacious by far than Grace Metalious’s epic of sin in a small town.

Nor is this variability in what causes us to feel salacious strictly a generational phenomenon. It also varies with geography. What one society considers “dirty” may be the accepted practice of another. In the United States, we tend to view the entire subject of sex as somehow salacious; an attitude handed down to us by our Puritan ancestors. (It should be noted that the Puritans preached a good game, but that a study of their marriage and birth records indicates that they had as many “6 month” births as any other society.) There were (and are) cultures where sex was considered little more than healthy exercise (various Polynesian societies before the incursion of Europeans, and the ancient Etruscans, for example).

Since the sex drive is so strong in human beings, differences in attitude can lead to serious problems. There is the case of Salman Rushdie, who so insulted Moslems with his novel *The Satanic Verses* that he has been hiding out from Iranian hit squads for the past 20 years. His sin? He described a religion that bore a striking resemblance to Islam and made sexual references about the Prophet Mohammed.

The problem of cultural clashes over sexuality is even better illustrated by the experience of Ferdinand Magellan when his half-starved crew landed in the Philippines in 1521. The Spaniards, having been at sea for more than 2 years, were amazed and delighted to discover that the Philippine women and girls not only ran around naked, but they thought nothing of going into the jungle for a little quick exercise in exchange for a hand mirror or a bit of iron. In fact, the sex-for-iron trade got to be so prevalent that Magellan was afraid his ships would fall apart because the crews extracted so many nails from their hulls for use as “trade goods.”

The Philippine men were a hospitable lot and considered that sharing their women with the visitors was a perfectly normal thing for a host to do. However, after a few weeks, when the Spaniards’ desires showed no signs of slaking (it *had* been two years, after all), the Philippine men considered that Magellan’s crew was taking advantage of their hospitality. The resulting friction eventually ended in Magellan and a great many of

his officers and men getting killed. Years later, when one of the few survivors of the first circumnavigation of the planet was asked what went wrong, he said, "It was the piggish way we treated the women!"

Are there then no universal taboos or common agreement on what is "dirty?"

The one taboo that comes closest to being universal is that against incest, especially when it occurs between a parent and offspring, or two siblings. There is a very strong biological reason for this "universal" taboo. By having sex with your relatives, you vastly increase the probability that a recessive chromosome will be doubled up in any resulting child. Since recessive chromosomes are responsible for most serious genetic disorders like hemophilia and certain types of insanity, such couplings are rigorously repressed. In fact, for centuries there have been snickering references to the effect that inbreeding has had on the various royal households of Europe.

The incest taboo is so strong in the English-speaking world that the worst thing you can call someone is a "motherfucker." Not only does it accuse the victim of having broken the most serious of all taboos; it also has the effect of casting aspersions on his mother. In the United States, we refer to this as a "double whammy!" And while this particular pejorative term has lost much of its sting because a segment of the population uses it as an emphatic form of punctuation, there was a time when you could lose a few teeth for uttering that particular insult in a bar.

The insult is so strong, in fact, that we have truncated the phrase and have transmuted "mother" (often pronounced "mu'tha") into a curse word. What will future generations, who may not recognize a truncated phrase when they see one, think of a society where "mother" was an obscenity?

Nor is English unique in this respect. In Russian, the phrase most likely to get you punched out is "Yob' tvoyu mat'!" which means essentially the same thing. Note: Not to digress, but if you are studying Russian, there is a scholarly little work titled *The Dictionary of Russian Obscenities* by D. A. Drummond and G. Perkins, Scythian Books, Oakland, 1987. Since for most of the Soviet era, Russians didn't admit to having any obscenities, and certainly never wrote them down, we have found that presenting a copy to Russian friends provides them with a hilarious several hours on the long flight back to Moscow. Conversely, one of my translators told me that she had studied a Russian book titled *Dirty English*.

If you think incest is one of the human race's universal taboos, however, you are wrong. In ancient Egypt, for instance, a pharaoh was often the son of a prince and princess who were also brother and sister. If you consider the reasoning behind the Egyptian custom of royal incest, you will have to agree that it was a logical method for keeping the royal blood pure. Logical, but wrong. Pre-twentieth century Eskimos, I believe, also practiced incest without stigma. (My apologies to the Eskimos if this isn't true.)

Nor is incest our only generalized taboo. There are strong societal strictures aimed at protecting children too young to understand the implications of the sex act. There is a common slang term in the United States for a girl younger than the age of consent. They are referred to generically as "jail bait." If an adult has sex with a 14-year-old, for instance, he is charged with child molesting or statutory rape. The fact that she was willing has no bearing on the case.

Then, of course, there are the garden-variety taboos that a society enforces to greater or lesser degrees. “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” is the sixth of Moses’ Ten Commandments, although laws still on the books regarding adultery are almost never enforced. To enforce them rigorously would mean a new and massive round of prison construction.

Of course, there are places on this Earth where adultery is not regarded so lightly. In many Moslem countries, the penalty for adultery is public beheading or stoning. Whether you think the U.S. or Saudi Arabian approach is more correct is not the point here. The most enduring customs have some benefit to the society that holds them, and only a fool will denigrate another person’s culture without first understanding those reasons.

So, if you want to make a living as a writer of sex scenes, you would do well to study your target audience. Making a mistake can be costly in terms of book sales. There was a time fifty years ago when the custom was for groups of men to gather in their private clubs or lodges, and to occasionally view stag movies at functions known as “smokers” (another archaic custom). The people who arranged these showings quickly learned to avoid movies with teenage girls in them. Their aversion did not stem from the fact that movies with underage girls were illegal — all stag films were illegal. No, they avoided young girls as subjects because it would remind the lodge members of their own daughters, and the negative audience reaction would lose the distributor a paying customer.

You would do well to remember this when you start to write your sex scenes. Does your story really require that you show the heroine in bed with her own son? If not, why disgust a large plurality of your readers for no good reason? At the least, they will probably avoid buying your next book. At the most, you may have to join Salman Rushdie in hiding.

## **Rule 2: Objectively Speaking, Sex Is Both Undignified and Boring**

Consider if you will, the effect observing the human sex act would have on a visiting alien from Alpha Centauri. The visiting bug-eyed-monster would probably scream the equivalent of “Yuck!” and leave the room at high speed.

Observed objectively, none of the positions so lovingly detailed in the *Kama Sutra* is even the slightest bit dignified for the parties involved. Half the positions involve contortions that are liable to put a person’s back out, and the other half involve the woman doing things with her legs that can’t possibly be comfortable. Perhaps you and your wife (or husband) have made a videotape of yourselves making love. How many times have you watched the tape? I suspect not many. Seeing yourself performing in a porn tape is very demeaning, and probably not a little disheartening.

What this means to authors is that you can’t merely describe the physical act of sex when you write a sex scene. It isn’t that such an approach would be considered socially unacceptable, or too dirty, or somehow beyond the pale. It’s because such descriptions invariably become boring if pursued at any great length!

Sex, boring? How can that be?

Think about it. The mechanical details involving the sex act are fairly limited in their range. There are, after all, only so many ways people have contrived to rub mucous

membranes together! And despite the famous Hindu catalog noted above, there really are only so many different ways to *do it*!

As previously discussed, pornography is a literature (and a cinematic discipline) that concerns itself solely with the mechanical aspects of the act of sex. Your typical pornographic book or movie is episodic in nature, with the protagonists engaged in a series of graphically described or filmed couplings, in groups of two, three, or more. The episodes of sex typically make up more than ninety percent of content of these “artistic” works, and after a fairly short period of time, people tend to lose interest. Why? Because the “actors” are basically doing the same thing over, and over, and OVER again.

Thirty three years ago, I announced to my coworkers at Pratt & Whitney’s Florida Research and Development Center that I was marrying a girl from home and that I would be moving back to Arizona. As was the custom at the time, several of my male coworkers arranged a bachelor party at which much beer was guzzled and a series of graphic films were shown. After about the third such movie, I found that I was losing all prurient interest in the festivities. By the time a little movie titled “The Lady and the Great Dane,” was shown, my entire reaction was a clinical, “Isn’t that interesting? I didn’t know you could do THAT!”

So how did I go from anticipation of an evening of prurient entertainment to the feeling that I was watching open-heart surgery? The films shown that night delivered excessive repetition of the purely physical while making no attempt to engage the viewers’ higher mental powers. In other words, there was way too much “in-and-out” and not nearly enough memorable dialogue! (Although, in fairness, since the films were silent 8-mm reels, the directors lacked the technology to deliver dialogue.)

What this sordid tale means to the professional writer is that when you choose to concentrate on the physical act of sex rather than the mental act of love, you have turned yourself into a pornographer. And pornographers rank even lower in status than science fiction writers. When setting out to write a sex scene, remember that seduction is in a person’s mind, not their genitalia.

### **Rule 3: If the Plot Requires a Sex Scene, Then Write a Sex Scene; But Make It Appropriate To Your Audience**

One of the most famous teams of romance novelists consists of two suburban housewives who specialize in a form of literature known as “bodice rippers.” A bodice ripper is a romance novel with sex in it, so named because the hero usually rips off the heroine’s clothes and rapes her by about the third chapter, and certainly no later than Page 30. Even though he has “had his way with her” (as our ancestors so delicately put it), the heroine falls madly in love with the brute anyway, and he earns her love by saving her from a “fate worse than death” (another archaic concept) at the hands of the villain later in the book.

These two nice ladies have a simple formula for writing their books. They write the whole book, minus the steamy parts; then get plastered on wine in order to lower their inhibitions, and finish all of the graphic stuff in one sitting. The formula must work because they are vastly more popular than other writers, for example, me.

Another best selling author who doesn’t shy away from sex is Jean M. Auel, who wrote *Clan of the Cave Bear* and *Valley of the Horses*. Now, personally, I haven’t read

either book because they aren't my cup of tea. However, I did find them lying on my headboard where my wife had left them, and managed to scan through to find the "interesting" parts. I find Jean Auel's descriptions to be very clinical and much closer to the usual male outlook on the subject than the female.

You may find reading, writing, and talking about sex to merely be part of life's rich tapestry. Or, you may find that the very mention of the word causes you to stutter and turn a bright shade of crimson. Whichever is the case, as a professional writer, you owe it to your readers to deliver on the goods they have been promised. If your book requires you to write a graphic sex scene, then by all means do so. If you have to get liquored up to approach the subject, then that is what you will have to do.

However, make sure that your scene is absolutely germane to the plot and that your approach will not offend your readers. For that which is appropriate in a crimson-covered book purchased off the shelves of your local adult bookstore, is wholly inappropriate for a novel that will be serialized in *The Reader's Digest*.

After his death in 1988, Robert Heinlein, my favorite science fiction writer, published a book of letters titled *Grumbles From The Grave*. This volume consisted of the correspondence he had collected in 40 years of writing. A large portion of the book was devoted to a fights he had with his editors all through the 1950s.

At that time, the primary market for hardback books in science fiction was school libraries. Since any mention of sex, no matter how indirect, was inappropriate for a school library, Heinlein's editor blue-penciled everything that even hinted at the taboo topic. This irritated him greatly, and is undoubtedly one of the driving reasons behind his writing *Stranger in a Strange Land* late in the decade. The situation was so absurd that when he turned in *Red Planet*, an adventure about a boy on Mars and his animated basketball-shaped Martian pet named Willis, the editor removed the fact that Willis is female. Recently, following Heinlein's death, the *unexpurgated* version of *Red Planet* has hit the shelves. Anyone who buys that book expecting to read racy passages is doomed to severe disappointment.

By this time you are undoubtedly asking, "so what's appropriate for my kind of writing?" A good question. Since I don't know what it is that you write, I can't really provide the answer. Here are a few personal guidelines I have developed over the years. You, of course, will have to decide what's right for yourself:

### Children's Books

Unless you would like to have the impact of *Heather Has Two Mommies*, you should avoid any mention of sex at all. Despite the fact that she irritated him, Heinlein's editor was correct. The elementary school library is no place for torrid scenes. If you are inclined to react to this proscription by shouting slogans about the evils of censorship, then I would gently suggest that you examine your own soul.

### Books For Teenagers

Since sex is never far from the mind of anyone who is going through puberty, some limited sexual content is appropriate for teenagers. There is a vast sub-genre of books read by teenage girls that deals with the courtship ritual; i.e., dating. Kissing is not



only allowed, it's required! But graphic descriptions of sexual couplings should be avoided. Circumlocutions are the rule.

### Science Fiction Novels

Science fiction is historically a literature for adolescent boys. As such, any mention of sex was long avoided, mainly because it would tend to make the readership stammer in embarrassment. There still isn't as much sex in science fiction as in other forms of literature, although there is a branch that deals with mature themes for mature audiences. Figure out the age group of your readers and let your conscience be your guide!

### Romance Novels

Romance novels are wholly based on sex, or at least, courtship. If you go to the local bookstore, you will notice that the amount of sex in a romance novel is apparent by the state of undress of the hero and heroine on the cover. If the heroine is in a hoop skirted civil war dress complete with bustle and neck high buttons, there will be a lot of talk about love, desire, and veiled references to the sex act — but nothing very graphic. If, on the other hand, the hero and heroine are naked and entwined in a strategically draped sheet on the cover, steam is liable to pour out when you open the book.

Since romance novels are read overwhelmingly by women, it's important that any sex scenes be written with a female perspective in mind. Generally, women view sex more emotionally and cerebrally than men. Graphic medical-style descriptions should be kept to a minimum.

### Mainstream Novels

The mainstream novel involves having two to six stories that are woven together in alternate chapters until somewhere near the middle of the book, they come together. It isn't a mainstream novel if there aren't sex scenes every few chapters. After all, people buy mainstream novels to get the racy parts. As a writer, you shouldn't disappoint them.

### Pornographic Novels

If you are trying to write a pornographic novel, tie down the safety valve and let your imagination descend into the depths of your subconscious. Remember, what you are writing will tend to get boring with repetition, which means that you will have to work at keeping the reader's interest by maximizing the variety of sex in your book. Remember also: Two is not necessarily company, and three is definitely not a crowd. Make the sex scenes long and the transitions short. Your customers aren't looking for literature. They're looking for stimulation.

**Rule 4: Never Treat Sex As Trivial; Make It A Transforming Moment**

There is an attitude toward sex in Hollywood movies that tends to trivialize it. The hero meets a beautiful woman, they fall into bed together, and then part the next morning with neither of them changed by the experience. We have seen this image so often that we have almost come to believe it.

In a recent survey of sexual attitudes in the American public, researchers discovered that we are a much less sexually active society than people believe. Husbands and wives are largely faithful to one another, and of those who aren't, the number hopping from bed to bed is much less than people have been led to expect by a sensation-seeking news media.

The fact that we have bought into the myth of risk-free, cost-free sexual intercourse is a triumph of advertising over experience. We all know men or women who can't keep their pants zipped. Are their lives better for this fact, or worse? How many high level executives have ruined their marriages and careers because they couldn't control their libidos? How much did Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric, pay in alimony after the fact that he had a "nooner" with a reporter from a business magazine became public knowledge? A billion dollars? Was Bill Clinton's presidency helped or hurt by the Monica Lewinsky scandal? Wouldn't it have been better if he'd just kept his zipper in the "up" position?

Nor is losing your job the only cost of treating sex too lightly. There is always the danger of offspring. The last estimate I heard was that it costs \$250,000 to raise a child until they leave home. Frankly, that seems a little low to me, someone whose children are more or less out of the nest.

Since sex is so important in our lives, authors need to treat the subject with respect. One good rule is that whenever you find it necessary to the plot to include a sex scene, that you use the occasion to build a "transforming moment" into your story. In other words, the parties should come out of the act changed from the way they were when they went into it. Your hero may be a burly, extroverted, beefcake hunk of a man, who is bedding the heroine merely to ratchet up his score, but after doing so, he should discover that he has fallen in love at last — and that she will have nothing to do with him! The heroine may seek comfort in a stranger's bed as a means of punishing her wayward husband, but when she leaves that bed; she should be wracked with remorse, or have her love for her husband renewed, or even fall in love with the stranger. The act of sex has changed the characters forever, and in a way that advances your plot.

Sex is serious business in the real world. It should be serious business in literature, too. As an author, you have a duty to respect the second most powerful of all human instincts. To not do so cheapens your craft and yourself.

In the last two decades, a bumper sticker has adorned numerous automobiles in the United States: "Remember when sex was dirty, and the air was clean?" I've got news for you. Sex is still dirty, if we choose to make it so. A line of dialogue from one of those Hard-R movies they play on *Showtime* late at night says it all. One character asks, "Is sex supposed to be dirty?" Another responds, "It is if you do it right."

It is also inspiring, healthful, and the most caring thing two loving people can do together, if we so choose.

It is up to us, the wielders of the pen to decide how we will proceed. For, despite the opinions of generations of ladies' men, the pen is still mightier than the "sword." May it always be so!

The End

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### **3. Antares Dawn - US\$5.00**

When the super giant star Antares exploded in 2512, the human colony on Alta found their pathway to the stars gone, isolating them from the rest of human space for more than a century. Then one day, a powerful warship materialized in the system without warning. Alarmed by the sudden appearance of such a behemoth, the commanders of the Altan Space Navy dispatched one of their most powerful ships to investigate. What ASNS Discovery finds when they finally catch the intruder is a battered hulk manned by a dead crew.

That is disturbing news for the Altans. For the dead battleship could easily have defeated the whole of the Altan navy. If it could find Alta, then so could whomever it was that beat it. Something must be done...

### **4. Antares Passage - US\$5.00**

After more than a century of isolation, the paths between stars are again open and the people of Alta in contact with their sister colony on Sandar. The opening of the foldlines has not been the unmixed blessing the Altans had supposed, however.

For the reestablishment of interstellar travel has brought with it news of the Ryall, an alien race whose goal is the extermination of humanity. If they are to avoid defeat at the hands of the aliens, Alta must seek out the military might of Earth. However, to reach Earth requires them to dive into the heart of a supernova.

### **5. Antares Victory – First Time in Print – US\$7.00**

After a century of warfare, humanity finally discovered the Achilles heel of the Ryall, their xenophobic reptilian foe. Spica – Alpha Virginis – is the key star system in enemy space. It is the hub through which all Ryall starships must pass, and if humanity can only capture and hold it, they will strangle the Ryall war machine and end their threat to humankind forever.

It all seemed so simple in the computer simulations: Advance by stealth, attack without warning, strike swiftly with overwhelming power. Unfortunately, conquering the Ryall proves the easy part. With the key to victory in hand, Richard and Bethany Drake discover that they must also conquer human nature if they are to bring down the alien foe ...

### **6. Thunderstrike! - US\$6.00**

The new comet found near Jupiter was an incredible treasure trove of water ice and rock. Immediately, the water-starved Luna Republic and the Sierra Corporation, a leader in asteroid mining, were squabbling over rights to the new resource. However, all thoughts of profit and fame were abandoned when a scientific expedition discovered that the comet's trajectory placed it on a collision course with Earth!

As scientists struggled to find a way to alter the comet's course, world leaders tried desperately to restrain mass panic, and two lovers quarreled over the direction the comet was to take, all Earth waited to see if humanity had any future at all...

## 7. The Clouds of Saturn - US\$5.00

When the sun flared out of control and boiled Earth's oceans, humanity took refuge in a place that few would have predicted. In the greatest migration in history, the entire human race took up residence among the towering clouds and deep clear-air canyons of Saturn's upper atmosphere. Having survived the traitor star, they returned to the all-too-human tradition of internecine strife. The new city-states of Saturn began to resemble those of ancient Greece, with one group of cities taking on the role of militaristic Sparta...

## 8. The Sails of Tau Ceti – US\$5.00

*Starhopper* was humanity's first interstellar probe. It was designed to search for intelligent life beyond the solar system. Before it could be launched, however, intelligent life found Earth. The discovery of an alien light sail inbound at the edge of the solar system generated considerable excitement in scientific circles. With the interstellar probe nearing completion, it gave scientists the opportunity to launch an expedition to meet the aliens while they were still in space. The second surprise came when *Starhopper's* crew boarded the alien craft. They found beings that, despite their alien physiques, were surprisingly compatible with humans. That two species so similar could have evolved a mere twelve light years from one another seemed too coincidental to be true.

One human being soon discovered that coincidence had nothing to do with it...

## 9. Gibraltar Earth – First Time in Print — \$6.00

It is the 24th Century and humanity is just gaining a toehold out among the stars. Stellar Survey Starship *Magellan* is exploring the New Eden system when they encounter two alien spacecraft. When the encounter is over, the score is one human scout ship and one alien aggressor destroyed. In exploring the wreck of the second alien ship, spacers discover a survivor with a fantastic story.

The alien comes from a million-star Galactic Empire ruled over by a mysterious race known as the Broa. These overlords are the masters of this region of the galaxy and they allow no competitors. This news presents Earth's rulers with a problem. As yet, the Broa are ignorant of humanity's existence. Does the human race retreat to its one small world, quaking in fear that the Broa will eventually discover Earth? Or do they take a more aggressive approach?

Whatever they do, they must do it quickly! Time is running out for the human race...

## 10. Gibraltar Sun – First Time in Print — \$7.00

The expedition to the Crab Nebula has returned to Earth and the news is not good. Out among the stars, a million systems have fallen under Broan domination, the fate awaiting Earth should the Broa ever learn of its existence. The problem would seem to allow but three responses: submit meekly to slavery, fight and risk extermination, or hide and pray the Broa remain ignorant of humankind for at least a few more generations. Are the hairless apes of Sol III finally faced with a problem for which there is no acceptable solution?

While politicians argue, Mark Rykand and Lisa Arden risk everything to spy on the all-powerful enemy that is beginning to wonder at the appearance of mysterious bipeds in their midst...

### **11. Gridlock and Other Stories - US\$5.00**

Where would you visit if you invented a time machine, but could not steer it? What if you went out for a six-pack of beer and never came back? If you think nuclear power is dangerous, you should try black holes as an energy source — or even scarier, solar energy! Visit the many worlds of Michael McCollum. I guarantee that you will be surprised!

## Non-Fiction Books

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### **12. The Art of Writing, Volume I - US\$10.00**

Have you missed any of the articles in the Art of Writing Series? No problem. The first sixteen articles (October, 1996-December, 1997) have been collected into a book-length work of more than 72,000 words. Now you can learn about character, conflict, plot, pacing, dialogue, and the business of writing, all in one document.

### **13. The Art of Writing, Volume II - US\$10.00**

This collection covers the Art of Writing articles published during 1998. The book is 62,000 words in length and builds on the foundation of knowledge provided by Volume I of this popular series.

### **14. The Art of Science Fiction, Volume I - US\$10.00**

Have you missed any of the articles in the Art of Science Fiction Series? No problem. The first sixteen articles (October, 1996-December, 1997) have been collected into a book-length work of more than 70,000 words. Learn about science fiction techniques and technologies, including starships, time machines, and rocket propulsion. Tour the Solar System and learn astronomy from the science fiction writer's viewpoint. We don't care where the stars appear in the terrestrial sky. We want to know their true positions in space. If you are planning to write an interstellar romance, brushing up on your astronomy may be just what you need.

### **15. The Art of Science Fiction, Volume II - US\$10.00**

This collection covers the *Art of Science Fiction* articles published during 1998. The book is 67,000 words in length and builds on the foundation of knowledge provided by Volume I of this popular series.

## **16. The Astrogator's Handbook – Expanded Edition and Deluxe Editions**

The Astrogator's Handbook has been very popular on Sci Fi – Arizona. The handbook has star maps that show science fiction writers where the stars are located in space rather than where they are located in Earth's sky. Because of the popularity, we are expanding the handbook to show nine times as much space and more than ten times as many stars. The expanded handbook includes the positions of 3500 stars as viewed from Polaris on 63 maps. This handbook is a useful resource for every science fiction writer and will appeal to anyone with an interest in astronomy.