

New 1980s Coming-of-Age Novel Series Launches as Nation Nears 40th Anniversary of Challenger Disaster

40 years after the Challenger disaster, a new book series explores teen life, history, and culture in 1986 suburban America.

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY, UNITED STATES, January 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the nation nears the 40th anniversary of the [Space Shuttle Challenger disaster](#), novelist Chris Orcutt launches *Bodaciously True & Totally Awesome*, a nine-book literary epic set in 1986-87. The series explores the lives of American teenagers during the end of the Cold War era and the golden age of MTV. The novels are being released episodically over the next 24 months.

The first installment, *Bodaciously True & Totally Awesome: Episode I, Bad Boy*, will be released January 20, 2026, just days before the January 28 anniversary of the Challenger disaster, an event that shaped a generation of students who witnessed the tragedy in classrooms across the country.

Set in the suburban Hudson Valley, the series follows Avery "Ace" Craig and his peers as they navigate the challenges of teen romance, sexual awakening, and high school life against the backdrop of major historical moments including the Challenger disaster, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and President Reagan's Berlin Wall speech. Advance readers and critics have praised the novel for its lush period detail and accuracy, calling it "a time machine" back to the 1980s.

"I wrote *Bodaciously* to be a story for and about my generation," Orcutt said. "I've seen a nostalgic longing in the culture to go back to the '80s, probably because most of us are overwhelmed today by the internet, social media, AI, and algorithms. For Gen X readers, it's a way of remembering when all of life was ahead of us, and for younger and future generations, it's an accurate, immersive and authentic depiction of what it was like to be a teen in the mid-1980s."



Episode I: Bad Boy opens in February 1986, when Avery Craig, once invisible at school, suddenly becomes the center of teenage attention. During a school trip to D.C., Avery shakes hands with President Ronald Reagan, gets a glimpse of his future, and has a sexual awakening, setting off a chain reaction. Girls notice him, his hormones detonate, and his friends are clueless. With no adults to turn to, Ace must navigate the thrilling, terrifying terrain alone, with only a Boy Scout Handbook, his instincts, and a Princess Leia poster to guide him. Despite being armed with a Walkman, mixtapes, and growing confidence, Avery is unprepared for the emotional and ethical repercussions of his transformation, and his struggles mirror those of many unparented members of Gen X.

The series dramatizes a pre-digital teenage world shaped by shared cultural experiences like television, music, movies, malls, handwritten notes, and face-to-face friendships. As the era that MTV helped define now fades into history, *Bodaciously True & Totally Awesome* revisits the last great American decade, a decade when youth culture was predominant in the national zeitgeist.

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“While the novels are set in a fictional community in New York’s Hudson Valley,” Orcutt said, “because they’re about the teen high school experience, the novels could be set in any rural-suburban community outside a major city anywhere in the U.S. or Canada. In fact, I’ve had several advance readers who grew up in suburbs around the U.S. and Canada report to me that I captured their 1980s teen experience perfectly.”

Orcutt, a professional writer with more than thirty years of experience and over a dozen novels to his name, lives in New York’s Hudson Valley. A former journalist and teacher, he wrote *Bodaciously* offline, drafting early versions using pencils and vintage typewriters. For over a decade, Orcutt immersed himself in '80s teen culture and shunned the internet in monastic devotion to his magnum opus.

In addition to its “time machine” quality, reviewers have remarked on the series’ scope and

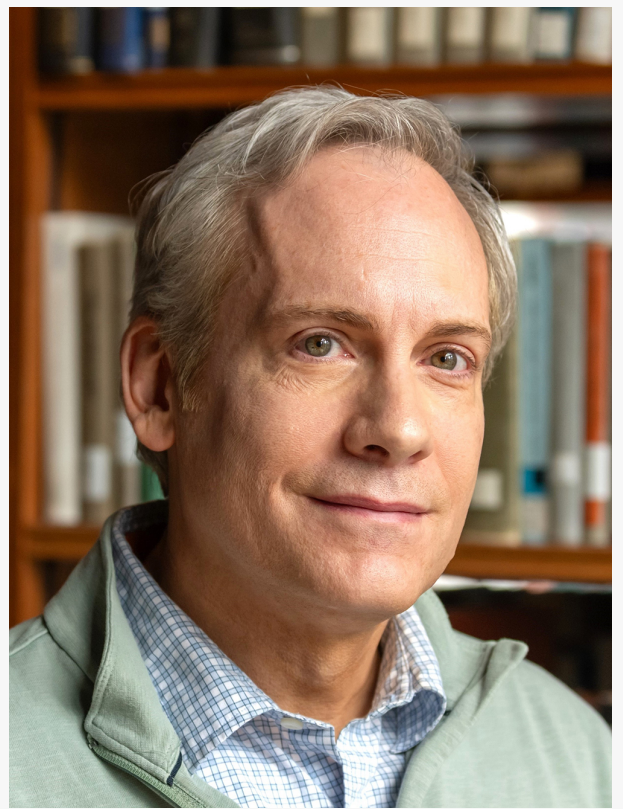


Photo: Karl Rabe

originality. A starred review from BlueInk Review calls Episode I “awesome,” and Midwest Book Review describes it as “a different coming-of-age novel that simmers with discovery.” While Foreword Clarion praises its immersive nostalgia and cultural detail, Kirkus Reviews calls it “a light-hearted, swift adventure.”

Bodaciously True & Totally Awesome: Episode I, Bad Boy is available January 20, 2026, in hardcover, trade paperback, and [Kindle ebook](#) formats. Subsequent episodes (2 through 9) will be released throughout 2026 and 2027.

Chris Orcutt

Have Pen, Will Travel

+1 845-705-6389

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