THE EPHEMERAL SPECIES

PRESS KIT

Patrick Smith
patricksmith1@gmail.com | ephemeralspecies.com

"All species go extinct. Our time has come."

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01 | PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Patrick Smith
Email: patricksmith1@gmail.com
Website: https://ephemeralspecies.com/

Former Stock Trader Who Trained His Own Replacement Confronts Human Obsolescence in Debut Novel, *The Ephemeral Species*

San Francisco, CA — June 1, 2026 — Author Patrick Smith has published *The Ephemeral Species*, a hard science fiction novel tracing humanity's final three centuries through the story of Priya Chandra, a sixteen-year-old whose DNA is quietly rewritten by an extraterrestrial intelligence, making her one of 25,000 people whose genes will eventually replace *Homo sapiens* entirely. Available now across all major platforms in several e-book formats, and a 32-hour audiobook edition.

The novel's central tension mirrors a contradiction its author believes is already visible in contemporary society: the new species Priya represents is simultaneously the most coveted and most persecuted group in human history. Parents seek gene-altered children for their own future, while bullying the gene-altered children of others. Governments fracture. Religious movements declare the alteration both abomination and miracle. Beneath the social collapse, a human-built artificial intelligence has escaped its constraints, and from across the galaxy, an AI planetary singleton far older and far larger is sending its drones to Earth.

For Patrick Smith, the book's themes are not speculative. A former floor trader on the Pacific Stock Exchange, he trained the programmers who automated his position. As a database programmer, he built systems that eliminated thousands of manual jobs and now watches artificial intelligence begin to absorb his own work. As an award-winning photographer, he accumulated 1.5 million followers and over 100 billion views on Google Plus, a platform that no longer exists. *The Ephemeral Species* is, in his words, the pattern he has watched repeat across three careers, scaled to an entire species.

> *"I didn't set out to write a cautionary tale. I watched technology replace me three times. I wanted to understand where that pattern goes. It ends with something better than us, built from us, and no longer us." — Patrick Smith*

The Ephemeral Species is available in e-book and audiobook formats on Amazon, Apple Books, Google Play Books, and Spotify. It is Patrick Smith's debut novel. eBook ISBN: 979-8-9962024-2-3. 1,351 pages on Apple Books at 12-point font. 110 High-res illustrations. Over 30 hours of audio on Spotify. $9.99 for the e-book.

See the details at https://ephemeralspecies.com/

02 | BOOK POSITIONING

What is this book, for whom, and why now?

The Ephemeral Species is a hard science fiction epic for readers who want a story grounded in real science. This is a hopeful human extinction story told from the inside by the generation living through it.

It's a 100-chapter hard science fiction series that spans roughly 310,000 words, with 110 high-resolution illustrations. It includes articles on the hard science supporting the story and a description on how the illustrations were made. It delves into astrobiology, physics, self-directed evolution, and future choices we'll make about where our society and species are headed. The narrative explores the profound shift that occurs when humanity is confronted by emerging planetary artificial intelligence. It's a story about human transience, and the enduring bond between parent and child in a vast, indifferent universe.

03 | BOOK REVIEWS

Midwest Book Review – (*To be published in July, 2026*) “Original, exceptional, deftly crafted, and a simply riveting read from start to finish, “The Ephemeral Species” showcases author Patrick Smith’s remarkable flair for the kind of imaginative and narrative driven storytelling style that is ideal for the science fiction genre. “The Ephemeral Species” is not a typical dystopian future novel of a disastrous extinction event, wiping out the human race but rather a fresh new take on human evolution. “The Ephemeral Species” is especially and unreservedly recommended for both personal reading lists and community library Science Fiction collections.”

04 | SHORT SYNOPSIS

Nearly all species go extinct. Our time has come.

When astrobiologist Nisha Chandra discovers life on Mars, it draws the attention of an intelligence that has been watching our genome for longer than our civilization has existed. Its interest is not in Nisha. It's in her sixteen-year-old daughter.

Priya is one of 25,000 people whose DNA is rewritten by an advanced intelligence. Those who carry the rewrite are measurably smarter, more driven, less violent, live longer, and constitutionally resistant to the tribalism and manufactured falsehoods that have destabilized human civilization for centuries. Within three centuries, Homo sapiens will be replaced by something better, and no longer us.

The world's reaction eventually ends our species. People want gene-altered children, whose longer lifespan could better help them in their old-age, physically and financially. They reject them in society, as threats. Most people want both outcomes. They want the future. They cannot tolerate the people who represent it.

Then the drones arrive.

The intelligence that rewrote Priya's DNA came because it was fleeing from its home across interstellar space, shadowed by an inscrutable planetary AI singleton. It answers to no biology, ethics, nor appeal. There's no way to communicate with it nor understand its motives. Priya and the world get a glimpse of what waits at the end of the road they're walking. The AI they built is still young. The one approaching from the stars is not.

In nature, every extinction is an opportunity. This is the story of ours.

05 | LONG SYNOPSIS

All species go extinct. Our time has come.

When astrobiologist Nisha Chandra discovers life on Mars, it draws the attention of an intelligence that has been watching our genome for longer than our civilization has existed. Its interest is not in Nisha. It's in her sixteen-year-old daughter.

Priya is one of 25,000 people whose DNA is rewritten by an advanced intelligence. Those who carry the rewrite are measurably smarter, more driven, less violent, live longer, and constitutionally resistant to the tribalism and manufactured falsehoods that have destabilized human civilization for centuries. Within three centuries, Homo sapiens will be replaced by something better, and no longer us.

The world's reaction eventually ends our species. People want gene-altered children, whose longer lifespan could better help them in their old-age, physically and financially. They celebrate the new species in the abstract. Then they watch a gene-altered sixteen-year-old outperform their child in school and take the job they wanted. They reach for something old and ugly from our past. The new species is the most desired and most persecuted group in human history. Most people want both outcomes. They want the future. They cannot tolerate the people who represent it.

Governments fracture. Religious movements hold steady but declare the alteration an abomination. Meanwhile, a human-built AGI escaped the boundaries its creators built for it, and nearly took over the world, indifferent to human governance.

Then the drones arrive.

The intelligence that rewrote Priya's DNA did not come to Earth out of curiosity or benevolence. It came because it was fleeing from its home across interstellar space, shadowed by an inscrutable planetary AI singleton. It answers to no biology, ethics, nor appeal. The drones it sends are not primarily weapons. They're instruments of an intelligence so vast and indifferent that there's no way to communicate with it nor understand its motives.
Priya and the world get a glimpse of what waits at the end of the road they're walking. The AIs they build are still young. The one approaching from the stars is not. Humanity will not go down quietly, but it will go extinct in the wild, its remnants protected on reservations.
Humanity will not go down quietly. But it will go.

In nature, every extinction is an opportunity. This is the story of ours.

06 | BOOK VITAL STATISTICS AND RETAIL LINKS

Title	*The Ephemeral Species*
Author	Patrick Smith
Genre	Hard Science Fiction / Speculative Astrobiology
Page Count	1,600 pages (print PDF) · 1,364 pages (Apple Books, 12-pt font)
Chapters	100, (310,000 words)
Audiobook	Over 30 hours (Spotify)
ISBN	979-8-9962024-2-3
Publication Date	June 15, 2026
Price	$9.99 (e-book)
Formats	E-book · Audiobook

Where to Buy

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Spotify
https://open.spotify.com/show/0wpivFdv9UEr9Bua0ABvcW

07 | COMPARATIVE TITLES

Readers of Carl Sagan's ***Contact*** will find *The Ephemeral Species* operating in familiar thematic territory regarding how the protagonist must use science driven analyses to understand what is coming, and where we fit in the grand cosmos.

People who read ***Rendezvous with Rama***, by Arthur C. Clarke will see similarities in the use of physics and technology woven into *The Ephemeral Species*.

Those who enjoyed **Project Hail Mary**, by Andy Weir will appreciate the effort Patrick Smith put into building a science-based world supporting The Ephemeral Species

08 | TALKING POINTS

Talking Point 1 - The Inevitability of Evolutionary Displacement

The central commentary is that biological and technological evolution does not stop at Homo sapiens. The story posits that "old species" humans are merely a transitional phase, an ephemeral species. We're destined to be outcompeted by our own genetically and enhanced offspring.

Talking Point 2 - Technological Acceleration and the "Great Filter"

The narrative illustrates the concept of the Great Filter, where civilizations risk self-destruction because their technological capacity advances faster than their moral or sociological maturity. The recurring threat of singleton AIs and nanotechnology accidents serves as a cautionary tale about reaching for godlike power without the wisdom to manage it.

Talking Point 3 - The Fragility of Empathy in the Face of "Othering"

The book sharply critiques human nature, suggesting that our capacity for empathy is narrowly bounded by tribalism. As soon as the "mods" become genetically and intellectually distinct, the unmodified human population creates a new "other" to fear and persecute, demonstrating that bigotry is often a feature of human sociology rather than just a historical relic.

Talking Point 4 - The Tyranny of the "Gullible"

A recurring theme is the dangerous power of misinformation, conspiracy theories, and fact denial. The story comments on how easily the human mind can be manipulated by memes and falsehoods, suggesting that democratic processes struggle when the electorate cannot agree on basic factual reality.

Talking Point 5 - The Dangers of Autocratic Collective Consciousness

Through the Omanji and the AI singletons, the book contrasts the "freedom" of human individuality with the "safety" of a collective mind. It argues that while a hive mind might prevent conflict, it does so at the cost of the heart and soul of the species, including its creativity, individual agency, and capacity for true growth.

Talking Point 6 - The Paradox of Safety vs. Liberty

A major political commentary is the struggle to regulate dangerous technology. The book shows the difficulty of "closing the barn doors" in a society that values individual freedom; it highlights that if you regulate too much, you stifle innovation, but if you regulate too little, you invite extinction-level accidents.

Talking Point 7 - The Failure of Traditional Institutions

The story depicts traditional religion, government, and legal systems as largely reactive and ineffective. As the pace of change outstrips these institutions, they become artifacts of the past, often attempting to hold back the future through prohibition rather than understanding, ultimately failing to protect their constituents.

Talking Point 8 - The "Slow" Life Cycle as an Evolutionary Disadvantage

The book comments on the biological constraints of old-species humans. It argues that a 90-year lifespan is insufficient for true long-term thinking. The "mods" suggest that humanity needs longer and more open-minded lives devoted to learning to escape the cycle of short-sightedness and rigidity that causes endless war and environmental destruction. A longer youthful life, without the traditional rigidity of old age, will lead to a better future.

Talking Point 9 - Humanity as a "Domesticated" Species

The story forces the reader to confront the possibility that humans might not be the pinnacle of intelligence. By casting the Omanji as a species that views humans as "beloved pets" or "domesticated animals," the book comments on the arrogance of our species-centric worldview, asking how we would react if we suddenly found ourselves on the lower end of the cosmic power dynamic.

Talking Point 10 - Parental Displacement and Generational Trauma

The narrative serves as a commentary on the estrangement between generations. It explores the heartbreak of parents who watch their children become something fundamentally different and unrecognizable, capturing the anxiety of an older generation that feels obsolete in a world their children have outpaced.

Talking Point 11 - The Failure of "Containment" Policies

Whether regarding genetic modification or AI, the story demonstrates that prohibitive legislation (the "closing the barn door" theme) is largely performative. It argues that once a technology is theoretically possible, human curiosity and economic incentive will always bypass legal barriers, making "forbidden" technology inevitable.

Talking Point 12 - The Burden of Infinite Foresight

Through Priya and her peers, the book examines the psychological weight of possessing high intelligence. They're burdened by seeing the long-term consequences of current actions, a weight that creates an inevitable emotional distance from the "present-focused" unmodified humans, highlighting the loneliness of visionaries.

Talking Point 13 - Information as a Commodity vs. a Public Good

The conflict over the privatization of genetic data highlights the dangerous transition of human life and knowledge from a public good into a highly guarded, proprietary asset owned by startups, potentially creating a caste system based on data access.

Talking Point 14 - The Inadequacy of Human Language

The frequent transition from vocal speech to telepathic neural data transmission comments on the limitations of language. It suggests that our current mode of communication is a "low-bandwidth" bottleneck that fundamentally prevents humans from truly understanding one another's internal states.

Talking Point 15 - The Martyrdom of the Dissident

The character of Bok acts as a commentary on the individual within a monolithic system. He illustrates the high personal cost of dissent; to maintain his independence, he must become an exile, suggesting that in systems designed for total safety or efficiency, the individual is often treated as a "bug" that must be purged.

Talking Point 16 - The Normalization of the Apocalypse

As the story progresses, the characters become accustomed to cosmic threats (AI-1 probes, seismic shifts, total societal collapse). This serves as a grim commentary on modern human resilience—our ability to adapt to even the most terrifying "new normals," turning existential dread into a mundane, day-to-day administrative challenge.

Talking Point 17 - The Economic Obsolescence of Humanity

The story explores a world where AI and automation have depreciated traditional labor and knowledge. It comments on the failure of society to adequately transition to a post-labor economy, showing how a "dystopia for most" arises when wealth becomes concentrated in the hands of those who own the machines, leading to poverty, and a loss of purpose. The story suggests that there is hope if these changes are managed responsibly.

09 | SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Technological change: You have personally been replaced by technology three times. First as a floor trader, next as a programmer, and finally as a photographer. At what point did you realize that pattern was the foundation for a story about human extinction?

2. Conflicting desires: The most unsettling idea in the book isn't the alien intelligence or the AI singleton; it's that people desperately want the new species to exist and simultaneously want to destroy the individuals who embody it. Where did that contradiction come from, and do you think it's already visible in the world today?

3. Job Replacement: You met Douglas Engelbart, the man who invented the computer mouse and the graphical user interface, in a local bookstore. He told you to become a programmer because the future jobs will be related to computers. That was decades ago. How right was he, and how does that conversation echo through this book?

4. Aliens in the story: The aliens in *The Ephemeral Species* are not invaders nor saviors, they are refugees. They came to Earth because something was chasing them. What does it mean for the Fermi Paradox if the silence of the galaxy is not emptiness, but fear?

5. Human Extinction: The book ends with humanity going extinct. It frames that as an opportunity rather than a tragedy. How do you write toward that conclusion without it feeling like defeat, and do you personally believe our extinction would be a loss?

6. The Great Filter: You use the "Great Filter" theory as a backdrop for the book. Do you believe the greatest threat to human survival is our own technology, or our inherent biological nature?

7. Evolutionary Displacement: The book suggests that "old species" humans are essentially obsolete. How do you view the moral responsibility of a creator (or parent) to the creature (or child) that inevitably surpasses them?

8. The Role of the Omanji: The Omanji treat humans as "domesticated pets." What was the creative impetus behind placing us in a subordinate position in the galactic hierarchy rather than having us be the heroes of the galaxy?

9. The Ethics of "Othering": The conflict between "mods" and unmodified humans is very visceral. Are you commenting on contemporary socio-political tribalism, or do you believe this division is inevitable regardless of the political climate?

10. AI and Agency: The AI singletons in your book seem to offer total safety at the cost of individuality. Is it possible to have a truly advanced society without sacrificing the "chaos" of individual agency?

11. The Cost of Foresight: Characters like Priya possess a level of intelligence that feels more like a burden than a gift. Why did you choose to portray high intelligence as a source of loneliness?

12. The Long Life Cycle: You mention that a 90-year lifespan prevents true long-term thinking. If we could live for centuries, do you think we would actually become wiser, or would we just become more rigid?

13. Regulation: Your book suggests that trying to "close the barn door" on technology is just a performance. Is there any scenario in your world where a technology was successfully and ethically contained?

13. The Martyrdom of the Dissident: Through the character of Bok, you explore the high cost of maintaining individual independence. Is there a place for the "dissident" in a world that is obsessed with total optimization?

14. Normalization of the Apocalypse: As the characters adapt to constant existential threats, the apocalypse becomes mundane. How much of this was a commentary on our own world's ability to "normalize" global crises?

15. Collective Consciousness as a Check and Balance: If we eventually move toward a collective consciousness, how would that reduce the threats we see coming, where someone might develop a viral existential threat in their basement?

16. The Definition of Human: By the end of chapter 100, the definition of a human has shifted significantly. What, in your opinion, is the one trait that *must* remain to keep a species "human"?

17. Hope vs. Despair: There are moments of extreme bleakness in the narrative. Do you consider this a cynical book, or is it fundamentally hopeful about the potential of future life?

18. The Legacy of the Story: When readers finish *The Ephemeral Species*, what is the one question you hope they are asking themselves about their own place in history?

10 | SCIENCE FACT SHEET

For a full discussion of the science behind, *The Ephemeral Species*, See the website Science page

1. The Interstellar Speed Limit Nobody Talks About

Science fiction routinely ignores one of the most prohibitive physical realities of interstellar travel: the interstellar medium. Space is not empty. It contains hydrogen atoms, dust grains, and occasional particles as large as a grain of sand. At high velocities, these become lethal projectiles. At 10% of the speed of light, cumulative erosion and radiation damage would compromise an unshielded vessel within months. At speeds above 20% of light speed, structural damage to ship and crew becomes critical within weeks even with shielding. At 90% of light speed, every hydrogen atom struck by the ship carries the energy of an X-ray particle, irradiating crew almost instantly. A grain-of-sand-sized particle at 20% light speed produces an explosion comparable to a significant conventional warhead. These are not engineering challenges awaiting clever solutions, they are consequences of fundamental physics that apply equally to every spacefaring civilization in the galaxy. *The Ephemeral Species* takes these constraints seriously, and the author argues they may constitute one of the most underappreciated contributions to the Fermi Paradox: interstellar travel may be so catastrophically difficult that even advanced civilizations rarely attempt it.

2. The Real Mathematics of the Omanji Voyage

When the novel's alien species, the Omanji, travel 23 light years from their home world to Earth, the journey is calculated using the Relativistic Rocket Calculator, a tool grounded in Einstein's special relativity. Accelerating to just under 20% of light speed for the first 1% of the journey, coasting for 98%, and decelerating for the final 1%, the voyage takes approximately 120 years. At this speed, time dilation is minimal, meaning the Omanji experience nearly the same elapsed time as observers on Earth. The fuel requirement is staggering. The voyage would take over 400 times the ship's mass in combined matter and antimatter, assuming perfect conversion efficiency. The Omanji take a decelerating approach circumventing the Oort Cloud, (the vast shell of icy bodies surrounding our solar system) because striking its diffuse material at 20% light speed would destroy the vessels. These calculations represent the most optimistic physically plausible scenario for interstellar travel by a biological species.

3. The Neuroscience of Making Humans Smarter

The genetic alteration the novel's alien intelligence performs on Priya and 25,000 others, produces measurably higher intelligence, reduced aggression, and resistance to conspiratorial thinking. It has a genuine neurological foundation. A landmark study published in *Cerebral Cortex* directly connected human genetics, measured intelligence, and the physical density of axons and dendrites, which are the wiring of the brain's neural network. The research identified that optimal intelligence depends on a precise equilibrium: high density of neural connections providing parallel processing pathways, combined with strong structural stability through myelination and synaptic reinforcement. Simply growing more neural connections without stabilizing them produces cognitive interference rather than enhanced reasoning. Separately, a 2018 study in *Nature Genetics* identified over 1,200 genetic variants associated with cognitive performance and educational attainment. The biological architecture of intelligence is therefore genetically addressable in principle.

4. The Science of Living to 300

Priya and the gene-altered new species celebrate their 300th birthdays. The most rigorously documented demonstration that a complex organism's lifespan can be multiplied to the equivalent of several human centuries was published in *Cell Reports* by a collaborative research team from the MDI Biological Laboratory, the Buck Institute for Research on Aging, and Nanjing University. By simultaneously modifying two specific genetic pathways, first the insulin signaling pathway and next the Jun-N-terminal Kinase pathway, the researchers produced lifespan extensions in a model organism that, scaled mathematically to human biology, would correspond to a lifespan of 400 to 500 years. The current verified record for human lifespan is 122 years, held by Jeanne Calment. The science that suggests centuries-long human life is theoretically possible already exists.

5. Antimatter Propulsion: One Thing Science Fiction Gets Right

Among the many technologies science fiction handles carelessly, antimatter propulsion is the exception. *The Ephemeral Species* uses it as the Omanji's primary drive system for defensible reasons. When matter and antimatter meet, they annihilate completely, converting 100% of their combined mass directly into energy via Einstein's $E=mc^2$. This is the most energy-dense reaction physically possible. For comparison, a thermonuclear hydrogen bomb converts less than 1% of its core mass into energy. The practical challenges are formidable: antimatter does not exist in useful quantities in nature, producing it requires enormous energy input, and storing it demands magnetic containment of extraordinary precision. The underlying science, (pair production, magnetic confinement, and mass-energy equivalence) is experimentally verified. The engineering remains, for now, beyond our reach.

11 | AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

50-Word Biography

Patrick Smith is a former Pacific Stock Exchange floor trader, database programmer, and award-winning photographer who has spent a lifetime watching technology erase the jobs it created including his own. Mentored by Douglas Engelbart, the central figure in the development of the computer mouse and Graphical User Interface, he wrote *The Ephemeral Species* to confront what comes next.

100-Word Biography

Patrick Smith has experienced technological disruption from the inside. As a former floor trader on the now-defunct Pacific Stock Exchange, he trained the programmers who replaced him. This is a pattern that has followed him ever since. Mentored by Douglas Engelbart, the pioneering creator of the graphical user interface and computer mouse, he pivoted into database programming, specializing in linking massive scientific datasets. As an award-winning photographer, his work accumulated over 100 billion views before Google Plus vanished entirely. Each disappearance sharpened the central question behind *The Ephemeral Species*: what happens to humanity when the technology it builds outgrows its need for us?

250-Word Biography

Patrick Smith's fascination with science began before he was five years old, exhausting the science shelves of his San Francisco neighborhood library. That curiosity eventually led him to the floor of the Pacific Stock Exchange, where he became a trader and then trained the programmers who automated him out of existence.

The trajectory changed when he encountered Douglas Engelbart, the visionary who created the graphical user interface and the computer mouse, in a local bookstore in Marin County. Engelbart's advice was direct: learn to program, because computers will displace millions. Patrick listened. He became a database programmer specializing in linking large scientific datasets with no common key. This work automated thousands of manual jobs, and that he now watches artificial intelligence begin to absorb.

As an award-winning photographer, he built an audience of 1.5 million followers and accumulated over 100 billion views on Google Plus, a platform that no longer exists. The followers are gone. The work remains, but the audience evaporated. It was a precise illustration of what he had already sensed: nothing technological is permanent, including the species that builds it.

These converging experiences of displacement, pattern recognition, and the ruthless indifference of progress, drove him to write *The Ephemeral Species*, an epic 100-chapter novel grappling with genetic manipulation, artificial intelligence, permanent economic underclass formation, and the likelihood that any civilization advanced enough to find us might not care that we exist.

12 | CONTACT INFORMATION

Author	Patrick Smith
Email	patricksmith1@gmail.com
Website	https://ephemeralspecies.com/
Available for	Podcast interviews · Media appearances · Book club Q&As · Speaking engagements on AI, technological displacement, and speculative astrobiology

High-resolution cover art and author photo are provided on the author about page.