

BLACK

LIVES

MATTER



# RED PLANET MAGAZINE

# Red Planet Magazine

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# THE PRINCESS KISS

by Maurice Humphrey

One day a handsome young man wandered into Forrestdale Village. He had a gash on his head and couldn't remember his name, so they brought him to see Doctor Rowen. The doctor examined him and found him in good health.

"You're in good health aside from that nasty looking bump on your head," he told the young man, "However, I'm going to keep you under observation for a few days. Nurse Sara, will watch over you. Do what she tells you, and you'll be out of here in no time."

Over the next several days the young man and Nurse Sara became very close. He remembered his name was Herald, and the ugly Witch Rhoda had cursed him. The curse compelled him to find a princess willing to kiss him, or wander the world searching for one that would. If he could find a princess, persuade her to kiss him, it would remove the curse.

With the curse removed, he would revert to his normal self, and free to stay with Nurse Sara. But there were no more kings or queens, princes, or even princesses; his quest would have no end. With a saddened heart, the handsome young man packed his meager belongings to begin his quest.

"Why do you have to leave?" Nurse Sara asked.

"It's the witches curse," he replied. "I must wander the land in search of something that doesn't exist."

“You don’t like me?” she pouted.

“Oh, I do like you,” Herald replied in anguish, “I like you very much, and I wish I could stay with you forever.”

In desperation, Sara wrapped her arms around him and kissed him. Then she hung her head and cried.

Herald felt terrible, but there was no way he could resist the curses mandate.

“I’m saddened, I won’t be able to fulfill your dreams,” he told her, “but being kissed by a princess is the only way to remove the curse.”

“But, my middle name is Princess,” she told him, “isn’t that enough?”

Herald stared at her in shock. His body shivered and convulsed. Then, with a mystical “POOF”, and a puff of greenish-purple smoke, he turned into a small green frog at her feet.

Nurse Sara Princess Rowen screamed!

“Ribbet?” the frog replied.

I am a Vermont native, husband, father, grandfather, Navy veteran, retired IBM engineer and retired printer repairman. I’ve written technical articles, taught technical classes and presented at technical conventions. I started reading science fiction in high school, and bought my first books through the TAB (Teen Age Book) club; they were “Journey to the Centre of the Earth”, by Jules Verne and “The Stars Are Ours”, by Andre Norton. After 50+ years of reading science fiction I decided to try writing. Although my main genre is Science Fiction, I’ve also delved into fantasy, horror and more recently written history articles for the local newspaper.



# TERRA

by Renée Cohen

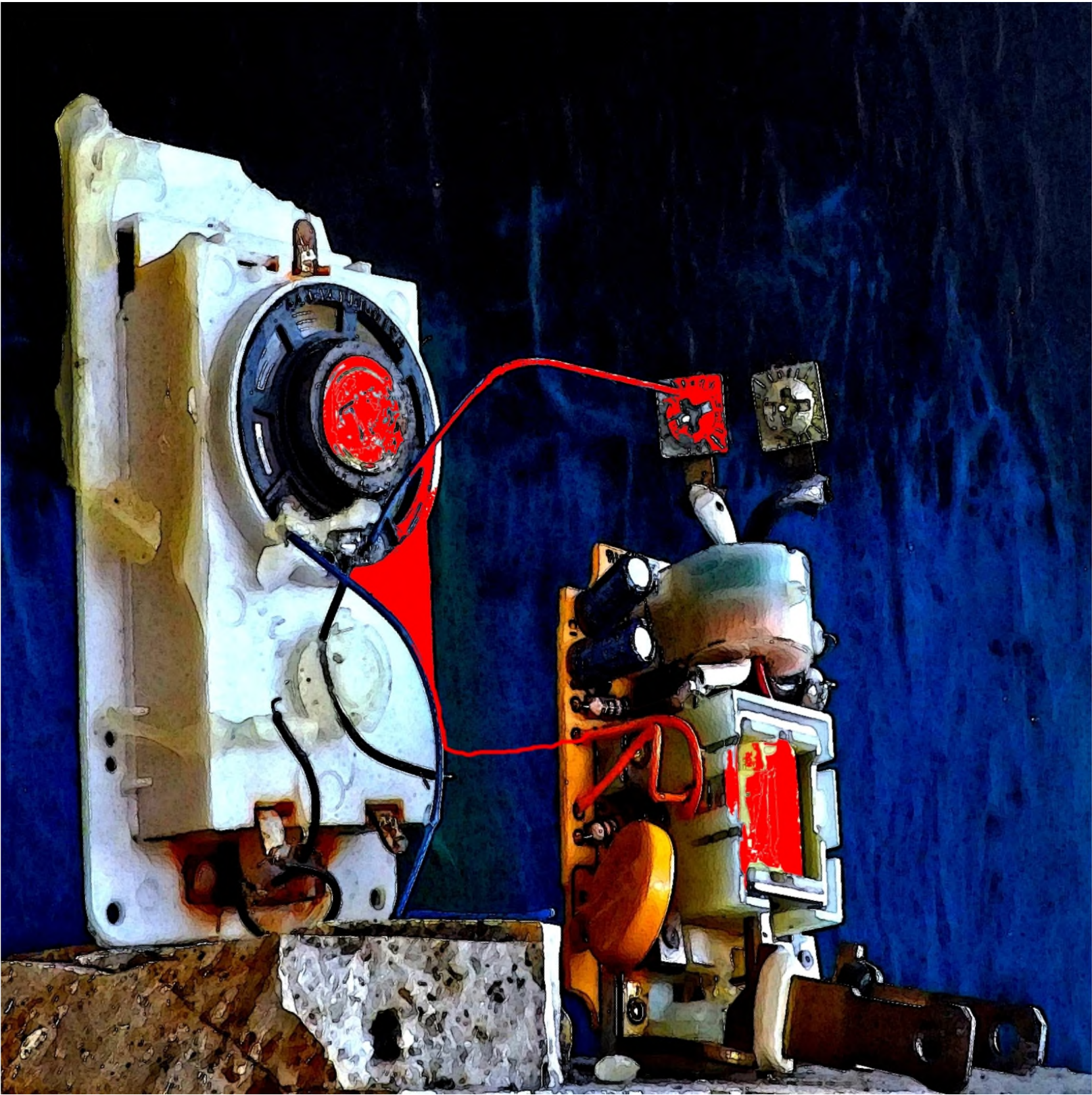
Renée Cohen is a freelance writer and artist from Canada. Her artwork has been featured on the cover of *On Spec Magazine*, inside *Montreal Writes Literary Magazine*, *Understorey Magazine*'s Nature Issue, *Jet Fuel Review*, *3Elements Review*, *Spadina Literary Review*, *Headlight 22*, *Sonic Boom Journal India*, and elsewhere.



# LOVE ON THE RED PLANET

by Alex Nodopaka

Alex Nodopaka originated immaculately in Ukraine. Speaks San Franciscan, Parisian, Kievan & Muscovite. Mumbles in English & Espanol & sings in tongues after Vodka. Studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Casablanca, Morocco. Presently full time author and visual artist in USA.





## WELL-CRAFTED OBLIVION

by J.J. Steinfeld

You, sweet dreamer, have run off  
to a well-crafted oblivion  
how clever, how astute,  
seconds before the authorities  
in their new uniforms  
like second skins of death.  
arrive at your door.

You, sweet dreamer, knew all about endings  
planned or impromptu  
safe in your well-crafted oblivion  
away from the late-night news.

Why, I ask, on this dying morning  
didn't you leave me a map,  
planned or impromptu  
a way to circumvent endings  
and uncrafted outcomes.

Canadian poet, fiction writer, and playwright J. J. Steinfeld lives on Prince Edward Island, where he is patiently waiting for Godot's arrival and a phone call from Kafka. While waiting, he has published 20 books, including *Madhouses in Heaven, Castles in Hell* (Stories, Ekstasis Editions, 2015), *An Unauthorized Biography of Being* (Stories, Ekstasis Editions, 2016), *Absurdity, Woe Is Me, Glory Be* (Poetry, Guernica Editions, 2017), *A Visit to the Kafka Café* (Poetry, Ekstasis Editions, 2018), and *Gregor Samsa Was Never in The Beatles* (Stories, Ekstasis Editions, 2019).

# AMONGST THE STARS

by Mike Turner

We are all but star dust  
Individual protons, neutrons, electrons  
Bound into atoms and compounds  
Formed in turn into protoplasm  
Nuclei, cells  
Muscle, bone, organs  
This living, breathing, walking shell we call  
"Human"

Surrounded by other star dust  
Comprising in turn  
The planet we live upon  
The land we inhabit  
The air we breathe  
And water we drink  
And all the flora and fauna  
Which accompany us  
And sustain us  
In the journey we call  
"Life"

When that journey concludes  
We decompose  
Back to the essential elements  
Making up our being  
Devolving to cells, nuclei  
Atoms, compounds  
Returning at last again to star dust  
In the process we call  
"Death"

Yet through all this cycle  
We are imbued with an additional force  
One that animates us

Gives us intellect  
Emotion  
Connectivity one with another  
Love  
That ethereal thing we call  
“Soul”

And while star dust may be seen  
In all its permutations  
Atoms  
Flora  
Fauna  
Human being  
The soul has no physical presence  
It simply is  
And as our mortal bodies return  
To the great teeming mass of the cosmos  
So too do our souls return  
To merge with the spiritual oneness  
From which we are born  
And to which we will ever belong  
Amongst the stars

Mike Turner retired from a career in Federal investigations to the US Gulf Coast, where he took up songwriting and poetry. He was named Male Gospel Entertainer of the Year by both the Alabama Music Association (2016) and the North American Country Music Associations International (2017), and was featured on the “15 Minutes of Fame Stage” at the Monroeville Literary Festival (2020). His recordings have received airplay and streaming throughout the US, UK, Europe, New Zealand and on the Armed Forces Radio Network. His poetry has been published in numerous print and on-line journals including Red Planet Magazine.

# Deckled Edges

by Mia D. Holmes

I'm a word in a book.

Not a sentence

or a page

or a chapter.

I'm just a word somewhere in between

something capitalized and

something with a punctuation mark behind it.

I'm not sure if I have four letters

or seven or maybe even nine.

Do people stutter over me?

Or wonder what my definition is?

Will they ask where my origin came from?

I can't tell and maybe I'll never know, but

I hope, at least,  
I'm one of the words  
in one of those sentences  
that can't be removed or altered.  
I hope the book I'm in is extraordinary,  
and I hope my part is memorable and,  
in some way,  
important.  
Even if I am just a word,  
on some page,  
in some book that I don't know the name of.

Mia Holmes is a Graduate Assistant at Christian Brothers University in Memphis where she is pursuing her Master's in Education with a concentration in English. She recently completed her BA in Creative Writing at Christian Brothers University, where she finished her last season of college soccer. Some of her work was published on Action News 5, a local news station in Memphis.

# STARS ABOVE LIGHT BELOW

by April Marie

A distant planet bears a tree;  
A single one, and well-buried.  
The sky burns hot with suns abound  
and scorched and empty seems the ground,  
but down below, the tree survives  
by planting roots at sunlight's sides.

Alone it lived for years until  
these men unearthed the dead mantle.  
Imbued with gold, this nature's ore  
made them trade their bodies for  
axe and helmet. A drop of sap  
can ease the load of debted laps.

Voids and hollows, roads with ends,  
silvery ropes, they yet descend,  
while orders echo from the deep:  
Sever a vein, and let it seep!  
Support the wall--if oil flows,  
gather the barrels! Down below.

These men can tell when suns arise;  
The branches quake and creep aside.  
And when the vein is bled and sapped,  
to find the next, they open maps  
of stars whose light cannot be seen,  
but guides them through the gold ravine.

## Poetry

by Lynne Goldsmith

### BINARY SYSTEM: WHITE DWARF ACCOMPANYING RED GIANT

Collapse to fragment in cloud of gas.  
Interstellar clumps form the birth of stars  
touched by dust, some bound by gravitation  
to orbit around a common center. If closer,  
stars transfer mass, meaning one grows  
while the other (white dwarf)  
pulls in matter forming a disk  
around its body. Nova burst  
of brightness might happen,  
or a largening into a hot red giant  
losing its outer shell of gas  
in explosion ejection of mass—  
as brightest supernova  
to pass into neutrons, a star—  
maybe into a pulsar  
or into the making of  
another galactic black hole.

# NEUTRON STAR REVIVED

Solar winds remove the red  
giant star's outer layers

as magnetic field  
of smaller star companion  
in shared orbit around  
common center

still keeps going strong  
in defying death,  
in being somehow young

and provided nourishment  
(transfer of mass  
from red giant star  
gravitationally bound)

leading up to  
unheard of  
bursts of

X-ray light  
on neutron star:  
solar winds' offering

a blanket  
over presumed core

of death.

# MILKY WAY'S BLACK HOLE

It's the mass that draws us in, black hole  
that awaits stars and gas clouds  
with a gravitational pull  
not even light can escape.

The dark emits high energy particles  
as breath from vortex magnitude.

Fourteen million miles across  
(opposed by magnetic fields),  
black hole  
of galactic core  
still cannot take in

everything.  
Expulsion of matter occurs.

# MAD AT THE WORLD FOR MOVING ON

by Edward Kline

You've now been away,  
almost four months to the day.  
You were right about the space we made.  
It was always doomed to fade.

I can't stop thinking of you.  
I know why you're gone  
But here I sit mad at the world for moving on.

In our haven, we could never remain.  
We took the easy way; it always ensures pain.  
And the ground on which we stood,  
has eroded into the ocean of time for good.

I can't stop thinking of you.  
I know why you're gone.  
But here I sit mad at the world for moving on.

Should we run into each other again,  
would I see the face of a foe or friend?  
I don't deserve anything but disdain.  
And should get no shelter from your rain.

Still, I can't stop thinking of you.  
I know why you're gone.  
But here I sit mad at the world for moving on.

Edward Kline is a poet and short story writer who resides in Boston, Massachusetts.

# THE SHIPWRECK ON OLYMPUS MONS

by Kristian Macaron

The pirates already knew the earth was round,  
before the emerald sunset; it was un-sailable,  
and unassailable, which is why they were surprised  
when the whirlpool drew them under not only miles,  
but eons of surf—their only air was salt water—  
and abandoned them breathing on the hard red rock  
of Mars under the Milky Way smoke of Olympus Mons.

They were gasping for breath before they understood  
they couldn't breathe—and then they realized they could.  
The Martian air it felt colder somehow, distant, and the ship  
creaked with water and though the men knew she was dying,  
they clung to her frame as if they had never known land before.

One of them, after gazing into the eternal stars tore himself away  
from the freezing, salty hull and said: Who better to settle a planet  
than treasure hunters? But when he tried to pull away, he followed  
his own footprints back and said, We have no compass for this land.  
The other men spent the long days putting their arms deep in  
puddles,  
looking for the portal that would pull them back into the bottom of  
their own sea. They even raised the mast and waited for wind,  
to see if perhaps they could sail unanchored through light years.

The captain didn't say much. He had seen the signs, after all: The men  
had spelled 'doom' after the albatross, the missing flag, the sun rising  
red, the cabin boy's whistles, the stowaway girl. Press on, he'd said,  
though he had lost the map that led their way long before.  
He didn't tell the men, but the green flash was still caught  
like a tear in the bottom of his eyes.

After a time, the one woman among them became like a goddess.  
She who had shrugged at their swears on earth gave them back on  
Mars

We are wanderers. We are heavenly wanderers, she said.

What good are you pirates if you won't search for star treasure?

And when they begged her for solace, made her their princess, saw  
her everlasting beauty because she was the one and only queen of  
the planet,

she said, Shame on the lot of you, ship barnacles, you are and she  
disappeared

into the wild blueberry-pebble fields of Olympus Mons to find, if not  
treasure

then, some new reckless way of life. She left them anchored to a  
lifeless ship,

an unknown future. She watched them from Olympus Mons,  
as they waited in space shadows, and the men, they knew the  
treasure she found would be worth all starlight,  
and they waited for her to bring it, burning, back.

As she became as small as a dove on the volcano,  
they watched her with their spyglass,

sometimes afraid to blink

for she was the only movement  
on the planet. As the ship froze in  
ice and red dust and the Martian  
wind blew, she became their sky.

Kristian Macaron resides in Albuquerque, NM, but is often elsewhere. Her poetry chapbook collection is titled, *Storm*. Other fiction and poetry publications can be found in *The Winter Tangerine Review*, *Ginosko Literary Journal*, *Medusa's Laugh Press*, *The Mantle Poetry*, *Philadelphia Stories*, *Luna Luna Magazine*, *Gargoyle Magazine*, and forthcoming in *Asimov's Science Fiction*, *Gyroscope Review* & *Drunk Monkey's Magazine*. She is a co-founding editor of the literary journal, *Manzano Mountain Review*. View her work at [Kristianmacaron.com](http://Kristianmacaron.com).

# Poetry

by Xe M. Sánchez

## NUN YERA BUXU

La xente de la NASA  
anden a la gueta  
de les güelgues  
de vida intelixente'n Marte.

\*\*\*

Conocí abenayá  
a un marcianu.

\*\*\*

Nun yera verde.  
Nun yera buxu.

\*\*\*

Na Tierra  
alcuñábenlu "poeta".

## HE WAS NOT GREY

NASA's people  
are looking  
for the traces  
of intelligent life in Mars.

\*\*\*

I met a Martian  
a long time ago.

\*\*\*

He was not green.  
He was not grey.

\*\*\*

He was called "poet"  
on Earth.

## ABELLUGU ESCONTRA LA INCERTIDUME

estos díes d'abellugu  
y d'incertidume  
son afayadiegos  
pa remembrar les pallabres  
y les semeyes  
que dexamos escecíes  
nes bufardes.

\*\*\*

taba ellí tamién esti poema,  
que camenté  
qu'examás diba escribir.

\*\*\*

ye un poema d'entrenamientu,  
pa cuandu la poesía torne  
a les cais  
y a la mio tiesta.

## SHELTER AGAINST UNCERTAINTY

these days of shelter  
and uncertainty  
are suited  
to remember the words  
and pictures  
that we have forgotten  
in the attics.

\*\*\*

this poem, which I thought  
I was never going to write,  
was there.

\*\*\*

it is a training poem,  
for when poetry returns  
to the streets  
and my head.

Xe M. Sánchez was born in 1970 in Grau (Asturies, Spain). He received his Ph.D in History from the University of Oviedo in 2016, he is anthropologist, and he also studied Tourism and three masters. He has published in Asturian language *Escorzobeyos* (2002), *Les fueyes tresmanaes d'Enol Xivares* (2003), *Toponimia de la parroquia de Sobrefoz. Ponga* (2006), *Llué, esi mundu paralelu* (2007), *Les Erbies del Diañu* (E-book: 2013, Paperback: 2015), *Cróniques de la Gandaya* (E-book, 2013), *El Cuadernu Prietu* (2015), and several publications in journals and reviews in Asturies, USA, Portugal, France, Sweden, Scotland, Australia, South Africa, India, Italy, England, Canada, Reunion Island, China, Belgium and Ireland.







R E D P L A N E T M A G A Z I N E