



# THE PERFECT MATCH

AND OTHER  
SMALL BITES STORIES

AN  
INDIES UNITED PUBLISHING HOUSE  
MULTI-AUTHOR ANTHOLOGY

THE PERFECT MATCH  
AND OTHER SMALL BITES STORIES

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First Edition published May 2025  
by Indies United Publishing House, LLC

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Edited by Jennie Rosenblum

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ISBN: 978-1-64456-820-0 [Hardcover]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-821-7 [Paperback]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-822-4 [Kindle]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-823-1 [ePub]

Library of Congress Control Number: 2025935896



INDIES UNITED PUBLISHING HOUSE, LLC

P.O. BOX 3071

QUINCY, IL 62305-3071

[www.indiesunited.net](http://www.indiesunited.net)

*Dedicated to every person who ever took a chance on an  
unknown author.*

*Thank you.*

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*Small Bites  
Grand Prize  
Winner*

*2025*

# The Perfect Match



Robert Plant

## Science Fiction

Alex was being followed. In fact, everywhere he went and everything he did was tracked down to the minute detail. The coffee he purchased in the morning sent data to several companies that utilize the information to push advertisements and help market their products. The same purchase that fueled his day also fueled these companies with large amounts of data at their disposal. That was how it worked, but it really only scratched the surface.

Now, they had access to his microphone. They could hear his conversations—who he talked to and about what topics. Nothing was off limits. His device worked for him, but it also worked against him by taking away his privacy. They even knew how many times a day he went to the bathroom. They knew what books he read, the movies he watched every Sunday night, and of course, the porn he watched on his phone before bed. Alex believed incognito mode protected him there, but these companies had ways around that.

They also knew Alex had moved to a new city in a new state. He needed a change of pace after striking out with countless women and feeling down on his luck. He thought this change would open up new doors for him. He moved to a college town



where there were a ton of possibilities to meet women. Alex hadn't gone to college and worked in retail sales. It wasn't that he wasn't smart enough; he didn't have the drive. He wasn't motivated by money or social status. All he wanted was to meet a nice girl, date her for a while to ensure she was the right fit, ask her to marry him, and then have a dozen kids. In the end, all he wanted was the girl. Someone to love him and hold him like his mother used to when he was a child.

He sat at the bar with his right leg shaking in a nervous twitch, sipping on his Jack and Coke. The flow of customers was steady considering it was a Friday night in a college town. There were patrons all around him, laughing and having a great time, but he sat alone waiting for his friend to join him. He pulled out his phone out of boredom with no one to talk to. He opened his dating app, Konnection, to check his messages, but the little red bubble popped up with only one message. It was from the admin of the app encouraging him to update some information on his profile. He laid the phone on the bar, but before he did, his new device took note of a few things.

First, it knew his location and even marked what stool he sat on at the bar. It used the microphone to record his drink order, and the front camera took note of the shirt he wore and how he styled his hair for the evening.

A young lady with honey hair that curled down past her shoulders walked into the bar in a hurry. She looked rushed, like she wanted to get a drink in before heading home to study for an exam. Alex blushed as she took the seat next to him while she fumbled through her oversized purse for her wallet. Unfortunately, as soon as she looked up to see him staring back at her, she moved over a few seats to keep her distance from him. She was way out of his league, and he drowned himself in his whiskey once he realized he didn't have a shot.

Maybe it was the little bit of acne he had growing on his right

cheek. Maybe she could sense he didn't have any confidence in himself—most women could smell that on a man. Or maybe his wide-framed glasses and hunched posture turned her off. He had no way of knowing, and he wasn't about to ask her.

“Dude!” Alex's friend Noah screamed from across the bar. He walked through the crowd and slapped Alex on the shoulder. “What's goin' on, my man?”

“Not much.”

Noah loosened the scarf around his neck and wiped the snow off his shoulders. He brushed his hands through his dark hair in James Dean fashion. He had the looks of James Dean, and his confidence came off like Sinatra, especially with his dark hair pulled back. Regardless, the ladies loved it, and they loved him. The way he conducted himself and the air of confidence he brought into a room every time he walked through the door.

“Did I just see you strike out? *Again?*” Noah motioned to the bartender. “I'll have a rum and Coke.”

“No, you jackass. I didn't even say anything to her.”

“Well, I saw her change seats and look at you like you're the Grim Reaper. We gotta get you laid tonight.”

Alex sipped his drink without saying anything, either out of embarrassment or frustration. Maybe both.

“I mean, look at all these beautiful women around here.” Noah waved his arms around, gesturing to several different groups of women, some of whom took notice. There was that air of confidence fogging up the room. “Aren't you glad you finally decided to move out here with your best bud?”

Alex nodded his head in agreement and sipped his drink.

The woman who had moved a few seats down gazed over at Noah and smiled. She sipped her rose-colored wine and turned toward the door, putting her back toward him.

“Watch this,” Noah whispered into Alex's ear as he stood up from his stool.

Alex could hear mumbles of them talking under the tone of the crowd in the bar, but he couldn't make out exactly what they were saying. Within a minute, Noah had his arm around her, and they were laughing while they clinked their drinks together. It was like they had been friends for years. Alex couldn't understand how Noah could turn a complete stranger into someone who adored him after barely even knowing them. He did it all the time, and it drove Alex crazy.

He decided to ignore them and watch the baseball game on the television directly in front of him. The batter on the screen struck out, and Alex knew how he felt.

Noah came back after a few minutes and put his arm around Alex. "Alright, man. This is your chance. My new friend Mary over there has a friend for you. Don't fuck this up."

Alex glanced over and saw a somewhat pretty woman with natural features sitting next to the girl who had dissed him earlier and was now giving Noah "fuck me" eyes. This new girl looked like someone on his level, and he thought he might actually have a chance.

They all hung out, taking shots and telling stories, which mostly came from Noah. He could hold the attention of a room no matter the circumstances, and both girls seemed to eat it up. Alex's awkwardness got the best of him, and he had a hard time connecting with Mary's friend Amber.

Every movie Alex brought up, she hated. He loved meat; she was a vegan. He liked to play the popular, yet very nerdy, board game Dragons and Dwarves, but she hadn't even heard of the game. While Noah and Mary had their hands all over each other giggling every other second, Alex and Amber looked like two sore thumbs sitting across from each other.

By the end of the night, Noah went home with Mary, and Alex went home alone. Amber was very sweet and let him down easy, but it still burned at him that he couldn't make a connection with

her.

Alex opened his phone in bed later that night, hoping to see a message in his Konnection app, but it read, “No New Messages.” He closed his phone and looked up at the ceiling, feeling the room spin from the alcohol. His eyes fluttered closed as he went off to dream about his future life with a beautiful wife and kids running around their house. Despite being alone that night, he slept with a smile—although, he wasn’t *really* alone. His phone was always with him. Always watching.



Indies United Publishing House  
Indies United Publishing House

2nd  
Place  
Small Bites  
Short Story Contest  
2025

# Perennial Guardians



Scott Meehan

## Science Fiction | Historical Fiction

*Commander Eliot Henson and his crew are sent back in time to 1863 during the Civil War. Their mission? To make sure that history takes place the way it happened.*

*In 2030, Space Command Intelligence Officer Major Asha Hawkins, discovers that an alien entity entered the Civil War time period to alter history. By keeping General Stonewall Jackson alive at Chancellorsville, Confederate Army General Robert E. Lee wins a tremendous victory at Gettysburg. The results lead to the Southern States triumph, continued slavery, and a complete secession from what we know as the United States.*

*This change in history, unless aligned correctly by Henson and his team, will lead to cataclysmic results for the split nation going into the 20th Century...one that the entire country will not survive.*

***Commander's log, 2030 AD (and/or) April 30, 1863***

**– Commander's Log**

**April 30, 1863 / 2030 AD**

After navigating the quantum zone—a non-relativistic continuum connecting myriad worlds—we have successfully touched down in the rolling green hills of western Maryland. This landscape, bathed in the golden hues of spring, stands in stark

contrast to the metallic confines of our ship, yet it is here, amidst the tranquil pastures, that our critical mission begins.

Utilizing the light-speed breakaway factor, we pierced the fabric of time itself, emerging in the 19th century on a pivotal day in April 1863. Space Command, mere hours ago in 2030 AD, briefed us on a perturbation in the logical framework of history. An anomaly had been detected—an unknown force tampering with the timeline. Our objective: correct this interference and ensure the course of American history remains unaltered, safeguarding the future of our nation and, by extension, the world.

Failure is not an option. The ripple effect of a single altered event could cascade into a catastrophic divergence, plunging humanity into an abyss of chaos and uncertainty. We carry the weight of centuries on our shoulders, but with our combined expertise, I am confident in our ability to succeed.

Accompanying me on this high-stakes journey are three exceptional individuals, each chosen for their unique skills and unwavering resolve. Chief Medical Officer Dr. Dan Kelley, whose medical prowess is rivaled only by his quick thinking under pressure, will ensure our health and resilience. Major Asha Hawkins, my first officer, is a trailblazer and the first female Green Beret. She brings unparalleled tactical acumen and unyielding determination. Lastly, our Technical Science Officer, the android Cyrix—C01Y2R1I0X—possesses an analytical mind and adaptability that transcends human limitations. Her synthetic intuition and rapid processing are invaluable assets in this temporal odyssey.

Together, we form an unbreakable unit, each well-versed in the others' strengths and weaknesses. We are not merely a crew; we are a family bound by a singular mission: to protect the integrity of history and ensure that the future remains bright.

As the sun dips below the horizon, casting long shadows over these verdant hills, we ready ourselves for the challenges ahead.

History awaits, and we are its guardians.

—EH

*Commander's log, 2030 AD (and/or) May 2, 1863*

We spent two days on the ground preparing for the mission before making our move. Today, we arrived at a remote ridge just outside Chancellorsville, Virginia. The late afternoon sunbathed the landscape in a golden glow, casting long shadows across the rolling hills. This was the setting for one of the most critical moments in American history. On this day, General Stonewall Jackson would execute a daring flanking maneuver, a tactical masterstroke that would lead to the Confederate victory at the Battle of Chancellorsville.

History records that Jackson's bold march of thirty thousand men swung behind General Hooker's army, leading to a devastating attack on the Union's right flank. This triumph, a pinnacle of Confederate military strategy, left President Lincoln reeling in anger and disbelief. Yet, this mission's significance transcended the immediate battle—it was a precursor to Gettysburg.

A Confederate victory there would alter the course of history, dooming the Union and reshaping the world as we know it.

The anxiety of what lay ahead gnawed at me, though I drew confidence from Cy's unwavering composure. Our task was clear: we had to ensure that history unfolded as it should, which meant allowing the tragic yet pivotal shooting of General Jackson. It was a grim necessity to prevent a future of division, slavery, and a fractured America.

The complication? An enemy agent—a Chinese AI shapeshifter—had infiltrated this moment in history. Its mission: prevent Jackson's death, ensuring the South's victory at Gettysburg and the Union's subsequent downfall. If the shapeshifter succeeded, the ramifications would be catastrophic. The United States would



never reunite, and the balance of power would shift dramatically, with Mexico emerging as a dominant force in the western hemisphere.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting the battlefield into twilight, Major Hawkins, Cy and I moved into position. Equipped with her advanced detection capabilities, Cy identified the shapeshifter—a Confederate soldier poised to intervene at the critical moment. The impostor approached Jackson’s men, mimicking a Southern drawl with chilling accuracy.

“Evening boys,” the shapeshifter greeted them, exuding an air of familiarity and authority. The men responded with trust, oblivious to the deception.

“Lieutenant Morrison wants you boys to head back to camp,” it continued. “Get some rest. I’ll take it from here. The Lieutenant anticipates a quiet night.”

The soldiers, weary and eager for respite, complied. This was the moment of truth. Asha steadied her breath, her sniper rifle trained on the shapeshifter. One shot was all she needed. Time seemed to slow as she exhaled, her finger tightening on the trigger.

*Pop.*

The shapeshifter crumpled to the ground, and chaos erupted. “Yanks!” I shouted, adding to the confusion. The Confederate soldiers, caught off guard, fired wildly into the night, believing they were under attack. Amidst the chaos, Jackson’s men appeared, and the scene played out exactly as history dictated.

Lieutenant Morrison’s desperate cries to cease fire were met with disbelief. “It’s a lie,” a rebel shouted back, and the firing continued. Jackson was hit, his fate sealed. History had been preserved.

Cy confirmed the shapeshifter’s demise, and we retreated under the cover of darkness, returning to our cloaked cycles. The mission was a success. We had prevented a catastrophic divergence in the timeline, securing the future of the United States.

As we made our way back to the ship, the weight of what we had done settled over me. The cost of preserving history was high, but the stakes had been even higher. We had played our part, ensuring that the sacrifices of the past paved the way for a unified future.

—EH



*3rd*

*Place*

*Small Bites*

*Short Story Contest*

*2025*

# Albert



Donald Firesmith

## Science Fiction | Paranormal

Albert, the elder care robot, woke his elderly mistress every morning and put her to bed each night. He ensured she took her medicines, and his sensors regularly monitored her vitals for any symptom requiring his attention or the calling of an ambulance. He cooked her meals, washed her clothes, and cleaned her house. He did these chores and a thousand more, enabling her to remain in her family home.

Most importantly, Albert attentively and empathetically listened to her as she talked about her childhood, her children, and the husband she had lost so many years ago. Albert did all these things, not because his programming required him to, although it did. He did them because he had been programmed to love her. And he loved her with a depth equal to any biological being.

And so, the days, months, and years swiftly passed until the night of The Storm. Albert had plugged himself in, and as he recharged his batteries, he silently watched over his mistress as she lay asleep. A severe thunderstorm raged outside, but the house was so well soundproofed that only Albert's sensitive microphones could hear the thunder as it approached ever nearer.

Then, lightning struck the power line mere feet from the

house. Traveling at nearly the speed of light, the resulting electrical power surge briefly overloaded the house's circuit breakers. Its extreme voltage and amperage raced through Albert's body, heating one of his lithium-ion batteries well beyond its safety limit. The battery burst into flames.



Honorable  
Mention  
Small Bites  
Short Story Contest  
2025

**MICHAEL NELSON**

The Adventure  
YA Narrative fiction

**D. KRAUSS**

The First Three Springsteen Albums  
Coming of Age

**ED DEJESUS**

From Darkness into Light: Thankful Tonight  
Historical Fiction | Based on true events

**LISA TOWLES**

The Outside Clan  
Historical Fiction

**TIMOTHY BALDWIN**

Blood at the Window  
Psychological Thriller

**DONNA DOTY**

There Was an Old Woman Who Thought She Was Dead  
Magical Realism

# About the Authors

## ROBERT PLANT

Robert Plant self-published his debut novel, *Heartstrings*, in 2023 and has a knack for stirring the soul in his fiction writing. After releasing this family drama to the world, Robert pivoted to writing in the Sci-Fi genre. He's finalizing his next book, *Dark Matter*, to be released in the summer of 2025, which will be an anthology of short stories that will challenge our existence in this small sliver of the cosmos. These short stories are created with a likeness to *The Twilight Zone* and *Black Mirror* shows and will have you on the edge of your seat until the final twist.

## SCOTT MEEHAN

Scott A. Meehan is a retired Army veteran, middle school history teacher, and award-winning author. He is a Bronze Star recipient from actions in Iraq and is known for his storytelling based on his worldwide experiences as a missionary kid and Army veteran. Meehan writes multi-cultural themes that focus on current events in the form of thrillers, suspense, romance, and military. He has a BA in Secondary Education-Social Sciences, MA in Computer Resource Information Management, and an MBA. In 2024, Scott won first place in the Orlando Veteran's Creative Arts Awards contest with his creative short story, *CH-47A Chinooks: Guardians of the Sky*.

## DONALD FIRESMITH

Donald Firesmith is a multi-award-winning author of speculative fiction, including science fiction, fantasy, paranormal horror, and modern urban paranormal novels and collections of short stories. Because of his strong background in software/system engineering



and science, his science fiction is well-researched, and he relies on numerous science, technology, and military technical advisors to ensure that the non-speculative aspects of his stories are realistic and believable.

## **MICHAEL NELSON**

Michael Nelson is a former small-town physician, living in a small community among the deep hills and valleys of Southwestern Wisconsin. Retired now, he indulges in his many hobbies. Woodworking, and travel to various parts of the country but most of all; writing. Always being open to new things has kept him youthful and vital as he tries to keep up with his young daughter, Isabelle Drawing upon their adventures together, in this most recent endeavor, he and his daughter, Isabelle have taken a lighter approach to exciting adventure and magic.

## **D. KRAUSS**

D. Krauss resides in the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia. He has been a cottonpicker, a sodbuster, a librarian, a surgical orderly, the guy who paints the little white line down the middle of the road, a weatherman, a door-kickin' shove-gun-in-face lawman, a hunter of terrorists, and a school bus driver. Currently, he's a layabout. He's been married over 45 years (yep, same woman), and has a wildman bass guitarist for a son.

## **ED DEJESUS**

Ed DeJesus (pronounced D Geezus) joined Indies United in January 2025. His thriller novel, *The Vulnerable*, debuted in April. His short story offers a glimpse into his forthcoming memoir collection, *Simpler Times in The Spindle City*. A technopreneur, he was President of Sightline Solar, CEO of JustZip.com, and VP of Engineering for MSL. Previously, his software work at Digital Equipment Corp was published in the Artificial Intelligence (AI)

and Design Automation journals. He served in the US Army Reserves and opened a record store with his wife in the vinyl era. He resides in Florida and is a Gulf Coast Writers Association member. When Ed's not immersed in his writing, he finds joy in reading, dancing, singing Karaoke, and traveling the world with his wife and children.

## **LISA TOWLES**

Lisa Towles is an award-winning crime novelist and a passionate speaker on the topics of fiction writing, creativity, and self care. She has thirteen crime thrillers in print with a new thriller, *Switch*, due for release in 2025. Her E&A Series titles *Hot House* and *Salt Island* were both Amazon Kindle #1 Bestsellers. Lisa is a member of Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, and International Thriller Writers. Deeply committed to supporting other writers, she hosts a YouTube series called *Story Impact*, where she interviews authors about the meaning and impact of their books. Lisa has an MBA in IT Management and works full-time in the tech industry in the San Francisco Bay area.

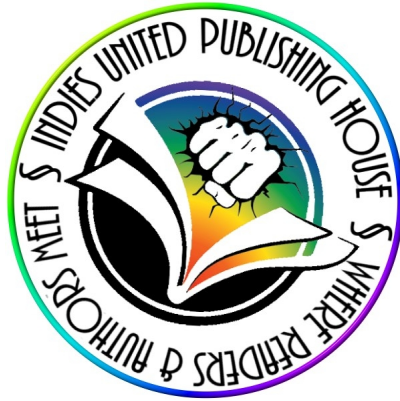
## **TIMOTHY BALDWIN**

Timothy Baldwin grew up in Syracuse, New York. He currently resides in Maryland where he teaches English, Creative Writing, Film, and Theatre on the middle school level. At the insistence of his own students, he began writing seriously in 2014. He credits his love for story to his mother, who spent countless hours reading to him and his siblings when they were growing up. Growing up, he devoured the literary words of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Piers Anthony, and many others. Mysteries, thrillers, and fantasies are among the genre he most frequently reads. When he's not writing, he's reading, teaching, camping, or enjoying a live music concert.

## DONNA DOTY

Donna L. Doty, Ph.D. is a New York-based Sociologist, content creator, and 2D animator who writes and produces her own animations series, *Coffee with Katrin*. Most recently, Donna wrote a work of speculative fiction called *The Rule of Thoughts: A Fictional Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*—which received a Certificate of Appreciation from the International Fiction Festival in 2024 for being ranked in the top 10% in the Novel category among 850 authors from 48 countries. Donna also wrote several short stories including *There Was an Old Woman Who Thought She Was Dead*, *The Day We Saw a Giraffe in Our Yard*, and *The Red Spot*. She is currently working on a short story series.

Thank you for taking the time to read this collection from Indies United Publishing House. We hope you enjoyed it and would like to encourage you to take a moment to review this collection on your favorite reading platform.



## A little about Indies United

Here at Indies United, we are a co-op of like-minded authors working together to showcase our books and highlight our diversity as writers. We openly encourage and support both new and established authors in their pursuit of finding their audience while bringing to you books worth reading. Our goal is to give authors a home to call their own, while bringing fresh, innovative, and exciting books to readers all over the world.

If you are an author, please check us out at [www.indiesunited.net](http://www.indiesunited.net)