

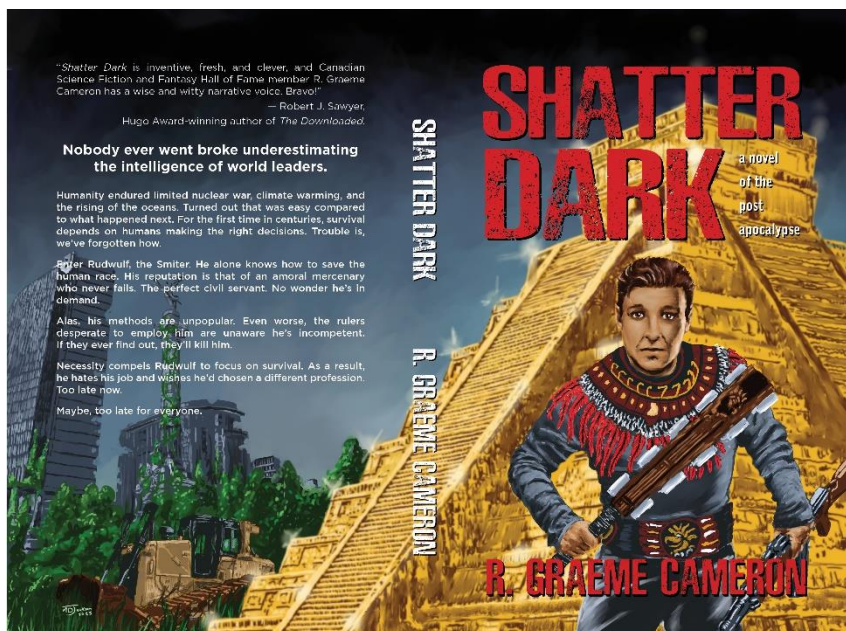
Shatter Dark Newsletter

The **Shatter Dark** Series Newsletter
– by R. Graeme Cameron

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KICKSTARTER FOR SHATTER DARK NOW ONLINE!



The site enables you to preorder either a paper copy (\$20) or an e-copy (\$5). Publication is anticipated to be sometime in July. If you are attending the When Words Collide Writers Festival in August, your pre-ordered paper version can be handed to you there.

My novel is idiosyncratic, weird, and loads of fun to read. Find the Shatter Dark Kickstarter here:

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/alexmccgilvery/shatter-dark>

REVIEW OF SHATTER DARK – by Rhea E. Rose

As published in Issue #19 of *Polar Starlight Magazine*.

Set in a fractured future stitched together with myth, memory, and malfunctioning tech, this novel follows Rudwulf the Smiter—a professional killer with a dry wit, a talking AI in his head, and an unholy appetite for logic-defying bureaucracy.

I was pleasantly surprised by *Shatter Dark*. It's a hilariously clever read. It's a science fiction story full of cynicism, satire, and post-apocalyptic absurdity. Empires crumble, technology rots and mythical memories fade, but the voice, Rudwulf's inner snarl and Buddy-bod's snide AI commentary keep the tone biting and brilliant.

Our Rudwulf is a Don Quixote-like character, a broken knight in a fallen empire, searching for meaning as we laugh at the absurdity of it all. His embedded Buddy-bod is Sancho Panza meets HAL 9000. Windmills are now AI gods and plastic pyramids.

Parts of Rudwulf's journey echo the legend of El Dorado and the quest for the city of gold. The reader finds plenty of mythical power, golden illusions, and doomed quests in this plastic-and-code paradise where grow-vats, religion, politics, and simulation blur.

Rudwulf's reluctant diplomacy lets us see the last gasps of Gods, governments, and gadgets delivered with deadpan flair. The novel is fiercely intelligent but never afraid to be ridiculous.

And this story asks an existential question. What does it mean to believe in anything when belief itself has been bought, sold, and pixelated?

A consistently sharp narrative voice and a charmingly unrepentant, cerebral and funny relationship between Rudwulf and his "love interest," Myriad, keep the story gritty.

Rudwulf's conversations and connection to his Buddy-bod are fun snark, and the technology is reminiscent of M.T. Anderson's young adult novel, *The Feed*, a dark dystopian novel, more serious in tone and outcome than *Shatter Dark*'s exploration of the aftermath of technology. Each time I picked up the manuscript for a read, I found myself smiling and chuckling at the page and subtext. I think readers will recognize this world and laugh out loud.

BUT WHAT IS SHATTER DARK ABOUT?

Short answer: an alternative future obsessed with the past.

Long answer: Humanity survives a limited nuclear war, climate warming, and the rising of the oceans. Mainly because a techgrid of self-aware AI provided useful guidance and effective control. But now the techgrid has collapsed with the result that technological civilization is no longer possible.

The solution? Revert to stone age culture similar to that of many early civilizations. Naturally local leaders leap to revive their particular historical traditions to preserve and advance tribal and nationalist interests. Consequently, future cultures based on extinct civilizations set the scene in this book, including Egyptian, Assyrian, Druid, Roman/Fascist, Tarascan, Mayan, and Aztec.

Bear in mind no cultural appropriation is intended. The portrayal of these cultures is not authentic to history. Rather, because so much info has been lost over time, especially when the infinite-memory banks of the techgrid went down, all of these polities and their “glorious leaders” are poseurs pretending to recreate what no longer exists.

For example, today, hundreds of Aztec poems from the preconquest days survive. However, in this fictional future only one such poem still exists. I confess that a drunken brainstorming session involving the protagonist and the Azteca Emperor Tizoc attempting to determine what Aztec poetry should address is one of my favourite scenes.

The purpose and premise of this book is not alternative historical fiction, but a fun presentation of my theory that all politicians and “Great Men” of history are just like the rest of us (yes, even the sociopaths and psychopaths) in that they all suffer from imposter syndrome and are making things up as they go along. Nobody is actually in control of anything. They simply pretend they know what they are doing.

In short, I utilize the entire canvas of human history to satirize eternal human shenanigans.

A subset of this is the protagonist Rudwulf. In a world resembling the majority of human history, where the average man dies at forty and the average woman at age twenty, there are still too many people for the dwindling resources. Rudwulf is the last of the Smiters, specialists in culling human herds. As such he is in constant demand.

Thing is he is a fraud. He merely takes credit for all the fresh disasters which take place coincidentally during his periods of employment. If exposed, ungrateful patrons may well want him dead. Personal survival is his utmost priority. So far, he has managed to bungle his way through life successfully, but there are no guarantees.

Rudwulf is actually quite ordinary. Like most of us, he constantly second-guesses everything and everybody, which means he hasn't got a clue what is actually happening. He lives in constant reaction to what he thinks is going on, but in reality in reaction to his own wrongful and inadequate interpretation of what he experiences. Fortunately for him, everyone else is just as confused as he is.

To emphasise his internal monologue, I present it in the form of an ongoing dialogue between himself and a techgrid nano-implant subroutine named Buddy-bod. Given that they almost never agree about anything, my theory that reality is simply a kaleidoscope of false impressions is lent wings.

Rudwulf is not a traditional hero reliant on fisticuffs and a desire to beat the enemy into submission. He tries to be a smooth operator, talking his way through and out of the inevitable unanticipated and complicating problems that ruin everybody's plans no matter what the sophistication of their wishful planning. In truth he is simply winging it. Which is what we all do. Which is why I hope readers will identify with Rudwulf, even though his "profession" is that of a mass murderer. Fact is, he's really lousy at his job. Since that is everyone's secret fear, we can all identify with that. I hope.

In sum, I had fun writing this book. I trust you will have fun reading it.

To this day, many science fiction fans loath and hate "Sci-Fi." Not me. I like it. It is a universally recognized and highly catchy pop culture handle that makes a superb marketing tool. So, I'm pleased to see it used thrice in the kickstarter. Possibly, you have always wondered:

WHO INVENTED THE TERM SCI-FI?

I quote from the Canfancylopedia I wrote years ago:

SCI-FI stands for Science Fiction. The term "Sci-Fi" (or sci-fi) was coined by

Forrest J Ackerman in 1955 while driving down a California freeway listening to his car radio. The logic pattern went something like this: car radio—kind of tinny—too bad it's not a high-fidelity setup—high fidelity = Hi-Fi = high quality listening, whereas high quality reading must = Sci-Fi!

Ackerman, one of the most prominent and well-known fans of the 1930s, 40s & 50s, began to promote this concept immediately, with less than satisfactory results. As Dick Eney put it in his 1959 'Fancylopedia 2': *"(Ackerman) 4e is trying to popularize this expression as an equivalent for stf, i.e. a contraction for science-fiction. So far it has attached chiefly to several professional movie-magazines and other Hollywood level stuff."*

ONE OF THE CURSES OF CHILDHOOD



You are looking at a humiliating photo shoot, taking place circa 1956. That's me on the left, my older brother Stewart on the right.

Why humiliating? We're wearing blazers typical of the era, yes, but also genuine German-made leather lederhosen. You can see the leather strapping over my shoulders and across my chest.

My father had been stationed in Europe, something to do with maintaining 100 RCAF Sabre fighter jets at one of our bases (we had a much bigger air force back then), and he returned with what he deemed "cute but manly" outfits for us boys. We were not pleased.

Fortunately, I soon grew out of my pair. By the time I was old enough to "inherit" my brother's pair as a hand-me-

down, both sets of lederhosen had been hanging in the back of a closet for years and had been forgotten by our parents. I used to touch the dried-out and cracked dark brown leather and shudder. Father may know best, as per the TV show, but you can never trust a dad's sudden impulse to cutify his kids. I suspect a number of steins at a beer festival may have contributed to his impulse.

At any rate, no lasting damage except, perhaps, my reluctance to wear leather. Lederhosen definitely not my thing. My brother, I think, was more traumatized. Blazers we were used to wearing on formal occasions, but Lederhosen? Never! Especially not in front of our friends. Still, in later years my brother managed 3 or 4 tours of duty in a row serving with the RCAF in Europe, and beer festivals were something he quickly learned to love. I am 100% certain lederhosen were not part of the attraction.

VOTING FOR 2025 AURORA AWARDS UNDERWAY

Voting for the final ballot began on June 5th and will end at midnight EDT on July 19th 2025.

If you are a Canadian, this is your opportunity to reward the Canadian creators, both professional and fannish, that you've always admired. To vote you must be a member of the CSFFA, which only costs \$10 CAD.

There are many worthy individuals on the ballot. But in particular I would like to see Rhea E. Rose win for her excellent editing of *Polar Starlight Magazine* which is entirely devoted to Canadian speculative fiction poetry. You can find it listed in the "Best Fan Writing Publication" category. Listed there because PSM is free to download.

On the other hand, since the contributors are paid, they are eligible in the professional "Best Poem/Song" category. This year J.D. Dresner is on the ballot for his poem "Horizon Events" in issue #15 of *Polar Starlight*, and "A Thirst for Adventure" by Lynne Sargent, which appeared in issue #28 of *Polar Borealis Magazine* #28.

You can check out the Awards procedure at: < <https://www.csffa.ca/> >

WHAT I WILL BE DOING AT THE WHEN WORDS COLLIDE WRITERS FESTIVAL

Takes place in Calgary in mid August. I have so far been scheduled for the following:

Saturday, August 16th, 4:00 PM: *Pathways to Publication.*

“Exploring pathways to publishing via conventional publishing, self-publishing, and independent “Indie publishing. Panelists share their experiences, pros and cons, on these diverse pathways to publication in the North American Marketplace.”

I will focus on my novel, *Shatter Dark*, and how I got published followed an unexpected and very different path from what I had originally planned.

Sunday, August 17th, 9:00 AM: *Live Action Slush Science Fiction*

A reader (Precious DeLeon) will read aloud the opening pages of submitted short stories till the panel of editors raise their hands to stop the reading. They will then critique what they have heard. I am involved as editor of *Polar Borealis*.

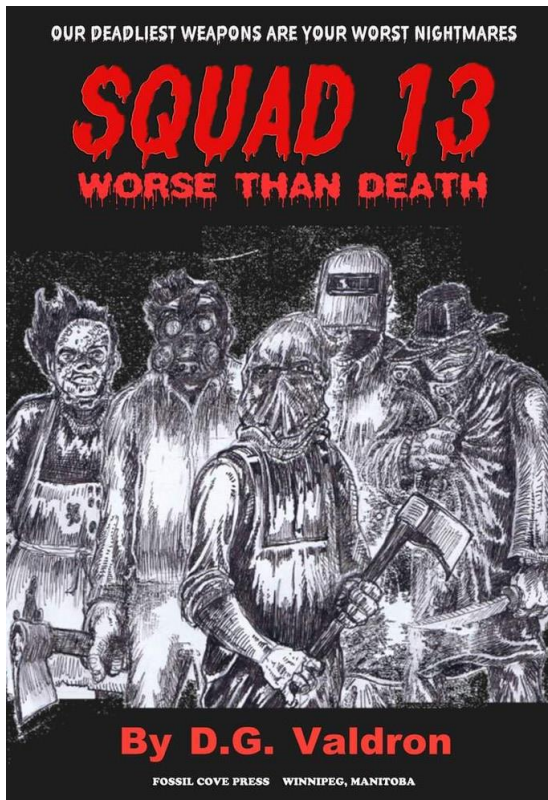
The off-the-cuff critiques are meant to offer serious advice. The basic idea is to determine if the story is polished enough to be worth submitting. Nevertheless, slush readings are generally a lot of fun and quite entertaining, plus very useful for beginning writers to grasp what editors are looking for.

Sunday, August 17th, 4:00 PM: *Pantser vs. Plotter—Which One Are You?*

“Are you a scribbler who writes by the seat of your pants? Or maybe you don’t start penning a work until you have a complete chapter-by-chapter outline? Find out what kind of writing style works best for you, and the strengths and weaknesses of each method, with authors who have been on both sides of the Pantser/Plotter spectrum.”

Over nearly six decades of occasional attempts at writing novels as a tireless plotter, I never got published. Then I switched to a 100% Pantser approach, and the result was snapped up quickly by a publisher. Even better, from the point of seniors attending the panel, my particular Pantser approach is specifically designed to aid aging seniors like myself.

YOU CAN PREORDER “SQUAD THIRTEEN”



D.G. Valdron has a Kickstarter going for this wickedly funny collection of short stories based on the following dark theme:

“In the last decades of the Twentieth century, all over America, unstoppable masked killers began to emerge. Called slashers, and using everything from machetes to chain saws, these figures would appear out of nowhere, slaughter a group of people, and then vanish, leaving traumatized survivors, only to reappear again, months or years later.

Law enforcement was helpless against Killers who would not die, who appeared and disappeared out of nowhere, who would not be stopped. Eventually, the Army was sent in. They couldn't stop the slashers.

So they recruited them.

It was probably a really bad idea.

They were designated *Squad Thirteen*. Unstoppable, uncontrollable killers, walking nightmares. To be contained and deployed for the worst emergencies, hellmouths, vampiric infestations, zombie outbreaks, alien incursions. When it's mad, bad and out of control, when the situation is hopeless and everything has gone to hell, they send in Squad Thirteen.

When Squad Thirteen shows up, there will be no survivors. The good, the bad, the heroes and the monsters, the ones who fight, the ones who run, the ones who hide, the guilty and the innocent... It doesn't matter.

Everyone dies.”

The Kickstarter for *Squad Thirteen* ends on Thursday, June 26, 2025.

Find it here: < <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/891071003/squad-thirteen> >

THE PERILS OF PUBLICITY

I'm feeling my way. This promotional newsletter, for instance. The first issue was downloaded (and presumably read) by 16 people.

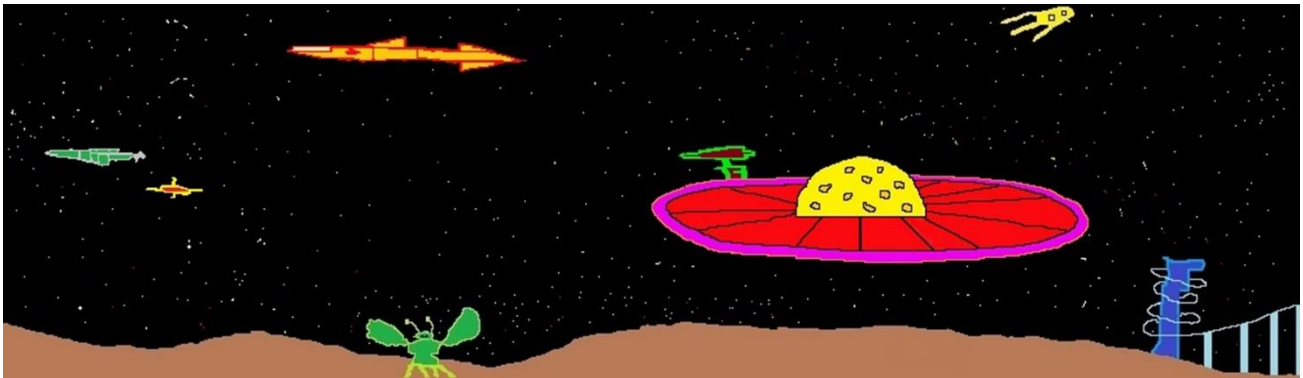
Five people signed up to receive subsequent issues to be sent to them direct.

Somewhat more encouraging, 218 people have downloaded (and presumably read) the sample second chapter of my novel.

All this has so far translated into 12 preorders for my book.

I'm given to understand, through my numerous contacts in the industry, that this is actually pretty good for a first novel at this early stage. Some authors maintain that Kickstarters are a waste of time since most readers wait till a book is available before buying one. Makes sense. After all, why rely on an unknown author's personal propaganda alone? Waiting till critical reviews come out and word of mouth begins to spread will allow for a somewhat informed decision.

Hence this second issue, in hope of encouraging readers to take the plunge.



To add yourself to the newsletter subscription list or to submit a letter of comment, contact me at: the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com .

Here again is the link to the *Shatter Dark* Kickstarter:

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/alexmccgilvery/shatter-dark>