Afternoon Discoveries: November 10, 2026

Science Fiction & Fantasy

AMONG THE LETTERS
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Science Fiction & Fantasy

Two lonely people trade letters across a world that freezes around them, and their correspondence becomes a love story. Today's science fiction and fantasy leans toward tenderness, with a potion maker who cannot stop improvising, a mouse knight who finds a tree without soldiers, and a scientist who reads homesickness in mine water. In the paid section, an exiled power learns to sit on a park swing, a front door keeps watch over a foundling, and

a mountain spirit welcomes the frost. The back shelf brings Hawthorne's snow child, a busy Verne future, and Dickens in a playful mood.

All links in today's edition were checked against the linked publication, magazine, or publisher page on November 10, 2026.

Featured Discovery

Time Is What Stops Everything - Kristiana Willsey

Ava and Will each live with a strange gift, since time stops around them under opposite conditions, so they can never meet. They trade letters through a hidden mailbox in Los Angeles, one writing in breathless lowercase and the other in careful, formal notes. Their confessions about loneliness, family, and a returning comet slowly build into something like love. Kristiana Willsey, a folklorist who teaches at the University of Southern California, makes the frozen world feel like a portrait of anxiety. The final scene in a doorway on Sawtelle is pure joy.

Read "Time Is What Stops Everything" at Uncanny Magazine

The Discovery Desk

Palatable Potions - Melinda Brasher

A witch's apprentice adds sage to a hair potion for a rich client, and the result gets her thrown out of her teacher's house. Left on her own, she cures a sick cowmel, gives a society lady lacy wings in her hair, and stirs a love potion into bacon soup. Each improvisation brings bigger trouble, while her stern teacher's voice keeps scolding in her head. Melinda Brasher writes with warm comic timing and a real feel for cooking. The story is a delight about learning when recipes matter.

Read "Palatable Potions" at Cast of Wonders

The Little Mouse Knight - Aaryan Balu

Fen is a battle-scarred mouse in tin-can armour who arrives at an old oak where nobody carries a blade. The tree is a bustling market of bakers, barbers, and painters, and every resident insists that the hawk protects them. Fen cannot believe it and slips away at night, only to meet the ancient hawk himself. Aaryan Balu, a Chicago writer and improviser, turns their conversation into a gentle fable about safety and belonging. Nicole Gustafsson's illustration adds to the charm.

Read "The Little Mouse Knight" at Tales & Feathers

Big Sky - William H. Hilf

Maya Chen-Sullivan returns to Butte, Montana, to study the poisoned water of the Berkeley Pit. Her samples hold microbes that should not survive, and a touch of the water floods her with memories that are not her own. The organisms have been recording the homesickness of every immigrant who drank from the town's wells for more than a

century. William H. Hilf turns a toxic mine into a moving image of shared longing. This short science fiction story ends with an unforgettable picture of the sky.

Read “Big Sky” at Abyss & Apex

Very Few Good Dragons - Christiaan Sabatelli

Written after Mary Karr, this short poem begins by listing what dragons are not. They are not chaos in scales, endless appetite, or fire that turns the trees to copper. A medievalist friend offers another reading, comparing the dragon to a parent whose children have left home. The hoard becomes a set of small joys guarded against further loss. Christiaan Sabatelli, a Rhysling Award nominee and a single father, finds unexpected tenderness in a familiar monster.

Read “Very Few Good Dragons” at Abyss & Apex

Thank you for spending some time with this afternoon’s edition. Below this point are six more stories and poems, three pieces of interviews and criticism, and three special recommendations from the back shelf.

Special Recommendations can be found near the bottom of the article.

More From the Discovery Desk

Pilgrimage - Caitriana NicNeacail

Martina walks a pilgrim path on a world of giant corals, counting the drones that carry remote pilgrims past her. She resents these proxy travellers, who never face ticks, heat, or blisters. Then a slick step breaks her leg, and her emergency beacon tumbles into the river below. Caitriana NicNeacail, who publishes her fiction on the Substack Coracle Voyager, lets the rescue that follows upend Martina's pride. The closing revelation about the drone's user is quietly powerful.

Read "Pilgrimage" at Coracle Voyager

I Will Bring You Tokyo - P.S.C. Willis

The narrator once burned cities and made constellations, but now walks the Earth in a mortal body under a curse. Only true love's kiss can break it, and a mother's old lesson insists that nobody loves you, only what you can do. On dates with a patient woman, the narrator keeps offering impossible gifts, including Tokyo served on a plate. P.S.C. Willis, a queer British writer based in Shanghai, lets the story turn on a night at the park swings. It is a sweet, funny study of being loved for yourself.

Read "I Will Bring You Tokyo" at Tales & Feathers

The House Keeps One Thing - Ben Blye

A new owner receives the keys to an empty house and slowly learns that it is not quite empty. Cupboards rest open by an inch, a stretch of hallway refuses the light, and closed doors stand open again each morning. The presence seems careful not to disturb the speaker, as if it is willing to share. Ben Blye, a UK poet and the founder of Poetry That

Speaks, builds quiet suspense from short lines. One room at the back stays shut, and that is enough.

Read “The House Keeps One Thing” at Strange Horizons

The Trees and the Frogs and the Sun on the Water - M. R. Robinson

In a village where poetry is magic, Leonora is the finest spellscribe born in a hundred years. Her love poems for her wife Rosemarie go wrong every time, summoning thunder and howling flowers, and one nearly burned their cottage. Rosemarie, a baker with no skill for words, dreads each new sonnet. M. R. Robinson finds a gentle answer in the poems Leonora has been writing all along. This cozy fantasy about a long marriage feels like a warm loaf on a cold day.

Read “The Trees and the Frogs and the Sun on the Water” at Tales & Feathers

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The Pyre - P. Anthony Ramanauskas

She is the spirit of a mountain, and this late summer day is her last. She wanders the stream and the meadow, trying to memorize every bird and every blade of grass. A painter once loved her mountain and burned his canvas when he could not capture it, and she remembers him as she gathers pine and heather. P. Anthony Ramanauskas, host of the Radio FreeWrite podcast, writes in rich, mythic prose. The story becomes a fable of autumn arriving in fire and frost.

Read “The Pyre” at Small Wonders

Through the Doorway, I Watched Her Come and Go - Diogo Silva Ramos

The narrator of this story is the front door of an old house. It hears a baby left on the porch one night and later watches through a peephole as old Pedro raises the foundling Marina. As Marina grows, new peepholes appear at her height, and the door learns what it means to see. Diogo Silva Ramos, who helps run an initiative for Brazilian writers, gives every object in the house a voice. The return of a grown Marina before the house is demolished is deeply touching.

Read “Through the Doorway, I Watched Her Come and Go” at Tales & Feathers

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Beyond the First Shelf

Interview: Kristiana Willsey - Caroline M. Yoachim with Kristiana Willsey

In this Uncanny Magazine interview, Caroline M. Yoachim talks with Kristiana Willsey about today’s featured story. Willsey explains that the idea began during a lonely postdoc in a new city. She calls romance a form that distills storytelling to two problems that solve each other. She also describes how folk music and duet ballads shaped the alternating voices. It is a perfect companion to the story, with a glimpse of her next fantasy novel, set in old Pasadena.

Read “Interview: Kristiana Willsey” at Uncanny Magazine

The Universe Box by Michael Swanwick - Stephen Case

Stephen Case reviews The Universe Box, the latest collection from Michael Swanwick, who once won five Hugo Awards in six years. The review asks what makes Swanwick a writer's writer and finds the answer in story after story. Case looks closely at Dreadnought, Grandmother Dimetrodon, and a melancholy tale set around a college reunion. He compares the craft to alchemy, where character, concept, and genre combine into something unexpected. It is an excellent guide for readers new to Swanwick.

Read "The Universe Box by Michael Swanwick" at Strange Horizons

The Subtle Art of Folding Space by John Chu - Alex Kingsley

Alex Kingsley reviews the debut novel of John Chu, which grew from his 2015 story Hold-Time Violations. Its heroine Ellie is a physicist who also maintains the hidden machinery behind the laws of the universe. When she learns that someone has tampered with it to keep her comatose mother alive, she faces a hard choice. Kingsley praises the tender treatment of grief and of Taiwanese food and heritage, while wishing the world were explained more fully. The review is thoughtful, honest, and fair.

Read "The Subtle Art of Folding Space by John Chu" at Strange Horizons

Special Recommendations

The Snow-Image: A Childish Miracle - Nathaniel Hawthorne

On a cold winter afternoon, Violet and her little brother Peony build a snow sister in their garden. As their mother watches from the window, the snow girl begins to run and play with them, and a flock of snowbirds flutters around her head. Their practical father, a hardware dealer, refuses to believe in anything he cannot explain. Hawthorne's gentle tale sets imagination against stubborn common sense. It is a lovely read for the first snowy weeks of November.

Read "The Snow-Image" at Project Gutenberg

In the Year 2889 - Jules Verne and Michel Verne

First published in 1889, this sketch follows one day in the life of Fritz Napoleon Smith, editor of the Earth Chronicle. His city has towers a thousand feet high, aerial trains, and pneumatic tubes that move travellers at a thousand miles an hour. He visits with his wife in France by phonotelephote and receives news from Mercury, Venus, and Mars. Long credited to Jules Verne, it is now thought to be mostly the work of his son Michel. The predictions are charming, and some feel uncannily close.

Read "In the Year 2889" at Project Gutenberg

The Magic Fishbone - Charles Dickens

A king with nineteen children worries about money until a fairy godmother named Grandmarina gives his eldest daughter a magic fishbone. Princess Alicia may use it for one wish, but only when she truly needs it. She handles everything herself first, from a fainting queen to a baby with a black eye. Dickens wrote the story as if it came from a girl of seven, and it is full of comic nonsense. This illustrated edition from 1911 is a cheerful treat.

Read “The Magic Fishbone” at Project Gutenberg

Thank you for spending part of your day among the letters with us.

Many of today’s stories turn on a moment of being seen. Two letter writers finally meet in a doorway, a battered knight finds a place among bakers, and a scientist reads her family history in the water. Others honour patient love, from a poet’s long marriage to a door that waits for its girl to come home. Science fiction and fantasy often travel far to arrive somewhere tender. We hope a few of these worlds keep you company this week.

I hope one of today’s pieces gives you somewhere worth staying for a while.

Take care!