

# Autoduel<sup>®</sup> Tales

The Fiction of Car Wars<sup>®</sup>



**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

# From the Pages of *Autoduel Quarterly*

## The Future Is Back!

From 1983 through 1993, *Autoduel Quarterly* published fiction set in the *Car Wars* universe, bringing the world of futuristic vehicular combat to life. Now, all those stories are back in print! Discover:

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... and more!

The world is in your hands.  
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your bookmark handy!

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by Steven Marsh  
Cover Art by Denis Loubet

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*From  
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Quarterly*



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# Autoduel Quarterly



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# the Driver's Seat

The year: 1981. There's a new game revolving around a simple hook.

The year: 2031. Cars shoot at each other.

The game is called *Car Wars*.

With the game came the broad strokes of a world: A global collapse. Grain blights. Riots. Bounties on the open road. Arena duels as televised sport. Convoys and courier missions between cities. A motto of "Drive Offensively."

The game begat a support magazine: *Autoduel Quarterly* (abbreviated *ADQ*). The year is either 1983 or 2033, depending on how you count.

The magazine supported the game, of course. But it also supported the *world*, fleshing out the intersection of cheap life and quick death, with fame and fortune in one direction and – in the other – a post-defeat reboot at a Gold Cross clone bank . . . if you're rich and lucky enough. On the side of the road are the metallic husks of former dreams.

One of the recurring features of *ADQ* during its decade-long run was its fiction. These stories stretched across the entire gamut of the *Car Wars* universe, ranging from humorously satirical to tragically serious, from noir-esque to science fiction, from uplifting to heartbreaking.

Of course, they also included a *lot* of cars shooting at each other.

This chronological collection compiles all the stories that appeared in *ADQ* (omitting some plotless fictional bits that were intended primarily to expand the game setting).

Herein you'll experience desperate missions, glamorous duels, love, betrayals, death, and the 21st-century consequences of failing to find a babysitter on short notice.

Welcome to the world of *Car Wars*.

Fastening your seat belt is *strongly* advised.

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# Effie

by Jim Lowerre

From *Autoduel Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 1 "Spring 2034,"  
first published in 1984

It was June 14, 2033, a date of no particular importance except it meant it was time for our monthly meeting and pep talk. ELMAY headquarters was in a fortified industrial area southeast of Old Los Angeles, about 28 miles down the big Eye-Five.

By this time in history, the United States Postal Service was as extinct as *Tyrannosaurus rex*, killed by the high costs of trying to maintain service in the face of the current turmoil. Most items the USPS used to handle were now carried by the private courier companies with their airplanes, helicopters, and fleets of battle-rigged trucks. They cost more (about a dollar for a one-ounce piece going less than 400 miles) but they delivered reliably and on time.

There was, however, an alternative: ELMAY, or electronic mail. You could take a piece of correspondence, put it in the ELMAY system, and courtesy of digital electronics, tight-beam lasers, and a satellite or two, a duplicate of your document would emerge from another machine only thirty seconds later.

But these systems aren't foolproof, and that's why I'm on the payroll of the ELMAY Corporation. I carry a toolcase.

My name is Jack Blackthorn; my colleagues call me the Juiceman. I'm an "effie." The word comes from the initials "F.E." – Field Engineer.

Jake Brennan, our manager, was addressing us. He had been an "effie" for ten years before his promotion, and his body bore evidence of the dues he'd paid. A tantalum plate covered a hole in the back of his skull, and his left arm still showed the scars of severe burns.

"The good news, guys, is that your allowance for ammunition is now \$200 a day. And for every two hundred miles you drive on business, the Corporation will pay for a full recharge."

He paused, then dropped the bomb.

"The bad news is that the Corporation is not going to give us another chopper. The helicopter we have will still be used only for calls more than one hundred miles from here."

There were no disappointed groans. We had all been expecting this. But none of us had to like it. Jake went on.

"I know it stinks, but the brass is paying good money for you guys to move on the roads."

"I wonder what Leonard would have thought of that. Or George."

The comment caused an uncomfortable silence. Leonard had burned to death in his Piranha after rolling it in a desperate attempt at a high-speed bootlegger. George had been attacked by a cycle gang that was after his tools and parts. He succeeded in driving them off with heavy casualties and got back to the branch only to succumb to his wounds.

"I miss them more than you know, guys. But the main concern is getting the customers up and running any way possible. Any questions?"

No one spoke.

"Meeting's over, now hit the streets!"

We finished our various drinks and rummaged through the parts shelves and cabinets. Picking up what we needed, we carried it out and stowed it in our vehicles.



# Oldest Trick in the Book

by Michael Stackpole

From *Autoduel Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 4 "Winter 2042,"  
first published in 1993

I slid into the leather-lined custom Kevlar bucket seat and closed the car's door. It thumped solidly shut, sealing out road noise and exhaust fumes. The metallic clicks and clacks of my safety harness accompanied the whispered hiss of the cockpit pressurizing itself. I punched my preignition code into the dashpad, bringing up my electrical system, then I snapped the complink line into the socket on my helmet.

I stabbed the celmodem button on my dashboard with the middle finger of my left hand. I frowned as the device dialed in and established the connection between Opsbase and the Badger. The knuckle on that finger hurt as if I'd punched someone, but I hadn't. I made a fist and studied the knuckle from every angle, trying to figure out if it was swollen. I couldn't tell and refused to believe it was arthritis setting in. Yeah, my mother's hands had ached like that when I was a kid, but she was old.

"About time you got into your rust-bucket, Allard." The snippy young woman's voice told me I'd get no sympathy, despite the fact that the call at home had roused me a bit earlier than I'd allowed myself to become accustomed to. A Wolfhound trainee in her last six months before hitting the streets, she clearly hated being my Ops shadow. "The Lobo is 5.2 miles from your present location, which I notice is remaining incredibly stable."

"Worrying like that will wrinkle your pretty little face, Wendy." I keyed the ignition code, waited a second and tapped in

the confirmation code, then the full dozen cylinders under the Badger's hood roared to life. "Want to give me cross-streets?"

"Sending to your Tacmap." A laser mounted in my helmet splayed a green and red map of the city on the faceplate. It isolated one small sector, then blew it up and started painting in details. Two Farmer's Equity Wolves became red arrows moving through the green streets. Red diamonds marked some of our sheep – Allcity used that sort of symbolism to remind me how valuable they were to the company – and the other cars were represented by asterisks, making them accidents just waiting to happen.

The Lobo got a solid red ball that flashed a Jot. "Got him, Ops."

"Get him, Allard! Make it fast because the delay will make us liable for 1.7 more payouts."

"Your wish is my command."

The Badger swung around the semi-circular drive in front of my house and cruised out into the street. It had a silver body with three black stripes running from the grill over the roof to the trunk. Blockier than most cars nowadays, and made more so by the heavy ramplates up front and in the rear, it moved through the streets like a living fossil. It made all the other cars look sleek and fragile, and I realized the same could probably be said of me in comparison to most of the folks in my trade these days.



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