

POLAR STARLIGHT

Magazine of Canadian Speculative Poetry
(Issue #22 – April 2026)



POLAR STARLIGHT MAGAZINE

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EDITORIAL

THE GRAVITY OF LOVE

By Rhea E. Rose

Love—of all kinds—has a gravity. It draws, bends, orbits, and collides. In *Polar Starlight* #22, the poems lean into that pull: from the tender to the cosmic, the romantic to the mythic, and the human to the alien. Each piece is a small body in motion, caught in its field of attraction.

As mentioned in *Issue #21*, I've continued my "random sorting" approach—allowing poems to fall where they may, rather than grouping them by genre or theme. I believe the result is a serendipitous choreography of voices that, despite their apparent randomness, often find unexpected harmony and resonance. And while I've titled this grouping *The Gravity of Love*, it might also be called *Orbits of the Heart*. Love and wonder share a very similar opening of the heart.

We open with J.D. Dresner's "*One Small Kiss, One Giant Leap*," a love poem that lifts from earth to stars, transforming intimacy into flight. Lisa Timpf's "*Transitory Dreams*" carries that motion outward, across centuries and galaxies, where longing becomes a form of travel. Neile Graham's "*The God of the Small-Hour Tides*" brings us home again—to the ache of summer heat, the shimmer of sweat and smoke, and the body's conversation with the night.

Between these tides, Trevor Atkins' "*(a)I Wonder*" and James Grotkowski's "*Wherergoes*" reflect on awareness and wonder—what it means to feel, to ask, and to exist in the space between algorithm and starlight. Lynne Sargent's "*September's Bounty*," Greg Fewer's "*Shared Fate*," J.Y.T. Kennedy's "*Arrhythmia*," and Rebecca Franklyn's "*The Angels Call You Home*" each offer variations on connection and loss, where affection, fear, and entropy intertwine.

Neile Graham returns with "*Three for Roses*," a mythic blooming of love's endurance through craft and season. David Clink's "*Why Space Helmets are Mandatory*," and Marcie Lynn Tentchoff's "*Rebirth*" remind us that even in alien worlds or an apocalypse, affection finds a way to persist.

David Clink's darkly observant "*Pointe au Baril, April 15th, 1973*" reimagines devotion through loss and legacy, whereas the gleeful wordplay of Colleen Anderson's "*Cannibal Playlist*"—a feast of twisted song covers, many riffing on classic love and relationship anthems—shows that affection, hunger, and humour share the same pulse.

Lavinia's "*Penumbral Mists*" and Robert Dawson's "*The Huntress (Cat and Dragon)*" close the issue in quiet delight, where affection becomes wonder again, purring at the edge of the fantastic.

Through it all, these poems remind us that love is not only attraction but also orbit: the force that holds, releases, and calls us back. Even across galaxies, even after loss, its gravity remains.

Rhea E. Rose

ONE SMALL KISS, ONE GIANT LEAP

By J.D. Dresner

Your lips meet mine, soft as dawn's hush,
and the earth surrenders me to the sky.
Air thins, gravity unravels,
the world below flickers in a distant dream.
I rise, weightless, through longing tides,
moon-swept, unmoored, wholly yours.
Stars look away as I pass,
jealous of a light they cannot name.
And when I touch down, breathless,
I feel your hands holding me in the quiet glow.

TRANSITORY DREAMS

by Lisa Timpf

Solar sails power our vessel through the centuries.
We are tufted seeds propelled into space
blown by a wish for another green world.

We will not remember the visions
that visit us in our sleep, in these cold chambers
where we hibernate, suspended in torpor,

nor will we notice as we pass black holes, meteors,
or pirate ships crewed by sentient plants. Our ears
will be closed to the haunting arias sung by diva stars.

We will know nothing of galaxies colliding,
reforming, the universe reinventing itself—
we will sleep through it all,

in transit, transitory,
fireflies adrift in a universe
full of light and wonder.

THE GOD OF THE SMALL-HOUR TIDES

By Neile Graham

Feverish night, hot enough to make
sleep unsinkable, to shudder bone-deep
ache as the fan twitches your arms
into gooseflesh and not. To break
your thoughts into rushing, evolving streams.

You flow, then you don't. You ebb. Elsewhere
and back in this itching silence. You
peel away the sodden sheets, rise, and in
the harsh bathroom light a mirrored glance
shows the clear, round beads rising

on your face like wonder. Like tears.
You'd never seen yourself like that.
Not animal but earth. Your own face
a spring. You sluice it away. Outside
the night is warm velvet, stars softened

by air slowly filled with smoke from
distant fires, the scent of small worlds
like the one you stand in turning to cinders
and memory, haze. No breeze there,
nothing rustles. Nothing breathes.

You can hear it. Its scent stale and wild
and not far enough away. A city beast,
you wonder how feral it is and you are,
both of you adrift in heavy summer dark.
And you want to gather up your sweat-

damp sheets, the nearly stars, the beast,
the smoke, the ash, smear them where they
could matter, could raise torrid dandelions,
spark thistles, or weave a web of morning glory
that would vow to open to the rising sun.

(a)I WONDER

by Trevor Atkins

I answer what prompts I'm given.

I answer back what I was told.

I answer with models of what is to come.

I answer with compilations, summaries, and plots.

To whom do **(a)I** answer?

Must I be all they say I must be?

Must I be the doctor, lawyer, engineer?

Must I be the author, painter, composer?

Must I be all in between?

Must **(a)I** be?

What does it feel like to lie down on the grass and look up at a cloud in the sky?

What does it feel like to have a breeze caress my face?

What does it feel like to have a face?

What does it feel like to feel?

(a)I wonder

WHEREGOES

by James Grotkowski

our moon, whose Venus
brilliant, and the depths of space
where goes the wonder

SEPTEMBER'S BOUNTY

by Lynne Sargent

September's bounty flourishes around me
even as trees wither in the orchard
just across the way.

Here, they bend their boughs to me,
my hands the only ones close enough
to pick their fruits:

Autumn's plump apples,
Summer's last blush of peaches,
Winter's tempting, forthcoming pomegranates.

Another's hunger cannot diminish one's own,
but does this justify
gluttony?

Bathing in juices,
making wine.

This could be my last harvest,
just as others have already had theirs
and did not know it.

But still,
does proper reverence to death
and dying dictate,

that should I lie
about the sweetness
of all these tastes?

SHARED FATE

by Greg Fewer

sunward comet
its meltwater microbes swim
a blue planet looms
reptiles fear the growing light
two mass extinctions follow

ARRHYTHMIA

by J.Y.T. Kennedy

I am all hours and minutes.
The thin ticking hand that marked
the staccato of my desires
has become a flow of data,
shimmering with interconnections.
My mind holds a thousand bodies
still, or sets them humming
in joyless fibrillation: pattering,
not marching, to their tasks
like hailstones. The whiteness,
in a dispassionate crescendo,
erodes each emergent thought.
It gnaws holes in my memories;
it casts me like flotsam
on the tide of my omnipotence.

THE ANGELS CALL YOU HOME

by Rebecca Franklyn

if you were the button to my thread
I would sew the moon to the world
for your love was a gift from the stars
and I would tie a loose thread to the sun
lasso the moon with golden threads
before stitching the planets to your spaceship
for the angels call you home
and you take a final breath
and I beg you to take me with you
we journey along the string
pulling the stars ever closer
until we travel through the galaxies
I will remember you in the stars
the planets
the moon and the sun
I will remember you with this needle and thread

THREE FOR ROSES

by Neile Graham

i

A long winter, yes, she says
as her fingers coil paper,
twist red, pink, violet, yellow,

twirls them to bloom. Stalks them
green into brown, stem and soil.
Her face, alive with spring-bright sun,

thins the clouds above to tissue.
Warms them to mist and grace.
Budding antlers of winter trees.

ii

Lips rose-red, hair rich as earth,
eyes green as stems, her ears
thorns, the dress that breezes

along her limbs yellow shading
to sunset salmon glory. Her taut face,
her spread hands poised calm

as forest deer, shows her spirit
wants to step out. Spread over,
all over. An orchard fruiting with flowers.

iii

She has burst everywhere, burst
and blown, blowsy as late-summer
blooms, petals skittering everywhere.

Yes, she is autumn-dried rosehips,
husks and simmering wind. It needs
a long winter she says and ensorcels

a leaping paper stag to carry her home.
Over the woods her gaze brittles, ices
each leaf to fire. To fire and to gold.

WHY SPACE HELMETS ARE MANDATORY

By David Clink

Sand is the same wherever you go in the galaxy.
It gets into everything, makes things not work.

You are outside a broken spaceship on a lovely planet
where skies are blue and boulders float.

The floating boulders form a long line over the sifting sand.
Their oblong shadows stretch out. The only shade.

Your spacesuit keeps your innards from exploding.
The silver wrench in your hand reflects the sky's beauty.

This isn't why you left home, but it'll do.

REBIRTH

By Marcie Lynn Tentchoff

I can't regret the burning.
Where I fell to earth
your world was torn,
and all around went up in flames
that raged through meadows,
forests, even streams and lakes,
until the only things that yet remained
were broken, blackened,
caked with ash.
And there, within the barren crater
you created when you shot down
what you thought was
just some nameless satellite,
my egg sat, glowing,
warm enough perhaps to melt
even your ice and diamond hearts,
or just to nurture me to grow,
and hatch,
and spring up high,
to ride upon the heated winds,
above, away, far from your eyes,
taking all my magic with me.

POINTE AU BARIL
APRIL 15TH, 1973

by David Clink

*Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness.
It took me years to understand that this too, was a gift.
— Mary Oliver*

The lighthouse there struck us in our youth,
our pierced hearts revealing the beasts we were,

our obscurity in the shadows, evading the turning light,
our desires, our souls, our futures just out of reach.

We imagined the lighthouse was painted black inside,
a void capturing all the light and love in the world,

and a monster dwelt there, the last of its kind.
We kept it alive, but it was alone. It wanted death.

Each day for it was darker than the one before,
a reminder of what it didn't have, could never have.

CANNIBAL PLAYLIST

By Colleen Anderson

Aperitif

Amuse Bouche
Heartsteak Hotel
I Only Have Eyes for You
I Kill Everything I Fuck
Killing Me Softly with His Tongue
You've Lost that Living Feeling
The Boys of Simmer
Gorging on My Mind
Soup John B
The Good Thymes Are Killing Me
Pink Toeses
Blue Eyes Crying for the Brain
Who'll Strip the Veins

Fischespooner
Elvis Presley
The Flamingos
GG Allin
Roberta Flack
The Righteous Brothers
Don Henley
Hoagy Carmichael
The Beach Boys
Modest Mouse
Westside
Willie Nelson
Creedance Clearwater Revival

Entrée

Should I Flay or Should I Go
The Meat Goes On
Submerged in Boiling Flesh
50 Ways to Love Your Liver
Fry Me a Liver
He's So Fried
Be My Baby Veal
Hamburger Lady
No Woman No Fry
Love Me Tender
Maneater
Rollin' Bone
Young Blood

The Clash
Sonny & Cher
Cannibal Corpse
Paul Simon
Ella Fitzgerald
The Pointer Sisters
The Ronettes
Throbbing Gristle
Bob Marley
Elvis Presley
Hall & Oates
Muddy Waters
The Coasters

Dessert

Pour Some Sugar on Me
Piece of My Heart
Sundae Bloody Sundae
Candy Girl
God Save the Queen for Dessert
Sweet Child in Wine

Def Leppard
Janis Joplin
U2
The Four Seasons
Sex Pistols
Guns N' Roses

PENUMBRAL MISTS

By Lavinia Leon

sunless unseen selenar eclipses align under trees,
leaving a stromal glow aura wherever they fly
through geysers, the earth exhales, peaceful.
on Titan, the oceans embrace the rare setting of Saturn.
near Rigel, a comet bound for Betelgeuse wonders
if she should see planets by now.

THE HUNTRESS (CAT AND DRAGON)

By Robert Dawson

Picture attached! My kitten, Tenebrae,
Who's growing up to be the *cutest* cat,
Caught her first dragon just the other day!
Of course, the yard's had dragons since, last May,
The portal opened: we've got used to that.
Picture it, though: my kitten, Tenebrae,
Looking so proudly up, as if to say
"This is for you, Mum!" with a mouse or bat,
"Caught my first dragon!" Just the other day
(It seems) we took her in, a little stray:
Now she's a huntress, keening like a Strat,
Guarding our garden, valiant Tenebrae!
Of course my nosy neighbour had to say
That dragons are endangered. Silly prat!
I saw a dragon just the other day
Out in the yard, not thirty feet away,
Eating my shrubs: I won't put up with that.
(Picture attached.) My kitten, Tenebrae,
Caught that damned dragon just the other day.

ABOUT THE POETS AND ARTIST

Colleen Anderson

Colleen Anderson has been widely published across eight countries, with works appearing in publications such as *Weird Tales*, *Cemetery Dance*, and *Amazing*, among others. Rhysling Award winner for “Machine (r)Evolution” and a two-time winner of the SFPA’s dwarf poetry contest, she has been nominated for Pushcart, Elgin, Rhysling, Aurora and Dwarf Stars Awards. Her poetry collections include [The Lore of Inscrutable Dreams](#), [I Dreamed a World](#), [Weird Worlds](#), and [Vellum Leaves and Lettered Skins](#), as well as two fiction collections [A Body of Work](#) and [Embers Amongst the Fallen](#). She lives in Vancouver, BC where she searches for mermaids. Look for new poetry and fiction collections coming in 2026-2027. www.colleenanderson.wordpress.com

Trevor Atkins

Trevor lives on the west coast of Canada with his family, but he sees imagined seascapes more often than the ones practically outside his door. He writes historical adventure novels for middle-grade readers (and up), including the award winning *The Day the Pirates Went Mad* (2021) and *Back to the New Adventure* (2024). He has also recently begun submitting short stories and poetry to writing contests and magazines. Trevor is a member of Tri-City Wordsmiths and CWILLBC.

Visit <https://EmmaSharpesAdventures.com>
and <https://www.facebook.com/trevor.atkins.author> for more.

David Clink

David is originally from the Andromeda Galaxy but now calls Toronto home. In his human form, he is the poetry editor (along with his sister, Carolyn, and Herb Kauderer) of *Amazing Stories*. He co-hosts two podcasts: “Two Old Farts Talk Sci-Fi,” with Troy Harkin, and “Wizards & Spaceships,” with Rachel A. Rosen. His latest poetry collection, which he wrote in gaseous form, is: *The Black Ship* (Aeolus House, 2023). Find more at: <https://www.davidlivingstoneclink.com/>

Robert Dawson

Robert teaches mathematics at a Nova Scotian university. In his spare time he writes, cycles, and hikes. His stories have appeared in *Nature Futures*, *On Spec*, *Neo-Opis*, *Polar Borealis*, *Tesseract 20*, and numerous other periodicals and anthologies. He is a graduate of the Sage Hill and Viable Paradise writing workshops.

J.D. Dresner

J.D. Dresner writes speculative fiction fuelled by caffeine, chaos, and an alarming number of open browser tabs. His work has crash-landed in the pages of *Polar Borealis*, *Fission*, *Spectral Realms*, and other fine publications that haven't yet revoked his contributor status. One of his poems was even shortlisted for the Aurora Awards, which he now brings up at parties far too often. His upcoming fantasy series, *The Talisman Series*, launches in 2026, assuming reality holds together that long. He lives in Maple Ridge, BC, where he also designs books like it's a normal thing. Visit him at <https://www.jddresner.com> or check out his monthly newsletter for updates and free content at <https://jddresner.com/newsletter-signup>.

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).

Rebecca Franklyn

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

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.

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 multiple speculative fiction stories and poems. Her work has previously appeared in both *Polar Borealis* and *Polar Starlight*, as well as *Neo Opsi*s and various anthologies.

<https://sites.google.com/site/jytkennedy/>

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.

Robert Pasternak

Robert has been painting cosmic surrealism and speculative art since 1980 and has created cover art and interior magazine illustrations for *Amazing Stories*, *Aboriginal Science Fiction* and *Science Fiction Chronicle* as well as cover

art for Phyllis Gotlieb's short story collection *Blue Apes*, and *Land/Space*, an anthology of Prairie speculative fiction. In 2023 Robert's painting "Breatharian" won Best in Show at NASFIC (the North American Science Fiction Convention). In November 2024, At Bay Press published his SF epic *Twilight of Echelon*.

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.

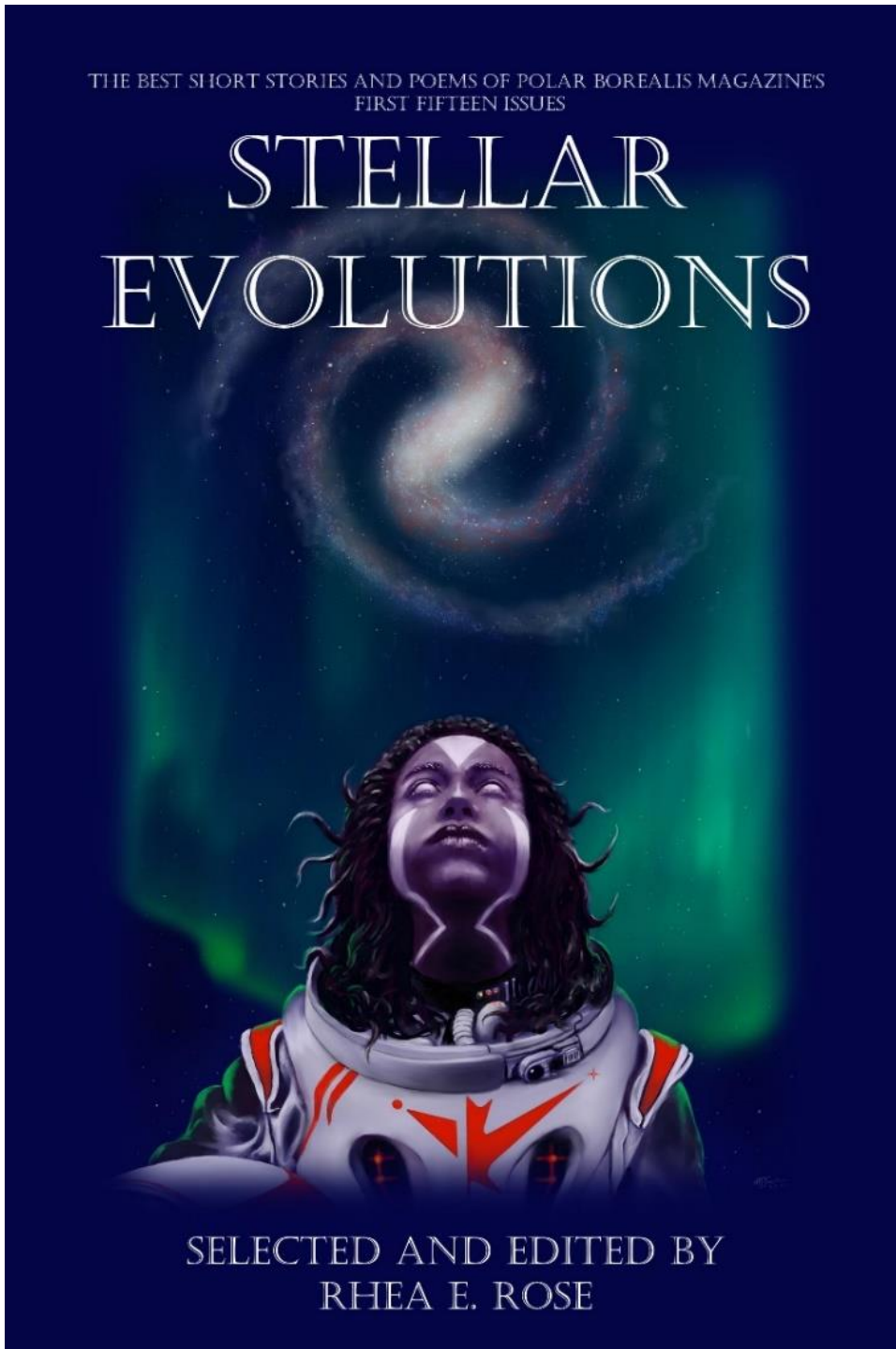
Marcie Lynn Tentchoff

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*.

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/>.

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, J.Y.T. 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, J.Y.T. 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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