

INDIES UNITED PUBLISHING HOUSE
PRESENTS

Infinite
Indies
2023

FORTRESS

A MULTI-AUTHOR ANTHOLOGY

INFINITE INDIES 2023
FORTRESS

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Compiled by Lisa Orban
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INDIES UNITED PUBLISHING HOUSE, LLC

P.O. BOX 3071

QUINCY, IL 62305-3071

www.indiesunited.net

Infinite Indies
2020

Infinite Indies
2021

Infinite Indies
2022

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

Thank you.

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FOREWORD



Lisa Orban

The room is warm and inviting in a cluttered way, with books scattered around the woman sitting on a chaise lounge. She has a book in one hand and a warm beverage in the other; not far from her fingertips, an open box of goodies. A small smile is on her face as her eyes scan down the page, crinkling with hidden delight.

Looking up, she smiles, sets down the mug, puts a bookmark to hold her place, then gently closes the book. “Hello, please sit down.” She waves at the overstuffed chair not far from hers. “Would you like to hear a story...?”

I love to tell stories. I always have. Put me in a room of one – or more – and I will spin tales designed to delight and sometimes horrify my audience, always leaving them wanting more. So, it’s not surprising that one day in 2015, I sat down to write some of the stories I had been telling my whole life. Now I could share my adventures not only with random strangers and close friends, but with anyone who picked up one of my books anywhere in the world.

Not many years after that, with the help of Jennie Rosenblum, the world’s greatest cheerleader, I opened Indies United Publishing House so other authors could share their stories with the world. What a ride it has been! Armed with a lot of knowledge and unflappable enthusiasm, I attempted something never done before; I opened a publishing house

that put authors before all else. To build a community within the writing world that was supportive and collaborative. Nurturing and guiding the many voices that walked through our doors, giving them all equal consideration and footing.

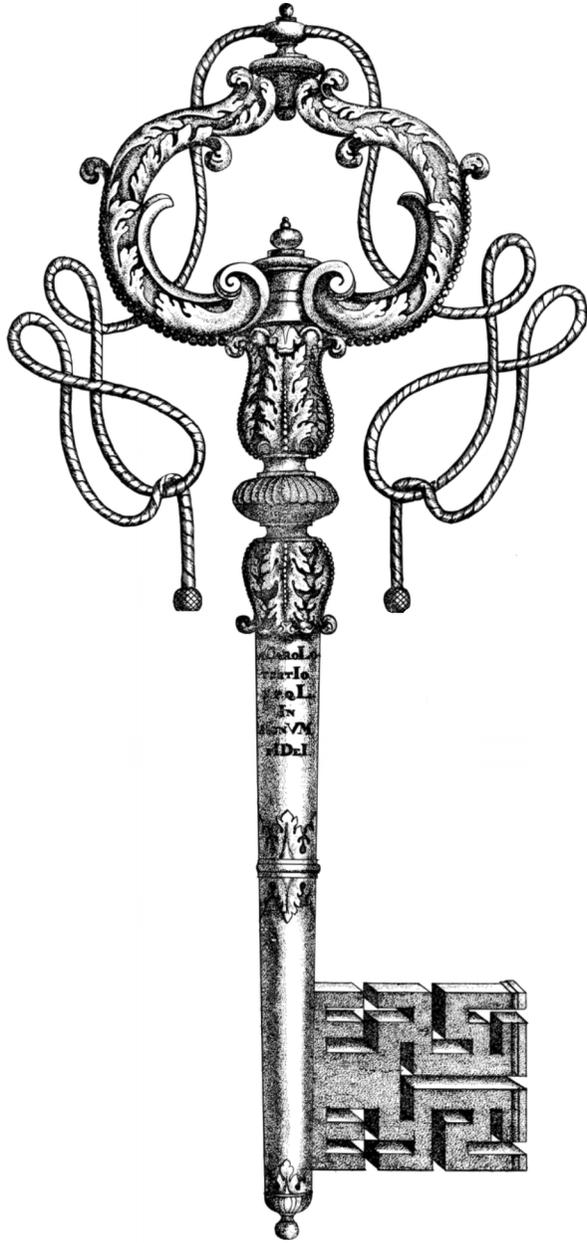
As you now know, I love stories—particularly short stories, where you can jump in and romp to the end in a single gulp. There is something special about creating a short story: to grab your reader and hold them completely enthralled, to develop entire worlds and characters with a few broad strokes and, most importantly, make your readers feel for those characters with that brief peek into their lives.

In 2020, Indies United published our first short story anthology, *Infinite Indies 2020*, and released a new one every year since. They were wide ranging, include every genre, poetry, and even commentary articles on writing. A grab-bag of literature, if you will.

But, this year I decided to do something different. Inspired by an article I read about the late, great John Campbell of Astounding. Campbell was known for fostering some of the greatest science fiction writers we know today, giving them a place to tell their stories and challenging them to hone their skills. One challenge was to come up with individual stories using the concept phrase, *goldfish bowl*. When finished, he published those stories together launching the careers of several now well-known authors.

Gathering my authors, I gave them a similar challenge. Write a story based on a single word, *FORTRESS*. Take it in any direction you want, but run with it. And run they did. Each story in this book reflects the writer's perception of the word, from the dark depths of despair to the elusive mystical.

We present to you *Infinite Indies: Fortress*. So, curl up in your favorite chair with your beverage of choice and enjoy this literary charcuterie board of small delights.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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 stories 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.

Cory Clark

Cory Clark is a small-town writer branching out from an IT background to work on his writing abilities after a long hiatus. When not working on a small gig in gaming journalism, he's working on short stories and his first major novel series, and enjoys writing science fiction with hints of fantasy and mystery.

Michael Deeze

MICHEAL DEEZE was a child in the notorious Maplewood Commons housing projects of inner city Chicago, growing up hard. And fast.

Surrounded by crime and violence, his family struggled to just hold their own while trying to escape their own poverty. Deeze gained street sense young, and it became the backdrop for a life of multiple indiscretions and occupations, call them what you will.

Deeze is a natural-born storyteller—in life and in print. A child of the sixties, he draws extensively from his own diverse experiences and subsequent education to introduce the hapless Emmett Casey. As U.S. Army veteran and retired Doctor of Chiropractic, Deeze now lives in Illinois after spending decades living near the forests of northern Wisconsin. He's a devoted father to his three children, a magical daughter, two grown sons, and his dog. His first novels are the critically acclaimed *Bless Me Father*, and *For I have Sinned*, *The Heretic* is the final novel in the series.

Marie Judson

Marie Judson lives on the wild Northern California coast. An ardent fantasy and sci fi reader since childhood, she also loves singing harmony, working with dreams, and trying to save our planet.

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.

Ana Manwaring

Ana Manwaring is a former newspaper lifestyle columnist. Her poetry, personal narratives, book reviews and short stories have appeared in diverse publications including the *California Quarterly*, *KRCB Radio*, *Morning Haiku*, *Mystery Readers Journal*, *Stolen Light Ed.* Fran Claggett, and *Sisters Born, Sisters Found Ed.* Laura McHale Holland.

A graduate of the University of Denver (B.A.) in Education and English Lit and Sonoma State University (M.A.) in Education/Linguistics, Ana teaches creative writing in California's wine country, produces the monthly *FUNdaMentalists* poetry event on Zoom and operates her editing company, *JAM Manuscript Consulting*—"Spread Excellence." In her "past life," she has owned and operated *BookWork*, an accounting

and tax preparation service, managed a social service non-profit organization serving immigrants, and cared for the elderly, all of which she gave up to work for a PI, consult *brujos*, and out-run gun totin' maniacs on lonely Mexican highways—the inspiration for, *the JadeAnne Stone Mexico Adventures*.

Ana's husband David, ace gopher hunter Alison, and a host of birds, opossums, skunks, deer, fox, coyotes, and occasionally the neighboring goats, co-habitat an acre of Northern California.

After earning her M.A., Ana finally answered her mother's question, "What are you planning to do with that expensive education?" Be a paperback writer.

Lisa Orban

Lisa Orban was born in Galesburg, IL a long time ago on a hot summer day. Due to various shenanigans by the adults in her life, her time in Galesburg was short and the family moved to Quincy, IL where they settled down for a good long stay.

Things were rolling along for a while inside the confines of Quincy, and Lisa rolled with them. There were several divorces, marriages, different schools, friends lost & gained, and many, *many* moves throughout all this activity. Until, quite unexpectedly, Lisa found herself in foster care at 16, much to her surprise.

Upon turning 18, Lisa ran away as fast as she could to Phoenix, AZ where she lived for 3 years. Got married, had two sons, made many mistakes, and then eventually, ran for her life back to Quincy, where she still lives to this day.

Lisa went to college, earned an Associates in Psychology, raised her 5 kids, got married, and divorced, several times, bought a house and eventually settled down to live the life she always wanted, as the ringleader in a madhouse of anarchy. She now writes books, takes in human strays in need of help, travels, opened a publishing house, and pretty much does whatever she wants, and is quite happy about it.

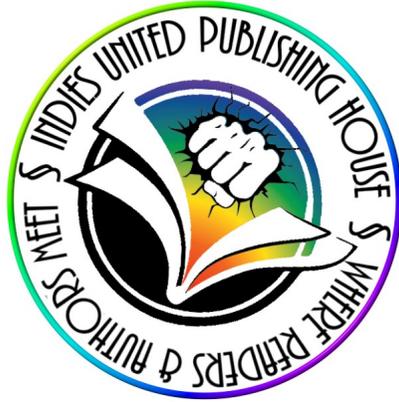
She became an author in 2015 with her first book, *It'll Feel Better when it Quits Hurting*, and hasn't stopped since.

Lisa Towles

Lisa Towles is an Amazon bestselling, award-winning crime novelist and a passionate speaker on the topics of fiction writing, creativity, and self care. She has ten crime thrillers in print with a new title, *Terror Bay*,

forthcoming in November of 2023. Her latest thriller, *Salt Island* (June, 2023) won both a Readers Choice and a Pencraft literary award. *Salt Island* is the second book in her E&A Investigations series following *Hot House* (June, 2022). Lisa is a member of Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, and International Thriller Writers and is deeply committed to supporting writers' success through friendship, fellowship and community engagement. She is Board President of a Bay Area nonprofit (Bridgegood.org) and speaks frequently to groups of business leaders and writers. She has an MBA in IT Management and works full-time in the tech industry in the San Francisco Bay area.

Thank you for taking the time to read this collection from the authors of 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