



As February comes to a close, where are you at with the status of those New Year's goals you made over a month ago? Are those resolutions nothing more than a distant memory? Whether it was a plan to exercise more, eat healthy, or finally quit a pesky habit, did life get in the way? If you are like us and you wanted to read more in 2019, you should start by reading Joe Byerly's post about [how to increase your professional reading](#). Next, you should remind yourself that you are *not* Joe Byerly, and any attempt to read three books at once is a pipe dream! What the rest of us mere mortals need is something short and highly entertaining to keep our reading goals on track. It is time to reboot our waning resolution.

We recommend adding a few short science fiction stories to your reading list. The benefits of reading science fiction are numerous. First and foremost, science fiction is highly entertaining and changes professional reading to leisure reading. By focusing on something enjoyable, aspiring readers are much more likely to develop daily reading habits - the key to consistent growth.

Second, science fiction expands conceptual horizons and challenges the status quo. As [Nate Finney](#) and [Mick Ryan](#) elaborate in two articles on [The Strategy Bridge](#) in [2017](#) and [2018](#), science fiction inspires “divergent thinking about advanced technologies and how to apply them in concert with new ideas and new organizations.” In other words, we learn about new and future technologies by reading science fiction and unlocking our creativity. As an extra benefit, we endorse pairing science fiction with a beverage of choice to increase your level of divergent thinking.

[August Cole](#), popular futurist and co-author of [Ghost Fleet: A Novel of the Next World War](#) (2015), aptly refers to increasing intelligence by reading fiction as #FICINT. Lucky for us, he has also written some great short stories over the past few years. These are quick reads, packed with rich characters set in plausible future-war scenarios. We think they are especially enjoyable when paired with whiskey. The first flight is on us - here are six short stories paired with our recommended drink. Don't take our word for it though, settle in with your spirit of choice and an August Cole story, then Tweet photos of your favorite combination using #FICINT.

Wild Turkey - [Discards](#). “You could use the fresh air, private. Pop a seal. Cease-fire's for real this time. If it wasn't, you think it'd just be us two pulling security here?” - Lieutenant Guerrero

Do you ever wonder if future technologies have the potential to remove the human element of war? Do these machines change the character of war and threaten the nature as well? This story focuses on the intersection of technologies and their impacts to humans. Our inventions continue to change the character of war, especially as we endeavor to remove ourselves more completely through them. As you strap on your boots alongside this lone U.S. Army team far from home, you will feel right at home with the Kentucky classic, Wild Turkey. Moreover, the characters in this story would appreciate a shot to calm their nerves after their stressful experience. But be careful, one shot can lead to another... just ask

August about his “no bourbon after midnight rule.”

The Macallan - [Automated Valor](#). “You know, if we survive the next three minutes, and reach our next rally point within another 87, Sticky might just make citizen and leave Taiwan behind.” - Churchill, vehicle commander

This recent story and The Macallan share a similar description - “depth and possibility.” If you agree, in the next 20 years, there may be a need to “reopen” the port of Djibouti after the Chinese close it, then this is the one to start with. Settle in for a plot with advanced weaponry, artificial intelligence, manned-unmanned teaming, and futuristic human factors. In this emotionally charged story, information and cyber actions gradually transform into full blown kinetic operations. We recommend pouring a glass of The Macallan to enjoy the richness of this classic playing off the texture of “Automated Valor.” And just like The Macallan, Automated Valor even makes for a great second or third indulgence.

Hirsch - [UNDERBELLY](#). “The imagery would be stunning, certain to create mayhem through doubt.” - August Cole

When the U.S. cuts support to NATO Article V and Russian information/special operations in the Baltics heat up, Transatlantic Allies must rely on cooperation, ingenuity, and deception to avoid a full-blown war. The story follows three paths, and combines existing and near-future technology that makes it feel eerily like reading headlines in the next couple of years. The story lines overlap and converge at critical points that add spice and complexity, very similar to the spice and complexity of the award-winning small batch Kentucky bourbon, Hirsch. Coming in at just under ten pages, this is a quick read, but leaves you wishing there was more. Cole skillfully creates characters and scenes with enough background and depth that the reader can put the puzzle pieces together and enjoy a full picture. It suits Hirsch perfectly: There's enough deception to make you think this is “just” another bourbon, but you'll want to pour another glass, and you could, just so you can re-read this fast paced and

exciting short story.

Laphroaig - [Operation CANDLEMAKER](#). "But you couldn't court martial an algorithm, so the Navy brass had to keep a human 'in the loop' in case things went awry with the onboard autonomous combat system." - August Cole

What could be more complex than orchestrating the clearance of the Straits of Hormuz and securing nuclear sites in Iran, following the open missile attack on a U.S. Navy flagship? Consider the rich tones of peat and smoke of the single malt Scotch Laphroaig as you follow the harrowing tale of a naval commander and a recon-Ranger team. A U.S. Navy CDR commands a squadron of autonomous ships, while simultaneously coordinating aviation assets. The Army Ranger team, camouflaged in the electromagnetic spectrum, orchestrate an attack on a nuclear weapon site, but their mission is put at hazard by some local civilians. This story is as robust and multifaceted as the famous flavors of Laphroaig. There are twists and turns within the many layers of physical, virtual, and informational dimensions. Take some extra time to enjoy this pairing and think about the implications of human nature during war.

Bulleit - [ANTFARM](#). "That's what they wanted war to look like: an all-powerful view over a lonely landscape far, far above the shredded flesh and torn robes, the smell of piss and shite, sweat and tears swallowed by the dirt." - August Cole

This new take on classic air power includes AI, spec ops, crowd-sourced targeting, and additive manufacturing for on-call mission specific munitions. The tie-ins to predictive analysis, much like the [Hybrid Forecasting Competition](#), raise the tension throughout this harrowing story. So what happens when you combine swarming technology with crowd-sourced predictive intelligence all in the name of manned-unmanned operations? You won't find any spoilers here... But we can promise by the end you'll need to pour a strong glass to settle your nerves. All of the tingling from the haptic suit will go well with the buzz from a

glass of Bulleit Frontier Rye. The all-American flavor matches well with this classic tale with some new and nerve-wracking twists.

Stolichnaya Vodka - [ANGRY TRIDENT](#). "Was this a heroic way to fight? That was a question to be answered years from now, and one he was not particularly interested in at the moment. He would accomplish his missions, and protect his country - by all means available." - August Cole

The latest short story from August Cole takes place in the frozen landscape of Norway where American and Norwegian allies fight alongside each other. They endure the harsh environment while experiencing alternating periods of extreme boredom and unexpected hair-raising action. The manned-unmanned teaming, additive manufacturing, and automated drones will open new doors to what you thought was possible. Their tactical employment will challenge long established norms. By the end, much like the characters in this story, you'll need a shot of Stoli to warm up and calm your nerves.

It is still early in 2019 and there is plenty of time to reinvigorate your reading goals. Perhaps you are on track. If so, is your reading diet well balanced like your food diet? Or are you spending most of your time focusing on military history and leadership? Science fiction is a great addition to your reading regimen. August Cole's science fiction short stories are sure to spark some new thought and expand your conceptual horizon regarding technology. #FICINT inspires connections between disparate ideas and stokes our creativity. Besides, science fiction is just fun to read! So, pour a couple of fingers, neat or on the rocks, and settle in for an enjoyable read.

*[Austin M. Duncan](#) and [Tyler Quinn](#) are officers in the U.S. Marine Corps and plankowners of [Ender's Galley](#). The opinions expressed are theirs alone and do not reflect those of the Marine Corps, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.*

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