

Review

Writing Tips for Authors by Stefan Vucak is an excellent guide on how authors can start writing a book and get published. It answers all your questions on how to begin, how to plan writing a book or novel, how to go about researching the topic, and how to get a publisher or self-publish. It will prevent the author from stumbling during his initial stint as a writer wanting to get a book published.

Readers' Favorite

Books by Stefan Vucak

General Fiction:

Cry of Eagles

All the Evils

Towers of Darkness

Strike for Honor

Proportional Response

Legitimate Power

Science Fiction:

In the Shadow of Death

Against the Gods of Shadow

A Whisper from Shadow

Shadow Masters

Immortal in Shadow

With Shadow and Thunder

Through the Valley of Shadow

Guardians of Shadow

Non-Fiction

Writing Tips for Authors

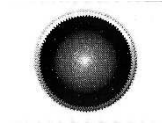
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WRITING TIPS FOR AUTHORS

By

Stefan Vucak



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Dedication

To Debra L. Hartmann ... channeling the river of life

Acknowledgments

My thanks to all authors who contributed articles for this book, and I hope their advice and insight will be of some use to others.

Cover art by Laura Shinn.

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Foreword

Having spent years bent over a desk, pen in hand, staring at the writing pad waiting for inspiration, then pounding away on the computer transcribing, I thought the worst was over. It wasn't until I sought to get my books published that I experienced real torture. We have all been through it: write that opus, submit to publishers, sigh over a stack of rejection letters, and then review alternatives.

It wasn't until I began submitting guest blog posts that I realized how much painful experience lay behind my writing and publishing efforts. Publishing some of my posts on *Authors Helping Authors*, Debra L. Hartmann suggested I collect my posts and produce a book. After some deliberation and accumulation of more material, I put together *Writing Tips for Authors*, hoping the articles might help some authors avoid the pitfalls I stumbled into.

Stefan Vucak
Melbourne, 2013

Writing Tips for Authors

Part I – Articles by Stefan Vucak

Stefan Vucak

On Writing

Rain is coming down, soft and invisible, blurring outlines. I take a sip of coffee and stare out the smeared window. It's a perfect day for writing.

I always wanted to write.

As far back as I can remember the printed word held a fascination that allowed me to escape into other worlds, other characters. For an imaginative kid, it was better than candy—almost. One of the first books I ever read was an illustration of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. That was quickly followed by *Robinson Crusoe*. After that, of course, I was hooked. Where I attended primary school, there was a small library at the top of the street, which I made my own. I remember bringing books home, to my mother's vast amusement and my father's disapproving frown. He never had much time for books or learning, but I cannot hold that against him. He did not have the opportunities I had, but at least he made sure I had them.

I was just getting used to putting down my first clumsy sentences, dreaming of writing my own novels and being famous, when the whole family came to Australia and I had to grapple with the mysteries of English grammar and the torture of spelling. I cannot express my relief when word processors came along with an automatic spell checker! But English did not faze me at all. Sure, the first year was tough, but devouring simple books to start with, then gravitating to more complex works, it was business as usual. The new country was much tougher on my parents, of course, and as a youngster I did not appreciate that until later in life. Years later, I remember when I was in Mexico trying to find my way around and making myself understood in Spanish. I had a book of common phrases and when I wanted something, I pointed at a phrase in the book to the luckless person I accosted to help me. I got along, but it drove home what my parents must have gone through when they came to Australia.

At school, I loved my essay writing assignments, even though many of my classmates found it an agonizing chore. I could never figure out what was the big deal. My specialty was using elaborate flowery language. I loved adjectives, sometimes to excess. But nobody could describe a sunset, a moonlit night or the booming of crashing surf like I could. The one thing my writing lacked was people. It took me a while to make the connection. Prose was great, but great writing has to involve people, drama, conflict, emotion and everyday life. When I learned to write dialogue, everything clicked, or so I thought. Man, how I labored to learn what good dialogue was all about! You

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can have brilliant narrative, but crummy dialogue will sink you.

Every spare dollar I had, I used to buy books; all kinds, but I loved science fiction. Having read some of what got into print, I figured I could do better, and I had ideas, a whole universe begging to be unleashed on the unsuspecting world. There was no holding me back. The first book I ever wrote dealt with the Orieli Technic Union visiting Earth. That theme is buried in *Shadow Masters*. I wrote the thing on colored A4 pages, single-spaced, full of typos and whiteout marks, and I thought I was in for a Hugo. I still attended college then and that kept me busy, but the urge to write never left me. I realized long ago that it never will. It is like cancer, always eating at me and I never have peace. At one point, I tried to leave it, swearing I would never write another word, but the images and ideas did not stop, driving me on. It was easier to give in, although the creative process can be like giving birth—extremely painful, especially when the words simply will not come. But when everything flows and my pen cannot keep up with the storm of words in my mind, the rush, the exhilaration of creation makes it all worthwhile.

I walked around Melbourne, peddling that first book to local publishers and getting the inevitable rejections. After a while, I figured that perhaps my book was not as hot as I thought it was. There was nothing for it but to sit down and rewrite the damned thing. I did and it also got rejected. I wrote several short stories and sent them off to magazines in the States, not really knowing how to properly format my work or make correct submissions. It was depressing, but I learned, and I consider that my period of apprenticeship. Once I started full-time work in the IT industry, which kept me active pursuing a career, but the drive to write still burned, even though it was now directed to producing reports and design documents. It was during those years that I created Terrlls-rr and the universe of the Serrll Combine.

The first book I wrote in the Shadow Gods series was *With Shadow and Thunder* and it won the runner-up finalist prize in the 2002 EPPIE awards many years later. Needless to say, that book went through several agonizing rewrites before I was grudgingly satisfied that it contained my best effort. One lesson I learned the hard way, and it is the only way to learn it, was becoming a ruthless editor of my own material. I had been a reviewer and submissions editor, and had first-hand exposure to some pretty awful material by first-time authors who never learned that lesson: write, rewrite, edit and then rewrite again! I know all about cutting out sentences and paragraphs that may appear perfect—hack off my arm first! But being savage and dispassionate with my material has helped hone my skills. If a writer cannot learn to do this, give up

now and save yourself a lot of pain later. In the easy days of the fifties and sixties, publishers were happy to work with writers to polish their work. These days are long gone. Current submissions must be perfect or you will not get a look-in. Even then, be prepared to collect folders of rejections. I was told that to get ahead, I should get an agent. Sounds easy, but very few agents are interested in an unpublished writer living in Australia. E-mails and letters just won't hack it. What I should really do is park myself in New York or London and go door knocking, provided I could afford to do that. Talk about depressing...

Writing *With Shadow and Thunder* opened a crack into my Serrll Combine universe; a vague, disjointed set of characters and institutional structures. Before getting down to writing the sequel, I first had to flesh out my universe and introduce order. If I did not get my 'reality' right, writing a believable book would be tough going. Using a spreadsheet, I set down the composition of every interstellar block, geography of how they fitted together, the political setup, distribution of seats in the ruling Executive Council. I created a list of all Executive Council Bureaus, their Directors and subordinate Commissioners. With the structure done, I had a tapestry from which history, conflict, political maneuvering and power byplays could be extracted—a readymade plot factory. All I had to do now was use it, and I did, producing eight books in the Shadow Gods series. One sad thing I witnessed from published writers who produced books in a series was their inevitable descent into mediocrity. Their first few books were well written, but subsequent efforts were lamentable, works that would never get past a slush pile if submitted first time. I vowed that every book I wrote would be the very best product I could come up with. I owe at least that much to whoever might read them.

Having semi-retired in 2006, I decided to branch into the contemporary market, giving Terrlls-rr a rest. This resulted in a political thriller, *Cry of Eagles*. The theme is topical: Iran's nuclear capability represents a clear threat to Israel, but the US does nothing. Mossad sabotages a refinery complex in Galveston, plant evidence that incriminates Iran and sit back waiting for the enraged United States to strike back in retaliation. But the Mossad team makes a small mistake and America is now poised to vent its wrath on its ally. The work involved a tremendous amount of research, creation and fleshing out of new characters and tortuous plotting, detail that every writer needs to pay close attention to. I have given up using it as an entry into the traditional publishing market, and that door-to-door option might still be my best bet.

That was followed by *All the Evils*. I think I have it polished enough, but

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then, I am never satisfied. Still, I was forced to put the work down and turn my thoughts to new projects, which resulted in three more novels.

My cup is empty and I need a refill.

The Drive to Write

Bright sunshine has flooded the landscape with light and shifting shadows as the wind whips branches into restless frenzy. A thin tendril of steam is rising from my cup of coffee and I gaze at it momentarily, captivated by the patterns it makes. I am staring at the computer screen, at the paragraphs running into each other, making no sense as I search for inspiration. No, that's not quite right. I am driven by inspiration to pour out the words clamoring to get out, my characters screaming at me to write down what they have to say. I just don't hear them, my mind wandering as I look out the window at the shadows, the light and the patterns they make. There is an avalanche of ideas waiting to be unleashed, but I have stumbled into a pothole and I am too weary to drag myself out. I take a sip of coffee, taking in the aroma and the satisfying taste, and sigh as I stare at the words across the screen...

It's strange, but I always wanted to write. Ever since as a kid when I stumbled across an illustrated book of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, I was hooked. A whole new universe was opened for me, one I never knew existed, one far beyond the narrow confines of my childhood pursuits and shallow games. When I discovered a library not far from the primary school, I gladly plunged into that universe. Of course, reading led me to think that I could also create a universe of my own, something others could share and hopefully enjoy. It didn't look all that hard. After all, it was simply putting down words on paper. Although the drive to write never left me, it was some years later that I could unleash that part of me and allow my imagination full flight. But like Pandora, I unleashed a part of me that ever since has given me moments of intense pleasure, soul-wrenching frustration and disappointment.

Part of the frustration was mastering the mechanical craft of writing, learning how to write good dialogue, not allowing myself to get swept up in flowery prose, how to plot, research...a raft of skills a writer needs in order to produce something good. And I am still learning. But why put myself through all that pain, accumulating a stack of rejection slips along the way, harboring murdering thoughts at authors whose crappy books are on the stands while stuff I produced cannot make it? Why put up with lonely hours cooped up in my study, bent over my notebook or pounding away at the keyboard, enduring cramped muscles, mental blocks, endless hours of tedious editing, simply to turn out that novel? Why do I write?

The answer is simple as it is complex. I am driven to write. It is a fire that burns within me and one I cannot quench. I tried to once or twice, but that

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urge to write, to create, never let go, could not be extinguished. It's a curse and it is also a gift. Once I recognized that I could not change what I was, I accepted my fate and allowed myself to soar. All the frustration and tedious work, the attention to detail and the rewriting, it fades into insignificance when I look at the rewards of my creativity. When the words flow and I can hardly keep up with them, when my characters live and laugh and cry with me, and come alive on paper, when it all clicks and my spirit cries like an eagle high in the sky, the buzz of pure creation can be giddy and addictive. And it is addictive, far better than any smoky weed or pill.

I write primarily because I must and because I want to share with others the joy of my creations. Once that book is done, the moment of accomplishment passes, but there is always a sense of power, knowing I have left something behind that is lasting. The doubts about getting published, having the thing sell, marketing, all those things will weigh on me later. But even if one person reads what I have produced, I am satisfied, although I am egotistical enough to want as many readers as possible. Then there is a period when I must recharge and get ready for another book, more frustration, more loneliness, more tedium. Sometimes I really wonder why I put myself through all this.

I'm driven and I'm cursed and I must write. The passion and the drive that keeps pushing me is relentless and won't give me peace. But I have ceased fighting the current and have accepted my destiny, because there is nothing more fulfilling in life.

I take another sip of coffee, now gone cool, flex my fingers and smile at the keyboard. I have come for you, I tell my characters...

Practical Advice for Beginning Fiction Writers

So, you want to be a writer, eh? I'd suggest you take up golf instead. It's just as frustrating, but at least you get some fresh air. Still determined?

I'm not going to talk about why you want to write. That's a story in itself. You have read widely and perhaps dabbled at writing some short pieces, and after seeing what's out there, you're telling yourself it can't be that hard. You can do a much better job and you've made up your mind to prove to everybody you can do it. You also decided that you can take the pain, the loneliness, and exasperation that goes with writing. Have you? If you haven't, do think about it. Writing a 300 page book means many hours with a pen, notebook and computer. Time where you don't want to be interrupted by anything or anybody. Still want to inflict this on yourself?

When I started, I had grand dreams about getting published and my books in every store in the world. I'd be famous! Perhaps you might make it, but before you jump into the writing tar pit, knock any expectations you may have about fame and money out of your mind. If you want to write for money, become journalist or a freelance. Better still, get a paying job. That's my first bit of advice. The second: forget about becoming famous. If you are honest with yourself, you will understand that you are driven to write, and you want to share what you have written with somebody. Everything else is secondary. If you don't have that fire burning inside you, goading you to write, never leaving you alone, than you're kidding yourself. Remember what I said about golf?

Okay, let's get serious. Like any profession, writing is a craft and there are tools you must master to be any good at it. What did Thomas Edison say: ten percent inspiration and ninety percent perspiration? He got that right. Having a story idea is nothing. Getting it down on paper in a form readers will not want to put down is everything. As with anything new, practice makes perfect. If you haven't already, write some short stories. Why? The effort will tell you how good you are at manipulating words, creating sentences, scene breaks and chapters. It will show you if you have problems with plotting, whether you are character or action writer; whether you like prose, dialogue or are in love with flowery adjectives. By the way, drown those adjectives—most of them anyway, or take up poetry. You need to find your voice. You need to discover your writing style with which you are most relaxed and one that doesn't impede the flow of words. Stilted, awkward narrative and dialogue is death, regardless how good the story itself might be. *Don't* try to imitate an

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author you like. You must be true to yourself.

Some basic things that get overlooked, but are important:

- Format your manuscript correctly. Use 1 inch margins all around and have a proper header: Author Name/Book Title at left, and page numbering at right. Amazing how many people get this wrong.
- Use double spacing with your sentences, and don't right justify the text. That part comes later when the book gets published.
- Always use the word processor's automatic paragraph indenting. Have a hard page break, never one you create using the Enter key to space down the page.
- Never use tabs!

There are other small things, but the idea is to get the fundamentals right before you put down that first word. Believe me, it will help in the long run. Why do all that? Firstly, submission editors have rules on manuscript formatting, but more importantly, you are developing yourself into a professional, not some amateur who hopes a brilliant story will carry you over all the bad parts. Long ago, editors helped iron out poorly written manuscripts, but those days are long gone. Today, your manuscript must be perfect, ready for typesetting and printing.

Become your worst enemy! You need to develop editorial skills and be prepared to cut that favorite word, phrase, sentence or paragraph. Never, never become so attached to your writing that you cannot prune. Like a shrub that needs cutting in order to make the whole live, you must be prepared to trim your writing. I know. It's like hacking off an arm, but you must become inured to the pain, your eyes set on the end product. It takes time and practice, but it's worth the effort. If you don't do it, your editor certainly will. He will do it anyway just to demonstrate his superiority over us lesser mortals. Grin and bear it, and have a glass of bourbon.

Develop a disciplined approach to writing. You would never build a house without proper architectural drawings. In the same way, never jump into writing that book without having thoroughly researched your subject, written a detailed outline and worked every plot angle. Careful not to get carried away with the outline or you'll end up writing what should really be 'real' writing. An outline is a skeleton on which you write the book around. And like any skeleton, every bone must be in place or things will start to fall off when you begin to write. That's called writer's block, and can drive you to thoughts of

jumping off tall buildings. It can also result in a book that will be all disjointed and pieces won't fit. You can write a short story on the fly, and I've done it, but not a full-length novel. I have seen results of such amateurish writing and I still shudder when I think of them.

Develop your characters. There is nothing worse than coming across a character that has blue eyes in one chapter and brown in another. There is more to it than that, of course, but you get the idea. Every major character in your book should be fully developed, like a police mug sheet. And like that mug sheet, it should contain everything: height, color of hair, distinguishing features, mannerisms, likes and dislikes...you get the idea. This not only beds down the character in your own mind, but enforces a consistency of behavior by that character. If you have given your character a quirky mannerism, you can use it with confidence throughout the book. It will also make your reader comfortable, knowing you will not spring a surprise on him. If your character is a badass, keep him that way. Don't introduce a brand new mannerism way down the book simply to make a point.

There are lots more things I could talk about here that every author needs in his toolbox, but I have to do some writing on my own novel. You will run into mental potholes, wander why you're bothering, thinking that drinking your way out will help, but there is one thing you must always keep in mind. Writing can be tremendously satisfying. There is nothing like the buzz you get when the words flow and everything clicks together. The pure joy of creation can be giddy—and addictive. Once hooked, I'm afraid there is no cure, and no cold turkey withdrawal will help.

Still want to be a writer? On your head be it.

Turning that Inspiration into a Book

I am sure someone famous once said that genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration. Not sure about the genius part, but in writing, the rest is certainly true. When I wrote my first novel, and I use the term ‘wrote’ loosely—good thing it will never see the light of day—I wasn’t short of inspiration. I had ideas for a dozen books; still do, and some have been turned into real books. Along the way, I wrote several short stories and shared them with my friends, eager for their approval. However, I did not always get it, which puzzled me. I wrote good stuff. Okay, the stories had some grammar and word usage issues, and if you think typing perfect manuscripts on an electric typewriter and making corrections is easy, you probably didn’t have the pleasure, if that’s the right word. Life became so much easier for us writers when PCs and word processors came along.

Over drinks one evening, leafing through one of my stories, a friend told me he also planned to write a novel. I was delighted. I would have someone who would share my passion for writing and we would be able to critique and edit each other’s work. He never picked up the pen and didn’t write a thing. Why didn’t he? Probably lots of reasons, but I suspect—something I came to learn much later—he didn’t have that fire in his belly to commit himself to many lonely weeks and months in front of a writing pad and computer. Basically, he wasn’t prepared to put in the perspiration, and as we all know, there is lots of perspiration involved when you are a writer. The gnashing of teeth is a freebie.

In my early days when I got frustrated with my novel and words wouldn’t come, I diverted myself by writing a short story to clear my mind. Sounds contradictory, doesn’t it? You can see some of these distractions at: www.stefanvucak.com ‘Stories’. It worked for me, and along the way it also sharpened my mechanical writing skills. Back then, young and impatient to have that book done and out of the way, I was beset by too much inspiration, too many ideas clamored for my attention. Hence my detours into short stories. I haven’t written a short story in many years, and it is not likely that I will. The reason is simple: I learned to control my inspiration. I learned discipline.

So, how do you turn that inspiration into a book? My personal view is that many book reviewers are frustrated writers who never got to write anything, and hate writers who managed to produce something on principle. We all have egos that need stroking, hence the need to seek approval and acceptance. As writers, our egos are as big as our characters, but unlike our

characters, our ego needs to be firmly grounded in reality. We need that fire in our belly to keep us going over the rough parts. Sadly, some of the stuff out there should have been kept in the drawer like my first novel. Okay, you have that fire, you are inspired, and keen to start writing. A reality check.

What exactly is that inspiration? When I consider a book idea, it can be several things: a beginning, an ending, a particular scene, something I read or saw somewhere; lots of things can trigger it. The idea bubble isn't even a story skeleton. It's just a nebulous cloud with some daylight shining through. This is where some writers make an enthusiastic leap and jump into that cloud—and fall through, of course. With only a vague notion of what they want to write, they turn on the computer and start pounding away, with predictable results. I reviewed several books...never mind. It wasn't pretty, even though the core idea might have been worth nurturing.

Out of a swarm of ideas, one has stuck in your mind and you want to look at it more closely, which is exactly what you need to do! When inspired to write a novel, I never had the whole thing worked out in my mind. I had to take the initial idea and put some flesh around it. I needed to see if it *can* be turned into a book. That will mean several things. Like with my latest contemporary novel—still to be written—I first had to research the underlying technical plot elements to ensure the story was feasible, which I did. What I must to do next is start the perspiration part: write the outline. I'm still dancing around that one, thinking about characters and the plot, but I've been through this before. It's simply a matter of gritting my teeth and getting on with it.

The bottom line with all this? The inspiration part is easy. If you are not prepared to put in the sweat that will result in a professionally produced novel, do yourself a favor. Buy a book instead. You'll have more fun.

About the Author

Stefan Vucak is an award-winning author of eight techno sci-fi novels, including *With Shadow and Thunder*, a 2002 EPPIE finalist. His political thriller *Cry of Eagles* won the coveted 2011 Readers' Favorite silver medal award, and his *All the Evils* was the 2013 prestigious Eric Hoffer contest finalist and Readers' Favorite silver medal winner. *Strike for Honor* won the gold medal. Stefan leveraged a successful career in the Information Technology industry and applied that discipline to create realistic, highly believable storylines for his books. He lives in Melbourne, Australia.

To learn more about Stefan, visit his:

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Shadow Gods books by Stefan Vucak

In the Shadow of Death

An extraterrestrial craft is discovered in an ancient Mayan pyramid and the knowledge throws Earth into social and political turmoil. As a new agent in the Diplomatic Branch, First Scout Terrlls-rr is tasked to destroy the craft before international tension throws Earth into open conflict.

Against the Gods of Shadow

Facing economic sabotage by Palean raiders, Pizgor pleads for help from the Serrll government. Second Scout Terrlls-rr is tasked to find the raider base and expose Palean's duplicity. Terr is forced to battle a Fleet ship that leaves them both badly damaged and leads Terr to confront forces that threaten to destabilize the Serrll itself.

A Whisper from Shadow

An extraterrestrial craft is discovered in an ancient Mayan pyramid and the knowledge throws Earth into social and political turmoil. As a new agent in the Diplomatic Branch, First Scout Terrlls-rr is tasked to destroy the craft before international tension throws Earth into open conflict.

Shadow Masters

With his mission on Earth completed, First Scout Terrlls-rr is returning home, only to be intercepted by an Orieli Technic Union survey ship. The encounter sends ripples of consternation throughout the Serrll Combine. In an attempt to establish a link between a raider network and the AUP Provisional Committee, Terr's cover is compromised. To extricate himself, he has to raise the hand of Death.

Immortal in Shadow

On his way to a prison planet, Tanard, a renegade Fleet officer, escapes and vows vengeance. He is recruited by an extremist Palean group to raid Kaleen worlds. First Scout Terrlls-rr must find the secret base that is supporting him before the Wanderers rise up and unleash Death's wrath on the Serrll.

Through the Valley of Shadow

Bent on revenge, Terrlls-rr pursues his Anar'on brother to the fabled world of the Wanderers—and face judgment by the god of Death. On their frontier, the Serrll Combine is plunged into a savage encounter with a Kran invader, showing them a glimpse of a dark future.

Guardians of Shadow

Having destroyed a Kran invader, Terr, Teena and his brother Dharaklin, head for Orieli space where they will begin their cultural exchange mission. In a devastating Kran attack, Teena is taken and Terr seeks to rescue her. To win a war that threatens to consume the Orieli and the Serrll Combine, the fabled Wanderers must march against the Krans wielding the hand of Death.

Other books by Stefan Vucak

Cry of Eagles

2011 silver medal winner from Readers Favorite

Iran's nuclear capability represents a clear national threat to Israel, but the United States and Europe do nothing. A Mossad black ops team sabotages a refinery complex in Galveston, plants evidence that incriminates Iran, confident that an enraged America will strike back in retaliation. But the Mossad team makes one small mistake, which the FBI exploits to uncover the plot before America vents its wrath on Iran and plunges the world into political and economic turmoil. An award-winning thriller that will leave you at the edge of your seat.

All the Evils

A researcher in the Secret Vatican Archives uncovers a papyrus that claims Jesus was John the Baptist's disciple and the second Messiah. To prevent the tractate from becoming public, the Vatican secret service engages an assassin to silence anyone who has knowledge of the papyrus. It is up to an FBI agent to unravel a series of murders and prevent the assassin from killing him.

Towers of Darkness

A Wyoming mineworker discovers a human hand bone embedded in a forty million year-old coal seam. An anthropologist, Larry Krafter is sent to recover the bone and unearths a human skull. Instead of receiving acclaim when he publishes his discovery, vested establishment interests seek to discredit him, using murder to do it.

Strike for Honor

In a joint exercise with the Korean navy, Admiral Pacino's son is one of the casualties from a North Korean missile strike. Enraged that the President is more interested in appeasing the North Koreans, forgetting the lost American lives, Pacino decides to make a statement by bombing military facilities in both Koreas. His court-martial puts American foreign policy under public scrutiny.

Proportional Response

The Chinese populist faction, the Tuanpai, plan to trigger a global disaster that will devastate America. In the aftermath, the FBI identifies China as the culprit, but don't know if this was a rogue operation or a government plot. Fearful of American retaliation, China invites U.S. investigators to find that proof. Under a cloud of mutual suspicion, America readies itself for a military confrontation. A mid-bending expose of international politics!

Legitimate Power

What happens when a person living on the outskirts of Jerusalem digs up two ossuaries and finds a strange crystal the size of a smartphone able to repair itself when scratched and turns into a perfect mirror under laser light? When the crystal is put on the shadow gem market, suspecting that it is not natural, an American collector buys it, wanting to tap into its hidden potential. When the Israelis learn what it is, they want it back...as do the Chinese...as does the American government, which sets off a race to get it, no matter what the cost in shattered lives.