

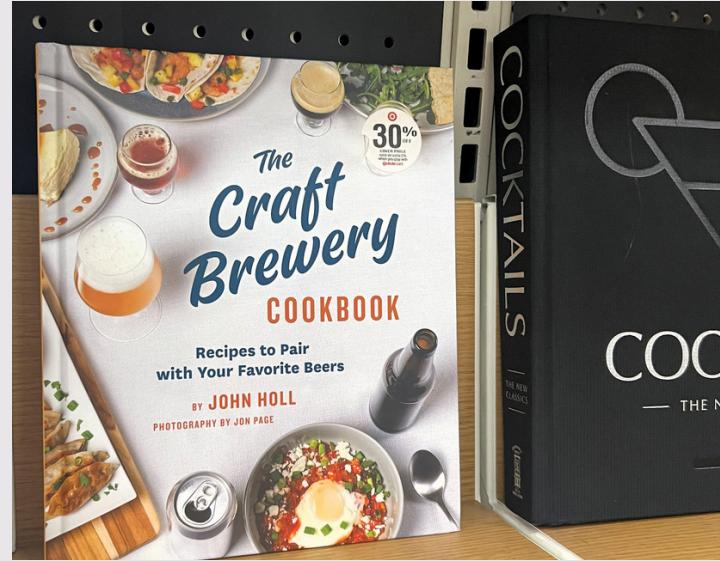


BOOKS X TARGET

WHAT I SAW, WHAT I LEARNED, WHY IT MATTERS

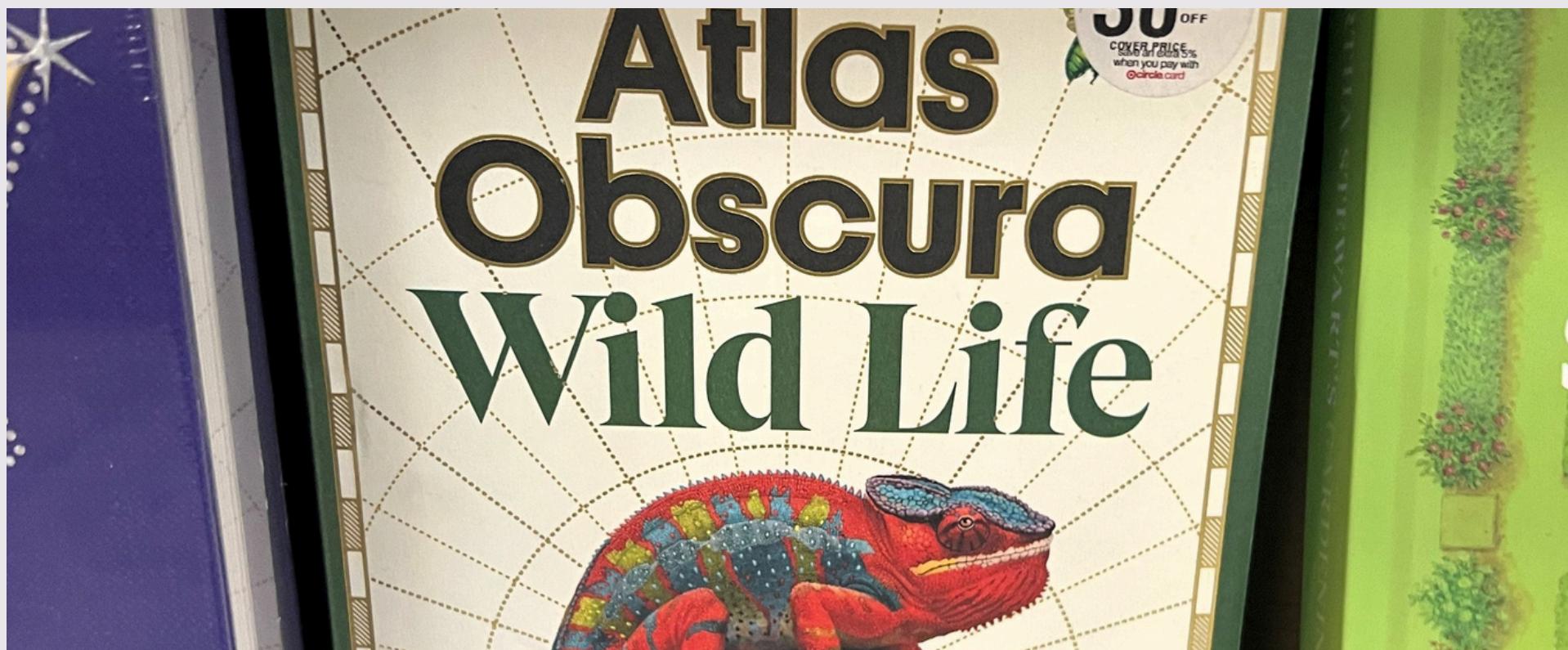
All text, art, insights by Alex Yalen
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WHAT I SAW



- A constellation of proven choices, not “indie.”
- Careful orchestration of titles. Enough sexiness to hint, nothing approaching pornographic. Rock’n’roll, hip-hop, cocktail how-to’s, encyclopedias. College kids, bachelors, young families, my parents – dozens of groups could have found culture there.
- In sum: the store led me, without judgment, to a ready-made library free of purchasing friction.

WHAT I LEARNED



- Target takes fantasy and makes it concrete. Fantasy kitchens. Fantasy classrooms. Fantasy decks and grills.
- That includes emotional lives: fantasy relationships, fantasy affairs, fantasy childhoods, fantasy darknesses. Target's bookshelves offer safe outlets for millions of readers.
- Target shelving is spatial gold. If books command displays there, we must conclude:

READING IS ALIVE & WELL.

- Colleen Hoover is top-shelf at Target and everyone around her is a best-seller. Critical assessments are non-factors.

WHY IT MATTERS

I have never been more negative about writing as a career, and more positive about the only direction fiction has left to go.

- Writing career? Like what? Where? 60 percent of WGAW members had no writing income in 2023. The collapse of streaming content led to a 42% decrease in jobs.¹
- AI is only going to accelerate this phenomenon.
- There's really only one conclusion for writers to reach, as far as fiction goes: ²

**FUCK IT. THERE'S
NOTHING TO LOSE.**

Nothing to lose = risk

Risk = resonance

Are we approaching a golden age where fiction is liberated from the constraints of career? ³



FOOTNOTES

1. All figures from a 2023 Writers Guild of America West report.
2. Colleen Hoover was a WattPad superstar first. She wrote what she wanted to read, and when that happens, it resonates.

Another example that comes immediately to mind is grunge. Grunge rock started as PNW bands playing for each other. It was retconned into a scene after Nirvana broke, but there was no “grunge” per se until that point.
3. I’m clearly not the only one who believes writing has a future. Substack, a major online newsletter service, social platform and writer-driven incubator, recently secured another \$100M investment.