

# POLAR STARLIGHT

Magazine of Canadian Speculative Poetry  
(Issue #21 – February/March 2026)



# POLAR STARLIGHT MAGAZINE

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## ART CREDITS

COVER: *The Moon Goddess* – by Derek Newman-Stille  
(Previously published in the zine *The Hate You Give.*)

## EDITORIAL

*By Rhea E. Rose*

In the 2026 issues of *Polar Starlight*, something fun this way comes. Fun but powerful. Often, poetry known as erasures or found poetry crosses my desk. The thrill of these creative pieces comes from the discovery of new literary works within old ones or within works that weren't even considered literary. A message in a bottle, so to speak.

While assembling the latest issues, I tried a new approach. Instead of grouping poetry into themed issues—science fiction, horror, or fantasy—and so on, I tried what I call “random sorting.” The poems are arranged as accepted, in order of submission. This way, reading each issue offers a new and exciting way (for me) to experience their poetic impact. Poems that might not have connected found themselves juxtaposed.

What emerged from this experiment surprised me. In their unplanned order, the poems began to speak softly to one another, forming an unexpected dialogue about stillness and reflection—as if the act of randomness itself had composed a kind of quiet.

In the hush between seconds, when the noise of the world falters, the imagination listens differently. *Polar Starlight* #21 gathers its strength from that hush—from the spaces left behind when time, myth, and human longing settle into stillness.

We open with Sandra Kasturi's “The Time Butcher,” where time becomes a substance to grind, cook, and consume—a sly reminder that even our most elusive element can be made familiar, even edible. But time, even when butchered and devoured, remains quiet, silently accepting its fate as it doles out its infinite inevitabilities.

What follows are poems of solitude and reckoning: Gregg Chamberlain's spare “Solitude,” Lisa Timpf's grim “One Possible Future,” and Neile Graham's luminous “The Goddess of the Mad Wind.” Each turns motion into meditation—moments suspended between decay and renewal.

Throughout the issue, quiet becomes an act of resistance. Derek Newman-Stille's “Midwife to the Bees” listens for the vanishing hum of pollinators; Greg Fewer's “Dissident Art” imagines poetry itself outlawed. Yet in Lynne Sargent's

“Let’s All Get Over the Butterfly Effect,” a small gesture still trembles with hope—that even a myth might migrate toward change.

Later, myth and madness intertwine—Sasquatch roams, gods return, and creation begins again in Lavinia’s “Mythmaking.” The final poems, “Captive,” “Visitors,” and “Aspiration,” bring us to the edge of exhaustion and wonder, where silence feels earned rather than empty, but time never rests, quietly sliding onward—a witness to the struggles, cries, darkness and light of the human condition.

Taken together, these poems remind us that quiet is not absence but persistence—the world catching its breath, time folding back on itself, and art continuing to speak, even in whispers.

Rhea Rose

# THE TIME BUTCHER, OR, CHARCUTERIE

*By Sandra Kasturi*

If you had a time machine, and I mean  
a *time* machine not a time travel  
machine; if you had that—  
you could manufacture time,  
grind it out like sausage.

You'd build the machine yourself  
of course, from plans you drew  
on paper you'd pressed.  
You'd smelt the metal, pour  
it into moulds you'd carved.

Affix the brass fittings and twiddly knobs—  
because a time manufacturing machine  
should have a steampunk look,  
a Victorian shine, as if it were flown  
in by zeppelin or parasol.

Once you were done smelting  
and building and fussing,  
you'd have a rest, because time is difficult  
work, sweat equity—all those hot minutes,  
pernicious, unruly seconds.

You'd attach the continuum casing to the nozzle  
at the end, and feed all the meat of time  
into the wide-mouthed funnel at the top  
of your time machine, adjust and twirl  
the knobs, crank the handle.

The time machine would grind and churn  
and puff and lo!—out they'd come—  
palatable, easily digestible oblongs  
of time. You'd twist them at each end  
and they'd be plump and ready for delivery.

At breakfast the next day, the entire town  
would fry up slices of time, fresh  
and spicy, each bit cooking  
as the aroma of lost and found decades  
wafted through the air.

-----

# SOLITUDE

*by Gregg Chamberlain*

The Last Man on Earth  
Always walks home  
Alone.

-----

# ONE POSSIBLE FUTURE

*By Lisa Timpf*

gardens wilting, dustbowl farm-fields  
air feels sultry, breathing's harder  
nightmare lifestyle, barely sleeping  
store-shelves empty, likewise larders

brighter moments, painful recall,  
walking, golfing, watching baseball,  
climate crisis warnings should've  
acted back-then, when we could've

-----

# THE GODDESS OF THE MAD WIND

*by Neile Graham*

You're in the leaves, tossed with them, flipped over  
turned around and inside out. Pushed

then pulled from the arms that would hold  
you, trying to cling but instead stripping them

naked as winter. Then in the following rain  
you're needles so long you become battered ribs

and tissue, forget how to be anything, slowly  
ebb to cotton wool, then to finest mist, the kind

that hangs in the air and doesn't weigh enough  
to fall. In the forest, the mist of you stalls the wind,

makes it into something tame. If you could be weather  
you would be this: tumult worn into peace. If you could

be a river, you would be this, this creek rolling over  
the stones, this sun making them shine.

-----

# MIDWIFE TO THE BEES

*by Derek Newman-Stille*

We created tunnels  
and bunkers  
to protect us from the missiles  
but we were so busy looking skyward  
that we missed the silence of buzzing  
the sound of pollination and the spark of life

“We can live without honey”  
we told ourselves  
“there are other pollinators”  
we told ourselves  
burying deeper into our burrows  
separated by cells  
becoming only workers and Queens

We buzz with conversation  
filling the void left to us  
Talking over and over one another  
claustrophobic to the possibilities  
of being alone.

-----

# THE LONE WALKER

*by Diana Churchill*

In twenty twelve's month two,  
an image lingers unexpectedly,  
hovering as old photographs might do.

A wheat field  
of endless feathery plumes,  
packed so thick they blur.  
The unseen sun lays chevrons of light and shadow across the field.  
Between the shimmer and the blankness lies  
a hedgerow grown so old, tall bushes disguise as trees.

Blotting that blanket of wheat is a lone figure  
in a dismal stagger and nobody suit.  
Weakened neck, abandoned hair,  
all swinging forward as he lurches,  
hanging limp when he rights himself.  
Only his shirt's white collar stays stiff,  
pulled up as if the tie knot refused  
to loosen when he'd tried.

A zombie show but I see no blood and guts.  
No terrorized humans for him to set upon and gorge.  
No horde of zombies stalking, rabid for his flesh.  
There is nothing of his past or future, no sign of an apocalypse.

Across the glimmer of my flickering screen,  
I see only living death  
limping on.

-----

# WASMINE

*by James Grotkowski*

from the dust, 'tis I  
swirling breathing, for a time  
passing, what was mine

-----

# DISSIDENT ART

*by Greg Fewer*

derelict warehouse  
people huddle in the dark  
a scribe reads aloud  
sudden police raid  
non-AI poetry banned

-----

# LET'S ALL GET OVER THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

*by Lynne Sargent*

The fickleness of a flap of a butterfly's wings  
has been proven false,  
and yet if only

we might with the flapping gusts  
of our words, turn fighter jets  
to flowers,

a small effort might be enough magic  
to create feast where there is famine

and so the myth,  
like migration,  
persists.

-----

# SASQUATCH ROAMING

*by Alex McGilvery*

A Sasquatch's work never ends  
Living on reality's edge  
Treading footprints through myth  
Leaving clumps of legend  
Hanging from bushes.  
An everlasting quarry  
Whose purpose is to be glimpsed  
Yet never proved.  
Beats in the forest  
A distant roar  
Roaming our imagination  
Bearer of honesty  
Diviner of gullibility  
Yet holding our hopes  
Making the world bigger,  
Deeper,  
Wilder  
Showing we don't know  
That much after all.

-----

# GOING OFF THE RAILS

*By Marcie Lynn Tentchoff*

It is raining in my cellar.  
I can feel the water tricking  
down the sloping hills of  
rutabagas, Yukon Golds and beets,  
flowing slowly off the turnips,  
and then forking out to worship  
all the golden mounds of carrots,  
as though reaching for the sun.

It is dark here in my cellar,  
but the spiders have forgotten  
that I ever have existed,  
or they've maybe come to think  
I'm some different sort of parsnip,  
pale and scrawny, swift-uprooted,  
with what sweetness I was born with  
tucked away behind the dirt.

It is quiet in my cellar,  
and my manacles don't jingle  
with the sweet sadistic music  
that my captors first composed,  
but I think I hear their voices  
or their footsteps, my tormentors,  
coming ever, ever closer  
to the spell-locked, rune-chained doors.

It is cold here in my cellar,  
and the clouds my pain has gathered  
drift above me, ever conscious  
of the anger that I feel,  
which is growing deep inside me,  
in my battered, pain-wracked body,  
and the tattered, broken cobwebs  
of my frail and failing mind.

Oh, and there they are, the spiders!  
They are nibbling at my toenails  
where they press against the bloodstains  
on the jagged, rocky floor.  
I can see they're sad they left me  
to their poor, abandoned cobwebs,  
but they're back now, and they love me  
with each poisoned, tasty kiss.

It is too cramped in my cellar  
and I find I want to leave it,  
so I throw a muttered curse bolt  
towards the storm clouds in my mind,  
and I feel the lightning weaving,  
and transforming into train tracks  
as I hail a passing box car  
in the dark—and ride away.

-----

# ASPIRATION

*By Casey Wolf*

the pure blank space  
of possibility

each first thought  
a star awakening

hold back in silence  
till another follows

and another comes  
winking into life

till the whole sky  
glitters

and now:  
draw near

-----

# MYTHMAKING

*by Lavinia Leon*

- one primordial egg, separated into chaos and order
- one full pack of hydrogen
  - superheat forever (or until thermal death)
- one teaspoon of suns (set in spinning motion)
- one tablespoon of dark matter

Mix until accretion disks appear. Let cool.

Recycle matter accordingly, occasionally, as supernovae.

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# ALTERNATE EXPLANATIONS

*By Marcie Lynn Tentchoff*

Perhaps  
the fairy tales  
and well-loved myths  
all got things wrong,  
not just by reason of  
historians  
who made bad calls,  
or, as is thought now,  
magic spells and talking beasts  
being sad and fake,  
but just because  
the characters  
and creatures  
who starred in those tales,  
like so,  
so many of us now,  
could not accept  
their dirty laundry  
being aired,  
and had things...  
changed.

Perhaps  
the fairy dust  
that drifted, sparkling,  
from the fae queen's wings,  
was truly but a nasty case  
of fungal flakes,  
and maybe,  
when that dragon  
in the story books  
breathed out a stream  
of caustic flames,  
it was, in fact,

not some internal,  
mystic blaze,  
but, this instead:  
the acid of  
untreated heartburn,  
a symptom of  
anxiety,  
enormous social stresses,  
and last night's  
under-cooked  
last knight.

-----

# CAPTIVE

*By Colleen Anderson*

manbull  
dishevelled fur  
storms the confusing maze  
bellowing against the human  
restraints

-----

# VISITORS

*By Lynda Williams*

In silent places, only silent places  
once they used to come there  
asking questions.

Silly questions.

And I would answer, always.

They were only tiny demons  
with vertebrae too delicate to crack  
without a blow of conscience.

And voices to clamorous loud  
to be mystery talking.

I don't know where they are now.

Perhaps in someone else's  
silent places.

Asking questions.

I wish them nothing.

I am tired of them.

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## ABOUT THE POETS AND ARTIST

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### **Colleen Anderson**

Multiple award-nominated and award-winning author Colleen Anderson has been widely published across seven countries, with works appearing in publications such as *Weird Tales*, *Cemetery Dance*, *Amazing*, and the award-winning *Shadow Atlas*. She is a Rhysling Award winner for “Machine (r)Evolution” and a two-time winner of the SFPA’s dwarf poetry contest. Based in Vancouver, BC, she has been a Canada Council, BC Arts Council and Ladies of Horror Fiction grant recipient. Her poetry collections include [\*The Lore of Inscrutable Dreams\*](#), [\*I Dreamed a World\*](#), and [\*Weird Worlds\*](#), as well as fiction collections [\*A Body of Work\*](#) and *Embers Amongst the Fallen*—all of which are available online. *Vellum Leaves and Lettered Skins* is her fourth poetry collection.

[www.colleenanderson.wordpress.com](http://www.colleenanderson.wordpress.com)

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### **Gregg Chamberlain**

Gregg lives in rural Ontario, Canada, with his missus, Anne, and their cats, who have the humans do all the mouse-catching around the house. He writes speculative fiction and zombie filk for fun and has several dozen published examples of his fun, including past appearances in *Polar Borealis*, *Daily Science Fiction*, *Speculative North*, *Mythic*, *Weirdbook*, and various anthologies.

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### **Diana Churchill**

Diana is a poet who loves spoken word and open mic, heading out every chance she gets to bars, coffee shops, libraries, community centres, dungeons, to share in the poetry experience. Zombies are an obsession, but so are animals and nature.

“The Lone Walker” is Diana’s first sale. She is a fearless mature student in York University’s creative writing program.

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### **Greg Fewer**

Greg originally hails from Montréal, Québec. His speculative fiction and poetry have appeared in (among other places): *Cuento Magazine*, *Lovecraftiana*, *Monsters: A Dark Drabbles Anthology*, *Page & Spine*, *Polar Borealis*, *Polar Starlight*, *Scifaikuest*, *Star\*Line*, *The Nafallen University Course Catalogue*, *The Sirens Call*, *Utopia Science Fiction*, and *Swords and Heroes*. He has twice been a Dwarf Stars finalist (2021, 2023).

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### **Neile Graham**

Neile is Canadian by birth and inclination, though she has lived in the U.S. (mostly Seattle, so she’s leaning toward the border) for many years. She writes both fiction and poetry and is currently concentrating on plotting the build-out of her fantasy romance empire. Her poetry has been published in Canada, the U.S., and the U.K. and on the internet. She has four collections, most recently *The Walk She Takes*, a idiosyncratic travelogue of Scotland which includes ghosts, ruins of all kinds, and a landlady named Venus.

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### **James Grotkowski**

James is a native northern Albertan who now calls Calgary home. He holds a degree in geology and presently works in IT systems development for the aviation industry. He is a long-time member of the World Haiku Club with dozens of his poems included in its published reviews with another dozen haiku offered in releases of *Polar Borealis* and *Polar Starlight*. James has begun his short story writing endeavours with a couple of works having been published in *The Enigma Front: “Onward”* and *“The Stories We Hide”* anthologies and with another couple in *Polar Borealis* #21 and #26. Humans

are in short supply in James' works; if you read them be prepared to fly far off-world. A collection of his short stories and a book of poetry are on the way.

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### **Sandra Kasturi**

Sandra is an award-winning editor, poet, and writer, with over twenty-five years of freelance editing experience. Her writing has been published in various places, including *The New Quarterly*, *Rattle*, *CNQ*, *Prairie Fire*, *ARC Magazine*, *Taddle Creek*, and *80! Memories & Reflections on Ursula K. Le Guin*. Her two poetry collections are: *The Animal Bridegroom* and *Come Late to the Love of Birds*.

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### **Lavinia Leon**

Lavinia was born in Romania and writes about the many forms and times of Home. She has received an Honourable Mention in Off Topic Publishing's Contest (2023) and was longlisted for the Magpie Award for Poetry (2024). In 2025, Lavinia published two chapbooks: *Wallachian Lullabies* and *don't say no-no to Dada*, and became a first reader for *The Masters Review*. She can be found at [LaviniaLeon.com](http://LaviniaLeon.com).

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### **Alex McGilvery**

Alex has been reading since before he can remember and writing almost that long. He has published more than 35 books and is author and editor at his imprint Celticfrog Publishing. Alex lives in Clearwater with his dog and the stories clawing their way out of his head.

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## **Derek Newman-Stille**

Derek (they/them) is a Queer, Nonbinary, Disabled, Fat, Femme settler Canadian (Turtle Island) author, poet, academic, editor, visual artist, and activist. They are the 9-time Aurora Award-winning creator of the digital humanities site “Speculating Canada” and the associated radio show. They frequently use fantasy and science fiction as a means of elucidating possibilities and potentials, reimagining the way that we situate identities and ideas. Derek has published poetry in fora such as *Fat Studies In Canada: (Re) Mapping The Field* (Inanna) and *Whispers Between Fairies* (Renaissance Press), performed and published poetry for Artsweek Peterborough's SHIFT: Post-Code Tour, and performed poetry for Peterborough’s Arts Ability: Taking the Stage.

In addition, Derek has published short fiction in *Dark Waters* (Poise and Pen Publishing), and *Nothing Without Us* (Renaissance Press). They have edited the collections *Over the Rainbow: Folk and Fairy Tales from the Margins* (Exile), and *We Shall Be Monsters* (Renaissance Press). Additionally, they and Nathan Frechette co-published their collection of short fiction *Whispers Between Fairies* (Renaissance Press).

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## **Lynne Sargent**

Lynne is a queer writer, aerialist, and holds a Ph.D in Applied Philosophy. They are the poetry editor at *Utopia Science Fiction magazine*. Their work has been nominated for Rhysling, Elgin, and Aurora Awards, and has appeared in venues such as *Augur Magazine*, *Strange Horizons*, and *Analog*. Their work has also been supported through the Ontario Arts Council. To find out more visit them at [scribbledshadows.wordpress.com](http://scribbledshadows.wordpress.com).

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## **Marcie Lynn Tentchoff**

Marcie is a writer/poet/editor from Gibsons, BC, where she lives in the middle of a whole lot of prickly greenery with her family and

various other critters. Her work has appeared in such publications as *Star\*Line*, *Dreams & Nightmares*, *Strange Horizons*, and *Illumen*.

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### **Lisa Timpf**

Lisa is a retired HR and communications professional who lives in Simcoe, Ontario. When not writing, she enjoys bird watching, vegetable gardening, and walking her cocker spaniel/Jack Russel mix Chet. Her speculative poetry has appeared in *New Myths*, *Star\*Line*, *Triangulation: Seven-Day Weekend*, *Eye to the Telescope*, and other venues. Her collection of speculative haibun poetry, *In Days to Come*, is available from Hiraeth Publishing. You can find out more about Lisa's writing projects at <http://lisatimpf.blogspot.com/>.

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### **Lynda Williams**

Lynda is the author of the Okal Rel Saga, coming out in its third edition in 2026-2027. She is also publisher at Reality Skimming Press and hosts web-published articles by Canadian authors on the Reality Skimming Blog.

See <https://realityskimming.com> or <https://facebook.com/relskim>

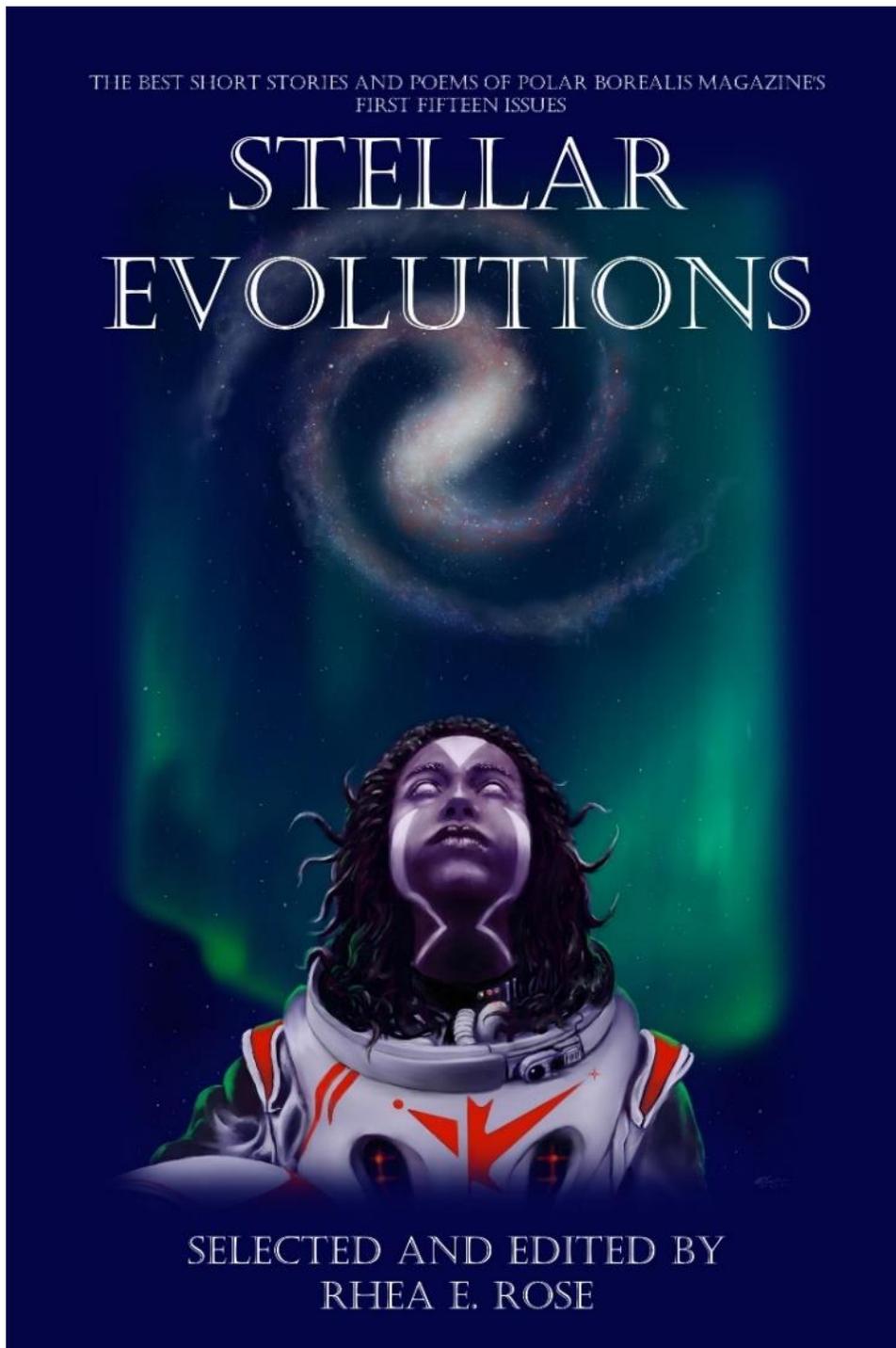
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### **Casey Wolf**

Casey writes occasional short speculative fiction in various genres, and every now and again a poem of the speculative sort pops out. She lives in East Vancouver, in a little apartment overlooking a little yard all happy and dense with plant life.

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The Best Short Stories and Poems from the first Fifteen Issues of *Polar Borealis* Magazine



**Cover:** Space Force  
– by M.D. Jackson

**Poetry** – by Lynne Sargent, J.J. Steinfeld, Melanie Martilla, Lisa Timpf, Kirsten Emmott, Catherine Girczyc, Andrea Schlecht, Selena Martens, JYT Kennedy, Taral Wayne & Walter Wentz, Douglas Shimizu, Marcie Lynn Tentchoff, Matt Moore, Richard Stevenson, Mary Choo, and Y.A. Pang.

**Stories** – by Mark Braidwood, Jonathan Sean Lyster, JYT Kennedy, Casey June Wolf, Monica Sagle, K.M. McKenzie, Jeremy A. Cook, Lawrence Van Hoof, Lisa Voisin, Elizabeth Buchan-Kimmerly, Dean Wirth, Robert Dawson, Michael Donoghue, Steve Fahnstalk, Michelle F. Goddard, Chris Campeau, Ben Nein, Karl Johanson, William Lewis, Tonya Liburd, Jon Gauthier, Jonathan Creswell-Jones, and Akem.

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