

Background Information

About the author

Bruno Lowagie lives and works in Ghent, Belgium. In his previous life, he was an open-source software developer and entrepreneur. After selling his company, he turned his attention to writing. He first published works for Dutch and Flemish readers before beginning to translate his fiction into English in 2024.

In 2026, he shifted his focus from short fiction to screenwriting, but since getting noticed by production companies can be notoriously difficult, he began adapting his screenplays into narrative form, resulting in a series of novelettes.⁵⁶

This is the fourth installment in that series and the first that isn't based on a screenplay. Instead, it is a collection of short science-fiction stories.

About the stories

Many of the stories in this collection were originally written in Dutch and submitted to writing contests or published in Dutch and Flemish magazines.

In 2024 and 2025, Lowagie tried to find a wider audience for the English translations by submitting them to magazines such as *Asimov's Science Fiction*, *Clarkesworld Magazine*, *The Colored Lens*, *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*, *Fusion Fragment*, *James Gunn's Ad Astra*, *Sci-Fi Lampoon Magazine*, and many others.

While most of these stories found publication in Flanders or the Netherlands, all the English-language magazines mentioned above declined these submissions. Only two stories in this collection were ultimately published in English.

1. Mirror Point

Spiegelpunt was written for the *Zonderlingen* contest organized by Godijn Publishing.

Zonderlingen (Dutch for *Eccentrics*) was both the theme and the title of the anthology published in 2019, containing the twenty-five highest-ranked submissions. *Spiegelpunt* placed nineteenth.

The story was also selected for publication in an anthology compiled and published by EdgeZero, *Helio-centrisme: Reisgids voor ons zonnestelsel* (2026).

2. The Beast

This story was originally written in English in response to one of the monthly *Furious Fiction* challenges by the *Australian Writers' Centre*.

Each month, participants are invited to write a story of 500 words or fewer within 55 hours while incorporating a number of required elements.

For the April 2019 challenge, every story had to include the following sentences:

- "It is a beautiful and terrible thing and should therefore be treated with great caution."
- "He's never done anything like this before."
- "What's it going to be then, eh?"

Although the story did not make the longlist, Lowagie later translated it into Dutch.

Under the title *Het beest*, it was published by the online magazine *Out of this World* (January 14, 2024).

3. Out of this World

Niet van deze wereld was published in *HSF 2024/2* (Year 55, No. 285), a magazine by *Nederlands Contactcentrum voor Science Fiction* (NCSF), the Dutch contact centre for science fiction, fantasy, and horror.

4. Just As He Wanted

Precies zoals hij het wenste was first published in the Flemish quarterly *Weirdo's* (Year 37, No. 2, July 2024).

The English translation was sold to *Every Day Fiction* for the princely sum of three U.S. dollars.

The story attracted the attention of a movie director, Ion Adrian Fucigiu, who adapted it into the screenplay for his seven-minute short film *Adventum*.

The Dutch version was later reprinted in *Onvoltooid toekomstige tijd*, a collection of forty-two short stories by Lowagie, published by Poespa Producties (2025).

5. I'll Worry About That Yesterday

This story was originally written in Dutch as *Dat zijn zorgen voor gisteren* in response to a weekly writing assignment on *schrijvenonline.org* (June 5, 2019; Assignment #249). It was later published in the Flemish quarterly *Weirdo's* (Year 36, No. 4, December 2023).

6. Blackout

This story won fourth prize in the 2022 thriller contest organized by the Dutch publisher LetterRijn.

Black-out was both the theme of the contest and the title of the anthology containing the highest-ranked submissions. Because the title of each story had to differ from the anthology title, it was originally published as *De vergeten moord* (*The Forgotten Murder*).

It was later renamed *Black-out* for inclusion in *Onvoltooid toekomstige tijd* (Poespa Producties, 2025).

7. The Natural Child

Lowagie wrote this story for 9000con, a Flemish science-fiction convention. It was published in the anthology *9000 levens, editie 2025* by EdgeZero.

The story was included in *Onvoltooid toekomstige tijd* (Poespa Producties, 2025).

8. That Crazy World Show

The original Dutch version, *De aarde draait door*, has appeared in four publications:

- *Out of this World* (online magazine, May 21, 2024)
- *Niet van deze wereld* (EdgeZero anthology, 2024)
- *In beweging* (2024), an anthology of the *Gorcumse Literatuurprijs*, a literary contest organized by the Dutch city of Gorinchem.
- *Onvoltooid toekomstige tijd* (2025, Poespa)

9. Deliver Us from Evil

Verlos ons van het kwade was written for the yearly Dutch Harland Awards for speculative fiction, where it placed 129th out of 221 entries.

Lowagie admits that he was disappointed by that result. When asked to compile the anthology for the science-fiction convention 9000con (*9000 levens, editie 2026*), he included this story to give it a second chance.

10. Ants from Space

One of Lowagie's goals for 2024 was to place at least one story in a paid English-language publication.

Ants from Space became his first success. The story appeared in *Spidersilk & Spaceports*, a children's print magazine published by Hiraeth Publishing (June 2024), earning him the grand sum of two U.S. dollars.

The translation, *Ruimtemieren*, was published in the Dutch magazine *SF-Terra* #285 (May 2024).

11. The Sand Awakens

Het zand ontwaakt was written for the *Zandmannetjes* contest organized by Godijn Publishing.

Zandmannetjes (Dutch for *Little Sandmen*) was both the theme and the title of the anthology published in 2026, containing the twenty-five highest-ranked stories. *Het zand ontwaakt* placed twenty-fourth.

12. The Pursuit of Happiness

Het streven naar geluk was written for the *Charlatans* contest organized by Godijn Publishing.

Although it did not make the final anthology of twenty-five selected stories, published in 2023, it was later included in *Onvoltooid toekomstige tijd* (Poespa Producties, 2025).

13. Unicorn

This story was originally written in Dutch as *Eenhoorn* in response to a weekly writing assignment on *schrijvenonline.org* (February 27, 2019; Assignment #235).

It was later included in *Onvoltooid toekomstige tijd* (Poespa Producties, 2025).

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End notes

The following endnotes provide additional context for the characters, events, and settings.

¹ **Riemann.** The name of the captain refers to the German mathematician, Bernhard Riemann (1826-1866), who made profound contributions to calculus, number theory, and differential geometry.

Riemannian geometry is a branch of mathematics that extends ordinary geometry beyond flat planes and provides the framework used to describe the curvature of spacetime in Einstein’s theory of general relativity.



Georg Friedrich Bernhard Riemann, 1863

² **Erlangen.** Erlangen is a city in Germany (Bavaria), but *erlangen* is also a German verb, meaning *to gain, to obtain, to achieve, or to attain*.

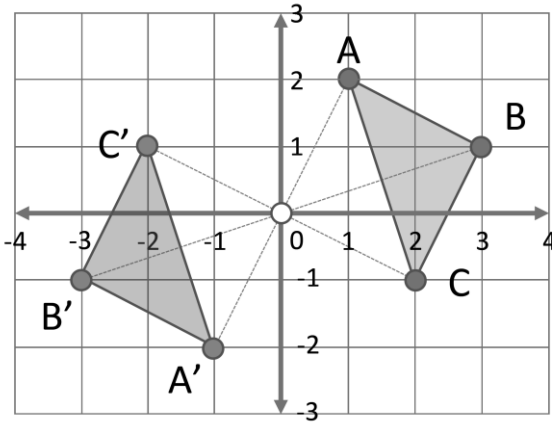
It is often used in a formal or abstract sense, e.g. "*Die Forscher hoffen, neue Erkenntnisse zu erlangen.*" ("The researchers hope to gain new insights.")

The author chose the name because of its association with attainment and discovery.

³ **Reflection point.** A reflection point is the central point in geometry around which a figure or point is reflected. In a point inversion (also known as a central inversion), every point of the original figure is mapped along a straight line through the reflection point to an equal distance on the opposite side.

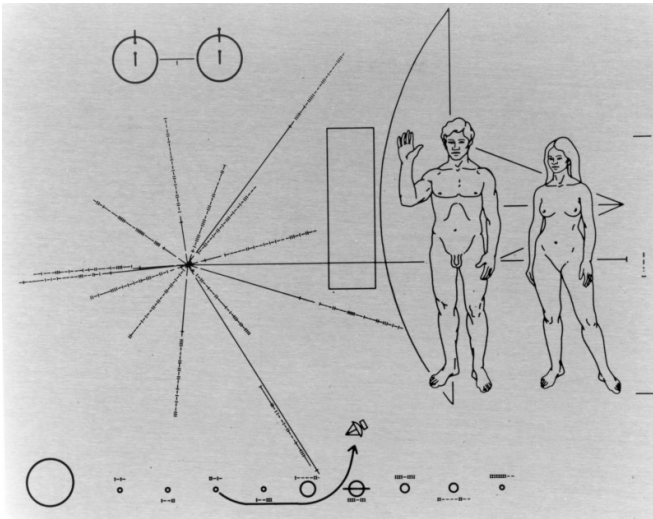
In Dutch, a reflection point is called a *spiegelpunt*, which translates literally as *mirror point*.

The author is aware that the term mirror point can have a somewhat different meaning in English, but he chose the literal translation because it worked better as the title of the short story.



Point inversion in a two-dimensional plane (© Wiki LIC)

⁴ **Pioneer Plaque.** This plaque is a small, engraved metal plate attached to NASA's Pioneer 10 and Pioneer 11 spacecraft, launched in 1972 and 1973.



The illustration on the Pioneer plaque

Designed by Carl Sagan, Frank Drake, and Linda Salzman Sagan, it's intended as a symbolic message from humanity to any extraterrestrial intelligence that might one day encounter the probes.