



ISSUE #8 WINTER 2023

FROZEN WAVELETS

Frozen Wavelets

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to Issue #8.

Compared to 2022, this year we face the usual set of challenges and brand-new ones, some of them specific to our community of speculative fiction creators and lovers.

Speculative fiction, which includes science fiction, fantasy, and horror, is often dismissed as mere escapism or entertainment. However, I argue that we should support speculative fiction because it provides important insights into our world and ourselves, inspires us to think creatively, and fosters empathy and understanding.

Impossible to disagree, right? Well, this is the take of ChatGPT, Feb 13 Version, which I duly queried asking why we should support speculative fiction.

I am sure you are all very aware of the debate raging now about how we can avoid being flooded by AI-written stories, which, as a horror and SF writer myself, I'd find weirdly amusing not being for the challenge it poses to magazines that will have to deal with them. I don't have a solution, but I am fascinated by the problem.

What's certain, we'd better get ready: AI is not going away, and a writing-fiction AI will be the least of the world's problems. Still, as in any new (powerful) technology, there are dangers and opportunities, and it is on us to find the way to reap the second without overlook the first.

For a good dose of human-concocted dread and dark beauty, enjoy this winter issue in all its variety of themes and verses. The next one is probably going to be in another format, somewhen later this year.

Take care,

SPB

Frozen Wavelets

Come Young Sailor

by J.D. Harlock

Come, young sailor, to my shore

Your spirits are weak, your heart is sore

The worlds you'll see, the bliss you'll feel

Your soul will mend, your wounds will heal

Now, leave your ship, abandon the war

I'll give you the love, that I swore

So, come young sailor, I'll sing you a song.

Listen well, you don't have long...

She Gathered and Fair Trade

by Marisca Pichette

She gathered up the dust

of herself
and could not find the glue.

So, despairing of a place
she took a breath, and blew—

The pieces fluttered from her hands
and sparkled, as they flew

to land at last
upon her past;

A house she never knew.

A fair trade

tell the secret of bones:
 wet bones
 salt bones
 bones oh
 over water,
asking for oceans for
 roses and bread—

we give them bones
 and secrets

and the sea.

Excavating Lost Languages

by Daniel Ausema

As I turned the soil with my shovel, the smell of ancient morphemes filled the air. Rich alleles competed with forgotten fricatives, turning my thoughts giddy. If I could only express such sounds in the languages I knew.

Philologists have long since unearthed the skeletons of the world's lost alphabets. They've pulled them from the ground and used them as the base for elaborate studies of what people once spoke, as if a writing system were merely the architectural drawings for a mathematical building of perfect logic. Such fools those experts are. Such a fool am I, even so. Alphabets are vastly more than their skeletons.

I filled my wheelbarrow with the detritus of those lost languages, decaying alphabets left behind by the philologists to rot away in the ground. The squeaking of the wheelbarrow as I pushed it seemed itself a hint of some lost linguistic signifier, its meaning divorced from the sound, but a scintilla of its original substance remained.

It spoke of a bird's shriek, of a rodent's surprised flight, of death.

I pushed the rotting flesh of forgotten tongues to a garden behind the city library. I fertilized the flowers with guttural plosives and liquid approximants. I cupped the tender shoots of the plants with obstruent clicks. I sprinkled the soil with the tonal patterns of languages long forgotten.

And now I wait.

New languages and new stories will rise, will envelop the city, will track down their own lost skeletons and sniff in superiority before they absorb even those bones into their new meanings and unspoken sounds.

And may they sniff in superiority at me, as well, at the memory of me many years from now, when my waiting is past, and their realities embodied anew. By then I will be forgotten by all but the languages I have prodded into life. May they look down nasalized vowels at my skeletal form as they absorb me and translate me into something I have never been before.

In the syntax and semantics of those unimagined tongues, I will surpass the experts and all their refined limits.

The End

Diamond Snow

by Dawn Vogel

the weather on this planet
is confusing and frightening
the clouds say snow, so we prepare,
but then we see downpour all day
until it turns to glittering snow,
as sharp and hard as diamonds.

Tapping on the void and **Unleashed**

by Marsheila Rockwell

Trapped in my black hole
I shoot desperate flares of fading hope
A celestial Save Our Souls
But you see only constellations
Mistaking my signaled distress
For someone else's star-mapped myth
You turn your telescope away
And I remain abandoned, lost
Running out of warped spacetime
Trapped in my black hole

We will not be tamed
By hemp or hypocrisy
Though thy noose burn tight
We bend neither neck nor knee
For once we swing, we shall fly

Dragon in Flight [*]

by Toshiya Kamei

The tailor's thread moved in and out of the snow-white fabric almost of its own accord. Underneath his needle, a flame-colored dragon gradually took shape. A pair of wings unfolded in slow motion. A long, scaly tail slithered like a snake. Beady eyes glowed amber. In his mind, the creature flapped its wings, soared into the clouds, and circled over a muddy river flowing into the ocean.

The girl's wedding was only a few days away. It was a rush order, and the tailor put aside other tasks to finish her kimono. As the deadline fell the following morning, he toiled late into the night.

His vision blurred as he stared at the flickering candle on his table. When he returned his gaze back to the garment, the embroidered dragon wiggled. A faint light sparked in its fiery eyes. Or so he thought. He blinked a few times before going back to his sewing.

When he finished his last stitch in the wee hours, a dull knock at the door echoed through his modest house.

"Who could that be at this hour?" the tailor wondered aloud, with a quick glance at the wall clock. He slid the door open with a slow creak. A pale-faced girl stood before him, a serious look on her face.

"Oh, Miss Sayuri. I didn't expect to see you so early."

A faint smile formed on Sayuri's lips as she looked around.

“How is my kimono coming along?”

“It’s finished, miss.”

“Is that so?” She tilted her head slightly.

The tailor beckoned her inside, picked her folded kimono off a rush mat, and extended it before her eyes.

“Congratulations, by the way. You must be happy.”

The girl remained silent while the wall clock ticked out the seconds. “Thank you,” she finally mumbled as her smile faded. Before she looked down, a shadow clouded her face. “That’s what everybody says. Happy. What is happiness? Do you know? To please my father? Increasing his wealth by marrying well?”

“I don’t know, miss. Don’t tell me you’re not looking forward to your own wedding.”

“Excuse me,” Sayuri said, with a look of resignation. She stood behind a shoji screen. The candle flame danced on the table nearby, casting her oversized shadow along the wall. The rustle of her clothing falling filled the otherwise silent room. Dressed in her bridal attire, she walked toward the door.

The tailor gasped, not least because the bride-to-be’s beauty moved him. An otherworldly flicker ignited in the girl’s eyes like a funeral pyre.

“Miss Sayuri, where are you going?” he asked in a trembling voice. The girl vanished into thin air, her kimono slowly falling like a petal tossed into the wind.

Exhausted and confused, the tailor staggered outside. He walked to where the kimono fell and grabbed it.

The embroidered dragon was gone, and in the sky, a life-size dragon made a few circles above a bare persimmon tree and flew toward the horizon as the sun painted the clouds crimson.

[*] **Dragon in Flight** is a reprint, has previously appeared on Ghost Orchid Press.

Knife and **Clamshell**

by Colleen Anderson

knife

deboning flesh

we eat mermaids

clamshell

snapping closed

my bloody hand

Forgiven and Enchanted

by C. L. Sidell

I lie –
a candle stuck
in its own wax:

a yellow canine
sat down
and said: “Blow
out the candle.

You needn’t
be afraid
of mortal sin.”

fog-sprinkled leaves tremble under the barn owl’s weight
from a knotted oak branch beyond the candle-lit window, flute-song serenades

stars fizzle like snuffed flames
the universe goes blank for eighty-two heartbeats
re-igniting with the arrival of green tendrils, spidery limbs, and glowing eyes

dew-drenched rabbits celebrate, chasing each other in buoyant circles
hind legs kicking, cottontails twitching –
an armadillo pauses in its journey to glance up at the crescent moon

and in the space beyond Earth’s prescient, opalescent smile

the planets dance

A Girl Narrates a Nature Documentary

by Ruth Joffre

Skeleton flowers—their crisp white petals harboring a gothic secret.

Here, we see their pale ivory blossoms languishing in the shade, untouched by the sun or the gentle fingers of the gardener drifting across the yard toward her mate. Together, they sit beneath the branches of black and white pines and shiver in anticipation of the rain. It descends like fairies—so softly and brightly, it hardly seems real until the drops cling to the skeleton flowers and their petals turn translucent.

What once appeared as a ghostly surprise has since become a ritual. Each day, the gardeners don their gloves and pick up their trowels and continue the work of beautifying this small patch of planet, and each day rain sweeps through—soft at first, then hot and insistent, warm water steaming on contact with their skin, then soaking into the welcoming soil.

No one told them the future would look like this: so green and restful.

Watch as the tender shoots of basil and chive push through the damp layer of topsoil.

“Welcome to our family,” the gardeners say whenever a new plant develops. Today’s count brings the total to 587 family members, including two half-human adults and a single human-floral hybrid child approximately age ten—Phylleia.

Let us pause and marvel a moment at the fact of her existence. Petal-velvet skin, leaf-green eyes, filaments of pollen-gold hair reaching out to push the green button of a nose in the mirror. If she were to walk outside right now, in the downpour, her skin would be translucent. A pearly ghost in denim overalls drinking water through the roots of her toes.

Once, she cast off the habits of her humanoid form and ran naked in this storm, her body a blur of hard capillaries and soft, globular organs. Avert your eyes now or she may do it again. Such are the benefits of being bipedal. Where Phylleia can run to her mothers whenever she pleases, her siblings remain forever rooted in place; her parents must always go to them.

Mornings pass quickly in the garden: birthing, pruning, watering, giggling at the clinging hugs of vines, those first hesitant attempts at baby talk from the baby's breath.

Behold: a garden full of life. A family on its own terms. This, Phylleia knows, is an ongoing project. One she will inherit from her two mothers when the time comes. For now, though, the rain has stopped, and her parents have returned from the garden to enjoy the quiet after the storm. Now, Phylleia is just a child, younger than most of her siblings by decades—in one case a century—and she still has much to learn about joy and the tender work of fostering it. Her family endeavors each day to teach her something new about happiness.

Observe. See how she enjoys a game of piggyback with both moms, wrapping the vines of her appendages tight around each of their waists in turn to prevent a fall. See how she hangs upside-down from the branches of the black pine, her roots extended as counterbalance to her body weight, while she sways in the breeze. Every day is a victory of growth and photosynthesis. A sweet series of rituals and discoveries, like learning the language of honeysuckle and harnessing the true power of thorns. If we were to follow her around their garden tomorrow morning, we would see her kneel by the flowerbeds to ring the bluebells awake. We would hear her ask, "What shall we play today?"

Let us wait patiently for the answer.

Sparse Wavelets

by Gerri Leen and Deborah D. Davitt

Howling

The moon's full again
Calling to my better self
I wish I could stay
Running through the woods with you
And never have to change back

A Dryad Reborn

(sijo)

In a fall of willow branches, I can see your hair—
its slender trunk, your frame, transformed; yet not by some jealous, slighted god,
but by your own will. You drink in light and transform it, too.

About the Contributors

Colleen Anderson edits and writes fiction and poetry. Her work has appeared in over 250 publications such as *HWA Poetry Showcase* and *Star*Line*. Her fiction collection, *A Body of Work* was recently published by Black Shuck Books, UK. She is also working on a poetry collection and alternate world novel. Find her at www.colleenanderson.wordpress.com

Daniel Ausema's fiction has appeared in *Strange Horizons*, *Daily Science Fiction*, and *Diabolical Plots* as well as previously in *Frozen Wavelets*. He lives in Colorado at the foot of the Rockies and can be found online at <https://danielausema.com> and @ausema on Twitter.

Deborah L. Davitt was raised in Nevada, but lives in Houston, Texas with her husband and son. Her work has appeared in *F&SF*, *Analog*, and *Asimov's*. For more about her work, please see <http://www.edda-earth.com/bibliography>. You may contact her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/deborah.davitt.3 or Twitter @davittDL.

J.D. Harlock is a Lebanese Palestinian Syrian writer & editor based in Beirut. He is the Poetry Editor at *Orion's Belt* and Poetry Co-Editor at *Solarpunk Magazine*. You can find him on Twitter and Instagram enjoying himself a tad too much.

Ruth Joffre is the author of the story collection *Night Beast*. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Lightspeed*, *Pleiades*, *The Florida Review Online*, *Flash Fiction Online*, *Wigleaf*, *Baffling Magazine*, and the anthology *Unfettered Hexes: Queer Tales of Insatiable Darkness*. Find her @Ruth_Joffre on Twitter.

Toshiya Kamei writes fiction inspired by fairy tales, folklore, and mythology. Their short stories have appeared in *Daily Science Fiction*, *Galaxy's Edge*, and elsewhere. In 2022, they won the *Apex Microfiction Contest*. <https://toshiyakamei.wordpress.com/>

Gerri Leen is a Pushcart- and Rhysling-nominated poet from Northern Virginia who's into horse racing, tea, and collecting encaustic art and raku pottery. She has poetry published or accepted by *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Strange Horizons*, *Dreams & Nightmares* and others. Visit gerrileen.com to learn more.

Marisca Pichette is an author of magic and monsters, living in Western Massachusetts. Her work has appeared and is forthcoming in *Strange Horizons*, *Fireside Magazine*, *Pseudopod*, *PodCastle*, and *Fusion Fragment*, among others. She is on Twitter as @MariscaPichette and Instagram as @marisca_write. Website: www.mariscapichette.com

Marsheila (Marcy) Rockwell is a Rhysling Award-nominated poet and the author of multiple books, short stories, poems, and comics. She is a disabled pediatric cancer/mental health awareness advocate and a reconnecting Chippewa/Métis. She lives in the desert with her family, buried under books. Website: <https://marsheilarockwell.com/>

A native Floridian, **C. L. Sidell** grew up playing with toads in the rain and indulging in speculative fiction. When she's not working or writing, she's usually looking for ways to spoil her pets or stopping traffic to rescue animals. You can find her at <https://crystalsidell.wixsite.com/mysite>

Dawn Vogel has written for children, teens, and adults, spanning genres, places, and time periods. She is a member of Broad Universe, SFWA, and Codex Writers. She lives in Seattle with her awesome husband (and fellow author), Jeremy Zimmerman, and their herd of cats. Visit her: historythatneverwas.com or Twitter @historyneverwas.