

Shatter Dark Newsletter

Formerly titled “Rogue Pollyanna Review”
– by R. Graeme Cameron

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WHY TITLE THIS *ROGUE POLLYANNA REVIEW*?

I have a reputation as a Pollyanna promoter of Canadian Speculative Fiction. I never give negative reviews in my *Amazing Stories* review columns. If I don't like a book, I won't review it. Not my job to warn people about bad books. There's a million of them. I consider it my job to tell people about books I think they will enjoy reading.

Naturally I'm enthusiastic about promoting my soon-to-be published novel SHATTER DARK. I genuinely believe you will enjoy reading it. I'm fiercely determined to convince you to read it. No more neutrally objective nice guy. I be promoting my novel!

WHAT IS THIS NEWSLETTER ABOUT?

In essence, my life experience, albeit focused on my novel series and everything which led to its creation.

For example, in 1967, at the age of fifteen, I was doing my Latin homework in bed and wondering what sort of life this was preparing me for. I had a vision, an epiphany, a revelation... or an idle thought. Anyway, I imagined a shelf full of pocketbooks with lurid covers and my name on the spines. Yes, my goal in life was to make a living writing science fiction novels. Cool! I immediately leaped out of bed and began making notes for my first novel. (I failed Latin.)

Over the years I wrote a number of novels. None got published. Finally, at the When Words Collide Writers Festival last year, Alex McGilver of Celticfrog Publishing asked about the novel I was working on. Today he is on the verge of publishing *Shatter Dark*. My first published novel. It took me nearly six decades to accomplish this.

For this reason, I call myself “a professional beginning writer.” I don’t mean I’m a professional writer. I’m not. I’m an amateur and a dilettante. I mean I am “a professional beginner,” a writer who has been writing for years and years and years in hope of getting published. I identify with beginning writers. I know their dreams.

WHAT KIND OF CHILDHOOD?



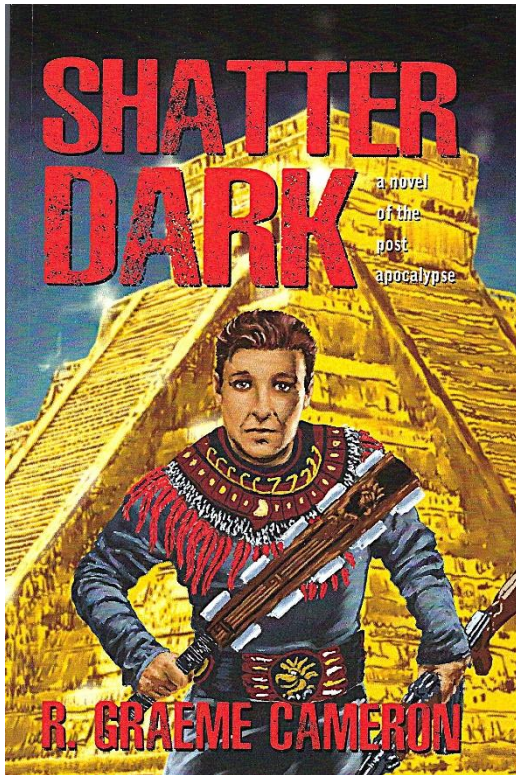
One filled with fantasy as programmed by the era. The photograph of me as a gunslinger was taken circa 1957 when I was five or six. The clothing was mine, but the holsters, six-guns and hat were borrowed props.

I still remember posing in this outfit, remember strutting across the lawn, my hands poised above the holstered guns, ready for a quick draw. I actually thought I looked tough and intimidating. Easily the equivalent of Roy Rogers.

That I exulted in this costume is quite understandable. I normally played “Cowboys and Indians” dressed in street clothes and using my brother’s hockey stick as a rifle substitute.

The funny thing is I didn’t actually like Westerns but that was just about all there was to watch on TV in those days. Even so, I didn’t totally buy into the American “Wild West” mythos. For instance, I tended to root for the Indians, and the Métis. In part because of family lore. My ancestor Charles Thomas Lewis interviewed Louis Riel. Later the family donated “A Prayer and Confession of Faith,” written and signed by Riel, to the RCMP Museum in Regina. I thought of Riel as a hero fighting for a just cause. So, even as a kid, I watched western movies and TV shows with cynical eyes.

WHAT IS THE NOVEL ABOUT?



I quote the back cover:

Humanity endured limited nuclear war, climate warming, and the rising of the oceans. Turned out that was easy compared to what happened next. For the first time in centuries, survival depends on humans making the right decisions. Trouble is, we've forgotten how.

Enter Rudwulf, the Smiter. He alone knows how to save the human race. His reputation is that of an amoral mercenary who never fails. The perfect civil servant. No wonder he's in demand.

Alas, his methods are unpopular. Even worse, the rulers desperate to employ him are unaware he's incompetent. If they ever find out, they'll kill him.

Necessity compels Rudwulf to focus on survival. As a result, he hates his job and wishes he'd chosen a different profession. Too late now.

Maybe, too late for everyone.

STATUS OF THE NOVEL?

The original plan was to publish *Shatter Dark* in all its varied formats sometime in May of 2025.

However, certain unexpected technical difficulties have put the novel temporarily on hold until the problems can be resolved.

Nevertheless, I anticipate publication soon. I waited approximately 58 years to realize the number one item on my bucket list. I've learned to be patient. I can wait a little longer.

SOON YOU WILL BE ABLE TO PREORDER SHATTER DARK!

Celticfrog Publishing intends to create an online opportunity to preorder the paperback version of the novel. It would then either be mailed to you once the hardcopy version is physically available or handed to you if you are an attendee at When Words Collide Writers Festival in August.

How much will it cost? The price has not yet been determined. So many factors to consider. I assume the publisher and I will work it out together.

Where and how will you be able to preorder? I don't yet know. But as soon as I do, I'll post the info online, and in a second issue of this newsletter. Further, if you let me know now that you might be interested, I'll send the relevant info directly to you once I have it. Contact me at (see last page).

It might soon be possible to preorder an E-version as well. Stay tuned.

WHY SHOULD YOU READ *SHATTER DARK*?

If you like alternative history, why not try *future* alternative history?

Besides, Robert J. Sawyer, Hugo, Nebula and Aurora Award-winning author of such classics as *Farseer*, *Illegal Alien*, *Hominoids*, *Flash Forward*, *Red Planet Blues*, *Quantum Night*, and *The Downloaded*, has this to say about my book:

"*Shatter Dark* is inventive, fresh, and clever, and Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame member R. Graeme Cameron has a wise and witty narrative voice. Bravo!"

My judgement of my book may be called into question, but I suggest Robert J. Sawyer knows a tad more than I do on what makes a novel addictively satisfying to read. As was my intention, *Shatter Dark* is weird, quirky, idiosyncratic and consequently somewhat different from the usual. If that sounds interesting, *Shatter Dark* may well be what you are looking for.

WHAT'S MY SECRET?

This time I didn't bother writing for an intended readership, I just wrote to please myself. I know I'm not unique. I figure there's people out there who share my cynical

vie of history and my offbeat sense of humour. This novel is for them. My narrow-niche target readership could well include you, I'm hoping.

ANY OTHER SECRETS?

Shatter Dark is entirely the product of my subconscious mind, a creature of my rampaging Id.

You see, I realized there's no point in continuing my past habits of careful plotting and meticulous research. At my age, by the time I finish reading through my notes I'll have forgotten them.

Instead, I went 100% pantsner, sitting down in front of my computer without a clue what I was going to write, armed only with the conviction that my subconscious mind is far smarter than I, and that all I had to do was unleash it.

DIDN'T THIS CREATE A BIT OF A MESS?

Well, yes. The first draft was full of contradictions and unnecessary complications. But with the aid of my publisher, my proofreader Steve Fahnestalk, and a bunch of wonderful beta readers, three revision drafts produced what I think is a consistent and readable text.

BUT WHAT ABOUT NEEDFUL RESEARCH?

Did it after the fact. For example, during a scene where a future Aztec emperor is attempting to revive Aztec poetry, I typed "Insert Aztec poem." Later, I researched same and came up with a genuine pre-conquest piece that suited my purpose perfectly.

In other words, I didn't waste time researching Aztec culture prior to writing the book, I targeted specific items later, just enough to lend credibility to my futuristic vision of the Azteca empire. Anything more would have been superfluous.

Bear in mind I took courses in Mesoamerican art and architecture at UBC, including a month-long guided tour of ancient cities in Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras. (I climbed sixty pyramid-temples.) Plus, I've read numerous books on the subject. My subconscious actually knows quite a bit. It's just my conscious mind that betrays my ignorance from time to time.

IS *SHATTER DARK* A YOUNG ADULT NOVEL?

Actually, no. Many a teenager might appreciate it, but it's definitely not for children. Some swearing here and there, and occasional references to sexual problems, feats, and desires.

To be sure, the protagonist Rudwulf may be immature by modern progressive standards, but he lives in an age when life is short and sexual disease common. In other words, the way humanity has lived throughout most of its history.

I mean, Churchill's father died from syphilis. And the old-fashioned gentleman's habit of wearing wigs started when certain kings wore wigs to hide the syphilitic sores on their scalps. Fact is prudery in the past was part of a quest for survival. So, Rudwulf, like most men his age, in his era, is still a virgin. A disgruntled virgin. But better safe than sorry.

Really, it's just an excuse to allow me free reign to satirize sexual attitudes over the centuries. All part of the human condition.

IS *SHATTER DARK* GRIM AND DARK?

Only if you are literal minded. Personally, I find it amusing. I chuckled constantly while writing it. Meant to be a dark satire.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER?

Let me know at (see page 7) and I'll add you to the subscription list.

OOK! OOK! SLOBBER! DROOL!

(Letters of Comment)

Note: comments by The Graeme *are in italics* immediately after each letter. This, an attempt to create the illusion of a conversation in the interests of conviviality.

Send your letter of comment to (see below) as I would appreciate your thoughts and opinions.

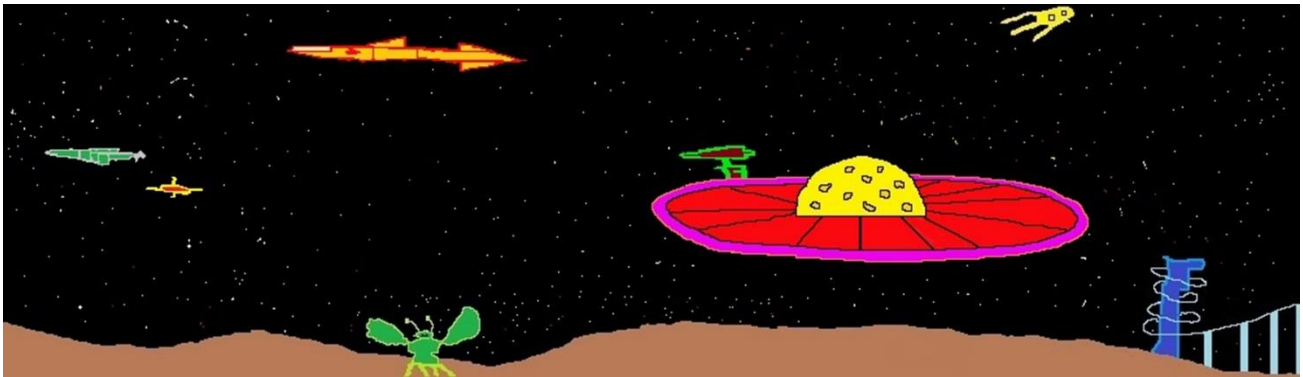
From: **Lord Codswallop** – (May 19, 2022)

Dear Colonial,

Egad, sir! Not enough references to the British Empire!

Sincerely, Huzzah!

The Graeme – *Weren't you the guy who led the charge of the Light Brigade? I'd keep quiet if I were you.*



To add yourself to the newsletter subscription list, to let me know you want to preorder a paperback version of the book once it is possible, or to submit a letter of comment, contact me at: the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com .

NOTE: This newsletter is in a PDF zine format because that is what I am most familiar with.
