

Globally-minded, wide-personhood, realism-based, social sci fi/nanopunk/hopepunk by an autistic author with a unique background
MSD is not white male American-centric, nor military sci fi.

Minimum Safe Distance

**First contact was nothing like we imagined.
Can the aliens save Earth? Should they?**

With the Earth teetering on recovery from humanity's 21st century mistakes, two highly advanced aliens observing from the Moon are suddenly on opposite sides of an ethical battle over a dire cosmic threat.

As governments seek to destroy them, the aliens wrestle and scheme, entangling all of humanity as they influence and empower specific humans to achieve their contrary objectives.

Among them are a brilliant AI expert who has channeled her autism in the service of science, and a violent, anti-secular zealot who hates everything she stands for.

Drawn into the conflict, Laurence and Matt must reach minimum safe distance from human nature itself – their own, the rest of humanity's, and of the former-human, techno-demon 'monstas'.

Chased into the ruins of the US, they struggle to distill the meaning of personhood, discover the value of their own lives, and in so doing decide the fate of the solar system.

["Our Verdict: GET IT" – Kirkus Reviews](#)
[8.75/10 rating from The BookLife Prize](#)
[4/5 rating from Foreword/Clarion](#)
[5/5 stars from The Wishing Shelf Awards](#)
[5/5 stars from Readers' Favorite](#)

["Ho Yen's descriptions of advanced technologies should please fans of hard SF, but what really makes the book work are the questions it raises about what it means to be a person and a member of a species." – Kirkus Reviews](#)

"A stylishly written 'first contact' novel with a strong cast of 'very different' characters. Highly recommended!" (5/5 stars)
— The Wishing Shelf (www.thewsa.co.uk)

"When's the sequel coming out?!"
— Derek O., rocket scientist and soccer player extraordinaire

"I really enjoyed MSD. Amazing for a first novel."
— Rupert G., technology director, international traveler

"A thought-provoking novel packed with complex, compelling characters, valuable philosophical insights, and remarkable attention to detail."
— Dan C., attorney

"Brilliant! Would have loved it even if I didn't know the author. Intriguingly inventive and acutely astute. Well done!"
— "Fuj", international NGO assessment information systems manager, blogger, consulting prognosticator

"An engrossing read with unusual characters. If I had purchased the book, I would be happy that I did."
— Brad H., PhD, Applied Mathematics/Astrophysics, special guest reader

X. Ho Yen wants to continue the trend of humanizing, globalizing, and de-militarizing realism-based sci-fi

X. Ho Yen, BS MS MS, is an East Prussian-Cuban-Chinese human raised by Kwai Chang Caine on the planet Vulcan. He's been writing and creating forever, rocket science day job notwithstanding, and is on the autism spectrum (diagnosed). He's been a new person since 2007 when he broke a lifelong Complex PTSD from childhood.



Before his two+ decades in aerospace engineering, he was a sandwich maker, security guard, deliverer of flowers, preschool teacher, data processing grunt, taxi driver, and independent software author.

He's been in the air (PPL glider rating), out to sea (a couple of weeks on a research vessel out of San Diego acquiring atmospheric data), deep underground (Carlsbad Caverns and other public access caves), and in high mountain winter whiteout (a couple of weeks of atmospheric data collection atop a mountain at Steamboat Springs, CO).
XHoYenAuthor.com (member, SFWA, Alli, CAL)

X. Ho Yen Bio Page

Short Bio:

X. Ho Yen is an autistic, Multiracial aerospace engineer who wants to continue the trend of globalizing, de-militarizing, and humanizing realism-based sci fi.

Medium Bio:

X. Ho Yen is an autistic, Multiracial aerospace engineer and CPTSD survivor, raised by Kwai Chang Caine on the planet Vulcan. A creative type since his early childhood autistic fog, he writes realism-based sci fi that's not white-male-American centric or military-focused, but is informed by his focus on human nature.

Long Bio:

X. Ho Yen writes realism-based sci fi because you'll never meet a less magic-minded person, and he's in his own autistic world anyway. An aerospace engineer and lifetime space nerd, he thinks on scales of time and space ranging from the quantum to the cosmological. As an autistic, Multiracial CPTSD survivor and child of immigrants, he has the widest definition of personhood, and a strong personal emphasis on human nature. He wants to continue the trend of globalizing, de-militarizing, and humanizing realism-based (aka "hard") sci fi and is happy to leave science fantasy writing to those better equipped for it.

Suggested Questions for X. Ho Yen

Q: What's your debut novel, "Minimum Safe Distance," about?

Q: Is the autistic character in MSD a savant?

Q: You're unusual in so many ways, yet you managed to carve out a career in aerospace. Why did you go down this path of becoming a writer, with its whole new set of challenges?

Q: How did you choose your pen name, and why have a pen name at all?

Q: Why do you write realism-based sci fi instead of one of the more popular genres?

Q: Why unconventional? Don't readers want and expect their favorite conventions??

Q: Why did you decide to self-publish MSD?

Q: How has MSD been received?

Q: Do you have another book in the works?

Suggested Questions (same ones) with Answers from X. Ho Yen

Q: What's your debut novel, "Minimum Safe Distance," about?

A: Ah, the dreaded "what's it about?" question. Short answer: personhood and transformation. Long answer: As a debut novel, MSD is all about me, of course – my experience of existence, daily and over a lifetime, my struggles with life, the universe, and everything, my perspectives on human nature and the nature of the physical universe, which is unaffected by what we think or believe. That's my honest meta-answer. My marketing answer is that it's 'about' first contact with aliens who don't need us or our planet at all. It all goes terribly wrong, but we might survive, despite ourselves. Everyone is affected, but we mostly see how these events affect two people who are the opposite sides of one coin. I guess you could say it's all about that figurative coin. Importantly, MSD is hopepunk, not dystopia.

Q: Is the autistic character in MSD a savant?

A: No, she is not. She's capable and competent to a large extent because she must be in order to survive in the brutal world of neurotypicals.

Q: You're unusual in so many ways, yet you managed to carve out a career in aerospace. Why did you go down this path of becoming a writer, with its whole new set of challenges?

A: It's not because I'm like those savant autistics on tv and in the movies, let's just establish that right now. The plain answer is that it's my way of reaching out into the world to make contact, persistent contact. I'm not someone who makes people feel good about themselves through commonalities. The best I can hope for is that putting my inner world on paper might somehow be worthwhile, perhaps even transformative for the reader. If that happens I would be delighted!

Q: How did you choose your pen name, and why have a pen name at all?

A: For the record, I chose X. years before a certain billionaire used 'X' in a rebranding effort. And the Ho Yen surname was my Cantonese grandfather's actual surname (a composite of the Chinese style of carrying both maternal and paternal surnames). Very successful author Daniel Abraham recommends using different names for different genres, to avoid confusing readers who've associated a name with a genre. While at this moment I'm focused on sci fi, there's a good chance I'll want to try my hand at something else in the future.

Q: Why do you write realism-based sci fi instead of one of the more popular genres?

A: To my core I'm incapable of believing in anything magical, and souls and vampires and magic simply do not speak to me as a reader or as a storyteller. Plus, I'm a lifelong STEM person, so given a choice between fiction genres, realism-based sci fi is easiest for me, closest to my daily experience of life. The plain fact is, there are many writers out there who have a firm grip on the fantasy handle, and, at least for now, it would be insane to try to compete with them. From the reader standpoint, I believe there must be many readers who, while they enjoy fantasy, may be quite happy to read some unconventional realism-based sci fi (e.g. not military or violence porn sci fi). Like everything about my life, I'm in my own niche.

Q: Why unconventional? Don't readers want and expect their favorite conventions?

A: Readers' tastes vary widely. Not everyone who wants grounded sci fi wants military or violence porn hard sci fi. Distributor and tradpub categorizations are self-fulfilling – if those are the only categories, then obviously they'll sell better than non-existent categories. I write what I like and hope and assume that I'm not the one person on the planet who wants more out of grounded sci fi. My stuff will never have fleets of interstellar spaceships or basically status quo humanity spread across the galaxy, because I truly don't believe that will ever happen in that way. Readers of MSD will see why. My stuff will never have aliens who come to Earth because they want our resources or our flesh. (which, by the way, I see as thinly veiled fear-of-Other stories) If anything, a species capable of interstellar travel might come here because they like some of our books. :) They certainly won't *need* anything on this pale, blue dot. Again, readers of MSD will see why. I can't compete with writers who are good at satisfying conventional needs, and I don't need or want to. It will be interesting to discover whether or not my main audience are fellow autistics.

Q: Why did you decide to self-publish MSD?

A: My plan was to query agents and see if I could get MSD traditionally published. After years of querying, and 170 queries, I finally pulled the plug. Three things have become clear to me.

- 1) Self-publishing is no longer automatically a sign of poor quality, let alone failure. Self-pub in and of itself is nothing to be ashamed of. Putting out a poor quality product remains shameful, of course.
- 2) The traditional publishing industry, still very much clinging to a near monopoly on brick-and-mortar print sales, is now in the same state as the music industry – it mainly pursues the next Harry Potter series, the next platinum album, at least in genre fiction. That's a cryin' shame. If it hasn't already, soon it will become apparent that there are many self-published novels out there, mostly in eBook form, that rival or exceed the quality and artistry of many tradpub novels. I've read tradpub novels that weren't nearly as interesting as MSD, if I do say so myself. At this point, it's tradpub's loss.
- 3) Once I realized those two big things about the world of books, I had to face the self-publishing learning curve, which is daunting. At first I looked at so-called hybrid publishers, but long story short, it costs too much and I lose too much control going that route. So I did my research and climbed the learning curve. As an autistic, or maybe it's just me, I find self-pub incredibly annoying. There's so much writing about oneself (like this media kit), so much torturous self-promotion, so many detailed processes I don't care about and from which I want to run screaming – business, legal, tax, marketing, social media things. Argh! Yet, I have complete control over deployment. It's all on me, and that's probably for the best. I just wish it didn't take so much time away from my writing.

Q: How has MSD been received?

A: I'm very pleased to report that MSD currently has five positive editorial reviews from reputable sources and no negative ones. (Links are at the top of this media kit and on the /msd page of my web site.) Readership is growing, and lovely reader reviews are coming in as well. I look forward to more of the same!

Q: Do you have other books in the works?

A: I do! In October of 2023 I released "Custodians of the Future". It's the stylistic opposite of MSD. Where MSD was cerebral, serious, and ambitious, and covered the Earth-Moon system over the course of a century, CotF is a hopepunk mystery-romp-chase with a touch of whimsy, plus my irreverent social commentary, of course. And it takes place entirely on one day, New Year's Eve, 2099, in Stockholm, Sweden. It has over a hundred homages to pop culture classics, like "The Blues Brothers", "Star Trek", and

many more (but recognizing them is not required to enjoy the book, of course). CotF has several nice alpha reader testimonials and I'm actively promoting it. It already has two 5/5 editorial reviews (Readers' Favorite, and The Wishing Shelf)! Ukrainian studio MiblArt.com did the cover design for me again, and they did a great job. There's a link on my web site. It took me years to write MSD but four months to write "Custodians of the Future", so the groundwork has been laid. More novels are coming, hopefully never quite the same. I've also recently released the pilot episode of my VLOG, "Space Autistic Author," as a new and hopefully better outreach channel. (<https://XHoYenAuthor.com/vlog>)

X. Ho Yen's Endorsements/Reviews/Testimonials

MSD:



BookLife Prize - 2023
Overall: 8.75 out of 10



Clarion Rating:
4 out of 5



“A stylishly written ‘first contact’ novel with a strong cast of ‘very different’ characters. Highly recommended!” (5/5 stars)

— The Wishing Shelf (www.thewsa.co.uk)

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“A thought-provoking novel packed with complex, compelling characters, valuable philosophical insights, and remarkable attention to detail.”

— Dan C., attorney

“Brilliant! Would have loved it even if I didn’t know the author. Intriguingly inventive and acutely astute. Well done!”

— "Fuj", international NGO assessment information systems manager, blogger

“I keep telling you I enjoyed it. The final edit is much better. What happened to [character name redacted] made me cry.”

— X. Ho Yen's spouse, retired research lab training manager

“An engrossing read with unusual characters. If I had purchased the book, I would be happy that I did.”

— Brad H., PhD, Applied Mathematics/Astrophysics, special guest reader

CotF:

“I found it a fast read and kept thinking I had the ending figured out. Of course I was never close to figuring it out but found it a fascinating, humorous read!”

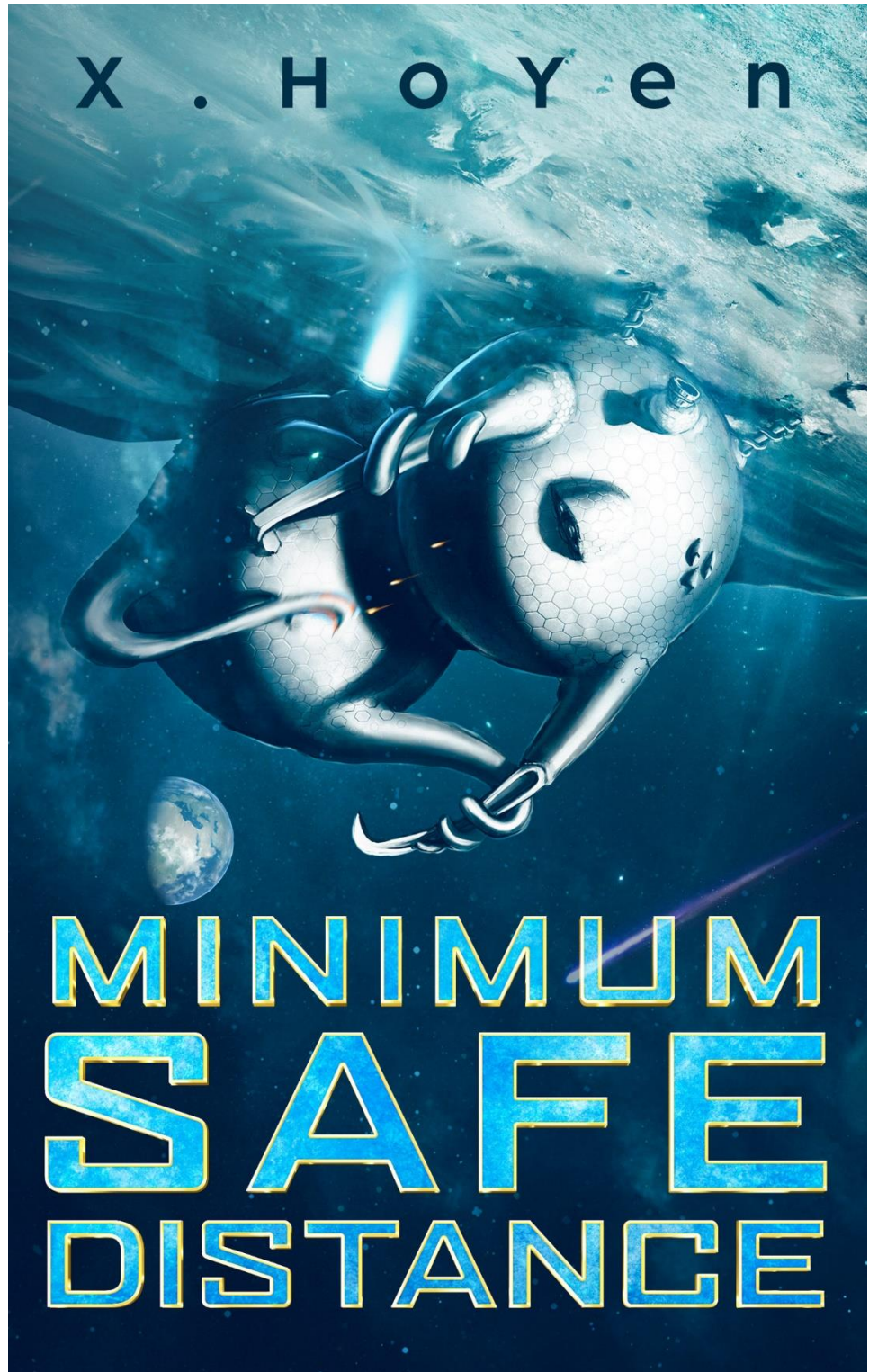
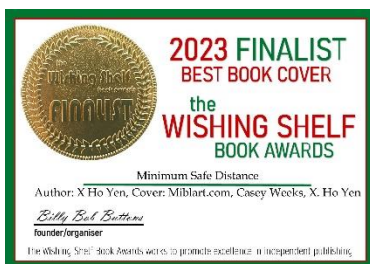
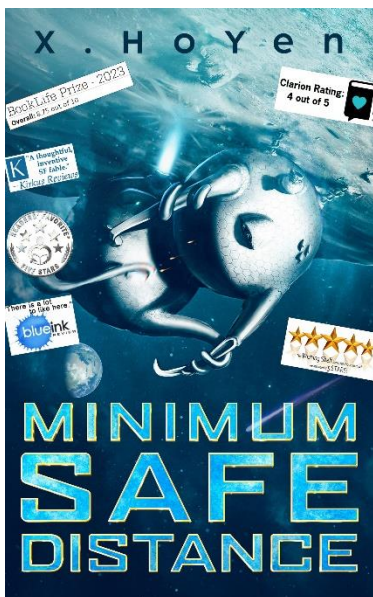
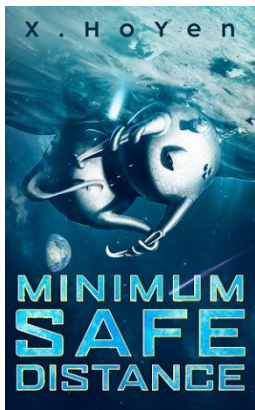
— Cathy B., alpha reader

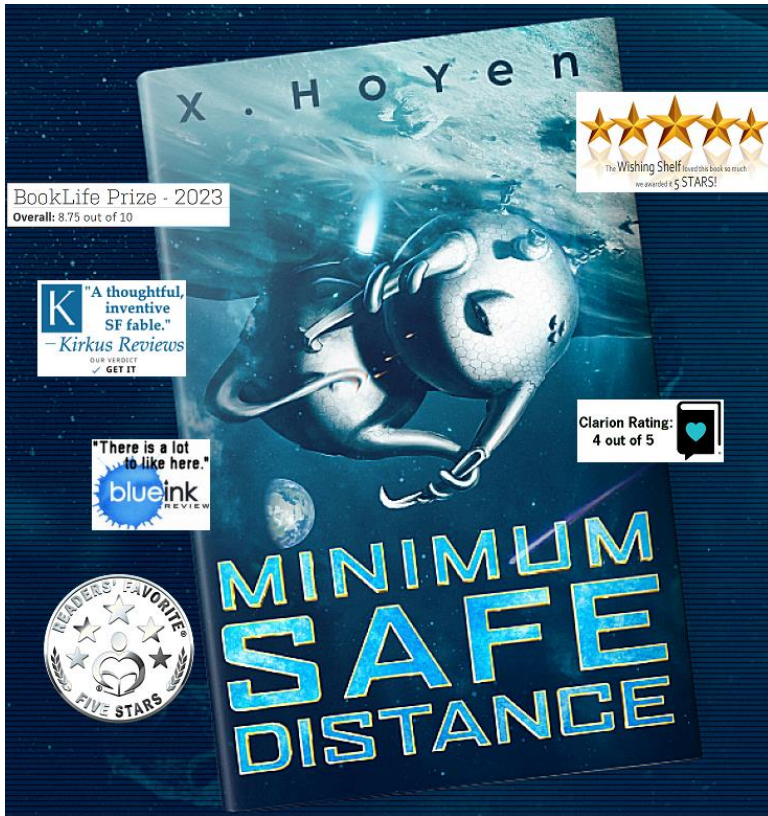
“A rollicking romp through the lingering stench of the wretched refuse of human civilization. I really enjoyed it. I read it straight through. You should consider this an extreme compliment – rarely happens... bloody brilliant.”

— Chris B., alpha reader

”Enjoyed the book! Much sillier tone than MSD, it was a fun read”
— Bobby R., alpha reader

X. Ho Yen's Debut Novel Cover Images, "Minimum Safe Distance"





PYSCHOLOGICAL
SCI FI
 NANOPUNK
 HOPEPUNK
 NON-INVASION
 FIRST CONTACT

X. Ho Yen

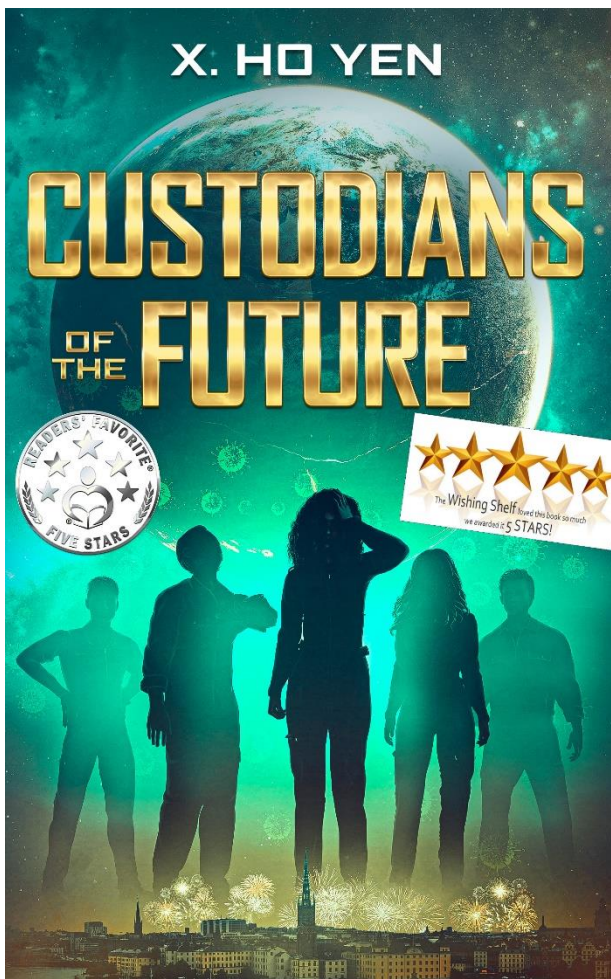


MEMBER

Member Level: Associate

Member Since: 26 Nov 2022

Renewal: 04 Nov 2024



SCI FI
MYSTERY
ROMP
CHASE
SATIRE
 with
NOD EGGS
 in
STOCKHOLM