

POLAR STARLIGHT

Magazine of Canadian Speculative Poetry
(Issue #17 – February 2025)



POLAR STARLIGHT MAGAZINE

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COVER: *Gods* – by Mark David Campbell

EDITORIAL

By Rhea E. Rose

“Love, love, love... Love is all you need.” I couldn’t agree more. In this first 2025 issue of *Polar Starlight* (February—the month of love), we celebrate love in all its forms. Love yourself, love your neighbour, love your partner, love your pet (be it animal or alien). Love your life.

This collection of poetry invites you to reflect on love’s many faces: its joys and heartbreaks, its cosmic and intimate dimensions. From Sandra Kasturi’s “Epistolary Monsters,” a fervent plea to a misunderstood creature, to Corrina Mae’s “Sleep Paralysis,” where night terror and love entwine, these poems explore the power and fragility of connection.

We’re thrilled to welcome many new-to-*Polar Starlight* poets in this issue. Renee Cronley’s “Just Another Love Story” delivers a knight-in-shining-armor tale turned bittersweet. Malaya Barroso’s “Cosmic Rave” moves us with its galactic grooves, while Melissa Yi reinvents the love sonnet in a way that even H.P. Lovecraft and Shakespeare might applaud. Lene MacLeod’s “Haunt Me Not” reminds us that love sometimes has a timeline, and Heath Bleau’s “Observer Effect” invites us to contemplate love and existence before the universe shifts again.

Rebecca Franklyn’s “Forever Between Galaxies” celebrates love’s timelessness, while the verses of our returning poets continue to delight with their unique voices and perspectives. Together, these poems craft a constellation of connection through the strength and universality of love in all its diverse and glorious forms—sad, serious, silly, and sublime.

So, dear reader, as I say, “All together now,” let this issue of *Polar Starlight* guide you through the galaxies of this timeless theme. Love is all we need.

Editor,
Rhea E. Rose

EPISTOLARY MONSTERS

By Sandra Kasturi

Dear Creature from the Black Lagoon. Dear Creature! I feel that somehow we have misunderstood each other, misunderstood our basic dynamic of capturer and capturee.

You were not to know that I pursued you, that I set the snare between my bare legs: a Georgia O'Keefe flower, stylized, a trap repeated.

Take me to your lair, dear Creature, take me to your underwater kingdom, your wet orifice in the strand, your carbuncle paradise.

Give me your leathery eggs and unblinking desire, your webbed imprint on my body that only salt can wash away.

Is it too much? Am I too fervent in my cunning pursuits? I'm a modern city girl and you are Paleolithic, I feel.

But come! Shun the sunny dales with me, dear Creature, let gilled nature take its course. Look, here, no fishhooks, no nets.

Just love, sharp love.

SOLAR AFFAIR

by C.A. Rose

Our love was born in a solar storm
In a huge open golden molten flair, a multi-headed cobra of hurricane flame.

In the beginning, we rode the great heat of coronal ejections.
Came out of the sun in a horn blast of gamma rays in a solar squall.

Then shimmied like synchronized noodle dancers
Among the chimeras of those dark black nights.

We were ionized auras in unending parades of eruptions
Universal disrupters sent from the spots on the sun.

After the nights of plasma dancing, mornings came from a million different suns
Eventually, even we sought the heavy eddies where time slows.

Where it looks like liquid amber and our limbs tangle in the twists
Of time stretched far and wide for a thousand eons.

Then one millennium you shot by in a solar streamer
Smiling and singing in the x-rays.

Unstable, my mouth opened but
I had to close my eyes to the wake of your astral dust.

I was just a configuration that once held in me an electron
Frozen in flux.

SLEEP PARALYSIS

by Corrina Mae

When I travelled too far down
into my mind,
it caught me.

Reunited by moonlight.
Its presence disturbed
my wander.

My fragmented memories,
sold to hunger.
Foul soul.

Roused by an effort to scream.
Hollow attempt.
Cannot move.

Waspish whispers in the walls.
Needles and nails
stab my spine.

It hovered above my bed.
Aura coloured red.
Eyes wide empty.

Paralyzed on my mattress.
Kiss me at dawn.
Set me free.

AT THE SPACEPORT BAR

by Lisa Timpf

at the spaceport bar
patrons seek
a different kind
of weightlessness

everything's so much clearer out here
where the stars shine so bright,
light from past years
brilliant enough to blind you

"Don't look up," the old-timers say
hard not to—
hard not to be mesmerized,
to drown in the vastness of it

bartenders can spot the newbies
fresh off their first six-month stints
minding the mining equipment
out on the asteroid belt

they're already giddy
when they enter the place
easy marks, and usually big tippers,
so you concoct whatever they ask for

a Martian mule, a Titan Tommy,
a Neptunian twist, or a Pluto Punch
if they're really adventurous
but only the tourists

order the drink
with the gold flakes—
it reminds the miners
all too much
of work

JUST ANOTHER LOVE STORY

by Renee Cronley

Too many bruises to the heart
made my love artery pump poison
to the angry and weeping souls
howling at one another
from their cages in my mind.

From the music box inside me
where my mother resides,
I hear her sing: *I told you so*—
the lyrics sit silently on top
of the curses under my tongue.

His mouth spins golden lies
with steel threads hard enough
for me to sharpen my teeth.

The distorted story he contrives,
he says while avoiding my eyes
where his ending is written.

There's a slit in his armour
when he pauses to turn the page
for me to cut his character.

In the dying pulse of his promises
bloodletting our final chapter,
I watch his sea of tears fall
and freeze in the cracks
of the ground I walk on
until everything is even again.

THE BIG CRUNCH

by Guy Immega

Until 1998
The gravitational collapse
Of the universe
Seemed inevitable.
Now we know
That the expansion of the cosmos
Is accelerating.
 Dark energy brings new hope.

COSMIC RAVE

By Malaya Barroso

Floating above the dance
floor lit by supernova
neon lights, smooth-moving
Martians groove, lose themselves to the
moonwalk.

Hop, step, dip and disco

Bust galactic grooves
beneath blazing lasers
fired in psychedelic
flares shot by drunken extraterrestrials
who puke spiked blue milk back into black
holes or rocket engines

Clap to the staccato
cacophony of cosmic collisions,
bob to throbbing bass, screaming
solar wind whipping,
heads nodding along.
Rhumba, conga, twist and tango

Flickering fabrics reflect ultraviolet
vibrations expelled
Absorbed through translucent
skin shimmying,
tentacles swaying

Perpetual partying
within mists of time
Rhythm pulsing
in an eternal speck of space.
Disco and dip, tango and twist

FAST RADIO BURST

By Guy Immega

Compress the sun's total power

For one year

Into a thousandth of a second.

Beep!

Greetings from a distant galaxy!

SONNET 116

by Melissa Yi

Let us not to the warping of whole minds
Forget the shoggoths; they are the beasts
That alter with commands that bind,
Gelatinous amoebas on the move.
O yes, they morph into unfixèd shapes,
Withstand sea tempests and are hardly shaken;
They are the slave to Elder Things' larks
Their worth unknown, their souls forsaken.
They won't stay the fools; shoggoths will creep
Within the range of sentience come
Through a millennia of cries and shrieks
Mutating past the edge of doom:
If this be terror and my sense removed,
I lack all wit, becoming shoggoth food.

HAUNT ME NOT

by Lene MacLeod

when you pass on I
don't want you to look at
me, that would be creepy
I wouldn't see you
When you pass on I
don't want to know
you are there
so, no knocking on walls
so, no rattling chains
so, no moans
so, no temperature drops
When you pass on,
I shall blast you into space
with the money you saved
for a lead-lined vault from which
you thought you would return
your spirit blasted into
fragments in the icy darkness
lost in the cosmos
splintered into colours
only you could own
when you pass on,
you better not
see me

OBSERVER EFFECT

By Heath Bleau

“There is a theory which states that if ever anyone discovers exactly what the Universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable. There is another theory which states that this has already happened.”

— Douglas Adams

one must wonder
how many
states of existence
the universe
may fluctuate between
if what we observe
we change

might we manage
to get a handle on
the base quantum equations
and then take a reading
on the reasoning
for it all,
what variations
might we see,
or might we just
cease to be;
the laws
of relentless entropy
hastened
to immediacy's pace

might we face
existential gradations
or is existence
a binary equation

and we either are
or are not

I have a hunch,
but I think I'd like
to know for sure
before
we know too much

THE GODDESS OF WHAT ISN'T THERE

by Neile Graham

I shield it with my hand.
It is so small. This wind, this

boisterous beautiful wind,
could blow it into oblivion

like the ghost music that
weaves its tune in your head

but if you listen, isn't there.
Only the hints of its passage.

The places where it isn't have
been pressed. Once. Touched

and gone. Woven. Unwoven.
How real can it be? This wisp,

this whisper when there is
no voice to speak. Not the veins

stretching this transparent wing.
This open throat with nothing

warbling. Feed it the seeds
fallen from your palm, watered by

dew dried by morning sun.
Hold it. Keep it. It breathes.

FOREVER BETWEEN GALAXIES

By Rebecca Franklyn

carry the north star in your pocket
for spaceships need a guide
if all else fails
know this
they flew by your side until the very end
and the angels spoke of dreams
yet your soul knew your star
would live forever
between galaxies

ADRIFT

By James Grotkowski

when the night sky slides
and your grass bed is adrift
what really moves you

POCKET DIMENSION

By Melanie Marttila

put this moment in your

pocket dimension

along with memory and dream.
mix them up so you don't know
which is which. reach in, pull out a
handful, and sprinkle liberally—
cosmic stardust,
your creation.

TAPESTRY

by Derek Newman-Stille

Our future is a tapestry
with loosened thread
and we are pulled out of the seams

We've always been treated as marginal
disabled people
always treated as though we don't fit
into a world made to not fit us

Our futures written by those who choose
not to see us
choose
not to see a future for us
scribbling us in the margins of their speculations
scribbling us out of the imaginarium

The future is an apocalypse for the disabled
a wasteland of perfect, abled bodies
and a crematorium for the diverse

How do we reclaim our future?
How do we write ourselves
out of the margins and into the main story?
How do we pull the right threads
to re-weave ourselves
and not have those threads become puppet strings?

ABOUT THE POETS AND ARTIST

Malaya Barroso

Malaya is a writer and poet residing in Vancouver, Canada. A dedicated and committed student-athlete, community member, sister, daughter and friend, she still manages to find some time to escape into fantasy worlds of prose and is starting to write some of her own.

Heath Bleau

Heath is an American Expat living with his Canadian wife in Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. A photographer and poet, he draws his inspiration from the beauty and horror of nature, science, and societal issues. His work explores themes of mental illness, intimacy, and the darker side of the human condition.

Mark David Campbell

Mark is a Canadian/Italian who lives in Milan, Italy with his husband. He has a passion for socially and culturally driven science/speculative fiction. His background in anthropology gives him a unique humanistic perspective along with tools to build authentic worlds. He brings a queer perspective to the sci-fi narrative.

His publications include: *Secrets of Ishtabay*, Ninestar Press 2023. The story of a Maya village in Belize that struggles with its transition to globalization after the completion of a highway linking it to the outside world.

Eating the Moon, NineStar Press 2021. A utopic story of a young anthropologist who stumbles across a hidden society where homosexuality is the norm and heterosexuals are marginalized.

Renee Cronley

Renee is a writer from Manitoba who stepped away from nursing to prioritize her children and channel her knowledge and experience into a poetry book about nursing burnout. Renee can be found at <https://www.reneecronley.com/>

Rebecca Franklyn

Rebecca writes from Vancouver, British Columbia. Her work has won *Writer's Digest* Short Story awards and is published in *Polar Borealis*, *Polar Starlight*, and *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. She writes across multiple genres and age categories. She can be found on Instagram [@onelifetowrite](https://www.instagram.com/onelifetowrite).

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*, an idiosyncratic travelogue of Scotland which includes ghosts, ruins of all kinds, and a landlady named Venus.

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.

Guy Immega

Guy is a retired aerospace engineer. His company, Kinetic Sciences Inc., built autonomous robots for the space station, robots to clean up nuclear waste, and patented miniature fingerprint sensors. He served in the Peace Corps in Africa and vaccinated nomads in the Sahel against smallpox. In 2018, he presented an invited paper at a conference in Abuja, Nigeria on an engineering plan to save Lake Chad in the Sahara.

Guy is currently working on a scheme to counteract global warming with solar sailing mirrors in the L1 region of space between the Earth and Sun. See his website: www.planet-cooling.com.

Guy's hard SF debut novel, *Super-Earth Mother*, published by EDGE SF&F (Calgary), is now available from all online booksellers, and in bookstores.

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*.

Lene MacLeod

Lene writes dark fiction, quiet horror, SFF, and poetry in Ontario, Canada. Her debut collection *Fringes of Grey* is now available from DarkWinter Press. Publishing updates can be found on www.lenemacleod.com

Corrina Mae

Corrina resides within the Slokan Valley of British Columbia, Canada. She is perpetually inspired, creatively, by her local environment and feels a deep connection to the land. This motivates Corrina to focus her energy on intensifying this connection through literature.

Corrina is a passionate young woman who bears a strong drive to communicate life's developmental journeys through her writing.

Melanie Marttila

Melanie Marttila (she/her) is an #actuallyautistic author-in-progress, writing poetry and tales of hope in the face of adversity. She has been writing since the age of seven, when she made her first submission to CBC's "Pencil Box" and is a graduate of the University of Windsor's Masters program in English Literature and Creative Writing.

Her poetry has appeared in *The /t&nz/ Review*, *Polar Starlight*, *Sulphur*, and her debut poetry collection, *The Art of Floating*, was published in April 2024 by Latitude 46. Her short fiction has appeared in *Through the Portal*, *Pulp Literature*, *Pirating Pups*, and *On Spec*. She is a settler and writes in Sudbury,

Ontario, or 'N'Swakamok, on Robinson-Huron Treaty territory, home of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and the Wahnapiatae First Nation, in the house where three generations of her family have lived, on the street that bears her surname, with her spouse and their dog.

Substack: [Alchemy Ink](#)

blog: [Always Looking Up](#)

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/melanie.marttila>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/melaniemarttila/>

Threads: <https://www.threads.net/@melaniemarttila>

Bluesky: <https://bsky.app/profile/melaniemarttila.bsky.social>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/melanie-marttila-20868047>

Derek Newman-Stille

Derek Newman-Stille (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, Nathan Frechette and they co-published their collection of short fiction *Whispers Between Fairies* (Renaissance Press).

C.A. Rose

C.A. Rose Has a fine arts background. She writes and paints visual poetry wherever she finds it. She sometimes finds it in the bottom of old paint tins and pours them out on a canvas. Sometimes, when she's lucky, she finds poems that agree to be poured out as words on a page.

She makes her home in New Westminster B.C. overlooking the river.

Look for her self-published collection *Narcissus Poeticus* this Spring in a book house near you.

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/>.

Melissa Yi

Melissa is an emergency doctor who can't stop writing. Her twelve weird, Lovecraftian poems will appear in *Cthulhu's Cheerleader*, currently on pre-order and scheduled for publication in October 2025.

Each poem was inspired by a literary legend like Shakespeare or Emily Dickinson, and nine are accompanied by original art commissioned from Canadian artist Sara Leger. "Deviance" is rooted in Dorothy Parker's "Bohemia."

In *Killing Me Sloth-LY* (<https://books2read.com/b/slothly>),’ Melissa’s heroine, Dr. Hope Sze, leaps from studying Parkinson’s disease to battling a killer cult that draws its strength from the mythical force of Cthulhu.

Melissa won the 2023 Prix Aurora Award for her poem “Rapunzel in the Desert” and the Derringer Award for short mysteries.

Since Melissa wastes too much time on social media, you can find her on most platforms through <https://linktr.ee/melissayi>. She also invites you to kick it old school with a newsletter subscription and a gift at <http://www.melissayuaninnes.com> and <https://melissayi.substack.com/>.

POLAR STARLIGHT #18 – April 2025

Published by R. Graeme Cameron, Polar Starlight is edited by Rhea E. Rose.

Cover: *Patchwork Man* – by Derek Newman-Stille

The 18th issue contains poetry by Donald B. Campbell, Carolyn Clink, David Clink, Elizabeth Creith, Greg Fewer, Neile Graham, Sandra Kasturi, Spencer Keene, Lynne Sargent, Marcie Lynn Tentchoff, Lisa Timpf, and K.T. Wagner

Will be available for free download in April 2025.

POLAR STARLIGHT #19 – June 2025

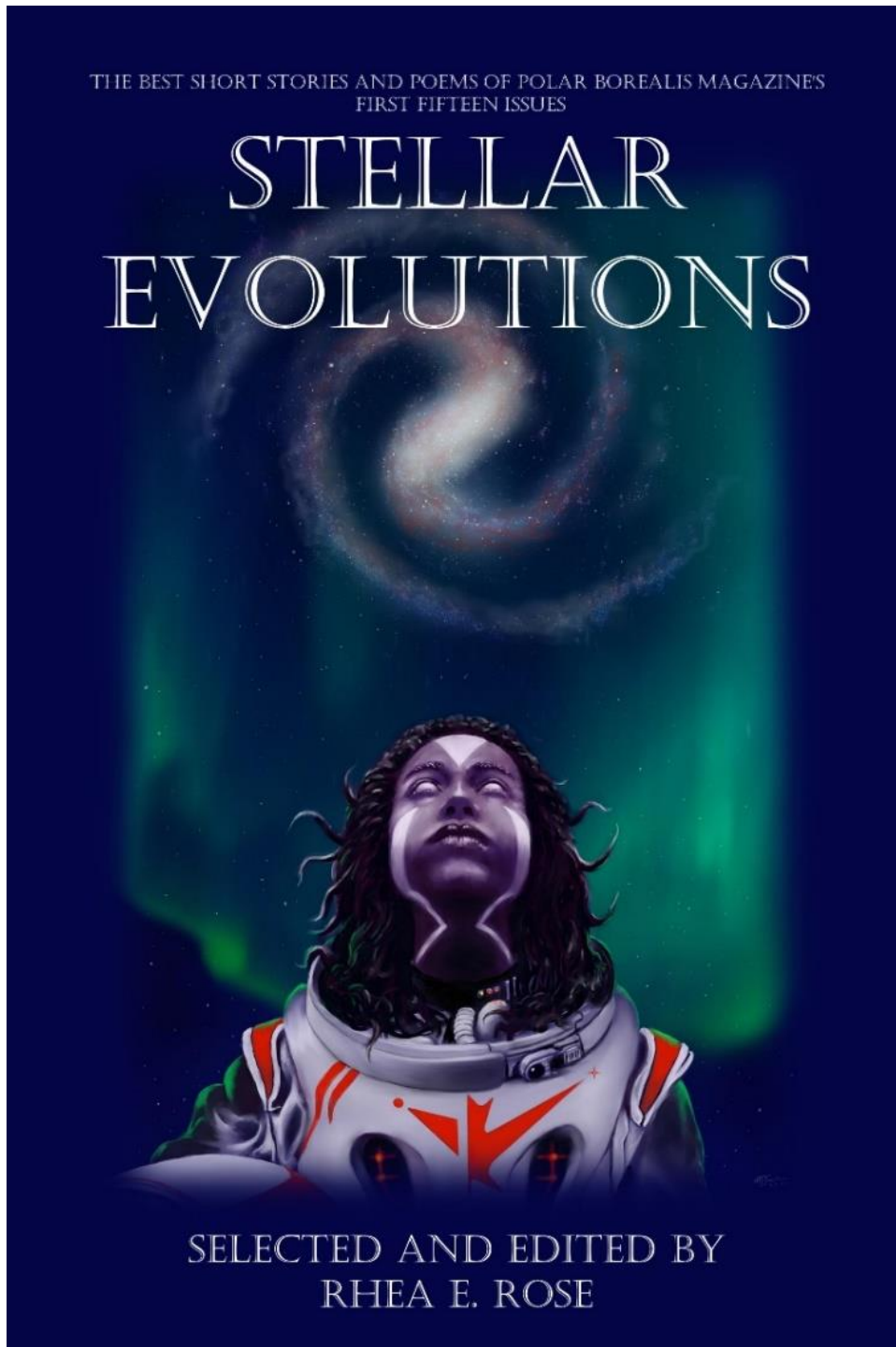
Published by R. Graeme Cameron, Polar Starlight is edited by Rhea E. Rose.

Cover: *Cracked Earth* – by Lily Blaze

The 19th issue contains poetry by Colleen Anderson, Karen Bingley, Heath Bleau, Greg Fewer, Aaron Grierson, James Grotkowski, Guy Immega, Sandra Kasturi, Michèle Laframboise, Derek Newman-Stille, Irena Nikolova, Rhea Rose, Lynne Sargent, Lisa Timpf, and Hayden Trenholm,

Will be available for free download in June 2025.

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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