

# POLAR STARLIGHT

Magazine of Canadian Speculative Poetry  
(Issue #5 – March, 2022)



# POLAR STARLIGHT MAGAZINE

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COVER: DRYAD'S KISS – by Kari-Ann Anderson

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to *Polar Starlight's* second swing around our star. In this first issue of 2022, spring brings many things. New, complex life welcomed, old life composted; birds and beasts burst onto the scene with whimsy and wind, renos and rebirths.

Let's start with renovations. What is our angst around fixing and changing things? Why don't we leave well enough alone? It might have something to do with the fact that we are tool makers, tool users; we're only as good as our tools. We strive for perfection because imperfection kills us. Who can blame us if we love these extensions of our minds and appendages, or if we love them more than we do other humans? Tools save us. Whether it be a simple bolt needed to hold closed the forward hatch against an invader or a complex android designed to tear open that hatch to help us escape a burning ship; our tools, simple or complex, rock even in rhyme.

These extrapolations of ourselves, our needs and our desires free us, fasten-ate our existence. Yet, all that spring cleaning, organizing, minimalizing and tinkering develops appetites. To feed us and fuel the need for fixing, we require food glorious food—be it flesh or foul, I mean fowl, which is on the poultry menu in this issue. A bird's got to eat or be eaten. Fixes and food and faraway places remind us that there's no place like home even if it needs a little paint.

Spring may bring fresh new things but not before feeding on or in old dead things. We are tinkerers, tailors, space-soldiers, astro-sailors, butchers, bakers, and laser-loving candlestick makers, but inevitably, time and time again, entropy makes all our hard work vanish; yet, we persist in our ways like the writing of poetry, picking away at words to create lines then erasing a line to create better stanzas which are then piled one on top of the other and held in place with the essence of soul-glue or something magically sticky.

What we build in our writing we then send sailing down the solar winds of hope, wanting to communicate, requiring, even demanding, consumption by an invisible audience. Whether we're building a portal into a previously unseen dimension with poetry, eating a seedless apple or being eaten by a black hole, the cosmos consumes its stardust, but in return gives us, like spring does, the elements to rebuild, renew, create worlds upon which we paint our ancient myths. Here are the first sixteen amazing words of wonder for 2022. Enjoy, like a fine wine after a great meal and a hard day of redoing, they are meant to be savoured.

Rhea E. Rose

# THOUGHT I'D FIXED IT

*By Marcie Lynn Tentchoff*

But when I woke  
the sun was orange.  
“Not again,” I said  
and blinked to change  
the filter on my  
newly-prismed cyber ocs.

It seems to happen  
at the oddest times,  
like Fridays on  
the flyball field,  
when Courtney  
zaps the ball my way,

Or Sundays when  
we're half asleep,  
but giggling over  
horror trids,  
stale popcorn  
sticking in our vents,

Or Tuesdays in  
our quant-grav class,  
while Terrance tries  
to steal my notes,  
before I click  
to clear my mind.

I guess I might  
get used to it...  
but glitches spread  
so bloody fast,  
and blue suns are  
quite trendy now.

# REMODEL

*by Shannon K. Green*

It took a month

Walking out  
Every evening  
Past dark houses  
Through empty parking lots  
Stopping at every puddle  
Every reflection

A solid 28 days  
Of walking stooped  
And hunched  
Our fingers stiff and cold  
When the sun rose

We placed the collected scraps  
Where they belonged  
If they didn't fit  
With what we had  
We released them

They were never  
The right pieces  
Then we grew desperate

We trimmed the edges  
When we had to  
We filed the ridges  
Where needed  
We replaced with new  
When necessary

We thought we'd fail  
They thought we'd fail  
But we did it

We rebuilt the moon  
Full, for one night only

Tomorrow we start over  
We will go slowly  
Blending the shades  
Smoothing the edges  
We will make it right again  
We have twenty-eight days.

-----

# OTHER WORLDS THAN THESE

*By Jamieson Wolf*

When he opened his eyes,  
I waited to hear his voice.  
The seconds stretched around us  
like a comfortable blanket  
made of time forgotten.  
He smiled at me and  
I marvelled that he could do  
such a simple thing  
without the benefit of thought.  
“Are you my mother?”  
I smiled back at him,  
wondering how to respond.  
“Well, I’m the one who made you,”  
I told him, keeping my voice calm.  
“So, I suppose I am,”  
He moves to sit up,  
blinking his eyes rapidly  
and I know that with each blink,  
each rapid bit of eye movement,  
he takes in more of the world  
that he now finds himself in.  
When he sits up completely  
and looks outside,  
a frown replaces the smile  
almost instantly.  
I can hear the gears  
of his brain whirring,  
the pistons inside his metal skull  
firing sparks of electricity  
into the rest of his body.  
He looks out at a barren landscape,  
one of metal and cold light,  
so different from  
the worlds that  
fill his memory banks,



ones with grass and light,  
mountains and water  
and stars mirrored  
along its surface.  
He looks at me with  
an almost accusatory glare  
in his mechanical eyes.  
I watch as they narrow,  
trying to see if I am real  
or just a figment of his imagination.  
“I’m sorry,”  
I tell him, but these words  
feel insufficient to account  
for the fabricated pain  
that runs through him now.  
“I’m sorry,”  
I say again and hold him close  
as we both look out  
at a landscape so different  
from the one that we remember.

-----

# A VISION OF THE FUTURE

*by J.Y.T. Kennedy*

My apple has no core.  
It is a globe of crisp white  
with a red surface more wax than peel.  
I can't remember the last time I ate something with seeds in it,  
or heard the whine of a mosquito by my ear, or found a weed  
growing for its own reasons.  
The cracks of the world are clean now.  
Nothing bites.

-----

**THERE WILL BE A SHORT PRAYER  
AFTER THE CEREMONY – RSVP**

*by Marcie Lynn Tenchoff*

Nope.

I

will not

be there for

your bloody wedding;

that kind of climate makes me ill,

your fiancée has made it clear she'd like to skin me,

and every single member of the crowd we used to hang with is on that insect's side.

I think I'll stay at home, remembering the good times that we had here in my ski lodge,

before you traded Himalayan snows for jungle,

and late nights in my plush embrace

for her huge thorax

and the chance

to lose

your

head.

-----

# FIRST COURSE

*by Janine Cross*

Take a red cabbage—it's called a red cabbage, but that's a lie.

It's purple.

Slice swiftly through the middle, as if you're cleaving the head of a young child.

Stare at the pattern inside.

Deep purple, veined with virgin white,

in flesh that's dense, solid, neither rubbery nor inflexible.

Violet swirls and whorls—it could be anything.

Cosmic entities slyly poised to slither into new positions the moment you glance away.

White threadworms, bulging fat in segments, stretched slender in others, twisted and contorted around the liver of a cancer-riddled beast.

Inhale the aroma.

Peppery, faintly reminiscent of horseradish and billy goat and yet wholly purple.

Earthy purple. Feral purple.

Not a synthesized, civilized bubble-gum grape but

a purple that knows the sins and triumphs of evolution, the dreams and failures of ambition.

Hash the cleaved head.

Diced, the white no longer delicately dances with the purple.

The purple dominates.

Gather the pieces.

Rain them into a skillet that hisses and chortles with oily heat.

Season with salt, pepper, and slices of sun-dried tomato as red as organ meat.

Sweet ingredients would turn the dish a bluish hue,

but acid ingredients turn it a sombre red.

As oils and juices bleed away all traces of white,

call everyone to the table for dinner.

Forgo cutlery.

Encourage everyone to eat with their hands.

Savour the crunch, the heat,

the hint of bitterness,

the confusion and silence.

Keep the cleaver on the counter, purple-flecked and hungry,

for all to see.

As you eat, hum a little, and wonder aloud what you should serve for dessert.

# CANNIBAL CANTEEN

*by LeRoy Gorman*

gangster grub  
don't-ask-who  
sausage

lawman's lunch  
sticky fingers  
lightly grilled

barrister's basket  
hot & spicy  
liars' lips

salesman's sushi plate  
bite size  
suckers

dirty uncle dish  
pulled fingers  
& pinched buns

schoolmarm delight  
Adam's apple  
fritter

widow's whimsy  
sweet & sour  
lover's balls

heartbreaker special  
cold shoulder  
lightly salted

lumberjack stack  
charbroiled  
trunks & limbs

carpenter cuts  
smoke-cured  
bored feet

free-range fieldhands  
unpaid fingers  
farm fresh

vegan option  
tofu toes  
in all sizes

-----

# THREE HERONS: BLACK-CRESTED NIGHT

*by Geoffrey W. Cole*

Wait  
They will come  
They will swim, they will crawl, they will perambulate  
Wait  
Silent as the primordial night  
When Earth was young and nothing dreamed  
Waters ran clear, barren, devoid of even microscopic blight  
How we would have hungered then  
But now  
Face hammered to a spear  
I wait  
Meals swim, meals crawl, meals perambulate  
They will come and I will feast.

History divides into the time before and after  
A two legged, wingless thing  
Carrying a face on the end of a stick  
Skewers the water, steals my meals  
As loud as the waterfall by which I hunt  
This two-legged, fish-scaring oaf.

So fly  
Find another stream  
Wait

-----

# THREE HERONS: GREAT BLUE

*by Geoffrey W. Cole*

The fish taste of diesel  
The frogs are runny,  
Eggs not quite poached.

What use is perfect stealth in a world so loud?  
Engines chew the air where once we ruled  
Petroleum erupts in combustion chambers  
Every human screams into the slabs they press to their ears  
They mate they compete they nest they hunt  
And every act is cacophony.

There are no new streams  
Nowhere left to fly  
I could wear bells on my ankles and a whistle on my beak  
The fish wouldn't notice.

What use is a face hammered into a spear  
When the fish are so fat and sick  
A gargantuan man on a collapsing plastic chair  
Can pull them by the bucketful from my river  
With a flick of his arthritic wrist?

Why fly?  
Every stream is just as loud, just as filthy  
So wait  
As quiet as a shadow  
Until they consume themselves.

-----



# THREE HERONS: YELLOW-CRESTED NIGHT

*By Geoffrey W. Cole*

We waited  
Now data flows down the snow-chilled stream  
The latest pollens, last year's chrysalis  
No diesel, no plastics, no poisoned carcasses  
Salmon swim upstream to tear their bellies open on winter-shattered  
stone  
Each pink egg an amuse-bouche that leaves me starving for more  
We waited  
We won.

Wings divide the morning  
Into the time before and the time after  
It landed in the stream upriver.

One of us  
long-legged  
hammered-spear face  
Yet not one of us.

We are the ninja, the assassin, more silent than carbon monoxide  
and twice as deadly  
It is a moose-calf learning to swim  
The fish, wary now in this newly-quiet world, flee  
My frog, well-poached and so close, dives.

The not-us comes closer, honks as if in greeting  
But it knows not our tongue  
Its eyes are lit with an extra-avian intelligence  
So we didn't win  
Not quite.

Fly  
It tries to follow  
But it is new to its wings  
And moves with mammalian imprecision.

Aloft  
The land has knit itself back together  
The sky is ours again  
For now.

-----

# SWINGING GRYPHON

*by Gerald L. Truscott*

A gryphon with a broken wing  
Sits upon my daughter's swing.  
He calls her near,  
    "Come push me dear.  
To flying it's the next best thing."

-----

# GRASSGREEN

*By J.Y.T. Kennedy*

Like strings pulled loose the grass arose:  
entangling, weaving, forming shapes  
of nimble feet and muscled legs.  
A torso fattened, downward braids  
became round arms, with joints and palms  
and slender fingers. Stretching up,  
some twisted tight to build a chin,  
mouth, nose, and brow. Last, through the heart  
of the grassgreen woman grew the stems  
of daisies which bloomed as wakeful eyes.  
She plucked up her roots and walked beyond  
the graveyard walls, on lonely paths,  
to where her son lay fever tossed,  
lips dry as bark, his lovely curls  
all plastered down with sweat. She soothed  
the boy, she wiped his brow and gave  
him sips of water, sparing none  
for her own roots. The sun rose high,  
the tips of her fingers paled, then streaks  
of yellow spread along her limbs.  
Her petals drooped. The fever broke.  
The boy breathed softly, safe at last.  
She tried to stand but her wilted legs  
were useless weights. She sagged; she fell.  
The door opened. She raised her head.  
The tawny strands all strained and slipped  
against each other, twisting loose.  
She tried to speak; her face collapsed.  
The man rushed in to snatch the child,  
and left her there to wither.

-----

# DAUGHTER OF SPRING

*by Frances Skene*

The daughter of the spring goddess is  
swept away in the flood. She waves at the  
red-winged blackbird who's singing in the  
rushes; he's looking for a mate.

Below the surface, ducks dive, hunting for  
tasty morsels. Soon she too will become a  
morsel, part of the cycle, to be reborn next year.

I want her back sooner. I want no cycles, just  
spring all the time. But that can't happen.

Old life feeds the new.

-----

# GRAVITY WELL

*By Geoff Hart*

Alone.

Hallways echo,

Fuel is spent.

Crew's gone too—raced ahead.

Gravity, relentless, drew them in, event horizon passed.

All my fault, hubris-led where none had gone before, wiser than I'd been.

Message sent, beacon set, final words spoken quietly,

Spiralling inwards, gravity painfully strong,

Stretching like taffy,

Torn apart.

Farewell!

-----

# LONELY

*By Jo McBride*

Space is empty, the universe  
is indifferent, and home  
is just a smudge of star  
in a galactic spiral  
so very far away.  
Cocooned in my ship,  
I cradle a shell  
and hear the oceans of home.

-----

# THE GODS OF OLD HOMES AND NEW

*By Neile Graham*

Mist populated with no shadow  
of the forest once here. Perhaps  
one cedar, one sapling, permitted to rise  
above the chimney, above the roof,  
to interfere with views and wires.

Its naked shape of the non-forest.  
Its dim recollection of the long  
not-time before its pulp was pressed  
into its own history. Cedar was god

here. The god of canoe, bred  
into the rain, fed on it, the god  
woven into the hat that swept rain  
off the shoulders but into the twigs

and mud where it burst forth again  
and again. Small things bright as birds  
and the overbearing largest shelter  
its bones built into the poles

and halls. If the earth were once  
to shake us scuttling off its curves  
the moss would spread through all we  
think we've built and feed the forest

once again, biting through our roofs  
and floors, pressing our doings  
aside, rising above it all and flourishing.  
Who would we be then? What would

our shadows be? When the gods  
of the forest, the gods we once were  
haunting shadows between the elder  
gods, returned. Not rising above views



and views but shifting through the roots  
our fragments the bones of history  
undone. The tale the elder gods tell  
around their own fires.

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## ABOUT THE POETS AND ARTIST

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### **Kari-Ann Anderson**

Kari-Ann was born and raised in Fort Frances, Ontario and now resides in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She started out as a Wildlife artist but has always loved the Fantasy genre and was heavily influenced by her love of Comic Books. She eventually made it over to the Fantasy genre but retains the ability to create in multiple genres.

Kari-Ann won the Ducks Unlimited Provincial Artist of the Year for Manitoba in 2005 for her piece titled *Family Excursion*, and has been nominated for an Aurora Award in the Artistic Achievement category. She has also painted covers for books and other projects. If you would like to take a look at more of her work please visit [www.kari-annanderson.com](http://www.kari-annanderson.com).

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### **Geoffrey W. Cole**

Geoffrey's award-winning short fiction and poems have appeared in such publications as *On Spec*, *Clarkesworld*, *EscapePod*, *Reckoning*, and *Imaginarium 2012: The Year's Best Canadian Speculative Writing*. His stories have been translated into Catalan, French, Hungarian, Italian, Romanian, and Spanish, and have been produced as podcasts. He is the 2016 winner of the Premis Ictineu for best story translated into Catalan. He lives with his wonderful wife, three sons, and giant hound outside Toronto, Canada.

Visit Geoff at [www.geoffreywcole.com](http://www.geoffreywcole.com).

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### **Janine Cross**

Janine's debut novel *Touched by Venom* made the top-five of Library Journal's 2005 list of best SF/F novels. Ace/Roc (Penguin) published her *Dragon Temple* trilogy, and under the pseudonym Paulette Crosse,

Dundurn Press published her women's commercial literary novel, *The Footstop Cafe*.

Janine has recently sold non-fiction aviation articles to *Flight Magazine*, the journal for the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association, and several non-fiction writing articles to the magazine for the Federation of British Columbia Writers.

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### **LeRoy Gorman**

LeRoy lives in Napanee, Ontario. His poetry, much of it visual and minimalist, has appeared in various publications and exhibitions worldwide and has garnered numerous awards including, most recently, the 2017 Dwarf Stars Award. His latest book *goodwill galaxy hunting* was published by Urban Farmhouse Press in 2019.

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### **Neile Graham**

Neile is a Canadian by birth and inclination, though she has lived in the U.S. (mostly Seattle, so she is leaning toward the border) for many years. She writes both fiction and poetry and recently wrote the introduction to a collection of essays on writing by Clarion West workshop instructors. That's because she spent 20 years associated with that workshop initially as a student then as their workshop director. Now she has stepped down and is concentrating 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*, an idiosyncratic travelogue of Scotland which includes ghosts, ruins of all kinds, and a landlady named Venus.

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## **Shannon K. Green**

Shannon K Green is a poet and author of short stories from Newfoundland and Labrador. When not repairing or restoring historic homes he can usually be found writing under the supervision of cats.

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## **Geoff Hart**

Geoff (he/him) works as a scientific editor, specializing in helping scientists who have English as their second language publish their research. He also writes fiction in his spare time, and has sold 34 stories thus far. Visit him online at [www.geoff-hart.com](http://www.geoff-hart.com).

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## **J.Y.T. Kennedy**

A long-time resident of Alberta, though born on the other side of the planet in Auckland, J.Y.T. has published one fantasy novel and several speculative fiction stories. Her poem “Devoured” was published in *Polar Borealis Magazine* #2, and her short story “Till All the Seas Go Dry” in *Polar Borealis* #14.

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## **Jo McBride**

Jo (she/her) has been a reader and a writer for most of her life. After living in Toronto and Vancouver for nearly 65 years she’s hoping a March move to Calgary will shake things up a bit.

Her previous work experience includes type-setting and book selling, and the printed word rules the world.

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## **Frances Skene**

Frances is a retired librarian who has been actively involved in science fiction fandom and promoting science fiction literature since the 1970s. She is also a co-author of the Science Fiction novel *Windship: The Crazy Plague*, which can be found here: [Windship](#).

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## **Marcie Lynn Tentchoff**

Marcie is a writer/poet/editor from B.C.'s rain-soaked Sunshine Coast. She lives surrounded by deep, dense underbrush and various noisy animals, both human and not. Her latest poetry collection, *Midnight Comes Early*, was published by Hiraeth Publishing in early 2021.

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## **Gerald L. Truscott**

Gerald got into SF long ago as the managing editor, behind the scenes, for the first two Tesseracts anthologies, then he co-edited Tesseracts 3 with Candace Jane Dorsey. He also had a few SF stories of his own published in those days. In the 1990s he changed course when he became publisher at the Royal BC Museum. Now retired, he's back at SF—taking small steps at first.

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## **Jamieson Wolf**

Jamieson is a number-one bestselling author—he likes to tell people that a lot—and writes in many different genres. Jamieson is also an accomplished artist working with acrylic paint. He is also a Tarot reader.

He currently lives in Ottawa with his husband Michael and their cat, Anakin, who they swear has Jedi powers.

You can find Jamieson at [www.jamiesonwolf.com](http://www.jamiesonwolf.com)